

Prestinoni, Paola (2013) *Experiencing difference: being a migrant in Italian school*.

MPhil Thesis. SOAS, University of London

<http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/18070>

Copyright © and Moral Rights for this thesis are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners.

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder/s.

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

When referring to this thesis, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given e.g. AUTHOR (year of submission) "Full thesis title", name of the School or Department, PhD Thesis, pagination.

EXPERIENCING DIFFERENCE: BEING A MIGRANT IN ITALIAN SCHOOL

PAOLA PRESTINONI

Thesis submitted for the degree of Mphil
in Social Anthropology

2013

Department of Social Anthropology
School of Oriental and African Studies

University of London

Declaration for MPhil thesis

I have read and understood regulation 17.9 of the Regulations for students of the School of Oriental and African Studies concerning plagiarism. I undertake that all the material presented for examination is my own work and has not been written for me, in whole or in part, by any other person. I also undertake that any quotation or paraphrase from the published or unpublished work of another person has been duly acknowledged in the work which I present for examination.

Signed: _____

Date: 10th September 2013

ABSTRACT

This research presents an ethnographic account of life in primary and middle schools in Varese, a provincial town of northern Italy. As Italy turned into a country of immigration, an increasing number of non Italian pupils are now enrolling in Italian schools. The Italian government has chosen 'Intercultural education' as the way to facilitate the integration of these young people.

By collecting 'thick description' in schools this investigation wants to understand the real effects that education has on this process.

It describes how intercultural education is understood by the national government and how it is put into practice by local schools. Moreover, it looks at some young migrants' experiences in order to understand their own experience of intercultural education and its impact on their academic career. In particular this work seeks to understand if the response chosen by the Italian government is working on a local basis, if not in improving young migrants' chances of academic success, in reducing the spread of local stereotypes against them and in managing to offer equal education opportunities to all the students enrolled in compulsory education.

This work offers an ethnographic contribution to the research done so far regarding education in Italy.

Table of contents

Chapter I - Introduction.....	6
1.1 Literature review.....	8
Multicultural education.....	9
Development of intercultural education	13
1.2 Status of research on Italian school system and non Italian students.....	16
1.3 Research Methods: from observer to employee.....	18
I, the anthropologist.....	19
I, the support teacher.....	22
I, the project manager.....	24
Chapter 2 – Immigration in Italy and in Varese.....	26
2.1 The presence of immigrants in Italy.....	26
2.2 Immigration in Varese.....	29
2.3 Varese: when fieldwork and home merge.....	34
Varese local administration and immigration	36
2.4 Italian immigration law.....	38
Chapter 3 – Italian education system and non-Italian students	45
3.1 The Italian education system.....	47
The Moratti Reform.....	49
3.2 L'intercultura - Intercultural education in Italy.....	53
Chapter 4 - Intercultura in practice.....	59
4.1 The world of the school.....	59
4.2 School staff and non Italian students.....	70
4.3 Home language and Italian language.....	78
Chapter 5 – Young migrants' experience of education.....	91
5.1 Being Albanian in Italian middle school.....	92
Ardit.....	96
Jennifer.....	98
Kristian.....	102
5.2 Being Moroccan in Italian middle school.....	103
Omar.....	108
5.3 Being a student from a 'good' migrant group.....	110
Hu Li.....	110
Eric.....	116
Chapter 6 – Conclusion.....	122
APPENDIX	129
Bibliography.....	131
Web resources.....	139

List of Tables

Table 1: 2005 Estimate of the number of immigrants living in Italy - First ten countries.....	28
Table 2: Increase in the number of immigrants living in the Varese province. Estimate 2000-2005.....	30
Table 3: Number of immigrants living in Varese province in December 2005....	31

List of Illustrations

Picture 1: Map of Italy.....	35
Picture 2: The Provinces of Lombardy Region.....	35
Picture 3: Poster affixed by Lega Padana in many cities of Lombardy.....	37
Picture 4: Oliviero Toscani's advertisement for Benetton using a picture of 1991 Albanians' arrival in Bari harbour.....	39
Picture 5: Image from the CPT in Lampedusa.....	42
Picture 6: Image from the CPT in Liguria.....	42

Chapter I - Introduction

Since its unification in 1861, Italy has predominantly been a country of emigration. It is only over the past 10-15 years that the situation has reversed: Italy has slowly become a country of immigration. Even in the post-war period when other industrial countries (the UK, Canada, the USA, and Australia above all) were welcoming migrant workers in order to fulfil their industrial demands, in Italy, internal migration, from the rural southern regions to the more industrialised regions of the North, has always been the way of recruiting industrial labour. However, over the last two decades Western countries have experienced a 'new form' of immigration. This new phenomenon is reflected by not only the increase in the variety of migrants' communities, but also the fact that immigrants are beginning to settle in countries traditionally known as 'countries of emigration', one of which is Italy.

Gradual and continuous consolidation of the reality of immigration in Italy is confirmed by a set of indicators that allow us to consider immigration as a structural fact of Italian society (Ambrosini, Molina 2004; King 2001). To support this thesis it is enough to look at the data concerning the phenomenon. The earliest record of the number of migrants in Italy in the 1970s registered a presence of more or less 100,000 individuals, whereas data as to January 1st 2006 speaks of an immigrant population of 2.8 million representing 5,2% of the population (Caritas 2006)¹ - 940 thousand more people than those reported in different estimates referring to the same period of time of two years earlier. This powerfully illustrates that Italy is no longer considered a transit country, but rather a long-term - if not a permanent - landing place (ISMU 2005).

One unambiguous sign of this change is the increasing presence of a number of services for - and managed by - immigrants, such as telephone centres, ethnic supermarkets, ethnic shops, restaurants, etc., as well as migrants' associations aimed at increasing welfare and power among the non Italian citizens living in Italy. A sign of a new trend in immigration is also the recovery of gender equilibrium in the immigrants' communities, the growth of family units², and the rapid increase of the presence of children with non Italian origins in Italian schools as well as the number of children from mixed marriages, enrolled especially in primary and middle schools. The presence of migrant under 18s resident in Italy reached 581 thousand in 2005³ and their

¹ The number is an estimate based on the number of *permessi di soggiorno* (permits to stay) released by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the number of permits being renewed, the number of non Italian residents under 16 years of age, and the number of 2005 new born babies. (CARITAS 2006)

² The requests for family reunification were almost 100 thousand in 2005.

³ 56% of these minors were born in Italy, and in 2005 almost 52 thousand new born babies were from non Italian

presence is hard to ignore. It represents not only a crucial issue for the migration phenomenon, but it is also a challenge for social cohesion and a possible factor for the transformation of Italian society.

If compared with countries with a longer history of immigration such as France, Germany, the UK, and the USA, immigration in Italy is a recent phenomenon, and, 'historically a country of emigration, Italy appears to be still 'metabolising' the unexpected arrivals of foreigners that started about 25 years ago' (Gobbo 2011:14). The debate regarding immigrants in Italy in the last few years is slowly moving away from statistics and is starting to investigate issues of integration, assimilation, ethnic identity, cultural transmission, multiculturalism, and so forth⁴. However, research on immigrants' lives in Italy has focused largely on the situation of adults⁵, and little is known about their children even though they will probably form an important component in the Italian society of the future.⁶ Moreover, a great deal has been written on 'intercultural education'⁷ and on how to improve or modify the quality and the method of teaching in what has become a 'multicultural' school; however what really happens within the schools' walls and the real effects of this 'new' form of education on students has not been analysed yet.

However, school represents for the large majority of non Italian students in the country, and the same could be said for the ones living in Varese, the only space for socialisation available outside their family. Especially young people aged between 11 and 14 years old – middle school students – have limited choice for socialising outside school hours. While schools, due to the compulsory and economic aspect of Italian primary and middle school⁸ attract students from different cultural and economic background, other typical socialising space are subjected to religious or economic influences. Taking for example the *oratori* – a space inside or adjacent to a

parents (Save the Children Italia Onlus 2009).

⁴ For example Sartori (2000), Sciortino and Colombo (2003), Melotti (2000), Semprini (2000), Piccone Stella (2003), Galeotti (1999), Mantovani (2004), Brusa (1999), De Vita, Berti, Nasi (2004), Remotti (1996), Dal Lago (1996).

⁵ From an anthropological point of view Zinn (1994) studied in 1994 Senegalese immigration to South Italy, and the same topic has been examined by Carter (1997) few years later, and subsequently by Riccio (2000); Cole (1997) has provided an ethnography related to the experience of migration in one of the Italian Southern island: Sicily; Però (1999) analysed the link between left wing politics and immigration in Central Italy; while the specificity of female care workers has been the main interest of Andall's (2000) and Naré's (2008) studies. Grillo and Pratt's volume 'The Politics of Recognizing Difference' has shown from its subtitle 'Multiculturalism Italian-style' the 'complex, multi-layered way in which Italian conceptions of 'otherness' have been constructed' (Grillo and Pratt 2002:XVI) and the particular answers of Italy to the presence of immigrants in the country.

⁶ Giovannini (2004) provides a useful review of research conducted on a national and local level in the last 5 years on migrant minors living in Italy.

⁷ Nanni (1998), Agosti (1996), Demetrio (1997), Di Carlo (1994), Durino Allegra (1993), Nigris (1996), Perotti (1995), Santerini (2003), Sirna (1996), Baraldi (2003) just to mention a few.

⁸ Italian school is called '*scuola pubblica*' (literally 'public school'), a term used for schools administrated by the government and free of charge and, as a matter of fact attended by the large majority of the students. 'Private school' – '*scuola privata*', on the other hand, is the school not administrated by the government for which parents need to pay tuition fees. Although the Berlusconi's government has been pushing for a better investment on private schools, less than 10% of the total number of students are enrolled in them.

Church where children can usually play or do their homework helped by volunteers⁹ - attract mainly Italian Catholic young people as they are administered by the local Church and sport clubs (such as football, basketball and swimming clubs to mention the most popular ones) are not free of charge and therefore the most disadvantaged part of the population is excluded from them.¹⁰

This thesis offers an ethnographic contribution to the research done so far regarding education in Italy. It describes how intercultural education is understood by the national government and how it is put into practice by local schools. Moreover it looks at some young migrants' experiences in order to understand their own experience of intercultural education and its impact on their academic career. In particular this work seeks to understand if the response chosen by the national government to the increasing number of non Italian students enrolled in compulsory education is working on a local basis, if not in improving young migrants' chances of academic success, in reducing the spread of local stereotypes and prejudices against them and in managing to offer equal education opportunities to all the students, being Italian or non Italian.

As a matter of fact official administrative documents highlight how for the intercultural perspective the social and cultural changes of the country represents an educational opportunity and a resource for everyone involved. However, while intercultural education and good practices aim at building a climate of mutual respect, classroom teaching and learning seem to be often defined in terms of 'problems' or 'emergency' that teachers themselves have difficulty answering (Gobbo 2011:15).

1.1 Literature review

The changes that occurred in the last decades require changes in all the educational institutions around the world. The birth of new technologies that reduces distance between people, new migrations flows, greater mobility, the rise of new economies, new wars and terrorism attacks have influenced the life of every human being. Institutions have also been interested in these changes and have been deeply affected by these developments. The changes that occurred in the last decades require changes in all the educational institutions around the

⁹ *Oratori* are especially crowded during the long summer vacations period. As Italian schools are closed from the second week of June until the second week of September, working parents need someone to care for their children. Many *oratori* usually organise 'summer camps' from the day after the closing of the school until the end of July. They are cheaper than other summer camps however not many non Italian children take part in it, and often Albanian and North African children go back to their countries of origin during the long summer holidays.

¹⁰ English writer Tim Parks provides us with a vivid description of children after school activities in Italy in his autobiographical book *An Italian Education: 'If children want extracurricular activities of any kind they have to go outside school; the parents have to look for it, and take them there...and pay. Late afternoons become full of sacrifici (sacrifices) of time and money.'* (Parks 1996: 288)

world. The birth of new technologies that reduces distance between people, new migrations flows, greater mobility, the rise of new economies, new wars and terrorism attacks have influenced the life of every human being. Institutions have also been interested in these changes and have been deeply affected by these developments. As migration now is increasingly viewed as a family's project, formal education in particular, with its aim of preparing the new generations for becoming adults and providing them with the necessary skills for their future needs to find a successful way to achieve this goal. The skills acquired through education need to function effectively not only within the families and locally, but also within and across national society and the world community.

Starting from the assumptions that, as there are in my fieldwork location some widespread strong prejudices and stereotypes against immigrants – especially from some countries – young people might reproduce existing negative stereotypes and act accordingly. Therefore, the relations between 'Italians' and 'migrants' might be problematic. In addition to this, Italian immigration policy does not facilitate the integration of non Italian citizens.

Allport's (1954) identified four conditions to meet for improving relations between different groups. These are:

- minority and majority groups needs to be taken into an equal status within the situation
- there needs to be a common goal to be shared by the different groups
- groups' members need to cooperate for a specific task or in a specific situation
- the authorities need to support this interaction between groups

Pettigrew (1998) added to this outline the opportunity for members of the groups to become friends.

Due to the compulsory nature of school, to the governmental approach to education in Italy, and to the time young people spend at school, we can say that school is the Italian institution where, at least theoretically, there is the most concrete possibility that these conditions can be met, therefore we can assume that school can influence young people's perceptions of 'the others' in a positive way and that education could have a considerable effect on the integration of children of immigrants. The theoretical background presented here is necessary in order to understand the Italian school context and to comprehend the origin of intercultural education.

Multicultural education

Over time, multicultural education has been understood in different ways and important

events that have challenged the efficacy of migration and integration policies in different countries have also cause a re evaluation of this line of education. The historical roots of multicultural education lie in the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. It emerged as an answer from educational institutions to the requests of reform of curricula and re-examination of hiring practices from ethnic and feminist groups in order to provide everyone with equal opportunities and a chance of succeeding in school. It was influenced, especially in its initial stages, by African-American scholarships and ethnic studies related to the other ethnic minority groups in the United States. Gay (1983), one of the main developers of the field noted that it 'originated in a sociopolitical milieu and is to some extent a product of its times. Concerns about the treatment of ethnic groups in school curricula and instruction materials directly reflected concerns about their social, political, and economic plight in the society at large'. (Gay 1983: 560).

James Banks, one of the pioneers of multicultural education, was among the first education scholars to examine schools as social systems from a multicultural context and he saw in this approach the only possibility for equal educational opportunity for everyone if connected with school transformation and social change (Banks 1981). However, there is a lack of consensus between scholars on the several approaches that multicultural education could have depending on the ideology behind it and the aim the institution wants to achieve, as well as the schedule planned for the goals desired (Banks 1993; Sleeter and Grant 1987, Nigris 1996). Despite the different definitions made by various scholars, within multicultural education it is possible to identify a disadvantage approach, an enrichment approach, a bicultural competence approach, and a collective equality approach (Eldering 1996). Sleeter and Grant, in their 1987 review of the literature on multicultural education in the United States have highlighted similar approaches, however they defined them differently, naming them 'teaching the exceptional and the culturally different', 'human relations' approach, single groups studies, multicultural education, and education and social reconstruction. Despite small differences their aims and assumptions are the same as the ones mentioned in Eldering's work.

The assumption at the base of the disadvantage approach is that some students from minority groups have educational gaps that other students do not have, therefore in order to give them the same educational opportunities as the majority group, it is necessary to remove these disadvantages. Activities in this framework are then directed exclusively to those students or pupils indicated as 'in need' and provide them with the necessary knowledge required. For migrant students this could be language tuition in order to be competent in the host country's language and be able in a period of time as short as possible to follow the lessons in class with

their peers.

Gibson (1984) has defined this approach as 'benevolent multiculturalism' starting from the assumptions that 'culturally different children face unique learning handicaps in schools dominated by mainstream values; that to remedy this situation multicultural education programs must be devised to increase home/school cultural compatibility; and that these new programs will, in turn, increase students' academic success.' (Gibson 1984: 95-96) In few words, this approach accepts, without further questions, that the cause of minority groups' failure at school is largely their cultural difference.

The enrichment approach on the other hand involves every student in the classroom and it is based on the idea that cultural diversity could be an enrichment for the whole of society. Within this approach an institution could choose to set up monocultural courses – for example languages of minority groups' courses or, as in the USA 'black studies' or 'Asian studies' courses, or courses aimed at reinforcing minority students' self-esteem. Multicultural courses aspire to develop mutual respect between cultures through improving the knowledge of each of them, by teaching all the students the value of cultural differences and to accept others' right to be different. However, Pettigrew (1974) notes that 'to continue to focus on differences is perhaps to continue subtly to support the inferiority-superiority hypotheses while at the same time postulating an acceptance on a level of parity of differential behaviour manifestations from all cultures.' (Pettigrew 1974: 82). Moreover, there is the possibility of falling into the trap of considering ethnic groups as a monolithic block with uniform, well defined characteristics by 'ignoring similarities among groups and neglecting differences within any one group' (Gibson 1984: 101).

The bicultural competence approach goes one step further than the multi-cultural one and aims at making pupils from minority groups competent in two cultures, the host country's and the country of origin's in order to extend cultural pluralism, and prevent assimilation. According to Banks (1988) bicultural education should not be restricted to pupils from ethnic groups, but to every student as everyone should have, and benefit from, being competent in more than one culture.

While the approaches mentioned above are limited to minor changes in the school's existing curriculum, in the collective equality approach the education system itself and the structure of the whole society are questioned. An example of this approach is the Canadian school system, or in Europe the Belgium, French, and Flemish ones. The aim is to turn the existing school system into a multicultural one, not only in terms of curriculum, but also in terms of teaching methods and school staff (Banks 1988; Troyna and Edwards 1993). According to its supporters, multicultural education produces critically thinking and socially active members of

society. It is not simply a change of curriculum or the addition of an activity. It is a movement that calls for new attitudes, new approaches, and a new dedication to laying the foundation for the transformation of society.

In his extensive writings on the topic, Banks has identified five dimensions of multicultural education which help interpret the extensive literature on diversity and education: content integration, knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy and empowering school culture and social structure (Banks 1993).

In brief, content integration describes 'the ways in which teachers use examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations, and theories in their subject area or discipline' (Banks 1993:4) and includes the discussion regarding the curriculum's contents, audiences, and so forth. The knowledge construction process consists of the 'methods, activities, and questions used by teachers to help students understand, investigate, and determine how implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases within a discipline influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed' (Banks 1993:6). When the knowledge construction process is implemented, teachers help students to understand how knowledge is created and how it is influenced by the racial, ethnic, and social-class positions of individuals and groups.

The prejudice reduction dimension of multicultural education relates to the characteristics of students' racial attitudes and strategies that teachers can use to help them develop more democratic values and attitudes. An equity pedagogy exists when teachers modify their teaching in ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and gender groups (Banks and Banks 1995).

Whereas other dimensions deal with particular aspects of a school or educational setting, empowering school culture and social structure conceptualizes the school as a complex social system. It involves 'the process of restructuring the culture and organization of the school so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational equality and cultural empowerment' (Banks 1993:7).

Whatever the approach to multicultural education is, and despite the terminological confusion, as Grant and Sleeter point out, multicultural education 'in actual practice is not one identifiable course or educational programme, but are all actions related to educational equity, women, ethnic groups, language minorities, low-income groups and people with disabilities' (Grant and Sleeter 1987). Without doubt multicultural education pushes education systems to respond to a cultural diverse society in order to meet the educational needs of every single student and to prepare young people for life in a changing society. However, the fact that

advocates of the different approaches often criticize each other does not help in clearing the confusion and mitigate the critics the multicultural education. I do not want to dwell on an analysis of the critics of multicultural education as, as Banks clearly underlined: 'the critics have chosen some of the worst practices that are masquerading as multicultural education and defined these practices as multicultural education' (quoted by Sleeter 1996:7). It has to be said, however, that the uneven understanding of multicultural education theory and its many definitions and approaches has made the concept itself weaker. Before moving on to intercultural education, I will briefly mention some of the criticisms made by scholars.

Critics, especially from the antiracist education supporters, contend that multicultural education throughout the years have mainly reinforced the existing status quo and reproduced social and economic inequities (Troyna 1992) without managing either to reduce racism or to provide equal opportunities for everyone. On the contrary, by labelling students as 'in need' and by putting an excessive emphasis on diversity the risk lies in reinforce existing stereotypes rather than challenging them. Minority groups are then seen as exotic or even primitive when presenting their diversity with a 'Saris, Samosas, and Steel bands' approach (Troyna 1983).

Moreover, when multicultural education is approached in a 'benevolent way' stressing the deficits of students with the aim of filling educational gaps could be view as assimilationist. Grant and Sleeter (1987) and other scholars have underlined that multicultural literature lacks a tight correspondence between theory and practice (Grant and Sleeter 1987; Sleeter, 2001; May 1999). 'The political and transformative theories of multicultural education have often been neglected when translated into practice. As a result, even though multicultural education has made an important contribution to schools and communities, few long-term institutional changes have taken root' (Nieto, et al. 2008: 178).

While multicultural education remains the aim and the approach taken by many governments, in other countries, including Italy, multicultural education has developed into intercultural education. However, the differences between these two approaches is not often clear.

Development of intercultural education

'Societies became all pluricultural and can be defined as multicultural; in the sense of the presence of people with different norms, values, religions and ways of thinking. Educational interventions, however, should be intended as intercultural: differences and similarities are taken into consideration, brought into contact and bring about interaction. (Portera 2008:486)

While in the USA, Canada, and Australia multicultural education is still a widely used term

and is also the governments' choice in order to indicate an approach that could help minority groups' students being successful in school, in Europe in the last years there has been a development towards 'intercultural education'. Recently however, the concept of interculturalism has begun to be taken in consideration in English-speaking countries as well (Gundara 2000, Sleeter and Grant 2007).

After the 1950s, due to an increase in migration, schools in Europe started to acknowledge the presence of students with linguistic problems. Immigration was already a reality in countries such as France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, and teachers and on the one hand politicians stressed the importance of learning the language of the host countries, whilst on the other, they stressed the importance of maintaining their mother tongues, in view of a possible return to the countries of origin (Portera 2008: 482).

The council of Europe adopted multicultural education in the 1970s with a resolution that established a so called 'double track strategy' in order to promote both the integration of migrant workers' children and also to help maintain cultural and linguistic links with the countries of origin. Since the mid-1980s however, it started to promote projects which were seen as 'intercultural'. 'An intercultural perspective has an educational and a political dimension: interactions contribute to the development of co-operation and solidarity rather than to relations of domination, conflict, rejection, and exclusion. (...) For the first time in the history of pedagogy, children of immigrants were no longer regarded as a 'problem' or 'risk', but as 'resources'. The possibility of enrichment and of personal and social growth was officially recognised, which stems from bringing together people from different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds.' (Portera 2008: 483).

Intercultural education, for its supporters, is a direct answer to the risk of homogenisation that current globalisation might produce. This form of education take into consideration the dynamic character of individual cultures and identities and consider the presence of 'difference' in school as a potential source of enrichment and individual and social growth.

'Intercultural education offers the opportunity to 'show' real cultural difference, to compare and exchange them, in a word to *interact*: action in the activity; a compulsory principle in every educational relationship. It provides the immigrant with skills and abilities to manage activities with common norms and regulations. There is a game, an 'interaction', between people with different ethnic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds in which the aim is not assimilation or fusion, but encounter, communication, dialogue, contact, in which roles and limits are clear, but the end is open.' (Portera 2008:488)

However, as for multicultural education, there remains confusion about its definition (Portera 2008; Grant and Brueck 2011). Portera (2008) attempts to provide a short semantic

explanation of the concept by distinguish between 'transcultural education', 'multicultural education' and 'intercultural education'.

Transcultural education is supported by cultural universalism and the strategies adopted by its supporters aim at developing common universal values such as peace, respect, and so forth. Although respectable and noble in its aim, the view of the world it depicts is unitary and the risk is for it to become a new form of cultural imperialism. Basically the Western world might try to force its own value systems onto the rest of the world through education.

Multicultural education as we have seen, aims at acknowledging and respecting diversity. However, the risk, according to intercultural education supporters, is to consider other cultures as static and rigid and, as a consequence, places cultures in a hierarchy. Moreover, when translating theory into practice there is the danger of exotic representation, or to attribute to migrant children thinking and behaviour patterns which in reality they do not have.

Intercultural education develops an approach that seeks to avoid the aforementioned risks. Identity and culture are not considered static and diversity is seen as having the potential for confronting stereotypes and challenging them. As a matter of fact the prefix 'inter' seeks to describe this interaction and the exchange between two or more cultures. 'The principle of intercultural pedagogy represents a truly Copernican revolution. (...) [It] can find its place between universalism and relativism. At the same time it can subsume both in a new synthesis. In other words, the intercultural principle can incorporate all the positive aspects of trans-cultural and multicultural pedagogy, but at the same time include all the above-named dangers, to bring about awareness of them.' (Portera 2008:485-486).

Intercultural education does not come without critiques either. As for multicultural education, it is considered by some scholars as lacking clarity regarding its approach and as merely a good theory which is not translated into practice. Some scholars suggest that intercultural education needs 'more complex conceptualisation, more history, more politics and fewer norms' (Coulby 2006: 254). As a consequence of this lack of precision, sometimes teachers, who just as for multicultural education seem to be the main recipients of suggestions and the advice given by scholars, could run the risk of emphasising only differences between students, leading to marginalisation and stereotyping. Moreover, it could lead to an assumption that migrant students are the ambassadors of a culture of which they might know little, and don't wish to know about.

Intercultural education is the approach chosen by the Italian government in the wake of the success that it had in other European countries. It is however important to look also at the political environment in which intercultural education is implemented and the importance that

demographic movement has in its development. Attention to the details of context is fundamental for a development of intercultural education, as well as for understanding the 'globalisation' that is taking place in the world. As Coulby explains 'to the extent to which the context of globalisation is overlooked Intercultural Education will have de-politicised its subjects and wider social understanding. To depoliticise Intercultural Education is to cut it off from many of the possibilities of political action and redress' (Coulby 2006: 249).

1.2 Status of research on Italian school system and non Italian students

Italian research on migrants has grown rapidly in the last decade and is now becoming well-established; research regarding the experience of young migrant within the Italian education system is also increasing in number. However, while books examining intercultural education, its meaning and its implementation, are numerous, ethnographic studies in schools are still a rarity (Gobbo and Gomes 2003).

It is possible to highlight two paths of Italian research within the school system. One analyses teachers' opinions on the presence of non Italian students in their classrooms, and the need for intercultural education. The first research of this kind, conducted in 1991 – 1993 in Tuscany, had already highlighted problems that would have been crucial in the 90s: the urgency of the revision of curricula, the importance of welcoming non Italian students, the need for the funding of resources, and for specific training of the school's staff, the difficulties in communication with non Italian families, and so forth (Tassinari 1992). A second important research project was conducted in 1996 by Fondazione Cariplo and ISMU¹¹ and investigated primary school teachers' attitude towards the presence in classroom of non Italian pupils. The research highlighted the continuation of stereotypes and prejudices in teachers alongside a kind of 'passive acceptance' of the presence of immigrants in the school (Giovannini 1998). In 1999, from an official point of view, the Ministry of Education began to investigate the reality in schools by conducting a survey between 1998-99. In a sample of 276 schools they set out to understand the changes that had occurred in the system due to the growing presence of non Italian students. Between 2000 and 2001 the Ministry conducted a second research on a qualitative and

¹¹ Fondazione ISMU, formerly Fondazione Cariplo - ISMU since 1991, is an autonomous and independent organisation promoting studies, research and projects on a multi-ethnic and multicultural society, and focusing in particular on the phenomenon of international migration. ISMU presents itself as a service structure open to cooperation with other institutions, public organizations, the world of voluntary work and non-profit organizations, school institutes of any educational area and level, and scientific institutions both in Italy and abroad. (from the website www.ismu.org)

quantitative basis (MPI 2000 and 2001) that again highlighted the positive potential of the presence of non Italian students in the classrooms, but also the problems of educators and school staff in dealing with this presence.

Research on a local level has highlighted the same crucial aspects underlined on a national level, such as the lack of resources available to the school and the lack of knowledge of professors and teachers of the cultural background of these 'new' students. (Fravega and Queirolo Palmas 2003; Pagani and Robustelli 2005).

A second strand of research is one that investigates non Italian students themselves, first of all the youngest, enrolled in primary schools and kindergartens (Favaro 1998; Favaro and Genovese 1996). On the one hand, this has brought to light the characteristics of non Italian pupils, and from the other, their difficulties when entering Italian schools. Few research interest also non Italian teenagers and pre-teenagers. These studies have highlighted how young migrants expressed not only extreme difficulties in finding solid roots and points of reference in the host country, but also a great openness to new experiences which they tend to consider as a potential resource (Besozzi 1999).

One of the most interesting and comprehensive research projects regarding non Italian teenagers is one that compared their outcomes and school choices with that of their Italian peers. The 1998–99 research was conducted through questionnaires with a sample of almost 1,000 third grade middle school students in order to investigate their migration experience, their self perception of school results, their job aspirations, their family structure and so forth. One of the most important outcomes was the fact that poverty - material and cultural – and not country of origin, was the main determinant for both Italian and non Italian students in overcoming disadvantage, self esteem and trust in the future. At the same time, a good atmosphere in the class, school support and family support influenced school results positively for both groups (Giovannini and Queirolo Palmas 2002).

Recently researchers have moved on a new path of investigation regarding the integration of non Italian teenagers outside the school, concentrating on the job market, and formal and informal spaces of socialisation (Cologna and Breveglieri 2003; Ambrosini and Cominelli 2004). The results highlighted how often a positive integration at school does not correspond to a positive integration in the wider context where young migrants are often lonely and marginalised.

Other researchers have oriented their work towards specific ethnic groups, religious attitudes (Galloni 2002, 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).

No research, however, has so far analysed the link between the school system and the implementation of didactic methods aimed at facilitating the integration of non Italian students – such as intercultural education - and its real impact on students, based on ethnographic data. There is a gap in the knowledge of the real effects that intercultural education – when implemented – has on students themselves and how central government guidelines are translated by headmasters and teachers in local contexts. Moreover, in much research, school seems to be taken as an 'island' separate to the wider social context. However, local stereotypes and attitudes, as well as events and issues outside do influence adults' and young peoples' perception of 'the other'. Therefore in this ethnographic study, I have tried to look not only at intercultural education *per se*, but also at how, and if, students benefit from it and how this is translated in their aspirations for the future.

1.3 Research Methods: from observer to employee

All the data for this work was collected between September 2004 and the winter of 2005 in two different sites: school, and specifically middle and primary schools situated in Varese and in its province; and the local office of an organisation – Anolf Varese onlus - that helps immigrants deal with the bureaucracy of entering and living in Italy.

My presence in the school allowed me to get into contact with students and with some families and to try and understand their feelings and expectations from education, to experience the problems and frustration of teachers, and to experience for myself the gap between Italian government guidelines and the reality in schools.

On the other hand, working in the office kept me up to date with changes and discussions within Italian immigration discourse, including its effects on the life of non Italian citizens. Moreover, it allowed me to understand the complexity of Italian bureaucracy regarding immigration and gave me the opportunity to familiarise myself with non Italian citizens' difficulties in dealing with red tape.

Although the initial plan was to collect data exclusively through questionnaires, participant observation and semi-structured interviews, after a few months of fieldwork I also started to collect data by working as support teacher for non Italian students. Moreover, during fieldwork I was offered a position of project manager by Anolf Varese onlus - a job that I accepted and that I am currently carrying out.

The next section will explain how I collected data for this research and the problems I

encountered.

I, the anthropologist

Through my personal network of friends I contacted the headmistress of the schools where I eventually conducted most of my participant observation. The headmistress, a lady in her 50's, was crucial in opening the door for me to the educational system of Varese. The schools she administered were not the ones with the highest number of non Italian students in the city. But I had met her on previous occasions and I knew she would have no problem with me 'attending' her school on a daily basis. She fully understood my research needs and gave me complete access to the school facilities and spaces. Her openness contrasted with the suspicion and the resistance I met whilst working with some of the middle school teachers who refused to let me be present in the classroom during their lessons. Luckily, the vast majority of the primary school teachers were very friendly and cooperative, especially the *doposcuola* ('after school' hours) teachers with whom I spent many hours in the afternoon observing pupils' behaviour after the compulsory lessons.

Middle school students were aware of my role as a researcher, and I managed to develop a friendly relationship with many of them after a few weeks of 'suspicion' and silence especially, from the male students. From October 2004 until April 2005 I spent almost every morning in the middle school sitting with the students of two first grade classes, two second grade and one third grade class during Italian lessons, (which included grammar, text comprehension, history and geography), Art classes and Physical Education classes. The decision was dictated more by which teachers gave me permission to observe the lessons rather than by my own personal choice.

I decided to spend almost all afternoons during these months in one of the primary schools situated close to the middle school. One of the reasons for this was that many of the middle school students had brothers or sisters enrolled in this primary school, and the number of non Italian pupils was considerably higher in this school than in the other schools administered by the same headmistress of the middle school.

After a few days sitting in the class with the pupils I decided to mainly observe the 'after-school hours' (*doposcuola*). This decision allowed me to spend most of the mornings in the middle school. When middle school finished at 1 or 2 o' clock I could easily walk to the primary school and spend three hours there until the end of *doposcuola*. Moreover, whilst in class pupils were not free to choose their seats and tables, and the time left for playing and talking was reduced to the bare minimum, during *doposcuola* pupils were free to play, talk and sit as they

wished and they were not divided by age. *Doposcuola* is not a compulsory activity in primary school but it was created for working parents who cannot look after their children during the afternoons. During the hours that pupils stay at school in the afternoons there are no lessons, but pupils usually do their homework and then play under the supervision of teachers. Parents need to enrol their children at the beginning of the school year in the *doposcuola* and pay a monthly fee¹².

Through participant observation in schools I wanted to understand how 'intercultural education' - which I had read a lot about - was put in to practice by teachers, and how teachers change their behaviour, depending on whether they were dealing with Italian or non Italian students. I also wanted to understand what influence, if any, this 'new form' of education has on the creation and the upholding of stereotypes and prejudices against immigrants, so common in this area. Moreover, I was hoping to learn about the young people's world and to observe which forms of inclusion or exclusion young people experienced. By attending classes for a long period of time I was also hoping to get the students to know me and to trust me when it was time for interviews and personal questions.

The relationship with the students developed more easily than I expected, whilst my relationship with teachers did not. My presence in the classroom was viewed by middle school pupils with mixed feelings: from amusement to interest, from surprise to total indifference. Teachers seemed to - at best - tolerate my presence. However in the majority of cases I felt that teachers were annoyed by my presence.¹³

After months of observation I conducted 87 semi-structured interviews with middle school students (Italian and non Italian), moreover I interviewed the teachers who allowed me to observe their lessons and two school directors with opposing political ideas. Deciding which students to interview was dictated by who returned their parental consent form, which was compulsory for getting permission to ask students to leave their classrooms for the time needed. Getting to know the students during the first months of fieldwork ensured that they were at ease during the interviews that took place towards the end of the academic year. By that time young people were used to seeing me at school and most of them were at ease talking to me about themselves and

¹² The price of *doposcuola* varies from school to school and they are calculated by the Varese school administration on the basis of the parents' economic situation. Parents can get a discount by presenting at enrolment a form (*modulo ISEE*) previously obtained from local tax offices that analyses their tax declaration, bank statements, payslips, house contracts and so forth. Prices are divided into four groups and goes from free of charge to a maximum of, in 2005, 60 € per month (40£). Children enrolled in the *doposcuola* must have lunch at school and the price for it was a maximum of 4, 30€ per lunch (2,8£).

¹³ Many teachers were nervous about me being in the classroom during their lessons, as they felt I was there to judge their didactic methods. After few days in her classroom one teacher asked me to leave the room, as she did not feel comfortable with my being there, and others asked for my help in correcting homework and tests.

their personal lives. The first part of the interview focused on their experience of migration, how they arrived in Italy and what their memories and feelings were during the first few weeks in the country. The second part focused on the school, their first experience of education in the new country and if and how it had changed during the years. There was also time to talk about other issues or events that I had noticed during my staying in the school and their aspirations for the future.

As Gunaratnam points out there is a general assumption when conducting interviews within minority groups that 'the research encounter is characterized by distance and estrangement between the researcher and the research participant which the research needs to 'overcome' (Gunaratnam 2003:80). The distance I felt with some participants was, I believe, more related with my age than with my Italian-ness. I had the impression that some students – especially some Italian ones - felt the need to answer my questions in a way they believed 'was right for me', as if there was a right or wrong answer. One of the reason for staying around the students as long as possible was to overcome the doubts and the suspicion of young people and acquire their trust so they could be as honest as possible during the interviews. Despite this I was constantly aware that my physical presence as a white, Italian, adult, female had an influence on what, and how, students talked to me. In order to reduce as much as possible the inherent power imbalance between adults and children (Eder and Corsaro 1999) during the time I spent as an observer I adopted aspects of a 'least adult role' (Mandell 1991). I tried to distance myself as much as possible from the teachers by sitting with the students, avoided talking to adults during school hours, walked with students in and out of school, and followed their TV shows and shared with them thoughts and gossips. In many cases, my being in the class for a long time dressed in a casual and youthful way, as well as being a woman, worked to help secure conversations and trust, especially with female students who, after a while, stopped apologising to me every time they said a swear word or talked about sex, love or boys.

This approach however gave me some ethical dilemmas in certain situations. A few times while sitting at the back of the classroom during written tests I happened to see students copying from textbooks placed under their desks, or other students passing results to a classmate. A few times third grade students asked me for cigarettes before or after school hours, and once I arrived late at school and bumped into two students skipping school (they provided a parents' note the day after to justify their absence). In all these circumstances I decided not to report to adults what I saw, in order not to compromise my position with the young people. I also never mentioned the episodes with them during later talks or interviews.

At the same time I also made my role as a researcher clear to the students. This decision

helped in raising interest and enthusiasm, especially during interviews when they heard that their words would potentially be part of this thesis. For some of the students this was an opportunity to be listened to, while some others, especially at the beginning of the interviews, were scared I might report what they said to teachers or parents. Usually the reassurance of remaining anonymous and using pseudonyms if they wanted, helped them to relax.

Interviews with teachers regarded mainly intercultural education and the Italian education system as a whole, their understanding of the ongoing changes and reforms, their difficulties - if any - in teaching non Italian students, and their experience in doing it. With some of the teachers it was a good opportunity to discuss issues or situations which arose during my time at the school.

In order to have an idea of how and when school staff categorize 'foreigners' and what their attitude and feelings were towards the presence of non Italian students in their classes, at the beginning of the school year I also distributed an anonymous questionnaire to all the teachers of the middle and the four primary schools mentioned above. It was a big disappointment to discover that only a minority of the school staff returned the questionnaire: this was an initial sign of the difficulties I had working with adults throughout the entire period I carried out my fieldwork. The questionnaire included a series of questions with a specific set of possible responses, some of which related to teachers' perception of immigration and others which were more specifically related to the presence of non Italian students in classroom. A second part was more focussed on teachers' studies, their participation in training specifically aimed at multicultural education and their difficulties – if any – in teaching non Italian students. The limited number of teachers that filled in the questionnaire did not allow an analysis of the results. However I considered the responses I did receive as an indication of school staff's suspicions towards my presence, and their underestimation of the importance of a better understanding of their students.

I, the support teacher

Another main source of data came from working as a *mediatore e facilitatore linguistico* (linguistic mediator and facilitator) for the local organisation ANOLF - *Associazione Nazionale Oltre le Frontiere*, National Association beyond Borders – office in Varese. The organisation was founded in 1989 as a national association with the aim of improving the relationship between migrants and Italian citizens. It is promoted by CISL, one of the main Italian trade union groups and administered by a small group of paid employers and a large group of volunteers (both Italian and non Italian). Its main aim is to help immigrants living in Italy with issues related with the *permesso di soggiorno* (permit to stay), work, education and racism, offering when necessary

legal advice. The Varese branch opened in 2001 and from December 2006 the association has been also entitled to complete online immigrants' requests for the renewal of permits to stay, *carta di soggiorno* (long-term residence card), and other documents.¹⁴ From 2004, in order to benefit from the services offered by the organisation, members needed to pay an annual membership fee of 20€ (12£).

When I started to volunteer there shortly after my arrival in Italy, my work mainly consisted of receiving immigrants in the main office, listening to their problems, giving information when I could, filling in forms and fixing appointments for legal help or professional advice when necessary.

In February 2005 they asked me if I was interested in using my experience and my language knowledge to work as a 'linguistic mediator' in one primary school and in one middle school situated in the province of Varese. 'Linguistic/cultural mediators' have been introduced in Italian schools in order to help migrant pupils integrate faster and better with their Italian classmates. Universities have also recently organised new degree courses in 'Cultural and linguistic mediation' in order to train professionals¹⁵. These support figures are usually paid directly by the school or by the local education administration, and depending on the students' language proficiency level, and the teachers' wishes, they work in or outside the classroom. Some local administrations have also started to organise public examinations for the creation of a list of qualified linguistic mediators to be used when required by schools, courts, and hospitals.¹⁶

I accepted the offer straight away. I thought that working within the school would help me better understand teachers' difficulties in dealing with non Italian students, and in facilitating my relationship with them.

¹⁴ Once the request has been sent online, the immigrant has to personally send to the *questura* (police headquarters) via post a list of documents depending on the type of permit required. The *questura* will then call the person a first time to take pictures and fingerprints of the applicant; and a second time some months later to collect the new permit to stay.

¹⁵ The University of Milan organised the first university degree course in 'Cultural and Linguistic Mediation' in 2001. 500 students (50 places are reserved to non Italian students) are admitted every year to the degree course on the basis of the students' results in the final exam of secondary school.

¹⁶ Varese's local administration organised an examination of this kind in October 2005 for Albanian, Chinese, Rumanian, Arabic, and Spanish speakers. However, due to the strict rules for admission to the examination – an Italian University degree in Cultural mediation or equivalent, five years of residency in the country for non Italian citizens, fluency in one of the above-mentioned languages, work experience in the education sector - the participation was extremely limited. The impression I had of this is that the administration organised the examination as a proof of its interest in the issue, however the efficiency of the operation has been disputable. Besides the fact that many of the participants were Italian, results of the exams were communicated in November 2005, however the selected professionals did not start working in schools until March 2006. The following school year 2006-2007 the list was 'forgotten' by the local administration and not one of the winners of the examination was contacted for work. I continued to work in one school only because one teacher contacted me directly by phone and I signed a contract as a 'external collaborator' directly with the school.

I, the project manager

In September 2005, I became project manager for ANOLF, dealing with funding research and the management of projects mainly related to migrant women and children. The work, challenging in itself, is complicated by the national and local governments that constantly reduce funding for social projects and by the increasing number of NGOs and organisations that compete for the same funding. This helped me to understand many issues, especially the link between government decisions regarding education and real life in schools, and the link between immigration law and its effects on migrant families, including their young members. Moreover, it gave me the possibility to observe the school from different perspectives: as an anthropologist, being as much as possible 'neutral and objective' in her observations; as a teacher with a specific role in educating young people and in helping them improving their Italian; as a project manager involved in immigrants' issues, fighting with the shortage of funds available and complicated bureaucracy.

Interviews and meetings with social assistants, school directors or city mayors for planning various projects allowed me to see how high the risk is of social exclusion for the non Italian population that for one reason or the other do not or did not attend school in Italy. The problems are a consequence not merely of the difficulties of this part of population – especially married women and young people who arrived in the country in their 20s - in understanding and communicating in Italian, but of their isolation from Italian society. They lack the space and tools for being an active part of the society and for interacting with their Italian peers.

Moreover, the ANOLF office in the city centre was my main site for observing the 'adult world', and I also I used this work experience to expand my contacts and to interview adult members of all the major immigrant communities of the city, in order to have an idea of the perception of adults towards life in Varese. As I was struggling to get access to students' families, this was a good place to investigate parents' expectations from their children's education, and to understand tensions and relations between migrant young people and their parents.

In addition to this, I also conducted a daily analysis of one local (*La Prealpina*) and one national (*La Repubblica*) newspaper, in order to comprehend the media's portrayal of immigrants and its fundamental influence on local perceptions of immigration, especially in relation to its role in reinforcing existing prejudices and stereotypes or in creating new ones.

All the data collected, including the interviews that had been transcribed, were organised into specific topics, such as teachers' interpretation of 'interculturalism', students' words on life in

Varese, students' dreams and expectations, etc. Starting as I said before, with the assumption that there are strong prejudices against immigrants in the area, the data were then analysed in order to see if teachers and students themselves were reproducing these stereotypes against non Italian people. Moreover, interviews and data collected through participant observation were studied in order to highlight the influence - if any - of intercultural education on the academic career of non Italian students. When possible, I tried to look for a proof of the students' words by interviewing their parents or siblings.

Chapter 2 – Immigration in Italy and in Varese

The increasing number of children of non Italian origin that attend Italian schools are the sons and daughters of migrants who have been living in Italy for a period of time, stretching from those newly arrived to those who have been in Italy for many years. Statistics, reports, and also some Italians, including politicians simply refer to all of them as '*gli stranieri*' (the foreigners) or '*gli extra-comunitari*'¹⁷. However it is important not to generalise, but to understand who the people that have decided to migrate are, where they are from and why they are in Italy.

Migration is the result of push factors in the country of origin – for example war, poverty and so forth - and of pull factors in the host country – employment opportunities, easy access, etc. - but it is also a very personal event in the life of every single immigrant. While push and pull factors can be similar, personal reasons are always different, and by generalising, the risk of forgetting the original meaning of words such as '*stranieri*' and associating it to negative connotations, in opposition to 'Us', 'Italians', is very high.

Therefore, before talking about intercultural education as it is applied in Italian schools, it will be useful to look briefly into who the people that are arriving in the country are and where they come from. Moreover, as migration flux is regulated by the host countries' governments' decisions regarding immigration it is important to see how Italy has developed an immigration law and what rules were in place at the time of this research, as rules and regulations determine the possible type of immigration into a country, and as a consequence, greatly influence people's expectations for the future. The distinctive social process of migration is defined by the control which states exercise over borders and by personal individuals' decisions. Moreover, the state does not exist in isolation; it is shaped by social forces and by its place in the world order, in the Italian case by its belonging to the European Union.

This chapter presents a brief analysis of the immigrants' presence in Italy, starting with the sudden 'discovery of immigration' by media, government and Italians during the 1990s., together with a description of the reality of my fieldwork location: the city of Varese.

2.1 *The presence of immigrants in Italy*

Like many other southern European countries such as Greece and Spain in which emigration has been the important trend for more than a century¹⁸, Italy started to become a

¹⁷ The term technically refers to a person with a citizenship from a country outside the European Community. However, in everyday conversation this term is mainly used in a deprecatory way to indicate any person who physically does not 'look Italian'.

¹⁸ From 1876 to 1976 some 26 million Italians emigrated. (Pastore, 2001: 96).

destination country for non-European immigrants during the 1970s. In 1973, when for the first time the number of people entering the country was higher than the number of people leaving, Italy changed from a country of emigration to a country of immigration. This change was due to the intensification of push factors in certain countries near Italy, the adoption from 1973 of restrictive immigration policies in other northern European countries, and the transformation of the Italian labour market, which started to view migration as functional to an economic system requiring cheap and flexible labour.

The number of immigrants grew throughout the 1980s 'in the context of economic growth and the near absence of immigration controls' (Cole 1997:5). Many scholars, such as Melotti (1993), Foot (1995), and King (2001), pointed out that during the 1970-80s Italy represented the easiest country for illegal immigration due to a variety of different factors: historical (a traditional 'sending' country not adapting quickly enough as a 'host' country), bureaucratic (a well-known inefficiency of the state), geographical (8,000 miles of coastlines and in the middle of the Mediterranean sea) and political (a lack of specific immigration laws). Even nowadays Italy attracts more illegal immigrants than other countries not just because of its geographical position or its political weakness, but also because of the expansion of private care and domestic services, as well as the proliferation of small enterprises where unregistered labour can be hidden more easily.

According to ISTAT (January 1st 2006) – The Italian National Institute of Statistics - the foreign population regularly present in Italy at the time of my fieldwork was of 2,670,514 individuals¹⁹ - 268,357 more than those reported at the same time the previous year. The same source underlines that the whole body of residents who may be classified as citizens from the commonly defined '*paesi a forte pressione migratoria*' (countries under heavy pressure to migrate) grew in 2004 by 408,000 individuals (+22%). The average yearly growth rate of the non Italian community between 2001 and 2005 was 24.4%. The distinction made between 'immigrants' and 'immigrants from some specific countries' cannot be underestimated. As we will see in the following chapters, some locals – both adult and children - do not consider all 'foreigners'²⁰ as 'immigrants' and some of them are not considered 'foreigners' at all.

One of the first groups of immigrants to arrive in Italy was young Tunisian men employed in Sicily as temporary workers in fisheries and in the agricultural sector followed shortly by

¹⁹ ISTAT reports only the *immigrati regolari*, while the estimates of Caritas of 3,035,144 immigrants living in Italy is based on ISTAT data plus data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and includes all types of migrants.

²⁰ The term 'foreigner' is used here as the direct translation of the Italian word 'straniero', which in the Italian language denotes someone holding a citizenship different from the Italian one, with no negative or demeaning meaning.

Moroccans and Senegalese men who quickly monopolised the street-selling business of forged leather goods. At the same time the main cities of both north and south Italy saw an increasing number of migrant women, mainly from Catholic countries such as the Philippines, Colombia, Cape Verde, who were employed in the domestic sector as housekeepers and elderly assistants.

However, the presence of these first groups of migrants did not constitute a problem due to the necessity for employers to use cheap labour, the unwillingness of local residents to undertake unqualified and physically strenuous jobs, and the apparent lack of immigrants' desire to remain in the country. However, what was initially considered a limited and a transitory phenomenon by both immigrants and host country soon began to assume a visible and permanent status. It is during these years that the media started to be interested in immigration and in 1981 there was the first real count of the population in Italy, which recorded a number of 210,937 non Italian citizens.

Over the years the Italian migrant population has increased²¹ and one of the characteristics of migration into Italy is its variety. More than 50 thousand people from 11 countries were living in Italy at the end of 2005 and five of these accounted for more than 100 thousand individuals.

Country of provenience	Present in Italy
Romania	270,845
Albania	255,704
Morocco	235,000
Ukraine	118,000
China	112,358
Philippine	77,015
Poland	72,229
Tunisia	60,337
India	51,399
Serbia - Montenegro	51,093

Table 1: 2005 Estimate of the number of immigrants living in Italy - First ten countries

Source: Caritas 2006

The territorial distribution of migrants present on the Italian territory is not uniform. Areas of greater or smaller concentration depend on the particular favourable or unfavourable conditions of the wider socio-economic context. Northern Italian regions, where the possibilities of employment are higher, host more than half of the number of immigrants. Southern regions and

²¹ The non Italian residents in Italy, just over 100 thousand in 1951 became 4,570,317 at the beginning of 2011. In terms of incidence on the total resident population in Italy (60.626.442) the rate is 7.5%. In average, one person out of 13 is a non Italian citizen, but the incidence is higher among minors (1 million) and among young adults (18-44 years).(Caritas 2012)

the islands (Sicily and Sardinia) are only a landing-point especially for illegal immigrants - who then move to the north of the country in search of employment.

2.2 Immigration in Varese

Overall migration trends in the Varese area, with regard to countries of origin, gender type and also the year of arrival reflect the more general trends of migration to Italy.

ISTAT registered 46103 foreign citizens living in the Varese province²² on 31st December 2005, of which 11000 were minors (5.46% of the population). Although this number is the most accurate one for immigrants legally registered in the province - as it includes citizens from all countries - it excluded the ones living without a valid permit in Varese.

Therefore, the following information regarding the presence of migrants in Varese province is based on the *Osservatorio regionale per l'integrazione e la multiethnicità* (Regional Observatory for the Integration and Multi-ethnicity)²³ 2006 report on immigration in Varese, which I believe to be the most useful for my study. The report gives an estimate of the migrants' population's age, education, housing condition, work condition, family status, economic status, religion, and so forth, despite their residency and their legal status in the Varese province on a sample of 40 *comuni* (town) and a sub-sample of 700 immigrants from Eastern Europe and developing countries.

A joint analysis of the number of new permits to be issued by the *Questura*, the number of foreign residents in every town, the number of new borns with non Italian parents, and the number of foreign citizens registered in the local health centres comes to a total of 44,5 thousand immigrants from countries '*a forte pressione migratoria*' (countries with high pressure to migrate) as defined by the report, present within the Varese territory up to July 2005.²⁴

Of this total, 92,1% are *regolari* (regular residents), 2% are *irregolari* (irregular) and between 5,9% and 9,2% are estimated to be *clandestini* (illegal)²⁵. These numbers place Varese

²² It is interesting to underline that in the *comune* of Varese live only 6639 foreign citizens. The vast majority of them therefore live outside the city centre, where house prices are lower and where there are more factories and job opportunities.

²³ The Lombardy region established the Regional Observatory for Integration and Multi-ethnicity in December 2000, with the aim of monitoring the quantitative evolution of immigration into the region and of obtaining a detailed knowledge of immigrants' life in the area by monitoring housing, education, employment and the health situation of immigrant residents. In the last five years the region has managed to create a network of provincial observatories that provide a yearly report on the condition and the number of immigrants living in the province. Varese Provincial Observatory opened in 2001.

²⁴ 'Heavy migration pressure countries' are the main countries of emigration, and it excluded therefore EU citizens resident in the city who are quite numerous (Germans are the most numerous group with 1399 inhabitants).

²⁵ The distinction is important: *regular* refers to immigrants with a valid permit to stay or residence card registered at the *anagrafe* (register of births, marriages and deaths) of the Comune of residence. *Irregular* refers to immigrants with a valid permit to stay in the country but not registered in any *anagrafe* or registered in a Comune different than where they live; *illegal* refers to immigrants without a valid permit in Italy.

as the forth province in the Lombardy region for the number of immigrants, after Milan (360,6 thousand), Brescia (130,6) and Bergamo (86, 8) (Provincia di Varese 2006). The percentage of illegal immigrants is well below the national average of 16% estimated by ISMU (2005).

Immigration in the city of Varese started during the 1970s, when two groups of immigrants, began to arrive in the area. The first were Tunisians and Moroccans, mostly men looking for employment in the numerous factories of the area, and the second were Salvadorians, Sri Lankan and Filipino, mostly women, who were easily employed in the domestic sector, where the Italian public care system started to show its weaknesses, and families were looking for a cheap way of taking care of their oldest or youngest generations.

During the 1990s the effects of the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe brought an increase in the number of arrivals from ex communist countries, in particular from Albania. The first Albanians in town arrived from South Italy in one of the boats which I will talk about below.

Accurate data concerning immigration in the Varese province is available only from the year 2000, when the provincial branch of the Regional Observatory for Integration and Multi-ethnicity started to function. As a matter of fact the number of immigrants living in the area before 2000 was limited, as migrants I met during my fieldwork testified. The provincial administration only saw the need to monitor immigration in Varese when the number reached 20 thousand and their presence in town had the potential to create social problems.

As we can see from the table below, the number of immigrants living in the Varese province has consistently increased in the last years, and doubled between 2001 and 2005.

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Estimate of migrants' presence (in thousands)	21,1	22,1	25,8	34,2	36,6	44,5

Table 2: Increase in the number of immigrants living in the Varese province. Estimate 2000-2005
(Source: Osservatorio Provinciale per l'integrazione e la Multiethnicità)

If we take a closer look at the countries of origin of the immigrant population of the city, one of the characteristics is the variety. Table 2 shows the number of foreign citizens from the most numerous thirty communities regularly living in Varese's territory at the end of 2005 based on ISTAT's data and the Provincial Observatory. Beside the country of origin of immigrants, it is important to look at their mother tongues. As the context of the research is the school, the variety of languages spoken by students could facilitate or hinder a teachers' work. By looking at the

table below we can observe how eight different languages are spoken by the first ten foreign groups living in Varese and this definitely has repercussions on the school activities and teaching.

	Male	Female	Total	% Female
Albania	4671	3456	8127	42.5
Morocco	4230	2849	7079	40.2
Romania	1101	1165	2266	51.4
Tunisia	1376	692	2068	33.5
Ecuador	658	1128	1786	63.2
Pakistan	1144	531	1675	31.7
Ukraine	219	1298	1517	85.6
Germany	663	736	1399	52.6
China	729	606	1335	45.4
Peru	466	798	1264	63.1
Sri Lanka	518	465	983	47.3
Senegal	730	225	955	23.6
Bangladesh	609	296	905	32.7
France	377	492	869	56.6
UK	358	363	721	50.3
Egypt	472	190	662	28.7
Switzerland	264	357	621	57.5
Ivory Coast	285	308	593	51.9
Brazil	156	418	574	72.8
Philippine	229	344	573	60.0
Netherlands	254	301	555	54.2
El Salvador	187	363	550	66.0
Serbia - Montenegro	261	225	486	46.3
Poland	111	344	455	75.6
Ghana	238	207	445	46.5
Dominican Republic	129	308	437	70.5
Belgium	205	212	417	50.8
Spain	134	255	389	65.6
India	207	173	380	45.5
Macedonia	164	150	314	47.8

Table 3: Number of immigrants living in Varese province in December 2005

While Chinese and Romanian migration into Italy has always been balanced in terms of gender, Albanian, Sri Lankan, Moroccan and Tunisian communities have started to rebalance thanks to the high number of successful family reunification procedures. Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigration is still mainly a male business (69.9% of immigrants from these groups are male). Pakistani men are mainly employed in the food industry as dishwashers or assistants to cooks, and some of them have managed to become self-employed by opening Kebab shops in town.²⁶

²⁶ In May 2004 Varese was at the centre of a trade of 'new invisible slaves' (Varesenews, May 2004), as local newspapers headlined the news of the arrest of eight Pakistani men and three Italian construction workers. The court case lasted two years during which more than one hundred Pakistani men were reached by an expulsion order due to their alleged involvement in the trade. More than two hundred Pakistanis formed in Varese the

On the other hand Latin American and Ukrainian immigration is characterised by a high presence of women, working in the care sector.²⁷ As Italian women have increasingly taken on paid work, they need others – paid housekeepers and caretakers for the children and the elderly – to replace them, as the state is not able to provide sufficient care for them. ‘The ‘care deficit’ that has emerged in the wealthier countries as women enter the workforce *pulls* migrants from the Third World and post-communist nations; poverty *pushes* them’ (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003:8). Women employed in the assistance of elderly people usually share accommodation with their employers, a situation that restricts their freedom and makes the family reunification process a difficult task, as they lack suitable accommodation, or do not meet the salary requirements requested by law²⁸. The vast majority of South American women in Italy (as well as Ukrainian and Filipino women²⁹) are employed as live-in domestic workers. The use of migrant domestic workers has greatly increased in Italy ‘as a consequence both of Italian women’s increased presence on the labour market and the absence of an Italian welfare model to accommodate this fact by the universal provision of state support services’ (Andall 2003: 45).³⁰ However, despite their numerous presence, domestic workers are a ‘hidden affair, executed within the privacy of the employers’ home’ (Andall 2003: 39), and most of the time they are employed illegally or irregularly³¹. The social ‘invisibility’ of female domestic workers corresponds to a real invisibility of their family, which in the vast majority of cases remain in their home country. As a matter of fact

Pakistani Committee in their defence and in June 2006 the court case was closed with the release of a six-month permit to stay for the men involved who turned out to be victims of the trade, forced to work for free or under terrible conditions after entering the country illegally by paying more than 10 thousand Euro to smugglers and construction company managers.

²⁷ 87.3% of the Ukrainian migrants in Varese are women. Peruvian women are 75.6% of the total of Peruvians resident in the city, 70.4% of immigrants from Dominican Republic are women, and 66% of all immigrants from Ecuador are female.

²⁸ The government has fixed the minimum yearly salary requirement to reunify one member of the family to 5061€ (more or less 3000£). The amount is double if you intend to reunify two members of the family.

²⁹ ‘*Filippina*’ (Filippino woman) has become an equivalent of ‘domestic helper’ and it is not uncommon to hear conversations between ladies such as: ‘*La mia filippina é così carina. Viene dalla Bulgaria e lavora davvero molto*’ (My ‘*Filippina*’ is really nice. She comes from Bulgaria and she works really hard’) (Fieldnotes, March 2005) of which the meaning of *filippina* is ‘My domestic helper’.

³⁰ 2006 ‘*decreto flussi*’ (see chapter 2.4) allowed the release of 170 thousand new work visas for immigrants of which 45 thousand were reserved to domestic workers as their work is now considered a ‘social service’.

³¹ According to CARITAS one in four domestic workers are employed irregularly. To try and solve this problem the government in 2009 decided to launch a ‘regularisation’ campaign for ‘illegal’ domestic workers. After more than nine months the results of this action are still unknown, however, many illegal immigrants desperately tried to find an employer willing to sign a contract as elderly assistants or domestic helper and proceed with the release of a permit to stay. Many employers, Italian and non Italian ones, saw in this a way of earning money by asking illegal immigrants considerably high amounts of money for pretending to employ them. The decree in fact stated that the migrant had to work as a domestic helper or elderly assistant at least from the 1st of April 2009. The employer needed to pay all the worker’s tax contributions due before the release of the permit to stay. The regularisation-request time closed at the end of September 2009, however many employers and employees in April 2010 have not been called yet by the *Prefettura* to sign the contract, leaving them in ‘limbo’ as the requests is not guaranteed to be successful. The taxes, however, were collected since the 1st of April 2009 despite the fact the contract was not signed. In this way the State managed to collect 147 million of euro due to the 294 744 requests made between September 1st and September 30th.

contemporary global migration is characterised by a feminisation of migration (Andall 2003, Castles and Miller 1993) and Ecuadorian, Peruvian and Dominican communities in Varese town are typical examples of virtually single-sex migration, followed - in some cases - by a later reunification with the family.

'When I came here in 2000 I knew that I would have to work hard. I had a cousin here and she found a job for me in a family. I worked there five mornings a week and that was enough to guarantee me the documents, but not enough for bringing my daughter and my husband here. So I had to find another part time job. I managed to bring my daughter here by having three part time jobs. But things have changed too much...my daughter is here but I barely see her as I am always at work, I have another daughter...I don't know what I will do. I guess I will stay here and continue to work as hard as possible to give my daughters a chance in life. What else can I do? My oldest daughter would like to go back to Ecuador with her father who is still there, my youngest daughter has never seen Ecuador and all she knows is Italy and her father is here...What I think doesn't count much...they are more important. Besides, my family in Ecuador needs the money I send them. I decided to leave to give everyone a better life and this is what I will continue to do.'
(Karina's mother, 36 years old, from Ecuador)

Comparing this data with the data presented earlier in this chapter, we can see that immigration in and around Varese has characteristics similar to the rest of Italy. However, what makes Varese an interesting fieldwork location for issues regarding immigration is the contrast between the increasing number of immigrants and the political orientation of the local administration, which is strongly against the presence of immigrants in the country. In addition to the economic reasons for people migrating to a specific location – where they are most likely to find employment due to the high demand for unskilled labourers – other pull factors for migration can be the presence of parents, relatives or more generally people from the same country of origin, who can help, especially during the first stage of life in the new country.

As a matter of fact in Varese there is a active number of local and national NGOs giving support to immigrant communities, and immigrant communities are also organising themselves in various associations, such as the Pakistan Committee mentioned above, in order to be able to obtain funds for social projects and facilitate integration with locals. These types of associations offer mutual aid and support and provide networks that could serve as information channels. One of the oldest and most active associations is the *Raggruppamento dei Tunisini* (Tunisian Group),

established in 2000, which since 2004 has organised an Arabic course for primary and middle school students attended by an increasing number of Moroccan and Tunisian children.³²

In the last few years also Moroccan, Ghanaian, Sri Lankan, Togolese, Peruvian, and Ivorian communities, just to mention a few, have decided to get recognition from the Lombardy region and fund different NGOs, all of which are registered in the regional or provincial list of volunteers' associations. Moreover, formal and informal immigrants' associations co-exist within a complicated network of organizations.

This is seen in a positive way by national authorities who see the protection of migrants' culture and the creation of migrants' associations as a potential push for integration. Immigrants on the other hand see these associations as a form of participation, often being excluded from the right to vote.³³ Therefore in the last few years in Italy 'a discourse has developed in which immigrants' associations are supported as a barrier against the development of social conflicts, perceived to be the outcome if no room at all is given to the expression of cultural differences and to a shared knowledge of both national and foreign cultures.' (Danese 2001: 74)

2.3 Varese: when fieldwork and home merge

'If a fish were to become an anthropologist the last thing it would discover would be water'

Margaret Mead

Anthropology is traditionally defined by the exoticism of its subject of study and by the distance (geographical or /and cultural) between the researcher and the observed group. The anthropologist goes to the 'field', the 'unknown', as opposed to 'home' (Gupta, Ferguson 1997). However, for me field and home have merged.

Varese, my selected fieldwork location, a provincial town situated in the Lombardy region³⁴ in northern Italy, is my home town and the city where I grew up and studied until 1992.

³² The 24 children attending the course in 2004 has doubled over two years.

³³ *Participation* here is used in the widest notion of the term, as one of the many possible forms of interaction linking the political system and society.

³⁴ Italy is divided into 20 regions. Each region is then divided into provinces and then locally administered by *Comuni* (town councils). The region of Lombardy has 12 provinces and Varese has 141 *Comuni*.



Picture 1: Map of Italy



Picture 2: The Provinces of Lombardy Region

Doing fieldwork in a well known location has the advantage of skipping the 'adjustment' phase of getting over the feeling of being lost and lonely, which is common when working or living in an unknown society. I definitely experienced these feelings when studying in China and also when working in a much closer country like England. However, even the native anthropologist faces the problem of determining who has the authority and the responsibility to represent experience and knowledge. Even at 'home' the researcher - no matter what his/her research is about - has to learn another language, which, in my case, was the language of the 10-14 year old students.

The impression mentioned in the opening lines of this section never entirely disappeared. While observing the world in 'my town' I had the impression that everything was unworthy of mention and I filled my notebook mainly to avoid feelings of guilt. The impression that the important things were happening 'somewhere else' was a daily one. It was only when I started to review my notes and listen to the interviews that I started to notice the relevance of most things and words.

Aside from personal reasons, I also wanted to conduct fieldwork in Varese for other reasons.

Varese, situated between the regional capital city – Milan - and the Alps, attracts a reasonable number of Swiss, Dutch and German tourists during the summer months and many visitors from the neighbouring city of Milan looking for relaxation fresh air on the shores of its lakes. The Italian economic boom of the post World War II period enhanced the need for labour in Varese, and attracted a high number of workers, especially from the southern regions of the country.

The city somehow circumvents Italian national policy, which is aimed at limiting immigration in the country. Despite the political orientation of the local administration, the number of migrants living in the city, as mentioned before, is continuously increasing.

Varese local administration and immigration

The provincial town of Varese has been administered since 1992 by the Lega Nord (Northern League), the nationalist political party that promotes, as Kivisto defined it, 'a Social Darwinian-inspired form of racism that depicts southern Italians as inherent inferiors' (Kivisto 2002:5). This party seeks secession of the North from the rest of Italy on the basis of the recovery of the ethnic and historical features of the northern Italian regions of 'Padania' (the river Po plain region). The party, based on open attacks on the State, the South of Italy and all immigrants, gained an incredibly high percentage of votes during the 1992 elections in the main industrialised regions of the North.³⁵ The ideas they transmit are openly against immigration and as many examples illustrate, the party leaders, such as Umberto Bossi, do not even attempt to hide the racism in their propaganda.

'Hitler exterminated all the Jews. The communists want to exterminate the people of Europe with immigration.' (Umberto Bossi, interview with La Repubblica 13 Aug. 2000)

'There are no houses for immigrants. There cannot be. We must give houses first to the people of Lombardy, not to the first 'bingo bongo' that arrives here. Immigrants are not at home here, but they are guests. We do them a favour and let them work. Nothing else.' (Umberto Bossi, La Repubblica 4 Dec.2003)

Even the posters this party uses in order to gain attention and promote itself are always extremely provocative. For example, in autumn 2004 on the walls of many cities in Lombardy Lega Padana (which is part of the Lega Nord) put up posters with '*Adesso basta! Fuori dalle Balle*' (This is enough! Get out!) over a picture showing Muslims gathered in prayer in order to demonstrate their disagreement on the number of immigrants living in the province .

³⁵ During the 1992 national elections, Lega Nord gained 23.6% of votes in Lombardy, 25.5% in Veneto, 16.3% in Piedmont. The national result was of 8.7% of votes. This result allowed Lega Nord to raise the number of its members of parliament from 2 to 80.



Picture 3: Poster affixed by Lega Padana in many cities of Lombardy

Although the results in the 2006 political election indicated a general decline in public support for the party nationally, by contrast, in the 2007 provincial election, Varese saw the opposite result.³⁶

The strong presence in the city of an openly anti-immigrant political party suggests the presence of many supporters with similar views on immigration. Therefore, the local context could be termed as one of 'dissonance', using Rumbaut's words (1994), and local perceptions of immigrants might also have an influence on young people perceptions of 'the others' and, as a consequence, on the process of integration of young migrants with their peers.

Anti immigrants parties use local episodes of crime or public disorder as evidence of innate violence amongst immigrants in general, and Albanians and Muslims in particular, in Varese. They also use these episodes to illustrate their unwillingness to integrate into Italian society. In Varese, during my research, two episodes became the centre of attention in the national media and provoked xenophobia throughout the city. One was a murder of a bar attendant in Besano, a small town near Varese, by an Albanian man³⁷, the other one was the debate and the struggle over the presence of a mosque in Gallarate, one of the largest *comune* south of Varese.

The struggle over the mosque is still far from being over and Muslims in the area are still praying in temporary buildings, a story that is quite common in other areas of the country. I found myself in agreement with Saint-Blancat's and Schmidt's comment regarding their analysis of the

³⁶ While in the Regional 2005 elections Lega Nord gained 21,8% votes, it decreased to 14,67% in the Political elections in 2006 and again increased to 22,36% in the provincial elections of May 2007. In the 2008 national elections Lega Nord increased its votes with a campaign almost entirely focussed on 'security issues' and on the risk of Italy being invaded by immigrants.

³⁷ See pp. 63-64.

building (or rather the *non-building*) of a mosque in Lodi, which has numerous similarities with the procedure for the closure of the Gallarate mosque. *'The conflict that grew around the mosque hides the real issues: it is not the fact of acknowledging the presence of a religious minority in the public space that is at stake; the issue is rather that of local citizens accepting the arrival in their midst of an Islam perceived of, and associated with immigration factors, a 'foreign body' that should preferably remain temporary and in place only as long as it was advantageous to the economy'* (Saint-Blancat and Schmidt 2005:1092).

Moreover, following the anti-Muslims wind that was blowing through Europe, on a local level, between September and December 2004, 12 local administrations of the Varese province governed by Lega Nord proposed motions against wearing of burqa. They justified the proposed ban by referring to laws passed in 1931 and 1975 that respectively stated: 'It is forbidden to walk in public with a mask' and 'The use of protective helmets or any other way that could make the recognition of the person difficult is forbidden in public places without a valid reason'. The motion was also given encouragement in different parts of the country by the words of the Minister of Justice, Mr. Castelli, who in June 2005 encouraged locals to report to the police anyone wearing a burqa. Again, despite the fact that in all the years I spent in the city I have never seen a woman wearing a burqa, the local media highlighted these 'new' motions and reported episodes involving women and veils for various months.

All the events mentioned above, together with generalisations in the mass media, contributed to the local construction of immigrants as the 'enemy' and a 'threat'.

Over the years, Italian immigration law moreover, has not helped in changing this wide spread idea of immigration. The State's reaction to it has been marked by a 'contradictory mix of increasingly restrictive measures on new entries, and liberal provisions for regularisation' (Dell'Olio 2004: 113).³⁸

2.4 Italian immigration law

Although, as I have shown, Italy became a 'host country' in 1973, March 1991 could be seen as the date when Italians 'discovered immigration'. Alongside the discovery, the lack of administrative and cultural frameworks to deal with this new situation were exposed, as well as the incapacity of the Italian government to deal with the growing numbers of migrants.

Between the 7th and the 10th of March 1991 some 25,700 Albanians crossed the Otranto

³⁸ Between 1986 and 1998 in an attempt to regularise the numerous illegal immigrants in the country, the government introduces four 'amnesties' which allowed to regularise nearly 790 thousand people.

channel by boat between Albania and the south-east coast of Italy (Mai 2002). In August of the same year another 20 thousand Albanians arrived in south Italy and yet again caught the Italian state unaware, especially as Italy was on the verge of closing down for the summer vacations. 'The arrival of those boats, packed to the gunwales, with migrants perched on every available surface and shinning down the ropes to the quayside, has become part of the iconography of migration, not only in Italy but worldwide. The boat is highly symbolic of the 'migrating crowd', since it gathers together the greatest mass of migrants in a single confined space, berthing on the shore of 'fortress Europe'. (King and Mai 2009: 120)

The images filled Italian TV screens and also Oliviero Toscani, at that time photographer of the well-known fashion brand Benetton, used that image for one controversial Benetton advertisement campaign.



Picture 4: Oliviero Toscani's advertisement for Benetton using a picture of 1991 Albanians' arrival in Bari harbour

Anxiety about the possible negative consequences of immigration on unemployment, and fears that the 'distinctiveness of Italian cultural identity' might be blurred because of the influx of large numbers of immigrants led to significant changes in public opinion with regard to foreigners (Triandafyllidou 1999: 66). In 1991 the first group of Albanians were greeted as 'deserving political refugees'. However, by the end of August of the same year due to the significant number of arrivals, 'these same people were treated as illegal 'economic migrants', and sent back to Albania after a period of detention in specially prepared camps' (Mai 2002:77).

The Italian government only realized the necessity of an immigration policy in 1986, when the number of immigrants started to increase significantly and the other European countries started to question the ability of Italy to deal with the situation. However, despite numerous

attempts by both right and left governments to create an efficient immigration law, it seems that politicians keep considering immigration as an 'emergency' and deal with it as such. Even the terminology of the law seems to consider immigrants as a 'disease', and an aberration. Take for example the word '*sanatoria*'. This is an amnesty that occurs quite often and is aimed at regularizing the position of the considerable number of illegal immigrants and to prevent further illegal entry into the country. It derives from the verb *sanare* which means 'to heal', to restore somebody's health. The immigration laws that both right-wing and left-wing governments have proposed seem to reflect these ideas.

Immigration law mainly deals with access to - or expulsion from – the country, and the blocking of illegal arrivals rather than rules for facilitating the social integration of immigrants already in the country. The fundamental contradiction of Italian migration policy consists in the fact that rights guaranteed to immigrants are limited to those in a regular position, while their numbers are decreasing because of restrictive policies of regularisation and border protection. Moreover, the limited range of social policies in favour of immigrants is leading some of them to a situation of growing social marginality. Overall, an analysis of Italian immigration laws would seem to indicate that the efforts of successive governments to control the influx of immigrants failed to achieve their objectives. They have perpetuated a situation of permanent social emergency (Campani 1993) because they have managed neither to control the migratory flows nor to integrate those already established in the country. In addition they failed to prevent violence and xenophobia against migrants, as the numerous episodes of open aggression³⁹ or actions against immigrants demonstrate (Triandafyllidou 1999).

The first official law regarding immigration was issued in 1986 (called *Legge Foschi*, named after the Minister who proposed it). It was also the first attempt of many to regularise immigrant workers⁴⁰.

A new law was issued by the government in 1990, commonly known as *Legge Martelli*, which tightened the conditions of entry into the country and enlarged the margins for the regularisation of those already present on national territory.⁴¹ For the first time the law talked about '*flussi*' (influx), an annual quota system for immigrants in search of work, which is set in a Prime Ministerial Decree each year. The quota sought to establish the number of immigrants that could enter the country with a work visa and is based on a survey of manpower requirements in

³⁹ More than 400 violent attacks (one third of which have been fatal) against immigrants have been reported every year since 1995 (Dal Lago 1999: 28).

⁴⁰ Despite the fact that, according to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 105,312 migrants obtained a regular permit to stay through it, the turnout has been considered relatively low considering the high number of illegal immigrants in the country. This was mostly due to the difficulty for immigrants to meet the criteria for being eligible to 'regularise' their position.

⁴¹ According to statistics, 216,037 immigrants were legalised through the Martelli Law (SOPEMI 1991).

the national labour market conducted by the Ministry of Labour, which reserves specific quotas for the nationals of countries that the government considers to be effectively co-operating to combat illegal immigration and human trafficking.

It has to be said that the Martelli law, as with previous legislation, was relatively inadequate, as the '*flussi*' system only started in 1995, and all the other measures were blocked by the crisis caused by the arrival of Albanians in 1991 mentioned above. The introduction of a visa requirement caused a rapid increase of illegal arrivals from northern Africa, as well as overstayers, due to the difficulties of obtaining a working visa. The expected expulsions planned for undocumented migrants were infrequent due to the high costs.

Moreover, the events of the summer of 1991 not only caused problems for policy makers, but also started to raise public fears among the locals: namely that immigrants might compete with the national labour force, that criminality - with which immigrants are often associated in Italian popular opinion (such as prostitution, burglary, and drug dealing) - might increase, and that the already fragile social and infrastructural systems might not be able to cope. Immigrants started to be seen as 'folk devils' (Cohen 1972): a real threat to the existing social order.⁴²

The political debate therefore changed from issues related to immigrants' rights to the need for social security and border controls, and the 'invasion syndrome' that took hold of Italians from 1991 was used by nationalist politicians, especially by the leader of the Lega Nord, Umberto Bossi. He used the presence of immigrants to spread moral panic, attract votes and request even stricter immigration laws.

Before the approval of a new law, in 1995 minister Dini issued a decree that regularised 250 thousand immigrant workers. However, in a way, this decision had the effect of stigmatising immigrants as a 'social problem' and as enemies from which Italy had to be protected. It established the closure of Italian borders, and expulsion, as the answers to these 'emergencies'; moreover it functioned as proof of a possible agreement between left and right parties regarding immigration in the name of 'national interest', which resulted in 1998 *Turco-Napolitano* law.

The new law attempted to regularise the position of non-EU immigrants and to facilitate the renewal of documents by introducing a long term residence card (*carta di soggiorno*) for migrants legally resident in the country for a minimum of five years. Moreover, it facilitated access to the national health system, even for clandestine immigrants and introduced a new 'job-search' visa⁴³.

⁴² For a particular account of fears and moral panic in Italian society, a good example is John Foot's description of the Turin San Salvario district (Foot 2001).

⁴³ Non Italian workers could enter the country sponsored by private individuals or associations who had to deposit a guarantee, demonstrate a sufficient income, offer accommodation and pay the contributions to public health insurance for the immigrant.

At the same time the government increased border control and accelerated expulsion procedures. It also created the *Centri di permanenza temporanea (CPT – Temporary residency centre)* where immigrants without documents would be held pending identification and possibly expulsion. The centres were justified by the supposed necessity of giving first aid and assistance to clandestines who had arrived by boats, as well as the need to establish the age and nationality of each new arrival.⁴⁴ Images of these centres with their gates, barbed wire and policemen have had a powerful effect on sustaining stereotypes: immigrant=criminal, due to their close resemblance to prisons.



Picture 5: Image from the CPT in Lampedusa



Picture 6: Image from the CPT in Liguria

Leaving aside the practical effects of the Turco-Napolitano law, one important aspect is that this law established a strong distinction between 'regular' and 'illegal' immigrants which was the result of the balance between left and right party pressure: to the first group the State recognised a 'right to exist' (Dal Lago 2004:38), while to the second group were exclusively applied norms aimed at social control.

At the time of my research immigration was regulated by the *Bossi-Fini* law, which came into effect in 2002. This new law was the result of the constant underestimation of the migration phenomenon in Italy, which is commonly seen as - or desired as - fleeting and transitory. It also pandered to the xenophobic impulses, which were fed at a political level by some of the parties in the 2001 centre-right governing coalition.

'The new law requires all third-country immigrants to be fingerprinted and allows the use of naval ships to patrol Italian coastlines to intercept smuggling ships. It also requires immigrants

⁴⁴ CPT are considered a violation of human rights by many associations as despite their initial aim are viewed as a form of imprisonment due to the lack of freedom and the overcrowding conditions in which immigrants are kept. Moreover, there is no separation between newly arrived immigrants waiting for identification and illegal immigrants waiting for expulsion. Tensions often explode with mass escapes from the centres or with fights involving police forces and groups of immigrants.

to have contracts from Italian employers before their arrival and it links legal residence to the work permit' (Dell'Olio 2004: 113). This means that permits to stay for work depend on a combined employment and residency contract (*contratto di soggiorno-lavoro*). Workers who lose their job have the right to register in job placement lists and legally reside in Italy for six months with a legal permit. Once this permit expires they will be expelled unless they have found some form of employment.

Moreover, the minimum stay in order to request a *carta di soggiorno* (long term residence card) was raised from five years of documented residence to six years. The job-search visa was cancelled and the maximum limit of time for detention in one of the CPT mentioned above was raised from 30 days to 60 days. In order to obtain citizenship a distinction was made between 'immigrants with Italian origins', 'immigrants from EU countries' and 'immigrants from non-EU countries'. The length of minimum residency changed from five years for all immigrants to respectively three, four and ten years. The importance of the *ius sanguinis* – therefore a child's citizenship is determined by his/her parents' citizenship and not by his/her place of birth - in order to obtain citizenship was reinforced and the process was facilitated for people with Italian relatives who had emigrated in the past.

Despite the opening of new offices in every province of the country (*Sportello Unico dell'Immigrazione*), in order to simplify the administrative procedures and to facilitate the *Questura* work, the time it took to release new permits or renew old ones did not decrease and immigrants could wait up to nine months for their documents.

The new law did not solve the problems of illegal landings, irregular immigrants, illegal work, or the insufficient number of new work visas established by the *flussi* system, and managed to exacerbate the tensions between locals and migrants. The former group convinced themselves even more than immigration was a 'disease', which, despite the measures taken by the government, could not be cured. At the same time they recognised the need for different measures in order to stop the 'invasion', or control the immigrants already in the country⁴⁵. The latter were constantly living with the risk of becoming irregulars and with a rising feeling of frustration.

In short, laws changed but the problems for both immigrants and locals remained. With the end of the second Berlusconi government in 2006 everyone expected a 'new era of immigration law'. The new government however did not live up to these expectations. Prodi's government, sustained by a centre-left coalition, did not managed to change the existing

⁴⁵ In some cities of North Italy, locals, with the support of the Lega Nord, organised neighbourhood patrol duty groups in order to 'protect themselves against foreigners'.

immigration law and despite the good ideas expressed in a draft law presented in 2007⁴⁶ the government collapsed in 2008 before addressing the immigration law issue.

The new Berlusconi's government created after the 2008 election with the solid support of Lega Nord intensified the strict control over immigrants.

What is evident is that despite the numerous attempts of the different Italian governments to create an efficient and coherent immigration law, the solutions adopted by governments in the last 20 years have so far dissatisfied everyone.

The remarks of a 53 years old male from Ghana, who has lived in Italy for 15 years leaves no need for further comments:

'It is amazing how Italy is doing its best to make us feel unwelcome. I was hoping that with a left-wing government things were going to change for us, but I guess politicians need to listen to their voters. And we do not vote. They don't really want us to stay here and the laws reflect these feelings'.

(Adam, private conversation in Anolf Office, June 2007)

⁴⁶ The new law aimed at facilitating legal entry to Italy through the re-introduction of 'sponsors' for a job-search visa. Moreover planned to allow unlimited entries to domestic helpers and elderly assistants, as well as professors, managers and qualified workers from non EC countries. The intention was to create a three-year *flussi* system with the possibility of annual re-adjustment on the basis of the real work request; employment lists kept by the Italian embassies and consulates around the world in which non Italian workers can register in order to enter Italy for permanent and/or seasonal jobs. The new law also included the extension of the duration of the permit to stay for up to three years for workers with a permanent contract and for up to one year in case of unemployment. It planned the closure of CPTs, and the right to vote in the administrative election for immigrants resident in the country for more than 5 years.

Chapter 3 – Italian education system and non-Italian students

'I docenti, protagonisti di una scuola che cambia!' (Teachers, the leading role in a changing school system!)

(Una scuola per crescere, - A School to Grow up in – Information booklet issued by the Ministry of Education in 2002, p.20)

For every young person, school is the link between the family and the wider society, the first step towards adulthood and independence. It has been defined as a formal institution, with the intentional and specific aim of transmitting to the new generations culture and values that society considers central. 'School as a specialised institution presents itself as a learning community with educative intentions, aims, strategies, actions and interaction modalities linked to a culture built-in a contest which at the same time is linked with a varied and heterogeneous culture of parents and students, but also with a series of other interlocutors present within the local territory of the school (local community) and with a large series of real and virtual, material, symbolic, normative, local and international references' (Besozzi 2006: 231).

As Besozzi clearly points out, the school cannot be seen as detached from local, national and global issues. Due to the specific aims a school has, which is that of educating young people, the position of teachers and headmasters is one of great power. However, in Italy, due to problems teachers face in finding stable employment ⁴⁷ and a general distrust of society towards all the institutions – school included – teaching is not such a sought-after profession anymore. 29.2% of the teachers admitted in a questionnaire I distributed at the beginning of my fieldwork, that they chose teaching as a profession by chance, or for convenience as working hours are not onerous, and it left them with time to spend with the own family or doing other things.

In response to the negative feelings towards teaching as a profession, the government has been trying to give teachers more prestige.

⁴⁷ Teachers in public schools of every topic besides religion are recruited via national examinations, however due to a surplus of teachers these exams are not held on a yearly basis. In order to be able to teach, a graduate needs to obtain a specific teaching qualification, then register in a local list under the topic he/she can teach. From 1999 the government has established a specific two years course called SSIS (*Scuola di specializzazione per l'insegnamento secondario* – Specialization School for Secondary School Teaching) compulsory for teaching in secondary schools. Schools need to consult specific lists made up by a point-system method which calculate national exam results, years of teaching in the public sector, hours of substitutions done and so forth in order to request a teacher. Only if all the teachers included in the list refuse the position the school can employ someone via other methods. Winning of the national exams however does not imply a *cattedra* (desk- as teaching in the same school for an entire year is commonly called) but it usually implies years of 'waiting for a cattedra', during which one must work as a supply teacher or finding employment in the private sector.

Do teachers really have the leading role in a changing school system, as the booklet mentioned at the beginning of this chapter wants them to believe? The time I spent conducting fieldwork and working in this sector left me with the impression that more than the teachers, the real main characters in the changing Italian school system are the government rules that regulate education. These rules are constantly changed, depending on the coalition parties in power. The professionals working in the sector are asked first of all to understand these changes. Then they are required to try and 'adapt' to them for the reality of the school where they work.

In the last few years the Italian education system has gone through a number of reforms that have not been well accepted by people working in the sector. Moreover, despite the great emphasis assigned to school autonomy, this is very limited in practice and seems to cause more problems than benefits. Since the 31st of December 1962, when Italy established the creation of a single and compulsory middle school, education has changed from an 'elite' system restricted to a small minority to a 'mass' system open to everyone (Besozzi 2006). Since then, there have been problems educating children from different economic and social backgrounds, due to the diversity of the Italian population. However with the changes in Italian society, these problems have become more visible, and the request for a solution has become more urgent. Basic compulsory free education has been without any doubt an important step forward and no one would minimise or negate its importance. However, if in theory compulsory free education seems to guarantee to everyone equal opportunities, in reality there are many other factors that can influence the real achievement of this goal. In the modern Italian school system more than giving everyone an equal basis for future achievement, the education system often seems to – as Giddens states when speaking about education - reinforce wider inequalities, rather than reducing them (Giddens 2001). If teachers are perhaps not the leading players in school, they unquestionably have an important role in determining the academic success of non Italian students.

Beside the duty of transmitting the necessary knowledge to future generations, school - together with the family - represents the main socializing agency for every young person during childhood and adolescence, years which are extremely crucial for the construction of personal identity. Moreover, for young immigrants school is in the vast majority of cases also the first real contact with an Italian institution. Seen in this light, the time spent in the classroom is of the utmost importance for their social integration, their self esteem and the development of their identity. However, if the school is not ready to deal with this process, the consequences can be extremely negative.

This chapter discusses the reality of the Italian school system, looking at how it deals with

the growing number of non Italian students.

3.1 The Italian education system

At the time of my research the Italian education system was structured in the following way: at the centre of the system there is the *istituzione scolastica* (school institution) which organises and administers one or more schools of different levels: kindergarten (*scuola materna*) – which is not part of the compulsory education system - , primary school (*scuola elementare*), first level of secondary school (*scuola secondaria di primo livello* previously called *scuola media* – middle school⁴⁸) and second level of secondary school (*scuola superiore*). One *dirigente scolastico* (school director, previously called *preside* – headmaster) is in charge of each school institution.

Based on the different kinds of organisation, a school institution can be called *circolo didattico* (didactic circle), *istituto comprensivo* (Inclusive institute) or *scuola secondaria* (secondary school).

Compulsory education has a duration of 10 years and starts with primary education which lasts five years, starting from the age of 6. The first level of secondary school lasts three years and ends with a first national examination. It is followed by a second level of secondary school education, which lasts five or three years depending on the type of school chosen. Secondary school is divided into *Liceo* and technical or professional schools. After completing five years of secondary school, and after sitting the second and final national exam (*Maturità*), a student obtains a diploma and can enrol in University.

The modern structure of Italian education system was created in 1923 with the *Riforma Gentile*, which was partially modified with the *Riforma Berlinguer* of 1997, which talks for the first time of '*autonomia scolastica*' – the autonomy of schools. I believe this question can have more influence on the education of non Italian students. The principle of the autonomy of schools was officially launched in the 1999 Presidential decree called 'Rules concerning the autonomy of school institutions'. It can be seen as providing the possibility for a single school to organise their educational strategy specifically for the needs of its own environment. Its purpose is to 'guarantee of freedom of teaching and cultural pluralism'. In essence, individual schools gained the power to create a personalised plan of activities on the basis of local needs, of partially changing and modifying the government's programmes, and choosing the school timetable and calendar. Each decision needed the approval of the Regional government and is required to be in line with

⁴⁸ I will use the term '*middle school*' to indicate this type of school and '*secondary school*' to indicate the second level of secondary school.

government main directives. The State, however, has the overall authority on general issues on education, on a set of minimum standards guaranteed throughout the country and on programmes to be followed in each year of schooling.

How should the autonomy of schools guarantee cultural pluralism? In theory this is because each school has the possibility of defining its own curricula and programmes, by choosing didactic methods and development activities based on the students' cultural background, their interests, and families' requests. If used in this way the autonomy of the schools could really be one of the most useful tools for both improving the level of teaching and for guaranteeing equal learning possibilities to all students regardless of their mother tongue or their past experiences in education. The document that should highlight the autonomy of each school is the POF – *Piano dell'offerta formativa* (School Educational Policy Plan) – which is 'the school ID card': it describes the specificities of the school, the cultural and pedagogic basis of its programmes, its aims, its extra school activities, its teaching methods and so on. But as we will see later in this chapter, schools are not as 'autonomous' as the document suggests and the space left to it is limited due to economic resources or to school directors' decisions.

During the months of my fieldwork the Italian education system was at the centre of some reforms attempted by Berlusconi's Minister of Education, Letizia Moratti. These reforms were particularly unpopular - must of all with school directors and teachers. Besides the reforms regarding the structure of the school system, funding for public schools was cut, causing much concern amongst professionals. Strikes and protests against the reforms were widespread during my year of fieldwork, and attacks on the reforms have been numerous - even from the media. In an interview with the *Repubblica* newspaper, one of Milan's school directors clearly underlined one of the major problems due to the lack of funding: 'A few years ago in the Milan province there were 700 teachers whose role was to facilitate the integration of non Italian students with their classmates (*facilitatori*). They were *insegnanti di ruolo* (teachers with a permanent contract of employment). Three years ago these teachers were reduced to 220, two years ago to 120, last year to 80 and this year there will be even less.'⁴⁹ This situation is caused not by a lack of vocation, or by the sudden death or retirement of a high number of professionals. The decrease is exclusively due to the cutting of funding from the Ministry of Education. During the 'Moratti era' the number of Italian teachers seriously decreased by almost 34 thousand units. The first ones to suffer from this situation are the so called 'supplementary service teachers' such as teachers for immigrant and disabled students. Besides the fact that it is worrying that in a school where the

⁴⁹ Interview with the school director of one school in Milan by A. Giordano, 2005, Tutti a scuola, in *Il Venerdì di Repubblica*, August 2005.

number of non Italian students is constantly increasing, these types of services are still viewed as 'supplementary' by the government and by some directors and teachers, it seems that the aim of the reform is to create private elite schools from which, possibly, 'problematic students' such as immigrants and disabled children are to be excluded.⁵⁰

However, if we do not consider the economic aspect of it, 'on paper' the reform, with its stress on the importance of IT and English knowledge, its offer of different possibilities of school schedule and its apparent attention to individual students' abilities, was an excellent improvement from the 'old' Italian school system. The main problem was that schools have found it impossible to put government decisions into practise. In order to understand the conditions under which teachers have to work, I will now look at the main issues related to the latest reform of the system, commonly known in the country as *Riforma Moratti*, from the name of the Minister of Education.

The Moratti Reform

School is a perpetual building site covered in scaffolding but waiting for the lime of a total reform that might never come; a permanent 'waiting for Godot' until the current accumulation of bricks of different colours should sooner or later miraculously create a beautiful and functional wall.'
(Dossier 'History of a Century of School, Il Sole 24 Ore, 27 December 1999)

The above-mentioned quote is taken from a dossier which was published in 'Il Sole24 Ore', the main Italian financial newspaper. At the end of 20th century, in order to underline how Italian society had changed in the previous 100 years, the paper presented a collection of reports regarding several Italian institutions, one of which was the school. It was the time of the reforms brought in by Luigi Berlinguer, the Minister of Education. During this period, the school, as I have mentioned earlier, gained 'partial autonomy' (law n.59, art. 21, 15th March 1997). The reform also included the idea of creating a seven year cycle of 'primary school' by joining the primary and middle school years, and the progressive raising of compulsory education to 18 years of age.

However, the reform was never completed. In the elections of 2001, the left-wing government fell. Berlusconi's government came to power, and a new Minister of Education, Letizia Moratti, was appointed,.

I believe the above quote, - although it is referring to some years ago, is still valid for the current situation of the Italian school. This 'waiting for Godot' feeling and the confusion surrounding the applicability of the reform is palpable in the talks I had with many of my

⁵⁰ What I had imagined during fieldwork – that non Italian pupils were seen as a 'nuisance' in school - found confirmation at the time of writing. In 2008, the Chamber of the new Berlusconi government, pushed by the Lega Nord signed a motion for the institution of *classi ponte* (bridge-classes) for immigrant children. Newly arrived non Italian students should be enrolled in these classes for learning Italian and admitted in class once able to pass a test.

informants. As one primary school teacher stated during an interview:

'I don't know much about the Moratti reform...I hate all this bureaucracy and I find it hard reading all the circular letters than the Minister issues. I am a more practical person, more pragmatic. I always tell myself: there is no need for me to put so much effort in this, there is no letter that officially confirmed the changes anyway so it does not mean we will have to do it...so I told myself, when time the time comes, when it will be strictly necessary and compulsory I will face it. (SHE LAUGHS) As a matter of fact I am not setting a very good example as a teacher - it is not a very smart thing to do...let's call it a survival strategy!'
(Elisabetta, primary school teacher. April 2005)

It is not only teachers who are experiencing confusion and frustration, but also school directors, who are uncertain about the efficacy of the reform. The words below from two school directors show how negative or uncertain comments regarding the Moratti reform are not necessarily linked with the political ideas of the speakers. The first comment is from a school director who openly supported a left-wing party, while the second comment was made by a school director close to Lega Nord. Both of them expressed their doubts:

'I think that the primary school organisation that was created only a few years ago with all its problems and complexity, was somehow working. Small corrections were needed but not a total reform (...).The reform is creating huge mental confusion, huge administrative confusion in the reality of the school. We are receiving new guidelines, new rules followed by corrections to these rules and guidelines...the result is that everyone just tries to do his best or just sits and waits.'

(June 2005 – Interview with school directors regarding Moratti Reform)

'We need to be careful. The word 'reform' does not necessarily mean improvement. It simply means 'attempt to change something that we imagine does not work properly'. It can mean a change for the worse. Politicians are convinced that schools are not working, however they never bothered to ask people working in the school what they really think about it'.

(June 2005 – Interview with school directors regarding Moratti Reform)

The process of the implementation of the Moratti reform started officially in January 2004 – as the first step of a gradual reform of the entire education system - when the Cabinet approved the decree regarding reform of the first 'educational cycle' with the abolition of the final

exams at the end of five years of primary school. Due to the fall of the second Berlusconi government in 2005, the planned reforms were never fully completed.

The main aims of the reforms were to increase the autonomy of the schools in order to simplify bureaucracy, to create a national evaluation system in order to ensure that all the schools could provide a good level of education, the development of technologies and IT tools, the valorisation of the professionals working in the sector, an increase in training for teachers, the adjustment of the structures, and a decrease in the level of students failing or dropping out of school.

However, in order to reach these goals the schools' funding needed to increase. On the contrary, the government's 2005 financial report saw a decrease in the money destined to public schools for the so called *spese di funzionamento* (running expenses, such as paper, cleaning products, teachers' materials, and so forth) and the teaching expenses. If the financial report of 2001 issued 331 million Euro for public schools, in 2006 this amount dropped to 99 million. In the meantime, funding for private schools rose by 2% and the government issued a triple bonus for families who chose to enrol their children into private schools. The decrease in funding requires schools not only to cut expenses, but also to increase the contribution from students' families for school trips, material for extra-curricular activities and so forth. The first ones to be affected by these requests are students from economically disadvantaged families, many of whom are immigrants, who run the risks of being cut out from important socialising experiences, such as school trips.

The government thought that one way of cutting school expenses from the yearly national financial report was to reduce school hours (and therefore reduce the number of teachers). However, the freedom left to the students' families to choose what type of schedule they wanted for their children meant this didn't work. Moreover, it increased the need for more resources for the school in order to cover full time education and canteen services, as parents requested. The old education system established a very simple school schedule: Monday to Saturday from 8 am to 1 pm, for a total of 30 weekly hours of lessons. Nowadays parents can choose a weekly schedule of 27 hours, 30 hours or even more - up to 40 hours. When the reform was issued, the Ministry hoped and forecast that the majority of the families would choose the minimum number of hours, but the data surprised everyone.

72.9% of primary school classes function with a schedule of 30-34 weekly hours, and 24.8% with a weekly schedule of 40 hours, and the same applies for middle schools, with only 1.33% of classes with a weekly schedule of 27 hours (MIUR). This implies the creation of school canteens in order to provide lunch for the students who cannot return home during the midday

break, the extension of school buildings, the employment of new professionals and so forth. 'Tempo pieno' (full time school, with compulsory lessons in the morning and in the afternoon) is particularly important for immigrant families.⁵¹ It is not only convenient on a 'practical and economic' basis, as children can stay at school even in the afternoon with no additional cost to the family, but for non-Italian children themselves it is an important opportunity for improving their language skills and socialising with peers. At the moment of enrolment in the schools I visited, teachers always suggested to migrant parents that they enrol their child in classes with a 'full time schedule', or to enrol him/her in *doposcuola* in order to give him/her more opportunities to practice the Italian language and improve their language skills.

Moreover, the introduction of new curricular topics such as IT, a second foreign language, or one foreign language from primary school in the same old school schedule necessarily meant a cut in the weekly hours of other subjects and the employment of new teachers. This naturally created growing frustration among teachers who saw their subjects demoted to the 'B league', or the disappointment of teachers who had been asked to teach subjects out of their expertise, or saw their weekly schedule increase without an accompanying increase in salary.

The frustration and disappointment of teachers was also due to the abolition of the final exam after five years of primary school. This has caused a decrease in the teachers' power, who now have less possibility for evaluating their students.

Moreover, although it is true that with greater school autonomy teachers now have greater possibilities for professional training, this training is not compulsory and there is no economic advantage in becoming more expert.

'It is discouraging. Very often the fact that you have learnt something extra, that you have gained a qualification, means you are requested to do something more at school. However, this does not imply a decrease in your 'normal activity', therefore many teachers, including myself, do not enrol in courses, as there is simply no benefit from them.' (May 2005 – Primary school teacher)

Although there is funding for professional training and this can be used for training staff in 'intercultural' teaching, teachers did not seem particularly keen in taking part. 56% of people who answered my questionnaire admitted that they had not taken part in any professional courses or

⁵¹ The *tempo pieno* differs from schools with *doposcuola*. Schools that choose the former have longer school hours and all the activities are compulsory for the pupils, lessons run in the mornings and in the afternoons and are usually closed on Saturdays. Schools that choose the later, 'traditional' schedule, have lessons Monday to Saturday only in the morning and some of them organise a *doposcuola* in the afternoon for which parents have to pay a fee (see p. 19).

workshops in the last 3 years. Despite this, 42% admitted their inadequacy in dealing with non Italian students. Only 17%, however, indicated the 'failure with some students' as a source of frustration in their profession, while 36% admitted that the main frustration of being a teacher was the lack of adequate economic compensation.

I will not go into more detail on the reform of the school system. However, my point is that there is a great contradiction between the aims of the reform – that are all very positive and desirable on paper – and the cutting of funding in order to put these reforms into practice. Moreover, the autonomy of the school, although limited in its applicability, has indeed created league A and league B schools, because of the school director's ability to receive additional funding from the Province or the Region for specific projects, or as the school where I conducted most of the fieldwork did, by looking for a private sponsor.

Moreover, as a school director, despite the school's supposed autonomy, cannot choose whom to employ in the school he/she administers – which I do not consider to be completely negative – some face the problem of not having staff who are adequately qualified in dealing with 'problems', such as newly arrived non Italian students. Due to the lack of funding available, the first services that the school usually decides to cut are the ones for a 'minority' such as disabled children and immigrants. However, the principles of intercultural education, so well promoted by the government is in opposition to this, as we will see below.

3.2 L'intercultura - Intercultural education in Italy

'For a long time now our school has chosen the full integration of all peoples, and intercultural education as its cultural perspective. Our cultural model, unlike the English and the French ones, refuses the logic of assimilation and also refuses the creation or the reinforcement of closed ethnic communities. It instead favours reciprocal respect and dialogue in order to valorise the importance of the latest experiences and in order to teach even with the involvement of the families. In short, it encourages the integration in full respect of personal identities.'

(Letizia Moratti, Ministry of Education, 2005)

Italy started to promote intercultural education from the second half of the 1980s. It was seen as a necessity for everyone and not only as an emergency measure restricted to immigrant children (Chang and Checchin 1996).

As explained in chapter one, while in other parts of the world the term 'multicultural education' is well accepted and constantly used, in Italy this term has been substituted with 'interculturalism' and the debate concerning terminology has been wide. 'With the term *multicultural* we refer to a situation in which different cultural groups live next to each other

without necessarily interacting. With the term *cross-cultural* we define a comprehensive vision of a specific phenomenon, of a specific situation through different cultures without interaction between these cultures. Instead by using the term *intercultural*, we underline a situation in which people from different cultures interact, or an activity that requires this type of interaction' (Durino Allegra 1993: 17).

From the extensive literature that analyses intercultural education, we learn that the future of Italian education consists 'of a passage from multiculturalism to the construction of interculturalism that sees man growing and developing in relation with others, who expresses himself through dialogue, with negotiation and with pluralism' (Rizzi 1992: 13). Moreover, an educator who claims to have a multicultural perspective considers the 'cohabitation of different ethnicities, cultures and religions - something that has happened also in Italy, as a natural, spontaneous historical process. He will recognize this process and adapt his didactic methods. On the contrary, a teacher aiming for an intercultural perspective will choose to build, to create, and formulate a proposal' (Nanni 1998: 28-29). A study of the 'other culture' not a cumulative experience, but an interactive one, not as encyclopaedic knowledge, but as an epistemic one, as a consequence of *interculturalismo*.

Despite this stress on the right terminology to use while referring to education in books and government papers, in reality school directors, educators and teachers use the two terms interchangeably.

The inclusion of immigrant children and families in Italian schools occurs within an institutional organisation within which its rules and impositions determine the models of inclusion or exclusion. This is the reason why I consider it to be essential to give a quick overview of the set of rules which governs the presence of non Italian students in Italian schools and to understand what government means by '*interculturalismo*'.

The aims of intercultural education are well defined by the Ministry of Education's Circular letter n.73/2nd March 1994. It states that: 'Intercultural education does not finish with the problems due to the presence of foreign students in the school, but expands to the complexity of the conflict between cultures (...) and it constitutes the highest answer to racism and anti-Semitism. It requires the desire of knowing and of being known by respecting each other's identity in an atmosphere of dialogue and solidarity'.

At the basis of the government's directives are not only articles 3, 6, and 10 of the Italian constitution that establish the same rights to all the citizens despite their sex, language, and religion, but also ONU's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the ONU Declaration of Children's Rights. Moreover, Italy needs to take into account the European Directives that in 1975

stressed the importance for all the country members of the EC to guarantee free education for immigrant children. It pushed the countries to teach migrant students, using the host country language and their mother tongue. Moreover it highlights the importance of preparing qualified teachers for this.

As far as Italy is concerned, at the basis of the inclusion of non Italian students in the public education system the main document is the CEE Directive n.77/486 of the 25th of July 1977. This document abandoned the model of assimilation in favour of the inclusion of immigrant students respecting their own cultural identity. Education has to include support activities in order to facilitate the learning of the host country's language, and to facilitate integration and socialisation with classmates.

1989 is considered the year of the 'birth' of Italian intercultural education. The year saw the approval of the *Martelli* law on immigration (see chapter two) and the first Ministerial guidelines (n.301/8th September 1989) regarding the compulsory education of immigrant children. This represents the first attempt to establish rules regarding the inclusion of non Italian children in schools. The focus was on the cooperation between local bodies (school, health services, immigrant communities' associations, and so forth) in order to see the integration of immigrant minors not only to the school environment, but also expanded to society as a whole. One year later, in 1990, the Ministry of Education issued a second document(n.205/26th July 1990). The document addresses three main themes. The first one is administrative, involving the enrolment of immigrant children and the development of a personalized education programme; the second one is concerned with language and culture and in particular with the need to establish specific Italian language courses for non Italian students, alternating with lessons with their Italian classmates. The third theme involves the introduction of intercultural education as the pedagogical response to linguistic and cultural diversity, seen as a structural condition and a key element in achieving immigrant students' integration. Intercultural education, in the document is described as follows: 'The educational task (...) takes on the specific character of mediation between the diverse cultures of which the students are bearers: mediation which is not reductive of the diverse cultural contributions, engendering a continuous, but a productive encounter between different models. (...) Intercultural education confirms the meaning of democracy considered as 'cultural diversity' is to be thought of as a positive resource for the complex processes of social and personal growth. Therefore, the primary objective of intercultural education is defines as the promotion of the capacity for constructive cohabitation in a multiform social and cultural fabric. It involved not only respect for diversity, but also the recognition of one's cultural identity, in the daily pursuit of dialogue, understanding and collaboration with a target of

mutual enrichment' (CM 205/1990).

Moreover, it should be the school's responsibility to use all the available resources in order to understand the past experience of a newly arrived student and to insert him/her in a suitable group on the basis of his/her age, past educational results and previous years of attendance in school. For this particular purpose, in 1990 the government suggested the creation of a specific office that deals with all these issues on a local level. In addition the school needed to seek the collaboration of qualified Italian L2 (Italian as a second language) teachers and experts in communication and organisation. In all the government letters and the ones that followed, much attention was given to the preservation of the language of origin of the immigrant students. However the availability of qualified personnel, the lack of funding, and the current difficulties in cramming the school programme into 27 hours of weekly teaching makes activities specifically aimed at these goals an absolute rarity in Italian schools. The duty of, and the right to education, includes the duty of and the right to education even for children with immigrant parents, despite their legal status in Italy. Therefore it also includes children whose parents are illegally resident in the country (art. 38 - 25th July 1998). These students are enrolled '*con riserva*' (provisionally), waiting to obtain the legal documents necessary for staying in Italy. If the student's family does not possess the legal right to stay in the country (the *permesso di soggiorno*) the school cannot turn to other institutions, such as the police, to notify the presence of illegal immigrants in the school. This is in order to ensure that the minor's right to education is guaranteed. The school, however, is obliged to refer children who appear to have been abandoned or left alone in the country, to the authorities.

In the following decree dated 1992 there was an attempt to define culture in the context of education policies and also to distinguish between a multicultural and intercultural approach. Firstly, the preservation of a pre-migration cultural heritage is prioritised, whilst secondly a dynamic and creative encounters of cultures is highlighted. 'According to the multicultural viewpoint, cultures understood anthropologically are like a second nature (...) hence the necessity of respecting them and assuring them to the new born like indispensable endowment for their development, being the transmission of the functional cultural models needed not only for the survival of groups, but also for individuals. According to the intercultural viewpoint, cultures do not have to be understood like an armour that prevents growth or is venerated like untouchable sanctuaries, because they are also always a human product and their function is not only that of protecting, but also that of supporting the effort that every man must make in order to free himself from his origins, increasing the focus not only to the variety of existing models of humanity, but also to those which are possible' (CM 122/1992).

The directives of the government are simply guidelines, however. In 1999 the possibility of enrolling students in the compulsory education system in any moment during the school year (DPR n.394/99 art.45) was established. This was of great importance for non Italian families. From this time they did not have to wait until September to enrol their children in school. However the arrival of a new student, especially if she/he did not speak Italian, in the middle of the school year was not something that every teacher, or school director appreciated.

During the Berlusconi's era the government further stressed the autonomy of the school and law n. 53/2003 allowed schools to personalise its programmes, which meant it allowed specific education paths for each student on the basis of his/her maturity and knowledge. Once again, with the autonomy given, schools could cover all areas that required a specific and local solution, including having a high percentage of non Italian students.

In 2004 the government also established the '*Ufficio per l'integrazione degli studenti stranieri*' (Foreign Students Integration Office) with the aim of supporting, empowering, and coordinating the actions aimed at the integration of non Italian students. The main result of this was the creation and circulation of a document called '*Linee guida per l'accoglienza e l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri*' (Guidelines for Welcoming and Integrating non Italian Students)⁵² in 2006, which represents the official position of the Italian government in regard to intercultural education. The document underlines the duty for families to enrol every child under 16 years of age, whether or not they had the legal documents required to stay in the country. It also stressed the importance for school administrations to form classes with students of different nationalities. Moreover it stressed the value of Italian language tuition for every newly-arrived non Italian student; the presence of linguistic and cultural mediators for better communicate with migrant families; and professional training for teachers.

While the government issued precise instructions in order to explain what the school should do overall when enrolling a non Italian student, in reality they did not explain how to put this advice into practice. If, for example, we take into account the 2007 document entitled '*La via italiana per la scuola interculturale e l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri*' (Italian Path for an Intercultural School and the Integration of Foreign Students) issued by the Foreign Students Integration Office, we read as follows: 'Italian schools have chosen to adopt an intercultural perspective, which means dialogue and exchange between cultures (...) This means that the school does not simply integrate foreign students or adopt special emergency measures for doing this. Diversity must be intended as the identity of the school itself. (...) This is based on a

52

http://archivio.pubblica.istruzione.it/news/2006/allegati/cm24_06all.pdf

dynamic view of culture that avoids both the closure of students in a 'cultural prison' and stereotypes or folklorisation of cultures' (Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione 2007: 9). The document also outlines the importance of language tuition, of professional training for directors, teachers and also the administrative staff of the school, as well as the importance of the maintenance of the mother tongue for the identity of young migrant students. In theory the government views the inclusion of non Italian students in the school system as something that could be easily done, providing training for teachers and individual programmes for students were considered. However, the reality that I observed in school is that nobody really knows how to put *intercultural* into practice and changes are made by school directors' choices, the ability of teachers, and the extent of their desire to involve newly arrived students from their first day in the new school.

Chapter 4 - Intercultura in practice

This chapter describes in detail the schools where I conducted fieldwork and how the policies suggested by central government, which were presented in the previous chapter, work – or do not work – in the context of the schools I worked in.

The second part of the chapter analyses the importance of language competence and how young migrants and their families deal with the issue.

4.1 The world of the school

'I am surprised at the atmosphere I have found in this school. After three months of participant observation I must admit that the first negative impression I had after my first day here has definitely changed. I would definitely love to be a student in this school at the present time and to have the chance to participate in all the activities and projects that the school offers. However, maybe this is an exception, maybe I need to find a 'terrible' school in order to see something happening. I have the feeling I am observing something 'normal', I am spending my days waiting for something to happen but nothing is happening here. I need to keep in mind what I read just before leaving London: that an anthropologist is usually aware of what is happening around him/her as much as fish are aware of water.'

(From my fieldwork diary, School A – January 2005)

When I decided to conduct fieldwork in Italy and specifically in the school environment, I thought my notebook would be filled with notes regarding the terrible misbehaviour of students, the failure of non Italian children, bullying and racism against non Italian teenagers, comments on how schools were unprepared and unwilling to accept the challenge of 'multiculturalism', and so forth. However, the situation I encountered in the school where I spent most of my time as an anthropologist in the field has been, at least at a first glance, completely different.

After a few months, I had the impression that everything I had read during my year of preparation before leaving for fieldwork was useless; all the ideas I had on how to continue my research needed to be reviewed and all the things I expected to happen in the school simply did not happen. What remained of what I thought my fieldwork would have been was the sense of frustration and dissatisfaction that teachers, and in general the people working in the education sector have. Instead of notes on 'multicultural' issues that I thought I would have taken talking with teachers, my diary started to be full of complaints on government decisions and on school organisation. That is when I started to understand that in order to fully comprehend the context of my research I needed to start understanding teachers' moods and teaching methods.

As students nowadays are spending more and more time in school, the ideas and

behaviour of professionals working in this sector are fundamental in order to understand how young people could be influenced by the place where they learn. Schools are not only a place for learning, but are a place - and for some children the only place - where people from different backgrounds have the possibility to socialise and interact. The activities that the school offers and the words that teachers use in this place are all factors that can influence children's own identity formation process and their perception of 'the others'. Moreover, as school is a formal institution with the aim of transmitting specific knowledge and specific values to new generations, what teachers transmit and how they do this is of the utmost importance.

The main focus of this section is to describe the specific context of my research, and the schools where I mainly spent most of my time during fieldwork. Without this context the world of Italian education will be - at best - misunderstood.

- **School A**

The school in itself did not change much since I studied in it. The building has the same 'temporary' look of 20 years before: it is a prefabricated white two floors building with red doors and window frames with a big garden all around. As I entered it for the first time in twenty years I sort of feel 'at home' knowing my way to the main office, the school director's one, the gym, the library and so on. As a matter of fact even the inside has not changed much in all this time. Students enter at 7.55 am through the main door into the hall where the ones attending classes on the second floor wait in designated areas for each class the teacher to arrive at 8.00 and then walk upstairs into their classrooms. On the first floor there is a IT room – one of the few novelties – the secretariat, the hall, the school director's office and two rooms for teaching disabled students. On the second floor the only news consisted in a room for Italian language lessons and a classroom transformed into the psychologist's office used also by the provincial intercultural coordinator of the PAISS group. Classrooms, library, art classrooms, teachers' room and the entrance to the gym changing rooms are exactly as I remembered, on the second floor of the building. (Middle school A – Fieldwork diary October 2004)

The middle school where I spent most time doing participant observation is situated a few kilometres away from Varese city centre, and is easily reachable by public transport. The students enrolled in it live mostly within walking distance of the school, or they come from three small villages about 10 kilometres without a direct bus service to the school. This is because the *Istituto comprensivo* of which the school is part includes the primary school situated in one of these villages. Therefore once the pupils finish primary school they automatically enrol in the middle school of the same *Istituto comprensivo*. The *Istituto comprensivo* includes the middle school I did my research in, one primary school situated in a village 8 kilometres away, two primary schools (one of which was about 500 metres from the middle school where I spent most of the afternoons), and another one about one kilometre away, as well as three kindergartens.

If the building had not changed much in all the intervening years, the students had. In 2004-2005 the Istituto comprensivo had 829 students, 12.3% of which were non Italian. If we consider the schools where I mainly conducted my study the percentage of non Italian student in the middle school was 15.6%, whilst in the primary school it was 14.3%.

The main country of origins of the non Italian students were as follows:

PRIMARY SCHOOL – SCHOOL B		MIDDLE SCHOOL – SCHOOL A	
Country of origin	Percentage compared with the total of non Italian students	Country of origin	Percentage compared with the total of non Italian students
Albania	38.5%	Albania	35%
Syria	10.3%	Chile	7.5%
Morocco	10.3%	Sri Lanka	7.5%
Philippines	7.7%	Romania	5%
Ivory Coast	5.1%	Peru	5%
Dominican Republic	5.1%	Angola	5%
China	2.6%	Colombia	5%
El Salvador	2.6%	Bangladesh	5%
Ecuador	2.6%	Ukraine	5%
Argentina	2.6%	Russia	5%

This school did not suffer from some of the problems that many other schools were having: it had the same school director over a number of years⁵³ and permanent staff that had not changed for several years. Due to the ability and the resourcefulness of its director the school managed to receive some additional financial support from private companies⁵⁴ which helped offer the students some extra curricula afternoon activities. These included music lessons and theatre classes (for which families needed to pay a small fee) in addition to sports. Families could choose school hours from Monday to Friday 8 am – 2 pm or from Monday to Saturday 8 am – 1pm. In September 2004, 32 teachers, only 5 of which were male ones, were working in the school. 5 of the staff were in charge of teaching disabled students.

From it POF ⁵⁵it seems that the school gives a certain amount of thought to the needs of

⁵³ Due to the financial cut decided by the government many schools with less than 500 students were administered by a temporary school director who was in charge of another *istituto comprensivo* on a permanent basis.

⁵⁴ In 2004 this school managed to receive the sponsorship of a local car dealer who donated 4000 € in exchange of advertising his shop on the school notices, on the school walls and also on some of the teachers' cars.

⁵⁵ See p. 48.

non Italian students: it established a *commissione interculturale* – intercultural commission – with the task of allocating classes for newly-arrived non Italian students, which consisted of interviewing families and students in order to understand their past educational experience, and testing the level of Italian of the young person. If necessary, an individual timetable and programme was drawn up, depending on the students' level. It also provided students with Italian language tuition during school hours, thanks to the work of one teacher on the staff, and one teacher provided by the *comune*. It also enrolled cultural mediators when necessary during meetings between teachers and parents, or entry tests for new non Italian students.

- **School B**

The primary school where I spent most afternoons is situated around 500 meters from the above mentioned school. It is a two floor building with a big back garden where pupils usually play during the morning break or in the afternoons. The school has one fully equipped, IT class, a video room, a gymnasium and a new 'intercultural' library where students and member of the staff can find a collection of books from teaching manuals to tales and stories from other countries⁵⁶. In the basement there was a large canteen for the students' lunch. School hours were from 8 am to 1 pm Monday to Friday and one day a week from 2 pm to 5 pm (4 pm for first and second grades). The school also offered a pre-school (*prescuola*) and a post-school services (*doposcuola*) organised by the Comune di Varese for which parents needed to pay a monthly fee. This was not compulsory. 23 teachers, all female, were in charge of educating the pupils.

The POF of the primary school also highlighted the importance of intercultural education 'with the aim of raising in children a different mental attitude when encountering the other, or 'the different', and helping develop a new solidarity. The presence of foreign students in the school reinforces the need for finding practical strategies and educational pathways for promoting the right of equality and a democratic coexistence.'⁵⁷

The school had a so called 'Italian L2 laboratory' for non Italian pupils situated in the library that was basically language tuition during school hours for pupils who needed it. At the time of fieldwork two Moroccan girls, one girl from Bangladesh and one boy from Albania were receiving extra Italian lessons, sometimes as a group, at others on an individual basis for an average of four hours a week, depending on their schedule and the activities that teachers organised in the classrooms.

⁵⁶ The library was then opened to the public in 2007.

⁵⁷ Translation from the school POF.

- **School C and school D**

The *Istituto Comprensivo* of which middle school C and primary school D are parts of, is situated about 20 km from Varese. Beside these schools, the same director also administers three kindergartens and two other primary schools situated in two small towns nearby. In the year of my work there, almost 12% of the students enrolled in the schools were non Italian and almost 60% of these were Moroccan, followed by 5% of Albanian and 4% for Ecuadorian, Peruvian and Salvadorian. Despite a fair number of non Italian students, especially in the primary school, including newly-arrived ones, the schools were extremely disorganised in welcoming them. I worked there as a *facilitatore e mediatore linguistico* as part of the Anolf project focussed on the integration of migrant children. In primary school D I taught Italian to a group of five pupils from Albania, Ecuador and Morocco. Moreover I was a linguistic mediator for a Chinese pupil. However, despite the difference between the two roles⁵⁸, the school specifically asked me to teach him Italian outside the classroom once a week. Lessons were usually held in the computer room of the school but I often changed location depending on the weather, or the mood of the students. I often used a small gymnasium situated in the basement or the school garden.

In the middle school C my group of students consisted of three boys and a girl from Morocco. I was in charge of helping them study history and geography. My one-hour class, held twice a week, with another hour of Italian language tuition from a teacher of the school was the only support they were receiving. This additional support was given during Religion Education, which they did not attend. I was also in charge of teaching Italian to a Chinese boy twice a week for one hour in the same school. The lessons were usually held in the 'music classroom'. However, when the teacher of music needed the space we were often moving one or two tables in the hall and had lessons there as there was no other space available in the school.

- **School E**

School E is a middle school situated in a small town few kilometres away from the border of Switzerland. It is also very closed to Besano, another small town situated in the outskirts of Varese, which in 2005, gained attention from the national media for a murder that was committed there, and the ensuing issues which followed in its wake⁵⁹. The non Italian students in the school

⁵⁸ A '*facilitatore*' (literally a facilitator) is someone who teaches Italian to students of different nationalities and usually works as a support teacher outside the classroom on an individual basis or in a group. A '*mediatore*' is usually a person from the same country of origin - or someone with a deep knowledge of the language and the culture of the country - of the student and usually stays in the classroom translating to the student teacher's explanations. He/she also helps the school to communicate with the student's parents.

⁵⁹ To summarise the event, in 2005 an Italian bar attendant was killed by an Albanian citizen illegally resident in Italy. What the newspaper reported the day after the crime was that a fight was under way outside a bar – however the reasons for the fight are still unknown – and the bar attendant went outside to calm things down. At

make up 14% of the students population and half of the non Italian students were Albanian. The school offered a large number of projects within its curriculum. One project, developed and run by Anolf, tackled the prevention of racism and the understanding of 'the other'. In the school year 2004 -2005 I carried out the project in two third grade classes and one second grade one. In one class there were no immigrant students, whilst in a third grade one, there was an Albanian and a Moroccan boy. In an other class there was one a Peruvian girl. The project included a series of activities, from essay writing to games, watching films, encounters with migrants, discussions, and so forth. In addition to this 'external' support, the school itself had a very precise and accurate '*Protocollo di accoglienza*' (Protocol of Welcome) in order to implement an Intercultural education. The document explained how to welcome a new student in the school, from the enrolment to the evaluation of him/her. It also stated the establishment of a *Commissione Accoglienza* (Welcome Commission) constituted by the school director and four teachers, in charge of meeting the parents of the student, providing entry tests and deciding which class to put the student in. All this had to be carried out within 15 days, from the moment of enrolment to the moment of the actual entrance into class. Subsequently, within a month, the teacher of the class needed to lay out a tailored education path, which would be used when evaluating the student.

Looking at these procedures from the outside, and on paper, the situation in most of the schools seemed problem free and most of all efficient and easy to put into practice, however the everyday reality was not free from questions and problems. After few weeks of observation, one important question came to my mind: in practical terms, what was the meaning for educators, of the word 'intercultural' in these schools?

One way to understand this was to follow the steps of a non Italian family who were arriving in school A for the first time, and needed to enrol their children. The school secretary office only had enrolling forms in Italian, despite the fact that on the internet was possible to find many forms used in school, and translated into different languages. Families were also given the option of requesting a translator, who acted as a mediator. However this was only possible after

this point he was attacked and stabbed by the Albanian man. The bar attendant was a member of the Varese Football Club Supporters, one of the most racist and violent football support groups in the whole of Italy. The day after the murder, friends of the victim – many of whom have been arrested and charged in the past for tumults, brawls and racist episodes in and outside football stadiums - and various provincial members of the Lega Nord political party organised an unauthorised demonstration in Varese city centre against the presence of immigrants in Italy, which ended up in a real 'witch hunt' against Albanian citizens. As a result of those events, one Albanian boy was seriously beaten by some demonstrators, one restaurant managed by an Albanian citizen situated near the bar where the fight occurred was destroyed, and Varese captured the national media headlines with these sad episodes. Another demonstration was organised the day of the bar attendant's funeral, together with a 'peace' demonstration organised by left wing political parties and other NGOs. This time the day passed without further incidents, probably also due to the massive police force which was present in town that evening, which carefully organised everything in such a way that the two groups would not meet.

enrolment when a meeting with teachers and family could have been scheduled. However, the presence of mediators in the school, as the government guidelines suggest, could not be on a permanent basis. Professionals could be called for a few hours when it was felt they were needed. Teachers and school directors never questioned the importance of this support for both the family and the school. However, the main problem was how to pay for this service. The school had a yearly budget for intercultural activities. Unfortunately this was never enough to cover all the 'emergencies' and the *commissione interculturale* needed to use this budget carefully.

'Yes, the guidelines of the Ministry of Education regarding the inclusion of immigrant students in the schools are great, and also the advice on what a school should or should not do in order to prevent racism and to develop real intercultural education; however, the main problem is not that we don't know what we have to do or what we should do...the problem is that we have no idea HOW to do it. Of course I would love to be able to welcome afor example, a Turkish student in her language and to meet her parents who are free to ask me whatever they want because a Turkish linguistic mediator will translate everything to me...but who will pay this person? The school? the province? the family itself? Me?' (School A Italian Teacher on Intercultural Education and its applicability)

'At the beginning of the school year the school set a budget for 'interculturalism'. This includes a small project for the whole class, language tuition for non Italian students and the employment of a linguistic mediator when it is needed. Unfortunately I cannot forecast if in the middle of the school year my school will see the enrolment of a new migrant pupil for whom I will definitely need some help. So I need to 'save' some of this money for this kind of emergency. Moreover, for some languages such Chinese and Bangladeshi I have no choice, there are so few professionals that I need to employ whoever I find, however, for other languages such as Arabic and Spanish there are many NGOs that can offer linguistic mediators for these languages...so I choose the cheapest one! It is a proper business...I buy what costs me less!' (School Director A on how to manage school money)

The main concern of the school when a new non Italian student enrolled was to try and get as much information as possible from the family about the student's past education. Then the *commissione interculturale* would decide in which class the student should be placed on the basis of his/her age, previous school results and, when possible, entry test results. The school guaranteed for every non Italian students hours of Italian tuition depending on the need. The

middle school had Italian class with two different levels run by a teacher of the school and a teacher from the *Comune* during school hours. Students were divided in small groups and attended this class instead of Italian grammar, literature, and history classes, especially at the beginning of their school attendance. The primary school organised Italian tuition with teachers who had made themselves available, and the pupils were mainly followed individually outside the classroom. One of the times for having basic Italian lessons was during religion class, as mentioned above. The Catholic religion was a compulsory school subject in all levels of Italian school until 1984. After that date, religion is still a subject in all schools (from primary up to secondary school). However it is not compulsory anymore. At the beginning of each academic year, parents can choose to enrol or not children in the religious studies class. One of the main problems is that the alternative for someone who decides not to take part in the class is that they usually end up sitting in a room with another teacher doing homework, or simply waiting for the hour to pass. Some even come to school an hour later or leave school an hour earlier than other students.⁶⁰

The vast majority of pupils not enrolled in religious classes are immigrants, and teachers often take advantage of this hour in order to provide additional Italian language tuition for them. The choice between attending religious classes or not attending them is something that is now well accepted by everyone and something that even the most religious families consider right and fair. However, schools, despite the stress on 'intercultural' mentioned in their programmes, do not offer valid alternatives to this subject. Usually in middle school A the students leave the classroom and wait in the library or in the teachers' room for the lesson to finish, under the supervision of a teacher. In primary school B Italian students spend this time doing homework in the library or in another classroom waiting for the hour to pass. In both schools, for non Italian students in need of Italian language tuition, teachers used this time for doing extra Italian language exercises with them.

The lack of alternatives to religious studies class sometimes made families change their initial choice after the first year, worried that their son or daughter might feel uncomfortable with leaving his/her classmates for the duration of the lesson.

'The first year I chose not to enrol my daughter in the religious studies class, however she was spending the hour outside the classroom in the library reading by herself, or drawing...well, she was not feeling good about this as she got bored and did not like to leave the classroom by herself. So this year we decided for her to take the religious studies class...what harm can it do?' (Ukrainian father of a pupil in primary school B).

⁶⁰ For information on the legislation on the teaching of religion at school refer to Bonaiuti 2004: 232-234.

Once enrolled in the school and once the *commissione* has decided in which class the student can enter, he/she can start attending classes. If his/her level of Italian is not sufficient, the school organises an individual timetable with mainly basic Italian classes and topics such as music, art and physical education, topics where knowing how to read and write in Italian is not totally necessary in order to understand what to do. The feelings of loss that non Italian students that can not speak the language feel when entering Italian schools is strong, as this is usually the first time since their arrival in the country that they are totally alone, away from the safe nest of their family. Sometimes school can provide a cultural mediator, who stays for the first days of schooling, in the classroom with the student. They translate for him/her. Otherwise a student from the same country sits next to the new student and helps him/her to deal with the new environment. However there is usually not much that can help the new student 'feel at home'. Even in the library, including the multicultural library, the books are exclusively in Italian, and there was only a Chinese-Italian dictionary and a Arabic-Italian one that could somehow help students from these countries feel a little less lost.

In the schools where I worked as a cultural mediator the situation was similar. Young people had different reactions to their encounter with the Italian school. However the initial feeling of loss was common to everyone I spoke to, and was sometimes exacerbated by a particular situation. One young Chinese student I used to teach related to me:

A school called me as cultural mediator for a Chinese student recently arrived in the country who had been enrolled in the fifth grade of primary school. The school did not have many non Italian students, especially newly arrived from the country of origin and did not know how to deal with this situation. The boy could not speak a word of Italian and was extremely relieved when I started to speak Chinese with him. He asked me to call him with his Chinese name instead of 'Matteo', the name his parents chose for him once in Italy. 'Teacher – he told me – I am lost here! The teacher sometime calls 'Matteo' 'Matteo'... I am not used to this name...I don't even understand when the teacher calls me!' (Matteo, 12 years old from China – October 2005)

Even if in Matteo's school teachers were doing their best to make him feel comfortable they lacked knowledge and experience, due to the limited number of non Italian students enrolled in their school. Schools A and B, on the contrary, had an history of migrant students and were trying to implement standard procedures in order to welcome new non Italian students. However,

often the attitude of the school staff or the daily routine inside the classrooms did not correspond to the idea I had of 'intercultural education'.

Take for example the description of one of Maria's school days. Maria is a girl from Angola who arrived in Italy in early 2004 with her younger brother and mother. She enrolled in the second grade of the middle school A.

Maria arrives at school at 7.50 after walking from home with her younger brother who attends grade 1 of the same school. They have been in Italy for five months now and their ability to understand and speak Italian is quite good, probably due to the similarity between Portuguese - their mother tongue language - and Italian. She stops for a few minutes to chat and laugh with two of her classmates while her brother does the same with his. As soon as the bell rings at 7.55, everyone enters the school building and as Maria's classroom is situated on the second floor she needs to wait with all her classmates in the school hall for a teacher to walk with them upstairs. She is not the only non Italian student in her class, but she is the newest one, as all of her classmates have already attended at least one year together - some of them even more. Despite this, she seems to be well accepted by her classmates and she has managed to create a good relationship with the girl sitting next to her who is one of the best students in the class and often helps her with assignments and exercises during school hours. In this class there are also two Albanian pupils (one boy and one girl), a boy from Ecuador, a girl from Chile adopted by an Italian family and a boy with an Italian mother and a Syrian father.

After the daily bureaucratic activities of calling the register, checking parents' signatures on absence forms and marks and so forth, the Italian teacher starts the first lesson of the day: The Reading Laboratory. This activity aims to encourage students to read for pleasure. The teacher previously complained about the fact that the reform cut the weekly hours for Italian from 7 to 5, therefore there is a reduced time for everything. This laboratory, a weekly activity, now runs for one hour every fortnight. During this hour, pupils report on what they have read on a specific topic and then the class reads something chosen by the teacher. As we are not far away from Christmas today's reading is about the upcoming festivity. Maria has not read anything in the last two weeks. Therefore she does not participate in the lively debate that goes on in class. 'I know there is a library here, but I don't like it. It is difficult for me to read a book in Italian; plus I wasn't a good reader even before when I was in Angola!' she says to me after the class. She struggles to keep up while her classmates read a passage from Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol'. But she promises the teacher to read it again at home and try to complete the homework assigned for two

weeks time.

At 9.00 the bell rings and it is time for the second lesson of the day: Italian Grammar. There is no break between the two lessons as the teacher is the same, so the pupils simply put away the material they have used for the laboratory and take their Grammar books out of their rucksacks. The first part of the lesson involves the correction of homework assigned last week. Maria does not have a grammar book and she is excused from the homework as it would be too complicated for her at the moment, and also because she studies grammar during her Italian tutorial hours. She simply sits at the desk listening to her classmates reading the exercises. The teacher is not satisfied with the level of the class: many pupils have made a lot of mistakes in their homework and some of them have not completed them at all. 'And they keep thinking about reforms, how to make pupils do more things, and forgot that the pupils now don't want to put any effort in anything! They are lazy and don't want to make any sacrifices' she tells me after the class, very disappointed with her pupils.

The entire hour is spent in checking exercises the pupils were supposed to have done and in the teacher telling them to study and concentrate more.

At 10.00 the teacher leaves the room and the pupils get ready to change classroom. It is time for Art class and the school has a specific classroom for it. It is an opportunity – one of the few – for pupils to sit where they want in the classroom and many choose to sit next to their friends. Maria sits next to the same girl at a desk in the first row with five other pupils - all girls. Today pupils need to start a new drawing. They need to copy the picture of a Roman church that is in their book and everyone starts the assignment. The lesson is entirely spent on doing this, accompanied by some chatting by the pupils and some shouting for silence from the teacher. Meanwhile, I sit quietly in a corner observing. At 10.55 there is a 10 minute break when students eat a snack, go to the toilet and simply walk around the classroom laughing and chatting. Maria spends the break talking with three other girls about a TV programme they saw the day before and how much all of them like the main male character.

At 12.00 the bell rings and the pupils move to the gym for the last lesson of the day: Physical Education. Maria complains about a stomach ache and is not doing the lesson. The teacher explains: 'You need your mother to write you a note. Can you mother write?' 'Of course' answers the girl. 'Next time then remember to ask her to write you a note if you want to be excluded from the lesson'. All the other students get changed and after a brief warm up the teacher explains the rules of handball and they all play.

At 1 o'clock, the last bell rings. Everyone gets changed and runs out of the school. Lessons are over for the day.

Maria waits for her brother and they walk back home together. During an interview she explains to me what she does in the afternoons. Her mother works part time, so as soon as she is back from school the mother goes to work, leaving her in charge of the house and of her younger sister who is aged 16 months. Her brother often goes to the 'oratorio' nearby to play with other friends and is usually back home by 5. She simply stays at home, doing some homework, watching TV and playing with her little sister. She would like to attend the track and field afternoon activity organised by the school, but the family has no-one to leave the younger child with, so she needs to stay at home. Her father usually arrives home by 6 but it depends on the shift he does at work. She does not take part in any afternoon activities and does not see her peers outside school, even if on Saturdays and Sundays the family often goes to visit friends. The only socialising space she has is school.

(December 2004 – fieldnotes)

Although Maria was a new student, she attended only 2 hours a week of Italian L2 class and had no individual programme to follow, nor did she have a cultural/linguistic mediator during her first days at school. When I asked her teachers about this, they responded that as Portuguese was a very similar language to Italian, Maria could understand almost everything since she started school by herself. The school decided to use the money for other students who they considered were more in need of help.

In short, she was not considered by teachers and by the *commissione interculturale* as 'foreign' as some other students. This begs the question, what does make a student a 'foreigner' according to school staff? The next section attempts to answer this question.

4.2 School staff and non Italian students

'I need to collect data from the school's administration office regarding the presence of non Italian students in the schools where I am conducting participant observation. A few days ago I went to the office with a written request, signed by the school director, and the secretary asked me to return and collect the list in a few days. As I pick up the list and go through it, I notice that the names of some students are not in it. From my observation in the schools I knew that there was a French pupil and a Swiss one in one of the primary schools, one German student in the middle school and an Argentinian boy with Italian parents in another primary school. However these students are not mentioned on the list I

have just received from the office. I return to the office asking for explanation and the lady in charge, answers me, very surprised: 'Oh, you needed the list of all the students who were not born in Italy? I thought you only wanted the list of the foreign ones!' I am more surprised than her and I just answer 'Yes', and also feel the need to apologise to her for the lack of detail in my request.

I return to the office to pick up my 'new' list of 'foreign' students. I still have the 'old' one I received a few days before and as I compare the two I notice that the four students born in Chile but adopted by Italian families enrolled in that school previously listed as 'foreigners', have disappeared in the 'complete' list I have just picked up. A 'new' American girl not mentioned before, is now included between 'the foreigners' as well a few Swiss born young people. I leave the school wondering: who are 'the foreigners'? '

(Fieldnotes , school A – January 2005)

Collecting precise and accurate data regarding the presence of non Italian students in the schools was not an easy task, although in the last few years both the Ministry of Education (MIUR) and ISMU⁶¹ have built a database and have published annual reports on their presence. Moreover, on a local level the PAISS ⁶² group has tried to monitor the presence of non Italian students and to create a provincial network of schools in order to make the life of school directors and teachers easier, when faced with the inclusion of a non Italian student. In addition to this, as the time of a migrants' arrival in the country is not fixed and the enrolment of a student can happen anytime during the school year, it complicates not only the work of teachers, but also the administrative part of a school, which requires both flexibility and attention to detail. Even defining who is 'foreigner' and who is not, something that at a first glance appears to an easy thing to do, has become a 'subjective' exercise, depending on people's views.

After a few days of fieldwork, I soon discovered that administrators, teachers, classmates and students rarely agreed on the definition of 'foreigner'. Depending on the context, the distinction between immigrants and locals varies. This is also because the distinction is part and parcel of different definitions of where the boundaries of the nation are drawn (Brubaker 1992). Therefore in a school environment, while the school administration takes 'nationality' as the only marker for being labelled a 'foreigner', it is important to understand where teachers trace the boundary between an Italian and a non Italian student.

During my first days of observation in the middle school, as I entered three different

⁶¹ See p.16.

⁶² The PAISS group (*Progetto Accoglienza Integrazione Stranieri nella Scuola* – Project for the Welcome and the Integration of Foreigners in School) was formed in 2003 by nine teachers. Six of them work in six different school institutes in order to organise intercultural events or as teachers of Italian for foreigners and three of them coordinate, offer consultancy and organize professional training and workshops in Varese province for improving the quality of intercultural education. Due to a lack of funding in 2006 the group was reduced to one single person.

classrooms, three teachers pointed out the non Italian students attending those classes. They asked them to stand up and introduce themselves to me. One class included a girl from Angola, a girl from Chile, an Ecuadorian boy and two students from Albania. The teacher asked them to stand up and tell me who they were and where they were from.

According to the teacher of that class, they were the only 'foreign' students enrolled, even if later during the year I 'discovered' that one girl had an American father and was herself born in America and another student had Italian and Syrian parents. As I wanted to understand why the American-born student was not pointed out as a 'foreigner' by the teacher, I subsequently asked her what she thought about this student:

'I never even think of Giulia as a foreigner. I mean, she was born in America by an American father, but she has always lived in Italy and so did her father. He doesn't even have an American accent when he speaks Italian! She is a great student...you will see, that is what counts for me, not where she was born!'

(Middle school A teacher's comment – October 2004)

Of these seven students, only four were included in both of the lists I received from the administration. Apparently school administrators took different factors such as nationality, parents' country of birth, student's country of birth, year of arrival in the school, and so forth, as determinants of 'Italianness' or 'foreignness'.

The focus of teachers on the other hand has been exclusively on the student's knowledge of the Italian language, and it follows that even due to the limited number of hours that each of them spend in the same class, what interests them on a didactic level is that everyone learns Italian as quickly as possible. Teachers basically ask newly-arrived students to adapt as soon as possible to the new explicit and implicit rules of the school, to learn Italian as quickly as possible and to use this language to communicate with them and the classmates. Once the student learns Italian well enough to communicate and follow the same programme as his/her Italian classmates his/her presence is seen as positive, especially as it provided an opportunity for cultural exchange and comparison, as 80% of the teachers answered in the questionnaire I distributed at the beginning of fieldwork. The presence of immigrant students in the classroom is in general seen with ambiguity by teachers. In theory, as Besozzi (1999) pointed out, although educators are open to universalism as their ethics requires them to be, nevertheless 'they share the ambiguities and the worries typical of multiethnic relationships and, in general, of all situations of otherness and diversity' (Besozzi 1999: 60). They also often share the stereotypes present in wider society. Although all the teachers I contacted believed that it was a good opportunity for

other students to have immigrant classmates, 70% of the teachers that answered the questionnaire also believed that there were 'too many' immigrants in Varese, and a further 12% believed that they were 'numerous'. Moreover, 80% believe that the presence of immigrants in the city have somehow increased the level of crime. The results I had from the questionnaire, although limited in number, reflect opinions highlighted in extensive research carried out by Giovannini (1998) on Italian primary school teachers' perceptions of immigrant students. The title of the publication anticipates the results: *'Allievi in classe, stranieri in città'* (Pupils in Classroom, Foreigners in the City). The research illustrates how teachers differentiate between non Italian pupils and adult immigrants and how some prejudices and stereotypes present in society are intentionally or unintentionally transported inside the classroom walls by the teachers. 88.2% of teachers believed that the presence of non Italian pupils gives Italian pupils an opportunity for cultural enrichment, and 95.8% of them do not consider their presence presents a risk of a deterioration in the quality of education. However, only 25.2% of them would not mind if his/her son or daughter were to marry a non-white Italian, and 36.7% associate immigrants with the increase in crime in the country (Giovannini 1998). They basically have an image of non Italians which is marked by contradictions. This is perhaps inevitable due to their multiple identities as educators, private citizens and human beings. In my research, and many others⁶³, teachers have generally shown a certain openness when considering immigrants as 'students with a 'different' cultural background and identity' but also held prejudices relating to migration policies, alleged criminality and ideas about a perceived danger of 'invasion'.

Despite the dissonant context outside the school discussed above, during my time with the students I did experience a positive atmosphere in the school and all the teachers were apparently welcoming to non Italian students. However, comments such as *'Oh no...I have just found out that next week another Moroccan will arrive in my class...what I will do with him?'* (Primary school D teacher) or *'What can he [a student from Pakistan] understand? He cannot say a word in Italian. I really don't know what to do with him...I think he should not be here in the class...he will somehow slow the whole class down'* (Middle school C - Geography teacher) were heard on a daily basis in the schools I visited. The comments were mainly dictated by the frustration educators feel regarding the changes in teaching methods and the extra work that a student with no or limited knowledge of Italian necessarily involve. When confronted during interviews, a typical way that teachers responded was: *'I am not racist, but...'* before moving on to

⁶³ G. Giovannini (1996) *Allievi in Classe Stranieri in Città*, Milano: Franco Angeli; Pagani C. Robustelli F. (2005) *Marek a Scuola. Gli Insegnanti e l'Inserimento degli Alunni Stranieri nella Scuola Italiana*, Franco Angeli: Milano; Colombo M. (2004) *Relazioni Interetniche fuori e dentro la Scuola*, Franco Angeli: Milano; Zani B. Villano P. (2001) *Dimensioni del Pregiudizio e Modelli d'Integrazione degli Immigrati: una Ricerca sugli Insegnanti*, Unicopli.

express their frustration or their unhappiness at the arrival of a new migrant student in one of their classes, especially if this occurred in the middle of the school year.

One issue that has never been highlighted well before in previous research and came out from my research was not only the chronic lack of resources for dealing with non Italian students – meaning economic material resources – but also the lack of time teachers had. The additional subjects introduced in primary and middle schools (mainly IT and foreign languages) have cut time from 'traditional' subjects such as Italian or Maths. Programmes however have not been adapted to the reduction of the teaching time. Many teachers have complained to me about this and have highlighted how the need to drop external projects such as those related to racism and cultural awareness is not dictated by a lack of interest, but mainly a lack of time, forced as they are to squeeze lessons between school trips, national tests, meetings and so forth. Therefore, even if some teachers, as the one quoted below, have used strong language to justify the abandonment of a project aimed at the prevention of racism and at the analysis of stereotypes, it was not out of lack of interest in the topic:

'We cannot postpone the project on 'racism and stereotype' to May. May is always a difficult month for the school. We need to rush in order to finish the programme and the students usually start to think about their final exams...we cannot make them waste four hours for that!!'

(Private phone call from a teacher of a Middle School E involved in one of ANOLF's projects on the prevention of racism)

However, the lack of attention of some teachers and the rush to complete programmes and directives make some of them lose precious moments to analyse some intercultural issues with the students without realising that avoiding explaining to the students texts such as the one discussed below could lead to the reinforcement of prejudices and stereotypes – something that the school should prevent.

During my time as an observer in schools A and B teachers did not facilitate reciprocal knowledge exchange between students, as an intercultural didactic approach suggests, during their lessons. Not during Christmas time, a time that could have been a conducive time for such an approach, and not even during geography lessons, a subject for which it is particularly easy to use intercultural methods. As I looked at history and geography textbooks used in class I was looking forward to hearing the explanation of the teachers on a specific chapter of a geography book in use in the first grade classes of the middle school.

In this book, entitled *Geografia verso il duemila* (Geography towards 2000) a chapter is dedicated to the population of the planet and issues related to it, such as immigration, emigration,

overcrowding, and so forth. A section of it is entitled *RAZZE E GRUPPI UMANI* (Races and human groups).

The chapter reads as follows:

'Until a century ago, it seemed to be correct and obvious to divide the world's population by skin colour, hair type, height, skull formation. Nowadays the existence of specific races is more and more put in doubt: certainly there are people with black skin, or white, or yellow, however it is equally certain that what we see today is the result of a very long series of merging, contact, joining, mixing that has altered, from remote times, the original human groups.

Today it is almost senseless to talk about races. For this reason the map below has a very approximate value. The following branches (rami) are highlighted:

- *'europoidi' (skin colour mainly white)*
- *'negroidi' (skin colour mainly dark)*
- *'mongoloidi' (skin colour mainly yellow)*
- *'australoidi' (skin colour mainly dark, but with features and body details different from the negroidi)*
- *other derived races (extremely mixed)*

(from Geografia verso il duemila, Loescher edition, 1998, pp 73-74)

A few pages later the explanation goes into more detail and divides the aforementioned 'branches' into twelve 'stocks' (ceppi) and explains:

'The stocks, also called 'principal races', are at their turn divided in races. For example, within the 'europidi' stock we can distinguish between the Mediterranean, Nordic, Iranian, Indian, Alpine, Baltic, Adriatic, and Pamir races.'

(from Geografia verso il duemila, Loescher edition, 1998, p.80)

As I saw this as a perfect topic in which teachers could easily put into practice all the 'intercultural' theories so often mentioned when referring to education, I waited patiently in class for the day when teachers discussed these pages of the geography book to their students. However, this day never came. In one class the teacher simply asked the students to study the pages and ask if they had questions (questions that were never raised); in another class the teacher simply skipped the pages and moved to topics such as the world population in numbers and the different types of human habitats.

Although the text mentions the fact that the existence of specific races is in doubt, without further explanation or the help of adults it teaches the students to differentiate human populations on the basis of specific physical characteristics. The term 'race' is used in an unproblematic way

in everyday speech and both school children and adults do not seem to question the term. Leaving aside the fact that the word *etnia* – ethnicity – is never mentioned in the chapter, the main problem is that using the term 'race' as a category implies that if someone has the physical characteristics – which always also hides negative or positive stereotypes linked to each group - mentioned in the list he/she belongs to that category without considering the private feelings of belonging to that group or not. It could also seem as if the feeling of belonging to one of these groups is a 'natural feeling' that someone has because he/she was born in a specific place and has specific distinctive features.

However, ethnicity is not a natural, physical phenomenon but a social construction. Assumptions, ideas, knowledge shared with in-groups influence its social construction and as school has the aim of transmitting knowledge it also transmits what Figueroa refers to as an 'ethnic frame of reference'. 'Actions always have a figure-ground structure so that the focus of the action (...) stands out against a set of assumptions, a dominant image, which at the moment is unstated and untargeted (...). This set of assumptions, this 'image', animates and constrains the action, informs it, orientates it and circumscribes it, gives it meaning, directedness and definition, serves as the basis on which, at least tacitly, the actual ways of acting are selected – on which the course of action is determined and unfolds. Such sets of assumptions, such an image, I refer to as a frame of reference.' (Figueroa 1991: 28). Such frames of reference guide and inform social action and are themselves socially generated, learnt, sustained, modified and transmitted through education. As ethnicity involves assumptions, it is also linked to specific frames of reference that we need to understand in order to recognise inter-ethnic action, as the ways people interact, are expressions of their beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and their perceptions.

As school has the task of educating young people and transmitting knowledge, I wonder what kind of ideas students have regarding 'the others' when learning to categorize different people in the stereotypical ways mentioned above. Is this the 'ethnic frame of reference' transmitted by the school? When I read the geography book I wanted to understand whether students were influenced by these assumptions, and whether young migrant people were aware that such assumptions could produce boundaries. Young people attending school are indeed influenced by the context in which they live, by the school attended, the family they were brought up in, and by what they hear on television, radio and their friends. Young Italian students do often categorize 'others', using fixed and rigid groups such as the one mentioned in the geography book above, while migrant students often do not recognise themselves as such and react to this external classification in ways that will be further described in the next chapter.

'Like when people think that I am Chinese just because they look at me and they ask me

'how do you say this and that in Chinese?'...how do I know?! I am not Chinese! I am Italian.'
(Valentina, 13 years old, Italian father and Chinese mother)

With what I understood as 'intercultural' in mind, I spent the whole school year waiting to detect an 'intercultural hint' in teachers. As I did not notice any, I talked to one teacher about it and she commented:

'The 'intercultural' is important for us. It is fundamental for today's school and in this school we put a lot of effort into it. As you must have seen, there are linguistic laboratories for foreign students, additional language training and we did one project on 'food around the world' and on 'houses in the world' during the year so students can see different ways of life'. (Interview with a Middle school A teacher of Italian – May 2005)

As I had started to understand during the year and as Giovanni Resteghini, a member of the PAISS group, who from 2007 was responsible for the 'intercultural' programme for the Provincial Educational Government, later confirmed, 'intercultural' is not understood as a teaching method by the teachers, but as a series of activities that could be done in order to facilitate the integration of non Italian students. Most of the schools limit these activities to the presence of linguistic mediators, additional Italian courses or projects where culture can be seen as a moment of folklore and nothing else by the students. The result is that students view others' cultures as something at best 'exotic', at worse 'inferior' to the Italian one. By doing this students do not see the possibilities that contact and interaction between cultures could create but view 'our' culture as well separated from the culture of 'others'.

The gap between policies and reality is also confirmed by Resteghini's words:

'I know, there is a big discrepancy between the government's directives and reality. The vast majority of teachers does not use any intercultural principles when teaching.(...) What teachers have not understood is that 'intercultural' is not a list of activities that they might do in class, but is a teaching method. They should learn and use this method in every topic. And it is easier than you might think. For example, geography teachers can use maps of other countries where Europe is not at the centre of the map. 'Interculturalism' means being able to read reality from different perspectives and it is this that teachers should teach students.'

Moreover, the support such as Italian L2 classes, linguistic mediators, homework help and so forth - where it exists - is limited to school hours. Outside the school, for many students,

as in Maria's case, there is little but loneliness.

All the attention and concern of educators was concentrated on the difficulties in communication with both students and families who could not speak Italian, and how to overcome this problem. Teachers basically consider interculturalism as synonymous with the idea of overcoming linguistic barriers, therefore setting up actions and activities that could solve this communication problem. In other words, interculturalism 'as a holistic approach to comprehension and exchange between different cultures is often reduced to the integration of migrant pupils in predominant social contexts through the acquisition of the host country language' (CHICAM 2004: 5).

Proof that the migrant student was seen as a subject to be integrated in the shortest time possible was also evident in the absence in all the schools I visited as an anthropologist, as a project manager and as a linguistic mediator, of some sort of home language teaching in the school curricula. This task, fundamental in the guidelines issued by the government, of maintaining the mother tongue for younger generations was left exclusively to migrant families as we will see in the following section.

4.3 Home language and Italian language

Intercultural education stressed the importance for a young migrant to be bilingual and therefore also the importance of establishing courses in the migrants' languages⁶⁴. However, the data collected during fieldwork suggest that both school and migrant families themselves consider this task something 'private', and that public education should not deal with it. Moreover, the lack of knowledge of Italian of some migrant parents exacerbated the efforts of many teachers in all the schools I visited and it was seen not only as one of the main obstacle to involving non Italian parents in the educational path of their children, but also something that could be an obstacle to the learning process overall, and to the integration of their children.

'What we would like from the cultural mediator is to convince the parents to come to the parent-teacher meetings. They never come and it is so difficult to communicate with some of them. If they come they just pick up the evaluation report and nothing else. But sometimes we need to explain a few things and we would like the parents' support but with the foreigners this is difficult. The majority do not speak Italian and they bring the child as an interpreter...' (Teacher in primary school A)

⁶⁴ See p.55.

The language barrier is indeed an obstacle for communication between school and some families, but it is also something that most of the non Italian parents are aware of. During my work with ANOLF for two years I taught elementary Italian to a group of women in a small town near Varese. Two of them, both from Morocco, had been in Italy for more than 8 years but their knowledge of the language was extremely limited. While the rest of the students were recently arrived in the country and some of them were the first of their family to migrate and therefore were pushed to learn Italian quickly in order to find employment, these two women confessed that they realised they needed to learn Italian for their children as well. Both of them had three children all aged between nine and six who were enrolled in the local primary school. Before their children started school the two mothers never felt the need to speak Italian. They arrived via family reunification with their husbands, and had children soon after their arrival in the country. The children had not attended kindergarten. The women had always been in the company of other Moroccans, at home or with family friends, when shopping or dealing with Italian bureaucracy. However, when even their younger children started school they felt inadequate. They were ashamed of the fact that they could not speak with the teachers or with other parents, or that they could not help their children with their homework. When speaking with teachers regarding Muslim families, stereotypes and prejudices were very evident, as they assumed that mothers did not speak Italian because their husbands do not let them out of the house. Very often this is not the case and the reasons for women's limited knowledge of Italian were different. Running the family often does not leave much spare time for women as frequently there are no other family members – for example grandparents - to take care of the children; women rarely have a driving license or a car to get around with and find a language course, especially if they live in small towns; every family has cable television and exclusively watch home language TV programmes. Therefore for some women there are actually very few opportunities to interact with locals and to speak Italian. They can often spend their whole life in Italy without improving their language skills. Some schools have started to acknowledge this and in order to give women an opportunity to learn Italian they have organised, together with the *comune*, or with funding from other institutions, *La scuola delle mamme* – mothers' school, an Italian beginners' course for women which runs once a week during school hours. This course also started in the primary school B in 2006.

While schools seem to be interested only in Italian, migrant families do value bilingualism. However, when questioning some parents about this, and asking if they think that school should be involved in teaching foreign languages beside English and French (and in some middle school

also Spanish or German), the general idea was that mother tongue was a 'private affair'.

'The main task of the school is to teach my children what they need to know here in Italy, what they need for finding a good job when they finish. The Albanian language is not a priority. It is up to the family to teach it. This is why we speak Albanian at home. It is something between us, the family and other Albanians'. (Albanian mother with a son in middle school and a daughter in primary school)

Non Italian families can count on the work of some immigrants' associations in order to maintain their mother tongue through the generations. One of the most active associations of this type present in Varese is the 'Raggruppamento dei Tunisini' (Tunisians' group), founded in the year 2000. Its main activities are related to the organisation of events which allow the transmission of the Tunisian culture to younger generations, especially the provision of Arabic courses. One of these courses⁶⁵ was organised, with the collaboration of ANOLF, the local education administration, and the Tunisian consulate in Milan, in primary school B⁶⁶ in 2005 and was attended by 24 children from 5 to 12 years of age. *'Children, especially immigrant children – said the teacher of the course, a middle age Tunisian man – must be able to cultivate their cultural identity, and the ability to speak and understand their parents' language is very important for this. It is wrong to assume that in every family from Maghreb children can speak Arabic, because it is not always the case, especially with the young generation. There are families in which children not only don't speak Arabic, but also know very little about their culture. Without culture there is no integration.'* Knowledge of the mother tongue is viewed by the adult members of the association as a possible form of positive identification as one father testified during an interview:

'I speak Arabic to my sons and daughters. Only Arabic, because they are Moroccan and they need to know it. It doesn't matter if they will live here all their lives. They need to be able to speak and read it because this is the language of the Koran and the language of our people.' (Mohammed, father of 6, in Italy for 15 years)

⁶⁵ See also p. 34.

⁶⁶ The decision to lend a classroom of the school for the course was not an easy one. It caused a lively discussion during the school parents' meeting, as some adults complained about the additional pay owed to the school caretaker for the overtime. On Saturdays the school was closed, but the school caretaker had to work extra for the course. The parents complained because the school used the money for something 'extra' used only by a limited number of pupils. However, the course was open to everyone enrolled in the primary or middle school of the *istituto comprensivo*, although no non-arabic children attended it. The success of the course - an addition course started in 2007 in a different area of the city - is a proof of the desire of parents to teach Arabic to their children.

The local mosque also held Arabic courses for children in Varese. One of the reasons Moroccan families teach Arabic to their sons and daughters is also because they tend to visit their home-towns frequently. Most of the families return to Morocco for the summer holidays and the younger generations usually spend the whole three months of school holidays in their home country. Therefore the necessity to be able to speak Arabic is something that it is felt by young people themselves.

'Every summer we go back to Morocco and it is weird. Now I am getting used to it, but the first few times I could not speak and I felt like a foreigner even in my home country. Now that I can speak Arabic it is better. I like it. The problem is that for three months I don't speak Italian so when I come back it takes some time to adjust again to speak in Italian' (Said, born in Italy by Moroccan parents)

The Chinese families I got in contact with were also particularly interested in teaching their children Chinese. Due to the particular nature of the Chinese language the vast majority of young Chinese residents abroad can fluently converse in one of the many Chinese dialects, but are unable to read or write the characters, since it is a non-alphabetic language. Sara, who attended primary school A and was born and raised in Italy, could speak Mandarin and started to read and write at home with her mother's help. Julien, who attended primary school D but was born in France, could only speak his family's Chinese dialect. His parents were planning a summer course for him in China in order to learn written Chinese. He did a similar course the summer before our meeting. However, the experience did not leave him with particularly good memories.

'I went to a school near Nanjing and we were lots of boys and girls all living abroad. Every day we had to study but I don't like Chinese. It is too hard. I don't mind talking in Chinese, but reading and writing is too difficult for me. My parents want me to learn it but I hope that they will not send me there again.'(Julien)

This interest in maintaining the mother tongue is almost absent in the Latin American community. Generally, South American adult migrants see their future in Italy and once they manage to reunify their families they know they will stay in the country. They are a perfect example of what Sayad (2004) refers to as the end of the 'myth of the return'.

Moreover, very few families can afford the travelling expenses to return to their country for holidays. Teenagers are able to comprehend Italian after a short amount of time in the country. However their ability to use the language besides daily conversation remains limited. This results

in speaking a mix of Italian and Spanish at home, at school and with their peers.

'I have been here six years now...OK, my Italian is OK, it has improved, but I know I don't speak it very well. Writing is bad...doubles, v, b...always the same mistakes I know! At home I speak a mix of Italian and Spanish, it doesn't matter...there is nobody that can correct me. At school with my friends it is OK...Italians think that Spanish is cool so if I speak some Spanish I am cool...teachers no...they want me to speak properly but sometimes it is like they forgive me because I am Spanish. In oral exams...they are stricter with my classmates than with me. If I say something wrong it is because I am Spanish mother-tongue! This is not bad...' (Pablo)

Usually in Italian schools no attention is paid to bilingualism. As teachers struggle over limits on time, money, and programmes, there is little room for anything else. However, as mentioned before, no immigrant parents have complained to me about this.

For students themselves, the ability to speak the language of the country of residence is essential in order to be, and feel integrated, with locals. Moreover, it is also essential in order to succeed in education, especially in a system where teachers consider the knowledge of Italian as the main factor for 'measuring' the level of education of a newly arrived non Italian student. It is well known that the younger the person is the easier she/he will learn a foreign language. However other factors also influence the speed of learning a new language: the other members of the family's knowledge of Italian; the nature of their network of friends; the support of teachers; and not least, the personal resolve of the student to learn and study the language.

Leaving aside for a moment the strategies used by youngsters to use their knowledge – or lack of – of different languages, what was common for all the non Italian students I met, despite their age, their country of origin, or their knowledge of Italian at the time of our meeting, was the feelings of embarrassment and shame at the beginning of their school career in the new country of residence due to their inability to speak and understand the local language. If they are not born in Italy young people arrive in the country via family reunification with one of their parents and sometimes with their siblings, and after having spent some days at home with the family they are enrolled in a school where everyone is a stranger and only in a few cases is there already a fellow countryman or a relative there that can help them. Suddenly, they are left alone in a classroom full of complete strangers. In this situation, the ability to speak and understand Italian becomes essential.

'At the beginning I couldn't say anything because I couldn't say a word in Italian anyway. I used to sit in school and try to hear a word I could understand but it was impossible. It was so

frustrating...when I started to have tuition it was better because I could learn the language without my classmates looking at what I was doing.' (Ardit)

'It [the first days at school] was horrible! I started in fifth grade in primary school and I felt really bad. During the summer I was OK, I was with my mother and I could talk Albanian all the time. If I needed something I had neighbours to ask...but at school I couldn't understand anything! I felt ashamed because in Skutari I was a very good pupil, but here I could not understand. Only the simple things...like 'ciao' and few words once in a while. They made me sit next to another Albanian boy and he translated lots of things for me. Then I had to study Italian with another teacher outside the class. I knew I had to, but I did not like it! I know she was doing her job but I wanted to be with all the others so I was trying to show her that I did not need her by studying everything I could study. By January they let me stay in class all the time and I started to like school and being in Italy. Don't get me wrong, I did not dislike the teacher...I know that she did a great job and that I really needed her but at that time it made me feel ashamed, like I was stupid and could not make it by myself.' (Jennifer)

'When we arrived at school I felt a bit lost but luckily my sister was with me. The school had a small party on the first school day and it was nice. I could not understand much but they organised games where it did not matter if we could not understand. The second day I was in a class and my sister in another one and I felt lost without her because nobody could understand me if I had a problem. Everyday I have Italian lessons with a teacher and my sister now and one of the first thing I learned was 'bagno' (bathroom) so at least I could ask to go to the bathroom if I needed. I was very worried about this at the beginning.' (Jasmine)

'I was in Morocco and a day later I was here! (...) Like the first days were nice...all the family together, relatives coming and visiting us. No problems, I thought. Going to school was another issue. I could not understand, I felt so bad and I start missing Morocco even more. As I could not understand I was thinking all the time of Morocco and what a waste it was coming to school here.' (Ismail)

The same difficulties were encountered even by young Spanish speakers, despite the similarities between the Italian language and Spanish, and the widespread assumption that these students are able to understand Italian from their early days in the country without many problems.

'I arrived three years ago and when I arrived, it was January and they sent me directly to school. I was so ashamed because I could not understand anything!' (Christopher)

'When I arrived [in Italy] I was really scared, and I could not understand much. When I

went to school the teachers were talking to me and they all thought that I could understand because I kept saying 'Yes, yes'. But the truth was that I could understand a third of it...maybe... but I did not want them to think that I was stupid and I could not understand...so I kept saying 'yes yes'...eventually they realised and I felt really bad!' (Dora)

As school funding is limited and the decision to set up extra Italian language classes or to employ linguistic mediators in order to help communicate with non Italian students and their families is up to the school directors and to the budget available, although government guidelines suggest welcoming students in their own language, a newly arrived migrant student is very often left alone, or at best, another student from the same country who is already attending the school is asked to help with communication as many students told me during interviews.

'When I first arrived I was ashamed that I could not speak, but in the same class there was another Albanian student, so they put me next to him and this is how I have started to learn the language.' (Alex)

Not all the students who were asked to help new non Italian students, were, however, happy about this. I had the impression that helping a newly arrived student made them think of their own first days in the school, where the discomfort and feeling of uneasiness and shame had reached a peak.

'I am just a student like everyone else. I help if someone asks me to help with a new student...not that if I hear that there is a new Moroccan student I go there and talk to him...if the teachers ask me I go, if not I go on with my life. And not because I don't want to help. I just think it is normal to act like this. Italians don't run to talk to a new student that arrives at school...do they? New students are always alone at the beginning.' (Ismail)

While the beginning of the school career is always hard for every young person, for a non Italian students it is even harder. The language barrier is a very evident obstacle, and one that youths need to overcome fast, if they want to be included in their peer group and to actively participate in school activities. Peer group exclusion due to language diversity was more evident in primary school than in middle school. The main reason for this was probably the fact that all the middle school students I met⁶⁷ had at least a basic understanding of Italian. However, another reason for this was the different structure and teaching methods between the two stages of

⁶⁷ Hu Li a Chinese boy in school C was the only exception, however he had no interest neither in being included in any group nor to learn Italian.

schooling. In middle school students rarely work in groups, and moreover the time to interact with classmates is limited to a short break in the middle of the morning and the few minutes between each lesson. In primary school, on the other hand, teachers often organise the class in small groups for painting, doing games or other activities and in the *doposcuola*, once pupils finish their homework, they are left to play by themselves. The ability to speak Italian then becomes fundamental if pupils are to be involved in games and activities with their Italian classmates.

For example, Mamel, aged 6, and Jasmine, aged 8, arrived in Italy from Morocco in October 2004. They were the two pupils with the least ability to converse in Italian in the whole of primary school A. Because of this, they were often excluded from games and activities organised by other pupils. During *doposcuola* they used to sit next to each other doing homework but were eager to join the other pupils as soon as they finished. One day in November some of Mamel's classmates were playing a game called '*campana*'⁶⁸, a popular playground game in which the girls draw a circle on the ground, and then take turns to throw a bottle cap into it. They then hop through the spaces of the circle to retrieve the cap. Mamel wanted to play with them and waited patiently for her turn. However, once everyone had had their go and it was Mamel's turn, the girls decided to change games and moved to a table to play with cards. Mamel was left alone.

Another day, two girls in Mamel's class were playing a game of cards and Mamel sat next to them watching. Her Italian was limited and from time to time she was saying '*io, io*' (Me, me), asking the girls to let her playing. The girls however ignored her and continued to play. When I asked one of the girls why she did not want to involve Mamel in the game, she simply answered '*She cannot speak Italian...we cannot explain to her how to play*'. The same happened with her sister and the two girls were often compelled to play alone together. They rarely managed to become involved with the activities enjoyed by the other pupils.

As the months went by, Mamel and Jasmine improved their knowledge of Italian and started to get involved in childrens' games. They also developed friendships with other girls from the school. They were the only two new non Italian girls in school B. The other non Italian students had been enrolled for at least one year in the school or were born in Italy. In one of the primary schools I worked in (school D), where the number of newly arrived non Italian students was higher, I had the chance to observe how gender influences the difficulties in overcoming the language barrier between Italian and non Italian pupils. I was in charge of teaching Italian to a small group of five pupils aged between 7 and 9. Whilst one Ecuadorian girl and a Moroccan boy had been in Italy for a year, a Moroccan girl, an Albanian boy and a Chinese boy arrived a few months before from their countries. What helped the boys interact with other pupils from their first

⁶⁸ Hopscotch.

days in the school was football, for which knowledge of Italian was unnecessary. Whilst the girls' games required a minimum of explanation, and therefore a basic understanding of Italian, the boys used to spend every minute of the short morning break playing football. The new boys were involved from their first days in school. Football was the main boys' activity during playtime in every primary school I visited, and indirectly helped non Italian students feeling part of their peer group from their early days in the school.

Even young pupils however, do not passively accept their situation and some of them try to use their language knowledge to their advantage, especially in order to obtain 'softer' treatment from the teachers. One afternoon, I am sitting in the *doposcuola* classroom of the primary school with all the pupils and the other three teachers. The classroom is very crowded, like every Thursday, due to the presence of all the pupils in the five grades of school. As all the teachers are busy helping the older pupils with their homework I sit with the third grade girls checking what they are doing. Most of the girls have already finished their homework or are about to finish it, except Mamel who has not yet started. She opens and closes her exercise book continuously and keeps laughing and playing with Giada, another pupil, who has finished studying. I walk to her and ask her to show me her homework. *'I haven't finished it'* she replied. *'Then you cannot go and play. You have to finish your homework first'* I tell her. *'I cannot do it...and you are not helping me'* she replies. I ask her to show me what she has to do and the exercise consists of writing words starting with 'CA', 'CO', 'CU', 'CHI', an exercise that she is more than capable of doing by herself. I go and sit with the other teachers. Mamel looks at me and pretends to work, however after a few minutes she comes to me looking for some help. I check the exercise book and it is empty and I send her back to the desk. A few minutes later she returns to me and asks again for some help. I go at her desk and notice that she has not started the exercise yet. *'Come on Mamel, sit down and write. It just takes a few minutes and then you can go and play. I cannot help you because these things are things that you can easily do yourself.'* She sits down, picks up the pen and then in a very serious voice tells me: *'Paola, you have to help me...I am Moroccan I cannot do this.'*

In middle school time for interacting with classmates is short and life is ruled by the bell and by the teachers' words. Moreover, teachers usually decide at the beginning of the school year where everyone sits, and changes to the seating arrangements are not allowed. Space is strictly controlled by the adults as *'these decisions allow more control over the students and a more peaceful atmosphere in the classrooms'*, as one teacher explained to me. Time also controls students' movements and activities. At least in the middle school, socialisation between

pupils is strongly constrained by these elements. However, students manage to find ways of interacting, one of which is the passing of '*bigliettini*' (literally 'small tickets') from one student to another during lessons. The topics of conversation are varied, from invitations for meeting up in the afternoon, to requests for school equipment, to simple gossip.

This form of interaction excludes pupils with little understanding of Italian. Sometimes however, students were using a more obvious form of exclusion of their non Italian peers with a limited knowledge of Italian. During my time observing in the middle school I noticed how some Italian pupils tend to speak faster when they do not want someone else – a non Italian student - to understand them, or when they want to underline the fact that he/she cannot speak Italian yet. One morning during break I was standing outside the classroom in the hallway where a group of second grade middle school boys were chatting about girls. Alfred, an Albanian boy who had arrived in the country a year before, tried to join in the conversation without success. Later that morning I interviewed one Italian boy who was part of the group of students chatting during the break and I asked him why they had not helped Alfred join their conversation. *'We don't want him to listen to us. We were having a private conversation and he is always trying to sneak into our group. But he cannot understand Italian well so if we speak fast he eventually gives up and leaves.'*

The same strategy is used by non Italian students when they intentionally want to exclude others from their conversation. In middle schools C for example, Omar, and another pupil from the group I used to teach, were both Moroccan from the same area. They tend to speak Italian when at school. However, more than once they commented or chatted in Arabic during the short breaks between lessons and when classmates asked them what they were saying one of their most common answers was *'None of your business'*. Interviews with students from another middle school confirmed this strategy. *'Italians think they know Spanish and they can understand easily. But sometimes with Javier I speak Spanish even in front of teachers and other classmates even if they keep telling us that it is rude to speak Spanish when there are other people around. They say this because they don't understand and I do it on purpose'*. (Eduard)

Non Italian students also use their mother tongue when they want to pass information to friends during class or when they want to make fun of their peers. They often use a few words in their mother tongue (often rude ones) when insulting another student.

'I know some students don't like us [Albanian students] and they don't talk with us outside school, but we do the same. We know Albanian and Italian and they don't, so if they say something bad to us in Italian we understand it, if we say it in Albanian they don't...sometimes we

do it especially when we are out in town.' (Alfred)

As there are only a few schools where there are a number of foreign pupils from the same country, which allows them to use their mother tongue during any free time left during school hours newly arrived non Italian students are pushed to learn Italian as quickly as possible. However, as their knowledge of Italian improves, young migrants learn the advantages of bilingualism, and especially within their own family, they use it instrumentally.

In the large majority of cases, young migrants attending school and spending time with Italian peers manage to learn the language better and faster than their parents and end up being the mediators between their families and Italian society. Parents see their power diminished due to the greater ability of the younger generation to interact with their new society, while young people see their power strengthened as they often function as interpreters for one or more family members (Portes 1996, Portes and Rumbaut 1996, 2001; Leonini 2005; Giovannini and Queirolo Palmas 2002; Valtolina and Marazzi 2006).

This superior knowledge of Italian is used by some youngsters to underline the new boundary that is created between parents and their offspring, and they use language to highlight this difference, as one Peruvian boy told me: *'Sometimes at home my friends call and I speak Italian with them...we laugh and you know...we talk...sometime my parents listen because they are there and they understand something...not everything because they cannot speak well...so they ask me after what I was talking about and I say nothing. Sometimes I make fun of them with my friends and they cannot understand. And I go out and then they are angry because they say I did not tell them where I was...so I say I did tell you...but you cannot understand Italian!'* (Martin)

Young migrants very often take advantage of various misunderstandings in order to unbalance power and roles within their own family. They also use their parents' lack of knowledge of Italian to make them sign for bad school marks, without realising what they are signing for, or for letters from teachers.

'At the beginning the teachers kept asking me to make my parents sign this or that...I never did! And they were complaining and writing on the register. Now I make my mother sign. 'What is it?' she asks. 'Nothing...it says that there is a meeting, or that there is no class etc...so I can stay home...she doesn't understand...I can tell her what I want and I know she will never go to the meetings with the teachers.' (Mohamed)

Generally speaking the use of the mother tongue for young migrants is restricted to conversation with parents and older relatives, and within the family Italian is mainly used for speaking with siblings.

'With my parents I speak Albanian, no Italian. But with my sister we speak only Italian and especially when we fight we swear in Italian! I will never swear in Albanian in front of my parents. Sometime when I argue with my mother I do the same...I am rude in Italian so she doesn't understand me.' (Alina)

Behaviour of this kind is mainly conducted by young immigrants who have been in Italy for a longer period of time – three or more years – with a fair or good knowledge of Italian, and who are well-integrated with their Italian peers, with no distinctions of nationality. For recently arrived students, Italian, which is often only partially mastered, represents the language of institutions, of school life and of instrumental knowledge, but it also a 'generation language' used to interact with peers; the mother tongue is the language of family communication, and of conveying emotions and feelings (Giovannini and Queirolo Palmas 2002).

If the student has been in Italy for few years, their level of Italian usually allows them to interact with their peers, and they have often developed a network of friends, whether they are fellow countrymen or Italians or other nationalities. New students usually seek the help of others from their country of origin, at least at the beginning – and often it is the school which initiates this help – in order to fill the gaps, as well as ease the feelings of loss and confusion related by migrant pupils during their first days at school. When friendships develop at school students tend to use Italian, even with their countrymen or with peers from the same language group.

'My best friend is from Peru, but we speak Italian together. I don't know why...it would be more logical to speak Spanish, but we started in Italian and now it would be weird to speak Spanish with her...strange, because at home it would be weird to speak in Italian with my mother...or in Spanish with my sister who was born in Italy!' (Gabriela)

Sometimes language becomes a potential 'fashionable' way for interaction with peers. Language diversity becomes the object of curiosity by classmates. While in primary school, this means mainly the curiosity to know how something is said in another language, in middle school requesting the translation of 'love notes' for a girl/boy friend, or asking to learn swear words in another language. These are some of the banal examples of how diversity is manipulated and used as a way to establish contact. Italian pupils usually ask non Italian students to write simple words or names in their language by Italian pupils, such as 'I like you', 'I love you' etc. Having established a first contact in this way some of them 'feel special' with their additional knowledge, as one girl testified: *'I like it when my friends ask me to write their names, or something in Arabic. It makes me feel different....but in a good way. The first time they asked I had only been here for*

few months and I thought...finally something I know that they don't! Usually it was me asking my desk mate what this means, what that means etc.' (Aisha).

As most of the immigrant students consider their initial lack of knowledge of Italian as 'depressing' and 'discouraging', being asked about their language helps them overcome their feelings of discomfort and frustration, and they use experiences of the kind described above to begin communicating with their new Italian schoolmates.

While the school system emphasises learning Italian, keeping up the mother tongue is up to the family. As we have seen, it is also often in the young migrant's interest. In addition, whilst for non Italian parents their children's success in school was indeed often synonymous with 'learning Italian', many parents also push their children to maintain their mother tongue. Bilingualism is therefore often the product of several factors.

Success in school is important for a young person. It has the power to influence young people's expectation for the future, as well as build their self esteem and their interest in continuing to study. In order to be successful however, a student, needs the support of both family and school, especially if they arrive from a foreign country between 11-13 years of age. To succeed in secondary school, they need support to help fill the gaps in their language skills, and help to enable them to attain the same educational level as their peers. To illustrate this, in the next chapter, I will recount the stories I collected from migrant pupils about their experiences in the Italian education system.

Chapter 5 – Young migrants' experience of education

'Unlike the adult first generation, for whom success or failure is largely determined by performance in the labour market, for the second generation the key outcomes are linked to academic achievement. How well they do and how far they go in school will govern their eventual position in the American status system' commented Portes and Rumbaut in their well-known study, 'Children of Immigrants; Longitudinal Studies'. (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 234).

Education and success in school have indeed had great importance in determining the future of immigrant children and adolescents. However there are many factors that come into play once young students leave compulsory education. Family structure, the speed and stage of the acculturation process of both parents and young people, age, gender, self-esteem and the school context could be used as predictors of achievement, and none of these elements can be taken alone if we want to somehow 'predict' the future of these young people. *'Adapting and achieving in a new society cannot be attributed to any single factor; it is the way that individual and contextual forces are joined in a particular time and place that affects individual outcomes in a manner that is complex but not chaotic'* (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 268).

A year after fieldwork, I was able to receive information about some of the students I had met who were attending middle school at that time. This allowed me to highlight two factors above all that had positively influenced young people's expectation for the future and their ability to succeed in education. These factors are the support of teachers during school hours and the support of their families for young people's choices for his/her school career. When one or both of these are missing, the risk of failure is higher, with the result that youngsters drop out of school. However, the presence in the school of a valid support network for non Italian students greatly enhance students' trust in education and their academic success.

The experience of migration and schooling for Omar, Hu Li Li, Jennifer, Ardit, Kristian, and Eric, six young non Italian students I met in three different middle schools, are analysed below.

All of these young people have a similar history of migration. They arrived in Italy via family reunification whilst they were between 10 and 14 years of age. They were attending three different middle schools in the Varese area.

Kristian, Eric and Jennifer attended middle school A – although Jennifer was in a class I was not allowed to observe; Omar and Hu Li went to middle school C; Ardit attended middle school E,

where prejudices against his country of origin were, at the time of research, strong. This enabled me to also understand what role the country of origin and the school environment had in students' perception of difference and in their expectations for the future. We cannot forget that locals tend to differentiate between 'good' and 'bad' immigrants, not on an individual basis, but as a group. Young people are indeed affected by these generalisations.⁶⁹

5.1 Being Albanian in Italian middle school

'It doesn't matter how good I will be. There are certain things that I can change about myself, I can dress differently, I can learn Italian perfectly, I can also marry one....but other things you cannot change. On my documents there will always be written 'Place of birth: Albania'. I will be Albanian forever'.(Ega)

From my observation in schools emerged that students tend to represent immigrants as people in need, with many problems, who act irrationally and with very little - if any - understanding of the rules and prescriptions that one must bear in mind in order to integrate successfully with locals. In addition, migrants are often directly associated with conditions of uncleanliness and moral degeneration and they are also associated with crime, smuggling, trafficking, sexual exploitation and theft. In particular, middle school students have shown the importance between being 'just a foreigner' or 'being Albanian'. While in the first grades of primary school the country of origin of non Italian students did not result in word-calling or exclusion, with older pupils this became more predominant. Albanian nationality has emerged amongst middle school students as the group most associated with stereotypes of 'foreign migrants', reflecting the Italian media and wider society (Mai 2002). It seems that in daily discourse *Albanese* (Albanian) and *Marocchino* (Moroccan) have come to mean 'immigrant', often in a discriminatory way. This was not evident during the time I spent in school, but it was very common outside it.

The local and national media are not helping with depicting immigrants in a more positive way. In 1999, the Italian *Migration Studies* journal of the Centro Studi Emigrazione (*Centre for the Study of Emigration*) in Rome, published a study carried out by Cotesta entitled '*Mass media, ethnic conflict and migration*'. *Research on Italian newspapers in the nineties*', was based on an analysis of over six years of the titles and articles of the most widely distributed Italian

⁶⁹ According to previous research and also on the basis of daily chats with locals, Chinese, Philippines, Ukrainians, and in general all the South American citizens are considered 'good immigrants', on the other hand Romanians, Albanians, Nigerians and Moroccans are considered 'bad'. (Sniderman, Peri, De Figuereda, Piazza 2000; Sciortino, Colombo 2003; Foot 2001; Grillo, Pratt 2002; Dal Lago 1999; Melilli 2003; Maritano 2002 give examples of popular Italian perception of immigrants.)

newspapers in five regions of the country. The results of the research illustrated how *'the Italian 'we' represents a rational and efficient group in opposition to the degradation, irrationality, disorder and immorality of 'others'. (...). The encounter with the 'others' reinforces 'Italians' as a group that could bring help to the needy 'others'* (Cotesta 1999: 469).

'Within the wider context of Italian media representation of immigrants, Albanians are the group that is most intensely stereotyped, stigmatized and readily associated with criminality and moral degeneration' (Mai 2002: 82). Moreover, Vehbiu and Devole's study, published in 1996 (*La scoperta dell'Albania: gli Albanesi secondo i Mass media*, The Discovery of Albania: Albanians according to Mass Media) underlined three sets of narratives in the Italian media: tales of moral depravation with the description of Albania as a land characterised by chaos and lack of moral boundaries; discourses of essentialization of religious differences; and discourses of backwardness and isolation (Vehbiu, Devole 1996).

Varese's local newspaper (*La Prealpina*) is no exception. During my fieldwork I collected articles on a daily basis regarding immigration. Below are a few example of titles of articles related to Albanian immigrants:

21 Dec. 2004: *Car thieves and vandalism: two Albanians arrested*

18 Jan. 2005: *Prostitution and violence net, Albanian gang defeated*

5 Apr. 2005: *Disabled person robbed at the fun fair: two Albanians handcuffed*

20 May 2005: *China and Albania, an alliance between mafias*

25 March 2005: *2 million immigrants in Italy, waves of arrivals from Albania and China*

All these representations of Albanian citizens made by the press and repeated through public opinion, are also absorbed by young people. Of the 66 middle school students who completed a questionnaire that I distributed in school E, only three students used a positive adjective to describe people from Albania (*nice*). All the others used adjectives such as *aggressive* (26), *having bad manners* (15), *thieves* (12), *arrogant* (12), *maniacs* (11), *poor* (6), *working in the black market* (4), *murderers* (4), *ugly* (4), *not honest*, *hooligans*, *unreliable*, *insolent*, *alcoholics*, *racists* and so forth.⁷⁰

Moreover, the *Istituto per gli Studi sulla Pubblica Opinione* (Institute for the Studies on Public Opinion) in 2000, sponsored by the Commission for the Integration Policies Regarding Immigrants (*Commissione per le Politiche di Integrazione degli Immigrati*) carried out a study with 5000 participants regarding the feelings of the Italian population towards immigrants. Albanians came out as the least favourite migrant group for 80.7% of the sample, followed only by 'gypsies',

⁷⁰ The anonymous questionnaire asked them to write down the first five characteristics that come to mind when describing an Albanian citizen.

who were only seen positively by 10.5% of the sample.

As a result of this, as the case studies below show, the first impact on Italian society for Albanian youths is usually not a positive one and they all felt the disapproval of Italian society or of their peers when they first arrived in the country, as Kristian, Ardit and Jennifer all told me during interviews.

The negativity that many Italians attach to 'Albanians' is so strong that even younger students attending primary school are aware of this: *'I was 8 when I arrived in Varese from Albania with my family. At that time it was only me and my mother, my father was already here and I did not have a sister yet. I was ok but at the beginning nobody was talking to me or even inviting me after school. (...) I don't know why, it might be because I could not speak Italian or maybe because I am Albanian. People here don't like us. My sister is lucky. She was born here so she will be Italian. She will be considered as such and she will feel Italian. I am Albanian. When I came to school I was 'the Albanian girl of 3A' for a long time. It kind of stuck to me. Maybe now that I will change school it will change, but for me on my papers, 'Albanian' will always be written so I will keep being 'the Albanian'.'* (Ega)

Although in school these negative feelings were not openly displayed, during interviews and conversations I had with Italian middle school students 'Albanian' was very often considered as a negative thing, as a synonym for trouble, danger, dirtiness and so forth, and they were often considered as a separate group from the other immigrants.

'People are all the same, it is not fair that because someone has a different skin colour we have to laugh at him. I know this. I think that now in Varese there are a lot of people that come from other countries, according to me...well...I am not completely OK with it, with the fact that these people, these foreigners are so many. They come here to look for a jobbut sometimes not all of them are nice people...There are certain people ...like ...you know...Albanians...I am scared when I see them. But then I know that there are also good people between them and that are not going to hurt you...' (Anna, 13 years old, Italian)

'My parents don't like me going around by myself. They say I need to stay away from the train station because is full of Albanians and they can take you and you will never come back. I heard stories like this of children that have been kidnapped by Albanians and were forced to do things....' (Luca, 11 years old)

Other non Italian students share the negative idea of Albanians with their Italian counterparts: *'I have no problems with my classmates. Some of them are my friends and we*

meet up after school. I can be friends with a black guy or a Chinese one...maybe with an Albanian no. You know how they are. Maybe he is OK but if you go with him then people might think you are the same as him and you are going to steal things and cf stuff. So I don't mix with them.' (Marius)

Moreover, you could often hear jokes or sentences between teenagers such as the one recounted below.

I am following class 3B this morning and the physical education class is just finished. Students have changed their clothes and are now gathering to go back to their classroom. As we are waiting for the last ones to arrive, Pietro, an Italian boy, comments to Alberto who arrives last with his shoes undone, his t-shirt outside his trousers and a jumper in his hands: 'You are dressed like an Albanian'. A similar comment was heard a few days after from an Italian girl arriving at school with a bag for her physical education clothes, a rucksack for her books, and a guitar case in the other hand. Talking to a friend, she remarked: *'I look like an Albanian today!'*

Albanian students are aware of this and react to this negativity in different ways. Having a family that helps deal with the situation, or having teachers who are aware of the existence of such strong stereotypes and consequently try to limit their spread, can help young people develop a strong identity and motivate them to study and improve the quality of their lives in Italy. Albanian immigrants' social capital appears to be tightly bound up with kinship and close family friends. Young Albanian people often do not have the support of fellow nationals or national associations such as the ones created by other migrant groups. King and May (2009) have found that 'the Albanian associations that do exist in Italy were not established in the early years of arrival, in order to reinforce Albanians' ethnic identity and help each other settle down, but were formed in the late 1990s in order to respond to negative media images by recovering positive elements of identification. This delayed ethnic mobilization is described in the American sociological literature as 'reactive ethnicity' and arises out of the 'confrontation with concerted attitudes of prejudice on the part of the surrounding population' (Portes and Rumbaut 1996, pp. 133, 222).' (King, May 2009: 133)

In Varese where there is no association or formal gathering place for Albanian citizens. The support of the family and the school therefore becomes essential for young Albanian people, especially for the ones who arrived as pre-teenagers or teenagers. Below I recount the stories of three young Albanians I met, who related how they have reacted to their new life in Italy and the different ways they have responded to the dissonant context.

Ardit

Ardit is 14 years old and is enrolled in the last grade of middle school E. The school is very active in supporting non Italian students with language tuition, lessons on identity, respect, and difference. In every class, cultural and linguistic mediators were present when needed. Ardit arrived in this small town four years before our meeting, with his mother and his younger sister. They had been called over by their father, who had already been in Italy for four years. According to Ardit, his life in Albania was 'absolutely normal', he had friends, relatives and to him, nothing seemed to be missing from his life. He felt powerless in the family's decision to move to Italy. 'Yes, I was happy to go back and live with my father again, but very sad to leave my friends and my school. I was a good pupil there and I enjoyed my life. Here I did not know what I would find, besides my father and things that I heard on the television or from other people with parents and relatives in Italy'. When I asked him about the moment when his parents told him he had to migrate to a new country, he said 'When I first arrived here I went to school and it was not a good thing. I was ashamed of saying that I was 'Albanian' because people here are not very nice to Albanians. Not that they hurt you or things like this, but they say things and they tell you to go back home. So I never said anything. Well... at the beginning I couldn't say anything because I couldn't say a word in Italian anyway!' Therefore his first days in the new school in the new country left him disorientated and made him miss Albania a lot. The inability to understand his classmates and teachers and the feeling of not being welcomed there made him ashamed of his national origins. It was only when he moved to middle school that he started to 'rediscover' his Albanian-ness. 'When I moved to middle school things got better. First of all, I had been in Italy for one year and I could understand everything, plus I had managed to make some friends in primary school and we stayed in the same class even here in middle school. They had helped me during my first year in Italy with homework and stuff so I was sure that if I needed I could ask them also in middle school. The teacher made the biggest difference. Teacher S. (the Italian teacher of his class) made me and Amine (the other non Italian student in the class, a boy from Morocco) do a research project about writers, filmmakers, books, nice places ...anything we wanted from our countries and then we had to present it to our classmates. I think she realized that our classmates consider themselves superior to us because when we study things at school everything is about Italy. The history of Italy, of Europe, Italian writers, poets etc...which is fair because we are in Italy...and then on TV there are only Italian or American programmes...so people think that in other countries there is nothing ...well...some things, but that it is all inferior. I guess this is the reason why she made us do this. At first I tell you, I was not happy. I did not know much about it anyway and I thought that my classmates would not be interested in this. But

they were. I had to ask my parents for help because I did not know much about famous writers in my country or film directors or famous things anyway. And when I did it I was very proud because I think that I was myself starting to think that Albanians were not able to do nice things like Italians or Americans....I proved them wrong.'

During a workshop I conducted in his class about 'identity', Ardit proved at numerous times his 'new pride' in being Albanian. He strongly dissociated himself from other Albanians who committing crimes or were unemployed. However he never hide his origins anymore. 'I know I have changed. I know that I have taken lots of things from my Italian friends, I notice when we go back to Albania for the holidays, but I might become an Italo-Albanian. Half Albanian and half Italian! Because when I imagine my future I don't imagine it in Albania. I imagine it here, or in London or New York, but not in Albania.' I asked the reasons for this and they were mainly financial. 'Here there are more opportunities for work. Next year I will go to ITPA (secondary school for 'Foreign Language correspondents') and then I will look for a job in an office or something similar'.

Teachers in the school supported this choice as he was a very good pupil and could succeed in education if he continued to work as he did in the years of middle school.

Beside the fact that there were strong prejudices against Albanian citizens, partly reinforced by what had happened in Besano (see chapter four), a town very closed to the one where Ardit was living, the boy managed to finish middle school with good grades and developed a strong ethnic identity. Teachers in the school he attended were using all their knowledge and power to make students understand the 'new multicultural society' they were living in. For four years, the school had been working with Anolf, at the request of a number of teachers, using school funding received from the region, as an area 'of strong migration pressure'. The money had been spent not only on linguistic mediation for newly arrived pupils and families, but also for Chinese and Arabic short language courses for all the students in some classes, as well as workshops on 'Identity', 'Immigration and emigration', and meetings with immigrants from a variety of countries, including the testimonies of Italians who had emigrated abroad during the previous century. Moreover, the Italian teacher of the class attended by Ardit helped the students understand the contemporary world by reading newspapers in class and organising many discussions on different issues. The school itself had an efficient protocol when welcoming new non Italian students, with teachers dedicated to teaching the basics of Italian to newly arrived students, entry tests in different topics to help choose the right grade for each new student, and a budget for linguistic mediators, amongst other measures. The importance of school support in

Ardit's achievement is illustrated by what happened once he finished middle school and moved to secondary school.

Ardit went to ITPA in Varese city centre, a school which was often chosen by non Italian students because they could study foreign languages there. However, the school did not have a protocol for welcoming new students, or for language support and tuition, something which was very common in secondary schools. Ardit, despite his efforts and the support of the family, did not find the necessary support within the school and after few months his grades deteriorated. He did not manage to pass to the second year of school and had to repeat his first year.

In general, secondary school requires a deeper knowledge of Italian language and a better method of study than that required in middle school. At the time of this research, no secondary school in the area had a tuition programme for non Italian students. Newly arrived students could only count on the *Centro Eda*⁷¹ language courses and usually secondary schools delegated the task of teaching the basics of the language to this institution for the first months of attendance. Quite possibly, when Ardit did not manage to keep up with his classmates he felt demotivated, despite his family's support, and his story underlines the importance of school support in motivating and helping non Italian student to succeed.

Jennifer's story shows another way of reacting to prejudices against someone's nationality. Despite local prejudices against Albanians she saw school as a stepping stone to a better quality of life and she believed, due to her country of origin, she needed to be better prepared than her Italian peers, in order to compete in the job market when the time came.

Jennifer

I met Jennifer and conducted a series of interviews with her. She is tall and slim, with long blond hair and dressed in what I understood was 'the fashion of the moment': trainers, very tight jeans, a long t-shirt with a big belt at her waist. She has make-up on and looks older than her 14 years old. We have never met before, however I have seen her a few times in school and I was somehow surprised to 'discover' that she was Albanian. The school was not very big and during breaks I usually stood in the hall watching the teenagers walk by so I had more or less seen the faces of all the pupils, although I did not know their names. My first surprise when I met her was discovering she was Albanian, and the second was her knowledge of Italian. She has been in Italy for four and a half years and she could speak Italian very fluently. I could barely hear an accent, and I could not tell from it where it was from.

She seems a bit uncomfortable at first with my questions regarding her life in Albania and

⁷¹ *Centro per l'Istruzione degli Adulti* – Adult Learning Centre, which mainly organises IT and language courses for adults.

her trip to Italy with her parents and her younger brother. 'I remember when my mother said that we had to leave Albania and rejoin our father who left a few years before. I was ten years old and the first thought was that I did not want to leave. Yes, I wanted to see my dad again, and I wanted to see Italy. I knew that life there was better than the one we had in Albania, but my life was not that bad there. I had friends and my grandparents and I did not want to leave them behind. And I knew that all the people that left Skutari never came back. Some of them used to come back for holidays and they all had presents and stuff. Like at school some pupils were showing off things and were saying 'I got this from Italy'...that was good...I imagine me coming back with presents for my friends and things like this. But it has been more than three years and I have never been back since.' - she started telling me – 'then in June we left with my father, who had come to pick us up. We took a bus and then a boat...but a normal boat with tickets and documents - not one for desperate people!' ⁷² 'At the train station I could not understand anything and everything seemed strange'. She continues – 'I think that people thought that because we were Albanian we must have arrived by boat illegally. This is what Albanians do...or what people think they do anyway.' She then moves on describing her first days in Varese 'They [the first days in the new city] were OK. Not too different from Albania. My uncle had been here for 4 years with my dad and they were working as builders, they are still working as such. But we had some relatives here and they all helped us settle down. I would go with my mother and with my auntie to buy things and she explained to us what to do etc. To be honest, at first I felt OK. We were all talking in Albanian and I felt Ok. Yes, at the beginning it was OK, it was summer and I had nothing to do, just help in the house and things like this. I also started to learn some words in Italian for the school.' After a difficult start in school ⁷³, Jennifer became a very good pupil and her grades were a proof that she will have no problems in passing the final exam and moving on to secondary school. She is going to enrol in 'Ragioneria' (Accountant school), however her dream is to 'stay here and have a job...a good job. Like a doctor', she tells me. 'I know it will be very difficult because even if I feel like I am Italian, and at the end of the day I can speak Italian as well as an Italian person, my birth place will not change, I will always be an Albanian. If I am better than others, people might forget this.' She tries to explain; 'It is not that I am ashamed, but I don't want to mix with Albanians. I just wanted to stay with my friends and they are all Italian and they do not make me feel Albanian at all. Sometimes when things happen because of an Albanian, I know that I am not like them...I am definitely Italian! And when I started having friends and heard about

⁷² The stereotype Albanian = boat = clandestine is well-spread in Varese and young Albanians are perfectly aware of this. Jennifer was not the only pupil who when asked about her arrival in Italy clearly specified that she arrived by boat BUT with documents.

⁷³ See p.83.

bad things done by Albanians, I was always scared that my friends would find out or something and wouldn't talk to me anymore. But it never happened...sometimes they joke about Albanians and I joke with them because I am Italian too. Well, sometimes when I am at home and we talk about life before, and about my grandparents who are still in Albania or when my mother sings or something I know that maybe I am not 100 per cent Italian...that I will always be Albanian a little bit...but only in private. Outside, with friends, I'd rather be Italian'.

Social camouflage is what Jennifer puts in place. It is a well-thought social strategy that she uses in order to limit the disadvantages of 'being Albanian'. She does not simply 'imitate' her Italian friends but she is passing as Italian in order to get over the stereotype that makes her feel inferior. The existing stereotype against Albanian citizens makes her feel that her own ethnic identity is a negative attribute, which becomes the focus of attention for locals (Goffmann 1968: 14-15), making them 'forget' possible positive attributes. Being 'Albanian' therefore, is felt to be a stigma (Goffmann 1968), and social camouflage is seen as the answer to the phenomenon of being 'discredited' by the collective identity of the individual. Therefore, this is an 'instrumental and situational process of *concealment* of their own cultural peculiarities, (a) patrimony that however survives in the intimate sphere.' (Romania 2004: 8). Albanians, of all the immigrants living in Italy, seem to be the group most willing to adopt this type of strategy, 'because of the discrimination that is directed to them and because of the similarities between themselves and the locals Albanians represent the ideal model of discredited subjects' (Romania 2004: 9). For camouflage to take place it is necessary that, at a group level, their collective identity is discredited. The group is stereotyped in such a way that it makes them feel inferior. Moreover, certain conditions must exist for the migrants to 'pass' as locals: somatic features cannot easily be identified as 'other', or 'foreign'; cultural differences cannot be too evident or too visible; language knowledge must be high and with no - or a limited - accent. On an individual level there must be an individual perception of the existence of a negative stereotype and the will to hide, on some occasions, one's own national or ethnic identity. 'Social camouflage is a concept that describes a series of practical artifices that allow some subjects to reduce or cancel his/her own condition of otherness and visibility in the public space. Acting like this, 'others' return to being perceived as *normal*.' (Romania 2004: 163)

Jennifer chooses to act in a certain way and hide her Albanian-ness when in public, fully aware of the negative stereotype that exists against her countrymen (i.e.: Albanian = illegal = criminal). However, when at home with her family she is happy to speak her mother tongue and does not speak with her parents about this. *'At home we all speak Albanian, but never outside.*

Even when I go out and I might hear someone speaking Albanian I pretend not to notice. I know that I better not mix with them [other Albanians]. Because I speak good Italian people don't notice that I am a foreigner and I like this. I think it is better. Of course at school they know but no one notices it anymore and I am just like all the other pupils. (...) I cannot say that I feel Italian to my parents. I will upset them, especially my mother. She would like to go back one day I think, but I will stay here. My life is here. I want to stay here but I am not sure about them. We will see...'

The fact that Albanians in Italy and in Varese have not managed to build a 'community', and their unity is more on a family level – the concept of an extended family made up of cousins, uncles, aunties and so forth – helps Jennifer adopt this strategy. In addition, her family lives in a neighbourhood where there are only two other Albanian families (and one of this is her uncle's family). This has helped her to develop friendships outside her ethnic circle. Moreover, the fact that she is an attractive girl has made her popular with her male classmates. However, she is not in 'revolt' against her parents or letting the locals' negative feelings against Albanian citizens demotivate her. She has chosen instead to 'hide' her Albanian-ness outside the family circle while respecting her family's 'rules', like the evening curfew when she goes out, or having to do her homework before doing anything else. The fact that her parents are trying to improve their economic situation by doing some training courses also motivates her, and she wants to get a good education. *'My mother started to clean houses when we came here. Now she is doing a course to become a care assistant for the elderly. It is not easy for her as she never studied much in Albania, but she can earn more money and find a job more easily after it. It is not that I am ashamed of her or anything...I am proud, but I don't want to do that kind of job when I finish school. This is why education is important. (...) My father was an accountant in Skutari, now he has a small builders' company with my brother. I don't want to stop here. I hope to go to university because I think it is important.'* While she said that studying accountancy was her decision, after our conversation I had the impression that she has chosen this type of training under her father's influence and did not want to disappoint him. The support of the family and the good example that they give her by trying to improve their education helped the girl to consider school an important investment for her future career. Moreover, the primary school helped her with Italian tuition and by the time she moved to middle school she could follow the lesson like her peers. Thanks to her network of Italian friends she improved her language skill quickly and was supported by her school friends with her homework, especially in the first year of middle school.

Therefore, Jennifer choose 'camouflage' in order to find a space in Italian society by distancing herself from stereotypical representations and hiding her Albanian identity when with her peers, whilst Ardit regained some national pride after an initial difficult phase in the new

country of origin, thanks to the support he received at school. Other Albanian students, such as Kristian, although aware of the prejudices against him and his countrymen, passively accepted the situation without showing any reaction.

Kristian

Kristian is enrolled in the second grade of middle school A, despite the fact that he is 14 years old. I have been observing him and his classmates for days and although he does not seem to be excluded by his peers he is not fully included in their conversations either. Very often during breaks I would see him just standing next to a group of classmates without being an active part of the conversations or the jokes. He would just stand there listening to the conversations and laughing when everyone was laughing. He has been in Italy for four years, living with his younger sister and his parents not far from the school. During interviews he reported that sometimes classmates called him names – mainly 'Albanian' or 'clandestine'. Kristian however does not react to his classmates. He passively let them call him names and apparently laughs at it with them. 'I don't care really. I think they do it not just because I am Albanian, but also because I am not a really cool guy. I am ugly. I think girls don't look at me and my friends make fun of that. (...) I am shy in front of girls, not because I am Albanian but because I am not particularly good looking I think. I am pretty fat and girls like the guys that can play football and stuff like this...but I don't care. I am lazy anyway. I play football here at school but that is it.' The same attitude he showed in not trying to improve his appearance, he showed towards his schoolwork as well. 'When I first arrived here I could not understand a single word and everyone was making fun of me. They were calling me 'Albanese'...and that was the only word I could understand! Even now sometimes they make fun of me. They say that all the Albanians are delinquents, that because you are Albanian you steal things...maybe some of them...just like some Italians or some other foreigners. When I arrived I couldn't speak Italian but at school they put me together with another Albanian who could understand Italian and he translated everything for me. Now I don't have problems with the language but I do with school in general. I was in another school the first year of middle school, but I was not a good pupil. At the beginning yes, but afterwards no.' When I asked the reasons for this he replied: 'I guess I became friends with the wrong people. There were more Albanians there and older than me and we just hung out after school doing nothing. It was fun. We were not doing anything wrong...just sitting in the square, looking at girls, chatting, things like that. No study, no homework... so I failed. They did not admit me to the second grade. (...) Here it is better. But I cannot be bothered with studying. I am not good anyway. I am not smart so I will not go to secondary school when I finish here. I hope to be a car mechanic like my

cousin, or if not I am sure I can work as a plumber, or an electrician...things like that. Lots of my friends have jobs like that and I am OK with that.' We continued talking about life at school and his possible future and his dreams. 'Of course I dream of earning lots of money, everyone does, but I know it will not happen. My parents keep saying that we need to adapt to life. We came here...we needed to adapt to Italy...I cannot be a rich football player...I need to adapt to be something else. With time you adapt to things.' I wanted to try and understand this 'passive adaptation' he was referring to, by talking about the way he imagines his future. 'I don't know. We never talk about the future at home. I guess that now that my grandparents have arrived in Italy there is no plan to go back to Albania. (...) I don't mind [not going back to live in Albania]. My life is here anyway.' (Kristian)

5.2 Being Moroccan in Italian middle school

The Italian media also stereotypes Moroccans, as it does with Albanian immigrants, often associating them with drug dealing, crime, violence against women, and especially after the Twin Towers and London attacks, terrorism. Leaving aside for a moment questions linked with Islam (such as the anti Islamic feeling fostered by well-known intellectuals, the closure of a local mosque and weeks of anti-burqua campaigns), Moroccans are represented by the local papers in similar ways to Albanians, as these headlines of a local newspaper show:⁷⁴

4 Oct. 2004: *Moroccans driving the wrong way up a one-way street, the Police stop them and find drugs*

9 July 2005: *Moroccan raped lonely elderly women. The Police arrested him*

19 Sept. 2004: *Wife was kept segregated in the house, Moroccan convicted*

26 Sept. 2004: *Moroccan beat daughter to death*

Having said this, I was somewhat surprised at the answers middle school pupils gave in the questionnaire mentioned above when considering 'Moroccan' citizens. Moroccans are, as said earlier, along with the Albanians, the main group of immigrants in Varese and is also negatively stereotyped. However, to the question '*Which five characteristics do you think best describe a person from Morocco?*', although some students did write *thieves (2), stealing jobs from Italians (2), violent (2)*, the vast majority saw them as *black (48), poor (23), hard workers*

⁷⁴ A deeper analysis of Italian media was done by Cospe in 2003 that monitored 7 national papers, 19 local papers, 12 weekly magazines, 1 monthly magazine, 3 free papers, 3 national TVs, and 7 local TVs. The results of this research show that migrants find space mainly in crime news and when they cause problems to local communities. In particular, longer articles usually deal with illegal immigration and the control of it by the police, shorter ones deal with crime and violence. (Cospe 2003: 6-7).

(12), educated (9) with colourful clothing (11), with dark and curly hair (6), *vu cumprà* (5)⁷⁵, good at dancing (3) nice (3), always smiling (3), generous (2).

One of the reasons why students in middle school E gave such a description of Moroccan citizens and were apparently not influenced by wider perceptions in society towards North African migrants, could have been the result of the limited number of Moroccan migrants living in that particular area. That particular school was attended by only one Moroccan boy, who was very successful, and managed to build a strong network of friends during his life in Italy.

'Well, yes, if I go to Varese and I see all the people especially around the train station it is a bit scary. All these Moroccans look weird etc... But here it is OK. It is easy to say that all the problems of drugs and stealing are because of foreigners, but I cannot say this. Not here at least, because there are not many Albanians or Moroccans or others like that. The ones that live here are OK. I mean in our classroom there are Amine and Ardit and they are great. Amine is my friend, he is Moroccan but he is no different from me or my other friends. (...)' (Francesca, 13 years old, school E)

In other schools where Moroccans formed the most numerous group of migrant students – such as in school C and D - negative feelings toward them were more widespread, and not only between students. The arrival of a new student, especially in the middle of the school year, is never good news for teachers, and the arrival of a student from Morocco in primary school D, which already had number of Moroccan pupils, made the teacher react like this: *'Not another one! I don't know what to do with them anymore!'*. To justify this, she added that it is not that she does not want them in the school, but saw it mainly a language problem, a disruption to her teaching programme.

In general, Moroccan students attending middle school have demonstrated a stronger feeling of ethnic belonging than Albanians. All the Moroccan students I interviewed or I talked with identified with a strong ethnic identity, associated with their country of origin, their religion and their language. They were aware of the negative feelings that some people have towards them, but reactions to this were uneven.

'In 1999 I came to Italy because my dad who had been here for 18 years wanted to reunify the family. I got used very quickly to all the new things here because I wanted to open my

⁷⁵ A derogatory term used to label street sellers. It derives from the mispronunciation of *'Vuoi comprare'* (Do you want to buy?). The term is increasingly used in a generic way to define any individual who sell items in the street despite their real nationality. *'Vu cumprá'* is a common term. Everyone says it without thinking at all what the person in question feels' (Fazel Shirin 1994: 57).

mind and get to know the people. And the people I met really helped me. (...) Italy is a nice country but I think that no country is as nice as Morocco. Every foreigner loves his country. You come here only because in your country there is no work or there is a war or something. I came because my dad came here looking for work. But I love my country. I am proud of being Moroccan and when we talk with friends and someone says 'the Moroccans do this and that' I always say: 'Well, I am Moroccan and I don't.' Sometimes they apologise and maybe next time they are more careful in saying these things. I don't like it when my people hear this and they don't do anything. As an 'extracomunitario' ⁷⁶ I think that you should say, 'Listen, we are friends, you know me and you know that I am honest'. If everyone does that maybe slowly people will be more careful in saying that Moroccans are all bad.' (Amine)

'Some people do say 'the Moroccans are all terrorists' and things like this. But why should I care? I don't. Some of the people I play football with call me 'Osama' or things like this, but just for fun. I don't even pay attention to this anymore. In the end I think that if they really thought I was a terrorist they would not play with me... So I know they do it just to joke and I don't mind'. (Ismail)

Ismail's passive acceptance of his peers' jokes show how these stereotypes and negative perceptions of Moroccan citizens are so widespread that some immigrants themselves do not consider them as a form of racism and prejudice. It is 'normal', it is a 'joke' and a way to feel accepted because they laugh with, and not at me, Ismail seems to think. Even Amine who carefully corrects his friends when they joke about his fellow countrymen uses the terms 'extracomunitario' to talk about himself, indicating how the term is so widely used in Italian language to be considered acceptable even by immigrants.

For Moroccans the most widespread stereotype is Moroccan = terrorist = threat as Ismail mentioned in his remarks. Moreover, the general Islamophobia that has spread worldwide in recent years makes people see all Moroccans as Muslims and therefore as potential terrorist, even the younger ones. Associated with this, there are also other stereotypical images such as constant praying, wearing the veil for women, and so on.

'People stare a lot here. If I am alone it is OK, they stare, but not that much, but if I am on a bus with, for example my cousin or my brother and we talk in Arabic people look at us. I don't like this. (...). Here because you are Muslim I think that people expect you to do certain things or to say certain things. I don't know...like praying in the middle of the streets or something...I pray

⁷⁶ See p. 26.

as much as the others I guess...when they go to Church if they go. We have our festivities like others...there are not on the same day, but we celebrate them even here. (...)' (Ismail).

Students, and also teachers, share these stereotyped images of Moroccan people, as many of them have told me during interviews.

'Well, many immigrants are Muslims and I don't think this is good. I think it is dangerous with all the things that are happening in the world. You can never tell what can happen and I am scared when I see all these Muslims around...like at the train station.' (Silvia, 13 years old, school A)

'Moroccans are scary because of the Muslim thing...they would like everyone to be Muslim and they don't accept the fact that we are not.' (Michele 12 years old, school A)

Silvia and Michele's assumption – Moroccan = Muslim = danger - is one that many pupils stated during our conversations. These fears reflect the local society's perception of Muslim people as a 'potential danger'. These anti-Islamic feelings, are fostered not only by well documented terrorist attacks, or by the media but also by articles such as Orianna Fallaci's – a well known Italian intellectual – editorial in a well known Italian newspaper in which, a few days after the attack against the Twin Towers, she called for 'a total war against Muslims' (Fallaci 2001).⁷⁷

In her latest books, *Insciallah* (1990), *La Rabbia e l'Orgoglio* (Rage and Pride, 2001), *La Forza della Ragione* (The Power of Reason, 2004), which sold millions of copies, she openly talks about Muslims as terrorists, and she is against their presence in Italy. *'The nonsense of a 'moderate' Islam continues, along with the comedy of tolerance and the lie of integration'*.⁷⁸

Her thoughts are indeed the thoughts of many Italians who discount any possibility of the integration of Muslims in a country where Catholicism is such a dominant religion.⁷⁹

The Catholic religion is something that Italian middle school students have highlighted when asked about what 'made them Italian'. According to the 2005 report of the *Osservatorio Provincia di Varese* (Varese Provincial Observatory) on the presence of immigrants' in the province, 45% of the migrant population resident in the city is Muslim, 26.1% Catholic and 19.3% profess other Christian religions. However, middle school pupils who identify as Muslim are only Moroccans or Tunisians, despite the fact that the vast majority of Albanians living in Varese are

⁷⁷ In 2002 in France Fallaci was charged for xenophobia and religious racism and underwent a court case in Italy for the same reasons.

⁷⁸ *Corriere della Sera*, 16th July 2005.

⁷⁹ Even at the top of the Ecclesiastic hierarchy there are doubts on the possible dialogue between Catholics and Muslims, as the Archbishop of Bologna, Cardinal Biffi, once called for access to Italy to be restricted to only Catholic immigrants in order to save the Italian national identity. (cfr. Menafrà S. (2000), 'Immigrati sí, ma cattolici' (Immigrants: yes - but only Catholics), in *Il Manifesto*, 14th September 2000.

also Muslim. Even young Muslim Albanians themselves, when asked, did not consider their religion an important part of their identity. On the contrary, the Moroccan and Pakistani young people I met, have all talked about the importance of their religion and how their faith is helping them feel a part of a group. Pasha, for example, was the only boy from Pakistan in school A and was often alone and silent. He spoke to me only during the interview I had with him: *'When I arrived here it was difficult. I felt different. But when we went to the Mosque for the first time it was normal again. Like there were a lot of people like me also here'*. (Pasha)

Religious diversity and a subsequent identification with the religion in young immigrants is seen in some research as the effect of a certain dissonance between a partially successful cultural acculturation and social and economic exclusion. Religion therefore could be seen as the canalization of a condition of exclusion. 'Placed in an objective situation of social and economic exclusion, these young people feel 'hated' by a society that does not leave them any space. Islamisation is needed by them to re-organise the meaning of their lives. Becoming Muslim means increasing self-esteem and acquiring a socially recognisable identity' (Hervieu-Léger, 2003:103).

Stereotypes about Muslims are more common than I thought, and during all the meetings I organised between middle school students and a Muslim female colleague of mine questions regarding the 'burqa' always came up. The fact that Loubna, my colleague, was not wearing a burqa or a hijab disorientated most of the students, and many of the teachers had been convinced that all Moroccan women were forced - or at least decided by themselves - to wear the veil. The majority of students and also many Italian adults I talked to seem to be against the use of the veil even if it was the result of an individual's decision. However, this feeling is not dictated by reasons of 'safety' (the difficulty of identifying a person – as the government is trying use as justification for their intervention on the issue⁸⁰), but by the thought that 'someone showing such an obvious religious symbol does not demonstrate any desire to integrate in Italian society'. A 38 year old Italian middle school teacher told my Moroccan colleague:

'I think that if all Moroccans were like you, then there will be no problem. You are smart; you have studied (...) however, all these women going around with a veil ...how can they find a job? They should show that they want to integrate and one small step they can make is to take the veil off ...'. (Teacher in middle school E)

Despite the existence of these stereotypes, within school walls, at a first glance, the lives of young students from Albania or Morocco, seemed not to be affected. First of all in middle

⁸⁰ See chapter two.

school free time for interacting (with other students) was limited. In addition, the seating arrangement decided by teachers limited the possibility of exclusion of non Italian students. Also, name calling and negative comments - which were occasionally reported in interviews – always happened far from adults' ears. Eventual difficulties and the uneasiness of these students came out only during interviews. However, Jennifer and Ardit had the support of both school and family during their academic career; Kristian's school was giving him support with L2 teaching and an individual programme of study, whilst Omar, introduced below, lacked both forms of support. Moreover, his country of origin influenced his expectations and his achievements in school.

Omar

When I met Omar he was enrolled in the second grade of a middle school C. At the time of our meeting he was 15 years old and had arrived in Italy the year before from Morocco. At his arrival in the country he was not enrolled in the school year he was supposed to be according to his age – the last year of middle school or first year of secondary school – due to a gap in his educational career. Before coming to Italy he had spent two years in France with an uncle, without documents and without attending school. His father had left Morocco ten years before and slowly reunified the family once he settled in the country with a regular work contract as a builder. Omar's brother was the second one to leave their home country aged 18 and was also working as a builder like his father, for the past two years. Omar left Morocco with his uncle when he was 12 years old, thinking he would go to France. Once he obtained his documents, he would join the rest of his family in Italy. However things did not go according to plan. His uncle did not manage to get Omar's documents and he returned to Morocco after 18 months. Meanwhile his father succeeded in obtaining permission for the reunification of his wife and son, and the whole family was able to leave Morocco for Italy in 2004.

The family is now living in a small town not far from the Swiss border. The father is still working as a builder while the mother is in charge of the household. But she contributes to the domestic economy by doing some manual work from home. Omar also helps the family by working with the mother in his spare time. Once in Italy, Omar, despite his age – 14 years old - was enrolled in a first grade of middle school with students three years younger than him. In addition to his total lack of knowledge of Italian, he did not attend school in his home country (or anywhere else) long enough to justify his enrolment in a secondary school, or in the last year of middle school, with students his own age. He arrived in January and by June he improved enough to be admitted to the second grade. I arrived at the school in February 2005 as a 'linguistic facilitator' for non Italian pupils, as a part of one of Anolf projects which was sponsored

by the Lombardy region. Together with the teachers in the school, it was decided that I would teach geography and history twice a week to a small group of four Moroccan pupils. They were all enrolled in grade two of the school (Omar and the only girl in the group were in the same class and the other two in two other classes).

My first impression of the group was positive. The students were all very polite and seemed eager to learn. Omar in particular attracted my attention with his good manners and his attempt to use correct Italian, although he was the one with the least knowledge of the language. As time went by, he showed the most improvement during the first weeks of lessons and he was serious minded and studied with determination. Teachers in the school left me in charge of the group without interfering and I presented feedback on students' progress at the end of the term, when it was time to grade the students. Omar and the other girl were also following extra Italian lessons with another teacher, while the other two boys did not receive any additional tuition, as they had arrived in Italy a few years before. Whilst during the first weeks of lesson Omar obtained good marks and was making serious efforts to learn Italian and improve his knowledge, after a while his determination began to decline. He was often absent from school, he started to attend 'our' classes without homework or the necessary material (such as books and notebooks) and his results began to decline. I decided to confront him about this, wondering if everything was OK at home and with his family. 'What future can I have in education? I am 15 years old and I am still in grade II with classmates who are 12-13 years old! I should have finished school by now but I haven't. And why should I finish? It is not that I will have a better future if I do finish. I am Moroccan, so my place will be a builder like my dad or a mechanic like my cousin. My parents are not really interested in what I am doing, and my mother does not speak Italian, so if I say to her to sign something for the school she does, it could be marks, justifications for an absence... anything. They know that I will never go to secondary school or university so they don't care.' he answered. I then thought that this behaviour was a consequence of him missing his previous life in Morocco and to some extent I was right: 'In Morocco life was easier but we had nothing', he said to me. 'Maybe the best time was when we were there and my father was here and he could send money to us. But a family has to stay together so I understand why he decided to bring us here. It is right.' I took advantage of the fact that we were alone and he was showing some trust in me. He admitted that he rarely speaks with the teachers and that they had shown little knowledge of his life or his family background, so I asked again: 'Do you miss Morocco? Would you go back and live there?'. 'Of course I miss it. Even if we go there during the holidays and I know that one day I will go back there I miss it' he replied. 'Here I can earn more money than there. I will go back, first pretending I have lots of money so I can get all the nice girls and

everyone can envy me, and once I do have lots of money I will go back and live a good life there. My parents will let me do what I want. I am not a child anymore and this is what my dad did anyway He left Morocco to come to Italy looking for a better life. I will go back to Morocco looking for the same.' 'And what will you do once you finish this school?' I asked. 'I don't think I will finish it. I see no point in it. I will quit in June and go to work. I don't need to finish school to work. My dad did not go to school and he had no problems in finding a job and if I work I can start earning money and help my family and save for the future.'

I continued teaching this group of students until May 2005. On the report to the teachers I wrote about the progress, or lack of it, on the part of the students. I underlined Omar's difficulties in finding motivation for studying and finishing middle school. Once the hours established for tuition ran out, Omar spent the last month of school without extra tuition and without attending school regularly. Despite this and despite insufficient marks in some subjects, at the end of the school year he was admitted to the last grade of middle school.

A year after I went back to the school to find out what had happened to him. The fact that Omar did not go back to school in September did not surprise me. The school did not receive any requests for transfer to another school and as Omar had turned 16, he had reached the maximum age for compulsory education. The young boy had clearly admitted to me he intended to start working once he reached 16, and was painfully aware of his level of education compared to his peers.

5.3 Being a student from a 'good' migrant group

Hu Li

When I met Hu Li he was 15 years old enrolled in the third grade of the middle school that Omar was also attending. Before coming to Italy he had lived all his life in China, in the Zhejiang area in a small village. He had lived with his grandparent,s as both his mother and his father emigrated to France when he was only four years old. He had not seen his parents until 2003 when he was reunited with his family. During the years apart he used to speak with them once a month, and get information about his family from the grandparents. Not long after his parents arrived in Europe, they divorced, and his mother had another son, Julien, with another Chinese man who is now living in Italy with her. Hu Li's father stayed in France and Hu Li does not hear anything about him. The day Hu Li arrived in Italy he met his step father and his half brother,⁸¹. At the time of our meeting, Julien was enrolled in the last grade of the local primary

⁸¹ Both of the boys have a Chinese and a western name. While the younger brother only used the western name 'Julien', the older one only used the Chinese one 'Hu Li'.

school.

Hu Li's first house in Italy was in Mantua where the family was working for a small family business. However, not long after his arrival they moved to Varese and started their own business selling clothes at local markets. Hu Li was enrolled in the local middle school, the same one attended by Omar, and in 2005 I started teaching him Italian for one and a half hours, twice a week. However, after a few weeks of work he was showing no progress whatsoever. His attitude towards study was very passive and he never did the homework I assigned. Even during the time we used to spend together, our conversation was very limited and we spent a great amount of time in silence. When I raised this problem with his teachers they all agreed about his total lack of interest in education. However, the school decided to continue with tutorials into the second term. I was getting more and more frustrated and slowly gave up on him. We started to use our time together to talk about life in general, mainly in Chinese, and when my knowledge of Chinese was not sufficient, we would shift to Italian, making good use of dictionaries. Slowly all the unhappiness and the sadness of Hu Li came out. His only dream was to go back to live in China with the only family he recognised as such: his grandparents. 'Why should I waste time in learning Italian!' he said once to me. 'I will go back to China as soon as possible. My mother does not want me to, but I will. I need to wait a few more years, then she cannot tell me what I have to do anymore. I will take the first plane and go back to Zhejiang. And besides, she wants me to go and work with them in the market...I will not need much Italian there either...if they manage to keep me here'.

What at a first glance appeared to be as a language problem, and then a lack of interest in studying, it soon became evident that Hu Li had developed a well-thought out strategy. Hu Li's total unwillingness to learn or to interact with his classmates was the only way he thought he could convince his mother, seeing his discomfort, to send him back to China. In contrast, his half brother Julien, who had gone to China only once to a summer school to learn to read and write in Chinese, was a brilliant student and after few months he could speak Italian very well. 'That is not my brother' Hu Li told me during one of the first classes we had together, whilst I was trying to understand the structure of his family. Tensions between him, his brother and his parents were a daily routine and the lack of friends or places to go outside the family left him with very limited means of escape. 'It was better in Mantua...at least I could speak with other people there. And anyway, my friends are not here. My friends are in China and I talk with them almost every day. I text them very often and they send me movies and tapes that I cannot find here. I don't like the way Italians go around, maybe it is just because I cannot understand them, but I don't like them. I don't like how they look and what they do. I'd rather be in my room watching Chinese movies', he

commented when I tried to understand what he did during the afternoons and evenings at home.

However, Hu Li's strategy did not stop at the refusal to learn Italian. He soon understood that attending the middle school final exam would have meant going on to secondary education in Varese, something that he did not want to do. He somehow - and he was right to think so - guessed that if he attended the exam, teachers would have let him pass. His plan was to not attend the exam, and find a way of going back to China, or at least avoid working in the markets with his family. He did not attend the final exam and the year after the school was forced to enrol him again in the third grade, causing frustration amongst the teachers. One of them commented to me: 'Can you convince Hu Li Li to take part in the exam? We will make him pass so he can move on to a secondary school...he cannot stay here forever!'

One year after, when I returned to the school to find out about him, I somehow already knew the answer: Hu Li never managed to finish middle school and the family moved to another part of Italy in 2006.

Hu Li and Omar stories have very similar stories to tell. The lack of support of both family and school made the two boys lose interest in education. The school they attended was situated in a small town in Varese province. In the town where the middle school was situated, and in the town nearby where there was no middle school in 2004, only 2.7% of the population was non Italian (143 of whom were Moroccans), and 22 non Italian youngsters attended three classes of the local middle school. Despite the fact that many of the non Italian students needed some sort of learning support, the school did not have procedures for welcoming of new students, or for testing their knowledge when they arrive. Whilst in primary school there were Italian tuition classes for students who needed it, in middle school this task was delegated to people outside the school, such as linguistic mediators. It was whilst I was in this role that I met the two students. However, teachers and external staff did not collaborate, nor did they coordinate their work. During my months of working there, I never had a meeting with teachers, and I only managed to coordinate my lessons with one of Omar's teachers. When I finished my hours, I spontaneously wrote a report of the work I had done, and gave feedback on the students' results and attitudes during the hours we spent together. I gave this to the teachers. However, I was never called on to evaluate the students, or indeed for any other reason. As soon as I stopped giving them tuition, the students were left alone to follow the lessons in class and nobody helped them with understanding the texts, or explaining the lessons in a way they could comprehend. Lacking school and teachers' support it is not surprising that these two students, who had arrived already having gaps in their education, failed to finish middle school.

Moreover, family support in both cases was minimal. Nobody in Omar's family went to secondary school. However both his father and his brother managed to find what he consider a 'good job'. Hu Li's mother, despite her long residence in Italy, could not speak Italian, and this did not set a good example to the boy. The fact that his mother pushed him to learn the language only exacerbated his 'rebellion' against it, and caused even more tension in the family. One day Hu Li told me:

'We went to renew our permits to stay last week and my mother got really angry at me. The policeman was asking things and I couldn't understand ...neither of us could. On the way back she shouted at me and told me that I have to learn Italian and that it is really bad that I have been here so long and I still haven't learn it. Look at her! She has been here longer and her Italian is worse than mine! If she wants she can learn Italian, I don't.'

(Hu Li, May 2005)

Omar's family was equally not interested in the boy's progress at school, or lack of it. His mother's knowledge of Italian was minimal and Omar often lied to her when he needed signatures on school communications. His father was concentrated on work and delegated the education of the children and household management to his wife.

Although teachers saw Omar and Hu Li as merely two lazy students, their were clearly reasons behind their failures at school. 'Students in school, like other humans, learn constantly. When we say they are "not learning" what we mean is that they are not learning what school authorities, teachers, and administrators intend for them to learn as the result of intentional instruction. Learning what is deliberately taught can be seen as a form of political assent. Not learning can be seen as a form of political resistance.' (Erickson 1987: 343) The passive resistance they displayed was intentional, and was dictated by a well thought out strategy. Hu Li's refusal to study or to learn Italian was aimed at showing his mother his unwillingness to stay in Italy. However an imminent return to China was difficult for him to forecast. First of all, as he was under 18 years old he needed the permission of both his parents to leave the country; and secondly he could not leave compulsory education until he was 16 years old. Finally he could not afford the expensive plane fare back to China. His parents managed to carve themselves a space in a business that has become becoming more and more the reserve of ethnic communities: selling cheap clothes at the local markets. Whilst young Italian people are not interested in continuing this kind of activity, which implies working during Sundays and festivities, waking up early in the morning, driving long hours to reach the markets and so forth, Chinese people are increasingly buying licences from retired Italian market people. In the future, Hu Li might be able to see this as a way to prevent complete isolation – from his Chinese friends, from the Chinese

community in Italy, from his family – or as a possible path to incorporation with other ‘outsiders’. Min Zhou’s review of assimilation theories brought her to see a third possible scenario between Gans’ ‘second generation decline’ (Gans 1992) and her own earlier collaboration with Portes (Portes and Zhou 1993). She suggests the idea of ‘segmented assimilation’: young immigrants could avoid downward assimilation by remaining tied to ethnic economies and subcultures. Some migrant groups, and in Italy as in many other parts of the world, the Chinese community is one of these groups, offer young generations a quick and ready employment opportunity, especially in restaurants and in retail business. Therefore young people might not be pushed to study, and might not see it as a possible way of improving their future employment chances. Although Hu Li is not interested in joining his family in the market business, his family is pushing him in this direction. For him, employment in this ethnic enclave could be the only way to avoid downward assimilation, as he might end up lacking any kind of educational qualification. Hu Li, lacked personal motivation, the support of his family and his teachers’ interest in his achievement. If we consider academic achievement as a determinant for a successful integration (Portes and Rumbaut 2001) for him it had become almost impossible to reach this goal. Therefore, social improvement, thanks to employment within the ‘ethnic job market’, might offer a possible future for him in Italy, and perhaps be a positive alternative to downward assimilation or social marginalization.

After a short period of time, Omar also started to lose interest in school and refused to put any effort in studying. If we wish to consider his integration in Italian society, Omar’s story might suggest what Portes refers to as ‘downward assimilation’ (Portes 1995): unable to find a space in the host society, he risks eventually finding himself trapped in unskilled, low waged work. In their studies on second generation American migrants, Gans (1992) and Portes (1996) suggest that today’s ‘new’ second generation might feed a potential risk of deviance, social exclusion and ghettoisation. In addition, Portes, predicts a ‘second generation decline’, where they are neither willing nor able to obtain jobs which offer low wages, long hours and low status as their parents did, therefore finding themselves located outside the mainstream economy. Many young immigrants that took part in Portes’s research experienced ‘downward assimilation’ (Portes 1995) where education is seen as useless for social mobility, and therefore resulted in a type of socialisation that leads to failure and to social exclusion.

According to Omar, it is not only the fact of him being Moroccan that will prevent him from finding a good job. He also does not link success at school with the possibility of better chances in the job market. He is accepting the place in which his parents and Italian society have placed him. He also recognised the disadvantage of arriving in Italy as a teenager and the fact that he

had lost years of education before migrating. He does not blame this history, his country of origin, or his family. His reaction to migration could be described, using Child's words, as 'apathetic' (Child 1943)⁸². He speaks Arabic with his family and his Moroccan schoolmates, he spends his time watching Arabic TV, and he follows the Muslim calendar of festivities. However, he plays football in the local club, and he has managed to make a few Italian friends without rejecting his own ethnic community, or being shut off from wider Italian society. Omar is simply avoiding conflict in his family environment, in school, and with his Italian peers. He is a well-behaved and polite young man and during the first term, he managed to 'hide' his lack of enthusiasm for lessons. None of the teachers were particularly interested in the progress or failure of non Italian students attending their class, and were happy to 'hand them over' to linguistic mediators and facilitators.

The lack of participation of his parents in his educational career, and the lack of interest of his teachers towards his progress, as well the loneliness that he often felt, and the life style of Moroccans living in Varese were all factors that do not help Omar see education as a useful investment for his future career. On the contrary, he saw building work as the only possibility for his future career, and a good way to earn money. In Italy, the construction industry is the sector – together with domestic work – that employs the largest number of *lavoratori in nero* (black workers)⁸³, and entering this market without a qualification greatly increases the risk of being employed illegally. Moreover, if we think that Omar's aim is 'to earn money no matter what' as he often mentioned to me, and he seems to have no other expectations for his future, 'downward assimilation' is one possible future that awaits him.

Like Hu Li, he is fully aware of the consequence of his passivity in school and employs a similar way of resisting the system. As the work of John Ogbu (1978, 1987, 1992) and his colleagues demonstrates, school can have structural significance for youngsters in the sense that they may see academic success as a precondition for entry to secondary school and, later, to obtain well recognised and rewarded careers. When this idea of education as an investment for the future is lacking, students tend to underachieve in school. This is a common situation for many minority students in the United States. Those students are convinced that academic success will not help them break out of a cycle of poverty, which they rather attribute to the

⁸² Child's (1943) analysis of Italian immigrant communities in America categorises the second generation into three groups, the 'rebel reaction', the 'in-group reaction' and the 'apathetic reaction'. The rebel reaction involves the desire to be accepted by the majority group and hence the rejection of their own ethnic community. The second reaction reveals a desire to be accepted by the coethnic community and a rejection of the majority community. The apathetic reaction involves an avoidance of conflict and the desire to compromise.

⁸³ *Lavoro nero* (literally black job) in Italian refers to jobs that are not regulated by any contracts. Employers choose this illegal form of employment as a way to save on taxes and a way to pay workers less than the minimum hourly salary established by trade unions.

racism that is endemic in American society. This is a case of what Ogbu refers as 'castelike minority groups' who have resided for generations in the United States in situations of oppression. According to Ogbu, in a castelike minority group, members share a fatalistic perspective: there will never be jobs, so why try hard to succeed at school? Being Moroccan, Omar was subjected to strong prejudices and stereotypes, which linked to his nationality. The reasons for his sudden change of attitude toward education could have been because of his realisation of this.

It is indeed true, however, that Ogbu's theory is contradicted by the success that students from other stigmatized groups have had in education (D'Amato 1996). Jennifer and Ardit, mentioned earlier, are such example. It is important to note though, they could both count on the support of their families and school.

Eric

Eric was enrolled in the third grade of the middle school A. He looked younger than his thirteen (soon to be fourteen – as he often corrected me) years: he is short, slim and with very dark short straight hair. His complexion is also darker than other Ecuadorians I know. 'He is a good pupil' – this is the general comment of his teachers, and I believe that what they really mean is 'he is a good student for a foreigner'. Every time teachers needed to evaluate him the comment was: 'Yes, the test is not great, but it is acceptable, he is making some mistakes but all Spanish speakers do, he is well-behaved pupil and so we let him pass'. I have the impression that this is what teachers really think. To be honest, he is not a bad pupil, but I know that he could be a better one. He is doing the minimum amount of work necessary in order to pass without putting too much effort into it. He lives in a small town 14 km away from the school and every morning a school bus drives him and other young people from his town to school. I have chosen to have a long talk with him after months of observation in the middle school, as teachers kept saying how sensitive he was, and how he was well-integrated with his classmates and peers. During the whole time I spent in school he was always well behaved and he used to spend all his time chatting and laughing with his friends who were mainly Italian, during breaks and before and after school hours. The school is attended by a small group of South American pupils, including two boys and one girl from Chile who have been adopted by Italian families. Eric's opportunity to mix with his Latin American peers are limited and moreover living in a small town with restricted public transport to and from Varese narrows his chances of meeting fellow countrymen. Moreover, as he lives far away from the school he does not have time to return home during lunchtime, after which he has activities at school, such as the football tournament, or tuition

classes. This provided me with the space to chat with him outside of school hours, without the pressure of time or the need for permission from parents. He seemed happy and he loved to talk about his life.

'I have been here for seven years now. So it is half of my life. My mother left Ecuador before, when I was four and I saw her again when I was seven and I came here to stay with her. My auntie, my mother's sister was already here and she has found a job for her. I stayed in Ecuador with my cousins and my grandmother. I never met my dad and my mother never talked about him...I never asked her anyway. It is different in Ecuador compared to here. Families are different I guess. Lots of my friends in Ecuador don't know who their fathers are and it is not a big deal. (...) So I was saying...my mother left and I don't really remember that moment. It was long time ago. I remember her calling me on Sundays and telling me about her job and that she would come to pick me up soon. (...) It was strange because I was happy in Ecuador. I cannot say that I was missing her. I barely knew her. I was not alone, I was with all my cousins and it was fun. And then I had my dogs. My mother used to call me often and I was happy when I received parcels and letters from her, but it was a weird feeling. I don't know how to describe it. I was happy... because it was my mother, but in a way I barely knew her. (...) My life in Ecuador was great. I was with lots of people all the time, we were all living together and I felt free to do whatever I wanted. Like nobody cared if I went to school or not, if I got good marks or not, if I returned at six or at seven...things like this. OK, we did not have money, but everyone was like that. We had the money that parents were sending from Europe but we shared everything. One day I would have money, and I would buy something for everyone, tomorrow someone else will have money and he would buy for everyone...here it is not the same. I miss that feeling of being part of something. Here there is not this idea of sharing, especially between young people. I have this...this is MINE, only mine! (...)

I knew I had to leave Ecuador one day as my mother kept telling me every time she used to call, and my cousin left a few months before me. When my mother came to pick me up she stayed more than a month in Ecuador getting everything ready and I did not really know what to think. I was happy, and I was very sad. And I cried a lot the day before we left. I remember that well and I am not ashamed in saying this. You know some people never say that they cry...like it is not good. I did cry a lot! I was leaving my grandmother and my friends....and my dogs. (...) The only thing is that I didn't want to let my mother see me crying. I know she was doing this for me, and I was happy in a way to come here. I always knew that my life was 'on hold' (in attesa) ...waiting for my mother to come and pick me up.' The 'waiting' did not stop there. When he talked about his life the word 'waiting' came up often. 'Now I am waiting. Waiting to finish this school and move

to IPSIA where I will study electronics.' 'Do you dream about a future here in Italy?' - I asked - 'No...well...if I dream I dream of becoming a professional football player but not here. Back in Ecuador, because it is easier there. But if I think, I think that I will be an electrician somewhere here, because it is easier here. (...) It is not that I don't like my life here, but I feel lonely. I have the impression that my life is not here. And obviously it is not in Ecuador either. My mother leaves the house early and comes back in the evening and I am alone a lot of the time. She comes back tired and she needs to take care of me, and the house. I try and help with what I can but it is not like in Ecuador, there people help all the time with the house and stuff. Like when you are playing at a friend's house it is normal you stay there for lunch or dinner and then you go home when you want. Here no...you make sure you are home in time for dinner! (...) So most of the time I am alone and when I am alone I miss Ecuador. I come to school and I like school because I have friends here, some afternoons I stay here to study or to play football, when I go home I am alone. I arrive home, I eat and then I do my homework, watch TV, play with the computer. When my mother comes back we don't talk much. There is not much to say I think. Even if I have a problem I don't talk with her because I am not used to it. I managed to solve my problems alone for many years, so it would be strange now to ask her for help.'

Eric is an exception in the young people's Latin American community. As he lives in a small town with no other Latin American teenagers and because he attends a school with very few South American pupils, his opportunity to mix with fellow countrymen are limited. As other researchers have illustrated, (Queirolo Palmas and Torre 2005; Colombo 2007) South American adolescents in Italy tend to create inter-ethnic peer groups in a spontaneous way, due to their love for the same music and the larger freedoms they enjoy. One of the reasons for this is that compared with other young migrants, the large majority of them arrive in Italy as teenagers. As adolescents, and especially when the migration experience did not occur during childhood, the peer group seem to be socially homogeneous. Therefore migrant adolescents tend to meet within themselves on the basis of a common national or linguistic origin (Colombo 2007).

Eric does not have the support of the family as his mother is often out at work, and he only has one aunt living in Varese. Therefore the normal support of his family as a point of reference is missing. He is also missing the support of his peer group, which he could take as a reference point for models of behaviour, emotional support, and confirmation of his own identity. The difficulties that Latin American mothers experience seeing their sons and daughters grow up in their home countries without them, have been now transformed into the difficulties of looking after them once they arrive in Italy. Queirolo Palmas and Torre's 2005 research, conducted in

Genoa, where the number of Ecuadorian immigrants is the highest in Italy, underlined the difficulties experienced by adolescents who find themselves disillusioned with life in Italy. They often end up in violent teenage gangs, and their parents have to deal with this reality. The bad reputation of Latin American adolescents is beginning to translate into prejudice against female Ecuadorian workers, who were previously considered as the 'perfect house keepers' or care assistants for the elderly. The women themselves are less keen than before to take a full time care job, as they need to mediate between work and family, and they also need to take care of their sons and daughters.

With Latin Americans an initial form of identification is often the recognition of a network with well-defined borders, frequently limited to the national group. In these cases, the vast majority of their free time is spent with fellow countrymen or with people with whom they share the same mother tongue. Language appears to be the main symbol that establishes the borders between who is in and who is out. Italian is seen as the language of institutions, of school, of 'others', whilst everyday life and relationships are lived through the use of their mother tongue. Due to the limited size of the communities, the network within which the youngster identifies himself/herself often assumes a pan-national character, such as the case of South American youth. This strong identification with their ethnic group seems to be a characteristic mainly of youngsters that arrived in Italy after spending their childhood in their home countries. As we have seen, the inability to speak Italian is a strong discriminating factor: the community they belong to appears to be a 'linguistic community', a space in which they are comfortable, because they are able to express themselves and understand each other better. School is not viewed as a socialising opportunity, but something that they are compelled to do, a world totally separate from the world of friends and entertainment.

This is not the case for Eric. He finds himself excluded from peers from his country, as he has no opportunity to meet them. He likes school, as it is his only space for socializing, and the only place where his feeling of loneliness is mitigated. However, he also found himself 'in between': in a certain way he has not yet found a balance between his old life in Ecuador and his new life in Italy, and he feels he belongs in neither. The main reason for this is the lack of a network that could help him deal with these mixed feelings. As he is a well-behaved pupil who does not create problems, who always attends school and does not fight or quarrel with other students, teachers do not suspect anything is wrong; his mother is not home most of the time and the conversation between them is limited; peers are mainly Italian and Eric cannot share his feelings of exclusion and displacement with them, as they have not had similar experiences. He feels it would be hard for them to understand.

I met Eric again a year later.

He is still the same short, smiling boy from a few years before, and still loves to talk. His Italian has improved but he still makes some mistakes. *'I have finished middle school and enrolled in the 'Istituto per geometri'(surveyors' institute) but after I failed the first year I dropped out. I thought I could do OK in that school because I did OK in middle school. But secondary school is harder, there are a lot of new subjects and they are more difficult as well. I could not keep up the pace with my schoolmates and after the first part of the year I got increasingly demotivated and demoralized. So I just waited for the end of the year (...) After that I started to work on and off. I went to the employment centre and all the temporary work agencies and I did various jobs for a couple of months. Last year I started an evening course at IPSIA⁸⁴. Here I can do two years in one, so now I am enrolled in the third year, having passed the first one, which in reality is a two year course. (...) I want to finish it and then continue even on to the additional fourth and fifth years. (...) The school is easier I think because the level of the students is not as high as in the daily classes. We are all working – or looking for work – people. Some of them are older⁸⁵. Teachers help us and explain things in an easier way so everyone can understand them, and I do not feel inferior to anyone. Plus there are more foreigners like me. There are some Albanians and Rumanians and two Moroccans. I like it but it is still hard because in the day time you have to look for a job and study as well.'* (...) *'I still live with my mother who now has a new 'boyfriend'...I don't know what to call him...a man! He is OK, but I don't see them often. I am even more alone now I think....because before I had the school in the morning but now not anymore. So I spend the morning at home or I go to Varese, sometimes I meet up with other South American boys and we go and look for a job or we go to somebody's house and listen to music, you know...In the evening I go to school and when I go back home it is late and I just eat and go to sleep (...) If before I sort of wanted to go back to Ecuador now I know that my life is here. My mother will never go back and the more I stay here the more I know that I will stay here too. Maybe not right here...maybe in Spain, or somewhere else in Europe, who knows!'*

The students I met have highlighted the importance of school support for their educational success. To this, we need to add factors such as family structure and the family's interest in a young person's education, their personal history of migration, their personal motivation, but also the context outside school.

⁸⁴ Istituto Professionale di Stato per l'Industria e l'Artigianato – State Professional Institute for Industry and Crafts

⁸⁵ By 'older people' he means people in their 30s.

Despite the problems and the doubts concerning intercultural education that I have discussed, I have illustrated that even when implemented in a limited way, students have often managed to succeed and do not resist getting an education. Schools – whether middle school or secondary school - with no programmes or activities aimed at non Italian students witnessed many young people failing or dropping out. Eric, Omar and Hu Li are only three examples. Whilst in primary school, teachers are definitely more 'protective' towards their pupils, and there is time for extra tuition or individual help, middle school requires a bigger effort from the students. There are more subjects, less hours in school, more difficult textbooks and not all schools are willing to invest in L2 tuition or additional activities that could help with the integration of non Italian students with their peers. Moreover, there is more homework and often students require help from an adult, something that many non Italian parents can not provide. The gap between middle school and secondary school is even bigger. In addition, no secondary school has L2 tuition or support for non Italian students.

This leaves some middle school teachers, who are convinced about the importance of intercultural education, frustrated and disappointed with the system as a whole. As one teacher confessed me:

'I don't know Paola, sometimes I am frustrated by this. I do my best with non Italian students, I help them and I think I am doing a good job, but when they leave here, they get lost! They collide with a system that goes too fast for them, because they are still in need of support. But secondary school people do not understand this. They just carry on, and some can make it Ok, some cannot, but they don't see it as their problem.'

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

As we have seen, the Italian central government has chosen interculturalism as the main approach for facilitating the integration of non Italian students in school. In a country where right and left political parties have been in disagreement on almost everything, it is quite surprising to see the rapidity and ease with which an intercultural approach to education has been embraced. This 'idyllic agreement' (Tarozzi 1996) however is not convincing, and my research has demonstrated that the reality in Italian schools is far removed from the guidelines issued by the government regarding the implement of interculturalism in schools. In short, what is a valuable and effective approach in theory, has not yet been translated it into practice.

While government guidelines and directives highlight the importance of recognising the value and the benefits of the presence of non Italian students in the classrooms, the funding for public schools is decreasing year by year. Moreover, many teachers are forced to work in conditions of precariousness: many of them are working in the school on a temporary basis, for period of times that can go from a day to the whole academic year⁸⁶. The schools with a small number of students risk closure due to the merging of *Istituti comprensivi* in order to save money.

My observations of the education of immigrant children in the schools of Varese generally confirmed what some other research has also pointed out: that 'despite some current positive trends in overall societal acceptance of immigrants, educating children from diverse cultural, linguistic, ethnic, racial, or religious backgrounds is perceived as problematic' (Adams and Kirova 2006:6). The problem generates from the difficulties educators are finding in offering students, who are considered for a number of reasons as 'different', something that has to be the same for everyone: an education that allows them to be successful adults not only in the specific geographical area they will decide to live in, but also in the world.

As the approach chosen by Italian central educational government is intercultural education, I am going to summaries some critical remarks that have emerged from my work in the schools.

Lack of critical view of 'diversity'

Italian and non Italian students are not the same. This was made clear by the large majority of educators I met. However, who was labelled as 'foreigner' and who was not, was not straightforward or transparent. While not one of the teachers I met referred to migrants in terms of 'colour', they placed all their attention on their knowledge of Italian, of both non Italian students and their parents. One explanation for this could be that my presence as a researcher in the

⁸⁶ More than 200 thousands of teachers are estimated to be 'temporary employed' (*precari* in Italian).

school and the fear of being labelled as 'racist' made some of them cautious of the words they were using⁸⁷. Some teachers were not at ease with my presence in their classes, and with some others I needed a lot of time and energy before establishing a trusting and comfortable relationship. Their biggest fear was a negative portrayal of their way of teaching or of interacting with students, and this could have prevented them from being honest in their discussions with me. However, all the educators that talked to me during interviews over the year underlined that the main difficulty they encounter in teaching non Italian students is linked with language. Students' initial lack of knowledge of Italian scares teachers, and they often prefer to delegate someone else – another teacher, a classmate with the same mother tongue, or a linguistic mediator – to help a newly arrived student.

However, by making language the main feature of difference between Italian and non Italian student, teachers miss the opportunity to make other students, and themselves, appreciate other aspects of these young people's identities. Moreover, by establishing language as a marker of diversity, the result is often the categorisation of every student who speaks that language, placing them a unique and fixed space, imposing labels on young people that may not correspond to their self-ascriptions. Immigrant students, therefore, are not seen as individuals, but as part of a group who speak the same language. Moreover, on a practical level, it prevents educational staff from giving necessary attention to other factors that have might be the outcome of the experience of migration. Due to the financial hardship in which many schools find themselves, students with a mother-tongue considered similar to the Italian language suffer more, and do not receive the support and tuition they might need. Therefore, while it might be true that during their first days at an Italian schools these students might be advantaged in comparison to students whose mother tongue language is, for example, Chinese, Arabic or Urdu, a lack of relevant tuition might prevent them from developing over time, and constantly repeating the same mistakes, often causing them to fail when moving on to a higher level of education.

Moreover, teachers' perceptions of student ability is often influenced by the student's proficiency – or lack of it – of the Italian language. Although the importance of language ability for academic success cannot be denied, it cannot be taken as the only reference point. Educators' focus on language is also linked to the following observation.

Stereotypes and educators' expectations

Every educator, when entering a class full of students holds expectations. However, evidence suggests that teachers' expectations can be influenced by the stereotypes they have about students from some countries of origin. As mentioned before, Italians often categorise migrants into 'good' and 'bad' types according to their place of origin, and so do educators. Therefore,

⁸⁷ This issue was observed also by Maritano in her research in Turin. (Maritano 2002).

Chinese students are considered good at Maths, Romanians and Spanish speakers are expecting to understand – and converse in – Italian after a very short period of time in the school, and so forth. Bias and preconceived expectations from teachers are not limited to newly arrived students (Adams and Kirova 2006). In general however, if a non Italian student is not born in the country, teachers have low expectations for him/her. While some non Italian students, such as Omar's experience of education as described above, adapt to this situation, some others refuse to. Kleo for example, a dedicated student, who enrolled in the first grade of middle school A after migrating two years before our meeting from Albania, once complained to me: *'I am a student just like everyone else. If I study I can have good results, it is not because I am Albanian I cannot study. I don't like this, when they assume that I will fail and when I do not they are sort of disappointed...happy when they talk to me, but it is as if I surprise them because I can think and learn'*. (Kleo)

Many teachers in fact did not hide their surprise when a non Italian student performed well: *'Look, [showing me the test], I had to give him a 10 [the maximum mark possible] in this history test. He answered all the questions right! He should be an example to his classmates!'* (Teacher in school D talking about a Chinese pupil's result).

However, teachers are a part of wider society and so, like the students, they transport views from the wider community into the school. The danger is that, as research has shown, expectations from teachers to students – positive or negative, realistic or not – tend to be realised. By holding onto stereotypical views of immigrants, teachers can create a 'self-fulfilling prophecy': their expectations of a student on the basis of his/her country of origin can become how the student behaves (Foster 1990).

For example, non Italian students in third grade of school E where teachers, especially the Italian ones, were supportive and encouraging, performed in the same way as their Italian classmates, despite their year of arrival in Italy, or their country of origin. On the other hand, non Italian students enrolled in school C performed exactly how teachers expected, failing in tests or abandoning school altogether.

In addition, the views that teachers hold on specific minorities is not restricted to the students' ability or academic achievement but can also extend to his/her family. Therefore comments like these were common within the school walls: *'There is no need to call A.'s parents. His mother cannot speak Italian and you know how Moroccan men consider females'*. The well spread stereotype of Muslim women as backward, passive and relegated to domestic sphere was common between teachers, as well as the idea that the large majority of migrants do not have degrees or even a minimum level of education. In reality in 2009 ISTAT – The Italian National Institute of Statistics - revealed that 10.1% of the immigrants resident in Italy hold a university

degree⁸⁸. The stereotype is generated by the jobs that the large majority of migrants find themselves in in the host country, which is almost always below their level of education. Although it is well proven that the education level of the parents influences the academic achievement of the children (Portes and Rumbaut 1996; 2001), the gap between the level of education and the employment that the host country offers to migrants can also influence these negative perceptions. As immigrants in Italy are mainly employed as unskilled professions – cleaners, care assistants for the elderly, unskilled workers in factories, builders, dishwashers, and so on – the years that parents had spent studying in the home country could perhaps be seen as a waste of time by the younger generation. *'My mother went to University in Romania but here she is an assistant for the elderly, cleaning after people...you don't need a degree for that. I don't see why I should be wasting my time with the school if I want for example to be a builder or something like that.'* (Marius)

'It is not that I think that studying is a waste of time but I see my father who went to university and he is a dishwasher. You can find jobs even without going to university'. (Padma)

The main issue is that teachers should pay attention to their own and the students' stereotyping and spend some valuable time in getting to know the students, their family's background, their history of migration, and the social capital available to them. The children of migrants, especially if they arrived via family reunification, are strongly affected by their parents' attitude towards the host society, and the education system. In general the parents I met have shown a lot of interest in their children's education and firmly believe in the importance of obtaining a diploma or a degree. This interest in education by immigrant parents is also well documented by other research (Adams and Kirova 2006; Portes and Rumbaut 1996, 2001; Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco 2001). However the involvement that parents show in participating in school life should not be considered, as it has been the case in almost every school I worked in, as a lack of interest from adults in the children's progress. 'Many immigrant parents believe that it is not their business to micromanage the schooling of their children. We have found a general belief among many immigrant parents that teachers are responsible for what goes on in school. '(Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco 2001: 149) In addition there are family's economic conditions to be considered and also the self-esteem of many migrant parents that, only too aware of their limited knowledge of Italian or their lack of familiarity with the system, prefer not to interact with teachers, as a mother I interviewed confessed: *'At first I was surprised that school was so short. 2 pm. That was it. Then I think teachers are not that strict in Italy. But if teachers think it is enough it is not my business to judge. I don't tell them what to do. They know better than me. I went to school for only 8 years in my country.'* (Naima)

⁸⁸ The percentage is not that far from the 13% of Italians with the same level of education.

Despite all the evidence however, within school walls stereotypes and prejudices were widespread, reflecting the diffusion they have in the wider local context, and together with the media's representation of immigrants which we have already seen, highlighting only the negativity of migrants' presence, which is another factor mentioned which did not facilitate teachers' challenging these ideas.

Organisation of the school curricula

Despite the fact that 'the concept of intercultural education is now quite common in Italy, not only in books, but also in the area of school legislation,(...) such terms simply become a fad or a slogan, emphatic yet hackneyed, meaningless or misused' (Portera 2004: 283). It can be noted that in reality the Italian approach to intercultural education mirrors what Banks has defined for multicultural education as an 'Ethnic Additive Approach'. Ethnic themes are not ignored, but – when it happens - they are simply added to the curriculum, often in the form of special courses or workshops. As a result, the core curriculum remains essentially unchanged: notions continue to be presented from a Eurocentric position, while the influence and the connections between different cultures do not emerge (Banks 2006). Teachers' attitude towards migrant students reflects what has been defined as 'benevolent multiculturalism (Gibson 1984) or the 'disadvantage approach' (Eldering 1996). They see in language knowledge the main obstacle for non Italian students' school success and integration, and focus their energy in filling this gap in their education.

Although some schools have extra Italian language courses, ask for the support of cultural mediators, organize intercultural events or workshop, the impact of these solutions remains limited if white Western perspectives are not deconstructed and curricular are not reconsidered from multiple cultural standpoints. The fact that the Italian school system is highly centralised and the autonomy of schools is in reality reduced to a minimum, limits the intervention of individual teachers and headmasters for changing the educational approach. However, there could be an improvement when choosing textbooks⁸⁹. Research on textbooks used in Italian schools has shown, the use of negative and positive stereotypes (Portera 2004), something I also noticed when looking at some of the textbooks used in the schools I worked in. If educators are not aware of this and do not explain or deconstruct them, students will learn and assimilate them. In schools where some teachers were putting an effort in adopting an intercultural perspective and the school director was investing in external support, such as in school E, non Italian

⁸⁹ 'In Italy, unlike many other countries, anybody may write, print and publish a textbook for primary schools (...). Authors and editors may develop a textbook according to their own concerns, with different content and different methodological and educational approaches. Thus, what one finds in a textbook derives from the subjective preferences of the author, such as his or her ideological principles, moral beliefs, professional knowledge, and educational and psychological competence.' (Portera 2004: 284). At the end of the school year teachers choose textbooks for the following year.

students have indeed demonstrated higher self-esteem and positive academic achievements, which is also reflected in their inclusion in Italian peer groups.

Moreover, the fact that name calling and students' quarrels usually take place far away from teachers' ears and eyes, should not bring them to the conclusion that non Italian students are perfectly integrated with their classmates and therefore there is no need to address certain topics in class. If educators do not expose the power relations implicit in broader society, and acknowledge existing stereotypes, young people will not be able to recognise them and possibly change their behaviour by themselves. Although teachers may not witness episodes of overt racism inside the school, racist incidents do frequently occur, sometimes in 'hidden or indirect forms' (Troyna and Hatcher 1992:30). Moreover, racial and racist dynamics affect broader society, and children should be taught to recognise these mechanisms, critically reflect on them and devise solutions to counteract them (Banks 2006). If not in school, outside it, at university or in the job market today's pupils and students will encounter, confront and compete with people coming from very different cultural, social and economic backgrounds and primary and secondary education should prepare the younger generation for this.

I am aware that teachers seem to be in the spotlight here. They are obviously not the only ones responsible for the education of young people. However, families, especially single parents, or where both the parents work, often have limited time to spend together, and Varese lacks alternative spaces for the socialisation of young people. Therefore school plays a fundamental role in influencing young people's understanding of 'others' and can be taken as key to facilitating the socialisation and acculturation process of young migrant people (Adams and Kirova 2006).

Therefore, this research has highlighted the problems and frustration of educators and school staff with the condition of the Italian school system, which is very often not just related to the education of non Italian students. The main problems seem to be related to the economic conditions of public schools, which struggle every year with a progressive decrease of government funding. Moreover, a large number of young teachers are forced to work for decades in temporary positions, for periods of time that can range from an academic year to just a few days. Thus, they do not have the time to establish with the students the necessary bonds that a real intercultural approach requires. In addition, the debate regarding multiculturalism, interculturalism and so on, is restricted to institutions or scholars, while teachers, and school directors do their best with the resources that the government currently provides. Some schools, thanks to the attention and the energies of the single school director and some teachers, despite

the difficulties, seem to have got off to a good start. However, little can be done without the support of the central government, which so far, despite fine words, seems a long way off. The problems that were highlighted from research conducted more than a decade ago (see chapter one) are still the same issues that emerged from my observations and the words of my interviewees: economic shortage, educators' lack of knowledge of the students' background, and the lack of investment on educators' training.

This feeling of frustration and dissatisfaction in the state of the Italian education system, and the everyday struggles with funding and government guidelines, was evident even in the most dedicated professionals, such as the school director of school A and B. In June 2009, when I heard of her retirement I went to visit her. She confessed to me, with a mix of disillusionment and sarcasm: *'I leave the boat before it sinks completely.'* I could not help myself laughing along with her, and feeling sympathy for her apparent disenchantment.

APPENDIX

These are all the young non Italian students and pupils mentioned or quoted in this work. All the students' names are pseudonymous in order to maintain their privacy.

NAME	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	AGE	YEARS IN ITALY	SCHOOL
Alex	Albania	13	3	A
Aisha	Morocco	12	4	A
Alfred	Albania	13	1	A
Alina	Albania	13	7	B
Amine	Morocco	14	6	E
Ardit	Albania	14	4	E
Christopher	Peru	14	3	A
Dora	Peru	14	3	F ⁹⁰
Eduard	Ecuador	13	2	F
Ega	Albania	11	3	B
Eric	Peru	13	7	A
Gabriela	Santo Domingo	14	5	F
Hu Li	China	15	2	C
Ismail	Morocco	14	7	C
Jasmine	Morocco	8	5 months	B
Javier	Ecuador	14	2	F
Jennifer	Albania	14	4	A
Julien	China	12	2	D
Karina	Ecuador	11	6	D
Kleo	Albania	12	2	A
Kristian	Albania	14	5	A
Mamel	Morocco	6	5 months	B
Maria	Angola	14	1	A
Marius	Romania	13	9	A
Martin	Peru	13	5	F
Matteo	China	12	3 months	G ⁹¹
Mohamed	Morocco	14	4	C
Omar	Morocco	15	1	C

⁹⁰ In this middle school I conducted 10 interviews following the school director's permission after working sporadically as cultural mediator for school-parents meetings during the year. The school's population included 8.7% of non Italian students, and it had an interesting group of Spanish-speakers: two girls from Santo Domingo, one girl and one boy from Peru and five boys from Ecuador.

⁹¹ I briefly worked for this primary school as a cultural mediator for this Chinese boy twice a week for six weeks.

Pablo	Ecuador	14	6	F
Padma	Sri Lanka	13	4	A
Pasha	Pakistan	13	3	A
Said	Morocco	11	11	D
Sara	China	10	10	B
Valentina	Italy-China	13	13	A

Bibliography

- Adams L.D., Kirova A. 2006. Eds. *Global Migrations and Education – Schools, Children, and Families*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Agosti, A. Ed. 1996. *Interculturalità e Insegnamento. Aspetti Tecnici e Metodologici*. Torino: SEI.
- Allport, G. W. 1954. *The Nature of Prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books.
- Ambrosini, M. 2004. Il Futuro in Mezzo a Noi, Le Seconde Generazioni Scaturite dall'Immigrazione nella Società Italiana dei Prossimi Anni. Ambrosini, M., Molina, S. Eds. 2004. *Seconde Generazioni - Un'Introduzione al Futuro dell'Immigrazione in Italia*. Torino: Edizioni Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli.
- Ambrosini M., Cominelli C. 2004. Eds. *Educare al Futuro. Il contributo di luoghi educativi extra scolastici nel territorio lombardo*. Milano: Fondazione ISMU.
- Ambrosini, M., Molina, S. Eds. 2004. *Seconde Generazioni - Un'Introduzione al Futuro dell'Immigrazione in Italia*. Torino: Edizioni Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli.
- Ambrosini, M., Queirolo Palmas, L. Eds. 2005. *I Latinos alla Scoperta dell'Europa. Nuove Migrazioni e Spazi della Cittadinanza*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Andall, J. 2000. *Gender, Migration and Domestic Service: the Politics of Black Women in Italy*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Andall, J. 2002. Second-generation attitude? African-Italians in Milan. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. 2002;28(3): 389-407.
- Andall, J. 2003. Hierarchy and Interdependence: The Emergence of a Service Caste in Europe. Andall, J. Ed. *Gender and Ethnicity in Contemporary Europe*. Oxford, New York: Berg.
- Banks, J. 1981. *Education in the 80s: Multiethnic Education*. Washington, D.C.: National Education Association.
- Banks, J. 1988. *Multiethnic Education. Theory and Practice*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Banks, J. 1993. Multicultural Education: Historical Development, Dimensions, and Practice. *Review of Research in Education*. Vol. 19: 3-49.
- Banks, J.A. 2006. *Cultural diversity and education – foundations, curriculum and teaching*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- Banks, J. A., Banks, C. A. M. 1995. Equity Pedagogy: An Essential Component of Multicultural Education. *Theory into Practice*, 34(3): 152-168.
- Baraldi, C. 2003. *Comunicazione Interculturale e Diversità*. Roma: Carocci Editore.
- Besozzi, E. Ed. 1999. *Crescere tra Appartenenze e Diversità*. Milano: Franco Angeli.

- Besozzi, E. 2006. *Società, Cultura, Educazione*. Roma: Carocci Editore.
- Bonaiuti R. 2004. Scuola e Cultura Religiosa: verso un'ipotesi di Percorso Didattico. De Vita R., Berti F., Nosi L. Eds. *Democrazia, Laicità e Società Multireligiosa*. Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Brubaker, R. 2001. The Return of Assimilation? Changing Perspectives on Immigration and its Sequels in France, Germany and the United States. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 2001;24 (4): 531-548.
- Brubaker, R. 1992. *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.
- Brusa, C. Ed. 1999. *Immigrazione e Multicultura nell'Italia di Oggi*. Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Campani, G. 1993. Immigration and racism in Southern Europe: the Italian case. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 1993;16 (3): 507-535.
- CARITAS. 2006. *Immigrazione – Dossier Statistico 2005*. Roma: Edizioni IDOS.
- CARITAS. 2012. *Immigrazione – Dossier Statistico 2011*. Roma: Edizioni IDOS.
- Carter, D.M. 1997. *States of Grace – Senegalese in Italy and the New European Immigration*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Castles, S., Miller, M. 1993. *The Age of Migration. International Population Movements in the Modern World*. London: Macmillan.
- Chang, H.C.A. Checchin, M. 1996. *L'Educazione Interculturale. Prospettive Pedagogico-didattiche degli Organismi Internazionali della Scuola Italiana*. Roma: LAS.
- CHICAM. 2004. *School as an Arena for Education, Integration and Socialisation*.
- Child, I. 1943. *Italian or American? The Second Generation in Conflict*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Cohen, S. 1972. *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*. London: Routledge.
- Cole, J. 1997. *The New Racism in Europe: a Sicilian Ethnography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cologna D., Breveglieri L. 2003. Eds. *I Figli dell'immigrazione*. Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Colombo, E. 2007. Molto più che stranieri, molto più che italiani. Modi diversi di guardare ai destini dei figli di immigrati in un contesto di crescente globalizzazione. *Mondi Migranti*, 2007 (1): 63-85.
- Cotesta, V. Ed. 1999. Mass Media, Ethnic Conflicts and Migration. A Research on Italian Newspapers in the Nineties. *Studi Emigrazione*. 1999. XXXVI. n.135: 387-499.
- Coulby D. 2006 Intercultural Education: Theory and Practice. *International education* 17(3): 245-257.

- Dal Lago, A. 1996. *Lo Straniero e il Nemico*. Genova: Costa & Nolan.
- Dal Lago, A. 1999. *Non-persone*. Milano: Feltrinelli.
- Dal Lago, A. 2004. *Non-persone. L'esclusione dei migranti in una società globale*. Milano: Feltrinelli.
- D'Amato, J. 1996. Resistance and Compliance in Minority Classrooms. Jacob E., Jordan C. Eds. *Minority Education: Anthropological Perspectives*. New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Danese, G. 2001. Participation beyond citizenship: migrants' associations in Italy and Spain. *Patterns of Prejudice*. 2001; 35 (1): 69-89.
- Demetrio, D. 1997. *Agenda Interculturale*. Roma: Meltami.
- De Vita, R., Berti, F., Nasi, L. Eds. 2004. *Identità Multiculturale e Multireligiosa*. Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Di Carlo, S. 1994. *Proposte per un'educazione Interculturale*. Napoli: Tecnodid.
- Durino Allegra, A. 1993. *Verso una Scuola Interculturale*. Firenze: La Nuova Italia.
- Eder, D, Corsaro W. 1999. Ethnographic Studies of Children and Youth: Theoretical and Ethical Issues. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. 28: 520 - 531.
- Ehrenreich, B., Hochschild, A.R. 2003. Eds. *Global Woman – Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. London: Granta.
- Eldering, L. 1996. Multiculturalism and Multicultural Education in an International Perspective. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, Vol. 27 (3): 315-330.
- Erickson, F. 1987. Transformation and school success: The politics and culture of school achievement. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*. 18(4): 335–356.
- Fallaci, O. 2001. *La Rabbia e l'Orgoglio*. Milano: Rizzoli.
- Fallaci O. 2001a. La Rabbia e l'Orgoglio. *Il Corriere*, 29 Settembre 2001.
- Favaro G. 1998. *Bambini e Bambine di qui e d'altrove*. Milano: Guerini & Associati
- Favaro, Genovese A. 1996. *Incontri di Infanzie. I Bambini dell'immigrazione nei Servizi Educativi*. Bologna: Clueb
- Fazel Shirin R. 1994. *Lontano da Mogadiscio*. Roma: Datanews.
- Figueroa, P. 1991. *Education and the Social Construction of 'Race'*. London: Routledge.
- Foot, J. 2001. San Salvario, Turin: the creation of a dangerous place, 1990-99. King, R. Eds. *The Mediterranean Passage – Migration and New Cultural Encounters in Southern Europe*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Foot, J. 1995. The logic of contradiction: migration control in Italy and France, 1980 – 93. Miles, R, Thranhardt, D. Eds. *Migration and European Integration*. London: Pinter Publishers.

Foster, P. 1990. *Policy and Practice in Multicultural and Antiracist Education*. London: Routledge.

Fravega E. Queirolo Palmas L. 2003. *Classi Meticce. Giovani, Studenti, Insegnanti nelle Scuole della Migrazione*. Roma: Carocci.

Frisina, A. 2007. *Giovani Musulmani d'Italia*. Roma: Carocci.

Gans, H. 1992. Second generation decline: scenarios for the economic and ethnic futures of the post-1965 American immigrants. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 1992;15 (2): 173-192.

Galeotti, A.E. 1999. *Multiculturalismo, Filosofia Politica e Conflitto Identitario*. Napoli: Liguori Editori.

Galloni, F. 2007. Giovani sikh tra gli italiani. In Gobbo, F. Ed. *Processi Educativi nelle società multiculturali*. Roma: CISU.

Gay, G. 1983. Multiethnic Education: Historical Developments and Future Prospects. *Phi Delta Kappan*. 64: 560-563.

Gibson, M.A. 1984. Approaches to Multicultural Education in the United States: Some Concepts and Assumptions in *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, Vol. 15 (1): 94-120.

Giddens, 2001. *Sociology*. 5th Edition. Oxford: Polity Press.

Giovannini, G. Ed. 1998. *Allievi in Classe Stranieri in Città*. Milano: Franco Angeli.

Giovannini, G. 2004. 'Introduzione: Ricostruire la Condizione dei Minori di Origine Immigrata attraverso le ricerche' in Giovannini, G. Ed. *La Condizione dei Minori Stranieri in Italia*. Milano: Fondazione ISMU.

Giovannini G., Queirolo Palmas L. Eds. 2002. *Una Scuola in Comune. Esperienze Scolastiche in Contesti Multi-etnici Italiani*. Torino: Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli.

Gobbo F. 2011. Racism, 'Race' and Ethnographic Research in Multicultural Italy. *Ethnography and Education*, 6:1, 9-27.

Gobbo, F. 2012. Anthropology of Education in Italy. In K. Anderson-Levitt . Ed. *Anthropologies of Education. A Global Guide to Ethnographic Studies of Learning and Schooling*, New York: Berghahn Books.

Gobbo F, Gomes A. 2003. Eds. *Etnografia nei contesti educativi*. Roma: CISU.

Goffmann, E. 1968. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. London: Penguin.

Grant C.A , Brueck S. 2011. A global Invitation. Reflection and Creative Engagement for Intercultural and Multicultural Education. Grant C.A. Portera A. Eds. *Intercultural and Multicultural Education: Enhancing Global Interconnectedness*. New York: Routledge.

- Grant, C., Sleeter, C. E. 1987. An Analysis of Multicultural Research in the United States. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57(4), 421–445.
- Grillo, R. Pratt, J. Eds. 2002. *The Politics of Recognizing Difference – Multiculturalism Italian-style*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Gunaratnam Y. 2003. *Researching Race and Ethnicity: Methods, Knowledge and Power*. London: Sage.
- Gundara J. S. 2000. *Interculturalism, Education and Inclusion*. London: Sage.
- Gupta, A., Ferguson, J. 1997. *Anthropological Locations*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hervieu-Léger, D. 2003. *Catholicisme, la fin d'un monde*, Paris: Bayard.
- ISMU. 2005. *The Tenth Italian Report on Migration 2004*. Milano: Fondazione ISMU.
- King, R. Ed. 2001. *The Mediterranean Passage – Migration and New Cultural Encounters in Southern Europe*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- King R., Mai N. 2009. 'Italophilia meets Albanophobia: Paradoxes of Asymmetric Assimilation and Identity Processes Among Albanian Immigrants in Italy'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 32:1, 117-138.
- Kivisto, P. 2002. *Multiculturalism in a Global Society*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Leonini, L. Ed. 2005. *Stranieri e Italiani, una Ricerca tra gli Adolescenti Figli di Immigrati nelle Scuole Superiori*. Roma: Donzelli editore.
- Mai, N. 2002. Myths and moral panics: Italian identity and the media representation of Albanian immigration. Grillo, R., Pratt, J. Eds. *The Politics of Recognizing Difference – Multiculturalism Italian-style*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Mandell, N. 1991. The Least Adult Role in Studying Children. in F. Waksler. Ed. *Studying the Social Worlds of Children: Sociological Readings*. London: Falmer Press.
- Mantovani, G. 2004. *Intercultura*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Maritano, L. 2002. An Obsession with Cultural Difference: Representations of Immigrants in Turin. Grillo, R. Pratt, J. Eds. *The Politics of Recognizing Difference – Multiculturalism Italian-style*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- May S. Ed. 1999. *Critical Multiculturalism: Rethinking Multicultural and Antiracist Education*. London: Falmer Press.
- Melilli, M. Ed. 2003. *Mi Chiamo Alí... – Identità ed Integrazione: Inchiesta sull'Immigrazione in Italia*. Roma: Editori Riuniti.
- Melotti, U. 2000. *L'abbaglio Multiculturale*. Roma: Edizioni Seam.
- Melotti, U. 1993. Migrazioni internazionali e integrazione sociale: il caso italiano e le esperienze

- europee. Delle Donne, M., Melotti, U., Petilli, S. Eds. *Immigrazione in Europa. Solidarietà e Conflitto*. Roma: Cediss.
- Menafrà, S. 2000. Immigrati sí, ma cattolici. *Il Manifesto*. 14 Settembre 2000.
- MIUR (Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca). 2004. *Alunni con Cittadinanza non Italiana*.
- MPI (Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione). 2000; 2001. *Le Trasformazioni della Scuola nella Società Multiculturale*. Roma
- MPI (Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione). 2007. *La Via Italiana per la Scuola Interculturale e l'Integrazione degli Alunni Stranieri*.
- Nanni, A. 1998. *L'educazione Interculturale Oggi in Italia*. Bologna: EMI.
- Narë, L.M. 2008. *Managing Households, Making Homes – a Moral Economy of Migrant Domestic and Care Work in Naples*. Dphil Thesis. University of Sussex. Brighton.
- Nieto, S. Bode, P. 2008. *Affirming Diversity, The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Nigris, E. Ed. 1996. *Educazione Interculturale*. Milano: Bruno Mondadori.
- Ogbu, J. U. 1978. *Minority Education and Caste: The American System in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. New York: Academic Press.
- Ogbu, J. U. 1981. School Ethnography: A Multilevel Approach. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*. Vol. 12 (1): 3-29.
- Ogbu, J. U. 1987. Variability in Minority School Performance: A Problem in Search of Explanation. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*. Vol. 18 (4): 312 – 334.
- Ogbu, J. U. 1992. Understanding Cultural Diversity and Learning. *Educational Researcher*. Vol. 21 (8): 5 – 14.
- Pagani c, Robustelli F. 2005. *Marek a Scuola. Gli Insegnanti e l'inserimento degli Alunni Stranieri nella Scuola Italiana*. Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Parks, T. 1996. *An Italian Education*. London: Vintage.
- Pastore, F. 2001. La politica migratoria. Aliboni, R; Bruni, F.; Colombo, A.; Greco, E. Eds. 2001. *L'Italia e la politica internazionale*. Bologna, Il Mulino.
- Però, 1999. *The Politics of Identity in left-wing Bologna. An Ethnographic Study of the Discourses and Practices of the Italian Left in the Context of Migration*. Dphil Thesis. University of Sussex. Brighton.
- Perotti, A. 1995. *La Via Obbligata dell'interculturalità*. Bologna: EMI.
- Pettigrew, L. E. 1974. Competency-Based Teacher Education: Teacher Training for Multicultural

- Education. In Hunter W. H. (ed) *Multicultural Education Through Competency-Based Teacher Education*. Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education.
- Pettigrew, T.F. 1998. Intergroup Contact Theory. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 49: 65-85.
- Piccone Stella, S. 2003. *Esperienze Multiculturali*. Roma: Carocci Editore.
- Portera A. 2008. Intercultural Education in Europe: Epistemological and Semantic Aspects. *Intercultural Education*. 19 (6). 481-491.
- Portera, A. 2004. Stereotypes, Prejudices and Intercultural Education in Italy: Research on Textbooks in Primary Schools. *Intercultural Education*. Vol.15 (3): 283-294.
- Portes, A. 1995. Children of immigrants: segmented assimilation and its determinants. Portes. A Ed. 1995. *The Economic Sociology of Immigration*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Portes, A. Ed. 1996. *The New Second Generation*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Portes, A., Rumbaut, R. 1996. *Immigrant America: a Portrait*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Portes, A., Rumbaut, R. Eds. 2001. *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Portes, A., Zhou, M. 1993. The new second generation: segmented assimilation and its variants. *Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 1993; 530: 74-98.
- Provincia di Varese. 2006. *Quinto Rapporto sull'Immigrazione Straniera nella Provincia di Varese – Annuario Statistico Anno 2005*. Milano: Fondazione Ismu.
- Querolo Palmas, L. 2002. 'Istruzione e Migranti: Dove va la Ricerca?' in Giovannini, G., Queirolo Palmas, L. Eds. *Una Scuola in Comune. Esperienze Scolastiche in Contesti Multietnici Italiani*. Torino: Edizioni Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli.
- Queirolo Palmas, L., Torre, A. Eds. 2005. *Il Fantasma delle Bande. Genova e i Latinos*. Genova: Fratelli Frilli Editori.
- Remotti, F. 1996. *Contro l'Identità*. Roma: Editori Laterza.
- Riccio, B. 2000. *Senegalese Transmigrants and the Construction of Immigration in Emilia-Romagna (Italy)*. Dphil Thesis. University of Sussex. Brighton.
- Rizzi, F. 1992. *Educazione e Società Interculturale*. Brescia: La Scuola
- Romania, V. 2004. *Farsi Passare per Italiani – Strategie di mimetismo sociale*. Roma: Carocci Editore.
- Rumbaut, R. 1994. The crucible within: ethnic identity, self-esteem, and segmented assimilation among children of immigrants. *International Migration Review*. 1994; 28 (4): 148-94.
- Rumbaut, R. 1997. Assimilation and its discontents: between rhetoric and reality. *International*

Migration Review. 1997; 31 (4): 923-60.

Saint-Blancat, C., Schmidt, O. 2005. Why are Mosques a Problem? Local Politics and Fear of Islam in Northern Italy. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. 2005 (31), 6:1083-1104.

Santerini, M. 2003. *Intercultura*. Brescia: La Scuola.

Sartori, G. 2000. *Pluralismo, Multiculturalismo e Estranei: Saggio sulla Società Multi-etnica*. Milano: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli.

Sayad, A. 2004. *The Suffering of the Immigrant*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Save the Children Italia Onlus. 2009. *I Minori Stranieri in Italia – Identificazione, Accoglienza e Prospettive per il Futuro*. Save The Children: Roma.

Sciortino, G., Colombo, A. Eds. 2003. *Un'Immigrazione Normale*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Semprini, A. 2000. *Il Multiculturalismo, la Sfida della Diversità nelle Società Contemporanee*. Milano: Franco Angeli.

Sinderman, P.M., Peri, P. De Figueiredo, J. P., Piazza, T. 2000. *The Outsider: Prejudice and Politics in Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Sirna, C. Ed. 1996. *Docenti e Formazione Interculturale*. Torino: Il Segnalibro.

Sleeter, C.E. 1996. *Multicultural Education as Social Activism*. Albany: University of New York Press.

Sleeter, C. 2001. An analysis of the critiques of multicultural education. J. A. Banks and C. A. McGee Banks. Eds. *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Sleeter, C. E., Grant, C. 2007. *Making Choice for Multicultural Education*. 5th Edition. New Jersey: Hobdhen.

SOPEMI. 1991. *Continuous Reporting System on Migration, Trends in International Migration*. Paris: OECD.

Suarez-Orozco, C. Suarez-Orozco, M. 2001. *Children of Immigration*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Tassinari G. Ed. 1992. *Scuola e Società Multiculturale*. Firenze: La Nuova Italia.

Triandafyllidou, A. 1999. Nation and immigration: a study of the Italian press discourse. *Social Identities*, 1999; 5(1): 65-88.

Troyna, B. 1983. 'Multiracial Education: Just another Brick in the Wall?' *New Community*. 10: 424 – 428.

Troyna, B. 1992. Can you see the join? An historical analysis of multicultural and antiracist education policies. D. Gill, B. Mayor, & M. Blair Eds. *Racism and education: Structures and*

strategies. London: Sage Publications.

Troyna, B. Hatcher. 1992. *Racism in Children's Lives: a Study of Mainly-White Primary Schools*. London: Routledge.

Troyna, B., Edwards V. 1993. *The Educational Needs of a Multiracial Society*. Coventry, England: University of Warwick.

Valtolina, G., Marazzi, A. Eds. 2006. *Appartenenze Multiple. L'Esperienza dell'Immigrazione nelle Nuove Generazioni*. Milano: Franco Angeli.

Vehbiu, A., Devole, R. 1996. *La Scoperta dell'Albania: gli Albanesi Secondo i Mass Media*. Milano: Paoline Editoriale.

Zhou, M. 1997. Segmented assimilation: issues, controversies, and recent research on the new second generation. *International Migration Review* 1997; 31 (4): 975-1008.

Zinn, 1994. The Senegalese Immigrants in Bari: what Happens when the Africans Peer Back. Benmayor R., Skotnes A. Eds. *Migration and Identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Web resources

COSPE. 2003. http://www.mmc2000.net/docs/7cospe_report.pdf

ISTAT: www.istat.it

ISMU: www.ismu.org

Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, 2007. *La Via Italiana per la Scuola Interculturale e l'Integrazione degli Alunni Stranieri*.
http://archivio.pubblica.istruzione.it/news/2007/allegati/pubblicazione_intercultura.pdf