

BOOK REVIEWS

The French in the United States, an Ethnographic Study

Jacqueline Lindenfeld

(2000) *Bergin and Garvey, Wesport/London, (ISBN 0-89789-903-2, paperback)*¹

This book deals with the rarely studied issue of contemporary French immigration to the USA from an anthropological and sociolinguistic perspective. As such, it is both original and useful to all those, in North America and elsewhere, who are interested in examining integration and immigration processes in multicultural societies. It will undoubtedly come in handy to researchers in French sociology, particularly in terms of social networks and the relationship between ethnicity and nationhood.

The study is divided into seven chapters, and the initial one is a well-documented overview of French migration to North America since its beginnings. In the 1990s, Lindenfeld undertook the study of recent settlement of French citizens on American soil viewed from the broad perspective of acculturation, language practices and ethnicity. The three concepts constitute the gist of this book in the five following chapters.

An interesting though concise overview of literature on ethnic studies initiates the portrait of the French on the American scene, starting with the debunking of the traditional myth of the melting pot which has yielded a more pluralist, variable and dynamic perspective of ethnicity closely attached to the concepts of subjectivity and individualism. Thus, the difficulty to “identify” French immigrants is partially linked to the new complex – but hazy – definition of

¹ *Also published in French as “Les Français aux États-Unis. Étude ethnographique” in 2002 by L’Harmattan, Paris/Montréal, ISBN 2-7475-2479-5, 264 p.*

ethnicity, whereby members of a given community are conveniently and objectively defined by commonalities such as place of birth. In her study Lindenfeld tries to fill the gap of knowledge on French immigration to the US, aiming at defining its ethnicity and laying the grounds of possible further studies.

The methodology adopted by the author combines quantitative methods such as the questionnaire-like semiformal interview and qualitative ones such as participant observation: As a member of that French community in the United States, Lindenfeld has observed a number of French migrants and administered an eighty-item interview guide to ninety-six respondents, aged 26 to 92. On the whole, the interview used in the book can hardly be described as ethnographic, as the subtitle has it, insofar as most questions require the interviewees to rank, grade or simply answer closed-ended questions – only a dozen questions invite the informants to provide further developments. If one favours the principle that ethnic identity is evolutionary and dynamic, an appropriate method of investigation would be to let the interviewees elaborate definitions of their identities and/or ethnicities through discourse, since language is a means of conveying crucial aspects of identity. Furthermore I have some doubts on the method of "taking copious notes on prepared sheets rather than using a tape-recorder" (p.21) in this case, for if Lindenfeld is right in underscoring the intrusive aspect of the latter method, it seems essential to decipher transcribed written interviews in order to have a picture of identities in construction through dialogue. The other methodological aspect to highlight here concerns the geography of the study. At the time of the study, the ninety-six informants lived in the western part of the United States, namely Oregon and California. This is not strictly a problem of course, but just additional evidence that generalizations are sometimes risky. Moreover, an ethnographic study should bring about more of the lives of the informants and give greater importance to the various contexts in which it is undertaken.

Chapter 3 provides an interesting account of the relation between pre-migration characteristics, widely known as “push and pull” factors, and individual trajectories of migrants which transform voyage into settlement. One realizes – and research on French migrants in English Canada confirms it (Forlot, 2006) – that the motives for emigration are often individual rather than group-planned, as sometimes happens with other migrants. The only remarkable exceptions to this phenomenon are the pre-migratory socio-ethnic networks that provide informal and unofficial assistance to Basques when they land in the USA, as Lindenfeld shows, as well as the “wave” of migration of people from the same area of Brittany to New York after WW2 (Creagh, 1988). In terms of push and pull factors, Lindenfeld emphasizes that the attraction power of the United States on Europeans as well as family constraints (e.g. an American spouse) are two essential pull factors, and that real motives are rather attraction to the US than repulsion of France.

The next chapter offers a series of developments on the socio-demographic aspects of acculturation, with features such as residence and marriage patterns, socio-economic characteristics and citizenship status. Although these features are commonly used in migration sociology, measuring acculturation may nowadays appear a little too positivistic and deterministic to fit the idea of an evolutionary and dynamic model of adaptation. Redefining one’s adaptation to a new society seems more complex – and certainly more unstable – than what a survey on opting or not for US citizenship can show. This does not mean that intermarriage, citizenship choices, professional specialties or residence patterns are useless in drawing the portrait of migrants, but they cannot solely account for the development of the feeling of cultural and national belonging. One thing is true though: geographical dispersal is rightly identified as a reason for isolation of the French from their compatriots abroad. This dispersal is also crucial in transforming the feeling of identity from that of a group sharing collective values to a more individual vision of ethnicity, based mostly on fossilized

memories and representations of the old country. Another numerical presentation of behavioural factors is developed in chapter 5, with an analysis of food patterns and celebration of holidays is presented. All in all, these chapters, although quite informative, are presented in statistical terms which do not give analytic weight to the argumentation.

With the intuition shared by many that the French are not particularly gregarious among themselves, Lindenfeld reminds us that immigrant populations maintain a sense of collective identity when they have solid organizational activities in the community. After showing that religion has little if any significance in the lives of these immigrants, she explains that their lack of involvement in post-migration French culture is perceptible in the low level of their participation in French associations. Even if we should proceed with caution when analyzing the correlations between identity and limited statistical data, Lindenfeld's results confirm my own findings that the French abroad often tend to adopt the principles of individually motivated migration processes, thus engaging in de-ethnicized integration patterns once they settle down in North America. Maybe one is to look deeper into the pre-migration trajectories of those immigrants to understand their long term behaviours in terms of its ethnicity.

Let us return to methodological questions. The development of feelings of identity and ethnicity is both subjective and fluid (i.e. a heavily subject-centered taking into account a series of contexts such as the economy, the family, the news, etc.). Since these contexts evolve constantly, ethnicity is defined in discourse by the interested parties at one point in time, as a snapshot highly dependent on its environment to be read properly. This must be regarded as one of the major characteristics of interview-based ethnographic work. Furthermore, the metacommunicative context in which identity-related speech acts are produced is to be addressed at all times (Hymes, 1974; Briggs, 1986). In my view, the sixth chapter on the perceptual dimensions of ethnicity is undoubtedly the most interesting, for it captures ethnicity a

fluid concept which is speech-constructed. Not only do the informants express their identity feelings at the moment of the interview, but this speech event often gives them a chance to build it or to reshape it, making it a virtually intangible concept. Language is thus a tool that both is and reveals acts of identity. The chapter offers an interesting account of self-labelling and self-identification, with the usual methodological precaution in that memory is not always a reliable judge and that the investigation was conducted in English, which may have biased the self-depiction of the participants as members (or non members) of the French and/or American cultural worlds. The difficulty of building models for such fluid and dynamic concepts as adaptation and identification also applies to the notions of coordinate vs. compound ethnic identification which the author borrows from the area of bilingualism. However, her hypothesis that a migrant may function in a dual mode (i.e. either French or American) according to the context is undoubtedly seductive, and well illustrated in the way some people feel closer to one culture than to the other in various instances.

The final chapter deals with a crucial aspect of ethnic studies: language. Relying once again on statistical results and on some seemingly weaker analyses, such as the one on the pronunciation, most of the results are based on self-reporting. As far as English is concerned, it was assessed by the author herself since she conducted the interviews in that language. Furthermore, a development is provided on the concept of dominant language, but no clear definition of this concept is given, while it appears to combine qualitative and quantitative values of importance for the analysis. The author adds an interesting presentation of second generation children language practices. It demonstrates that despite the position of French as international language supported by institutions from France or within the United States themselves where French is still widely taught in schools, language – as an echo of identity in a sense – is still transmitted through the family unit. This means that is passed on to the following generation with various levels of efficiency if we

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consider the dispersed and clearly un-ethnic nature of French migratory behaviours. In other words, French in the USA, like many other immigrant languages, is limited to the private sphere, and it is only when societal level is reached that a language can hope to be maintained from one generation to the next. At this point, it would have been interesting to investigate to what extent language is perceived as a shared cultural good and a linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991; Heller, 1999) distributed differently according to social positions and migration trajectories.

In conclusion, this book is useful in identifying the nature of contemporary French emigration as a whole, and to see how those carrying a widely-renowned cultural capital deal with the "loss" generated by their expatriation. In fact, Lindenfeld shows us that they cope like any other immigrants, and that they even tend to blend well in American culture. This tells us something about the reality and the fiction of the prestige of cultures and languages, also shedding new light on the notion of "Frenchness" and the (often self-attributed) characteristics associated to it. In a nutshell, this book should to be read in its context, but comes as a well-documented and clearly written introduction to migration issues and as a tool to understand the adaptation of a seldom studied immigrant group. Finally, and probably more importantly, this book provides an insight of how migration movements between Western, industrialized societies may function.

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Gilles FORLOT

Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium &
IUFM de Lille, France

Email:forlot@rom.ucl.ac.be

What Happens When a Diverse Society is Diverse: Exploring Multidimensional Identities

Hakan G. Sıcakkan and Yngve G. Lithman (eds.)

(2006) Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006, 252 pages,
(ISBN 978-0-7734-5877-2, hardcover)

This volume is composed of eight chapters respectively written by Hakan G. Sıcakkan, Yngve G. Lithman, Hildur Ve, Mette Andersson, Randi Gressgard, Christine Jacobsen, Jan Kare Breivik, and John Erik Fossum, each of whom displays the vindication of deep-rooted Norwegian social anthropology tradition. The book is built upon Iris Marion Young's premise which argues that majority societies do not treat migrants as individuals but communities. Articles scrutinise various problematical aspects of ethno-culturally diverse modern societies with respect to migrant, ethnic and gendered identities. After the Introduction explicating diverse character of modern societies, he gives a summary of the theories of identity. Subsequently, Andersson explains the ways in which Pakistani origin female students differ from their parents in differentiating religion from culture.

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Gilles FORLOT

Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium &
IUFM de Lille, France

Email:forlot@rom.ucl.ac.be

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Andersson claims that religion provides young Muslims girls with an alternative form of recognition and a shield against the patriarchal authority of their parents. Gressgard and Jacobsen very successfully portray the limits of multiculturalist and republicanist narratives of integration vis-a-vis migrants. The authors claim that both narratives fail to treat migrants as individuals. Breivik, on the other hand, brings up the problems of the deaf population as a cultural community. Hakan Sıcakkan's article delineates the newly emerging global spaces in comparison, whereby diversity is successfully acknowledged. Lithman reveals the sources of radicalisation of diaspora communities after 9/11 in response to the conditions in countries hosting those diasporas. Consequently, Fossum draws a brilliant account of multiculturalism with reference to the rights-based, culture-based and social justice-based approaches.

The book certainly deserves a great attention due the fact that it is constituted by articles derived from field researches. Underlying the discourse of "togetherness in difference", the contributors draw our attention to the importance of the acknowledgment of difference as well as to granting minorities political rights in order to treat members of those groups as individuals and to keep them in the legitimate political ground. The principal character of this book, so to speak, is to shed light upon the contemporary debates on diversity, and also to explicate the state practices in managing ethno-cultural diversity. The last but not the least, each chapter is a very successful manifestation of the attempt to comprehend various facets of multidimensional identities and diverse societies. One minor shortcoming to be mentioned is that some references (e.g. p. 4, Weiss, 1998) are not included in the bibliography. Otherwise, the book deserves admiration.

Ayhan KAYA
Istanbul Bilgi University, Turkey
Email: ayhank@bilgi.edu.tr

**“Intercultural Competences” Collection
by L’Harmattan (Paris)**

“Compétences Interculturelles” is a collection published by L’Harmattan (Paris) (www.harmattan.fr). The collection strikes a unique balance between theory and application, and it addresses the needs and demands of a diverse audience. It introduces the works of the Institute of Research, Education and Actions on Migration (IRFAM, Liège, Belgium) (www.irfam.org). Here we are presenting a list of books published in this collection with brief descriptions.

S. AKGÖNÜL, Religions de Turquie, religions des Turcs. Nouveaux acteurs dans l’Europe élargie, Paris, Turin, Budapest, L’Harmattan, coll. «Compétences interculturelles», 2005, 193 p. ISBN : 2-7475-9489-0

Although 99% of Turks are considered to be Muslims it is not clear what kind of Islam they follow and practice. According to somehow deformed “occidental” point of view, Islam is perceived as a monolithic religion and Muslims have always the same vision of the world, the same attitudes, behaviour, and there is no difference in religious practice between Muslims. This vision of Islam has the effects on the auto-perception of Muslims themselves. It is obvious that the “occidental world” committed a double fault: by misrepresenting Islam to European citizens as well as to Muslims in their own countries. There is no homogeneous Islam. On contrary, there are several different kinds of Islam, like there are interpretations of Christianity. There are multiple peculiarities of Turkish Islam. The existing religious diversity comes from the imperial multi-confessional past but also stems from the concept of laicism that has been developed since the foundation of the Turkish Republic. Not only those vestiges of the religious diversity are still present in Turkey, represented particularly by non-Muslim minorities, but also, besides Islam, a mystic confraternity occupies an important place in the Turkish society and contributes to the development of Turkish sociability. Recently, the aforementioned

religious faiths and practices tend to undergo certain mutation and mutual transformation.

A. ELIA, **Réseaux ethnocommunautaires des Foulbé en Italie. Recherche de visibilité, logiques associatives et stratégies migratoires**, Paris, Turin, Budapest, L'Harmattan, coll. « *Compétences interculturelles* », 2006, 115 p. ISBN : 2-296-00398-2

This study is based on the empirical research (public inquiry) with the aim to analyze the level of social integration of Senegal immigrants into the different environments in Italy. One of the particularities of those African immigrants is the creation of ethnic networks founded on the same socio-linguistic background. This broad-based study, highly engaging reader, is presented in context that allows readers to understand that the creation of ethnic networks is not an independent phenomenon. On the contrary, it is the result of the process of integration of immigrants (that is considered as a collective action of the relevant ethnic community) and it is highly dependent on the real motives of immigration. Readers will discover the dos and don'ts of social interaction of Senegal immigrants and how important is the role of mutual support during this process.

L. MULLER et S. de TAPIA (éds), **Un dynamisme venu d'ailleurs: la création d'entreprises par les immigrants**, Paris, Turin, Budapest, L'Harmattan, coll. « *Compétences interculturelles* », 2005, 311 p. ISBN : 2-7475-8569-7

A comprehensive collection of both classical and contemporary voices in perennial ethical debates, "Un dynamisme venu d'ailleurs", has established itself as one of the truly outstanding works on ethnic enterprises. This study is based on the multidimensional research carried out by the University of Marc Bloch in Strasbourg (l'Université Marc Bloch de Strasbourg) in cooperation with other teachers-researchers and members of CNRS (from Paris, Poitiers, Toulouse and Liège). Those authors try to find out on what basis are ethnic enterprises established and run if their representatives (im-

migrants) do not have the necessary economic know-how. Since the beginning of the 20th century, certain group of immigrants has considered the entrepreneurial activities as a possible solution for an easier integration into the host society. They set up enterprises usually in the sectors slightly forgotten by the host society like: confection, handicraft, delicatessen, grocery stores and catering industry. According to the results of the recent empirical research, it is usually the solidarity of the family that lies behind the success of those ethnic enterprises. Chinese community in Paris, young Moroccans in Rif or Turkish entrepreneurs in Alsace are able to interlink their entrepreneurial activities in the host country with those in the country of origin. Economic globalization, of which they are representatives, is currently preoccupied by series of questions dealing with the redefinition of the concept of borders as well as commerce itself.

Ch. PARTHOENS et A. MANÇO, **De Zola à Atatürk: un « village musulman » en Wallonie**. *Cheratte-Visé, Paris, Turin, Budapest, L'Harmattan, coll. « Compétences interculturelles », 2005, 174 p. ISBN : 2-7475-8036-9*

In lucid, readable publication, with supporting statistics, the authors discuss the nature of social integration of Turkish community that has been installed in a mining region in Belgium since the beginning of 1960th. The authors provide the readers with a complete and comprehensive picture of the integration process of Turkish workers over the years. They explain their integration process in its variety, from the creation of their associations to their nomination to local authority elections. The authors identify diverse patterns to Belgian official policy as well as politics and living conditions of those immigrants. This book is essential for those who seek the facts upon the modes of installation and integration of the Turkish community that is currently residing in Cheratte: What is the most successful way of their integration? What are the main obstacles to be well integrated in the host society? What kind of problems is the Turkish community facing now? This ethnography of a Turkish community

that has been installed in the Belgian mining region is based on the extensive empirical research carried out over the years. The book is enriched by numerous examples of how Turkish immigrants reformed their environment in order to be better integrated into the major society. It is a unique overview of the forms of cultural integration of those coming from non-European countries.

Few earlier books published in the collection are as follows:

J. GATUGU, S. AMORANITIS et A. MANÇO (éds), **La vie associative des migrants: quelles (re)connaissances ? Réponses européennes et canadiennes**, Paris, Turin, Budapest, L'Harmattan, coll. « *Compétences interculturelles* », 2004, 280 p. ISBN : 2-7475-7053-3

U. MANÇO (ed.), **Reconnaissance et discrimination: présence de l'islam en Europe occidentale et en Amérique du Nord**, Paris, Turin, Budapest, L'Harmattan, coll. « *Compétences interculturelles* », 2004, 371 p. ISBN : 2-7475-6851-2

A. MANÇO (éd.), **Turquie : vers de nouveaux horizons migratoires ?**, Paris, Turin, Budapest, L'Harmattan, coll. « *Compétences interculturelles* », 2004, 308 p. BN : 2-7475-6591-2

M. VATZ LAAROUSSI et A. MANÇO (éds), **Jeunesses, citoyennetés, violences. Réfugiés albanais en Belgique et au Québec**, Paris, Turin, Budapest, L'Harmattan, coll. « *Compétences interculturelles* », 2003, 312 p. ISBN : 2-7475-4923-2

D. CRUTZEN et A. MANÇO (éds), **Compétences linguistiques et sociocognitives des enfants de migrants. Turcs et Marocains en Belgique**, Paris, Turin, Budapest, L'Harmattan, coll. « *Compétences interculturelles* », 2003, 126 p. ISBN : 2-7475-4892-9

A. MANÇO, **Compétences interculturelles des jeunes issus de l'immigration. Perspectives théoriques et pratiques**, Paris, Turin, Budapest, L'Harmattan, coll. « *Compétences interculturelles* », 2002, 182 p. ISBN : 2-7475-3406-5

Andrea Gerstnerova
Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic
Email: andrea_gerstnerova@yahoo.fr

Centering the Margin, Agency and Narrative in Southeast Asian Borderlands

Alexander Horstmann and Reed L. Wadley (eds.)

(2006) Berghahn Books, New York, Oxford, (ISBN 1-84545-019-1, hardcover)

Asian migration experiences within Asia are often neglected in the European and North American literature for various reasons. This compilation of papers, mainly based on the ICAS Conference papers, brings us a wealth of studies on Southeast Asian experiences at the borders. The agency perspective adapted in this volume in the analysis of borders and border crossings warrants a reconceptualisation of the nation and nation-state in the region. It reveals how fluid the borders in Southeast Asia. The narratives presented and discussed in each chapter reveal vivid examples of swinging importance and centrality for some borderland communities and the challenges posed by ethnic groups divided by newly built nation states and their borders. It is very interesting to see a variety of manoeuvres followed by borderland people. Authors of this volume do not only discuss the difficulties posed by the borders but also the opportunities offered. There are interesting tracks of borderland people's experiences of migration, return and interactions beyond borders. Religion also pops up frequently as a complementing element of the lives of borderland communities. Muslim populations of the bordering countries and marital and business relationships between are portrayed effectively. These fine analyses of the formation of translocal and transnational borderlands as central living spaces in Southeast Asian countries (Malaysia, Thailand, Laos, Indonesia, and Burma) should attract migration researcher's attention. Puzzles of borders and borderlands presented here are valuable in understanding the borderlands of the so-called modern industrialised world, where the borders are presumably clearer and established but yet permeable.

A well-woven introduction chapter sets the path of discussion and analysis and directs the readers to the questions

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about conceptual preoccupations of social scientists. The political economy and the making of nation state are discussed in contrast to the "partitioned" ethnic communities by these newly created national boundaries. The first part focuses on the peripheral space of borderlands in relation to the central political authority and exclusion and inclusion of borderland communities by the ruling parties are elaborated. The second part looks at the difficulties posed by the borders to local ethnic minorities who had enjoyed the freedom of wandering in their own space prior to the erection of 'national' boundaries drawing upon examples from Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. Final section focuses on the political economy of the border. Harassment, arrest, persecution, depression come into scene as the effects of the national borders on borderland communities. Everyday experiences and struggles of borderlanders need to be further studied 'with a focus on cultural complexity of the communities involved and on their transnational networks and spaces rather than the invented entities of nation-states' suggest the authors. Readers would find extreme similarities between these Southeast Asian borderlands and their western counterparts such as Turco-Greek or Turco-Iranian borderlands or US-Mexican borderlands.

This is a very useful reading for migration students and researchers with eye-opening vivid cases. Too many local names make it a bit difficult to follow but this would be a small price for reading a rich analysis of migration ethnographies.

Ibrahim Sirkeci
European Business School London, UK
Email: sirkeci@regents.ac.uk

Child Rearing in Six Ethnic Families, The Multicultural Dutch Experience

Mara Dekovic, Trees Peels, Suzanne Model

(2006) *The Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, New York, (ISBN10: 0-7734-6092-6, ISBN13: 978-0-7734-6092-8, hardcover)*

The results reported in the present book follow some empirical researches carried out at the end of the Nineties among several immigrant families in the Netherlands: Moroccan, Chinese, Somali, Surinamese, Creole and Turkish. These studies have been backed up by the Dutch government, interested in understanding the growth dynamics among immigrant parents' offspring (mostly the first-generation ones) in order to prevent the second-generation unease, included by means of prearranging specific interventions aimed to give their families a concrete support.

The editors particularly linger over two goals: 1) identify parents' attitudes and behaviours towards their children and hence evaluate minors' conditions on the basis of both family relationships and parents' behaviours and values - from childhood to adult age - and 2) determine immigrant families' needs.

The approach adopted in the present survey allows bringing into focus the many different ways of being parents: from the authoritarian control to the authoritative one, from permissive attitudes to neglectful ones, all of which characterised by different levels of support. The authors wonder if the combinations among the above mentioned ways of support and being parents in the Western societies - basically depending on the social class one belongs to - really represent effective tools to understand the interpersonal relationships among the immigrant families.

Actually the book seems to suggest that both relationships and expectations of immigrant parents toward their children depend on their cultural background and the family structure. Modernisation, education and economic conditions seem to favour an authoritative more than authoritarian lifestyle among immigrants, even if the process is not

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that consistent. Acculturation not necessarily leads to adhere to ruling cultural models; rather, past and present get mixed up in such a way that past dynamics can be restored under a different guise. From such a point of view, the structure of the book is interesting, as it devotes to every single group a chapter about unity and diversity in children's growth.

It's just the low level of adaptability of Western interpretative categories to family inter-generation relationships which persuaded authors to privilege the inductive method for observing the socialisation dynamics among the immigrants' offspring: the different categories are caused by data rather than imposed to them.

A crucial issue in the book is the judgement on how much the original dynamics come up again in the new environment or, in other words, continuity and change are pointed out. In detail, the dissonance is emphasised between the home environment and the wider social background that is the building of a cultural identity with reference to the host country as well.

The book consists of two different parts. The first describes minors' growth of each ethnic group, while the second compares natives and immigrants. A specific chapter is also devoted to differences and similarities in parents' behaviour.

Conclusions are developed in the last chapter, which mostly underlines the heterogeneity of parents' experiences in the ethnic groups reviewed and the inconsistency of the cliché of the poor family, unable to take care of its children. The results are the starting point from which authors suggest an interesting procedure to a political system which wonders on how to effectively intervene.

In conclusion, this book has many merits, among which surely is the individuation of a still understudied area: the inter-generation and family one and the choice of avoiding unease as the crucial issue of the survey. Its limits - declared by authors themselves more than once - mostly lie in the statistical pattern of the study since samples haven't been extracted by means of a strict statistical procedure and they

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are modest from a quantity point of view and different among them. The fact that interviews have only been carried out among those who showed willing to answer on such topics and that interviewees have often been recruited among operators' and interviewers' acquaintance, takes casualness away from samples and, as a consequence, representativeness as well. By relating the above mentioned limit to the fact that the researches taken into account in the book have been carried out mostly at the end of the Nineties, the present survey can be considered a very good starting point to check and possibly update the advanced hypothesis.

Patrizia Farina
University of Milano Bicocca, Italy
Email: patrizia.farina@unimib.it