Alice Elliot

LEGAL, SOCIAL AND INTIMATE BELONGING: MOROCCAN AND ALBANIAN SECOND GENERATION MIGRANTS IN ITALY

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LEGAL, SOCIAL AND INTIMATE BELONGING: MOROCCAN AND ALBANIAN SECOND GENERATION MIGRANTS IN ITALY

ALICE ELLIOT
University College London, Department of Anthropology

Abstract

The paper explores how second generation youths in Italy are creating and re-elaborating their life plans, sense of identity and belonging amidst the many pressures, influences and legal/social barriers they encounter in their daily lives. Following recent anthropological theorisations of identity and belonging, the project aims to highlight the importance of acknowledging the many, interrelated and multilayered, factors which impinge on second generations’ lives and identity formation and argues how classical theories of integration - conceptualised as a straight line which runs from “parents’ culture” to “host country’s culture” - are theoretically inadequate. The paper integrates the existing literature on second generation migrants with fieldwork conducted in northern Italy during the summer months of 2008 with young adults of Albanian and Moroccan origin and discusses sense of belonging and identity formation with reference to legal and social exclusion and the intimate spheres of sexuality and male-female relationships highlighting how Italy’s specific political, legal and social context needs to be seen as central to immigrants’ children’s identity formation and life trajectories.
Introduction

“Alice, ask me all the questions you want but please don’t ask me whether I feel more Italian or Moroccan. It’s the most pointless question in the world.”

(C., 22M, Moroccan parents)

Italy has only relatively recently become a country of in-migration and the presence of migrants’ children is a relatively new phenomenon for the country. As various studies confirm, however, the number of young migrants and Italian-born children of immigrants is rapidly increasing (see Caritas/Migrantes, 2007), making those second generation migrants who are either approaching or have reached adulthood “involuntary pioneers” (Andall, 2002:390) of a growing reality. This paper focuses on these young “involuntary pioneers” and integrates the existing literature with findings from fieldwork conducted in northern Italy involving young adults of Albanian and Moroccan origin in order to follow how various expectations, pressures, legal and social barriers, personal projects and desires are interlocked in the creation of these young people’s life trajectories, identities and sense of belonging.

Children of immigrants have always been an object of speculation (academic, political and journalistic) on ‘identity’, and a vast amount of literature has been published on the subject of second generation identity (Song, 2003; Thomson and Crul, 2007). Together with this, political figures have argued how children of immigrants present a threat because of their (alien) religious and/or cultural identities and identifications (Branca, 2007; Allievi, 2005) and a general worry about whether second generations will “culturally adapt” and integrate in a given host country can be often detected both in mass media coverage and scholarly publication on the issue (Brouwer, 2006; Song, 2003).

As far as social science research is concerned, the question of the identity of the so-called second generations has been tackled from a variety of perspectives and has used various theoretical frameworks which have evolved over time. Thus, while the initial interest in second generations centred on, as Baldassar argues, “attempting to gauge how ‘ethnic’ they were” (Baldassar, 1999:2) on the one hand and analysing their (theorised as inevitable) “culture conflict” on the other, scholarly interest has (partly) shifted, particularly in anthropology, to the analysis of how children of immigrants may have a multifaceted, situational, hybrid and complex sense of identity (Hall, 2002; Song, 2003; Malson et al., 2002; Frisina, 2007; Sansone, 1995). Anthropologists such as Hall (2002) and Baldassar (1999) have argued, in fact, how the conceptualisation of second generation identity and subjectivity expressed in terms of a “cultural dilemma” between a (supposedly homogeneous) ethnic culture of parents and a (also supposedly homogeneous) culture of the receiving country not only is theoretically questionable but also risks overlooking the “more fluid, ambiguous and plural processes of cultural production that occur in the daily life” (Hall, 2002:149) of second generation young people. In this way, then, anthropologists have also criticised those traditional models of integration which see children of immigrants either following the straight line towards total assimilation into the mainstream culture or remaining “locked” in their parents’ culture and tradition (Berthoud, 2000). Hall (2002) argues in fact how the young British Sikhs encountered in her fieldwork experience a variety of cultural influences in their daily life and, rather

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1 The term “second generation migrants” is habitually used to describe those children with one or both migrant parents who were either born in the parents’ “host” country or migrated to the host country with their parents before adolescence (Portes and Rumbaut, 2005). As various author have argued it is an extremely problematic term as it classifies young people as being immigrants despite the fact that they were either born or spent most of their lives in the country their parents migrated to (see Frisina, 2007)

2 See Amit-Talai and Wulff (1995) who argue how overlooking the cultural productions of young people is actually a general characteristic of anthropology and how the discipline often fails to see youths in their own right and as active cultural agents but, rather, tends to conceptualise them as ‘incomplete adults’. 
than having to choose between two dichotomous life trajectories and identity formations, they continually cross different cultural fields which require differently situated identities and forms of subjectivity (Sansone, 1995; Amit-Talai, 1995). Different cultural fields may require what Sansone (1995) terms a skilful “management of ethnicity” and skills in the presentation of self according to each specific circumstance (see also Malson et al., 2002):

“I sometimes say I’m Albanian and sometimes say I’m Italian. It depends. First I weigh up what kind of person I’m speaking to... they have no way of guessing if I don’t say it...sometimes I say I’m Albanian, just to, you know, enjoy the reaction” (V., 18F, Albanian parents)

Sense of identity, then, not only cannot be evaluated within an either (Albanian) or (Italian) framework but also needs to be theorised as something relational, something that is constructed and elaborated in continual “conversation” with a myriad of people, discourses, experiences and, especially in the case of children of immigrants living in Italy, legal policies.

In this paper, I develop these recent theorisations of identity and belonging with reference to young women and men of Moroccan and Albanian origin. Rather than a comparative study which contrasts Moroccan and Albanian second generations, the study analyses those common themes which emerged during conversations with my interviewees and attempts to elicit what being a young second generation migrant in Italy entails. In particular, the paper focuses on how legal and social exclusion affects the sense of belonging and identity of second generation youths and how these exclusionary practices are reworked, together with pressures and expectations from family and peers, within the intimate sphere of relationships and sexuality.

**Methodology**

Research for this paper was carried out during the summer months of 2008 in two northern Italian cities with Moroccan and Albanian second generation youths. Fieldwork consisted mainly of in-depth, lengthy interviews with nineteen respondents of Albanian (six) and Moroccan (thirteen) origin and included participating in young second generation's social and political events, organising focus groups and paying regular visits to interviewees both when with their families and with their friends. Interviewees were aged between 18 and 25, had both parents of either Moroccan or Albanian origin and were either born in Italy or had moved to Italy with their parents when young, mostly between the ages of 2 and 12.

Various routes were followed to contact second generation youths. Firstly, I returned to those migrant women I had conducted fieldwork with during previous research (Elliot 2007) who I knew had older children, as I was particularly interested in collecting perspectives from different generations within the same family. I then asked these sons and daughters of my previous interviewees to help me contact other children of immigrants and proceeded with this “snowball method”. Simultaneously I contacted the president of the “Giovan Musulmani d’Italia” (Young Muslims of Italy) organisation and the “G2 network”, a prominent national organisation formed in 2005 by second generation young adults, whom put me in touch with local representatives of their organisations.

The location of the interviews was chosen by respondents. All interviews were conducted sitting in bars or cafeterias and these “open air” interviews, particularly the ones conducted in well-frequented bars, were extremely useful for meeting other second generation youths who would

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3 Most interviewees arrived in Italy in the early/mid nineties through family reunion with their fathers who had previously migrated, in the late eighties as far as Moroccan fathers were concerned (Salih, 2003) and early nineties for Albanian fathers / whole families (King and Mai, 2004).

4 See their websites: [http://www.giovanimusulmani.it](http://www.giovanimusulmani.it); [http://www.secondegenerazioni.it](http://www.secondegenerazioni.it)
often stop by and join in conversations and discussions.

Interviews touched on a variety of subjects related to interviewees’ everyday lives, immigration history, future projects, legal status, relationships, family life, sexuality, interaction with peers, religious attachments, visits to parents’ countries of origin, immigration laws, local Albanian/Moroccan immigrant “community”, racism, gender inequity, marriage and police stations. Although topics of discussion had been delineated prior to starting the interviewing process, I intentionally allowed the conversations with my informants to be open-ended and unstructured in order to collect not only what concerned me as a researcher but also what my young interviewees saw as being central to their experiences and life trajectories.

The limits of hybrid identity: legal exclusion, social exclusion and belonging

“do I have Italian nationality?? Are you joking Alice? They can barely manage to give me the right documents to be a legal immigrant.” (B., 22M, Moroccan parents)

Many of the recent anthropological theorisations of identity formation of second generation youths are related to early theories on globalisation and diaspora, most notably Homi Bhabha’s concept of “third space”, a space where new hybrid cultural forms emerge at the intersection of disparate cultures (Bhabha, 1990). With its emphasis on mixing, movement and fluidity, Bhabha’s conceptualisation of hybrid space has been seen as a useful way to theorise the identity of second generation minorities (Song, 2003; Malson et al., 2002; Baldassar, 1999). The emancipatory, liberating and optimistic tone of these analyses of hybrid identities, however, often risk (amongst other things) overlooking the very real obstacles, constraints and pressures young second generation people face in their cultural productions and in the process of forming their identities. What clearly emerged from my fieldwork in Italy, in fact, was the profound impact Italy’s legal management of immigrants and the media and political discourse in the public sphere had on my informants’ everyday lives and, thus, on their identity formation and sense of belonging. In particular, both racist comments from peers and yearly queues outside police stations emerged as having the effect of reiterating a sense of exclusion and non-belonging in Italy. Many interviewees highlighted the irony of being treated as unwelcome guests in the only country they actually felt at home in and highlighted how frustrating, demanding and enraging it was to have to deal with Italy’s complicated and ever-changing legal policies on the one hand and its overwhelming political racism which trickled down directly into their classrooms on the other.

Legal exclusion and partial belonging

Although the literature on second generation youths both in Europe and North America does take into account the effects of racism and public political discourse on these young people’s lives (see for example Crul and Vermeulen, 2003; Rumbaut and Portes, 2001) few case studies talk of laws and legislations having as profound an impact on immigrants’ children as I found to be the case in Italy. Without exception, respondents said that their legal exclusion and vulnerability was one of the main sources of problems, frustration and worries in their daily life. The major role played by “avere i documenti” (having documents/papers) in my interviewees’ narratives, as compared to other ethnographies from European/North American contexts, can be seen as mainly due to the generally restrictive and exclusionary immigration policies and regulations in force in Italy (King and Mai, 2004; Grillo and Pratt, 2002) and the extremely limited legal status assigned to children of immigrants in particular (Andall, 2002; Frisina 2007). Firstly, Italy is one of the few countries in Europe that still applies a ius sanguinis rather than a ius solis rationale in the granting of citizenship rights. While the latter confers citizenship to all children born in a given country, the former confers citizenship only to the children of existing citizens. The main implication of this rationale is that
children born in Italy of immigrant parents do not automatically (legally) belong to the country; a 1992 law, however, specifies that if they remain continually resident in Italy from when they were born they can “request Italian citizenship within one year of turning eighteen” (Andall, 2002:394). As Andall’s (2002) ethnographic work with African-Italians in Milan shows and many of my informants confirmed, however, the process of acquiring citizenship for Italian-born sons and daughters of immigrants is neither unproblematic nor automatic.

In the case of children of immigrants not born on Italian soil but who moved to Italy in the early stages of their lives the bureaucratic process for obtaining citizenship is even more complex and problematic. Second generation youths who arrived in Italy at a very young age are treated in the same way as any other immigrant requiring naturalisation, and thus have to prove ten years of continual legal residence in Italy and economic and residential stability (Gubbini, 2006; Trani, 2007; Pastore, 2001). When one of the parents within an immigrant family manages to be naturalised as an Italian citizen, generally only the wife and children aged under eighteen can also obtain citizenship. This often creates paradoxical situations in immigrant families with older siblings still having a foreign nationality and parents and younger siblings being Italian nationals:

“my father got a positive response to his citizenship application three years after he had applied and ten days after my eighteenth birthday, ten days!...so my younger sisters and my mother automatically obtained citizenship too while I, because I was eighteen and thus “independent” from my father, remained a Moroccan national...so now there are 4 Italians in my family and one Moroccan...me!...when I received the news that everyone was going to become Italian except me... I felt so hurt, and angry, and frustrated...” (O., 18F, Moroccan parents)

Turning eighteen for many informants was something of a “culture shock”, as suddenly they were no longer legally linked to their parents and had to obtain a separate legal permit (either for work or for study) to reside in the country they had always lived in:

“you can’t just say ok I’m eighteen, I want to take a break, think about the future, go on holiday and then start university or simply I want my parents to support me for a while, be a real Italian no? no!... at eighteen you have to decide...either you get a work permit or a study permit...there is no other alternative...and you see your school friends, the people you grew up with that are doing sweet nothing and you risk being deported if you don’t make a quick decision and organise yourself...” (B., 22M, Moroccan parents)

“I’ve had my residence permit, granted for family reunification with my father, since I was a child...one morning they call me to the questura and these officers say ‘listen miss we have to send you back to Albania because you are eighteen now’...I was shocked...my mind blanked...so it comes out that instead of asking for a work or study permit I had simply asked to renew the family reunification documents, which are not valid once you turn eighteen, because you cannot be considered “dependent” on your parents any more and need a separate permit to stay in Italy...obviously nobody had told me...I remember I nearly broke out in tears...and just kept repeating ‘I have no one in Albania, no one’...my mother my father my brother were here...I remember telling them this...who am I going to stay with in Albania I kept saying...who?” (D., 24F, Albanian parents)

A vast amount of literature on migration highlights how immigration laws and policies affect immigrants’ lives in a variety of ways; scholars have argued, for example, how legal structures may have specific negative effects on migrant women (Boyd, 2006; Salih, 2003; Anderson, 2007; Lutz, 1997), how issues of legality and exclusion may impact reproductive choices (Bledsoe, 2004) and

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5 the processing of citizenship applications should take, by law, no longer than 730 days (Trani, 2007)
6 the police station where foreigners have to go to renew their legal residence permit for staying in the country
marriage arrangements (Szczepanikova, 2007; Fleischer, 2007) and how, in general, laws that regulate immigration and citizenship rights can be seen as legislative machinery that produces and reproduce systems of inequality (Szczepanikova, 2007; King and Mai, 2004; Mandel, 1995). In the light of my interviews, however, I would argue that questions of legal status and vulnerability take on an extra, in a way more profound and disturbing, dimension for second generation youths. As I believe the quotes above show, the question of having/not having documents, citizenship or residence permits is, for young second generation individuals, not only an annoying and frustrating burden which has important practical and material consequences but also has the power to instil in them a sense of being different, separate and unequal from the people around them (Mandel, 1995). In this way, then, Italian laws and legislation on immigration have a direct impact on immigrants’ children’s sense of identity and belonging (see Andall, 2002). All respondents spoke of Italian immigration laws and their burdensome requirements as being one of the main obstacles against them feeling “Italian” and, also, as being one of the clearest reminders that Italy, as a nation, has no intention of considering them Italian:

“... I feel well integrated...I feel Italian...I have Moroccan parents...and I’m proud of it...what’s the problem?7 it’s not like I spend my days saying ‘oh mamma mia! Am I Italian or maybe only half Italian or am I Moroccan?’...I’m happy with who I am...then as soon as you walk into the police station you feel an immigrant, as soon as you join the queue to renew your permesso di soggiorno [residence permit] and police officers start treating you as if you’re an ignorant peasant...well that’s when you start to feel like an immigrant, you begin to realise that for Italy whether you were born here, lived here all your life or whether you have just got off a gommone8 it makes no difference: you are and will always be an immigrant for Italy” (B., 22M, Moroccan parents)

In her analysis of the multilayered exclusions that children of Turkish immigrants living in Germany are subjected to, anthropologist Ruth Mandel came (more than thirteen years ago) to the same conclusion that B. and many other of my informants drew from their continual contact with Italy’s legal system: “children of migrant workers in many ways are victims of a set of systems stacked against them. This inter-connected systems [...] actually reinforce a status quo, serving to ensure that this group remains separate and unequal” (Mandel, 1995:265). In her ethnographic account, Mandel analyses the role assigned to children of immigrants by German society and argues how these children are inevitably conceptualised as foreigners and thus subject to implicit “segregationist discourses” which are coupled with a social and legal structure that separates the second generation from the host society (Mandel, 1995). I would argue that, at least from the legal point of view, Italy is following Germany’s example to the letter. As the last quote highlights, in fact, it is not just the legal structure itself but also what it expects young people to do in order to abide by laws that tend to keep second generation youth separate from the “host” society. Young people of the second generation who have neither Italian citizenship nor a carta di soggiorno (a kind of long term residence permit) are required to renew their documents (permesso di soggiorno – residence permit) at least once a year9. Thus, Italy’s legal structure expects these youths, at least once a year, to go to offices and talk to people who explicitly and implicitly reinforce their sense of non belonging to the place they live in:

“you have to queue hours outside the police station...then you are crammed in a small room like cattle or something...then, if you are lucky to get to the desk before the immigration office closing hour, you have a really arrogant person behind a glass thing talking to you as if you were stupid...

7 B. is referring to newspaper articles that portray children of immigrants in Italy as a confused and dilemma-stricken generation
8 the rubber dinghy, which has become the stereotypical symbol of clandestine arrivals from both Albania and Africa to Italy’s southern shores
9 By not renewing a residence permit, or by not renewing it on time, an individual automatically becomes an illegal immigrant
and taking your yearly 70 Euro...and then you get out, of course not with your actual renewed
document but with a stupid piece of paper that says you are waiting for the renewed document
[receipt of residence permit]10 ...and you feel like running away, it’s like every time I go there I come
out feeling awful, angry, humiliated...I am so full of anger I need to have a walk on my own before I
go back home...” (M., 22F. Moroccan parents)

Social exclusion and partial belonging: the case of schools

Immigration offices and police headquarters are not the only spaces where “difference” between
second generation youths and the “host society” is reiterated and inscribed. The general political
climate in Italy, characterised as it is by an increasing criminalisation and negative stereotyping of
immigrants (Grillo and Pratt, 2002; Frisina, 2007; King and Mai, 2004; Dal Lago, 1999),
contributed to interviewees’ sense of (not) belonging and of being (seen as) different in other areas
of their daily lives and this clearly emerged when talking about their experiences in Italian schools.

Various Italian studies have analysed the status of children of immigrants in Italian schools and
have mainly focussed on educational accomplishments and linguistic difficulties of “immigrant”
youths. A recent report by an established migration research foundation (I.S.MU) on second
generation students in Italy concludes that educational achievements of second generation middle
school students are generally lower than those of Italian students (Casacchia et al., 2007). From
such reports it may seem that one of the main problems second generation youths encounter in their
educational career is that of keeping up with the academic performance of their “Italian
counterparts” (Impicciatore, 2007).

Other, more anthropological, studies however are increasingly highlighting how the academic
performance and educational career of second generation youths cannot be solely interpreted in the
light of the supposedly intrinsic “disadvantages” of children of immigrants but also needs to be
assessed in the light of the (academic and social) treatment these students receive in local schooling
environments (Zinn, 2007; Fisher and Fisher, 2002; Omodeo, 2003). Interestingly, most of my
informants did not consider their academic performance an issue and, confirming various
anthropological analyses, highlighted the specific type of treatment received from educational
institutions on the one hand and peers on the other as having been “in the way” or as having
constituted hurdles for their educational career and, interlinked with this, their sense of belonging.
Like Immigration Offices and police stations, schools played a central role in creating a sense of
“difference” in many of my informants’ narratives.

Various studies in the European context have shows how marginalisation of second generation
youths often begins in schools where “children of immigrants are already selected out to vocational
education at a young age, with the result that they go to school where the majority of pupils is of
immigrant background” (Thomson and Crul, 2007:1033). Once again, Italy seems to emulate older
immigration countries as most respondents reported how their teachers “advised” them to attend
professional/vocational high schools rather than more academic/university-oriented ones:

“I was the best one in class in middle school, I’ve always loved studying...I wanted to be a
lawyer...but the consiglio di classe [teachers’ assembly] advised my father to send me to an istituto

10 receipt of residence permit (ricevuta) – it can take up to six/nine months to get the actual papers renewed,
meanwhile immigrants are required to carry the receipt as proof of their legal status. Although the receipt allows
immigrants to stay in the country legally they cannot, for example, leave (with a few exceptions) Italy (so, for
example, youths cannot go on school trips outside Italy) or, in some universities, officially register their exams until
they receive the actual residence permit. Given that permits to stay usually last no longer than a year, immigrants
often find themselves possessing an actual valid residence permit only for a few months each year.
professionale [vocational high school where you learn the skills for a specific job] and my father said well if the teachers say so...and so I went to this istituto professionale...full of Moroccans, nearly more Moroccans than Italians (laughs)” (U., 22F, Moroccan parents)

“it’s automatic really...if your parents are immigrants, then you are an immigrant and then the only school you can possibly attend is a vocational school which teaches you how to work...and surprise surprise! That’s what my teachers told me to do when I finished middle school at 15...and so I ended up going to an ITC [technical-commercial high school]” (B., 22M, Moroccan parents)

In her ethnographic study of Albanian primary school students in the south of Italy, Zinn highlights how “Italian schools appear widely off the mark in terms of striving to reach the intercultural pedagogic ideal of considering diversity [...] a resource” (Zinn, 2005:263). The fact that teachers tend to send children of immigrants to vocational rather than university-oriented schools is arguably one of the most blatant examples of Italy being “off the mark” in terms of “managing difference”\(^\text{11}\). Rather than seeing their students’ “different” origins as a resource, these teachers (and the educational system in general – see Omodeo, 2003) seem to identify their students’ “immigrant legacy” as a marker of difference which inevitably directs them towards work rather than study, regardless of of their academic ability\(^\text{12}\). As Mandel (1995) and Crul and Vermeulen (2003) highlight in the case of the highly tracked German schooling system, this general attitude toward “immigrant” students can become a self fulfilling prophecy by often having the result of demotivating youths from continuing with their studies, both because of the poor quality of the schools and because of these schools’ unidirectional push towards the labour market\(^\text{13}\). This attitude directly and indirectly impacts second generation youths’ sense of belonging and identity as it tends to single them out as “different” from their schoolmates because of their parents’ origins.

Children of immigrants are identified as different not only by their teachers but also by their peers. What also may be seen as impacting my informants’ educational trajectories and their sense of belonging, in fact, were the repeated instances of bullying and open racism many spoke about, involving both individual classmates and whole classes. For some respondents, bullying and racism had profound effects on their academic and personal trajectories. As King and Mai argue with respect to Albanians living in Italy, “stereotypical representations [of Albanian immigrants] directly impact on life trajectories [becoming] powerful agents of discrimination infiltrating every aspect of social interactions” (King and Mai, 2004:471):

“my high school was a nightmare ... from when I first joined my class on the first day of school to the final exam five years later these girls would pick on me...they would say the usual stuff, you know, ‘marocchina di merda’ [Moroccan shit], ‘go back to your country’...which always made me laugh because Italy is my country...I think they just hated the fact that I wore fashionable clothes, that I was really good at school and that I was a stupid Moroccan...it killed me really...I mean I know they were stupid and ignorant but can you imagine five years of people whispering at you when you go past, of nobody speaking to you in class...” (O., 18F, Moroccan parents)

“...and then I became really quiet, introverted, hoping that no one would notice me, that they would just leave me alone...I’m not a passive person you see? So when my classmates would open the window when I walked past, you know because I’m Albanian and so I smell, I would confront them,

\(^{11}\) See Grillo and Pratt (2002) for a detailed analysis of Italy’s politics of recognising difference.

\(^{12}\) This is also confirmed by the statistical data of the Italian Ministry of Education which shows how, in the academic year 2005/2006, while 41% of high school foreign students were attending a vocational school, only 19.9% of Italian students were (OiPF – rapporto 2007, 2007).

\(^{13}\) Interestingly although most of my informants attended a vocational course in high school nearly all of them decided to enroll in university after high school instead of entering the labour market for which they had been trained - a particular kind of academic trajectory which suggests active decision making on the part of these second generation youths.
I would show them how stupid they were...but it was useless because nobody would help me, the whole class would just laugh when some poor idiot made a comment about Albanians, or immigrants, or myself...‘Albanian bitch’ they would say...so you start to change, you start to get so tired of fighting you tend to just become quiet, smaller and smaller, praying for the last day of school to arrive quickly” (E., 21F, Albanian parents)

Informants received different kinds of comments and insults according to whether they were of Moroccan or Albanian origin, confirming King and Mai’s observation of how the way immigrants are “routinely provoked [in daily life] mirrors the hegemonic and gendered prejudices towards immigrants existing within society at large” (King and Mai, 2004:464). Thus, while the bullying of students of Albanian origin made use of the heavy connotation of inferiority, backwardness and criminality the word *albanese* (Albanian) has taken on in the Italian language (see King and Mai, 2004), insults aimed at informants of Moroccan origin often acquired religious connotations (Brouwer, 2006; Vertover and Rogers, 1998). Unsurprisingly, September 11 represented a heavily charged moment for all informants with parents from the Maghreb: suddenly their religion - or the religion of the country of origin of their parents - became an “extra” and central marker of difference from their Italian peers:

“September 11...suddenly everything changed, I felt people were looking at me in a way they had never done before...as if they had realised I am Muslim for the very first time...and at school it was a nightmare...teachers and students all accusing me and speaking about ‘your religion’ and ‘your people’...I was suddenly a representative of the whole Muslim Ummah! ... had to spend my last year in high school defending myself from continual accusations...I know this happened to Muslim second generations everywhere but I was the only Muslim loser in the whole school! (laughs) So not only was I a filthy immigrant (laughs) which was of course incorrect because I was born in this stupid country...but also a terrorist...I picked up a lot of definitions in my high school years...(stops to think) Alice I can smile about it now but it used to hurt...it actually still hurts” (L., 24F, Moroccan parents)

Creating intimate identities: relationships, sexuality and reproduction

Despite the prominent role played by both legal and social exclusion in second generation youths’ lives, ‘identity’ and ‘belonging’ cannot be analysed as merely the product of exclusionary practices. What emerged during fieldwork, in fact, was how young second generation youths were constructing, negotiating and actively elaborating identities and life trajectories amidst the various pressures, modes of behaviour and legal and social exclusion they confronted in their daily lives (see Hall, 2002). Interviewees were reworking Italy's exclusionary practices in a variety of ways and at a variety of levels, from participating in second generation pressure groups to an active and politicized assertion of their religious identity which inverted negative meanings associated with Islam and transformed “difference”, here in the form of a specific religious affiliation, as an opportunity to create one’s personal sense of belonging and identification rather than as a stigmatizing limit (Frisina, 2007; Chaouki, 2005; Vertovec and Rogers, 1998; Samad and Sen, 2007; Dwyer, 1998).14

Arguably, however, social and legal exclusion were not reworked solely at the 'public', visible level of political and religious activism. Exclusion, sense of belonging and identity were written and rewritten also within the most intimate spheres of informants’ lives such as those of female-male

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14 Part of the research on which this paper is based was dedicated to following how religious belief, involvement in religious movements and religious visibility may be seen as creating a new, active and multiple sense of belonging and identity for young second generation Muslims in Italy – for this discussion see my MRes Dissertation “Legal, social and intimate belonging: Moroccan and Albanian second generation migrants in Italy” submitted to the UCL Anthropology Department in 2008.
relationships, sexuality and reproduction, where informants delicately balanced family expectations and pressures on relationships and marriage, peer pressures and judgements on sexual behaviour and their personal desires, outlooks and future plans with racist discourses and legal exclusion. Confirming recent anthropological theories on second generation youths’ identity, what clearly emerged was not only the central role ‘intimacy’ played in the identity formation of young interviewees (Baldassar, 1999; Smart and Shipman, 2004) but also how this intimate identity formation was an ongoing, multilayered, situational and negotiated process, involving a myriad of responsibilities, pressures and projects.

**Family and relationships**

The family has often been analysed as being one of the main arenas of socialisation, conflicts and identity formation for second generation youths (Anwar, 1998; Stepick et al., 2001; Lacoste-Dujardin, 2000). In particular, much literature, including demographic literature (Lappegard, 2006; Hennink et al, 1999), has focused on the conflicts, compromises and negotiations within immigrant families concerning sons’ and (often primarily) daughters’ interactions with the opposite sex and how these conflicts, compromises and negotiations impact on young people’s constructions of ethnicity, gender and sexuality (Baldassar, 1999). Such literature often discusses the pressure exerted by immigrant parents on second generation youths to maintain socially constructed ethnic boundaries through their behaviour with the opposite sex (Barth’s (1969) seminal work; Brouwer, 1998; Drury, 1991; Mork, 1998). Other authors have argued how parental control over their children’s relationships is the result of a “fear of ‘losing their children’” to mainstream society (Mork, 1998:137) and/or of the fear that the honour of the family will result being jeopardised by their daughters’ interactions with boys (Kucukcan, 1998; Hennink at al., 1999). Some, mostly anthropological, literature, however, also highlights the high degree of variability in immigrant families’ attitudes towards their siblings’ social and sexual relationships, arguing how factors such as education, professional position, country and even parents’ area of origin must be seen as determining factors in the degree of parental control sons and daughters of immigrants are subject to (Killian, 2006; Lacoste-Dujardin, 2000).

The variability in immigrant families’ attitudes towards female-male relationships was confirmed when interviewees described a variety of family pictures and different degrees of parental control. All female respondents however, spoke of some kind of parental interference as far as relationships with men were concerned. In particular, many girls highlighted how relationships with boys was one of the main areas of conflict within their families, often not directly because of their desire to have a boyfriend but because many parents attributed their unwillingness to give their daughters more freedom (to go to parties, go clubbing or simply ‘hang out’) to the fact that members of the opposite sex would be present at such events (Brouwer, 1998). Interestingly, numerous girls expressed frustration not so much because their parents were worried about their daughters interacting with men and possibly having illicit affairs but rather because their parents were restricting their freedom for the sake of the extended family and the local Albanian/Arab community:

“my mother...she never said don’t go out because it’s dangerous, you might get raped and that... she always said don’t go out because what if anyone sees you with men? sometimes I say to her so if ever I get raped in a street while I’m going to school your first concern will not be whether your daughter is fine but praying God that stupid auntie [auntie’s name] didn’t walk past at that moment and see it happen (laughs)” (E., 21F, Albanian parents)

“my parents don’t seem to be able to handle the pressure from other Moroccans...and so I can’t go

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15 For an early, influential analysis of these mechanisms see Goddard’s (1987) study of the relation between honour and shame, female sexuality and group identity in Naples.
out because I might speak with a guy and some Moroccan might see me and then what would they think of us...they depend so much on others’ judgements, it makes me angry” (O., 18F, Moroccan parents)

Girls thus confirmed what Hennink et al. found in their study of young Asian women’s relationships in Britain: “even though an individual family may tolerate certain behaviour, there was often concern about how such behaviour would be judged within their Asian community and whether it would have a negative impact on the family’s reputation” (Hennink et al., 1999:877). Various scholars have analysed the role of gossip within immigrant “communities” as a powerful means of social control on young second generation individuals (Kucukcan, 1998; Hall, 2002; Anwar, 1998; Hendrickx et al., 2002; Malson et al., 2002). Male and female interviewees alike highlighted how gossip travelled on preferential tracks as far as their local Albanian/Moroccan community was concerned and some of them had devised techniques to counteract the effects of rumours:

“the secret is to get there before the gossips. So if you do something and you know it might be even remotely judged as wrong...I mean Alice this might mean that you are talking to your female classmate outside school and your auntie comes by on her bike and sees you...you need to call or text your mother immediately so when uncles and cousins or whoever say oh I’ve heard your son has done this...she can just, coolly say yes, yes I know.” (Z., 22M, Albanian parents)

In the light of theories regarding the maintenance of ethnic boundaries mentioned above, the pressure and control informants describe as being exerted by their parents on relationships and sexual behaviour could be seen not so much as something loosely linked to parents’ “culture”, but rather as a peculiarity of their condition as immigrants (see Hall, 2002) and certainly most interviewees regarded the control they received as being specifically linked to the immigrant status of their parents, with many noticing the higher degree of freedom in both movement and pre-marital relationships girls enjoyed during their visits to their parents’ countries of origin (van der Zwaard, 2003). Rather than explaining the difference between the attitude of their parents and that of their parents’ generation “back home” in terms of the theoretical concept of ethnic boundaries and their parents’ greater anxiety about maintaining a degree of “Albanianness/Arabness” in the family, many interviewees attributed this difference to their parents having been “left behind” by changes that had taken place in their countries of origin, because of their migration. This view clearly emerges in the following conversation I had with two Albanian girls:

D.: “things have changed in Albania...but our parents, who left the country a long time ago, they're still with those strict things...there, they are developing more...for example girls lead a life there that for us is shocking...”
E.: “[interrupts D.] yes because there you have your neighbour who is Albanian like you and you say well if they let their children I’ll let mine too...instead here your neighbour is Italian and so if they allow their children to do things you say oh well they are Italian, they have their culture...this is why when people come here they develop less, they don’t realise that traditions are changing back home...”
D.: “in Albania everything is different now...”
E.: “because they have developed like here...it’s even worse because they’ve had the freedom boom while here things have developed slowly”
D.: “also how they dress...they are all so trendy...”
E.: “they are much more provocative...girls give you bad looks if you go there with tennis shoes (laughs)”
D.: “yes...actually when I go there now...I feel a peasant! (laughs)...because you see all the girls with these short skirts and high heels and extremely low-cut tops...”

(D., 24F and E., 21F, Albanian parents)
**Brothers, sisters and 'gender equality'**

The monitoring of relationships and behaviour within families does not happen just between parents and children. Siblings often played a central role in controlling each other’s movements, at times “covering up” for each other, at times acting as mediums and at other times extending their parents’ monitoring powers (Joseph, 1994; Lacoste-Dujardin, 2000; Smart and Shipman, 2004; Matias, 2007; Hall, 2002). These “monitoring powers” were described as being, however, unequally distributed among siblings along gender lines and brothers were often described, together with possessing more freedom (freedom of movement, freedom to engage in pre-marital relationships, etc.) than their sisters, as adopting disciplinarian attitudes towards their sisters as far as their 'freedom of movement' and their relationships with men were concerned (Baldassar, 1999; Joseph, 1994; Hennink et al., 1999; Brouwer, 1998). Both female and male interviewees were well aware of the double standard applied to brothers and sisters and some were openly critical of it:

“my brother? He can do what he wants...he can go out when he wants and he can kiss who he wants and I would say he can sleep with who he wants...that is if he finds someone that wants him, of course (laughs with friend)...but if my father ever found out I had a boyfriend that I have no intention to marry and all that...he would probably kill me...and if he even had the suspicion that his daughter was having sex before marriage...he would probably get a heart attack” (V., 18F, Albanian parents)

Some male informants, although acknowledging their higher degrees of social and sexual freedom compared to their sisters, defended their role as brothers/guardians:

“sometimes I mediate between my sister and my parents but sometimes I tell her not to do things...especially, you know, I tell her not to change boyfriend every week...because it's wrong, then you get into the rhythm and you can't create anything serious...Italian brothers, they simply don't care about their sisters...” (Z., 22M, Albanian parents)

In general, however, most interviewees criticised their parent’s differentiated attitudes towards siblings and clearly expressed their intention to behave differently when parents themselves:

“So I ask my mother...you want me to marry a virgin girl right? But what about those girls I have slept with till now, they can’t get married because they had sex with me? I really think that isn't logical. And anyway why should my wife be a virgin if I’m not?” (A., 22M, Albanian parents)

“My plan is to have daughters...then wait a few years...then have a boy...so the sisters can beat him up (laughs with friend)...no I’m only joking! The only plan I have is to treat my children according to their age rather than their gender” (S., 24F, Moroccan parents)

Interestingly, both female and male informants argued that only by treating their future children equally as far as social and sexual freedom were concerned would there be more gender equality both within their future family and in the next generations. Confirming various anthropological analyses of gendered relations within families (see Joseph, 1994), the brother/sister relationship was seen as being central to the reproduction of gender inequality and informants were thinking of ways to somehow interrupt this reproduction, an interruption they argued their parents had not had the strength to accomplish (Baldassar, 1999).

**Peers and relationships: sexual freedom and virginity**

Families are not the only space where second generation youths construct and re-elaborate their
identities and belongings and this is equally true for intimate things like relationships. Although families exercise a considerable amount of control and pressure on relationships, they don’t exist in a vacuum and many other factors come into play in a second generation youth’s relationship experiences with the behaviour, attitudes and pressures of peers, for example, arguably playing as central a role as that of the family. Many interviewees highlighted how the main difference between themselves and their Italian peers was to be found in how they related to, envisioned and experienced male-female relationships (Baldassar, 1999; Smart and Shipman, 2004; Hennink et al., 1999) and for female interviewees this was principally expressed through their conception of sexual behaviour, including the value given to virginity and the conceptualisation of pre-marital sex:

“sex for me is something you do with the person you think you are going to spend your life with, for me it’s something really important and I’m not going to do it with the first fool that asks...for my Italian friends sex is just an experience, something you do because others do it” (V., 18F, Albanian parents)

A number of girls interviewed described the value they attributed to virginity as being different not only to the lack of value given to it by their Italian peers but also to the excessive symbolic value given to it by their parents (Brouwer, 1998; Baldassar, 1999). In particular they highlighted how they agreed with the importance given to virginity and sexual encounters by their parents but they did not “accord the same meaning to it nor did they agree with the consequences it has on their freedom of movement” (Brouwer, 1998: 138). Many girls argued that they neither saw virginity as a prerequisite for marriage and nor did they “advocate casual sex” (Baldassar, 1999:12; Moual, 2008).

Interviewees argued not only that sex was taken much more lightly by Italian girls but also that these girls were often judged negatively by their friends and boyfriends if they did not engage in sexual activities:

“it’s as if we received opposite pressures...us, to preserve our virginity as long as possible and them, to lose it as early as possible” (U., 22F, Moroccan parents)

Various scholars have analysed the direct and indirect pressures regarding sex that young girls are subjected to by both their peers and partners (Holland at al., 1992; Holland et al, 1998). Girls interviewed who had been in relationships spoke of the pressures they had received to have sex by partners and peers:

“ah they all ask, after going out with you for a week, a month...they text you for goodness sake! (laughs)...they make me laugh really, if they think I’m going to do such an important thing with them...” (V., 18F, Albanian parents)

“in my last year in high school, I was the only one left who openly said I never had sex...and girls would say I was such a loser...I mean...just because I did not follow the crowd, like a sheep, and I valued myself more and was not scared of being dumped by men...well for them I was this amazing loser” (S., 22F, Moroccan parents)

In a way, by distancing themselves from Italian girls who had sex because, amongst other things, they “had to”, interviewees were presenting themselves as being more “sexually free” than their Italian peers, despite the control exerted on them by parents and brothers, because they saw themselves as having the willpower to resist what they did not want to do and the strength to defend what they believed was important - their virginity (Baldassar, 1999; Hendrickx et al., 2002; Brouwer, 1998). A similar attitude was found in Baldassar’s study of young Italo-Australians where “the so-called “Australian” girls are not seen as being socially and sexually free at all, nor are they
perceived to be in a better position - one of more equality” (Baldassar, 1999:12) who goes on to argue how the Italo-Australian youths she did fieldwork with defined themselves “in opposition to the perceived identity, patterns of gender relations and sexuality of their ‘Australian’ peers” (ibid:2; see also Brouwer, 1998; Holland, 1993), confirming how identity and belonging can be seen as being constructed even through the most intimate of practices such as sexual behaviour.

**Marriage and reproduction: mothers and daughters**

Although I had originally intended to focus my research around perspectives on marriage and reproduction most interviewees had not yet given much thought to their marriage and reproductive futures, tending to put their academic and work career before any plan for engagement and marriage (Hall, 2002) and noting that their parents tended to do the same. This attitude reflects the findings of many anthropological studies on immigrant parents’ plans for their children (Cattaneo and dal Verme, 2005; Killian 2006, Zinn 2007) which suggest how educational plans somehow delay marriage arrangements and put the idea of marriage and reproduction into the background, both for youths and their parents. Although there was a general “delaying attitude” towards both marriage and childbirth, very different underlying reasons for this “delaying attitude” were given and very different significances were attached to these two life events. While marriage was seen by many as something that could, potentially, take place in the next three or four years and as an essential stage in interviewees' future lives, there was no sign of the same kind of inclination (vague as it was) towards childbirth. For female interviewees especially, children were seen as much more of a hurdle in the attainment of their life goals than marriage. As a matter of fact, many girls linked their intention not to have children in the near future (and, for some, not at all) to the fact that their life plans would necessarily be interrupted by reproduction:

“I am a very ambitious person, I think also because of my parents' pressures about studying...I'm working hard at uni so that I can get somewhere, I want to open my own pharmaceutical company, change the ethics of what a medicine is (smiles)...and there is absolutely no way that I'm going to start having babies and give up my plan...I know this may sound selfish of me but once I finish uni I will have time to think just about my life and my career...I want to do something with my life, you see, not like my parents...not just have loads of children and end up with loads of regrets...I am really scared of ending up like my mother...or my aunties...full of children and completely dependent on a man...I want to be independent, Alice.” (Q., 20F, Moroccan parents)

In the late eighties, demographers van de Kaa and Lesthaeghe argued how an impressive change was taking place in Western Europe with regards to fertility and family formation, a change they named “Second Demographic Transition” (SDT) (see van De Kaa, 2004). They related this demographic change to an increasing “individualisation of life”, in which a new conception and centrality of the individual was becoming dominant and directly affecting fertility and family related behaviours and attitudes. This new conceptualisation of the individual granted the “right to self-realisation to each individual” and made, van de Kaa argues, the guiding light of fertility choices “whether [reproduction] would be self-fulfilling” for the parents (van de Kaa, 2004:8). In a way, the above quote can be seen as a remarkably clear reflection of the individualisation of life van de Kaa speaks about and the effects it produces on reproductive decision making. The interlocking between the changing centrality of the individual and the changing demographic constellation becomes even clearer when one considers how the above quote stands in contrast to earlier narratives on motherhood I collected for an earlier research project from first generation migrant women (Elliot 2007). While first generation mothers spoke of children as being central to their lives and their self-realisation as women (see Cattaneo and dal Verme, 2005), second generation girls saw children as an impediment and a barrier to their realisation of self: while the mothers could not conceive of self-realisation without children, their daughters did not conceive of children as a
realisation of self. This may well be the result of van de Kaa’s demographic (and attitudinal) transition, the result of an “individualisation of life” for second generation immigrants where what counts is what one achieves as an individual or, as the informant above puts it, whether one “makes it in life”. I would argue, however, that other mechanisms, specific both to immigration and the Italian context, may also be playing an important role in the striking difference between immigrant mothers’ and their daughters’ attitudes towards reproduction.

As demonstrated, one of the reasons girls gave for their limited enthusiasm for reproduction was not wanting to end up like their mothers. Many girls, in fact, tended automatically to equate reproduction with their mothers’ life trajectories and saw these life trajectories as undesirable:

“children?!? Maybe later, when I’m 40 or something (laughs) no Alice, I don’t want to end up like my mother; she had her first child when she was 18...and now...what does she have? three children, a job as a cleaner and nothing else” (R., 22F, Moroccan parents)

It is interesting how the various girls interviewed saw their mothers’ reproduction as being the main thing responsible for their limited life achievements. Their mothers did not “make it in life”, they argued, because they had children instead of careers, children instead of education, children instead of “a life”16. Although the structural and social exclusion that had led to their immigrant mothers being cleaners or carers for the elderly in Italy rather than, say, teachers or engineers was acknowledged, their mothers’ reproductive histories still figured prominently as an explanation. I would tentatively suggest, then, that one of the reasons for second generation girls’ uninterested, if not hostile, attitude toward reproduction can be found in their rejection of the life trajectories of their immigrant mothers who, every day, remind them of what they are working hard not to end up being: cleaners, carers, and not independent.

What I would also argue, however, is that Italy’s specific context plays a central role in this mechanism. Various authors have highlighted how Italy’s institutions and policies offer little if no support to working mothers (Livi-Bacci, 2004; Mencarini and Tanturri, 2004; Mills et al., 2008). Unlike Northern European countries which tend to have more efficient public childcare facilities, higher gender equity in the distribution of child and domestic duties between spouses and greater economic support for mothers, Italy is considered as being off the mark as far as alleviating the “double burden” of working mothers is concerned (Mills et al., 2008). As Mills et al. highlight, “institutions and policies within countries facilitate or constrain the combination of women’s employment with fertility” (Mills et al., 2008:1); in the case of Italy, this implies, often, that women feel they have to choose between having a career or starting up a family (Mencarini and Tanturri, 2004). Young second generation girls are probably well aware of this and of the sacrifices they would have to make in their career if they started having children. Well aware of the structural and social exclusion and limitations they will have to fight against anyway in order to move away from their parents’ societal and labour positions, positions that legal and social institutions seem to impose on them as well, young second generation girls have little intention of making this fight even harder by having children and thus risk ending up like their mothers,

“cleaning stairs and old, grumpy, racist Italians.” (D., 24F, Albanian parents)

Conclusion
Moving on: Italy, belonging and the future

In this paper I have attempted to follow how second generation youths in Italy are creating and re-elaborating their life plans, sense of identity and belonging amidst the many pressures, cultural

16 In contrast first generation women interviewed argued they had “a life” precisely because they had children
influences and legal/social barriers they encounter in their daily lives. What clearly emerged from respondents of both Albanian and Moroccan origin, is how any simplified theoretical model not only of “integration” but also of “identity” and sense of belonging of second generation youths risks to be flawed and inadequate; as Thomson and Crul highlight, “not only is the classical, linear theory of integration into mainstream society, i.e. into some kind of ‘unified core’ of common values, practices and languages somewhat discredited as a prescriptive outcome of policy or practice, but it also now appears decidedly shaky as a process” (Thomson and Crul, 2007:1028). The fieldwork in Italy proved how necessary it is to acknowledge the many, interrelated and multilayered, factors which impinge on second generations’ lives and identity formation if one wishes even to begin to understand what “integration” may mean for immigrants’ children. It was through such fieldwork, in fact, that it clearly emerged how integration - conceptualised as a straight line which runs from “parents’ culture” to “host country’s culture” - is theoretically inadequate, as identities, sexualities, sense of belonging and religious beliefs not only are constructed in a field of various powers, pressures and projects but are also reconstructed in ongoing “conversation” with peers and parents, police officers and Muslim friends, teachers and school bullies, policies on immigration and dominant discourses on Muslim arranged marriages, visits to parents’ home countries and news on other European countries, queues outside police stations and mothers’ life trajectories, racist politicians and peers’ sexual behaviour. It is within, and not despite, these webs of direct and indirect “conversations” that identities and belongings are created by second generation youths.

With this in mind, I would argue that Italy’s specific context needs to be seen as central to immigrants’ children’s identity and life trajectories. As I have attempted to show in this paper, Italy impacts second generation youths through a variety of means, from its exclusionary legal policies (Andall, 2002) to its institutionalised racism (King and Mai, 2004) and its extremely limited support for working mothers (Mills et al., 2008). Italy’s specific political and social context and its specific attitude toward second generation immigrants can also be seen as profoundly impacting immigrants’ children’s future plans (Andall, 2002):

“I like Italy, it’s my country, I’ve been here all my life, it’s where I belong...but there is no way I’m going stay here...there are no opportunities for me here...they will always see me as a foreigner and always treat me as different and they will always make me queue for hours outside a police office to ask if please I can stay another twelve months in the country I was born in...so I’m leaving, Alice”
(Z., 22M, Albanian parents)

As Athanasopoulou (2007) finds with young Albanians living in Greece, practically all interviewees declared they were planning to leave Italy as soon as they could. Although various reasons were given, the most important one was linked, as the quote above demonstrates, to the legal and social exclusion and vulnerability second generation youths perceived in Italy. Many interviewees analysed Italy’s approach to immigration as being “backward”, a description many scholars, in less candid words, also make (see King and Mai, 2004; Grillo and Pratt, 2002; Zinn, 2007) and planned to move to (mostly European) countries which they considered being more “advanced”.

Furthermore, despite the little or no thought given to reproduction, the question of children emerged in some interviewees’ explanations of why they wanted to leave Italy for a more “advanced” European country:

“I know that if I ever have children they are still going to be seen as immigrants, as strangers, as enemies within...and I don’t want my children to go through what I went through at school, with the police and all that...so if I do ever have children, I’m moving on...it makes me sad because this is my country but Italy is still too blind to realise this...so I’ll have to move on... as my parents did, twenty years ago.” (L., 24F, Moroccan parents)
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