

Immigrants' daughters in the Italian school

Figlie di immigrati nella scuola italiana

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abstract

School, like any other education environment, is in itself an interactive place allowing to more easily understand the dynamics arising during the encounter between two different cultures.

This paper reports some results of a qualitative research based on the autobiographical writing in the attempt to examine the past of immigrants' adolescent daughters. An important catalogue of words and images to try to decipher the meaning of a double belonging.

Keywords: school, identity's building, second generation

La scuola, così come altri luoghi della formazione, ha il vantaggio di essere, già di per sé, uno spazio interattivo che consente di comprendere più facilmente le dinamiche che si generano nell'incontro tra culture diverse.

Il contributo riporta alcuni passi di una ricerca qualitativa che ha utilizzato la scrittura autobiografica nel tentativo di esplorare il vissuto di adolescenti, figlie di immigrati. Un archivio di parole e immagini, importante per cercare di decodificare il senso della doppia appartenenza.

Parole chiave: scuola, costruzioni identitarie, seconde generazioni

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1. Second generation and building of identity

Italy has been for more than twenty years a frontier land for Migration. The construction of a multicultural society, with a conflict's low level, is possible only through the actual integration of immigrants, whose presence is a structural, intrinsic, and daily phenomenon, and the most obvious sign both of their stabilisation and the increase of family units and children, new Italian citizens.

The second generation in the strict sense consists only of children born in the host country to foreign-born parents, even if it is often broadly defined as a composite group of adolescents with a different migration background, whether they were born in Italy or have arrived here before adulthood. It is therefore misleading to speak about "immigrant families" as a homogeneous and undifferentiated world because it is undeniable the distinctive features of their diversity: different national backgrounds; different patterns of formation or reconstitution of the nucleus; manifold ways of arrival, and migration projects; unique stories and family representations. We can state the immigrant family tries to reconcile and blend the different stories and individual trajectories and offers more or less complex references and behaviours, concerning the differences, similarities and conflicts which can lead to establish alliances in the territory or, conversely, cause confrontations and questions (Catarci, Fiorucci, 2013).

The children's schooling proves to be the nodal point for the stabilisation processes and it represents a crucial event, a stage deeply modifying bonds among generations. We can almost consider it as a sort of further migration in the migration and reason for fears about the loss of ties and possible rifts within the family story (Catarci, 2004). It can also be a way to bring the roles and functions of parents into question and school, even unintentionally, lays bare the communicative difficulties and awkwardness of parents, and disregards their competencies and skills acquired elsewhere and rarely marketable here so much so that their pride and hopes mingle with fears, defenses, loss of power and authority. Children born in

Italy have not been directly involved in the migration process, travel and eradication phase and re-orientation in the new context. Some of them have rarely visited their family's original contexts and know the country of origin only through family narrations.

From 1993 to 2014 in Italy almost 971 000 children belonging to the second generation in the strict sense were born, with a growth trend that has been reversed in the last two years. From the point of view of the population stock, those currently born in Italy represent 72.7 percent of foreign children under 18 years: the proportion is higher in the age group 0-5 years, it decreases little by little as they grow up and touches the lowest of 24.0 percent in the age group 14-17 years (ISTAT, 2016, p. 96). The differences among the various communities are substantial: the share of children born in Italy is nearly 89 percent for China and below 64 percent for Moldova and Egypt (ISTAT, 2016).

At school children, but above all females, often feel that parental references and patterns don't correspond to theirs. According to utterances by some basic education teachers, children aged around 5-6 years are beginning to acquire the typical knowledge of their gender: they start to experience tasks, increase awareness of their status and the general position within the society according to their gender. (Favaro, 2000). The respective roles of the generations and sexes are the subject of a long work, in which the special representations of what a man and a woman, a father and a mother, a child and an adult are, must be taken into account, in other words that compel scholars to consider the individual and cultural representations. As far as to the ways of expressing affections and structuring the roles and relations within the family is concerned, the foreign child experiences a feeling of distance because they appear to be different in his/her nucleus if compared to those of his/her classmates. The multiplicity and diversity of contexts allow boys and girls searching for their identity to get close, get away, feeling the same or different on this path marked by ambivalent feelings of belonging. They also allow them to choose how and where to place themselves within the family and social geography. Identity has to do with the existential and psychological condition of 'being and feeling between two cultures and two worlds, between two languages and two references, including the family's expectations and the school posts (Favaro, Napoli, 2004). They constitute the same horizons their peers have even though roots, stories and belongings are different: we can say they are the new citizens, open to the future and the new, but anchored in a core of common values constituting the basis of coexistence and democracy. In the school there is, in fact, a system of cultural implicits determined by a set of unspoken rules, behaviours, relational habits and

values which are now settled and internalized in the ways of being and behaviour of the individuals within a particular culture; any strictly ethnic interpretation can be justified, although the migration experience can obviously affect subjective well-being and, therefore, well-being at school. The multiplicity and diversity of contexts allow children and adolescents in search of their own identity to get close, get away, feel the same or different during this path marked by ambivalent feelings of belonging. This dynamic nature of identity, as a system of relations and representations, is influenced by different stimuli and expectations coming from different social groups among which adolescents move. The use of categorising constructs, such as the ethnic identity one, allows, on one hand, a deeper understanding of the reality's phenomena through the simplification of the social complexity and a collective attribution of socially determined meanings, on the other hand it underestimates individual differences (and intracultural ones) and may, therefore, cause stereotypical attitudes: the dual system of expectations on the part of the school and the family may lead the individual to look for new creative and innovative resources, but also to defensive attitudes of closure, if the necessary compromise among values and patterns of family space and those of social one is lacking. It is therefore understandable that the ability of an individual to adapt to a given social system depends on the possibility for him/her of taking advantage of the totality of possibilities, as Devereux states (1972).

2. At school with one's own story

Relations are a fundamental aspect of the educational activity and they play a key role in all those disciplines concerning human beings; the relation, in a pedagogical sense, is not a mere socialisation, since it relies on a system of values giving a deep significance of being together. In fact, one of the distinctive features of educational professionals is precisely the relational competence to be interpreted both as a subjective awareness, and as a skill acquired through a special training. Today the space of encounter is the most mature example of the intercultural work. It must be analytically studied and known with its complex structure. It should also be considered as the key factor in the pedagogical-educational work that the intercultural dimension always requires. It is a challenge, a complex device that needs to be theorized and spread with all its complexity, promulgated by the advanced and multi-ethnic societies of the current world of school. In this sense school, as well as any other education environment, is an interactive space in its own as it induces attendants to stay together, and find

common opportunities for projects and action, which make it possible to understand the situation of marginalisation and observe the dynamics generating among different cultures.

The involvement in class activities and in a small group encourages productive complementarity. In fact, the small group is more protected and monitored by the teacher, it facilitates the social and cognitive dimensions, helps acquire competence and encourages autonomy, it gives pupils the chance to share experiences, cooperate and communicate. It emerges a greater ability to learn, as the conversation with the teacher and classmates is more vivid and calibrated. The general tendency thinks that the teaching / learning styles taking into account aspects related to emotion, socialisation, interpersonal and communication reasons are worthy of attention.

Teachers should pay more and more attention to the pedagogical behaviour of each pupil, that is, to his/her mental paths and the ideas regulating them. Multicultural classes provide the ideal setting for teaching / learning styles which allow to share experiences, and transmit knowledge and skills. There should be a teaching giving prevalence to the dialogical understanding, including interaction and hermeneutic attitude. For the teacher it is important to find a way to interpret the pedagogical behaviour of his/her students, to find out how they work. This is possible if the teacher makes use of the inner look, availing himself/herself of the cooperation of the students so to understand their thoughts, connections, and memories. The school has to work in the complexity of social and cultural reality, through several cognitive dimensions, in order to provide effective tools to interpret the contemporary world, by those who teach or lead a group of teens or adults in training, and to cross different points of view, so to balance them allowing a coexistence without conflict. This requires continuous interpretive skills able to broaden the speech procedures and contents, including the unsaid side, the excluded one, all that is outside the magic circle of institutionalised discourse. Hermeneutics allows us to do this because it makes possible a destructuring cognitive process able to reveal what is hidden and bring it back within judgement. If interculturalism is a “reciprocal movement”, then it’s not enough just to speak to the other, nor speak about the other, we must listen to the other and his story. And the other too has to speak to us, to communicate what he knows about us. Without listening to the other interculturalism cannot exist. The narration becomes a device to encourage conversation, starting from one’s own experience as a captivating and meaningful input. The autobiography helps the teacher to learn more about his/her students, permits the student to speak about himself/herself, and share experiences, allowing

his/her classmates to know him/her better. The autobiography is one of the most effective and most current education method: the individual, at the centre of the process, becomes a mean and a goal at the same time, more aware of his/her presence in present, past and future time, he/she puts into play already taken paths and plans the ones to take, in a free and never-ending play (Biagioli, 2015). By the autobiographical method the learning process reduces difficulties, demotivating aspects and partiality of academic programmes.

Autobiography is a kind of educational trip allowing an individual to discover his/her own past: through memory he/she rebuilds his/her own identity and understands his/her educational path (Ulivieri, Biemmi, 2011). When didactic work activities are planned as a moment of educational experience and then as a moment of active dialogue with the things and world, when this experience is conceived as what it is, that is a constructive attribution of meaning to what the subject fulfills and achieves, then it is also a moment to deepen one's own personal identity, a commitment to encourage students to acquire critical learning methods as well as a certain independence of judgment, together with the ability to interpret the new and unknown aspects, without being influenced by prejudices. The goal of education is letting the students to reconstruct the development of their mental processes, highlighting the structure of the connections that have allowed the individual to represent the world.

Although memories of events occurred in preschool years are constantly difficult to be recaptured by an autobiographical evocation, as children don't master Italian language to put into words their experiences both in the inner dialogue and in the activity of memory that psychologists of memory call joint or collaborative memory (Biagioli, 2015), that does not mean, of course, that children aren't able to remember.

A small exploratory qualitative research conducted in Tuscany, in the towns of Livorno and Florence, in two secondary schools (Livorno) and high schools (in Florence), using the workshop of autobiographical writing, has tried to understand the existential horizons of young female students through the development of stimuli which have aroused their interest in writing and have allowed them to express themselves and to reveal aspects untold in other moments of school life. The empirical research, as Demetrius states, has drawn attention to the observation of human facts, in order to point out not immediately perceptible facts, underlying the world of immediate everyday perceptions and, unlike the positivist significance emphasizing the necessary connection between such causes and their educational effects, as a function of a generalisation, it is not subject to the rules of experimental estimation, because the only grounding link is

represented by the examination and the re-emergence of experience. (Demetrio, 2000, p. 80).

The writing workshop conducted in the third class of the secondary school in the province of Livorno, together with teachers, has provided stimuli aimed at recalling memories of childhood, early school years, of one's own current cognitive profile (the discovery of one's own intelligence to face the problems both at school and elsewhere; awareness of possibilities and limits, discovery and affirmation of one's own cultural identity), one's own interests and the life plan for an imagined future. Besides, to better understand which factors could influence the desire to live in Italy when they become adults, the dichotomous stimulus, "where would you like to live and why when you become adult" has been provided.

My name is Sun Wen Wen, I come from Shanghai in China, I am 14 years old, I'm reserved and shy. My whole family has been living here for many years, as well as my uncles and my cousins, and they speak Italian. I like watching cartoon, listening to music, watching television, wearing jeans like my classmates, I prefer black, purple, and gray colours, a kind of dark colour. When I came here I was little, I felt isolated because I didn't understand your kindergarten games, I didn't understand how to play, I didn't understand your words. At home I speak Chinese but I know the Italian language, my cousin instead feels Italian. But I don't feel integrated here because I don't understand your culture, but only because you don't understand mine. In China you must study until midnight, in the morning you get up early to meet the expectations of parents to attend university. I don't know if I would go back to China when I grow up.

According to the current models of self-knowledge, within the subjective mind, the conception of a multiple and discontinuous structure is considered the preliminary step. The self emerges from a dimension where the "mental" aspect and the "social" one are the result of a mutual process, however, it is not a monolithic structure, but it has the form of successive and complementary stratifications consisting of multiple identifications (Biagioli, 2005).

My name is Naty, I was born in Romania and I came to Italy when I was attending the primary school third class. Every summer I go to Romania and it is really ... speechless. We travel by car, the distance is 1,410 km and it is frankly tiring. I remember when I returned for the first time in my country, it was very touching. I ar-

rived and I saw them all, I felt full in my heart. I spent time with people that I missed and I ate many typical foods that here in Italy I cannot eat. I needed to visit the city and hear my language spoken by thousands of people. Each time we go to Romania, my whole family gathers and especially when there is some important festivals, we gather and stay all together chatting, dancing and eating. In Romania we dance a lot. My family is very close and large and sometimes before going to bed, I remember whole joyful days spent together.

At the same time it was a real pleasure to see my neighbours who asked me thousands of questions. Each time I go there I stay with them and go to the cinema, to eat a pizza and if we can we do shopping (especially I, my mum and my aunt).

Now I have been living in Italy for years and I have even got used to its lifestyle. I have also become friends with a girl living in the flat next to mine. She runs a petrol station and I really like it, it is my mainstay in summer. Her son is a mechanic, and when there are problems he replaces his mother, or in case of urgencies some relatives help her. She takes care of ordering petrol trucks and verifying profits and expenses. Each year there are conventions, that is meetings organised by the oil company to plan the new year's programme and propose new products. She works all day in contact with gasoline, I think she no longer feels its sickening smell, instead it makes me throw up. She works every day and I really admire her because she wakes up early in the morning and arrives home late in the evening. When I grow up I hope to work too, but in Romania.

These stories with no plots and conclusions, dramatic turn of events and suspense, however, are full of experiences marked by daily life and routine, from family to school, without, except in a few cases, extraordinary items and special contrasts but all passionate from the point of view of their humanity.

My name is Catherine and still a child, once I have arrived in Italy I have wanted to learn Italian, but it was impossible because I knew only my mother tongue, Russian, as I come from Kopniskoje, a small town in Russia. Soon, however, I began to attend the primary school and then I have started to learn the Italian language. In class I understood what my classmates and the teachers were saying, but I was not able to answer. Within a month I succeeded in learning Italian with the help of my school friends and teachers who sometimes explained the meaning of the more difficult words by gestures, or using the dictionary. Even my little classmates were always trying to put me at ease and organized games to teach me how to

pronounce the words: pencil, eraser, a desk, chalkboard and teacher. With time I have managed to overcome the language difficulties, I have integrated well in the new environment and I have made a lot of friends who make me feel good. I want to stay in Italy forever.

Male or female teenager born in Italy represent more decisive factors than the employment stability and force adults to face change and openness. The reasons, for instance, for the linguistic enhancement of the new country, is often stressed by the need to look better in front of children (Cambi, Campani, Ulivieri, 2003, p. 468).

My name is Azeb and I was born in Italy with my brother, but my parents were born in Ethiopia, in the north of Ethiopia. I speak the language of my parents, Tigrinya, but only at home. I speak only in Italian to my brother and he wants to speak Italian with me and with my parents too and he doesn't want to answer in Tigrinya. Now my parents have to learn Italian better thanks to me, and I'm glad about it. I'd like to visit my parents' country because they will always speak about it with nostalgia but I don't know if I'll like it. I'm good at school and I would always stay in Italy.

Taking into account and taking advantage, pedagogically, of experiences generated as a result of the comparison among the individual thoughts and contributions by the whole group, becomes a strategy for a qualified didactic activity making the school environment as a place of joint work among pupils and teachers, where emotions can play a key role for learning. The classroom becomes a place where identity is constituted and re-constituted in a relational way, through a method which, stressing the importance of communication of knowledge, reinforces the culture of participation. The school can be a social place for reflection and discussion, where different individuals, from different cultures, can talk together and tell everything that happens.

3. Friendship relations between female adolescent

For adolescents in addition to the attempt to merge two different cultures there is also the complex task of handling the transition from childhood to adulthood. By rejecting parental patterns of behaviour and rules, they ask for freedom of choice and more control over their own lives. That can lead them to the will to move away from their own family in search of new

patterns and reference points for their identity and which to conform to, but they realise, however, that what they have learnt from parents differs from external reality. The friendship group, in most cases, remains an important reference point for adolescents, it often represents an alternative and complementary social environment, in conflict with the parental one, and it becomes the testing ground for the processes of identification which had begun within the family. The adolescent years represent the most appropriate period for identity development. In this period society plays a crucial role for girls who have to acquire the sense of their own individuality. An important part of this process takes place thanks to the peers (some of which may become behaviour patterns). And here it should be emphasized the relevance of the peer group as the suitable place for all kinds of problems and cohesion.

The negative representation characterising one's own community of origin, widespread stereotypes, as well as difficulties to be accepted because of somatic differences, constitute experiences of exclusion many adolescents live in the encounter with peers. Precisely, the importance of relations with peers, the ambivalent experiences of ethnic groups during adolescence make reflect on the need to think about the building of identity as an experience of slow combination of multiple ethnicities which aren't necessarily mutually exclusive.

Unlike the Italian peers, who know and spend time with female friends, especially the place where they live in and in extra-school ones, most of girls think of only classmates as their friends, but above all of their female friends. From an exploratory research conducted in Florence in two third classes of two high schools, a vocational school and a school specialising in classical studies, which has used the laboratory methodology to encourage the writing of the self, in order to understand if among female teenagers of secondary schools there's a merger of existential horizons, it has emerged the importance of the project to go back to the country of origin in accordance with the culture and the origin of their families.

The autobiographical approach, by using guided writing based on a series of stimulus-based questions by the Researcher (introduction of oneself and one's own family, relations with female and male classmates, relations with parents, projects for the future), has been useful to recall and examine the already taken paths to understand their dynamics, and it can also help get rid of the prejudices and stereotypes induced by the cultural experience and form different impressions and perspectives.

According to these training moments, inner life becomes the real heuristic place of the qualitative survey, and these moments highlight a professional attitude favouring the relational perspective, they help bring

out others' point of view, enhancing its difference with regards to customs, traditions and mentality. Narration gives value to experiences so that they become learning opportunity: experiences imply emotions, which are the privileged ways to acquire knowledge. Learning, in fact, is not determined as much from "what" we learn but rather from "how" we learn as well as from our emotional experiences (Sarracino, Strollo (ed), 2000, pp. 84-85), so that it's easier to understand than judge. Thinking from the perspective of a narrative pedagogy means guiding to listening and keeping distance from one's own reference frameworks in order to grasp the significance the other gives to the experience. The difficulty of referring to one's own knowledge and skills of origin may lead even to a rejection of the culture of origin, so to deny all previous cultural references as if they were the cause of all arising difficulties. Encouraging interculture through narration allows individuals to be active protagonists of the encounter, because they all describe their own cultural background and compare it with others' ones looking for similarities and differences.

My name is Aziz, I'm 16, I'm attending a vocational school and my family is from Nigeria. I was 10 when I arrived here. The school in Nigeria lasts nine years: I went to school from September to July and in free months I was used to help my family with the housework. I have had many difficulties because in Nigeria there are no adequate school buildings, lessons were taught in turn in order to avoid overcrowding of classrooms, and they often weren't carried out.

I have been living in Italy for many years now, my parents work, and I study alone. My father runs a grocery and he keeps open all day long without a break. My mother works only in the morning but at home she cooks typical Nigerians food for anniversaries, baptisms, weddings and festivities. I have got many friends at school and out of school and I go out with them on weekends, we go downtown to walk, eat an ice cream and listen to music. We have got male friends and Italian ones are beautiful: all Italians are beautiful, although they sometimes joke and make fun of me because I'm different and I'm a Nigerian ...! Although they don't know us, they think they know us. But I want to stay in Italy forever, even when I grow up.

The research reveals that among girls from Morocco, although born in Italy, few of them feel Italian.

My name is Aliya and I'm 16 years old, I attend the vocational school. I was born in Morocco and I was ten when I came to Italy. I remember with nostalgia the primary school I attended in Moroc-

co. School there lasts nine years. The pre-school curriculum is very important, it takes place in Madrassa or Koranic schools, it includes the memorization of the Koran, the teaching of the sacred texts and the Arabic language basics too. Imam was our teacher. In this school we learnt the Kuran all together, repeating its verses in chorus. I liked it a lot. The repetition in chorus is typical in Moroccan schools. In our school system it is very important to learn contents by heart. For me, the most beautiful period of the school in Morocco has been the one dedicated to many games and we have had much fun. When I grow up I would like to go back to Morocco and work there as a doctor to help other people.

Girls whose parents are Moroccan, but also Albanian and Romanian, are not much inclined to stay in Italy, while Chinese and Ukrainian girls are more likely to stay.

Aicha, a student attending the third class of a vocational school and who was born in Florence where she lives with her parents and an older sister born in Morocco, feels Italian and Moroccan at the same time. She wears a veil and she doesn't want to give it up, even though her classmates ask her to remove it, but she can remove it only at home. She has no good relations with her mother, she thinks she is very strict with her, however, when she grows up she wants to go back to Morocco because she states everybody is more generous to people there.

We are coming across an extraordinary increase of factors, which, by causing the crisis of the traditional boundaries, are changing the logic and spirit of the relations between the individual and his own land of origin and making the concept of citizenship less static today (Pinto Minerva 2004, pp. 6-7), however the relation between personal identity and national identity appears to be even stronger.

This fact is in line with what 2016 ISTAT survey reports, namely that Moroccan girls are less inclined to want to stay in Italy than boys, especially if they feel economically disadvantaged.

This result underlines that migration patterns are typical of the different communities, even in the case of the second generation. The 2016 Istat Report highlights that the Chinese community wants to continue to live in Italy more than others and, in view of a limited number of boys who state they feel Italian, high percentages of girls and boys born both in Italy and abroad, state they want to live in our country. The girls of the Chinese community, one of the most introverted both in terms of relations and social contacts with Italians, are actually the ones that, under the same conditions, wish to remain in Italy.

My name is Lisa, I am Chinese, and I was born in Italy. I'm 16. I live with my parents and my older sister who was born in China in Beijing and has been living with us in Italy for some years. I feel Italian and Chinese, a little both, but perhaps more Chinese even if don't know other Chinese relatives in Italy and I don't even know well the story of my parents who sell clothes and other objects at the emporium. Nevertheless I speak Chinese at home because my parents and my sister speak Chinese, but I don't write in Chinese even though my mom sometimes teaches it to me. We pray in Chinese all together because we are Buddhist. In my free time I look at the iPad, or I go out to meet my friends. We meet at the park and play outdoors, we often play with rackets. We laugh and enjoy a lot. I spend my Saturdays and Sundays with my Chinese friends who attend the same school as mine, even though in other classes, and we play with video games in the game room and listen to music together. I always read comic books, even in Chinese, because there are pictures and I understand them better.

In class I must stay with my classmates but I prefer my Chinese friends whom I stay out of school with and when the school is closed for holidays we walk a lot down the streets of Florence. I always get in touch with them via skype and we send messages to each other by phone. In class females laugh and joke, but they don't play with male classmates.

When I grow up I would like to work as a chef and open a restaurant of my own, in Florence or in another place but still in Italy.

There are also more complex approaches, when individuals are not able to avoid the conflict within themselves; however, realising it, they try to limit it. For example, situations of disagreement with the family anchored in traditional positions can occur, but they are accepted because traditional values such as love, dedication, and solidarity remain.

My name Borana, I'm 16 years old and my parents are both Albanian. It's nice for me to stay in Italy and to attend a school with so many foreigners, to get to know new cultures, meet new people, the way of thinking, for instance, of Indians or Filipinos, Albanians, and Italians, to make comparisons, and this is possible.

My parents always criticise me for what I do at school, but not only because I'm sometimes wrong, but also because I have started to put on makeup, like all my other female friends, and they always complain about it. Since last year I have had my first male buddies, and I also have fallen in love. For all my schoolfriends this is normal, while for me it's different as I have always to hide such things. When I pray I always kiss the cross, although I'm Muslim! In sum-

mer we go to Albania but after a while I miss Italy, I miss habits, because I feel different there and I'm not able to explain why.

In these cases it emerges the will to deny less accepted values or behaviours. On one hand there are those who insist on fractures of migration, underlining risks of not belonging, gaps, shortcomings, failures and defeats. On the other hand, if we emphasize the creative potential of encounter and exchange, it's possible to discover the chances and the treasures of a life condition that integrates multiple references, more languages, and more memories.

This possibility of enlarging the identity choices is certainly a chance, but it is also an additional challenge involving losses and loneliness, as well as new certainties and achievements. In order to be able to successfully integrate without getting lost, and denying one's own differences, the girls of migration need a "double authorisation": by family and by school. School has to encourage educational environments full of friendship and care with a view, as affirmed by Bellingreri (2010), to giving life to a form of existential dialogue which aims to develop the ability to ask oneself questions about the meaning of the truth-bearing experience.

My name is Maria Felicita, I'm 16 years old and I was born in Italy although my mother is Egyptian. I haven't got any brothers or sisters. I have always been good at school, even when I was little and even now, at the high school for humanities I take good notes and study much at home alone. I would have liked attending the art school but my parents didn't agree. My mum doesn't want me to come out downtown with my school friends and they are Italian: she doesn't even allow them to come to my house to do homework. I can only stay at school to do the activities after the schooltime but only if there are teachers. She always controls me a lot and she always comes to school to talk to the teachers because she fears I met males. She doesn't want me to have male friends. She allows me to wear Italian clothes but they are outmoded, long clothes, a little below the knee. She also buys buggy pants for me, to wear together with long sweaters because it is forbidden for women to show their figure. After the high school I would like to enroll for architecture and become an architect, but I don't know if my parents agree. My father is a doctor, he is Italian and I have to follow the same career path as his. I'm allowed to stay with my peers only on Sunday during religious functions in church or during gatherings and Catholic spiritual encounters. I feel lucky when I am with them all day long on religious festivities, where we all feel the joy of sharing the same spiritual feelings.

The narrations thus represent useful tools to activate processes of attribution and interpretation of reality, and female adolescents achieve a sense-making process (Arendt, 1973, p. 169), that is the construction of meanings: a retrospective construction to interpret events within reference frameworks (Weick, 1995). The identity development in a heterogeneous cultural environment was examined by some French researches (Masters, 1979) allowing us to trace an interesting framework to understand the behaviours and reasonings individuals put in place in multicultural conditions to find self-justification of their own behaviour and solve relational problems within the new environment, but also within their own group. Many traits of identity don't depend as much on inner needs but rather on the relations that bind it to the identity of peers living in close contact with them. The diversity doesn't depend as much on the distance separating the groups but rather on their interactions. Each relations implies a dynamic, a story set in a precise place at a given time, so the nature of cultural traits can vary and some traits of an individual within a group will become whether dominant or recessive, depending on the needs. The multiplicity and diversity of contexts allow adolescents in search of their own identity to get close, get away, feeling the same or different on this path marked by ambivalent feelings of belonging. In other words, they allow them to choose a place within the family and social geography. This identity has to do with the existential and psychological condition of being and feeling between two cultures and two worlds, two languages and two landmarks, including the expectations of the family and the school messages. Identity that can be interpreted within different polarisations and focuses. Children and adolescents' acculturative style defined as transcultural, deeply changes their ways of living and thinking. The representations of the world by a commixture of continuous moments of exchange, comparisons, and of conflict too, change and change in turn. They constitute common horizons to their peers starting from different roots, stories and belongings.

For this reason telling and writing about aspects of their own culture is a useful exercise to recognize themselves in their uniqueness, in their singularity, but at the same time, to discover their existence to be similar to others' one. The narration becomes a track of the taken paths, a reality which becomes memory and builds memory, and which organises and shapes the same experiences. In short, the autobiographical work becomes intercultural education, leading to original and unique microsystems, according to the aim pursued by the narration and the adopted style. The autobiographical listening, which aims at knowing the biographies of the protagonists, encourages self-recognition: individuals realise

they have a life worth being appreciated. The story thus reveals the existence of a plurality of solutions to the complexities of life and it is accepted because it embraces different points of view.

With regards to the development of personal identities, such a method encourages young students to choose not according to an illusory and antithetical binary logic but to a negotiation (Demetrio, 1997, p. 57); it emerges that the negotiated identity is transcultural and, above all, it is an identity to be searched for and absolutely human.

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