



# American Perceptions of Italian Youth. A Study of Photographs in Foreign-Language Textbooks

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# Textbook Studies

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Textbook studies have found:

- Unfavorable & Inaccurate Depictions

The “others” are:

- often eliminated
- scarcely represented
- completely misrepresented
- little control of depictions

(Balodimas-Bartolomei, 2003; Banks & McGee Banks, 2001; LaBelle, 2010)



# Foreign Language Textbooks

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- Central to learning target language/culture
- Often student's primary source of cultural exposure
- Attractive textbook photographs
- 71% - simply ornaments
- Textbooks are not an authentic experience but *“a culturally coded educational construct”*



# Importance of Textbook Studies

Italian instruction-on the rise in high schools & universities

(Dolce & Tamburri, 2013)

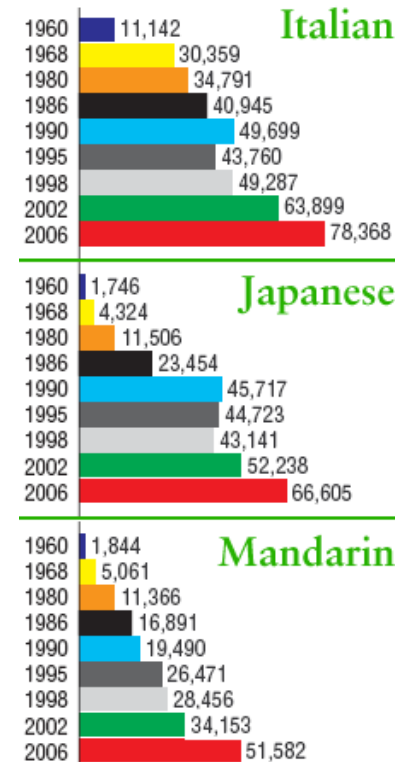
Few performed studies on Italian textbooks

Research studies needed in:

- areas of Italian studies
- language teaching
- curriculum development

Current study aims at demonstrating the significance of culturally relevant photographs in foreign language textbooks.

US Postsecondary  
Enrollments in Italian,  
Japanese, and Mandarin  
1960-2006



# Purpose of Current Study

The current study examines:

- Textbook Photographs of Italian youth
- *Teacher & Student Teacher Comments*

*Main objective of study/Research Questions:*

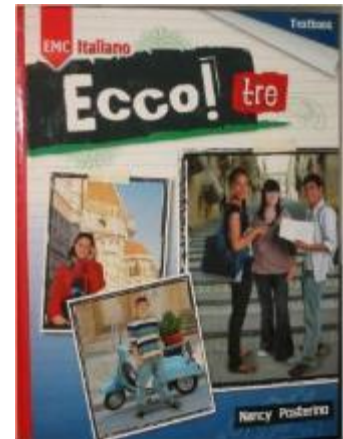
How are Italian youth depicted in textbooks?

What are some of the characteristics of Italian youth?

Are they presented as being part of a homogeneous or multicultural society?

Are there many similarities and/or differences with American youth?

Are youth from all over Italy represented?





# Ecco Textbooks

## Ecco High school series- EMC publishing, 2010

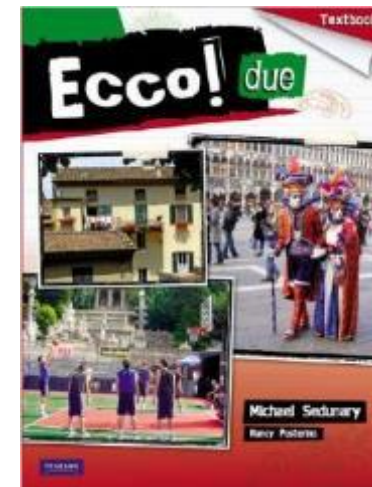
- Book 1- Michael Sedunary, Nancy Posterino, Sophia Kearns, Marisa Tarascio-Spiller
- Book 2- Michael Sedunary, Nancy Posterino
- Book 3- Nancy Posterino

## Textbook series contains:

- 3 texts/workbooks, CD's, Teacher's Resources, Assessment kits
- Only textbooks were evaluated

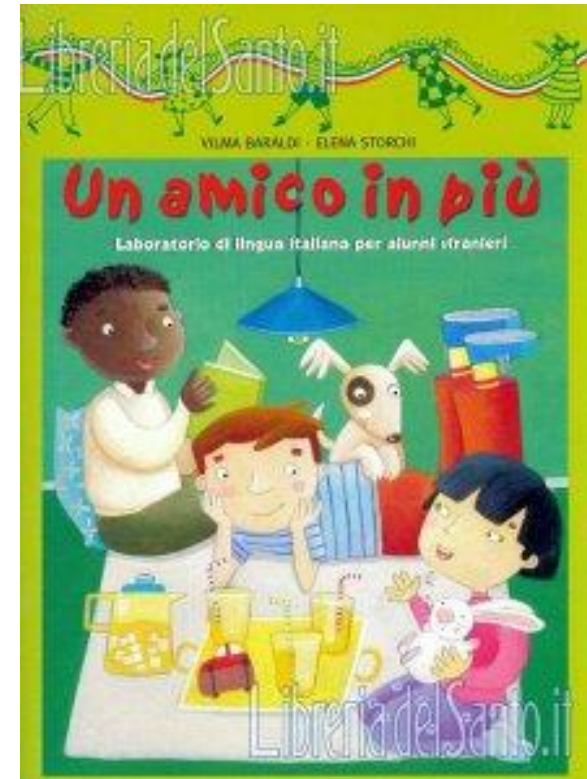
## The editors claim that the textbooks contain:

- Up-to-date and exciting photography
- fun cartoon stories
- authentic language



# Textbook Analysis

- Content Analysis
- Only on textbook photographs-not cartoons
- Two focuses of analysis
- Objects
  - Places, sites, products, clothing, transportation, food
- People
  - Gender, race, age, profession, hair color, actions, appearance
  - Patrikis' 4 sins of commission
  - Sadker's seven forms of bias



# Criteria: Patrikis' 4 Sins of Commission

Trivialization – silly out of date or quaint tokens depicting culture solely in terms of customs and cuisines.

Stereotyping – an oversimplified aspect or characteristic of a culture or its people.



Political bias – some elements of a culture are featured but others are ignored.

Dangerous incompleteness – an entire subculture or other crucial part of a culture is not represented.





# Zittleman & Sadker's 7 forms of Bias

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1. **Invisibility** – certain groups are underrepresented.
2. **Stereotyping or bigotry** – rigid set of characteristics to all group members.
3. **Imbalance and selectivity** or referred to as a half-told tale – only one interpretation of an issue, situation, or group of people.
4. **Unreality** – colored glasses – textbooks frequently present an unrealistic portrayal of our history and contemporary life experiences.
5. **Fragmentation and Isolation** – racial & ethnic group members are depicted as interacting only with persons like themselves, isolated from other cultural communities.
6. **Linguistic Bias** – using words, e.g. masculine terms and pronouns, for all individuals reflecting the discriminatory nature of our language.
7. **Cosmetic Bias** – attractive, shiny book covers, photos, or posters that present an unrealistic view of individuals and culture in society.

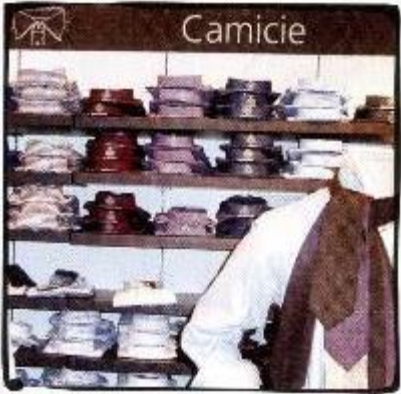
# Textbook Study Results

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907 Individuals Analyzed

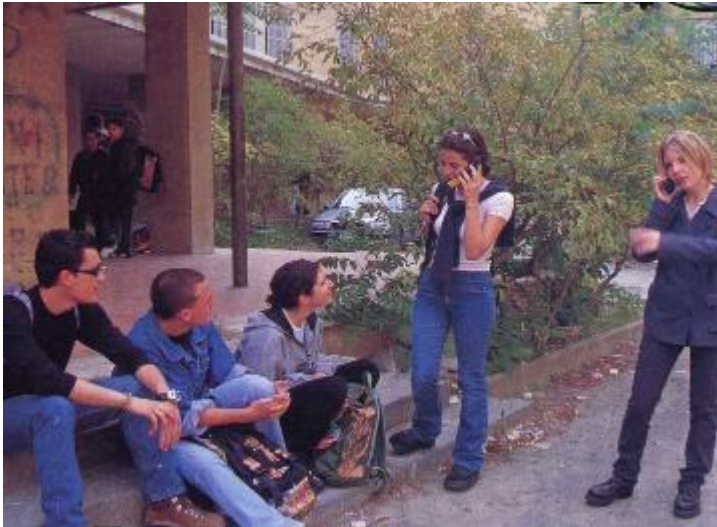
	Males	Females
Book 1	93	90
Book 2	82	109
Book 3	226	307
	<b>401</b>	<b>506</b>
Total: 907		

- 428 photos containing people
  - (96+91+241)
- 347 photos containing objects
  - (86+140+121)
- 775 photos analyzed



# La Moda, Jeans, Cell-phones, Shopping

60%= jeans  
4%= cells  
Shopping=5%



Italians love fashion, cellphones, shopping!





# Friends & Socializing

34%

- Italian youth enjoy parties...
- Socializing very often takes place in one's home.





# Education

12%

Education is highly valued-so is English!



L'inglese maccheronico, 'macaroni English', is spoken in a very Italian way with a heavy Italian accent and an Italian turn of phrase. How might this sort of squash (*schiacciare*) you? What do you think the Wall Street Institute is?

Capitolo 5



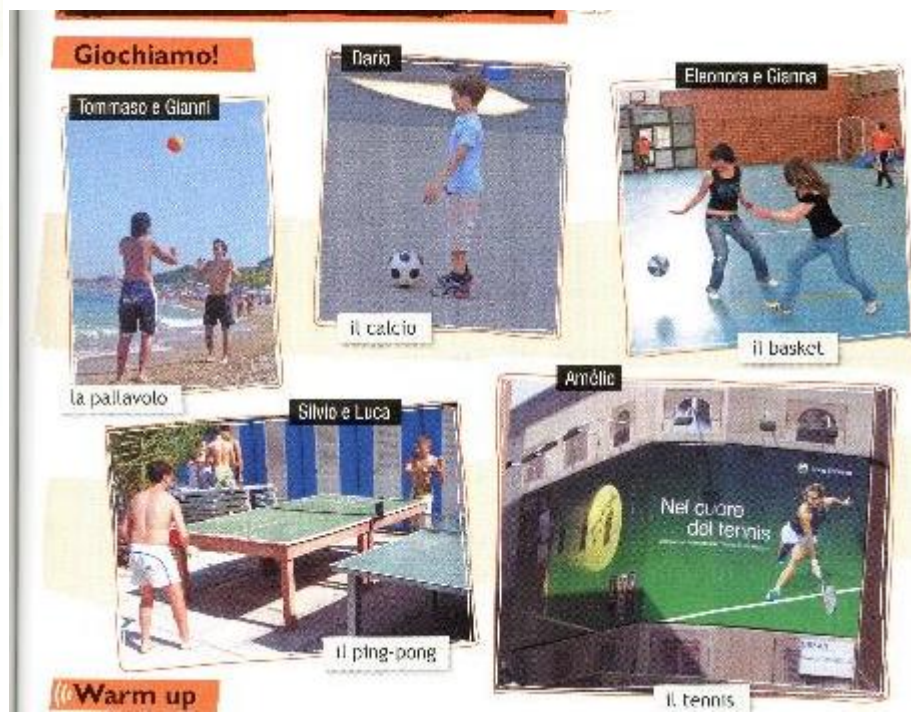




# Sports

Most Italian youth enjoy sports especially...

Gym  
Basketball  
Soccer  
Cycling  
7%

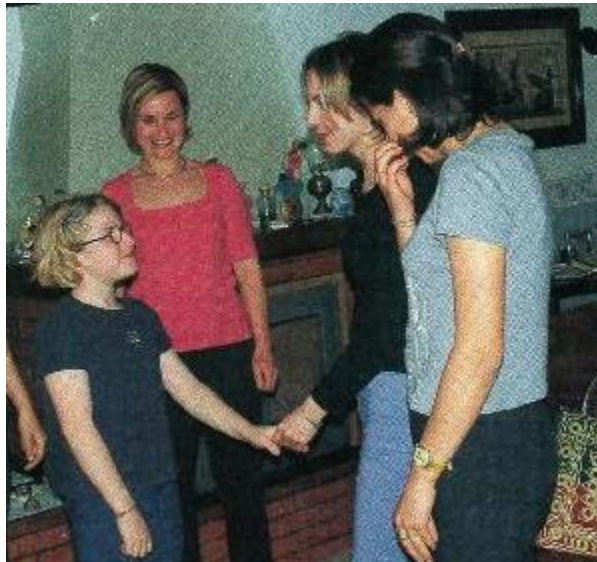




# Family

Total:  
20 photos=5%

- Italians are family oriented
- Quality Family time!





Food Items=8%  
Fast Food=3%  
Slow Food=9%

# Italian Food & Products



Traditional food is still highly regarded



## La pasta è sempre in forma

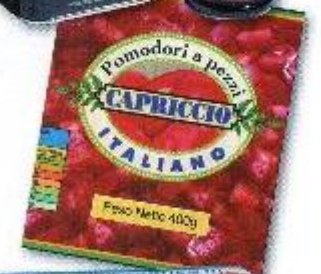
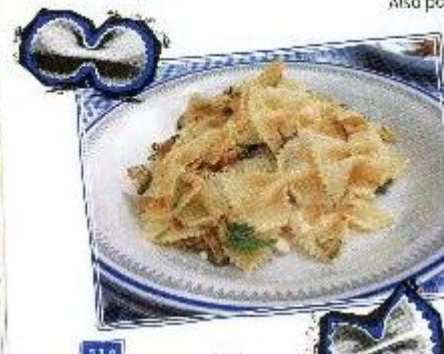
In the cartoon story, i Bacio Nuovo are crazy about pasta. In Italy, the word **pasta** means something made out of flour and water, so a small cake from the **pasticceria** can be called **una pasta**. The Italian term for the dry, brittle shapes we boil up to serve with **sughi** is **pastasciutta**. (The adjective **asciutto** means dry.)

**Spaghetti** is just one of about 300 – yes 300! – pasta shapes that find in Italy. The name comes from **spago** meaning “string”, so **s** are “little bits of string”. You know that the **-ino** ending makes it smaller, so you’ll understand that **spaghettini** is really thin spaghetti. If you want it even thinner you can go for **capelli d’angelo**, or **Two** other pasta names that you’ve probably come across are **t** and **fettuccine**. They are basically the same thing: long strips of shaped pasta, made with egg. In **Capitolo 6** you met the extra-called **pappardelle**.

Also popular are the hollow tubes of pasta: if they have a point on them they’re called **rigatoni**; if they have sharp points well they are called **penne** (pens). **Orecchiette** are small little ears. Have you tried **linguine**, the ones shaped like narrow tongues? (**Lingua** means “tongue” as well as “If you like them, you’ll probably enjoy the wormy shape”). **vermicelli**. And what about the ones that look like the called **farfalle**? They really make sense of the string cartoon story.

La pastasciutta non è brutta.

And remember, whatever the pasta shape you’re cooking, it’s important to have it **al dente** – tender, yes, but also firm when you put it to the tooth!





Paninoteca  
Gelateria  
Ice cream, Pizza,  
Hamburgers, Fries  
12%

# Fast Food & Gelato



And fast food too!!



Italians love ice cream!!



# Carnevale & Feast Days

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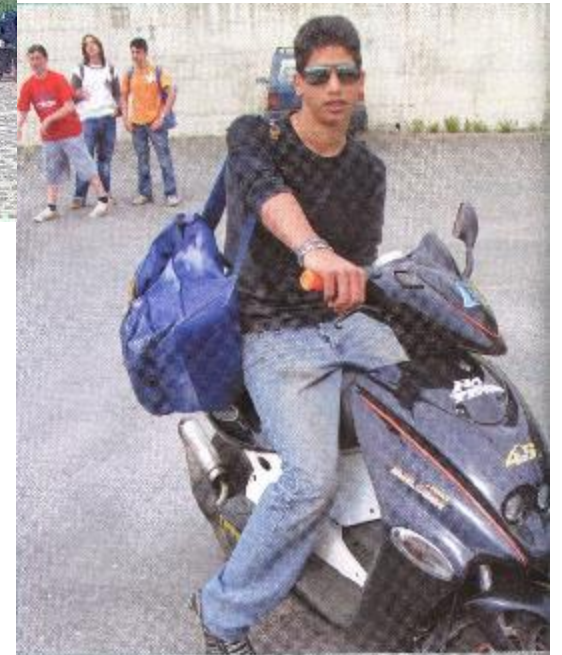
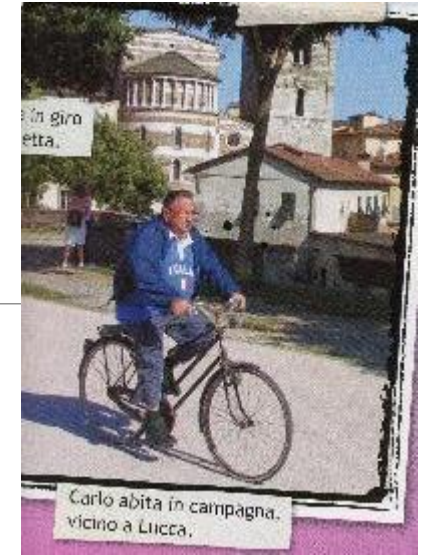
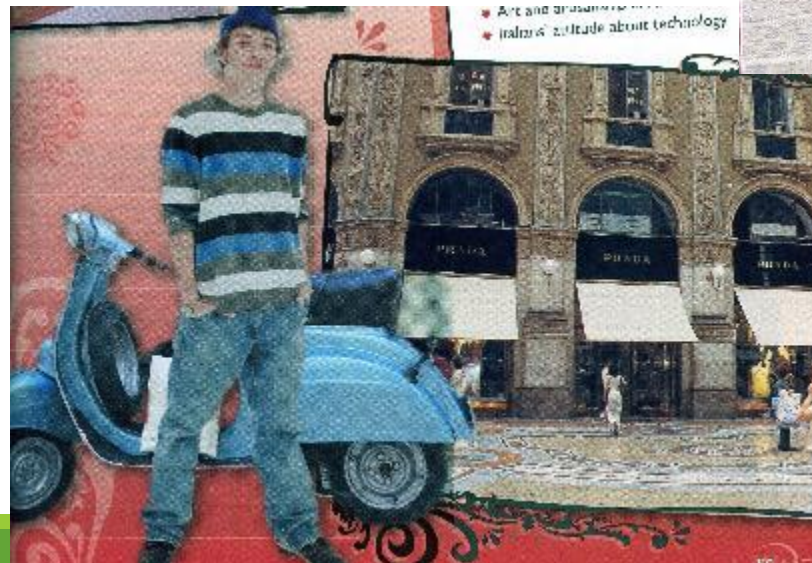




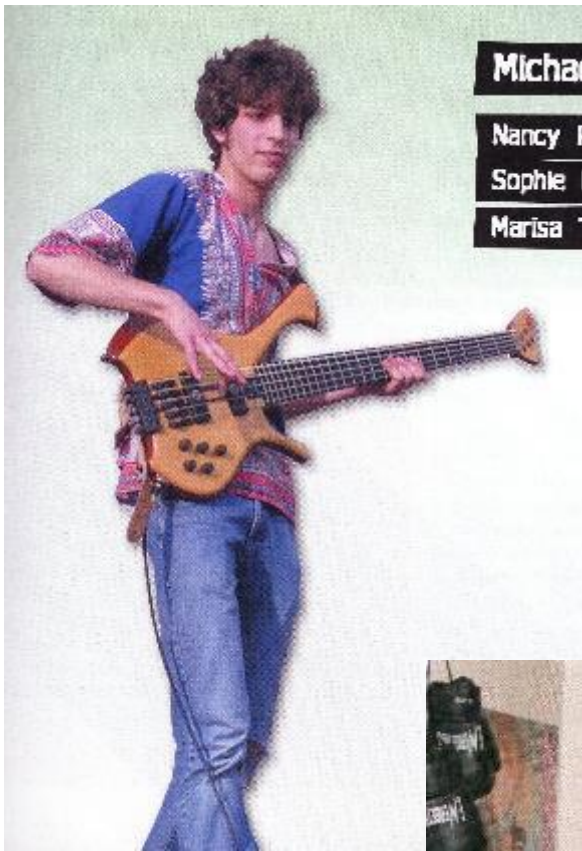


# Cars, Scooters & Bikes

The easiest way to get around

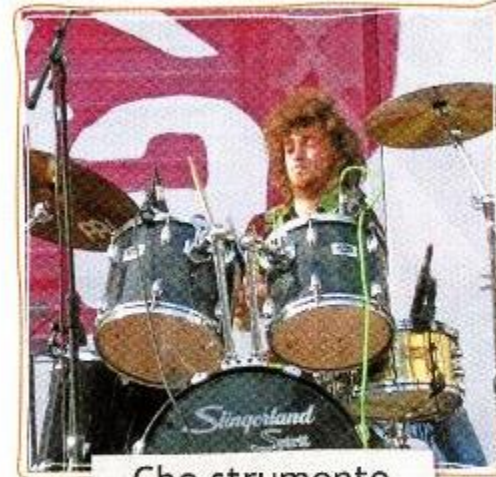






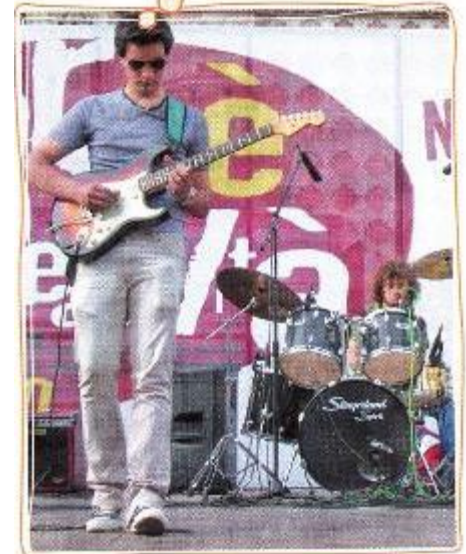
# Music

4%



Che strumento suona Roberto?

Mi piace suonare canzoni originali.



# Volunteering

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14 photos

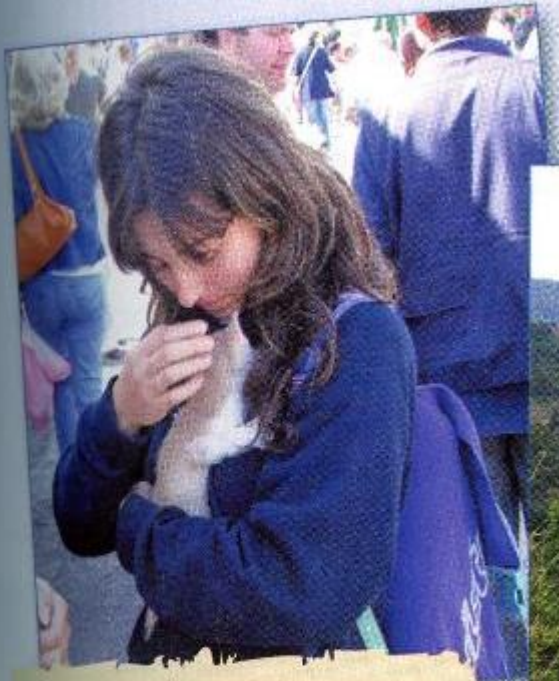




# Pets

Pets are very popular!

17 photos=2%



Questa è Olivia, una cugina di Eleonora. Olivia adora gli animali. Il gattino si chiama Galileo. Che carino!



Genna, vieni qui!



Che bella!

Mi chiamo Spillo. Ho 9 anni. Sono serio e intelligente, ma qualche volta un po' pigro! Sono anche carino, no?





# Environment

Environmental issues play a role in Italy.





# Places visited in text

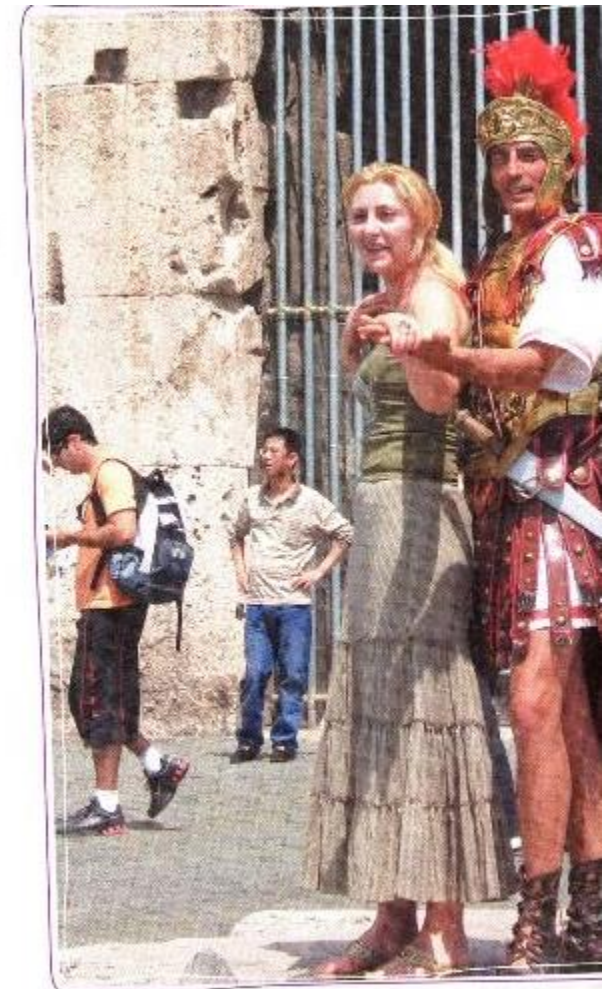
- **Rome=54**
- **Sicily=45**
- **Bologna=31**
- **Venice=25**
- **Florence=23**



Abruzzo	Alps	Amalfi Coast	Ancona
Assisi	Como di Lago	Dolomiti di Brenta	Genova
Lucca	Perugia	Pisa	Pompei
Puglia	Sardegna	Siena	Trentino
Umbria	Verona		

# Trivialization

- Silly, out of date, quaint tokens of culture
- Culture is only customs/cuisines



A Roma, i gladiatori parlano italiano, tedesco, spagnolo, inglese, giapponese



# Stereotyping

An exaggeration some aspect or characteristic of a culture or its people.

Assigning a rigid set of characteristics to all members of a group

19% =blondes



Federica e Morgana  
ai generi alimentari.



# Political bias, Imbalance, Selectivity

- Some elements of a culture are featured but others are ignored, either consciously or unconsciously.
- Gender, class, or regional linguistic differences
- Presenting only one interpretation of an issue, situation or group of people



139 emicentrotto

In the past, Italians left their homeland, often permanently, per motivi They were looking for a chance to overcome the problems of unemployment and poverty they were encountering at home. Now that Italy has one of the highest standards of living in the world, Italians generally travel for other reasons.

**Ada Lanzaro** is a young Italian woman currently working as a Community Editor in a publishing house in Melbourne, Australia. Read the interview next page to find out her reasons for traveling, both inside and outside Italy. According to Ada, what are the main advantages of travel?

Contino 7



Il signor Toscano è un professore. È molto bravo, intelligente e spiritoso. È anche simpatico.



Questa giovane mamma fa una passeggiata con sua figlia.



Oggi c'è l'esame d'inglese.

La signora Bianchi è molto brava. È intelligente e spiritosa. È anche simpatica.



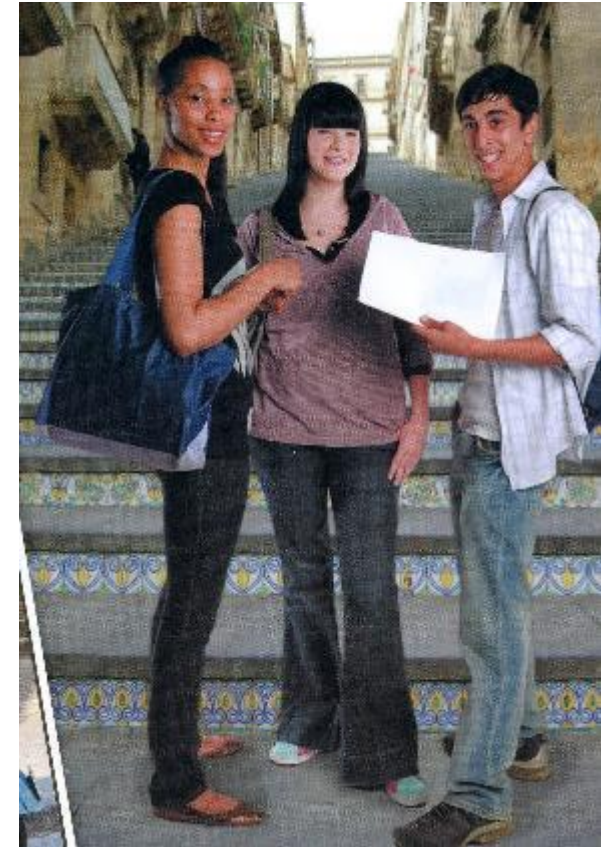
Andare al Lago di questo weekend.

Va bene, vengo.



# Dangerous Incompleteness, Invisibility, Fragmentation, Isolation, Cosmetic Bias

- Entire subculture or other crucial part of a culture is not represented group is physically or visually isolated
- In the text new cosmetic bias suggests that a text is bias free, but beyond the attractive covers, photos, or posters, bias persists





# Teachers' & Student Teachers' Comments

## • Italian Youth...

- Smile a lot – are happy
- Are adventurous - full of life- interactions welcoming
- Look like a lot of Americans especially in the way that they are dressed
- Enjoy spending time in their homes, at school and at the gym, with groups
- A very beautiful country - they enjoy exploring it.
- Value holidays, music, traditions, animals, social interactions
- Love their ice cream and enjoy music and going shopping.
- Use different modes of transportation: biking, scooters, bus, taxi, walking, etc
- Their technology seems like ours.

## Differences

- Italian mode of communication
- Talk a lot with their hands & use different facial expressions
- Settings, landscapes, and history are different
- Many on scooters – big difference with Americans
- Some photographs appear to be stereotypes or trivialization of “Italian” things, e.g. eating gelato and hanging out by the colosseum.
- Outdated cellphones, clothing, and hairstyles for both men and women.
- Basically all homogenously white, with no diversity shown. Thus, the book contained dangerous incompleteness.
- Overall, books very interesting & similar to high school French & Spanish textbooks. They would enjoy using these textbooks to learn Italian

# Conclusion

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This study has demonstrated that:

- ❑ Italian youth like socializing, nature, going out to eat, pets, fashions, jeans, cell phones, music, scooters, fast food, traditional food, nature, feast days, sports.....
- ❑ Italian youth share many similarities with American youth-sports, fashion, technology, socializing.

- ❑ Youth are connected to family
- ❑ Youth are depicted realistically
- ❑ Although different areas of Italy are included in book, southern Italy is not mentioned until book 3.
- ❑ Their society does not appear to be a multicultural society
- ❑ No handicapped students in book