

## CHAPTER 2

# NOT SO 'OTHER'

## Challenging Ideas of Citizenship and Belonging in Italy

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### INTRODUCTION

**N**o matter how Italian you feel, no matter how much you love it, the bureaucracy always excludes you and makes you feel *straniero* [like a foreigner].<sup>1</sup> These were the words of 25-year-old Bilal,<sup>1</sup> a Moroccan citizen who grew up in Italy but now only visits the country as he lives in Finland. He arrived in Italy from Morocco as a child with his parents and two siblings. After turning 18 Bilal could not find a work contract and had no desire to carry on with his studies. Two years ago his permit expired and, lacking the necessary requirements to renew it as an adult, he fell into ‘illegality’. When his girlfriend invited him to move to Finland with her, Bilal decided he had had enough of living the life of an ‘illegal’ migrant in Italy and joined her there.

This chapter analyses the ways in which immigration and citizenship laws create disjunctures for Bilal and others like him, who live with the paradox of risking illegality in a country they have grown up in. Bilal also embodies another paradox in Italian society: he is both Moroccan and Italian. This chapter explores the dynamic tensions that shape experiences of migration, citizenship and belonging in Italy. In the Italian context, understandings of citizenship and membership are highly racialized, and ethnicity and nationality are often conflated. This conflation, which is rooted in a ‘biopolitics of otherness’ (Fassin 2001), not only excludes the possibility of ‘genuine’ citizenship for those who do not ‘look’ Italian, but also assigns those who appear ‘other’ the status of low-level workers with associations of criminality and

poverty. Yet despite this, and despite the marginal position that migrants have been structurally and socially assigned in Italy, migrants and their children are actively challenging and reshaping ideas about insiders, outsiders, citizenship and Italianness. Italy's exclusionary immigration and citizenship laws, however, remain out of sync with these 'ground-level' shifts. The exclusionary bureaucratic system effectively blocks a gradual process of inclusion that might otherwise occur in Italian society. The disjuncture between the integrated lives that migrants build for themselves and the repeated hurdles that immigration and citizenship laws put in their way is at the heart of the lived experience of migration and exclusion that my interlocutors faced.

## THE ITALIAN CONTEXT

In comparison with some of its other European neighbours, Italy was a relative latecomer as a destination for migrants, but in the past decade it has become one of the main receiving countries in Europe (see Mahmud, this volume). As is the case across Europe, migrants have not been universally welcomed onto the nation's shores, but low birth rates and a very large ageing population make their presence crucial. As 'useful invaders' (Ambrosini 1999), migrants fill positions that Italians – with ever-increasing levels of education – refuse to. These include manual labour jobs in construction, manufacturing, agriculture, the service industry and domestic work. As Emilio Reyneri (2004: 78) observes, 'immigrants tend to be concentrated in jobs where conditions are hard, requiring physical strength, willingness to do shift-work, and where occupational hazards are high'.

This chapter is based on research conducted from 2009 to 2016 in a city in the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna. Following migrants' bureaucratic encounters as they sought to become and stay 'legal', I conducted nineteen months of intensive fieldwork between 2009 and 2011, followed by annual visits. My fieldwork was principally based in an advice centre for migrants. The centre's main functions were to act as a drop-in advice clinic on issues relating to immigration law and to complete application forms on behalf of clients free of charge. These included applications for permit renewal, family reunification and citizenship. Reflecting the diversity of migrant nationalities across Italy and the city where I was working, the clients who frequented the centre were a heterogeneous group hailing from all over the world. Overlapping partly but not completely with the list for Italy as a whole, the 'top ten' nationalities in the region at the time of research were Moroccan (14.6 per cent), Romanian (13.1 per cent), Albanian (12.6 per cent), Ukrainian (5.1 per cent), Tunisian (4.9 per cent), Chinese (4.6 per cent), Moldovan (4.6 per cent), Indian (3.2 per cent), Pakistani (3.2 per cent) and Polish (2.6

per cent) (Caritas 2010). Clients were also diverse in terms of their personal trajectories. Some had recently arrived in Italy, others had been in Italy for decades or were even born in the country. Some already held citizenship, while others were looking for ways to regularize their status. The peculiarities of Italian immigration bureaucracy mean that legal status is highly fluid, and it is not uncommon for somebody who has been in the country for decades to lose their legal status. Documentation status does not, therefore, reflect length of time spent in Italy. As a volunteer at the centre, I spent most of my time on the reception counter, but I also spent long periods of time with advisers at their desks in the back room participating in longer consultations. Much of my daily fieldwork was conducted in the space of the centre and other institutional settings, but over time, I also developed close relationships with staff members, volunteers and some clients, taking my research into more intimate and social spaces.

## IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP LAW

Italian immigration law, which has been criticized as discriminatory and driven by anti-immigrant politics, is key to the process of migrants' othering. Under the law, a migrant's legal status is contingent upon presenting a regular work contract. Consequently, regardless of how many years one has lived in the country, losing one's job or being employed unofficially in the 'black market' can result in the loss of legal status. Calavita (2005: 43) has argued that this 'institutionalizes irregularity' within the immigration law itself, which is inseparable from migrants' labour function. Through their precarious and temporary legal statuses, migrants remain perpetually 'other', which is a 'critical ingredient of their flexibility' (ibid.: 63) and ensures that they remain in low-level, poorly paid and insecure jobs – the so-called 'non-EU' jobs (those that native European citizens refuse to do). Accordingly, in the Italian context, migrants are othered through legal, political and discursive processes that characterize them as second-class subjects associated with low-level jobs, criminality and poverty.

These harsh and exclusionary immigration policies, however, exist alongside frequent amnesties through which 'illegal' migrants can regularize (or re-regularize) their status. In addition, there are fairly regular *decreti flussi* policies that allow for the legal entry of foreign workers (although in practice these also work as unofficial amnesties). In the words of one migrant respondent: 'It is easy to get in [to Italy], but hard to legally stay.' This is because while temporary and contingent legal status is relatively accessible, the long-term permit and citizenship, which offer possibilities for secure legal status, are both notoriously difficult to obtain. The current Italian citizenship law,

passed in 1992, is based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*, the right to citizenship based on one's ancestry. For those who have newly arrived with no ancestral links, or even for those born in the country, naturalization is the only option. To become a naturalized Italian citizen, among other bureaucratic requirements applicants must document ten years of continuous legal residence in Italy (five years for EU citizens). In Italy residency refers to one's place of address but is also an official bureaucratic status for citizens and non-citizens alike. Residency is distinct from legal status, and non-citizens are not obliged to hold residency: registered domicile is sufficient for the purpose of permit renewal, family reunification and other applications. The official status of residency, however, is necessary for citizenship applications. The requirement of ten years of documented *continuous* residency (not just domicile) was a frequent stumbling block for long-term migrants who desired to submit citizenship applications. Loss of residency, caused, for example, by an eviction following a problem with one's landlord, means that applicants are required to rebuild ten years of documented residency. This is the case even if the period of loss of residency is very short. Given these bureaucratic requirements, those I knew who did hold Italian citizenship had usually been living in Italy for much longer than the required ten years in order to have become eligible to apply.

Because the citizenship law favours Italian ancestry, attaining citizenship is a lengthy and difficult process for those who were born or grew up in Italy but whose parents are not Italian nationals. Minors can obtain citizenship through their Italian parents, and anyone who is born in Italy can apply for citizenship within one year of their eighteenth birthday. The latter, however, is a bureaucratic procedure that is far from straightforward. If, for example, a child's parents fall into 'illegality' after losing employment, the child is no longer eligible to apply for citizenship on turning 18. Instead, they are required to meet the same requirements as any adult migrant. In addition, if one who is born in Italy does not submit the citizenship application within a year of turning 18, the right to apply for citizenship is lost. After reaching 18, young people no longer have the right to a family permit and thus must either work or study full-time to avoid losing their legal status. Accordingly, many young people face legal precarity on reaching adulthood and certainly do not have the same possibilities as their peers with parents who hold Italian citizenship.

## AUTHENTIC AND INAUTHENTIC CITIZENSHIP

In the Italian context ethnicity and nationality are conflated, meaning that anyone who is not considered to be Italian (or a tourist) is demarcated as '*immigrato*' or '*extracomunitario*'. '*Extracomunitario*' is an ideologically

loaded, racist term. It refers to a non-EU citizen, but the term is primarily used to refer to migrants from the Global South and post-Soviet countries, notwithstanding their home country's EU member status. For example, Romanians and Poles, who are EU citizens, are labelled '*extracomunitari*', while Australians and Americans, who are technically '*extracomunitari*', are not labelled in such a manner. Accordingly, the term refers to migrants who are deemed to originate from poorer nations, and its use is related to the notion that migrants are low-level workers, criminals or objects of charity. Bruno Riccio and Monica Russo (2011: 362) have observed that the racialized divisions that exist in Italy are 'not a matter of mere cultural racism; phenotypic characteristics have also become more and more relevant in fostering Italian internal boundaries.' As a result, a 'biopolitics of otherness' is produced in which skin colour and supposed origin overwhelm the legal definition of the 'other' (Fassin 2001: 6). Through the identification of complexion, skin colour, dress, *tracce* (referring to facial features), language and other indicators, migrants and their children are automatically identified as '*extracomunitari*', meaning non-Italian, immigrant and non-citizen.

Given this, notwithstanding their actual citizenship status, in my field site migrants were indiscriminately placed in the category of '*extracomunitario*'. The cultural category 'Black Italian', for example, did not exist, but one could be an '*extracomunitario*' with citizenship. In this context Italian citizenship was stripped of any significance other than its formal legal meaning. Most of my newly Italian interlocutors – migrants who had acquired citizenship – considered their Italian citizenship to have no more significance than a piece of paper: they viewed it as akin to a *permesso di soggiorno* (permit to stay) and as serving solely instrumental ends. Other studies of migrants in the Italian context make a similar observation (see Andall 2002; Bianchi 2011; Colombo, Domaneschi and Marchetti 2011; Zinn 2011). All of my 'new Italian' friends had accounts of times they had been stopped by the police either on the street or at some kind of security checkpoint. On such occasions the presentation of their Italian identity card had caused confusion and suspicion, and had elicited a demand to see a *permesso di soggiorno* (a document that an Italian citizen would not have). Once their citizenship status was eventually and grudgingly acknowledged, it was nonetheless considered 'inauthentic' (Gilroy 2002: 50). Which is to say that, in the view of the officials, having an Italian passport did not mean that someone was 'really' Italian. These racist ideas about authentic and inauthentic citizenship were evident in the everyday workings of the advice centre. Clients were asked if they had Italian citizenship rather than if they were Italian. When staff members or centre users affirmed that they were Italian, it was voiced as a political statement rather than a neutral comment. Someone who claimed Italian citizenship in this way did so as if responding to a disbelieving official.

Alternatively, the affirmation was made in a tongue-in-cheek tone; these neo-citizens were sardonically communicating that they knew they would never be considered really Italian, but were also simultaneously challenging this assumption.

The case of Rose highlights how citizenship was often understood as nothing more than a bureaucratic process. Rose came in to the centre one day to ask if it would be possible to bring her sister to Italy from Nigeria through family reunification. She was initially told that this was not possible before the staff member thought to ask if Rose had Italian citizenship. It turned out that she did, and therefore, on grounds of family reunification, her sister would be able to obtain a permit in Italy. Rose then asked if she could bring her mother and husband. 'No problem', she was told. By this point the staff member had left, and she and I were speaking in English together. She was beaming and said, 'I had no idea I could do all this. It's not bad, this Italian citizenship!'

Two points are highlighted by this encounter. First, despite the large number of clients who passed through the centre who were Italian citizens, staff members often immediately assumed that the clients did not have Italian nationality. And second, clients who were Italian citizens did not identify as Italian nationals and were often not aware of the rights they had gained by obtaining citizenship. Rose's ignorance about her newly acquired rights revealed her attitude about her procurement of Italian citizenship. For her it was like the renewal of her last ever permit, a bureaucratic step that meant she no longer had to deal with the *questura* (immigration office). She did not view her Italian citizenship as giving her the same rights as a 'real' Italian. Similarly, people did not consider her to be Italian.

Others I knew understood their new citizenship in the same way, although their attitude was sometimes more critical. Indeed, the most common statement in conversations about obtaining Italian citizenship was: 'It doesn't change anything, but it is good not having to queue at the *questura* any more.' When stating that it did not change anything, my interlocutors were referring to the fact that, despite their citizenship status, they were still treated like '*extracomunitari*'. Those who were particularly angry about the discrimination they experienced distanced themselves from their Italian citizenship, emphasizing that they did not 'feel' Italian or did not want to be considered so. Many felt disheartened that no matter how long they spent in Italy, they would always be considered '*extracomunitari*' along with all the negative associations the term implies.

In this context, then, legal citizenship was not culturally considered to confer equality or to be an instrument to create common sociality. Rather, there was authentic citizenship and inauthentic citizenship. The inauthentic citizenship of migrants was a legal document and nothing more. Although the new Italian citizens were entitled to all the formal rights of

citizenship, they were still considered ‘*extracomunitari*’: that is, poor, low-status non-citizens.

## PERFORMANCE AND APPEARANCE

Migrants who spoke Italian with a foreign accent seemed to be easily demarcated as inauthentically Italian. In contrast, those who came to Italy as children, or those born in the country to foreign parents, came to embody an Italian ‘habitus’ (Mauss 1973) that disrupts ideas about authentic and inauthentic citizenship that are embedded in the normative construction of whiteness in relation to Italian national identity (Pesarini 2017). The literature on the second generation in Italy has explored the challenges of daily racism and difficult access to citizenship that this cohort of young people face (Andall 2002; Bianchi 2011; Riccio and Russo 2011). In particular, scholars have explored second-generation associations and this group’s attempts to further their political agenda and challenge racist and discriminatory attitudes (Riccio and Russo 2011; Zinn 2011). This section examines similar themes, but instead of looking at political arenas in which the 1.5 – those who migrated as children – and second generation challenge attitudes, it focuses on everyday encounters and the apparent disjunctures that they embody in the incongruity between their bodies and bodily performances (see Krause, this volume on the power of quotidian practices). Although the processes of ‘othering’ described above imply a straightforward understanding of what makes an Italian ‘Italian’, both the historically weak sense of nationhood and the lived reality of the 1.5 and second generations suggest that the notion of a clearly demarcated national identity is not as strong as it may seem.

The first time I met Tesfay, the leader of the Young Eritreans’ Association, he was teased by Claudio, a white Italian volunteer at the centre. Claudio grew up in Lecce in Puglia (in southern Italy), and Tesfay grew up in Bari, which is Lecce’s rival city. As Tesfay was leaving the centre one day, he and Claudio well-meaningly heckled each other with partisan banter. After Tesfay had left, Claudio said to the others at the reception counter, ‘God, it is such a shock when he speaks. A *Barese* Eritrean!’ Here Claudio and the others were referring to Tesfay’s strong *Barese* accent. A Black man speaking with a southern regional accent was ‘matter out of place’ (Douglas 1970: 36), and Tesfay’s manner of speaking destabilized Claudio’s and others’ rigid understandings of identity. The importance of regionalism in Claudio’s comment was significant. Because of Italy’s regional character and late national unification, people often feel closer to their region than to the country as a whole. Thus, for a migrant to identify with a particular region is a strong indicator of Italianness (see also Zinn 2011: 380). The shocked

reaction to apparent ‘outsiders’ speaking in local accents is not unique to the Italian context, but two issues make such a reaction noteworthy. First, in Italy, notwithstanding class, everybody has an accent that betrays their regional background, and accents are common topics of conversation. To speak fluently in Italian is to speak with a regional accent (the local accent I developed during fieldwork was often the subject of confusion or humour among my interlocutors). In addition, migrants’ presence is fairly evenly distributed across Italy, meaning that there is not a particular Italian accent that would be deemed acceptable for a migrant or Italian of colour to have. And second, because migrants and Italians of colour are automatically assigned to the category of ‘*extracomunitario*’, being identified as non-Italian is to be identified as somehow inferior.

Not all migrants feel cowed by such assumptions and prejudices. My friend Chiara, who volunteered at the advice centre, is an Eritrean by birth who has lived in Italy since she was 13 years old. She is called Chiara Mariotti – due to her paternal grandfather’s ancestry – and is a native Italian speaker. Her gesticulations and ways of speaking, eating and walking all demonstrate her embeddedness in an Italian ‘habitus’, but in the Italian context her dark skin and long braided hair automatically make her ‘*extracomunitaria*’. As she told me: ‘Italians who know me will say, “you’re different, you’re not a real immigrant”, because I speak perfectly and play the Italian. But, if they saw me on the bus, in an office or on the street and did not know me, they would be just like everyone else. They would presume I am an *immigrata di merda* [shitty immigrant]. That is what Italians think when they see an *extracomunitario*.’ When Chiara was younger she would run home crying after episodes of racism in which she was mistaken for a prostitute or heckled in the street. On other occasions she struggled to find a job and to secure a tenancy from a landlord. And at her workplace – where she is the only non-white employee – she is frequently mistaken for the cleaner and asked to refill the toilet paper in the bathroom. ‘Black person equals cleaner’, she commented wryly. In recent years, she told me, she has learned to deal with the prejudice in different and more empowering ways, mainly through humour and her strong sense of irony. She recounted to me that while she cleaned the stairs of the building in which she lived, she allowed her white Italian neighbours to think that she was Signora Chiara Mariotti’s *colf* (cleaner) and then revelled in their discomfort when she turned up at her building meetings as *the* Signora Chiara Mariotti: no one would match the Italian name with her dark skin. She laughingly told me about how, when she goes to public offices, officials often speak slowly to her, thinking that perhaps she does not understand Italian. I witnessed this myself when I accompanied her to offices to run errands: a moment’s delay between when the official first saw her and then heard her speak was typically followed by a slightly bemused



expression. She told me that she enjoyed this moment of tension when the official was left looking rather foolish. Playing on prejudices, she questions and challenges people's views by embodying the contradiction of dressing, speaking and behaving like an Italian but not conforming to what is normatively racialized as Italianness. Chiara is fully aware that people are often surprised and perplexed by her 'immigrant' looks and contrasting 'Italian' behaviour and language skills. Playing dialogically with the signifiers that are foisted upon her as a Black Italian, through irony and joking Chiara is able to mock prejudice and subtly challenge the discriminatory assumptions of those around her (see also Mahmud 2014: 34–38).

As early members of the 1.5 generation, Chiara and Tesfay embody what Paul Gilroy (2002: 69) terms 'ideological contradictions'. Like the Black athletes Gilroy describes as challenging ideas of Britishness, Chiara's and Tesfay's embodied Italianness, expressed through language, dress and body movements, seemed to contradict their black skin – and vice versa. The contradictions that Chiara and Tesfay embody correspond to Stanley's (2008: 56) observation that 'those seen as physically distinct from Italians, regardless of their performativity, also carry the assumption that they are not citizens of the Italian state'. As has been argued, judgements about who is (or could be) Italian are based on a very limited notion of Italianness. Identity is expressed and practised according to body politics, where difference from the physical 'Italian look' immediately demarcates somebody as not Italian. Stanley may be correct in her analysis of people's immediate judgements, but both Chiara and Tesfay unsettle these naturalized and racist assumptions. Claudio's joking with Tesfay and Chiara's teasing of her neighbours reveal the discomfort and ideological contradictions that the tension between 'body' and 'body techniques' creates. There is not yet a mainstream discourse about the possibility of a hybrid Italian identity, but ideas about Italianness, race and belonging are becoming more open to disruption and subject to temporal change. Chiara and Tesfay are not easily made other, but rather cause uncomfortable and perplexed reactions through the ideological contradictions that they embody.

Despite the extent to which 'body techniques' disrupt normative understandings of whiteness and Italian identity, the bureaucracy remains an exclusionary force that structurally others cultural insiders. These processes of othering and structural marginalization need to be understood as working in tense and contradictory relationships with everyday social relations that are challenging and negotiating 'boundaries of Italianness' (Hawthorne 2021: 706), notwithstanding the absence of a discourse on hybridity. The 1.5 and second generations complicate the division and hierarchy between 'formal citizenship' and 'substantive cultural identity that defines genuine membership' (Gilroy 2002: 50). In this way, documents, citizenship, appearance,

body techniques and habitus can work at diverse tangents to one another and must often be negotiated simultaneously by the migrants themselves.

### 'ILLEGAL' CITIZENS

Work on the so-called 1.5 generation has explored the way in which, on reaching the age of 18, those who are undocumented must learn to be 'illegal' (Gonzales 2011). This literature explores the contradictions inherent in being an 'illegal' migrant in the country where one has grown up and challenges ideas about citizenship and legality. On reaching legal adulthood those in this group experience trauma as they become 'illegal' subjects overnight. In a political climate in which the citizenship policies of migrant-receiving countries are becoming increasingly restrictive, the production of 'illegal citizens' – those who have grown up in a country but hold no juridical right to stay there – is rapidly growing. With anti-terrorism laws establishing the terrain, it has become increasingly common for young people who have grown up in Europe and North America to be sent back 'home' following encounters with the police – often to a country to which they have no or few links (De Genova and Peutz 2010; Drotbohm 2011; Peutz 2006). The situations of these young people, who may have multiple senses of identity and belonging, contradict the passport and other documents that imply unambiguous identification with one singular place (Coutin 2003; Drotbohm 2011; Mandel 2008). In these situations the ambivalent and tense relationship between belonging and citizenship comes to the fore.

The situation of the 1.5 and second generations in Italy, which is characterized by precarious legal status and racialized ideas about citizenship, offers important comparative contributions on this subject (Andall 2002; Bianchi 2011; Colombo, Domaneschi and Marchetti 2011; Colombo and Rebughini 2012; Riccio and Russo 2011; Zinn 2011). The cases of Lindita and Aurelie, outlined below, highlight the disjunctive and precarious position that makes the 1.5 and second generations particularly vulnerable in immigration politics (see also Riccio and Russo 2011: 363). It was precisely because of their cultural capital and embodied sense of integration that many young people, out of sheer ignorance – theirs and their parents' – risked their legal status.

### 'BUT I HAVE AN IDENTITY CARD': ITALIANS WITHOUT CITIZENSHIP

In the last few days of my fieldwork, a 17-year-old named Lindita came into the centre for advice. Her citizenship was 'almost ready', she said, but her

*permesso* had expired. The *permesso* had expired over a year ago and thus was theoretically unrenewable. Since a valid permit is a requirement for concession of citizenship, this could have created serious problems. Lindita was born in Italy, and when she turned 17 years old the *comune* had written to her, informing her of the possibility of applying for Italian citizenship within a year of her eighteenth birthday. Receiving such information from the *comune* is rare, and ignorance of the fact that one must apply within a year after turning 18 leads to many young people losing out on the possibility of attaining Italian citizenship. Fortunate to have received the letter, Lindita and her mother followed the instructions and completed the appropriate paperwork for the application. However, they were unaware that obtaining citizenship required one to have a valid permit at the moment of the *giuramento* (swearing of the oath). Lindita was very relaxed about the situation, and when I met her she seemed as though she had entered the advice centre on a whim. On hearing about her situation, Alberto – a staff member – became concerned about her losing this possibility for citizenship. Lindita, however, remained calm, saying, ‘It’s fine, I have a *carta d’identità*’ (identity card, which is a valid identity document for an Italian citizen but useless for a non-citizen). Her ignorance about the details of the procedure revealed her liminal status. Although by law she was considered a migrant, she did not inhabit a ‘migrant world’, which might have bestowed her with the appropriate knowledge. Further, her calmness and certainty of the power of her identity card demonstrated that she felt she belonged in Italy.

In a similar situation was Aurelie. Her father was well known in the centre, having been back and forth in his efforts to sort out her permit. He had told staff in the centre that Aurelie’s permit had been ‘blocked’ in the *questura* for two years, although his had already been issued. According to staff members this situation was strange, as children are dependent upon their parents: if Aurelie’s father had the correct requirements to renew his permit, then hers should automatically have been renewed. Unable to fit all the pieces of the story together to create an understandable narrative, Alberto finally asked him to send his daughter to the centre. A few days later, Aurelie came in. She stood out from many of the other people in the centre. She was dressed in the manner typical of Italian teenagers, wearing tight jeans and brand new Converse trainers. Her accent and fluency in Italian gave away her local upbringing. When she showed me an old photocopy of her father’s permit, a ragged sheet of paper with a photo of her 6-year-old self stapled on, I realized who she was and told her to wait while I went to find Alberto. Since Alberto was going for his weekly meeting at the *questura* with the vice director the following Friday, he asked Aurelie for all her identity documents so that he could present her situation and find out what had happened. Accordingly,

on Alberto's request, I photocopied Aurelie's documents. When I asked her for her identity card, she presented me with a flimsy paper document with the details written in French. 'It is from the Ivory Coast's consulate', she informed me, as I quizzically turned it over in my hands. I told Alberto that she did not have the usual Italian identity card (to which all legal residents are entitled), and the reality of Aurelie's situation dawned on Alberto as he put together the pieces of the story. Alberto realized that there was no blocked application for renewal of a permit. Instead, Aurelie possessed no valid permit at the current time and had not possessed one for the three years since her father's renewal.

The problem lay in her father's ignorance about the need for children to acquire their own, independent legal status. When Aurelie's father had renewed his permit, she had already turned 15, at which age, although still dependent upon her father, she ought to have applied for and been issued her own permit. But since she had never submitted an application, Aurelie had technically slipped into the limbo of 'illegality'. Passing Aurelie back her Ivory Coast embassy-issued identity card, Alberto asked, 'So you haven't had a permit for three years?' She shrugged her shoulders with a curious look, apparently totally oblivious to the significance of, or unbothered by, this information. As I chatted with her later she told me that she had arrived in Italy when she was six months old: 'I was practically born here', she said. Later that evening I saw her with a group of young people, giggling on the arm of her boyfriend. She may have been technically undocumented, but like Lindita she did not seem to feel disenfranchised or concerned; her sense of belonging in Italy overrode the technicalities of her legal status. Both girls' reactions to the news that they were 'illegal' and at risk of being denied citizenship were a kind of casual bemusement. For these young women the world of immigration bureaucracy was one from which they felt disconnected, and one that was completely out of sync with their sense of belonging.

The second generation were not all strangers to the immigration bureaucracy. In fact it was common for children to accompany their parents or other members of their communities to the advice centre to act as interpreters. Notwithstanding their familiarity with the immigration bureaucracy, however, for those without citizenship the contradiction between holding precarious legal status in the country where they had grown up and citizenship in their parents' land was common to all. Lindita's and Aurelie's rather indifferent reactions to the news of their precarious legal status differ from those reported in research conducted in the United States, which emphasizes the second generation's feelings of abjection on realizing their 'illegal' status (Gonzales and Chavez 2012). Instead, the young women seemed to hold what Jacqueline Andall (2002) has called a 'second-generation attitude'. Perhaps over time Lindita and Aurelie would also feel like they had 'awoken to

a nightmare' (Gonzalez and Chavez 2012). For the moment, however, their seemingly nonchalant attitudes highlighted the contradiction that immigration and citizenship laws pose for the 1.5 and second generations: being socialized by their 'host' country through their education and environment while simultaneously holding the status of undocumented migrant. Like migrants in other settings, Lindita and Aurelie challenge our assumptions about who an undocumented migrant is. Their experiences offer insights into the disjuncture that exists when state practices simultaneously produce the same individual as both 'cultural citizen' (Ong 1996) and undocumented migrant. These young people are culturally socialized as Italians or Americans but as adults become subject to the same laws that work to produce a vulnerable and tractable workforce (De Genova 2002).

Individuals such as Lindita, Aurelie, Chiara and Tesfay undoubtedly challenge ideological assumptions concerning race, belonging and citizenship. Moreover, as a growing body of literature on second-generation associations has explored, the 1.5 and second generations in Italy are becoming politically active and demanding more nuanced recognition of Italianness and citizenship (Riccio and Russo 2011; Zinn 2011). Despite these changes, however, the structural obstacles that exclusionary immigration and citizenship laws create entrench the marginalization of migrants and their children, fundamentally limiting possibilities for change. Exclusionary citizenship laws, economic marginalization, low-level work opportunities and racial stigmatization interact to produce and reproduce migrants as inferior and other. As Calavita (2005: 165) notes, 'With this powerful economics of alterité, and the legal infrastructure that supports it', integration policies and initiatives demanding equal recognition face considerable challenges.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored the tensions in the pervasive processes of othering in Italy, which are rooted in the normative construction of whiteness in relation to Italian national identity (Pesarini 2017). In line with Fassin's (2001) discussion of biopolitics, racialized discourses based on skin colour and appearance are used to dichotomously characterize non-Italians as either tourists or '*extracomunitari*'. To be identified as '*extracomunitario*' is to be made into a low-status worker other with associations of criminality and poverty. However, examining the situation of the 1.5 and second generations shows how unstable and contestable these racialized assignments are.

Inflammatory media reports that emphasize entry and flows of immigrants have dominated the political discourse on migration in Italy, making

immigration appear to be in a permanent state of emergency (Cole and Saitta 2011: 528; see Mahmud, this volume). In spite of this, and of the structural marginalization that migrants and their children are subject to, however, the 1.5 and second generations are challenging ideas of insiders, outsiders and citizenship in everyday encounters simply by being. Yet those who challenge still remain potentially structurally and legally marginalized because immigration and citizenship regimes are out of sync with everyday social contexts and encounters. The exclusionary bureaucracy, as well as the lack of a mainstream alternative political discourse about migration and hybridity, blocks any real change that could occur over time in Italy. These young migrants have cultural capital but do not necessarily have the legal right to remain in the country. Worse still, they run the risk of being excluded from citizenship if they fail to closely attend to their legal status. Although being a legal citizen would not necessarily diminish the racism or processes of othering they experience, it could encourage changes in society over time so that, for example, being Black and Italian need no longer be considered mutually exclusive categories (Riccio and Russo 2011: 370). This analysis challenges and contributes to our understanding of citizenship and the ways in which inclusion in a society is multifaceted, precarious and temporal. What it means to be a citizen exists in law and on paper, and also in everyday encounters that create new and unexpected meanings. Possibilities for change in Italy lie with the 1.5 and second generations, whose situations are profound evidence of the injustices that the current immigration law creates. While immigration laws successfully naturalize migrants' otherness, making their social, legal and economic marginalization seem acceptable (Calavita 2005; De Genova 2002), when those who appear less other – such as the 1.5 and second generations – are also subject to such processes, these injustices are brought into sharp focus. This reality is pertinent not only to Italy but also in different host settings, where members of the second generation are deported back to their 'home' nation states, parents are unable to legally enter the country where their children have citizenship and husbands and wives struggle to live within the same borders. Examining the 1.5 and second generations' everyday experiences of immigration bureaucracy underscores the profound difficulties, contradictions and injustices that immigration law creates in the lives of *all* migrants.

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## NOTE

1. All respondents' names have been changed.

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