

A Comparison of Mexican Immigration to the U.S. to that of
Albanian to Italy: Social Networks as a
Means to Adaptation

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Introduction

This research explores the immigration process by focusing on the adaptation and survival strategies of immigrants, in particular, their social networks. Although immigrants adapt to host countries, it is not clear whether all immigrants, regardless of their ethnicity and host country, use social networks in the same way and to the same extent to adapt. To shed light on this issue, I will compare two distinct immigrant streams in two distinct countries: Mexicans in the United States and Albanians in Italy.

The comparison between Mexican immigration in the U. S. and Albanian immigration in Italy allows me to identify differences and similarities in the use of social networks. No examination of this process has ever been undertaken despite that this comparison is an interesting and important because these two countries have a different migration history. The United States is an old country when it comes to immigration. It has always received immigration and in regards to the Mexican stream, it now has a century of Mexican migration, making Mexicans the largest minority group in the United States. Italy on the other hand, is a new country when speaking of immigration. Italy has been a country of emigration and in the past decade or so this has suddenly changed. The Albanian immigration began in the early 90's. Although this is a fairly new migration, Albanians compose the largest minority group in Italy. It is interesting to see how this new vs. old will affect immigrant adaptation. Mexican immigration can generally be said to have started due to economic reasons. In contrast, Albanian immigration owes its origins to the fall of communism. Albanians associated their movement to a newfound freedom, which created the massive migration. With time and the fall of communism, economic reasons arose as well and solidified the migration. These four distinct countries

and their situations allow me to highlight the similarities and differences that exist in immigrant adaptation. The question being presented is: How does the use of social networks differ for the two immigrant groups? This question will be answered through a comparative design that looks at qualitative unstructured interviews of Albanian and Mexican immigrants. I hypothesize that Mexican immigrants tend to use social networks more than Albanians because Mexican social networks are well established due to the long period of time that this migration has existed.

Immigrant/Country Background

Albania/Italy Background

Italy is a country that for most of its history has been a country of emigration. Today, on the other hand, Italy faces a new reality. It is no longer an emigration country but rather an immigrant receiving country. As stated by Favell, this is a “time when Italy has encountered immigration at a speed, to an extent, and with a surprise, unparalleled in Europe” (Grillo & Pratt pg. 238). Because this is a recent phenomenon of the past decade or so, Italy is going through constant changes to adapt to this new situation. This includes social, political and economic changes.

Most of the immigrants currently in Italy are Albanians. Caritas has recently found that in 2004, there were 2.8 million resident immigrants in Italy (quoted in Polichi, 2006). Of these, 316,000 are Albanians, representing the largest minority of immigrants in Italy (in Polichi, 2006). This number is probably even greater considering that illegal Albanians are not taken into account here.

Albania was under the rule of communism from 1944 until 1990. Today, the country is in transition to becoming a capitalist democracy. The transition has been very

hard leading Albania in becoming one of the poorest countries in Eastern Europe. Because of this, many Albanians decided to leave their native country in search for a better life for themselves and their family. In the 1990's after many political changes, it is estimated that one million Albanians left the country, almost 25 percent of the country's population (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, 2004), with nearly 250,000 of these migrating to Italy (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, 2003). This is just an estimate because the real figure cannot be determined since most of the Albanians entered without proper documents.

Mexico/U.S. Background

Immigration has always been a part of the history of the United States. The nation was founded by immigrants and continues to receive them today. The majority of these contemporary immigrants are Mexican. As of now, a century of Mexican migration to the United States continues and shows no signs of ending. Mexico represents the largest source of immigration to the United States. In fact in the March 2002 CPS, there were 32.5 million foreign born and of these 30 percent were from Mexico (Passel, 2004). Aside from this, Mexico is also the largest single source of undocumented immigrants. In March of 2002, there was an estimate of 9.3 million undocumented immigrants in the United States and of these, about 5.3 million or 57 percents were from Mexico (Passel 2004). Mexican immigration is increasing leading to the estimate that the foreign born population will represent in 2010 13 percent of the population. This is an increase of 40 million from 2000 to 2010 (Passel, 2004). Both of these ethnic groups, Albanians and Mexicans, represent the largest minority in their host countries leaving them with the challenge to integrate and adapt to a new environment.

Immigrant Adaptation

Immigration requires adaptation to a new and unfamiliar environment. Searle and Ward (1990) distinguished two forms of adaptation: psychological adaptation and sociocultural adaptation (quoted in Kotic, 2002). Psychological adaptation is mental and physical well being, and sociocultural adaptation is the individuals' ability to organize their daily life in a new context such as language ability, cultural knowledge and social relationships (quoted in Kotic, 2002). Adaptation depends on situational variables and individual variables. Situational variables are those such as characteristics of the society of origin and the society of settlement, while individual variables are socio-demographic and personality characteristics (Sam & Berry quoted in Kotic, 2002). Many immigrants adapt to the host country using the strategy of integration.

Integration is a strategy that is used to build relationships with the dominant group in the host country. Along with these relationships, participation in native social networks still occur (Kotic, 2002). Integration allows immigrants to keep part of their original culture while feeling accepted in the host country. Therefore, with the integration strategy, immigrants feel accepted. By using integration as an adaptation strategy, immigrants are able to adapt to a new dimension, both culturally and socially. At the same time they are retaining their culture.

Integration affects society as a whole and not just the individuals who have immigrated (Crespo et al. 2003). As an example we can see the case of Italy. Since most Italians are not accustomed to living in a multicultural environment, they must integrate into this new situation of diversity. Not only does the immigrant have to adapt to society, but society to the immigrant as well. For a successful process of integration three

elements must be followed. These are the adaptation of immigrants to the society that receives them; the adaptation of the host society to the immigrants; the generations of adequate communications between the two populations and between each one of them and the governments (Salt quoted in Crespo et al., 2003).

Integration is a concept that has been inconsistently defined. Despite of this, the common factors usually included in the definition are the immigrants' cultural adaptation, the absence of racism in the host society, and the immigrants' availability to services such as housing and health care. (Calavita, 2005). In reference to the Italian case, the Italian Commission on Immigrant Integration Policies, integration is composed of two elements. The first is the integrity of the individual meaning access to work, housing, health care and other basic services (Calavita, 2005). The second element is the positive interaction meaning the absence of xenophobia and racism in the host country (Calavita, 2005). Italian law and policy also have a role in integration. An example is the Turco-Napolitano Law of 1998. This law is the "blueprint" for immigrant integration in Italy today. This law made it illegal to discriminate because of race, religion, ethnicity, or nationality. Aside from this, access to the national healthcare services was given to legal immigrants and only emergency care to illegal immigrants (Calavita, 2005). The Turco-Napolitano also provided public education rights to all immigrants and access to public housing and public assistance equal to that of Italian citizens to legal immigrants. In addition to understanding the law, immigrants face other barriers. These include finding accommodations of where to live, finding employment, and finding initial economic capital to sustain them among others. An important strategy used to combat these barriers, which is the strategy I focus on in this paper, is social networks.

Social networks are relationships based on family, friendship, kin, and community (Choldin, 1973; Massey, 1990; Hagan, 1998). These networks are important because immigrants who incorporate themselves into strong established networks tend to adapt more easily to the United States (Hagan, 1998). Immigrants who have ties with weak networks tend to struggle more (Choldin, 1973; Hagan, 1998). Social networks help immigrants by reducing the short-term costs of settlement. This includes emotional support, cultural support, initial housing, and employment information (Lomnitz, 1977; Massey & España, 1987; Arriaza, 1997; Hagan, 1998). Immigration can be very costly. The migrant faces monetary cost. This can range from the actual transportation, to finding housing, and food. In addition, there is also information and search costs. This can be defined as efforts required and done to find employment along with money and time. The migrant also faces opportunity costs. This type of cost is all the income needed and used while traveling and seeking employment. Lastly there are the psychic costs. This is in reference to the psychological hardships of leaving family and friends behind to enter a new and unfamiliar environment (Massey, 1990). All these cost are reduced when the migrant has connections with other migrants, family, or friends in the host country or even the home country to help them. (Cornelius, 1975; Lomnitz, 1977; Massey and España, 1987; Hagan, 1998).

When the migrant first arrives, social networks can provide initial social capital to help in the settlement process (Hagan, 1998). This alleviates much of the monetary and psychic costs. Also the monetary costs can be reduced in terms of transportation. If the migrant has a good social network he most likely knows previous migrants. Previous migrants are experienced and know ways of crossing the border efficiently (Massey and

España, 1987). Also previous migrants might know of cheap guides (*coyotes* as know by Mexicans or *scafisti* as the Italians call them). Sometimes the fees can be eliminated entirely by having family already in the host country who are able to pay the fee (Choldin, 1973; Massey and España, 1987), or by knowing an experienced migrant who has a guide as a friend (Massey and España, 1987). By having the fees completely eliminated, the migrant receives an economic cushion that allows him to save from his new income and send money home (Choldin, 1973). Other monetary expenses such as food and psychic costs can be diminished by staying with family, kin, or friends already established in the host country. These networks provide emotional and cultural support in adapting to a new environment.

Social networks are beneficial in finding employment because these networks facilitate the circulation of information that helps the immigrants' job search (Livingston, 2006). For example, social networks are of great importance to the Mexican immigrants when it comes to finding employment. A reason for this is that individuals that do not have labor market experience in the United States will not have the skills needed and will therefore rely on their social networks. This creates a high demand for employment information (Livingston, 2006). Mexicans tend to use and benefit from their social networks because Mexican immigrants tend to be low skilled with no U.S. labor market experience. The information given to them by their social networks will help them learn and acquire the skills needed from other Mexicans who are already in the U.S. labor market. Another benefit associated with social networks is that through the circulation of information, immigrants can avoid employers who have a reputation of exploiting their employees (Livingston, 2006). Also because network members tend to recommend new

immigrants, this encourages potential employers to hire the immigrants even though they may lack the skills needed and the experience in the United States (Hugo, 1981; Livingston, 2006). Furthermore, the employer benefits because he has an employee he can trust and continues to get a supply of labor from social networks (Hugo, 1981). Social networks are the largest source of information in regards to employment to the extent that 81 percent of Latino immigrants rely on the use of social networks to find employment (Cornelius, 1975; Livingston, 2006).

Finding housing can be facilitated through the use of social networks (Cornelius, 1975; Hugo, 1981). Migrants who have contacts with social networks tend not to make their own housing arrangements at the initial state of settlement (Hugo, 1981). Their family, friends, or kin do this for them by offering housing or by providing information of where there is lodging (Cornelius, 1975; Hugo, 1981). Through networks, migrants share costs with other migrants and sometimes this involves sharing overcrowded rented apartments. This sharing of cost also involves staying with a relative or friend who has already settled in the host country (Massey and España, 1987). By doing this, the migrant is able to save money and reduce the cost of migration. In turn the migrant settles into the community and eventually might contribute and re-enforce the social network. Social networks serve as an adaptation strategy developed by immigrants to integrate into the new environment. They become crucially important to the migration process by facilitating the movement to the receiving country, reducing the costs of migration, facilitating employment and housing, all of which help ease the adaptation process.

Methods

This research follows a comparative design. As stated by Bryman, a comparative design “implies that we can understand social phenomena better when they are compared in relation to two or more meaningfully contrasting cases” (Bryman pg 53). Specifically the research follows a cross-cultural research comparative design. This cross-cultural design allows me to conduct secondary analysis of qualitative interviews already conducted about Albanian immigrants in Italy.

Ankica Kosic and Anna Triandafyllidou in “Making Sense of Italy as a Host Country: A Qualitative Analysis of Immigrant Discourse”, have conducted unstructured qualitative interviews to test the interaction between immigrants and the host country. I conducted a secondary analysis of their research and followed their design to conduct my own research on Mexican immigration in the U.S. concluding a cross-cultural analysis of the outcomes.

Kosic and Triandafyllidou conducted 30 unstructured qualitative interviews in the city of Florence, Italy. I did the same and conducted 16 unstructured qualitative interviews in the city of Santa Ana. The subjects were heterogeneous in terms of gender, age, and length of stay in host country. For a complete description of the subjects characteristics see appendix 1 and 2. Kosic and Triandafyllidou recruited their interviewees first through a contact and then used the snowball technique. I did the same, interviewing an already acquired contact, and then proceeded with the snowball technique. Kosic and Triandafyllidou identified three main themes around which the interviews were organized: the strategies of entry and finding accommodation, the strategies of finding employment and working conditions, and lastly regularization issues

and contact with authorities. The theme of social networks arises within these three themes. Social networks are the focus of this research project. The goal is to see how social networks affect or influence the strategies of entry and accommodation, the strategies of finding employment, and the contact with authorities. These three themes also served to help organize the Mexican interviews. Along with these themes, Kosic and Triandafyllidou used an interview guide which was the same guide used in the Mexican immigrant interviews to achieve a constant and more efficient comparison of both cases. These questions address the immigrants' motives for migrating, strategies used in finding employment, and strategies used in finding housing (see appendix 3). As a whole, the questions serve to highlight how social networks are used as a strategy of adaptation.

It is important to note that the Kosic and Triandafyllidou interviews were loosely structured and the wording of the questions and their sequence followed the flow of the interview and not a pre-defined order. This was the aim of the Mexican interviews as well. The interviews were recorded then transcribed and translated into English. To keep the subjects privacy, their identity was kept anonymous by assigning them fake names. This is the case for both immigration streams. All subjects were given a consent form in English and/or Spanish. Once the interviews were transcribed and translated, I proceeded to analyze them. To do this, I coded the main themes appearing in the Albanian interviews which are strategies of entry and finding accommodation, strategies for finding employment and working conditions, and lastly regularization issues and contact with authorities. These same themes emerged in the Mexican interviews allowing for a comparison to look for similarities and differences between the two immigration streams and in particular how social networks affect these themes.

Findings

Strategies of Entry and Accommodation

For Albanians who entered the country in the early 1990's after the fall of communism, the socio-political situation in Albania along with the job opportunities in Italy motivated their migration (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, 2002). The majority of the Mexican subjects identified their economic situation in Mexico as their stimulus in migrating. However, both migrations streams identified improving their life styles and that of their families as the main motivation for their immigration.

Hekuran (22, painter, Albanian) “(..) we were 8 people at home, 6 children and we lacked a lot of things...I was the only male child and it was up to me to leave” (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, pg 13)

Alejandro (53, janitor, Mexican) “Talking with people here in the U.S. I said lets go work and make some money, help the family. I thought I was going to do other kind of work but with no studies you work in the field... in what ever comes”.

The strategies of entry for both the Albanians and Mexicans in this study are similar in that the majority comes through illegal means. Nineteen out of the thirty Albanians entered Italy illegally by ferry or speed boats across the Ontrato straight or by using a fake visa (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, 2002). All but one of the Mexicans entered illegally to the United States by crossing the border by foot or in car.

Hekuran (22, painter, Albanian) “After 28 hours trip we returned back because of the bad sea. Our life was nearly over because our boat had problem and we returned back” (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, pg 16).

Cesar (23, cook, Mexican) “I remember when I was still in the mountains it was two days with no food or water. We found a small little pond or lake and it was dirty water but that is where we drank from. We tried putting a shirt on top of the pitcher we had to filter in only the water but it didn't work. It was still dirty. Now when I think about it I can't believe I did that.”

The difference between these two groups lies in the use of social networks. The Mexican migration stream had a strong social network already established in the United States. All subjects except 2 had a family member waiting for them to pay for the *coyote* (smuggler). In addition, the majority used coyotes that were referred to them by family, friend, and kin.

David (24, construction, Mexican) "My brother paid..."

Jorje (39, carpenter, Mexican) "It was three of us and my brother didn't have money to pay for all of us only for me so the coyote left us in L.A. We walked back to Santa Ana, it was a long walk. I think we were in Compton."

Armando (35, waiter, Mexican) "...through other people that had already come, they recommend you certain people that are safer to pass with than others. Friends usually recommend them [coyote]."

Marcella (52, factory worker, Mexican) "I came with a cousin, the cousin had a friend here and her brother knew the coyote who passed us".

Because the Albanian immigration in the early 1990's was fairly new, the immigrants had no strong social networks established. Albanians expected to receive help from the Italian government because they were fleeing a totalitarian regime. The government did help them in what they could but it was not much or at least not what the Albanians were expecting. The only things it could offer was temporary accommodation, basic food, and a small amount of money (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, 2002).

Hekuran (22, painter, Albanian) "I have been jobless for 8 months. An Italian Family helped me to study and I stayed in their house for a while...I have been only 24 days without a 'permesso' (permit), and then according to the law of that time..., I was a teen-ager and I was taken by an Italian family that helped me to have the documents" (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, pg 18).

The second major wave of Albanian migration came in 1997 when Albania went into economic and political destruction because of the financial pyramid crisis. By this time,

the government no longer had a welcoming attitude towards Albanians. This migration stream mainly received help by Albanians already established in Italy and by a catholic organization dedicated to helping immigrants named Caritas (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, 2002). Although there were some co-nationals in Italy, the social networks were not well established yet and many immigrants still faced hardships. However, the formation of strong networks was developing and those who did not have family or friends asked co-nationals seen at train stations for information on employment opportunities and on organizations that provided food and shelter (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, 2002).

Astrit (43, mason, Albanian) "At first I went to Rome. In Rome I stayed for 13 months. I was registered there to get the permesso (permit). They gave me a ricevuta (receipt) and I stayed for 13 months without permesso. I had so much difficulties that you can not imagine. If I would know before that I would live here as an animal I wouldn't come. I have slept under the bridges, I have slept in the highways. The first 6 months have been really very difficult until I was registered to get the permesso. Without the permesso I was treated as animal, because nobody has helped me. I was afraid of the police" (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, pg 18)

Clirim (25, Albanian) "I needed help at the very beginning and I went to Caritas. They gave me food during the very first period as I didn't want to be a burden for my friends" (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, pg 18)

Finding accommodation in the United States for Mexicans did not prove to be as challenging as for the Albanians. All of the subjects excluding two had housing waiting for them. This was arranged through family and proves how valuable family is in social networks. Unlike the Albanians, none of the Mexican immigrants resorted to any kind of organizations that helps immigrants whether it's in finding lodging, food, or employment. When I asked them what was their reason for this, the majority stated they had no need for these organizations. All their help was coming through family and friends.

David (24, construction worker, Mexican) "I stayed in the living room at my brother's apartment. Everything was ready for me when I got there. For a month

you don't pay rent, food, anything. After the month you pay. After a year I left and I am now renting with a cousin".

Leonardo (30, dishwasher, Mexican) "As a family member, you are conscious that one is screwed when you get here so the first month you pay absolutely nothing. Then when you find a job you start paying bills."

Armando (35, waiter, Mexican) "If you come with friends you live with them in an apartment with 13 people to pay the rent but imagine 13 men living in an apartment. I don't think so. I see it in the clients at the restaurant. I wouldn't have come if I didn't have my family here."

The majority of the subjects did not look for their initial housing. It was provided by social networks. For those that moved out from this initial housing, they reported no difficulties in finding alternate housing. This is a major difference in comparison to Albanians. Not only did they have problems finding initial housing but permanent or long-term housing as well. Landlords normally don't wish to rent to Albanians and if they do it is common that they refuse to do so in a long-term basis (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, 2002). Because of these difficulties, Albanians recognize the importance social networks plays in finding accommodation. Also, referrals by members in their social networks can contribute to finding accommodation.

Hyriet (32, mason, Albanian) "The Albanian face a lot of difficulties to find a house as Italians hesitate to rent their house when they know that their client is Albanian. They manage to find a flat only when another Italian gives a guarantee to the owner that he knows the Albanian client" (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, pg 29).

Strategies for Finding Employment and Working Conditions

Albanian and Mexican immigrants rely on social networks to find employment. This reduces the cost of migration for both migration streams. Nonetheless, both groups differ in the access they have to networks. Albanians have a more limited access to networks leading to a greater hardship in finding employment. Mexicans have a greater

access resulting in employment in a shorter period of time. In fact, most of the Mexican subjects reported no difficulty in finding employment. The majority found employment through network contacts and some even had a job waiting for them when they arrived. The initial period of unemployment ranged from three days to a couple months.

Armando (35, waiter, Mexican) "I work in my uncle's restaurant. I started within 15 days."

Alondra (57, Mexican) "...when I got here within 3 days...my brother let me rest but he already had a job for me whenever I wanted to work"

David (24, construction, Mexican) "He [brother] had talked to the company where he worked and I got here on a Thursday by Monday I was working."

Contrary to the Mexicans, Albanians reported a great difficulty in finding employment. No Albanian had a job waiting for them and usually waited a long period of time before finding employment (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, 2002). Eleven Albanians reported they waited for a job for five months on average and they contribute this to their legal status (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, 2002).

Joni (21, scooter mechanic, Albanian) "When they learn you are Albanian the first thing they ask is the permesso" (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, pg 22)

Hekuran (22, painter, Albanian) "If the enterprise is a regular one they ask you for the documents. If it is a firm where you work only one month and they don't pay you regularly they don't ask for the permesso they say 'come on he is an Albanian, let him work'" (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, pg 22)

Although legal status can be a barrier, Albanians and Mexicans acknowledge the importance social networks have on employment. For Albanians this means a way around the legal status barrier.

Marash (32, mason, Albanian) "Very often they ask for that [the stay permit](...) it is not that they want to comply with the rules when they hire workers, but simply that they want to know. To have or to have not the permesso (permit) is not

a real condition. The most important is to know somebody as here you have to have recommendations to go ahead” (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, pg 23).

For both migration streams social networks determined and conditioned the immigrants’ access to jobs. Therefore the immigrant is limited to jobs that are tied to their networks such as construction, agricultural work, and restaurant work. The conditions in these jobs vary by immigrant group. Albanians reported harsh working conditions. This was described by Albanians as hard manual labor with long working hours between 40 and 50 a week with low salaries ranging from 5-7 Euros per hour (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, 2002).

Tani (35, driver, Albanian) “The jobs they offer to us there are not the jobs we want to or we are specialized on. They offer always the heaviest jobs that Italians don’t want to do” (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, pg 19).

Vojo (43, mason, Albanian) “The employer can do whatever he wants with you, you work two months, six months and then he says to you that I don’t have work he kicks you and (...) They make to you a fake continuous job contract and then they tell you that there is no more job and they break immediately the contract” (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, pg 22).

Contrary to the Albanians, the majority of the Mexican stream reported good working conditions. This included hard manual labor, long working hours (40-50 a week) and minimum wage. These are the same conditions reported by Albanians but Mexicans labeled their working conditions as good mainly because although they are earning minimum wage it is a good amount of money for them.

Cesar (23, cook, Mexican) “...everything that I have here (U.S) in Mexico they were luxuries. From having a car, living well, eating well, I mean in Mexico it’s extremely hard to obtain. Besides what I earn, you can say that what I earned over there in a week, here I earn it in a day. There’s a big difference.”

Leonardo (30, dishwasher, Mexican) “Here you work less and earn more and over there unfortunately you work more and more and they pay you less.”

Regularization Issues and Contact with Authorities

The majority of both migration streams entered the host country illegally. However, it is the Albanians that show more interest in legalizing their status. Those who entered the country before 1997 were regularized thanks to the amnesty in 1996 (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, 2002). Those after 1997 actively seek opportunities to regularize their status. The main way in which they hope to accomplish this is through their employers and the annual quotas (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, 2002).

Altin (27, mason, Albanian) "I have got the first permit in the beginning of 2000. I gave to my employer 750 euros and he got the permit for me" (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, pg 26).

Contrary to the Albanians, the Mexicans showed no active initiative in regularizing their status. Four subjects have legalized their status and state it was a fairly easy process mainly done so through amnesty programs. The other subjects demonstrate a passive behavior and I associate it to the subjects' desire to some day return to Mexico. Some reported they wanted to go back while others where not sure but the thought of going back was there.

Armando (35, waiter, Mexican) "I plan to return to Mexico but first you must do something before leaving or you will go live your life from before. I have thought about getting my papers, but it's not my priority.

Rogelio (27, clerical work, Mexican) "...maybe if I had the opportunity but I would like to return to Mexico."

Ruben (23, construction, Mexican) "I came saying it was only going to be for 2 years and I would go back. But when you get here this changes because you adapt to this life. I mean, you think, you make your money go back but what are you going to do over there? But you already have your job here, you get paid less when you first get here but once you learn you get paid more more and more. You do want to go back but as a vacation. Right know I don't want to go back but who knows 3 or 6 years from now if this stays the same. I might want to go back and put a business or..."

Although this difference exists between the two migrant streams, they do have a similarity and that is that they both acknowledge the importance social networks have on legalizing your status. Both Albanians and Mexican state networks can be helpful when confronting barriers dealing with the bureaucracy that takes part in attaining your legal status.

Vojo (43, mason, Albanian) “I had a problem when I went to get my permesso as I was expelled one time. I took all measures before going to Albania and the expulsion document was taken away from my file. But, nevertheless they continuously postponed the delivery of my documents. In the end that friend of mine helped me to get the permesso. It was delayed two months but in the end I got it with the help of my friend in the questura. I know her as my daughter studies in the same school with her daughter. And she decided to help us and she helped us” (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, pg 27).

Alondra (57, Mexican) “For me it wasn’t hard. My son took me with a friend that worked in immigration and I asked her is she would help me get my papers and she said yes.”

Albanians reported complicated and controversial contact with authorities. They also found the Italian bureaucracy controversial and complicated (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, 2002). Mexicans had a mix review as well. Only six of the subjects reported any type of contact with authorities and of these four reported a negative contact. This mainly referred to deportation issues and the police possession of their vehicles due to driving without a license.

Joni (21, scooter mechanic, Albanian) “Italian laws do not allow certain things and makes it more difficult to get a permesso. E.g. the machine-shop where I work does not have a toilet. According to the Italian law it must have a toilet and for that reason my employer cannot make me a job contract” (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, pg 26).

Cesar (23, cook, Mexican) “When I was caught for the first time by immigration after walking in the mountains for two days, they put you like in a small jail. They treat you bad like if you were something weird. They have fun with you. I remember that they would ask us if we were hungry and we obviously would say

yes. They would chant you want 'cookies', I didn't even know what cookies were. Then they would throw them at us in the cell and laugh."

Discussion

Strategies of Entry and Accommodation

The importance of social networks in the strategies of entry and accommodation is reflected on both immigration streams. These two groups have confirmed conclusions of earlier studies (Choldin, 1973; Hagan 1998), which state immigrants who have ties to weak networks tend to struggle more than those who incorporate themselves into strong established networks. This was the case with the Albanians who struggled more in finding accommodation due to the fact that they had no strong networks in Italy. The Mexicans on the contrary, had a relative ease in finding accommodation. The majority found housing through networks and had their initial settlement phase housing provided to them. In addition, in line with existing literature (Massey, 1990), the monetary cost of entry was reduced because of the use of social networks. All of the Mexican immigrants who used the services of a coyote did not have to pay for it. Family members already established in the United States paid for it thus reducing the cost and risk of migration (Choldin, 1973; Massey and España, 1987).

Strategies for Finding Employment and Working Conditions

Albanians and Mexicans rely on social networks to find employment. Mexicans have strong networks and rely heavily on them as demonstrated by the majority of the subjects who had jobs waiting for them or found jobs through networks. These results do not agree with Choldin's conclusion that the more help an immigrant receives, the less opportunity he/she has in finding employment (Choldin, 1973). Albanians tended to

struggle more in comparison to Mexicans in finding employment. Although this was the case, both groups acknowledge the importance of social networks in finding employment. In particular, the Albanian case paralleled existing literature (Hugo, 1981; Livingston, 2006) in determining how recommendations of members from social networks to employers can be crucially important in finding employment. Both migrant streams reported the same working conditions: hard manual labor, long working hours, and minimal wage. The difference is that Albanians labeled these harsh conditions where as Mexicans labeled them good. I attribute this difference to the immigrants' background. Albanians tend to have high education levels and professional skills (Kosic, Triandafyllidou, 2002). This is mainly because education was something that was imposed on them by the communist regime. Therefore Albanians expect to find employment in their profession but instead are finding that this is not possible and acceptable in Italy. In contrast, the majority of the Mexican subjects had no higher education. The work that they were doing in their home country is the same work they are conducting in the United States but with a higher pay. This leads them to label their conditions as good.

Regularization Issues and Contact with Authorities

Although both migration streams share the similarity of illegal entry, it is the Albanians who are showing an active initiative to regularize their status. Because the majority of the Albanians face harsher conditions in their home country in comparison to Italy, they are willing to stay in host country regardless of their poor conditions. The political and economic conditions in Albania are the foundations of the deteriorating conditions in this country. Albanians know that their migration is a mid to long term one

therefore it is to their benefit to regularize their status. I associate the Mexican lack of initiative to the subjects' desire of returning to Mexico some day. Most come with the idea of a short term migration. It is also worth taking in to consideration that it is very difficult to regularize your status in the U.S. right now, therefore many don't even try. Both migrant streams did however state the importance of social networks in regularizing their status. They acknowledged social networks can help them overcome bureaucratic barriers associated with the regularization issues. This is a finding that should be further investigated as it is a new one and no research exist on the role social networks has on regularization issues. In addition, both migration streams reported complicated and controversial contact with authorities. They did not clearly give a majority of opinion.

Conclusion

Both Mexican and Albanian migration streams utilized social networks as a means to adaptation but the Mexican group tended to utilize networks more because their networks were stronger in comparison to those of Albanians. Mexicans had stronger social networks and utilized them more when it came to finding housing and employment whereas Albanians tended to utilize networks more for regularizing their status in comparison to Mexicans.

The aim of this paper was to explore the strategies and adaptations skills of immigrants by comparing two different migration streams. To achieve a better understanding of immigrant adaptation, further research should look at comparisons between other migration streams into countries or two different migration streams into one specific country. There are many questions to be answered such as: What forms strong networks? How do networks affect and form in host countries? Attention is placed

on networks in host countries but what importance does sending country networks have? Also, a social network within regularization issues is a new topic that scholars have yet to analyze. This is an important aspect that needs further investigation. The findings in this paper should not be taken as a representation of the overall adaptation of Albanian and Mexican migration. Rather they should be seen as individual situations of both these streams due to the dynamic nature of immigration.

Appendix 1: Albanian Characteristics

Immigrant	Age	Gender	Education	Family Status	Occupation in home country	Enter to Italy	First Job in Italy	Actual Job in Italy	Length of stay
Pellumb	37	m	3 yrs univ. in Albania	Married-family in Italy	summers in food processing plant	speed-boat	waiter (after 3 months)	cosntruction enterprise-regular	10 yrs
Altin	27	m	High School	Married-family in Albania	waiter	speed-boat	construction-irregular and saltuary	cosntruction enterprise-regular	3 yrs
Clirim	25	m	Secondary School	single	construction work	speed-boat	cosntruction enterprise (after 4 months)	construction job- regular	3.5 yrs
Joni	21	m	Secondary School	single-Italian girlfriend	no	family reunion visa (mother in Italy)	carpenter	scooter mechanic-irregular	5 yrs
Genti	21	m	Course for barmen	single	no	speed-boat	bookseller (after 3 years)	construction enterprise-regular	6 yrs
Pandeli	36	m	High School - technician	Married-family in Italy	petroleum plant in Albania	speed-boat	Mason assistant-after 5 months	construction enterprise-regular	11 yrs
Selman	38	m	High School	Married-family in Albania	in the police	speed-boat	Enterprise for the production of wooden stairs-after 3 weeks	house painter-regular	3 yrs
Genci	26	m	High School	Married-family in Italy	no	speed-boat	collecting olive fruits-after 4 months	construction enterprise-regular	7 yrs
Ilir	40	m	High School	Married-family in Italy	mechanic	Tourist visa	construction-after 2 months	construction enterprise	9 yrs
Ladi	33	m	High School	Married-family in Italy	ministry of Interior	speed-boat	construction-after 7 months	construction enterprise-regular	4 yrs
Fatmir	28	m	High School	Married-family in Italy	in agricultrual coop	speed-boat	plan for processing the wool- after 6	construc tion enterprise-regular	6 yrs

							months		
Tani	35	m	High School	single	no	Tourist visa	Baker	driver- regular	11 yrs
Hekuran	22	m	Elementary School	single	no	speed-boat	in a plant- after 8 months	enterprise for restoration of paintings- regular	7 yrs
Vojo	43	m	High School	Married-family in Italy	driver	with ferry -false visa	construction	job less- saltuary- family reunion	2 yrs
Anton	22	m	High School	single	waiter	Tourist visa	waiter -after 10 days	waiter- irregular	2.5 yrs
Dashnor	53	m	High School	married-family in Italy	doctor assistant	illegaly with Slovene visa	housekeeper- irregular		7 yrs
Agim	22	m	High School	single	no	speed-boat	construction	cosntruction firm- regular	4 yrs
Brikena	26	f		married-family in Italy	no	family reunion visa	housekeeper	unemployed	4 yrs
Ela	35	f	Degree	single-divorced	doctor	false visa	housekeeper	waiter- regular	8 yrs
Hyriet	32	m	High School	married-family in Italy	no	speed-boat	baker and construction firm	construction firm- regular	5 yrs
Marsela	24	f	High School	married-family in Italy	no	family reunion visa	leather processing factory	leather processing factory-regular	6 yrs
Flora	30	f	High School	married-family in Italy	no	family reunion visa	leather processing factory	leather processing factory-regular	8 yrs
Getta	30	f	Degree	Married-family in Italy	translator	visa- got scholarship in Perugia	baby sitter and registered at University	ARCI- emigration sector- regular	10 yrs
Edi	37	f	Degree	Married-family in Italy	architect	family reunion visa	followed a specialization course	architect- regular- free professional	5 yrs
Zana	35	f	High School	Married-family in Italy	no	family reunion visa	baby-sitter- regular		8 yrs

Sava	32	f	Did not finish Faculty of Agriculture	Married-family in Italy	no	family reunion visa	housekeeper	employee in the bank	10 yrs
Ndrim	30	m	High School	Married-family in Albania	no	with a fishing boat	agriculture	landing coop-regular	5 yrs
Marash	32	m	High School	Married-family in Italy	no	speed-boat two times	construction	construction firm- regular	9 yrs
Kujtim	30	m	High School	single	no	speed-boat	in forest- cutting wood- irregular	construction firm- irregular	3 yrs
Astrit	43	m	High School	Married-family in Albania	no	ferry boat with false visa	construction-irregular	construction firm-regular	4 yrs

Appendix 2: Mexican Characteristics

Immigrant	Age	Gender	Education	Family Status	Occupation in home country	Enter to U.S.	First Job in U.S.	Actual Job in U.S.	Length of stay
Alejandro	53	m	elementary school	married- family in U.S.	field/ agriculrue work	walking- coyote	agriculrue worker	ganitor	35 yrs
Armando	35	m	1st semester of High School	single	family business of Mexican Artisan	car- coyote	waiter	waiter	12 yrs
Jorje	39	m	started High School- did not finish	signle	auto shops	jumped fence- car- coyote	rubber factory	carpenter	19 yrs
Rojelio	27	m	currently in college	signle	field/ agriculrue work	walking- coyote	fast food	office work	13 yrs
Alondra	57	f	none	married- family in U.S.	maid	walking- coyote	Hotel worker	works for district taking care of kids	36 yrs

David	24	m	vocational training/ mechanic	single	construction	walking- coyote	factory	construction	4 yrs
Marcela	53	f	high school	married- family in U.S.	at a bus station	walking- coyote	agriculture	factory	32 yrs
Michael	48	m	2nd year college	single-about to get married	family business of Mexican Artisan	walking-car- coyote	cook	cook	5 yrs
Marina	51	f	elementary school	married- family in U.S.	none	walking-coyote	baby sitter	baby sitter	34yrs
Raul	53	m	none	married- family in U.S.	factory	walking- coyote	factory	factory	35yrs
Diego	39	m	1st semester college	married- family in U.S.	fabric factory	walking-car- coyote	waiter	owns carpet business	19yrs
Aldo	57	m	none	single	field worker	walking-no coyote	field worker	dishwasher	23 yrs
Cesar	23	m	high school	single	factory	walking-coyote	dishwasher	cook	3 yrs
Ruben	23	m	vocational training	married- family in U.S.	merchant	walking-coyote	construction	construction	5 yrs
Leonardo	30	m	elementary school	Married-in Mexico	construction	walking-coyote	construction	construction	6 yrs
Alicia	27	f	high school	single	waitress	walking-coyote	house cleaner	waitress	7yrs

Appendix 3

1. Interviewee's background in the country of origin (including education, family, place/locality of residence, work experience, professional background, previous emigration experience in a different country and information on the means and contacts employed) and why s/he emigrated.
2. What her/his first impression was of the host country.
3. How s/he entered the country (legally or illegally).
4. How, through whom and where s/he found accommodation in Italy/U.S.
5. How s/he found her/his first job.
6. How many times s/he changed work and why this happened.
7. How s/he coped with periods of unemployment (community or family support or other).
8. Conditions of work: wages and working hours, environment (did s/he work for instance in ethnic business with co-national and what were the conditions: informal labor? taxes? welfare contributions?).
9. Contact with various types of authorities, including direct or indirect experience of enforcement. Illustrate facts as well as the perception of these contacts.
10. Contact with Italians/Americans (individuals, families). Illustrates facts and perceptions of the contact.
11. Contact with non-statutory agencies: immigrant associations or other nongovernmental organizations. Again, illustrate both facts and perceptions of the contact.

12. Ask her/him for their perceptions of the host country (e.g. What do they think of Italy/U.S.?).

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