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Second-Generation Immigrants in Catania (Sicily): Prejudice and Relationships with Institutions

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Abstract

The presence of second-generation immigrants in a country is an indication of lasting immigration and of an irreversible process of cultural change. Immigration is often perceived as a resource, and the fact that whole families remain in our country is seen by the local community as a possibility for growth and cultural exchange. However, immigration is sometimes seen as a threat, a condition that causes unrest and dissatisfaction for which local people and immigrants are both responsible. In fact, it is possible to note a strain of prejudice that persists in native-immigrant relationships. This feeling precludes neither the way for a multicultural society nor the possibility to build an intercultural social model based on exchange and reciprocal acquaintance. Second-Generation immigrants form an *unintentional generation,* suspended between a sense of belonging and extraneousness. Unlike adults, their first request is not a house or a job but to be accepted by society. In particular, one notices a clash between the intercultural rhetoric of schools and institutions, and the perceptions of the youngsters. In order to explore these dimensions, 30 biographical interviews conducted in the city of Catania (Sicily) with second generation immigrants are discussed.

La presenza di seconde generazioni su un determinato territorio è indicatore di immigrazione stabile e rappresenta, di conseguenza, un mutamento culturale irreversibile e duraturo. L'immigrazione è spesso percepita come risorsa, ed il permanere di intere famiglie nel nostro Paese è visto dalla comunità locale come possibilità di confronto e crescita, altre volte si crea invece un'intensa conflittualità di cui spesso ambedue le parti sono responsabili. Si osserva infatti il permanere di un atteggiamento di pregiudizio, da parte di autoctoni e di immigrati, che non consente la concretizzazione di un tale progetto, né tantomeno di un modello sociale interculturale basato sul dialogo e sulla conoscenza reciproca. Le seconde generazioni di immigrati rappresentano in questo contesto una *generazione involontaria*; tali giovani sono infatti, ancor più degli adulti, sospesi tra due culture differenti, in bilico tra appartenenza ed estraneità. Inoltre, differentemente dai loro genitori, la loro richiesta primaria non è quella di una casa o di un lavoro, ma del riconoscimento da parte della società. La questione più rilevante, all'interno della nostra analisi, è che questa categoria di giovani spesso soffre disagi dovuti ad atteggiamenti di pregiudizio o all'esagerata indulgenza di cittadini ed operatori sociali. Il paradosso nasce dallo scontro tra l'immagine di interculturalità fornita dalle istituzioni, in particolare la scuola, e quella che emerge invece dalle narrazioni dei testimoni privilegiati. Al fine di analizzare questo aspetto dell'immigrazione produciamo infatti un'analisi ermeneutica di 30 storie di vita di giovani di seconda generazione che vivono nella città di Catania. Le dimensioni esplorate saranno infatti quelle del pregiudizio e delle relazioni all'interno delle istituzioni scolastiche e giuridiche.

Indice

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1. Introduction

The presence of second-generation immigrants in a country is an indication of lasting immigration and of an irreversible process of cultural change. Immigration is often perceived as a resource, and the fact that whole families remain in our country is seen by the local community as a possibility for growth and cultural exchange. However, immigration is sometimes seen as a threat, a condition that involves unrest and dissatisfaction for which local people and immigrants are both responsible.

In fact, it is possible to note a strain of prejudice that persists in native-immigrant relationships. This feeling precludes the way for a multicultural society and could arise from cultural and linguistic misunderstandings[1], a stereotyped and negative representation of foreigners, on the part of the natives, and a strong sense of belonging to their own cultural identity. Needless to say, this is not conducive to intercultural dialogue.

The permanent establishment of immigrants in the new country has led to a new description of the migratory process: First of all, the immigrant is no longer a temporary guest, with his roots elsewhere, where he plans to return at the end of his migratory path; secondly, the principal actors of this process are no longer mainly adult men, but also females and children.

This new description of the migratory process and the new position of the immigrant in the Italian society have had some consequences on the interpretation of contexts and roles of the actors and should require a new kind of organization, management and categorization of the relationship between immigrants and natives (Ambrosini, 2007, 213-237).

Second generation immigrants, as we usually call them[2], are the social category that suffer the contradictions of such a situation more acutely.

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* A condensed version of this paper was discussed at the 9th ESA Conference, Session 6: "Ethnic youth", RN "Youth & Generation", Lisbon, 2-5 September 2009.

[1] Communication problems are not only due to linguistic incomprehension: foreigners usually have, unintentionally or by choice (Bettedini, 2003, 32-33), different cultural needs, views of the world and traditions, which could generate serious "cultural misunderstandings" (Quassoli, 2003, 422-423).

[2] Regarding this expression we should point out at least two critical remarks: a) to speak of second generation immigrants is a contradiction because we cannot to ascribe to this category of subject the choice of migrant, that is instead implicit in the term: «they are 'immigrants' who have not emigrated from anywhere» (Sayad 2004: 291); b) these individuals are classified according to their family belonging and not according to their subjectivity (Costa-Lascoux, 1989; Moulins, Lacombe, 1999). On the contrary, we have to observe that the children of immigrants themselves accept and subscribe to this epithet and they have recently started an association named Rete G2, where G2 just means "second generations" (www.secondegenerazioni.it).

They feel they belong to two different cultures, since they were born in a place that they consider to be their own country and, at the same time, they are bound to a family with a different culture. Second-generation immigrants form an *unintentional generation,* suspended between a sense of belonging and extraneousness. Unlike adults, their first request is not a house or a job but to be accepted by society.

They are 'immigrants' who are not immigrants, i.e. they are not immigrants in the full sense of the word. In fact, they are not foreigners either in cultural terms, as they were socialized in the host society, or in national terms, as they usually have (or desire to have) the nationality of the country in which they are living. People do not know how to regard or treat this "new-style" of immigrant, but particularly they do not know what to expect from them. The presence of second generation children not only leads, to a "collective anxiety" coming from the fear of diversity, as in the case of adults, but above all from «the fact that they disrupt the diacritical function and meaning of the divorce that state thought established between nationals and non-nationals» (Sayad 2004: 291)[3]

Moreover, they often find themselves, as Ambrosini (2009) point outs, relegated to the same deprived contexts as their parents, and their upward mobility difficulty starts in a sectorial work market biased from an ascribed social capital.

Consequently, if on the one hand second-generation immigrants naturally live in a condition of *double belonging* and/or *ethnicity*, on the other hand, the majority of the members of the receiving society, especially in the most fundamental social institutions, continue to consider them as foreigners, and the social structure discourages their complete integration.

It is extremely difficult for minors and teenagers to mediate between two different cultures. There is a very high risk that the convergence/collision between the two cultural models provided by the family and the local society may provoke an identity gap. In cases like these, young people formulate a series of strategies to deal with a complex situation that is unstable and totally lacking in reference points. These depend on the migratory experience and/or on the level of inclusion and integration in the reception country.

There are four possible identity strategies (Braccini, 2000, 35-40):
1. *cultural resistance*, that is the general acceptance of the cultural model given by the family and the refusal of any of those offered by the new context;
2. *assimilation*, that is the total acceptance of the cultural models offered by the new society as well as a more or less total refusal of every model and behaviour belonging to the original culture, incompatible with the new one which, for these subjects, represents a better future;
3. *marginality*, which represents the refusal of both cultures. In this case, these young people feel that they don't belong to either civilization and consequently they put themselves passively in the middle, unable to choose between their origins, represented also by their family ties, and the new culture that may also represent a possibility for emancipation. This condition manifests itself in two ways: Through *frustration marginality*, that is a consequence of discrimination and hostility by the members of the host society that may be real or just perceived by the subject, or through *transition marginality*, which refers to that period of temporary discomfort experienced

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[3] Sayad describes the French situation that, in some aspects, is similar to the Italian one.

during the inclusion process in the new context and the elaboration of a new ethnic identity;

4. *double ethnicity*, which is the result of a slow, but profound work of analysis, through which the identity is elaborated through the continuous comparison between the two different worlds and never finds a definite or extreme solution. That strategy of identity gives the opportunity to young immigrants to grow in harmony with both cultures and supports the synthesis of both values.

Only in this case can we speak of a real *double cultural belonging;* however, this contrasts with a *double "not-belonging"*, derived from the fear of no longer belonging to either of the two cultures. This feeling/reaction is produced by the strategy, that we defined *marginality*, which becomes particularly critical when it comes from a *frustration*, as it is likely to degenerate into an illness. This condition clearly derives from the experiences of the subject and may arise both from the effects of the hostile and racist atmosphere of the country of arrival and by an attitude of prejudice of the young person him/herself.

Second-generation youths have been defined by scholars as a "generation of sacrifice", i.e. a generation which pays the high cost of the family migration path, for the troubled process of socialization and the many hardships that they have to endure because of their native position of "cultural border". This situation is exacerbated by the fact that the primary demand of the new generation is not a house or a job, but mainly *recognition* by society; young immigrants claim citizenship in the country where they have lived most of their lives, even if they have different origins and culture.

Consequently, these young people don't deny their inherent cultural diversity, but claim the rights of their birth and/or their stay in a country that is the place of their everyday life. But the condition of *foreignness* sometimes tends to persist in the lives of the new generations, not just because of a lack of integration on the part of young immigrants, but due to the attitudes of prejudice and rejection that sometimes come even from some members of the fundamental social institutions (e.g. teachers, police staff, etc.).

The persistence of such a situation frequently leads the young to perceive themselves as foreigners and to go through a serious identity crisis as well as leading them to urgently demand, sometimes aggressively, their rights as citizens of the country where they were born and have grown up.

In fact, the most relevant problem, in our analysis, is that second-generation children and young people often suffer troubles due to attitudes of prejudice or the exaggerated indulgence of citizens and social workers. More specifically, the aspects here explored will be prejudice and relationships in educational and juridical institutions.[4]

Even though schooling could be one of the instruments of communication between culture and of the construction of a new culture (Fisher and Fisher, 2002, 10), various problems could also arise from the relationships inside the school, especially between immigrant children and teachers.

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[4] In the present work we have produced only a part of the results of the information from the analysis of the life histories. The other aspects were: the peer group; the work placement; the family; the native culture; and the double belonging condition.

The problem is that teaching staff are not adequately trained to provide qualified answers to the dynamics of integration inside the school. In fact, there are three possible forms of integration: Assimilation, segregation and inter-culturalism, but the latter is the only one that could be really satisfying for both cultures. Let us briefly analyze them.

The goal of assimilation is that immigrant minorities are absorbed by the culture of the host society, therefore schooling is ethnocentric based. The assimilation strategy tends to interpret the cultural difference as a disadvantage and encourages children to abandon their original culture for the Italian one.

The segregation model supports, instead, the idea of cultural plurality but sees cultures as being contradictory. Difference is perceived in a negative way, thus it is necessary to avoid contamination between cultures and keep them separate. This is a multicultural model that imposes the "auto-segregation" to preserve the original cultural identity.

Naturally, the best form of integration is inter-culturalism. As Hannoun (1987) said, assimilation and segregation are the two faces of "cultural incommunicability"; inter-culturalism is instead the way to accept diversity, actively and positively. The school model is based on the guarantee of plurality, through the reciprocal enrichment coming from the confluence of different cultures. Communication, cooperation, exchange and solidarity between students become fundamental in this case. Therefore, the intercultural school does not try to hide conflict but to assume it dialectically for a better understanding of social life.

In our case, the question is whether this model is widespread in Italian schools, and specifically if it is common in Catania (Sicily).

A large number of studies have specifically analyzed the transformation of educational practices in Italy derived from the large number of foreign students at school and have tried to evaluate the construction of prejudice and of cognitive categories of the perception of this phenomenon (Cicardi, 1994; Giovannini, 1996; Fravega, Queirolo Palmas 2003; Colombo 2004).

From this works it has emerged that teachers have a strategic role in the process of school integration of immigrant students: They have an institutional task but they are also individuals and Italian citizens with a personal interpretation of immigration as a social phenomenon. In fact, as Besozzi said (1998, 49), teachers have an "ambivalent" feeling towards immigration and second generation children. On the one hand, they are inclined to use a universal model of reception and believe in the right of access to schooling regardless of cultural origins; on the other hand, they fear an increase of work, some changes in their teaching routine and lack of certainty if they have no previous professional experience with immigrants. Teachers are often left alone to face problems related to the integration of immigrant children with very little experience to help them find solutions.

Consequently, even if the ministerial guidelines and programs indicate an intercultural way of living in the Italian school, the actual behavior of teachers (and head teachers) often clashes with the official purpose and public image of the school.[5]

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[5] As we have deduced from the results of the other research program entitled "Second generations in Catania schools. Construction of multiculturalism amid inclusion, tolerance and prejudice", coordinated by the writer. The first results of this research were presented to the Congress "*Giovani Come IV. Il sapere dei giovani*", University of Salerno, 21-22 January 2010 (proceedings being printed).

Moreover, teachers are only human and may have their personal feelings toward immigrants, that are sometimes conditioned by prejudices and stereotypes. Young people also sometimes come up against prejudice in juridical institutions, especially regarding the process of application for citizenship.

Law n. 91/1992 on citizenship states in article 1 that *only those who were born in Italy to Italian citizens (father or mother or both) or if the parents are unknown or stateless* can be consider to be Italian citizens; a foreigner can ask for citizenship after 10 years of continuous stay in Italy. In this case citizenship is granted by "naturalization" with a decree of the President of the Italian Republic, heard by the State Council, by suggestion of the Interior Minister. It is a very lengthy, complex process, the positive conclusion of which depends on a discretional evaluation by the public administration. Children of immigrants who were not born in Italy must undergo this process; alternatively, they could obtain citizenship by marrying an Italian. There is no special path, even though immigrant children are often very integrated in the Italian culture and socialized to the Italian style of life.

Instead, if children of immigrants were born in Italy, if their births were regularly registered and if they live in the country until the age of eighteen, they can, when they become of age, and before their nineteenth birthdays, declare to the administration of their town of residence that they want to acquire Italian citizenship. After this deadline they must ask for a residence permit and demonstrate the validity of their stay for other three years.[6]

So, if we consider all the difficulties that children of immigrants have as the *unintentional generation,* this could became another very important obstacle, also because of discriminatory behaviour on the part of some members of the legal institutions, as we can see by reading the declarations of some young immigrants in the city of Catania.

However, before dealing with the results of the analysis of the interviews, it is interesting to note that the association Rete G2, set up in Rome in 2005 and very widespread in Italy, especially through the internet (www.secondegenerazioni.it), is working to obtain a modification of the previous law, because "citizenship is the only way that permits immigrant children to be considered on a par with Italians". They are also working towards cultural change in Italian society, particularly with regard to attitudes towards the children of immigrants.

Finally, the question on the quality of cohabitation in the future: there is the risk of social segmentation arising from negative representations, prejudices, and the individual and social exclusion of those who are considered to be foreigners for their ethnic and cultural belonging (Ambrosini, 2005; 2007). The paradox lies in the clash between the intercultural image officially given by institutions, particularly schools, and the description given by the privileged witnesses we are going to examine.

2. Path of life and integration of young immigrants in the town of Catania

We have made some conceptual clarifications, which are useful to specify the scope of our investigation, before progressing to the analysis of life-histories.

We must not confuse the concept of *second generation* with that of *immigrant children*, and therefore we consider that these definitions are not applicable when the

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[6] But only if both parents are not Italian or do not have Italian citizenship.

second generation children become adults (Molina, 2005). However, an analysis of some of the previous Italian research[7] has convinced us that so far, Italian researchers have focused on the children and not on the young adults.

On the contrary, we believe that the crux of the matter, on which the outcome of the entire migration process depends, regards their transition to adulthood. To achieve this aim we chose the following typology for the qualitative inquiry: Young people who have already gone through the first period of socialization and integration and turned eighteen, and they have faced problems (or are going to face them) regarding employment and the application for citizenship.

Taking second generation young adults as witnesses of a path of integration that takes into consideration in particular the issues of school inclusion, accession to Italian citizenship and the relationship with juridical institutions might seem appropriate in order to obtain the most exhaustive information on the previous experiences of the lives of immigrant children.

These young people cannot be considered a representative sample of the current condition of young immigrants. They were interviewed for the purpose of producing examples rather than statistics.[8]

As stated by Cavalli (1998, 22), the phase of late adolescence and youth, that can be placed approximately between 16 and 25 years, is the one in which people form values, opinions and attitudes regarding the social and political sphere, that remain relatively stable in later phases of life. However, in our case, it is mainly the time when they can elaborate previous experiences and provide some information about their future; in this period they also become aware of their social position, regardless of the traditional agencies of socialization (family and school).

The young people of foreign origin are also potentially different from their parents because they had contact with differentiated models and they are also different from many of their peers since they are more involved – either directly or indirectly – in the migration event. And this specificity probably will have lasting effects on the model of coexistence and on social relations.

These reasons justify the choice of a reasoned sample of second-generation young people between the ages of 18 and 34, that consider all the types included in this expression[9].

The 30 interviewees come from different countries and belong to different kinds of family; more precisely, fifteen came to Catania to join families (one of

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[7] Giovannini 2005, Casacchia, Natale, Paterno, 2008; Campani, Salimbeni 2006; Silva, Campani, 2004; Campani, Lapov, Carchedi, 2002; Favaro, Napoli 2002; Melossi, Giovanetti 2002; Vardanega 2003; Besozzi 1999; Farinelli 1999.

[8] Since 2001, the Department of Education has produced official reports on the distribution of foreign pupils at compulsory school, with regard to their type, degree and geographical location. But the statistical information does not provide sufficient empirical support for a comprehensive investigation of their integration process, especially in the Southern Regions. A great numbers of questions about their relationships with teachers or peers, the role of family, the process of construction of national identity, and about their experiences coming from prejudice feelings that would help to build a global picture remain unanswered.

[9] We refers to Favaro's classification (2000: 63-67) that distinguishes between: Children born in Italy to foreign parents, children who join an immigrant family, children out of family, refugees after wars or religious persecutions, children of mixed couples, children adopted by an international circuit, even if we think that in future it would be better to exclude the last category whose integration paths are very different from that of the children of immigrants. Some other definitions do not give fixed types, but differentiate the cases according to the length of the stay in the receiving country or the relative time of schooling, like Rumbaut (1997) or Cesareo (2005).

whom is the son of a mixed couple); nine were born in Catania, including four from foreign parents and five from mixed couples; three are children out of family; two adopted; only one is a refugee. Regarding the ethic group they belong to, the following nationalities are represented: Sri Lankan (4), Mauritian (4) [one of these has a divorced mother who is now married to an Italian man], Chinese (7), Senegal (3) Moroccan (1), Iran (1), Eritrea (2), Palestine (1), mixed Senegalese-Sicilian (2), mixed Sicilian-Ethiopian (1), mixed German-Brazilian (1) [whose divorced mother is now married to an Italian man], mixed Sicilian-Tunisian (1) may be sufficiently representative of the situation in Catania, that gathered Mauritians, citizens of Senegal and of Sri Lanka and Chinese (see table 1).

3. School and impact with the new language

The second generation comprise a serious problem for Italian schools due to the large number of immigrant children: In 2008-2009, there were about 600.000 students of non-Italian nationalities, about 16.000 of whom live in Sicily (Caritas 2009). This social category is growing rapidly if we consider that, according to data of the Ministry of Education, less than twenty years ago there were about 25.000 immigrant children. This increase has brought about some fundamental changes regarding school organization.

Some problem areas have emerged regarding the integration of these children, both from a linguistic and an educational point of view, together with a great many bureaucratic obstacles that immigrant parents often have difficulty overcoming in a successful and independent way.

The schooling of foreigners is generally more fragmented and discontinued than those of native students for two reasons: *Mobility* and *delayed schooling*. This issue requires some comments. First of all, the difficulties regarding the conformity control of the school documentation of the child: It often happens that the application is incomplete, unclear, irregular or even missing. Secondly, the criteria of the placement of the child in a particular class, which is essential for an adequate and successful educational integration are not always satisfactory. While it is true that since 2001/2002, we have been able to count on fairly clear indications, mainly thanks to DPR No. 449/99[10], these choices depend on the different schools (Pasqualini, 2005, 54-56).

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[10] This law states that "children of school age will be enrolled in the right class for their age, except if the board of teachers decide to put the child into a different class, taking into account: a) the school rules of the country of origin, which can determine the entry to a class immediately lower or higher than the corresponding age; b) the verification of skills, abilities and levels of pupil background; c) the educational training carried out by the children in the country of origin; d) any educational qualifications of the pupil."

Tabella 1 – Theoretical Sample

	Name	Sex	Age	Years of stay in Italy	Parents' Nationality	Employment	Typology	Partial total (per type)
1	Al.	M	24	-	Eritrean	Student/worker	Born in Italy	
2	Am.	M	19	-	Palestinian	Trader	Born in Italy	
3	F.	M	18	-	Mauritian	Worker	Born in Italy	
4	G.	M	18	-	Sri Lankan	Student	Born in Italy	4
5	C.	F	23	13	Brasilian	Worker (father's shop)	Joining family	
6	M.	M	19	12	Morroccan	Trader	Joining family	
7	D.	F	19	12	Senegalese	Student	Joining family	
8	V.	M	21	19	Mauritian	Black –market worker	Joining family	
9	L.	F	22	14	Mauritian	Unemployed	Joining family	
10	A.	M	23	17	Mauritian	Worker	Joining family	
11	N.	F	26	10	Sri Lankan	Student	Joining family	
12	R.	F	19	8	Sri Lankan	Student	Joining family	
13	T.	M	21	6	Sri Lankan	Worker	Joining family	
14	X.	F	22	11	Chinese	Worker (parents' restaurant)	Joining family	
15	S.	F	27	20	Chinese	Worker (father's shop)	Joining family	
16	J.	F	23	18	Chinese	Sales assistent (Chinese shop)	Joining family	
17	Ay.	F	21	13	Chinese	Student	Joining family	
18	Xu.	M	22	9	Chinese	Worker (parents' restaurant)	Joining family	
19	Y.	M	22	5	Chinese	Waiter	Joining family	15
20	Si.	M	20	4	Senegalese	Worker	Out of family	
21	B.	M	23	6	Senegalese	Worker	Out of family	
22	Li.	M	20	3	Chinese	Worker	Out of family	3
23	An.	M	34	20	Iranian	Worker	Political asylum	1
24	Ci.	F	25	-	Ethiopian/Italian	Student	Mixed couple	
25	H.	F	29	-	Senegalese/Italian	Worker	Mixed couple	
26	Ab.	M	20	-	Senegalese/Italian	Student	Mixed couple	
27	Z.	F	32	-	Italian/ Ethiopian	Sales assistent	Mixed couple	
28	Gi.	F	24	-	Italian/Tunisian	Worker	Mixed couple	5
29	Da.	F	22	21	Italian	Student	Adoption (India)	
30	Ar.	F.	25	22	Italian	Student	Adoption (Mexico)	2

We are not able, through the information we have obtained, to provide an answer to these problems, but we can discuss the experiences of discomfort relating to acquisition of documents, to the language and the relationship with teachers, that are very significant relational factors for both school and social inclusion.

From the analysis of the interviews of second generation young adults who came to Italy to join their families, who represent the majority of our sample, we have inferred a series of hardships mainly regarding inclusion in the class: They were often placed in classes with younger children even though they had already attended school in their country, which resulted in significant psychological problems for the children. Almost all respondents (except those born in Italy) testify to the significant language difficulties, that have been resolved in various ways and not always in a satisfactory manner from a relational point of view; in fact, some of them still suffer from it.

The story of D. is representative of this kind of problem. She says:

In the second year I attended school, the elementary school. I started school again, because I had already attended the third year in Senegal, but coming here I had to start over again because there was a problem with the documents. From here another problem arose, because already when you are seven years old your head, somehow or other, is already molded in a language and I had to forget everything and start again. All over again.
Now I feel that I don't know my own language, only Italian. I understand my language when someone tells me something, but I cannot speak it. I find it hard to conjugate the verbs.

C. also speaks about his language troubles, but only at school. His description introduces us to the question of the relationship with teachers, as well as the story of H. and An., who claim that they have suffered explicit discrimination and reveal it through the following statements:

At high school I disagreed with an Italian language professor, on the writing, she always gave me four [out of ten]*, because she didn't understand my difficulties in Italian writing and she always gave me four. Then I changed professor and she gave me six, I didn't have a high mark, but it was more normal ... (C.)*

A professor persecuted me openly, I don't know why, but despite every effort I made, I never managed to get a vote more than four. I was discouraged in every way, my failure was due to the color of my skin, I attended the first two years of business school, that was enough. (H.)

Racism at school yes, from teachers; for example: I got eight in mathematics, the teacher changed then always four and I rebelled and I said that before I had eight, consequently either she was racist or she didn't know how to explain the subject. (An.)

No children, not even those born in Italy, are excluded from this kind of experience, though they realize that they have had neither school or language troubles nor relational problems in the classroom. For example Al., that tell us how:

At school I have never had problems, except some teachers who had some kind of behavior, the head of the biennium, in particular, I don't know why he picked on me openly. But more than that ...

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Conversely, it is possible to represent relational situations based on exaggerated benevolence and on "special conditions at any cost" for immigrant students, that produce quite disadvantageous results for the pupil himself. Some of our witnesses felt they had been helped too much, others felt treated "differently", as M. tells us:

The most ridiculous thing is that the teachers talked to me in worse Italian than mine, they conjugated all the verbs in the infinitive form!

The first case corresponds to D's story:

In the third year of primary school [...] one day I did a written test and I had made a lot of grammatical errors because I didn't know Italian grammar well yet and the teacher gave me excellent with a special plaudit [...] the teacher explained that she had considered not so much the grammar but the content.
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This behavior is an example of the errors, listed by Glenn (2004, 171-177), that teachers should avoid so as not to create additional obstacles to the acculturation and integration process of second generations. In fact, the latter form of behavior could be identified as a *soft* approach, the result of a "sentimental multiculturalism", an exaggerated benevolence that fails to provide children with the necessary skills and knowledge useful for their future[11], and often this differential treatment produces greater marginalization rather than including the subject, because he is observed as a "misfit", as H. notes:

Certainly I understand now I am grown-up, but when I was a little girl this situation was very difficult for me, I was the daughter of a black man as well as the favorite of the teacher; in short, school was a tragedy even if, fortunately, the situation improved a bit in adolescence.

Instead, children born in Catania and some children of mixed couples show that they have not had serious problems with teachers, because the Italian component of the family acted as a mediator. As L. says, (but as we can deduce from the testimony of Z., whose father is Italian):

I attended tourism school, but I didn't get on with the Italian language professor in writing, he always gave me low marks; often I went back home crying and I wanted to leave school, but really my mother's husband [Italian] supported me a lot and he went to talk to the teachers and, thanks to him, I also changed class so I didn't have those teachers any more, and I managed to finish school.

Apart from the relationships between teachers and foreign students it is also interesting to make some brief notes on the peer group. In particular, regarding the

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[11] Other potential errors to avoid are: to interpret the low performances as an existential failure of the immigrant boy, or rather as a failure of his integration; to base the educational intervention on a "deep multiculturalism" that, by rejecting acculturation and integration, cut out the young migrant from participation in social life; to start programs of "bilingual education" without precautions, taking the risk of marginalizing the children of immigrants from any informal interaction (peer groups).

language issue sometimes there is a strong lack of communication between classmates from different backgrounds, as T. says:

When they talk to me they speak Italian; however, since I had difficulties in understanding when I was at the professional school some friends don't talk to me so much, only 1 or 2 close friends.

This difficulty was overcome in this case through play (e.g. a football match), but sometimes this lack of communication opened to much more serious discrimination.

To this regard, however, some interesting and hidden issues have emerged, connected to the use of stereotypes and the construction of prejudice, primarily related to skin color. Almost all respondents (obviously those with black skin) link their school success or failure to their physical appearance that is different from that of the other classmates, especially regarding the color of their skin. There are many statements on this:

At school I had some problems with my classmates because of the color of my skin, however, with professors it was better. (R.)

In short, there were good ones and bad ones [the schoolmates] *I was the "chocolate" … because in any case I'm black* […] *but I didn't contest …* (Ab.)

I don't know if these are problems, however, when I was a little girl and I went to school it was hard for me to be always identified as the "daughter of the black woman". (Z.)

But I often had problems of discrimination, more with my classmates than with teachers, especially at high school a steadfast irony accompanied my school days and because of that I dropped out of school.

One professor persecuted me openly, I don't know why, but despite every effort I made I could never get a higher mark than four. (H.)

These statements can be summarized by a phrase made by one of our witnesses, a child of a mixed couple whose father is of Senegalese origin, that confirms the persistence of a mode of interacting with the "foreigner" that ignores his personality and his real social behavior, focusing instead almost exclusively on his physical appearance:

I'm Italian ... but sometimes they treat me as if I'm not ... before they even know where I am from... (Ab.)

Similar issues concern the feelings of the young son of immigrants who in order to achieve the same school success has to apply himself more than the other classmates, as G. tells:

Let's say that at school I have to put in more effort to show my ability, even if I am quite good, I know that to achieve a good mark like seven I have to do more than the others, then no teacher can tell me anything.

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It was always like this at school, even when I was in primary school, in the end I attended all the schools here, I never had problems with language, because I learned Italian, but I remember that when I started to write short sentences at school, the teacher always said "certainly this is not his native language it is normal for him to make more mistakes than the others."

A different, albeit related, issue concerns the construction of new and old stereotypes within the classroom. Al. noticed, for example, the persistence of old stereotypes (such as the use of the word "negro") in textbooks, in spite of an intercultural educational project, and D. points out the tendency to a stereotyped interpretation of recent events:

The first day of high school, I went into my classroom and it was the period after the attack on the twin towers; topic: let's talk about this. But I reacted when I heard my teacher say something generalizing Muslims, just against Muslims, "ah but now we must be careful with these Muslims who now could put bombs everywhere".

It is evident that prejudice and stereotypes affect the process of integration and the life paths both of first immigrants and of young migrants in particular. These experiences can influence every future and incidental choice regarding not only training and employment, but also relational situations. The views of our witnesses are disparate particularly regarding the continuation of their studies. Some, like H., were discouraged by explicit behaviors presumably related to prejudice:

[The teacher] *discouraged me in every way, my failure was due to the color of my skin, I did the first two years of business school, that's all.*

Others, like D., who is a person with endless inner contradictions probably derived from her experience of migration and her late adolescence which, as everyone knows, affects the vast majority of young people of our country, has not yet made her choices about a career, and expresses some misgivings:

If it is possible I will continue my studies, however, as things seem to be, either you enter directly the world of work and it wouldn't be bad, or I don't know, you continue to study, hoping that one day …
I have always had the passion to become a lawyer, ... [...] when I was a little girl I said I wanted to become a lawyer and defend the rights of foreigners. [...] Now I prefer to throw myself directly into the world of work.

The desire to continue their studies is related to the desire to acquire new knowledge and skills, including mastery of Italian, which highlights even more the need for a better future job and the need for integration into the host society (Bertozzi, 2005, 74-75). In the case of D., who is completing high school, the indecision comes also from uncertainty about her stay in Catania, or even in Italy and, probably, by her partial rejection of the host culture. As we shall see, also and especially by the subsequent representations, we assume in part for D. the use of a strategy of identity based on *marginality by frustration.*
The responsibility for smooth school inclusion cannot be attributed solely to the teachers or to a class that is not welcoming enough, but it is often the result of

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family segregation or of the family's exaggerated affection for the original culture. The case of some of the Chinese boys is typical, but so is the story of Am., the son of a prominent member of the Muslim church in Catania who tells us that his parents, particularly his father, chose to hand down to their children the original culture and language, and consequently obtained the following result when they went to school:

> *At Italian schools we didn't know how to speak Italian, we knew only the basics, the minimum alphabet.*

As these examples show variegated interrelationships between immigrant families and schools, it seems obvious that the blame for any bad integration cannot be attributed exclusively to one of the parties. As pointed out in our introduction, attachment to traditions and roots and the difficulty to communicate, both linguistically and culturally, often produce a clash in which young children of immigrants often feel torn between family belonging and the new dimensions of identity related to the secondary socialization and to the experiences outside the family. The young of second generation immigrants often feel and become misfits both within original relationships and in new ones, and the factors that increase this feeling, as it is clear from the above analysis, are multifarious. Moreover, this feeling sometimes gets worse when they apply for Italian citizenship.

4. Relationships with legal institutions

The issue of citizenship, as has already been mentioned, acquires central importance in the process of integration of second generations. In Italy, as we have already explained, *jus sanguinis* is in force, but the children born, brought up and continuously resident in Italy may, when they become eighteen years old, request and obtain Italian citizenship; for the others it is more complex.

This is not the context in which to challenge these rules; instead we must report, with alarm, some discriminating behaviors, told by the respondents, on the part of some members of the police force, every time one of these young applicants went to the police for ask for citizenship. We do not mean to generalize, since the non-standard method does not allow that; we simply refer the reader to some extracts of the stories, that speak for themselves:

> *I do not have Italian citizenship. I study law and I know that after 10 years a foreigner can apply for Italian citizenship. When I was eighteen years old I went to the police and asked for Italian citizenship. They said, "we advise you to marry an Italian man". I looked them in the face and said "how dare you tell me to marry an Italian to get the documents" and to marry him only for ... That's all, they already convince you about that, then you have to tell me how one can go on if they already convince you that to get the documents the only way is to marry like that. (D.)*

> *Going to the police is really hard, there is a lot of discrimination, the police take advantage of their power and you a foreigner, you are nobody there, there I really felt foreign, because I never felt different, I always felt Italian, but at the police station they are very harsh with you, they are racists, they are sad just with you, they don't treat you very well. But if there is an Italian who*

must get a residence permit for a guy who works for him, they listen to him immediately, instead you wait ... you are foreign and you have to wait. (C.)

Unfortunately my mother still doesn't have Italian citizenship, unfortunately she still has to go through the bureaucratic procedure, that in my opinion is barbaric, of registration of visas of immigrants; my mother should go to sign, although she has been in Italy for thirty years, there is also the factor of the municipal police that come to our home and she must have her fingerprints taken like a criminal! (Al.)

I asked for Italian citizenship, because after five years as a refugee, a decade of immigration, I married in Italy ...! […] In May 2001 I made the application, in September 2001 two planes crashed into two skyscrapers, and then so many things changed: the Digos call me, police stop me when I am driving my car and make insinuations, I was searched at the airport. All these things are discrimination, but it is ignorance. (An.)

The tendency of those in charge of the bureaucratic procedures relating to citizenship application to turn foreigners away, even if they are young and well integrated in Italian society, in some ways is part and parcel of that attitude of ambivalence we noted with regard to teachers, but also reflects, on the other hand, the same feeling of acceptance-rejection of the citizens of our country. However, this aspect is symptomatic of an inadequate training of those who have contact with immigrants and their children. In fact, these operators have not been adequately re-socialized to the new relationships of a multiethnic and multicultural society, although this deficiency can be attributed more to the ways of institutional organization than to individuals, apart from ethical and moral issues that we are not concerned with in this article.

Moreover, we would like to reiterate, through the testimony of A., the importance of the mediation of an Italian citizen for an immigrant or child of an immigrant to obtain their rights:

This family [where the father works] *has helped us a lot, for example, they helped me so much to get my documents of citizenship. Every time I went in the offices, I was sent from one place to another without ever being able to conclude anything, but with this gentleman, that was my guarantor, I was able to solve my problems and now I have Italian citizenship.*

If this episode, on the one hand, states that there are concrete expressions of welcome by the Italian people, on the other hand, it refers to a fundamental institutional failure, which does not seem to depend primarily on inadequate laws, but rather on the inadequacy of the people who should put such laws into operation. It would be interesting to open a discussion on these and other significant data.

Finally, some considerations made by our interviewees regarding the persistent differences between Italians and immigrants and the resulting conditions of hardship suffered mainly by young people should be evaluated. The first observation is that of V., who resides in Italy thanks to a residence permit, even though he arrived when he was 2 years old:

The laws regarding foreigners are a bit more different, are a bit tighter in the sense that if an Italian, does nothing at all from morning to night, this is OK for the Italian law. Nobody says anything because he is Italian, but for a foreigner, because you do nothing at all, the fact is that

it's different, you must do something . [...] I cannot live in this situation, I renew my residence permit every six months, every six months, then after six months what could you do?

Such a situation creates an obvious state of anxiety in the person who feels that his stay in Italy is precarious. He would prefer to find a suitable job and live openly (instead, he is forced to work illegally) in the country that welcomed him as a child. In fact, he needs to clarify his legal position, obtaining Italian citizenship, but he cannot get it because he does not have a regular job. He becomes embedded in an obviously perverse circuit that may well lead him to a state of full-blown illegality.

Less serious, but equally illustrative, is the case of N., who has lived in Italy for 10 years. She would like to obtain Italian citizenship to protect herself from discrimination at work:

I have only the Singhalese (citizenship). But I would like to get Italian citizenship to eliminate the foreign one. [...] I had no problem till today, but I think about my future if I want to find some work, I'm always a foreigner, and if you have a label as foreigner you can never find work. [...] Yes, certainly, if I find some work I'm saying ah, the future first of all, I do this and I change citizenship, not because I don't want to be a Sri Lankan citizen, but I would like to have all the rights and I don't want the others to call me a foreigner, if I go to find some work they make fun of me, they tell me you are a foreigner, go away, and I don't like this.

5. Young immigrants, what kind of future? A preliminary conclusion

The problems of children of immigrants living in our country must be observed from different aspects and can only temporarily be traced to a single perspective of interpretation.

In this work, the tendency was to observe the extent to which the relationships of the children of immigrants with two of the most important institutions for their future were pervaded by different aspects linked to the stereotyping of the "other" based on his physical appearance and his "clear" ethno-cultural origin, even though sometimes they do not totally correspond with the real personal and social identity of the person.

As Cesareo (2005) asserts, «for an immigrant child, the main obstacle to self-realization continues to be identified in the risk of discrimination to which he may be exposed». Discriminatory attitudes and behaviors contrast the possibility of a receptive and stimulating environment, emphasizing a condition of social transitoriness typical of the second generation, relegating the young immigrant to a state of disadvantage and placing him, as mentioned above, at risk of deviance.

However, here is a question which Lonnie (2003, 1-33) seeks to answer: From what does the fear of immigrants arise? One of our witnesses (An.) would answer, "ignorance". If, in fact, with the word ignorance we mean the lack of information or believing distorted information, this can be a credible hypothesis.

The tendency to perceive an immigrant as a deviant is well-known. Discrimination, conditions of social and economic deprivation, and physical and cultural-behavioral diversity close the perverse circuit.[12]

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[12] Barbagli (2002: 34-36; 178-184), Daher 2006 (113-117).

We note, even if it is not possible at this stage to present representative data on this subject except by reference to other research[13], that prejudice is still a widespread phenomenon, although it is often present in a covert form.

Integration could be influenced by numerous conditions (Esser 2010). This is not the right place either to examine the principal ones or to side with one of these; however, we may deduce that all the troubles of the children of immigrants should not be relative to their integration in the receiving society. They ought to be already integrated, especially if we refer to the young born in Italy or those who migrated at a pre-school age: They had to "naturally" adopt an Italian style of life and culture, thanks to socialization at school and friendships with the Italian peer group.

Although on the one hand, it is true, as stated by the most fickle and uncertain of our witnesses, the result of an involuntary generation, that: *Prejudice still exist* ... (D), but on the other hand, this should not overlook the influence that the families of these young people can have on their level of integration and especially on their identity problems, but also on practical problems linked to this (Daher 2008).

This issue does not allow us to sweep away the latter topic, nevertheless it seems fair to remember that the *bi-directionality* of the integration process does not involve only migrants but also and jointly the citizens of the receiving country (Caria, Blangiardo, 2008, 3) and vice versa. Sometimes, in fact, one should point out that immigrant families are too rooted in their original culture and less open to the integration process and consequentially cause difficulties for their children who feel they are "unquestionably" Italians and plan their future in a country where they grew up and where they feel they have put down significant roots.[14]

However, the real paradox concerns institutional reception. In spite of the promises and optimistic statements made at a national or local level, we are still very far from offering real support for the inclusion, in the various social groups, of those who are really already integrated because he or she was born and/or grew up in our country, and the limits of this reception are still focused on issues that are greatly influenced by the common stereotypes of foreigners. The children of immigrants are still regarded with suspicion because they are perceived to be foreigners, even though they speak the Catanese dialect, dress in a fashionable Italian way and perhaps can even recite Dante Alighieri. They are distrusted by ordinary people and also by those with important public jobs. People are afraid of the young of the second generation because they evoke, like their parents, feelings of extraneousness because of their "physical" diversity, and their presence involuntarily threatens places, languages and reference points of value (Demetrio, Favaro, 1992, IX-XI).

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[13] Bacarani, Porta 1999; Cipollini 2002; Agnoli 2004; Campelli 2004.

[14] From an interpretative analysis of the integral version of some of the interviews here examined (Daher 2008, 96-100), it has emerged, in fact, that within immigrant families the "ordinary" generational conflicts are often aggravated because of some defensive and protection reactions of the two parties: The more immigrant parents cannot become completely integrated in the receiving society, the more they turn in on their traditions, just at the time when their children are in most need of their support. Moreover, with regard to their children's future, if the native family, on the one hand, overestimated the opportunities in the receiving society, because they are sure that the school and professional results of their children could make amends for their personal failures, on the other hand, parents become suspicious because of the gradual alienation of their children from the belonging culture for a new one grounded on values that they do not share, even though they hope that their children could benefit from this integration.

Consequently, as we stressed before, the "double cultural proposal" often becomes a real torture for the young who belong to the conflicting cultural model.

Therefore, the tendency to "label" before knowing still persists and represents one of the real obstacles to complete integration of those who, theoretically, are already Italian, also in a border region such as Sicily, where people must still recall relatively recent migratory experiences[15]. We should not forget that the place of the investigation is the town of Catania, that is a novelty[16] but represents also a look, albeit very partial, at new aspects of immigration in a country that not only is the principal actor of a recent emigration phenomenon but has also inherent and historical multicultural features. In fact, it is surprising that people have so easily forgotten that, only some decades ago, Italians themselves suffered, and probably they still suffer in some Northern places, the suspicion and intolerance of the receiving community, that caused serious obstacles in their everyday lives. This could certainly be considered another paradox that this investigation shows.

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[15] As Pugliese (2002, 15-54) recalls, Italy has in fact experienced two first overseas migratory phases: The "Great Migration", concerning people bound for America from 1800 to 1900 and the European one, after the second world war; instead, between the 1960s and 70s there were the first internal migrations, from the South to the North. Therefore, Sicilian people have historically experienced the relationships based on stereotyping and intolerance both abroad and in their own country.

[16] We have no news, at the moment, of any other research carried out in Sicily on the second generation children and young people, except for the ethnographical work of J. E. Cole ("Tunisian Students in Sicilian Schools." Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association 2006, San Jose, CA; see also Cole, Booth, 2007).

APPENDIX

Brief biographical profile of interviewees

Al., 24, born in Catania to Eritrean parents who emigrated to Italy a few years before his birth. He feels nostalgia for his native country through his parents. He understands his native language but does not speak it, although he is very interested in his original culture. He claims he suffered discrimination at work, but rarely at school - he only experienced one initial episode of wariness by the peer group. He feels Italian, but he does not identify himself fully in the Italian culture. He has dual nationality and his religion is orthodox.

Am., 21, born in Catania to Palestinian parents. His father has lived in Italy for thirty years and is the imam of Catania mosque; he has four brothers. The family is deeply rooted in their native culture, even from a linguistic point of view; they taught their sons mainly Arabic, though they were born and bred in Italy. In fact, he complains of some problems at school, although he is perfectly bilingual. He attended school only up to the first three years of secondary school. His group of friends is mainly from Catania, and he has also had an Italian girlfriend for 2 years, although he poses himself many questions about children of mixed couples. Work has been fundamental for his integration, together with the a good knowledge of Italian. His belief is Muslim, although it is difficult for him to respect all the rules. He feels he is very integrated in the host country and believes his way of thinking is very different way from the Arab one.

 F., 19, was born in Catania to Mauritian parents and is an only child. Since he was a child, he has been accustomed to speaking both languages: Italian and the language of his family. Even though he declares he is integrated, he still feels a bit different from Italians, both because of his skin color and because in the past he suffered episodes of discrimination. He has many Italian friends but he still feels like a foreigner; he confirms that the others make him feel "different". His girlfriend is from Catania but now she lives in the Marche; they communicate through Internet and when one can get to the other, particularly her because he is very busy with work. He says that soon he will travel to Mauritius because his parents want to return, though he is not convinced that they will feel at ease there; however, without them, staying in Italy would have no sense for him.

G., 18, was born in Catania to Sri Lankan parents, has dual citizenship and lives alone with his father; his mother and brothers are back in Sri Lanka. He is attending the last year of a business technical institute. He openly declares that he has no ties with his native country, only his family and the color of skin; he feels Italian. Therefore he is in conflict with his father who would like to return to his country soon, and does not intend, primarily for economic reasons, to leave him in Italy.

C., 23, born in Brazil to a Brazilian mother and German father, she arrived in Italy at the age of 10 after her mother's marriage to an Italian man who she now regards as her father. She says that she had no difficulty in leaving her country of origin and that she had a very positive impact with Italy. She is Catholic. She had several problems at school at first because of her language difficulties and bad relationships with some teachers. These problems stopped when she changed teachers. Now she is enrolled at University. She declares that she had no troubles making friends, even if Italians are a bit narrow-minded, even young people, unless they have had some experience abroad or with people of other nationalities. Even C. reported some difficulties with juridical institutions regarding the application for citizenship and also because of strong discrimination. In any case, she wants to stay in Catania.

M., 19, born in a town of southern Morocco, arrived in Catania seven years ago, when he was 12 years old, to join his father who had already been in Italy for several years. He lives with his parents and his two younger sisters; he also has two grown-up sisters who remained in Morocco. His arrival in Italy was, as he says, "dramatic"; he was already at school in his country of origin where he had also a lot of friends. He had considerable problems with the Italian language and in relationships at school. He said that the teachers were kind to him, but to communicate they used the verbs in the infinitive form! He admits that although his own impact with school was not very good, it was much better for his younger sisters. Socialization with peers took place through sport; playing football in the street helped him to make new Italian friends. Now he works with his relatives at the market, but he dreams of

opening an ethnic shop, because they are all the rage. He declares that Catania is his town and even though his parents plan to return to Morocco in a few years' time, he and his sisters will stay, while continuing to frequent the Moroccan community in Catania.

D., 19, born in Senegal, arrived in Italy at the age of 7 to join her parents. She found a new sister, born in the host country. She took the separation from her homeland hard. She claims she had difficulties with the language and relationships and that she still feels foreign; therefore, she has friendships with people of other nationalities. She feels very much the weight of discrimination (so much so that she repeated several times during the interview that whites exploit blacks!). With her family, she says, she has quite a serene relationship, though she perceives her parents' worries about the possibility of the complete integration of immigrant children in the host communities. She feels she is 99.9% Italian but she shows, at the same time, some intolerance at the idea of remaining in Italy, in Sicily. She does not feel integrated. She is Muslim, but she says that she is not a churchgoer and neither are her parents who, for this reason, are not integrated with the other Senegalese. She wanted to continue her studies, to became a lawyer to defend the rights of foreigners, but now, she says, she wants to work. She is extremely indignant about the problems relating to the application for citizenship. In this respect, she continues to reiterate that she feels Italian, but that she had to give up Italian nationality because of numerous difficulties. She talks at length of discrimination, hence her decision to maintain friendships only with foreigners.

V., 21, born in Mauritius to Mauritian parents. He arrived in Italy with his mother at the age of 2. He has an older brother who arrived in Italy later, already an adult, who failed to learn Italian or to integrate and returned to the original country. He works on a sporadic basis, and because of this he has only Mauritian citizenship. Although he does not speak Italian perfectly yet, and he does not have a regular job that would allow him to obtain Italian citizenship, he declares that he feels a citizen of Catania and does not want to return to his place of birth, except for a short period of time.

L., 22, born in Mauritius, came to Catania at the age of 8; her mother, divorced from her father, is now married to an Italian man. She did not find it hard to leave her homeland because it meant joining her mother; she did not have many difficulties in learning Italian, because she had to communicate with her mother's husband, who only speaks Italian. The presence of an Italian family also helped her in school relationships. With peers she has always had a good relationship. The fact that she is Catholic, she said, has facilitated relationships with native communities, although the presence of Mauritians in her life is continual and important. Her mother's husband was also a positive factor regarding her Italian boyfriend who she is going to marry next year; he helped to overcome the opposition of the boy's family. After the marriage she will get Italian citizenship.

A., 23, born in Mauritius, arrived in Italy when he was six and now lives with his parents and brothers. He had no problems with the Italian language; he started school regularly and was very welcome among teachers and classmates. He concentrated on his studies, also to satisfy his father , who not want to put up a bad show and for this reason he was also supported by private tutors in the afternoon. Currently he work in a computer lab, but only because the family where his father works in Catania helped him to get work; they have also supported him in the submission of documents to obtain citizenship and now he has Italian citizenship, like his father and brothers.

N., 25, came from Sri Lanka at the age of 16 to join her family and she is an only child. Before moving to Italy she lived in a Catholic boarding school, therefore in addition to facing problems with the impact of the new reality, as Catania was for her, she had to get to know her parents, with whom relationships until then had been at a distance. She studied economics at the University and she is an ambitious girl. She has had difficulty in obtaining a residence permit to study and work. She would like to stay in Italy, but without obliging her parents to do the same.

R., 19, born in Sri Lanka, moved to Catania at the age of eleven; her parents are separated and she lives with her mother and grandmother. She did not have a hard impact with Italian culture, not least because the Sri Lankan community in Catania is very large and active, and she continues to be closely linked to this community because she is not yet integrated with her native peers. She continues also to speak her native language at home, but claims she does very well at school (she is one of the best!). His favorite subject is English, she would like to move to London, where skin color is less of a big deal, and get a job as a hostess. Regarding her culture, she even accepts arranged marriages.

T., 19, born in Sri Lanka, arrived in Italy when he was 15 years old to join his family; his family wanted him to come when he was still a minor so as to avoid more complex permit requirements. His detachment from the country of origin was traumatic both because he lived an everyday life in a community that was in stark contrast to his life in Catania, where his parents were always away for business reasons, and for the linguistic handicap typical of young people moving at an age where they have already acquired much more than the first level of socialization. Things changed later, but not radically, when he learned Italian and had contact with the peer group; although he has had friendships with Italians, currently he sees young people from the Sri Lankan community on a regular basis and he expects to marry someone from his country in the future. In a few years' time,. his parents will return to Sri Lanka, while he hopes to move to London, and for this reasons he has not applied for Italian citizenship.

X., 22, born in China, came to Italy at the age of eleven; first she lived in Rome and then moved to Catania where she has been for nine years; she lives with her family who run a Chinese restaurant. She did not have a positive experience of school or good relationships with teachers and peers. She declares that her classmates made fun of her, but at the same time admits that cannot maintain friendships with the locals because she is Chinese. For this reason, she feels very different from them, a subject on which she insists a lot: The Italians think too much about having fun! She continues to follow Chinese cultural traditions and speaks her native language; Italian is only useful for work. She admits, with regret, that she cannot return to China because of the laws of the country.

S., Chinese, 27; she has been in Italy since she was 7 years old and lived in Florence at first. She attended only compulsory school in Italy and then some painting courses, about which she is passionate. In Catania she runs a shop with her family. She said she feels integrated, but she has decided not to have relationships with Italian peers.

J., 23, of Chinese nationality, arrived in Italy to join her family at the age of five; she lived in Florence, Ancona and Naples, but the town where she felt most integrated is Catania. She attended school until the first three years of secondary school, then she preferred not to continue her studies because she did not feel she was capable of it. She currently works in a Chinese shop. Half of her friends are of Chinese origin, while the other half are Italian; thanks to these contacts she said that she can better learn the host language, even though she is still not very good at it. At school, she complains that teachers always gave her a low mark, except in mathematics. She has not applied for Italian citizenship and she feels "mainly" Chinese.

Ay., 21, born in China, has lived in Catania since the age of eight - she moved to Italy with her mother to join her father who was already here. She did not suffer traumatic events at school, though she had some difficulty with the language, of course, but she did not seem to give it too much importance. She says that initially she did not want to live in Catania, but then she got used to it. She has a very large family, which are an important reference point for her, but she hopes to have a cultural progress: Her cousin is going to get a degree in architecture, although the elderly are strongly linked to the original tradition that would not have allowed it. She feels (maybe!) more Italian that Chinese: All her friends are Italian - she does not feel at ease with the young Chinese.

Xu., 22, born in China, has been in Italy since the age of thirteen. He attended school, but because he did not have good relationships with some of his classmates he decided to drop out. However, he did not like school and he does not like to talk on this subject. Currently he works in his family's restaurant. He say he does not have prejudices against his Italian peers, sometimes he even prefers them to the Chinese, but he claims he does not have any friends because he is too busy at work.

Y., 22, Chinese, arrived in Catania at the age of sixteen and did not attend Italian school; however, his younger sister is enrolled in school. He does not speak Italian very well, but he is attending a course to learn it; currently he works as a waiter in a restaurant. He says he enjoys living in Catania but that he has no time to get out and about because of work commitments.

Si., 20, born in Senegal, has only been in Italy for 4 years; he attended school in Catania, but only for a month. He lives alone in Catania, just as he came (his father lives in America while his mother remained in Senegal). First he lived in Vicenza for an year; in fact, he points out a fundamental

difference in treatment by the Northern Italy indigenous communities compared with the people of Catania. His story is very disjointed and he speaks in broken Italian; he tried to get work, although when he arrived he was not yet an adult, and he complains about the great difficulty in finding work. He also underlines the difficulty in arranging documentation for the residence permit; he points out the presence of illegal immigrants; perhaps he is an illegal immigrant too?

B., 23, Senegalese, arrived in Catania alone at the age of sixteen; his entire family lives in Dakar. He never went to school and is currently working. He speak very shaky Italian and frequented only Senegalese friends, who he met in Italy; he also said he feels he is a Catania citizen because he is a big fan of the city football team.

Li., 20, from China, in Italy alone since the age of sixteen. He attended schools in China, here he works, but he does not say what kind of work he does. He gives evasive replies because he does not speak much Italian - what little he knows, he says, he learned on the job. He claims to have both Chinese and Italian friends. He suddenly stops the interview with the excuse of having to go to work.

An., 34, born in Iran, arrived in Italy at the age of fourteen with his mother; they were later joined by his father and older brother. His escape from the dictatorship finished with the ONU request for asylum. He came to Catania because his uncle was a student here at the Faculty of Medicine. He learned Italian quite easily. He says he suffered sporadic acts of discrimination at school, but these were not connected with his language skills. After a period of refusal for religion now he claims to go to Mass every Sunday. He married an Italian woman in a Catholic church. He feels "a Catania citizen" and said several times vehemently he did not ever want to return to his native country. He requested Italian citizenship a few years ago, but has had no news yet about whether his application has been successful.

Ci., 25, born in Italy to a mixed couple, Ethiopian father and Italian mother; rather than being characterized as the daughter of an immigrant, she is known as the daughter of a blind woman. She has great admiration for her father who arrived in Italy when he was just 11 years old, without parents but with some of his brothers. She has never been to Ethiopia but is fascinated by the country and intends to go there after she gets her degree because she feels a strong sense of dual citizenship and wants to explore the cultural half of her that she has not been able to experience yet. She does not mention episodes of discrimination, only some cracks by her classmates due to the difficulty in pronouncing her surname.

H., 29, born in Catania, daughter of a mixed couple: Senegalese father, Italian mother. She lives with a man from Catania and has two young children (7 and 4 years old). Being born in Italy and having attended regular schools she had no problem with the language, and if at primary school she felt strongly supported by the teacher, who defended her against the attacks of classmates because of her skin color and father's job (street trader), at high school she felt instead discriminated against by some teachers, which led her to drop out at the end of the second year of the secondary school. She feels culturally free, supported in this by her parents, especially her father. She has never been to Senegal and nor have her sisters. She has had great difficulty in finding work; she wanted to be a shop assistant, but in the stores of Catania, she says, they do not want colored people. She notes, with a little bitterness, that fortunately her children look more like her partner than her.

Ab., 20, born in Catania, child of a mixed couple - his father is Senegalese and his mother is Italian. His parents are separated and he has no contact with his father, who after the divorce returned to his country of origin. He lived with his grandmother and mother and attended school in Catania, where he suffered a few episodes of racism because of the color of his skin (they called him "chocolate"). He had to repeat the year twice (once at elementary school and one at seventh grade); he does not understand the reason why: He is uncertain whether he was actually a poor student or if he was penalized because of his color. He feels Italian, from Catania, totally estranged from the culture of his father, but he notes that sometimes the others make him feel foreign because of his somatic diversity. He is now studying at university and would like to become a film director.

Z., 32, born in Catania, daughter of a mixed couple: Sicilian father, Ethiopian mother; she is married to a man from Catania and has a little daughter. She feels Italian, she appreciates her origins but has never been to Eritrea. The mediation of the father has avoided problems with teachers and classmates,

as the color of her mother's skin encouraged some gossip. Apart from this exclusion of her mother in matters relating to her secondary education, she has always felt a "girl like all the others". Her daughter is blonde with green eyes and she is proud to have a grandmother who comes from Africa. She notes with regret that what her daughter is now proud of, created a feeling of shame for her when she was a child. However, she does not want her daughter to have a strong connection with the cultural diversity of her maternal grandmother.

Gi., 24, was born in Catania; her father is Italian and her mother comes from a mountain village in Tunisia. Although her father had to convert to Islam to get married, her parents left her free to decide which faith to follow as an adult. However, as a child she was enrolled in a Catholic school, run by nuns, where she could experiment with the Christian religion. She speaks fluent Arabic, especially with her mother's family who are always present in Catania. She feels very well integrated and has many friends in Catania. Along with her family, she believes she is an "alternative" Arab, because very open to all people and experiences.

Da., 21, came from Calcutta at the age of eighteen months through international adoption. She has a sister aged 19, also adopted, who was born in another town of India. The first language she learned was Italian and she attended school regularly in Catania, where she had no problems either with peers or with teachers. She has always spoken Italian, hence never sensed any discrimination. She has always known that she was adopted and this has not bothered her - it has even been a source of pride, an experience to tell people. She is going to get a degree and is engaged to a boy from Catania.

Ar., 25, was adopted when she was 3 years old, together with a boy of the same age, both of whom came from Mexico to Italy. She still has a strong feeling about her origins; in fact, her answer to the question "Do you feel more Italian or Mexican?" she replied that she feels 70% Mexican. She wants to return in Mexico for a brief period after graduation to discover her origins. She experienced several hardships in her phase of integration; she was beaten at school by classmates because she was "different", she was derided because she was adopted, and the fact that she has attracted curiosity from others has been a problem for her. Initially she had difficulty with the Italian language as she was deeply rooted in Spanish, a problem that was overcome, slowly (8-9 years), with primary schooling. Today, she states she had a sort of psychological block: She can no longer speak her native language even though she reads and writes it fluently. However, she sees her migratory path in a positive way.

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