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Different But Not Stranger: Everyday Collective Identifications among Adolescent Children of Immigrants in Italy

Enzo Colombo, Luisa Leonini and Paola Rebughini

This article deals with the problem of the future of the second generation in Italy. After a brief overview of the main perspectives currently adopted to theorise the future of the second and subsequent generations, the Italian situation is introduced. Our objective is to see whether and how the observations made especially in contexts with a long tradition of immigration, where migration processes are now culturally and institutionally embedded, can be useful to understand the Italian situation, characterised by recent immigration flows. The empirical basis to the paper is a set of interviews and focus groups with 105 young people of migrant origin in Milan. Analysis of their narratives reveals six self-identifications which we describe as ethnic enclave, mimicry, crisis, transnational, hyphenated and cosmopolitan.

Keywords: *Second Generation; Identity; Cosmopolitanism; Youth; Italy*

Introduction

What future patterns will the children of immigrants follow in a country like Italy, which has only recently started to experience a significant immigration flow? Will they inevitably integrate and become fully-fledged Italian citizens? Or will they maintain their distinctiveness and thus produce a society characterised by difference and—potentially—indifference, lack of unity and conflict?

The future of the second and third generations of migrants has long drawn the attention of Western nations that have been attracting large migration flows for over a

Enzo Colombo, Luisa Leonini and Paola Rebughini are Professors in Social and Political Studies at the University of Milan. Correspondence to: Dipartimento di Studi Sociali e Politici, Università degli Studi di Milano, Via Conservatorio 7, Milan 20122, Italy. E-mail: enzo.colombo@unimi.it, luisa.leonini@unimi.it and paola.rebughini@unimi.it.

century now. Can the models developed for those nations be applied to the recent Italian experience? Or, on the other hand, do current migration processes—set within a scenario of connectivity and globalisation—bring about new forms of the relationship between young people of migrant parentage and the host society? This question is very relevant to the Italian setting, which is not characterised by embedded and institutionalised forms of assimilation, unlike those countries where immigration occurred during the consolidation of modernity and the Fordist model of industrial development.

The future of the second and third generations is one of the main topics of research in immigration studies. Since the second half of the last century, the optimistic idea of a straightforward and unproblematic integration of the teenage children of immigrants has given way to more complex analysis (Gans 1992). The straight line that was supposed to characterise the assimilation process increasingly shows itself to be a ‘bumpy’ one, which produces uncertain results. In the second and third generations, ‘ethnic’ differences do not fade and disappear; on the contrary, they are preserved, sometimes resurfacing in new forms (Gans 1979); assimilation can fail, creating new forms of marginality and uncertainty.

After a brief critical consideration of the main theoretical perspectives currently adopted to predict and speculate on the future of migrant generations, the Italian situation will be introduced. The objective of the paper is to see whether and how observations made especially in contexts with a long tradition of immigration could be useful to understand the Italian situation. Conversely, our research will also assess to what extent the Italian experience can shed light on some distinctive aspects of the contemporary world (Bosisio *et al.* 2005). First, we review the literature on assimilation and transnationalism. Then we present the methodology of our study. Our main analytical section discusses the construction of adolescent children’s identities as a continuous process in which, nevertheless, six ‘types’ can be distinguished. The conclusion enlarges on this complexity in the context of a classificatory model and frames our findings within the need for further research.

Segmented Assimilation and the Transnational Perspective

An initial reflection upon the future of the second and successive generations is based on an at least partial recovery of the assimilation concept (Alba and Nee 1997; Brubaker 2001; Gans 1997). These authors recognise that the word assimilation is associated with regulatory schemes imposed by the State and aimed at eradicating minority cultures; still, they believe that this term can be used productively from an analytical viewpoint to denote a social process occurring spontaneously and often unintentionally during the interaction between majority and minority groups. Emphasis is placed not so much on the cultural dimension but on social and economic levels (movement from ethnic-based associations to other equivalent social institutions of a non-ethnic character, marriage and family models, employment, religion, politics and forms of representation). The assimilation concept is deemed

important to counter an excessively positive view of difference and to explain processes that, unlike the transformation of an individual's identity, values or behaviours, do not occur at an individual level but concern various generations and society as a whole.

The *segmented assimilation* concept (Portes 1996; Portes *et al.* 2005) is used, on the one hand, to show that the assimilation process is far from established and inevitably oriented towards an improvement of economic and social conditions and, on the other hand, to point out the fact that economic and social assimilation can indeed occur without necessarily depending on a concurrent acculturation process (Zhou 1997). Conversely, the capacity to keep a strong link with one's ethnic context and to maintain a fluent bilingualism are frequently positive elements for successful assimilation. Second generationers who can rely on a particularly dense and differentiated ethnic network, who retain their ability to express themselves effectively both in the language of their ethnic group and in the one of the country where they have been 'socialised', are more likely to attain educational and professional success (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). In contrast, the children of immigrant groups whose members have poor schooling and professional skills experience a downward assimilation into the urban underclass, which is traditionally formed by highly stigmatised minority groups.

Despite its sophisticated structure the employment dimension seems to take for granted the existence of an established and shared dominant model, where being assimilated is possible and desired. The segmented assimilation perspective identifies a process with only two options: on the one hand, successful assimilation, where difference and the group are used as resources; on the other hand, downward assimilation, whereby difference becomes a tool to oppose the host society and its rules but which eventually only results in reinforcing exclusion and discrimination. The contents and forms of inclusion, the meaning of successful or unsuccessful assimilation and those who decree its success or failure, are rarely questioned. The only factor considered to be important for inclusion is economic success, which is assessed according to parameters and models belonging to the majority group.

Another important alternative avenue of thought is related to a rising interest in the transnational and cosmopolitan dimensions taken by migration processes in a globalised context. According to the main theorists of transnationalism, migration processes tend to create new social landscapes, connecting spatially separate places and groups, as well as a new category of social actors—*transmigrants* (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1992)—who maintain a wide variety of affective and instrumental social relations across national borders.

The experience of transnationalism does not necessarily presuppose living in two different places; rather, it is based upon the perception of the existence of deep and lasting relationships of exchange, reciprocity and solidarity between different places, leading to a certain degree of social cohesion and to a common repertoire of collective symbolic representations (Kivisto 2001; Levitt 2001). It is about belonging to a space of imagination (Appadurai 1996)—made of flows of communication and

sentiment, transfer of goods, information and images—rather than a stable and established spatial collocation (Faist 2000; Levitt and Waters 2002). The place that is experienced as one's own and as the basis of the fundamental experience of feeling 'at home' is construed to a larger extent within relational and imaginative dimensions, rather than within a spatial one. It is the product of a dynamic synthesis which, while taking due account of the territory where the person lives, embraces the trite and often dull ties of everyday life (routine, friendships, love affairs, consumption etc.), the warm and nostalgic ties with memories (crammed with relations, obligations, life experiences, respect, self-esteem), and finally the dynamic ties with the future, full of expectations, ambitions, dreams and projects.

Although the experience of keeping a dense network of relations between different spatial contexts is a constant element of migration processes throughout history and therefore is not a totally new practice, it reveals new peculiarities. Since it has become stable and regular over time, it involves a critical mass of individuals, and is now an ordinary rather than an extraordinary experience (Vertovec 1999).

Within this framework, the second generation of immigrants, far from being the mere extension of their 'native lands' and their traditional 'roots', negotiate and define collective identities separately from their ethnic and cultural citizenship. They borrow their identifying symbols from the global cultural flow, as well as from the distinctive features of their countries of origin and destination (Hall 1996; Soysal 2000). The concept of cosmopolitanism is frequently used to identify the extent to which this new transcultural space is able to create a new territory, which, while taking into consideration national borders, overcomes them, producing patterns that transcend the national distinctions typical of modernity (Beck 2002; Hannerz 1992).

In the traditional representation of the cosmopolitan as a marginal person suggested long ago by Park (1928), the migrant (cast in the language of the day as male) is seen as someone who is doomed to live in two worlds, neither of which he totally belongs to; someone who is no longer part of the group of origin but is still not part of the group where he wants to enter, which therefore causes him to suffer a relatively permanent identity crisis. In the contemporary perspective, on the contrary, the cosmopolitan is an individual characterised by continual efforts to attempt a synthesis rather than by the experience of exclusion; he/she is an individual who perceives him/herself in a continuous movement, in a flow, rather than being caught in a marginal position. S/he does not only show her/his 'anguish' at being between two worlds, but also the possibility to organise her/his life both individually and as part of a community within a multi-ethnic cultural framework, although always with a sceptical, self-critical and analytical attitude. The children of immigrants find themselves in a good position to develop a cosmopolitan identification since they experience place polygamy—a permanent link with different worlds and cultures (Beck 2004).

However, the most radical forms of the cosmopolitan perspective sometimes seem to make an excessive claim for individual freedom and creativity, transforming difference into a continuous process which strips it of all significance and turns it into

a mere aesthetic exercise—the display of a sterile creative omnipotence of individuals aiming at their sole immediate satisfaction. Furthermore, cosmopolitanism's emphasis on mixing processes might drift onto a normative level that conceals power dynamics and always constructs the hybrid as positive, as emancipation from previous constraints and powers, as a desirable condition for greater awareness and as a higher guarantee of freedom and justice (Anthias 2001). What is more, there is a danger of considering collective identification as purely context-based, devoid of foundations and stability, in sharp contrast with social situations where the recognition of collective belonging is, for the actors involved, far from trivial since it stirs passions, fuels conflicts and generates exclusion.

Research Setting and Methodology

The research aims to look into the processes whereby collective identification is constructed among teenage children of immigrants in Italy in order to assess whether and to what extent the prevailing research perspectives currently used to map the future of second generations can be applied to a context where the migration phenomenon is relatively recent.

Only in the 1970s did Italy switch from being a long-standing country of emigration to being one of immigration. Furthermore, immigration in Italy is characterised by tremendous diversity: the well over three-million-strong immigrant presence (which accounts for 5.5 per cent of the population) is made up of people coming from over 180 different countries. No single group accounts for more than 15 per cent of the total foreign population.¹ And no national community is sufficiently large and well-organised to form a highly distinctive group. Frequently, associations and groups of a pan-national character are formed, sharing a common language (especially those from Central and South America) or religion (especially the case with believers in Islam). Also, the perceptions held by the native population, though characterised by rising hostility, still do not appear to focus on ethnic or national factors: their representation of different groups is quite changeable and it tends to vary according to news reports.²

The debate around immigration has been dominated by rhetorical 'emergency' issues and therefore it has focused on reducing and quashing illegal immigration. Migrants have been mostly considered as manpower, wanted but not welcome (Zolberg 1987). Only recently have people begun to realise that the migration process has become established: the rise of family reunions and of children of immigrants born in Italy and attending Italian schools is self-evident proof that migrants and their families have become an important and permanent part of the nation.³

Presence and visibility are more evident also because a growing number of second-generation 'new Italians' are very active in public life: they claim recognition and participation and have good relations with institutions and government. Some of them are actually involved in government commissions on the revision of

immigration law and on the regulation of the relationship between state and religions.

Three associations of children of immigrants have gained special visibility and have a growing role in representing the voice of 'new Italians' in the public sphere. The best-known is probably the association *G2—Seconde Generazioni*, a national network of children of immigrants or refugees, born in Italy or having arrived during their childhood. This association, established in Rome in 2005, is especially committed to cultural activities: they have produced a number of videos on the rights, identity, curiosity and also bitterness of children of immigrants trying to grow up and find a way of life in Italy. They have created an interesting web site (www.secondegenerazioni.it) with a blog and a space for discussion; it works as a space for debate, confrontation, outbursts and the creation of a shared sense of belonging as well as an effective instrument for information and networking. The second, *GMI—Giovani Musulmani d'Italia*, is also well-known. Established in 2001, this association is mainly concerned to give voice to young Italian Muslims, helping them in their daily efforts to reconcile their religious faith with participation in Italian society. *GMI* is interested in promoting an Italian Islamic identity, elaborating a specific point of view for young Islamic people growing up in an Italian context. This new identity is different both from the identity of their parents (often accused of being unable to grasp the main features of Italian society and to recognise the necessity to adapt their religious beliefs to a European context) and from the identity of their Italian peers, who are not used to understanding and respecting other forms of religious practice and belief. The association gains high visibility by developing good relations with the press—its members are often invited to talk shows and radio programmes—and by using its web site (www.giovanimusulmani.it) as a means of networking and information. *AssoCina* is a third interesting Italian association of children of immigrants. Established in 2005, it is mainly composed of children of Chinese immigrants. Its principal goal is to give voice to the Chinese second generation, fostering its participation in Italian public life. They openly criticise their parents for being exaggeratedly enclosed in an ethnic enclave, and for being unwilling and unable to have real forms of interaction with Italians, and they promote a more intense, visible and aware participation by young Chinese-Italians. They have also created a web site (www.associna.com), a virtual space for meeting and sharing ideas, concerns and proposals and for elaborating a consciously new identity for Chinese youngsters growing up in Italy. The three associations are often involved together to promote initiatives fostering a wider understanding and acceptance of new forms of 'being Italian', to demand a more inclusive reform of citizenship law and to oppose discrimination and racism.

Italian research on second-generation immigrants has grown rapidly and is now becoming well-established. Italian scholars have concentrated their research on educational trajectories and scholastic success or failure, on changes to teaching models or school organisation in order to best fit an 'intercultural education', and on the role schools can play in social inclusion or exclusion (Queirolo Palmas 2006).

A second prolific field of research is represented by the study of paths of inclusion or exclusion of young immigrants, often arriving in Italy alone, without the support of parents or relatives (Petti 2004). Others have oriented their research towards specific ethnic groups, stressing the continuities and fractures with parents and peers (Saint-Blancat 2004), religious attitudes (Frisina 2007), racist and ethnic discrimination (Andall 2002), transnational activity and networking (Ambrosini and Queirolo Palmas 2005), and the challenges these 'new Italians' are posing to the whole of Italian society (Ambrosini and Molina 2004).

Our study is a contribution to this growing field. Specifically, we look into the ways in which these youths narrate their everyday experience, the models of self-identification and belonging they use to talk about themselves, their plans for the future and the way they perceive and integrate into the Italian context. Considering the characteristics of the Italian situation, the research adopted a generational rather than an ethnic perspective. It considered the teenage children of immigrants as sharing a similar 'generational location' (Mannheim 1928), which supports the perception that they share a specific historical and biographical experience, regardless of any particular ethnic and national belonging.

The study involved 105 young people aged between 14 and 21 years old. All were children of immigrants and all were attending Italian higher secondary school in Milan, northern Italy. A total of 79 in-depth narrative interviews were conducted and five focus groups were formed, involving 26 additional teenage respondents. Given the peculiarities of the current Italian migration situation, only a relatively small share of the respondents (22 per cent) actually belonged to the second generation of immigrants, while most of them came to Italy during childhood.⁴ When selecting prospective respondents, we tried to mirror the various ethnic and national origins characterising the current picture of Italian schools.⁵ All interviewees were enrolled in higher secondary school, which shows that they had decided to engage in education beyond compulsory schooling. Therefore, they do not represent a statistically significant sample of teenage children of immigrants, but rather an *avant-garde*, selected group that will probably play a key role in defining patterns of living together and integration in Italian society.

The interview schedule (average duration of 90 minutes) and the key questions proposed in the focus groups dealt with various aspects of everyday life (school integration, relationship with parents, friends, sweethearts, likes and dislikes, consumption, language, food habits). Special emphasis was placed on narrations about oneself and about the groups each respondent identified with; these aspects will form the main focus of the following analysis.

Constructing Identifications and Distinctions: A Continuous Process

This study aimed to detect the *self-identifications* used by our sample to make sense of their actions and their biographies, rather than their presumed *identities* as their constitutive and stable essence. Special attention was paid to identifications in order

to appreciate their constitutive process and point out that, although they do not ignore the reifications constructed on a macro scale (communities, ethnic groups and cultures as closed, coherent and homogeneous entities), they are eventually structured within local and biographical specificities, thus enabling distinctions, resistance and dissent.

Forms of self-identification are therefore not considered as 'needs' automatically stemming from national or ethnic belonging, but as processes developing from situated practices. These processes are partly shaped by reified discourses that define identities and belonging as 'natural' and 'hereditary' of a uniform and coherent nature, and partly determined by local specificities—density of networks, the cultural and social capital of each family and group, biographical and generational specificities, personal projects and strategies, recognition, and the discrimination originating from the context where the subjects interact.

The analysis of the narrations that we gathered revealed six different identification models: three of them relate to 'modern' forms of belonging, which characterise the migration processes typical of the period of Fordist development, whereas the other three forms are more innovative and deeply embedded in an increasingly globalised context. The first three tend to be more static and to be perceived as a form of 'either/or' choice; the second three look like a sort of translation of the older models in order to better fit the characteristics of a more complex and dynamic context. They are often conceived as a form of 'both/and' choice (Beck 2004).

Ethnic Enclave

One type of self-identification is recognition in a dense and well-defined network, which often coincides with national or ethnic belonging. In particular, language appears to be the main symbolic factor marking the boundaries between the different groups. The Italian language, which is often only partially mastered, is the language of the institutions, of school, of work, and of superficial and instrumental knowledge. The parental language, on the contrary, is used for everyday life, pleasure and 'warm' relationships.

Very often, this dense and warm network embraces family relations, including extended family, cousins, aunts and uncles living in Milan. Nonetheless, it may also take a national dimension—which is especially the case with Chinese and Filipino individuals—through attending cultural or religious associations, get-togethers and other celebrations gathering individuals from the same nation-state. However, as opposed to the US experience, the establishment of sufficiently strong and differentiated networks based solely upon ethnic or national belonging is made impractical in Italy by the smallness of each single community and by their greater spatial scattering. Consequently, the network within which individuals identify is often of a pan-ethnic and pan-national nature. A key reference group is formed by Spanish speakers regardless of their country of origin, especially for youths coming from Central and South America.

Those I hang around with are mostly Latin-Americans, firstly because, I don't know, we are kind of close, like say: we're on the street, we see some guy passing by, then we look at each other and start chatting, so we become friends and start going out together ... also we go dancing amongst ourselves; I really like dancing and I like Latino music ... My family have been here for years, I have older cousins through whom I met more friends ... I have many relatives here in Italy and we always meet ... like, for example on Sunday we like to get together with family and friends and eat Peruvian food ... we do this all the time, one time we cook one thing, another time something else ... and then we also meet at the Association ... yes, my uncle is head of an association and we try to support him as a family ... we organise sports competitions, football tournaments with teams made of Peruvian players and other teams of other Latin American players (Maria Eugenia, Peruvian parents).

When attachment to one's language and group is not matched by a sufficiently big group of people from the same country, attempts can be made at maintaining relations on an international scale. In this case, the Internet or the telephone are used in order not to feel isolated and lonely; alternatively, more simply, fantasies and wishes to live in a more welcoming and warmer environment are expressed.

Other children are trapped in this network and feel it as a constraint hindering their chances and experiences. They long for the pre-migration period spent in their home country where they were in a more welcoming and less difficult environment. Sometimes, return visits to the 'homeland' reinforce this sense of longing.

Crisis

'There are no doubt periods of transition and crisis in the lives of most of us that are comparable with those which the immigrant experiences when he leaves home to seek his fortune in a strange country. But in the case of the marginal man the period of crisis is relatively permanent [...] [He] is one who lives in two worlds, in both of which he is more or less of a stranger' (Park 1928: 893). That is how Robert Park described the migrant experience in the American metropolis in the early 1900s, the experience of the 'man' who is 'no longer and not yet', who feels distant from his family's habits and models but who does not have definite alternatives to replace them yet.

Certainly, adolescence is a period where 'crisis' is experienced recurrently, denoting the difficulty of changing one's view of oneself and of the world. This experience can be magnified when it is associated with the feeling of being—or being considered—strangers. At this point, subjects may experience a liminal state, a state of suspension, where the abundance of models is perceived as confusion, uncertainty and anomie.

When ethnic networks are weak or non-existent, and when subjects still do not feel able to fully master the rules and competencies required to live in a context where they feel strangers, they could experience feelings of inadequacy and crisis.

I now feel as if I do not have a nationality... I don't feel I belong to either nationality because I was born there but I don't live there, I no longer lead the life

they lead there; here, I don't know many people, I came here to study, that's why I had to come... but being accepted as a friend is not easy, I mean, you know that you're a stranger, that you've come here to start again... so, sometimes I'm a bit confused (Vitte, parents from El Salvador).

Unlike those who can rely on a dense ethnic and national network, these youths experience a condition of marginality and solitude. The loss of the habits and close relations of their own ethnic or national group does not lead to a greater chance of inclusion; on the contrary, it puts them out on a limb, with the need to deal with an environment which is often hostile and difficult to comprehend on one's own, without any support at hand. The experience of change—which is a key passage during adolescence—is magnified and has to be managed without the possibility to rely on the protection of the group or of established ritual practices that could reduce the risks of failure. This condition of uncertainty and confusion is sometimes made worse by a difficult situation at home, where children feel an unbridgeable distance between them and their parents. These parents, in many cases, had lived far away from them; they had been extremely busy trying to ensure success for their migration process while being distant from their children's sphere of affection as well as from their interests and habits.

Mimicry

One of the possible ways to overcome the feeling of being in a marginal position, where each rule seems to disperse in an overabundance of possibilities, is to try and speed up the passage and the transformation through a strategy of mimicry.

When I came at first, I would only listen to the music I had brought with me, salsa... everything came from there, I wouldn't listen to anything from here... There were music programmes on the radio or on TV and I said: 'No! That's horrible, forget about it!' Then, all of a sudden, I started watching them more and more; now, I still have my tapes but I don't usually listen to them, I don't take them with me to play on my Walkman, while you bet I take my Walkman and my Italian music tapes with me when I go out.

But this is because you have changed...

No, it's because I like it, and then maybe it was because I was feeling a bit uncomfortable, I mean, an Italian might come up to me and say: 'Hey, what are you listening to?' I can't always say that I'm listening to salsa, because they might think that I'm too homesick and I don't want to blend in, so I gave up, I only listen to that stuff at home when I feel like it (Milagros, Peruvian parents).

Sometimes, the attempt to mimic and hide one's nationality is linked to the fear of being discriminated or isolated. The negative value attached to being a foreigner, especially if one is included in stigmatised groups such as Albanians and Romanians, might lead to individuals distancing themselves from stereotypical representations and thus encourage conformist behaviour.

I don't like it when somebody says to me: 'But you're a foreigner', I don't like this word at all. I know it's true, but when I talk to somebody and they say: 'You're not Italian, are you?', 'No, I'm not'. 'Where are you from?'. 'Romania'. Well, who knows what they might think and not say... so I'd like to be able to say 'I'm Italian', I'd like to say so because Romanian people who live here don't always behave well... so I'd like to say that I'm Italian because I'm not proud of myself, of being Romanian, not at all (Magda, Romanian parents).

Transnational Identification: Playing Both Sides of the Border Fence

As a general trend, although not always in all details, the models of ethnic closure, marginality and mimicry reproduce forms of identification typical of Fordist migration processes, where assimilation in the host society seemed inevitable, despite the expected uncertainties of the transition period and the possible failure brought about by a withdrawal in ethnic enclaves. Contemporary globalisation processes encourage the development of broader and more complex forms of identification, which are shaped in a transnational dimension.

The self-identification process is not limited to a mutually exclusive choice between the country of departure and the country of arrival; it takes a wide variety of forms, one of which focuses on the immigrants' link with their country of origin without, nonetheless, denying the importance of their life in the country of residence. The transnational dimension is an acknowledgement of the 'migrant' condition, which is considered as an opportunity to strengthen the links with one's own national group back in the motherland and as a privileged state ensuring the development of new relationships and new opportunities within one's own network. Migration does not cause individuals to break ties with their group of origin; on the contrary, it produces a special 'way of being' within the group; it is a chance to enhance their individual status and, at the same time, it proves beneficial for those who live back home.

Living in Italy is a chance to gain professional skills that can be used at the same time in two different contexts. As Upeca, a Sri Lankan girl, noted:

I'd like to go to University to study medicine and become a paediatrician ... then, I'd like to go back to my country and help the children of my country who don't have... well, means of treatment; I'd also like to help orphaned children ... anyway my country is economically weak, so I'd like to help in that way, possibly by becoming a doctor.

However, this longing for return clashes with her being, at least partly, 'Italian'; she acknowledges that the special, regular and strong tie she still keeps with her parents' country of origin depends precisely on her migrant condition, a privileged status from which the entire group benefits:

Every time I go there, I don't want to leave. I don't know... maybe it's because anyway you feel more comfortable, you see people, my uncles, aunts and cousins who love me, maybe also because of the effect they have on me after not seeing each other for so long, so, since they're my family, when I go back, I'm the centre of their

attention, well... I mean, they put you on a pedestal; everything I might ask is a wish, a command... However I know my favourite cousins are used to us helping them and send money to them every month from here... and, obviously, we can do so because we live in Italy.

In this 'long-distance' and 'deterritorialised' belonging, the role and the prestige migrants hold 'back home' depend on their living far away, just like the ultimate sense of what is done 'here' is always subordinated to the link that is maintained with those who live far away.

In other instances, however, the economic dimension appears to be the main focus. Then, taking a transnational approach means using one's extra-territorial position to promote the passage of goods, information or skills in order to gain a financial advantage. This position highlights that transnationality, rather than being grounded in concepts of solidarity, proximity to the group and common advantage, could also be used in a clearly instrumental way and promote the development of individual projects. Being here and at the same time maintaining strong links with one's country of origin opens up *territoires circulatoires* (Tarrius 2000), which thrive on their ability to develop circulation and connection and offer opportunities for upward social mobility.

In my country, we have a factory that makes pipes, plastic pipes, so at the beginning I thought I was coming to Italy to attend university and become an engineer... but then, since I'm not good enough to be an engineer, I think I'll become a chartered accountant, so when I finish my studies I'll start a company, do something...

In Bangladesh?

No, here... now that I live here and that I've studied here, I don't think I'll fit in if I go back... I've studied here, so now I know how it works here... things are different there... so in the future I want to start a company, open a factory here... something big... not stay in my parents' shop... I want to set up a larger-scale operation, also thanks to the fact that I know the system over there too... and this can help me do business here (Namid, Bangladeshi parents).

Like ethnic identification, transnational identification implies a strong sense of inclusion in the group; on the other hand, the ability to maintain strong and stable links is developed at a transnational rather than a local dimension. One needs to be knowledgeable and informed and maintain exchanges and contacts both with those who live in the country of departure and with the network established in the country of arrival. This involves the ability to inhabit a specific space stretching beyond national borders, without however removing or ignoring them. The border remains a major element and its very existence confers specificity to each action, which could potentially deliver a wide range of benefits. Exploiting the ability to cross boundaries means attaining an education or a vocational training that could be used in both contexts as well as maintaining family links and traditional belonging that could increase chances of a successful biographical project. This project necessarily unfolds 'abroad' without necessarily weakening relations with those who stay 'back home'.

Holding Together, Encouraging Connection: Hyphenation

The forms of identification illustrated so far seem to be prevailing among foreign pupils of higher secondary schools who came to Italy in their pre-adolescent phase. On the other hand, most of those who were born in Italy or who came at a pre-school age seem to display forms of identification where there is a weaker sense of belonging to a specific group and where, consequently, the possibility to choose among multiple options is highly valued.

One of these forms of identification tends to adopt an inclusive approach, where the possibility to relate to two worlds that are perceived as different is considered as an asset. Here, considerable importance is attached to the hyphen, to statements of double belonging and to the clear determination on the part of this grouping of interviewees not to give up any of the components of their different cultural frameworks. Subjects identify as 'much more than Italian', opting for the hyphen, the connection that allows them to be at the same time members of one group without giving up other possibilities of belonging. These forms of identification highlight a desire for participation and openly demand access to community life without discrimination or exclusion.

Young people who recognise themselves as having a double belonging appear to share the lifestyles that are assumed to be typical of contemporary Italy; nevertheless, they do not want to give up their multiple identification, which is considered to be a factor of prestige. They do not want to hide it or to recognise it only in private; instead, they claim to exhibit and acknowledge it openly in the public sphere.

I feel more Italian simply because I was born here; I've done all my schooling here, I have friends, like, however I don't deny being Arab

In what sense do you feel Arab, what do you feel you...

Well, Arab, I don't know; maybe simply because my parents are Arabs, I suppose that's enough. Also, honestly, I don't do anything to be Arab, though I don't deny being Arab; on the contrary, I'm glad, because that means I have... I can compare two cultures, I like that... (Amada, Egyptian parents).

Young people who recognise themselves as 'hyphenated Italians' often show a strong interest in the history and the current affairs of their parents' country of origin. They feel 'foreign' with a certain degree of pride without belittling or degrading their strong feeling of being Italian at the same time. Their interest in their parents' country of origin is cultivated by searching out information on the Internet, studying its history and keeping up-to-date on current affairs, asking their parents about their family history and about the period prior to emigration, and spending the summer break with the part of their family who still live in those countries.

In this case, the 'other' identity is often the product of a 'rediscovery' and a 'retrieval'; it calls for proactive work, which involves gathering information and building experiences. These young people fully identify with the life led by their Italian contemporaries: they share their ideas, their lifestyles, their models of consumption and their expectations for the future. On the other hand, though,

through an inclusive rather than a substitution process, they 'retrieve' a sense of belonging of which they have often never had first-hand experience, but which takes on a powerful symbolic meaning.

This concept is effectively summed up in the words of a young Albanian-Italian, who shows a strong attachment to his parents' land and, at the same time, a just-as-strong desire of inclusion, in view of his future life in Italy:

I'm very curious about all that happens in Albania, I'd like to go back and travel all over the country... Except for Tirana and Durrës, I've never seen Albania, unlike my parents; I'd like to go there and see what I haven't seen yet... as for its history, I studied it thoroughly; I like knowing everything that relates to my country... moreover I know Italian politics and history much better than some kids my age... I now feel fifty percent Albanian and fifty percent Italian because I've been here a while now and I've fitted in very well... I see my future here... (Andi, Albanian parents).

Identifying as 'hyphenated Italians' appears to be more frequent in families with a high level of cultural capital, where parents are able to instil in their children an interest in the history and current affairs of their country of origin and show them the right channels catering for this interest. The social and cultural capital held by these parents—who often have a complete mastery of the Italian language, work as language and culture mediators or are actively involved in associations encouraging the inclusion of other migrants from their country—enables children to hold their parents in high regard and to proudly recognise themselves as part of their community of origin. On the other hand, it also encourages the development of all the resources needed to feel part of the Italian system too, like a strong interest in education and in learning the language and a will to achieve successful integration. Their parents' 'difference' is perceived as a value-added element, as an additional resource they can tap into in order to strengthen self-esteem and broaden relational networks.

Cosmopolitanism

The last form of identification emerging from the narratives gathered during our research introduces the figure of the cosmopolitan. This definition usually refers to the tendency to recognise difference as an instrumental, partial and changeable aspect rather than as a solid and unequivocal basis of identification. The use that is made of difference and the meaning it takes each time depend on the context, on the objectives set and on the way in which the various situations are construed. The ways in which a cosmopolitan belonging is claimed are therefore not necessarily constant and consistent; quite the contrary, they seem to be based upon different narrative models.

One representation of cosmopolitan identification, for example, seems to be based upon the metaphor of *errantry* (Clifford 1999). Here, the sense of the self is produced

by identification with the ability and the will to move: personal stability and *roots* are ensured by journeys and *routes*.

I'd like to travel all the time ... to live travelling ... for I don't feel I belong to one culture in particular. When I lived in Croatia, having been born in the Vojvodina region, which is part of Serbia... well, I didn't feel fully Croatian either, so I've never actually lived in the country where I was born ... so I don't feel I belong to one particular culture... anyway, in this case you feel freer, I mean, belonging to one culture... well, it's an obstacle, because it holds you back and it limits your abilities. If, on the other hand, you are freer, you don't feel you belong to a specific place, you are more open to new experiences... Well, I'd like to take with me something of all the places I've been, but without feeling tied to only one of them... (Mirko, Croatian parents).

Differences are considered as positive resources: they offer greater freedom and open up greater opportunities. Keeping together different allegiances and different specificities increases the possibilities for action and makes it possible to adjust to different situations. Identification becomes a resource when it does not force a choice, when it does not reduce options, when it is possible to keep together two worlds that are apparently so different and so far apart.

There is a clear liking of a lifestyle that feeds on variety and that is able to link up divergent elements in one single combination where, however, distinctions can still be made. The life projects made by these 'cosmopolitan' youths show a desire to hang on to multiple differences and multiple allegiances, thus shaping different life patterns that transform 'errantry' into models to achieve full self-realisation.

Another way of structuring cosmopolitan identification rests on the image of *irony* (Rorty 1989). In this case, a relativistic approach seems to prevail, where there is a rejection of the fundamental and lasting value of differences, which are reallocated in the specific contexts where they are displayed. Specificities, rules, traditions and allegiances do not have an absolute value but they hinge on specific times and places; they cannot be definitely and positively measured, compared or assessed on a scale telling right from wrong, good from bad and natural from imposed. Here, an important quality is the ability to recognise and use the different codes shaping and producing the rules that apply in a given context without it being possible or required to express a value judgement on the contents or the bases of these codes. Difference is not attached any value and it does not have established and stable meanings; on the contrary, it acquires its importance and meaning according to different circumstances. What is important is not to claim a specific difference but rather to recognise its biased character and be aware that its validity and its very essence are necessarily context-based: the 'ironic' cosmopolitan is the person who can apply the right codes in the appropriate times and places and with the right people.

When I have to do something Italian, I do it no problem; when I have to do something Eritrean I do that too.

Could you give me an example...

Well, I don't know, for example, in Italy on Sunday I always go to church; when I

travel over there, I have to attend every day, so I do it. I don't know, like, here there are different laws to there, so I comply with the laws here and also with those down there. In the end, I don't make distinctions, I mean... I like both (Maerge, Eritrean parents).

Knowing how to handle difference properly means being sufficiently able to grasp which codes suit a specific context and which languages are recognised and accepted, as well as being sufficiently skilled to use these codes effectively. What is important is not to develop a strong loyalty to one single belonging or one single difference; instead, it is necessary to adapt to the diverse contexts of one's life. Differences appear to be perceived as 'local rules', which cannot be successfully compared or exported from one situation to another and which are validated by the fact that they are the 'norm' in a specific context.

Another variant of cosmopolitan identification recalls the image of a *game*. Here, the thought of living in different situations and contexts, each of which has its own rules, is not only deemed a constituent and unavoidable element of everyday experience but it becomes a potential source of advantage and pleasure. Taking an instrumental approach, the ability to understand and use the specific codes applying in different contexts is considered not only a pre-requisite for fitting in but also a means to gain personal advantages and attain one's goals.

In the game-like structure of the world (Bauman 1995), identification is always relative: one needs to recognise what way of belonging is more favourable given the circumstances and personal goals, though the choice of one option is never exclusive and does not rule out other choices and identifications. 'Being Italian' does not exclude feeling part of other groups and communities, nor does it mean accepting every aspect of Italian life; to the contrary, it is a rational choice made with the aim of broadening one's chances of success or avoiding constraints to one's freedom of choice. Keeping as many options as possible open means recognising oneself in multiple belongings and accepting this. Different contexts facilitate different games, and being able to use different senses of belonging improves one's chances of success. The choice of the most appropriate allegiance and codes of reference to be used in the different contexts remains an individual one, guided by personal preferences and goals.

I'm happy in Italy, I feel this is my place... however, there are things about Egyptian culture that are better than in Italy, like, for example, devotion to family and parents and friendship, there's a greater sense of friendship... On the other hand, there are things in Italy that I like better, like all the comforts, greater study and employment opportunities, freedom... I try to keep both and make the best use of them. I'm now hoping to take Italian citizenship... this is important, because if you have an Italian passport you can travel anywhere... However, I don't want to give up being Egyptian totally—that has its advantages too (Hassan, Egyptian parents).

Having to choose between different identifications is deemed superfluous; it is often perceived as an unnecessary surrender, which reduces possibilities rather than ensuring stability, unity or identity. Identifying in different groups at the same time is perceived as an advantage not to be foregone, rather than a source of crisis and confusion. Instead of trying to solve the supposed conflict generating from multiple belonging, it is necessary to prevent one single possibility overpowering the others.

The tendency towards an identification characterised by irony or game-playing appears to be more common in families with a high cultural capital, which enables a comprehensive perception of one's own living context, where differences are not mutually exclusive choices.

In other forms of cosmopolitan identification, the individual dimension becomes more manifest. In this case, *freedom*, rather than difference, is the key factor. The 'crew' becomes the main site of identification. There, ethnic differences are superseded by community lifestyle, music consumption or dress style; they are an 'added' element, which increases the distance between the peculiarities of the group and the 'normality' of the outside world. Painting graffiti on the walls of the neighbourhood and on public transport, breakdancing and rapping are the main expressions displaying the difference of the group, its uniqueness sparkling against a grey and conservative background. These forms of expression are intentionally presented as 'ghetto culture', as a result and a display of a separation that is both imposed and intentional, of a distance that ensues from a choice and, at the same time, from a highly discriminatory environment.

The emphasis placed on freedom and the exclusive focus on the 'here and now' of immediate experience lead to the last variant of cosmopolitan identification, the *flâneur's* attitude of indifference towards difference.

Origin and belonging are devoid of any value, while individual traits and relationships built with people with whom everyday experience is shared are given a privileged role. What is important is not ethnicity but 'likeability', mutual understanding, solidarity and respect:

I don't want to get hung up about it and say: 'I live here, but I'm not from this country, I'm from that other country'... no way. I'd rather hang around with my friends and have a laugh, take it easy... I don't feel like saying: 'Look, I'm from this country'... I don't really care, I don't spend time mulling over it... it's not a question of being or feeling more Italian and therefore standing up for my Italian friends more than for those from my country, from my neck of the woods... that's not the point. It's about trust... yes, the trust people have in you, that's what it's all about, it's not a question of being from this country or another (Francesco, Salvadorian parents).

Indifference towards difference is also expressed in the rejection of any collocation, in stripping allegiances of all value while praising individual freedom. Individual resources, personal abilities to build meaningful relationships, and being independent take greater importance than belonging, labels imposed from the outside or the bonds of solidarity and uniformity required by strong loyalties. In this case, being

cosmopolitan literally means being citizens of the world because there is no attachment to any specific place:

I was born in Italy, so I'm not a foreigner but, to me, feeling Italian doesn't mean anything, I mean . . . , it calls to mind a quote by a philosopher, who said: 'I am a citizen of the world' . . . so I don't know what feeling Italian or Ethiopian rather than something else, means. I have masses of friends; on my mobile's phonebook there are over three hundred numbers . . . and they're Italian, foreigners, it doesn't matter (Samuel, Ethiopian father, Italian mother).

The individualist attitude taken towards difference that is embodied by the flâneur's gaze is undoubtedly supported by being deeply integrated in diasporic public spheres (Appadurai 1996), where ideas, lifestyles and consumption styles, information, goods and people circulate constantly and easily. A good control of the language and a high degree of cultural capital lead to the acquisition of cultural codes that are generated and disseminated on a global scale and to the ability to use them. These codes form the bases of a youth culture which, despite strong international uniformity, still retains equally strong local specificities.

Conclusion

The forms of identification shown by teenage children of immigrants are complex and varied. They can be classified according to the importance given to difference and to the level of receptiveness to the global dimension. These forms of identification are not conceived as fixed (ideal) social types but, rather, as processual models that can be used or refused according to situations, interests and possibility. Table 1 sets out the scheme we have followed in our analysis.

Some of these models seem to follow traditional allegiances that were customary among first-generation migrant groups: closure into an ethnic enclave, sense of crisis and loss of bearings, and propensity towards mimicry. These models of identification seem to be adopted especially by young people who came to Italy when they had already entered adolescence and who consequently experienced greater and more recent problems of integration and language acquisition.

Ethnic closure, rather than an environment effectively promoting successful integration, seems to be a sort of shield that can be used to protect oneself and lessen everyday difficulties, especially communication problems with the Italian host society. Language skills appear to be a key discriminating factor: the ethnic/national

Table 1. Main identification models among adolescent children of immigrants in Italy

	Localist forms of self-identification	Global forms of self-identification
Attachment, closure	<i>Ethnic enclave</i>	<i>Transnationalism</i>
Participation, integration	<i>Mimicry</i>	<i>Hyphen</i>
New synthesis, transformation	<i>Crisis</i>	<i>Cosmopolitanism</i>

community is above all a language community, a locale where members feel more at ease because they are able to better express themselves and understand each other. This is the case with some youths who came to Italy recently and who can rely on this form of self-identification every time they feel the need to deal with integration difficulties and overcome loneliness. The ethnic network therefore becomes the site of affection, emotions and warm relationships, whereas Italian society is the site of work, study and formal relations.

Owing to the scattering of people with the same national origin and their small numbers, common language and religion therefore become the catalysts and unifying factors of ethnic groups. Consequently, it appears that the only way to build a network wide enough to guarantee solidarity and personal enhancement, possibility of choice and internal differentiation, could be upon a pan-ethnic and inter-national basis.

All forms of exclusion and discrimination are another factor that could further reinforce ethnic identification, since they increase integration difficulties and reduce chances of contact. This makes it more comfortable to stay sheltered within a network that, by contrast, takes on dimensions of likeness, solidarity and warmth (Parreñas 2001).

Other youths who feel adrift but who do not know about or cannot count on the protection of the ethnic network can find useful the forms of identification which stress the dimension of crisis or, alternatively, they can try to use mimicry to make themselves indistinguishable from their native peers.

While these forms of identification are reminiscent of models which are typical of modern and Fordist forms of immigrant integration, the spread of globalisation processes contributes to making them more dynamic and complex. This is the case with young people who, for the most part, were born in Italy or raised in Italy from their early childhood and who live in families with a high cultural and social capital. They are in a privileged position to rely on a wider personal capacity (Melucci 1996) and they are more embedded in a globalised way of thinking. This allows them to use in a more flexible way all these different forms of identification; forms that become more complex and blurred, and tend to include aspects that can appear contrasting or even incoherent. So, while their lifestyle, consumption and values are not substantially different from those of their Italian peers of the same age, and the desire for personal fulfillment, individual freedom and possibility of choice are all indispensable aspects of a life well-lived, they seem less willing to relinquish difference. Indeed, difference itself, far from being a factor that guides and shapes behaviour, is identified as a resource that can help to achieve personal goals and that can be used or put aside according to the relational contexts involved.

In transnational identifications, attention is still placed on the parents' country of origin. The ability to connect, mediate and maintain real ties despite physical distance is a valuable resource, although transnationalism seems to be actualised especially in cultural and symbolic dimensions. Transnationalism does not necessarily require

actual participatory practices in the life of the parents' country; it can be displayed simply through curiosity, knowledge, and readiness to stand up for that country.

Transnational identification seems to be more common among individuals with a fairly high cultural and social capital, who are very well integrated in an ethnic network and who are strongly success- and self-improvement-oriented. This seems to happen more frequently among young people who came to Italy when they were aged between six and thirteen, who have a sound knowledge of and are well integrated into the Italian context, but who retain a vivid memory and a concrete tie with the place where they were born and where they lived during their early childhood. These youths have an excellent mastery of the language of their country of origin as well as of Italian.

The identifications of young people who were born or lived in Italy since early childhood are more complex and mobile. They usually perceive difference as a resource, something useful to keep and be able to use in specific situations. 'Imposed' difference, which is attributed from the outside and which limits chances instead of increasing them, is rejected whereas, on the other hand, difference enabling distinction is welcome. This shows a conditional use of difference, which does not have an absolute value but can be used tactically or strategically (de Certeau 1990) in order to achieve personal objectives, combat discrimination or simply for fun.

Reference networks are global rather than local and difference does not constitute an unequivocal, coherent and stable foundation for the making of the self; on the contrary, it seems to be used mainly as a resource in symbolic conflicts whereby the subjects involved in specific situated relations define situations and construct their identities. Although they use meanings constructed at a macro level and are legitimised by them, these meanings, which are not questioned or challenged—being Italian or Egyptian denotes 'obvious', absolutely plain ways of being—are revised according to local and specific needs. The dominant discourse therefore becomes a demotic discourse that, in accordance with context-related perceptions and requirements, might emphasise or underplay the strength and the permeability of the boundaries between *Us* and *Them* (Baumann 1996).

This is an exploratory piece of research; consequently, several determinants leading to one identification pattern rather than others need to be illustrated in greater detail and undergo a more accurate validation. For example, the effect of factors such as gender and somatic features could dramatically modify the capacity to choose among the different models and could represent a powerful obstacle to passing from one model to another. They both warrant further research. Furthermore, it needs to be borne in mind that our respondents were part of a privileged elite: young people attending higher secondary education who can rely on an array of individual and family resources that are not available to other youths. Scarcer resources are perhaps likely to produce different identification patterns. Nonetheless, this study shows the complexity of processes whereby difference is used and invites a more complex theoretical construction of the experience of second generations.

Notes

- [1] According to data from the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) and the Foundation for Information and Studies on Multiethnicity (I.S.Mu) (Blangiardo 2006; Bonifazi 2007), on 1 January 2006, the largest immigrant group came from Albania (458,000, accounting for 13.7 per cent of the foreign population), followed by Romania (437,000, 13.0 per cent), Morocco (408,000, 12.2 per cent), Ukraine (180,000, 5.4 per cent) and China (169,000, 5.0 per cent).
- [2] Following the 9/11 terrorist attack and subsequent events, people 'of Islamic faith' had the most negative image. The representation of Albanians was also largely hostile, as a result of news stories about robberies, assaults and frauds (King and Mai 2002). As for the other groups, they do not seem to be characterised by any particular or established stereotypes.
- [3] The number of foreign pupils in Italian schools has increased seven-fold in the last ten years, from 70,000 in 1998 to 500,000 in 2007.
- [4] The youths involved in our study can be grouped as follows: 22 interviewees came to Italy when they were over 14 years of age, 35 entered Italy when aged between 7 and 13, and the 23 remaining respondents are 'true' second generation (born in Italy).
- [5] The breakdown of our respondents according to parental nationality is as follows: Central and South America (excluding Brazil) 39, Brazil 4, Asia (excluding China) 17, China 7, North Africa and Arab countries 20, Sub-Saharan Africa 9, Central and Eastern Europe 9. Compared to national data on immigrant origins, youths of North-East-African origin are over-represented because Egyptians, Somalis and Eritreans are Milan's longest-established migration groups; consequently, they make up the largest section of the city's 'real' second generation.

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