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**BOUNDARY-MAKING IN AN IMMIGRANT SOCIAL SPACE:
ALBANIAN-ITALIAN AND ALBANIAN-ROMANIAN COUPLES
IN ITALY**

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October 2017

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:

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PhD in MIGRATION STUDIES

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SUMMARY

This thesis focuses on Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples in Italy. Through application of the boundary-making framework to integration and intermarriage, this study looks at the processes by which partners in mixed unions deal with socially constructed boundaries inside and outside the couple and family sphere. The thesis is based on multiple qualitative methods, but primarily on in-depth interviews with 61 Albanian-Italian/Romanian couples in Italy. These research-participant couples differ in terms of marital and family status, place of origin and settlement, education and occupation. The core sample is composed of an Albanian in-between generation, now in their 30s, who emigrated during adolescence for various reasons (asylum, family reunification, healthcare, study, work). Thence, I moved towards an Italian or a Romanian partner of these primary participants.

The original contribution of my study is both empirical and theoretical. From an empirical point of view, it explores the topic of intermarriage, which has not been previously examined in the existing literatures on the Albanian and Romanian migrations and is still understudied in Italy. In addition to this, the study specifically takes into account the combination of minority-majority (Albanian-Italian) and minority-minority (Albanian-Romanian) partnerships and marriages, whose conjoint analysis has been largely absent in intermarriage research. From a theoretical point of view, my research shows instead the importance of adopting a relational approach in migration studies through the inclusion of a plurality of social actors within the research design. In fact, while intermarriage in immigrant societies is usually interpreted as an indicator/agent of integration and through the essentialisation of the category of culture, my thesis proposes a novel understanding of intermarriage. I view intermarriage as a site of integration, and I see integration as a multi-way process of boundary change, which involves the national majority as well as multiple immigrant minorities interacting with and identifying each other in the construction of a common social space.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale

In the last 25 years Italy has turned from an emigrant into an immigrant society. In this period of time, its make-up has become increasingly diverse thanks to a plurality of migration typologies and immigrant profiles which have led authors to consider Italy as a specific case of the ‘Southern European model of migration’ (King and Zontini 2000). This diversity has not only produced a new kind of society, but also new socialisation patterns. Both the national majority and multiple immigrant minorities are actively involved in this ongoing social change, which is taking place at a societal level as well as at a more intimate level of interpersonal relations. In an immigrant society, the social change brought about by migrations would conventionally fall under the term ‘integration’. Constantin, one of my research participants, defined the national majority’s social closure towards immigrants as a ‘refusal to integrate with others’. This insightful definition reminds us that integration is an interactive process and that the verb ‘to integrate’ applies to immigrant minorities and to the national majority alike.

However, most migration studies focus either on one immigrant group and its trajectory of incorporation within the host-society or on a set of immigrant groups faring more or less well with reference to indicators of integration, whereas a more relational approach is often missing. Therefore, although integration is commonly understood as a two-way process (Castles et al. 2002), the national majority is not usually part of the research design and above all does not stand in equal footing – as illustrated by the dyad hosts/guests, which is the point of departure of all migration research. Nonetheless, interactions between the national majority and immigrant minorities do happen on a relatively more symmetrical basis, like friendship and partnership. What is more, interactions may also occur between different immigrant minorities, although this is greatly overlooked in the literature. While friendship constitutes a fleeting social relation, partnership has been instead considered as firm evidence of integration. The academic literature has thus looked at intermarriage as an indicator of integration, as well as a driver to it – which, in short, means that integrated immigrants are expected to be more likely to intermarry and intermarried immigrants to integrate. Clearly, the notion of integration which this cause-effect interpretation of the intermarriage-integration nexus implies is far from being two-way. Yet, integration and intermarriage

are not only two-way. They do involve multiple immigrant minorities, which relate to each other also beyond the national majority and make it necessary to rethink intermarriage, integration, and their nexus (Song 2009).

Another limitation which I found in the literature on intermarriage in immigrant societies consists in the dismissal of the controversial concept of integration as such and the adoption of the cultural differences paradigm, instead. With reference to this, a few authors have also noted the contingent salience of cultural differences in mixed partnerships and marriages as well as the shortcomings of a research design built around analytical categories like culture (Brahic 2013; Cottrell 1990; Menz 2013). Therefore, my research intends to make a theoretical contribution – in addition to its original empirical value – by proposing a framework not only to describe and analyse integration and intermarriage from the point of view of multiple social actors, but also to move beyond cultural essentialism. This framework is centred on the concepts of ethnic boundary and ethnic boundary-making (Barth 1969; Wimmer 2008a, 2008b). My research follows, in fact, a constructivist approach to ethnicity, which is seen as the product of a boundary between ‘selves’ and ‘others’ rather than as an inventory of the ‘cultural stuff’ that boundaries enclose (Barth 1969). Ethnic boundaries are understood as the outcome of processes of self/other identification taking place in social space, and varying in political salience, social closure, cultural differentiation, and historical stability (Wimmer 2008b). Different contexts are characterised by different processes of ethnic boundary-making, which may operate through the categories of ethnicity (in the strict understanding of the term), nationality, religion, or ‘race’ (Wimmer 2008a). Not only is ethnicity a superordinate identificational category based on both self-ascription and classification from others, but it is also a relation of identity/alterity requiring a third pole against which reciprocal (dis)similarities are measured – although this does not imply an ethnic structuration of the social space (Gossiaux 2002). In fact, ethnicity should be understood not as a ‘thing’ in the world but as a perspective on the world, which means that we can speak of ethnicity also in non-ethnically structured societies, looking at ethnic categories rather than at ethnic groups (Brubaker 2002). Therefore, both integration and intermarriage could be understood as processes of ethnic boundary-making, turning the ‘other’ into ‘another self’ through the mobilisation of ethnic categories (Qian and Lichter 2007; Zolberg and Woon 1999). After having situated my research in a wider picture, the rest of this chapter will narrow down its topic.

1.2 Research topic

The Albanian migrations in the 1990s and the Romanian migrations in the 2000s spawned the two largest immigrant groups nowadays residing in Italy. However, their contribution to the transformation of Italy into a society of immigration and integration has been considered only by a very few studies (King and Mai 2008, 2009; Mai 2010; Vathi 2015), to which my thesis ideally constitutes a follow-up. Both the Albanian and Romanian migrations to Italy were countered by phenomena of stigmatisation, respectively called Albanophobia and Romanophobia (King and Mai 2009; Mai 2010), which have singled out Albanians, first, and Romanians, subsequently, within an increasingly diverse immigrant population. The social stigma attached to these two nationalities has turned ‘Albanian’ and ‘Romanian’ into ethnic categories through which boundaries between ‘selves’ and ‘others’ have been drawn during the transformation of Italy from an emigrant to an immigrant society. While the existing literature has shown the succession of these social stigmata and their progressively declining relevance in the public discourse, I was interested in understanding how these categories might still impact on the social relations between individuals ascribed to these specific groups at a more private level. The phenomenon of intermarriage seemed to offer an ideal vantage point from which to observe social changes, because of the ‘total social fact’ character of marriage (Lévi-Strauss 1950) as a social institution which brings together individuals, couples, families and groups, and thus enables a multi-level analysis in between the personal and the societal. In short, this research aims to investigate the state of socially constructed boundaries between ‘selves’ and ‘others’ in the case of Albanians, Italians, and Romanians in Italy, and thereby to understand how ethnic categories are kept or modified through interaction, by focusing on Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian partnerships and marriages.

Moreover, not only has the topic of intermarriage not been investigated in the literature about the Albanian and Romanian immigrant groups, neither in Italy nor elsewhere, but also the combination of minority-majority and minority-minority intermarriages is almost completely absent in migration studies. In fact, the phenomenon of minority-minority intermarriage in itself has been only occasionally mentioned in quantitative studies (Kennedy 1994; Muttarak and Heath 2010; Peach 1980; Safi and Rogers 2002). Very rarely has it constituted a research topic in

qualitative ones¹. My study thus contributes to address these gaps, but it also presents further elements of originality: first, intermarriage in Italy is an understudied topic, which mostly concerns interreligious marriages between Italian women and Northern African men (Cerchiaro et al. 2015; Riva 2010). Second, intermarriage in Europe is usually studied with reference to the religious and racial divides between European Christians and non-European Muslims or between European Whites and non-European Blacks (Britton 2013; Rodríguez-García 2006; Streiff-Fénart 2000). Intra-European marriages have only recently received some attention, although mostly limited to those among cosmopolitan EU nationals in superdiverse cities² (Brahic 2013; Gaspar 2009) and to those between Southern/Northern European men and Central/Eastern European women³ in the context of female labour migration and transnational marriage migration (Djurdjević 2013; Domić and Philaretou 2007; Guetto and Azzolini 2015; Luehrmann 2004). In all these cases, the category of nationality has been overlooked.

My study deals instead with three specific national groups (Albanians, Italians, and Romanians), although it does not adopt a ‘groupist’ lens, but carries out an analysis of mixed couples and families at the intersection of ethnic, gender, and class categories across the urban/rural divide and having as a starting point the category of generation. This is what I have called the Albanian ‘in-between generation’, namely a generation approximately born from the mid-1970s to late 1980s who arrived in Italy from the early 1990s to mid-2000s, during their adolescence. It is a generation of individuals who were children in Albania and became adult in Italy, who are now in their 30s, and who have clear memories of this transition between two languages, cultures, places, but also two life-stages and world-systems. It could be defined ‘1.5 generation’ (Rumbaut 2004), although I prefer the phrase ‘in-between generation’, which also reflects the biographical/historical in-betweenness that the participants themselves perceived. In fact, the Albanian in-between generation is a unique generation made up of both primary and secondary migrants (unaccompanied male minors, 18-year old female

¹ See Isaksen-Leonard (1993) about Punjabi-Mexican intermarriage in the early 20th century rural California and Moses (2015) about Irish-Italian ‘unlikely unions’ in mid-20th century New York. To the best of my knowledge, there is no a single full-length study available on specific minority-minority intermarriage in Europe.

² The so-called ‘Eurostars’ in Favell (2008).

³ As De Rapper and Sintès (2008) noted about Greece, the Albanian immigrant group does not really fit into the Central/Eastern European macro-group, since the Albanian migration did not develop as a female migration like the other migrations from Central/Eastern Europe.

university students, children of migrants, etc.)⁴; greatly subjected to a phenomenon of ‘anticipatory acculturation’ – due to their exposure to Italian television from an early age back in Albania⁵ – as well as to secondary socialisation upon arrival in Italy. This is a generation who experienced adolescence at a time in which the whole of Albania was in transition (from communism to post-communism) and ‘on the move’. The complexity of this generation and the role of subjectivity in its definition are summarised in the words of a research participant, Artur: ‘Since I was a boy, I always had this fixation with going away, I don’t know, I didn’t feel good, maybe those were the worse years...the adolescence...then, keep in mind, that was a bad period for Albania...those years....and that’s it, I left...’. Although, for comparative reasons, I also included a few participants who arrived in Italy in their childhood and early adulthood, the core sample is composed of Albanian participants who could have been my peers, friends, flatmates, and classmates; an extended sample of those who were members of my social networks from my own adolescence onwards. From this starting point, I moved in two directions, towards an Italian and a Romanian partner of these primary participants.

My thesis is also timely: approximately 25 years after the first Albanian migration (1991) and 10 years after the Romanian migration ‘boom’ (2007), it looks at the integration of Albanians and Romanians in Italy from a novel perspective. In fact, I do not deny the importance of studies focused on one immigrant group only, nor those organised around more asymmetrical dyads – like national majority employer/immigrant minority employee, majority landlord/minority tenant, majority teacher/minority pupil, etc. – which are indeed useful at an initial stage of migration and integration. However, I also believe that without adopting a more relational approach, we may miss much of the integration which is going on at ground-level (‘mixity’ in Grillo 2005), where people meet and develop meaningful interpersonal relations like friendships and partnerships⁶. As a consequence, my study does not look at intermarriage simply as an index of integration, comparing immigrant groups in order to

⁴ By ‘1.5 generation’, the literature usually means the children of arriving immigrants only, that is to say children brought into the host-country by their parents when children are still of school age and dependent on their parents (see also Rumbaut 2004).

⁵ Watching foreign television channels was a widespread clandestine and illegal practice during the communist regime in Albania (King and Mai 2009). The subsequent phenomenon of ‘anticipatory acculturation’ gave a better start specially to the Albanian in-between generation *vis-à-vis* other 1.5 generations in Italy.

⁶ Although partnership represents a rather symmetrical relationship, I do acknowledge that it is not exempt from power relations, as we shall see.

see ‘who fares better’. Also for this reason, I examine Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian marriages, rather than Italian-Albanian and Italian-Romanian ones, as one might perhaps expect; because I conceive integration as a multi-way process of boundary change, which involves the national majority as well as multiple immigrant minorities, interacting with and identifying each other in a shared social space.

In order to seize interactions and mutual identifications, qualitative methods are thus necessary. This research is based on six months intensive fieldwork in the cities and provinces of Tuscany (Italy) and relies on multiple qualitative methods, but primarily on in-depth interviews – as with most sociological ethnographies. Knoblauch (2005) noted that, differently from anthropological ethnographies, sociological ones are not only focused in time, but also based on a background knowledge of the area and on an interest in the research topic that the researcher had already developed before starting the research project itself – which gives him/her a sort of insider status. During my fieldwork, I attained a sample of 61 mixed couples, who I personally interviewed either together or separately (96 individuals altogether, plus a number of relatives and friends occasionally participating in the interview). The quota of each typology of couple was also related to demographic patterns, which show that the number of Albanian-Italian couples with an Albanian woman is double than the number of Albanian-Italian couples with an Albanian man⁷, whereas Albanian-Romanian couples are almost exclusively composed of Albanian men and Romanian women. Couples also vary with reference to their marital and family status; besides married couples, I also interviewed a number of cohabiting, engaged⁸, and divorcing couples in order to obtain a deeper understanding of these unions by focusing on different stages of the relationship. Moreover, since half of them have children, I could also explore both attitudes and behaviours towards children’s identity-projects⁹ (Edwards et al. 2010; Meintel 2002).

1.3 Research questions

This thesis is organised around three main sets of research questions, corresponding to each strand of the literature which it originally brings together (ethnic boundaries, integration, and intermarriage). As illustrated in my theoretical framework, set out in detail in the next chapter, each strand of literature and each set of research questions

⁷ However, Albanian-Italian marriages are more gender-balanced than most intermarriages in Italy.

⁸ By ‘engaged’ I also intend ‘dating’, since the distinction between these two types of relation is rather arbitrary. I basically mean a non-married and non-cohabiting couple.

⁹ I did not, however, interview children.

should be conceived through its interplay with the other two rather than separately. In particular, the second and third sets of research questions will be answered in Chapters 5 and 6-7; whereas the more encompassing first set is discussed in the conclusion, where previous findings are summarised and analysed in the light of the theoretical framework. Below are reported the research questions at the basis of my study.

1. BOUNDARY-MAKING

- What can mixed couples and families tell us of the state of socially constructed boundaries, in the case of Albanian-Italian/Romanian couples and families in Italy?
- What kind of social change do they bring about? How are ethnic boundaries and categories kept or modified through this typology of interaction inside and outside the couple/family sphere?

2. INTEGRATION

- How do minority-majority (Albanian-Italian) and minority-minority (Albanian-Romanian) couples relate to integration?
- Is there any space, within the integration framework, for understanding intermarriage also from the perspective of the national majority partner? Could we speak in terms of co-integration, for instance?
- What about intermarriage between immigrant minorities? Is the concept of integration still suitable in such a ‘three-player game’?

3. INTERMARRIAGE

- What are the lived experiences of Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples?
- What is the role of friendship and family networks in couple formation and maintenance?
- What intersections of ethnic and gender categories characterise these partnerships and marriages?
- What are the characteristics of these mixed families?
- What configurations of mixedness are in place among them?

- What are the main (dis)similarities between minority-majority (Albanian-Italian) and minority-minority (Albanian-Romanian) couples and families?

I consider the second and third set of research questions as subquestions which unpack the concept of social change, mentioned in the first set, with reference to the outside and the inside of the couple and family sphere, respectively. While social change outside the couple refers to integration and specifically to integration as co-integration and mixity (Grillo 2005), showing how ethnic boundaries and categories are both reflected and enlightened by intermarriage; social change inside the couple refers to intermarriage and particularly to intermarriage as mixedness, understood as the combination of ethnic differences (Collet 2012), although going beyond it. In my thesis, Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian partnerships/marriages are defined ‘mixed’ rather than ‘international’, ‘interreligious’, etc. because of my usage of ethnicity in its broad sense (ethnicity *sensu lato*) encompassing the categories of ethnicity in its narrow sense (ethnicity *sensu stricto*), nationality, religion, and ‘race’ which are not only interwoven but also operating through a similar logic of boundary-making (Wimmer 2008a).

These two levels of social change, the societal and the personal, are also related to the etic/emic divide along which the three ‘findings’ chapters are organised. In Chapter 5, in fact, I refer to ‘mixedness through an etic lens’ and, in Chapters 6-7, to ‘mixedness through an emic lens’. By ‘etic’ I mean a view from outside the couple and family sphere; by ‘emic’ its opposite, namely a view from the inside. The etic view stresses ethnicity and specifically identifies nationality plus the attached social stigma as a marker of Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples in Italy. Chapter 5 thus looks at the processes by which these ethnic categories are reproduced, countered, and modified through mixed partnerships and marriages. The emic view focuses instead on both ethnic and non-ethnic categories which lie at the basis of boundary-making processes within the couple and family sphere – aware that gaps between internal and external visions specifically characterise intermarriages, as opposed to what are simply defined ‘marriages’ (Collet 2012), and also that etic categories can be introjected and turn into emic ones.

1.4 Thesis outline

This thesis is composed of 8 chapters. The current introductory chapter (Chapter 1) is followed by the theoretical, methodological and contextual chapters (Chapters 2-3-4); whereas my research findings are presented in the second half of the thesis (Chapters 5-6-7) and further discussed in the conclusion (Chapter 8). The content of each chapter is outlined below.

Chapter 1. Introduction

This chapter – the present one – introduces the thesis by setting the scene and clarifying its rationale, research topic, research questions, and structure. It shows the main theoretical and empirical gaps that my study aims to address and summarises the ways in which my research was carried out.

Chapter 2. Theories

This chapter presents the main theories and key concepts employed in my research. It is divided into three parts: ethnic boundaries, integration, and intermarriage. It reviews the academic literature, building up a theoretical framework specially tailored for this research by bringing together the above-mentioned three strands. The chapter starts by introducing the concept of ethnicity, focusing on ethnic boundaries and categories rather than groups and ‘cultural stuff’ (Barth 1969; Brubaker 2002; Wimmer 2008a). Both integration and intermarriage are subsequently interpreted as processes of ethnic boundary-making developed around the opposition between ‘self’ and ‘other’ (Qian and Lichter 2007; Zolberg and Woon 1999). Then, integration is discussed with reference to what Grillo (2005) called four ‘visions of diversity’ (assimilation, integration, multiculturalism, and mixity), whereas intermarriage is analysed in terms of patterns and meanings (Collet 2012; Kalmijn 1998). While my study approaches integration and intermarriage through the boundary-making framework, the academic literature has approached this nexus differently, looking at causality and at the essentialisation of the category of culture. My research will challenge these two assumptions, offering a more nuanced understanding of integration, intermarriage, and their nexus.

Chapter 3. Methods

This chapter concerns the methodology and methods of my research. First, it discusses the constructivist epistemology at the basis of qualitative studies (Flick 2009), and

subsequently examines the qualitative methods employed to collect and analyse the data (in-depth interviews, photo-elicitation, participant observation, and grounded theory), paying special attention to the concept of sociological ethnography (Knoblauch 2005). The chapter moves on to describe sampling techniques and the fieldwork setting. In particular, my access to the sample was possible thanks to a combination of snowballing, banns of marriage, and Facebook; the sample is composed of 61 Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples, whereas the setting is represented by urban and rural Tuscany (Italy). The chapter ends with a reflection on ethics and positionality. In particular, while the legacy of stigmatisation usually was not a problematic topic to deal with, the experience of being in a mixed couple/family sometimes was and even prevented some prospective participants from taking part in the research. Finally, my being a national majority female is linked with the management of proximity and distance from participants in research encounters and especially in joint couple interviews.

Chapter 4. Context

This chapter discusses the context of my research. It analyses the transformation of Italy from an emigrant into an immigrant society and reviews the academic literatures on the post-communist Albanian and Romanian migrations, covering the main themes and also pointing at overlaps and gaps – among the latter, intermarriage. It notes how, in the last 25 years, Italy has turned into an immigrant society and a specific case of the ‘Southern European model of migration’ (King and Zontini 2000). The Albanian migrations in the 1990s and the Romanian migrations in the 2000s produced the two largest immigrant groups currently residing in the country. While the Albanian migration developed in correspondence with political/economic/humanitarian crises (1991, 1997, 1999) and mostly targeted Greece and Italy; the Romanian migration was greatly affected by the EU enlargement (2002, 2007) and was mainly directed towards Italy and Spain. Subsequently, the chapter examines the integration process of Albanian and Romanian immigrants in Italy referring to structural indices also affecting partner choice. In fact, Albanians and Romanians represent the two largest immigrant groups in Italy. They both are widely distributed across the country, but present an opposite sex ratio. These two groups are well represented in the labour market and schooling system, as well as referring to citizenship acquisition and intermarriage – although showing different patterns. Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian intermarriages are here introduced,

relying on demographic information, and will be further explored in the following three chapters.

Chapter 5. Mixedness through an etic lens

This is the first chapter about my findings. It analyses the Albanian and Romanian integration processes in Italy from the viewpoint of mixed couples and families, through application of the boundary-making framework. It shows how the ethnic categories, which are in place in a shared social space, shape interactions and identifications between the national majority and multiple immigrant minorities as well as among immigrant minorities. The chapter specifically notes how phenomena of stigmatisation based on immigration produced the ethnic categories of ‘Albanian’ and ‘Romanian’ along with the opposition between national and foreigner (‘Italian’ vs ‘Albanian’/‘Romanian’) – further developed in that between old-timers and new-comers (‘Albanian’ vs ‘Romanian’). These categories, which not only indicate nationalities but also the social stigma that has been attached to them, are either reproduced or countered in intergroup encounters through stigmatisation, performances of social mimicry and counter-discourses based on individualism/universalism. However, interactions are also sites where categories can be produced *ex novo* and where established boundaries can be modified in their location and meaning. The chapter demonstrates that ethnic boundaries in an immigrant and former emigrant society may not only be made and unmade, but also remade through the category of migration. In fact, a common emigration background, the acknowledgement of a (co-)integration process, and a shared plan of return/onward migration may bring together yesterday’s, today’s, and tomorrow’s migrants. In this chapter, not only mixedness as integration, but also the etic ethnic categories underlying Albanian-Italian/Romanian partnerships and marriages are analysed and brought back to the phenomenon of migration. The next two chapters deal instead with mixedness as intermarriage and with the emic ethnic and non-ethnic categories informing these unions.

Chapter 6. Mixedness through an emic lens: encounter and cohabitation

This chapter and the next one should be seen as parts of the same unit, depicting a detailed portrayal of Albanian-Italian/Romanian couples and families. In particular, this chapter focuses on the encounter between the two partners, with the family of the partner, and between the two families; followed by a part on weddings and cohabitation.

It pays special attention to the social networks and their influence when it comes to couple formation and maintenance. It shows that the encounter between the two partners happened in a plurality of environments, often mediated by common friends; and that the family rather had an obstructive role both through sanctions and intergenerational value transmission. After having examined the wedding ceremony, the chapter moves on to the theme of life together – looking at living arrangements, the division of domestic labour, and cuisine. First, we can see how both the wedding and cuisine start to be defined as ‘mixed’ by participants. Second, entering the household, the category of gender becomes central and its combination with ethnicity is analysed, not only referring to the gendered dimension of ethnic stereotypes, but also to the gendered character of filial duties and family expectations, linked with generation and care – further developed in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7. Mixedness through an emic lens: family formation and beyond

This chapter focuses on family formation and discusses the configurations of mixedness which are in place among the couples whom I interviewed. It shows how both ethnic and non-ethnic categories influence the way in which individuals in mixed couples and families perceive themselves. These emic categories are not necessarily aligned with those imposed from outside the couple itself. Therefore, the concept of mixedness resulting from an ethnic boundary is not only accepted or rejected, but also reworked. In particular, the chapter explores naming, religion, language, and citizenship transmission among Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian families and delves into both minority-majority and minority-minority couple/family dynamics. It observes how participants interpret their own mixedness and points at the four main configurations which emerged from the fieldwork. It follows that the etic category of mixedness based on nationality may be either accepted by detaching nationality from the corresponding social stigma, or rejected when this detachment does not occur. Alternatively, religion, education, and cosmopolitanism may become sources of commonality within the couple – beyond different nationalities – at the intersection of ethnic/non-ethnic categories, and particularistic/universalistic views.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

The last chapter sums up my original contribution. It revisits the research questions stated in the introduction and also mentioned throughout the thesis, giving them sets of

answers. It also identifies what I see as the main limitations of this study and suggests possible directions for future research.

Figure 1. Snowglobe from Krujë, Albania¹⁰



¹⁰ This first picture should be related to picture 33 and 34, at the end of the thesis (pages 226 and 240). While Figure 1 portrays a snowglobe from Krujë (Albania) found in an Albanian-Italian household, Figure 33 portrays an Albanian-Italian couple in Krujë, showing the Albanian and Italian flags together. Figure 34 instead portrays various snowglobes, among which one displaying a picture of an Albanian-Italian couple of participants, and a frame about Albania and Italy. We could understand this sequence of three pictures as the coexistence of an internal/external view on mixed couples (in this case, Albanian-Italian), seen as microcosms, and this thesis as constituted of two main movements (zooming in/out).

THEORIES

Introduction

This chapter concerns the theoretical framework of my research and presents the three key concepts of ethnic boundaries, integration, and intermarriage. First, ethnicity is intended as ethnicity *sensu lato*, encompassing ethnicity *sensu stricto*, plus nationality, religion, and ‘race’, since all these categories operate through comparable logics (Wimmer 2008a) and often intersect within the sphere of intermarriage – in my thesis also defined as ‘mixed marriage’ rather than through subdivisions like ‘interethnic’, ‘international’, ‘interreligious’, or ‘interracial’ marriage (Collet 2012). Moreover, ethnicity is approached as a social construction rather than as an essence. Therefore, the attention is focused on sites where ethnic categories are made, unmade, and remade – the ethnic boundaries – rather than on the ‘cultural stuff’ that they enclose (Barth 1969). Then, by moving from the concept of ethnic boundary to the concept of ethnic boundary-making, I follow Wimmer (2008a, 2008b) in emphasising the agency of social actors in the production of categories of self/other identifications. The concept of boundary-making frames all this research, applying to both integration and intermarriage (Figure 2). In fact, integration could be seen as a process by which boundaries change, interpreting the distinction between ‘selves’ and ‘others’ as an opposition between host-society members and immigrants. Through a plurality of dynamics ranging from language-learning to citizenship acquisition, immigrants progressively turn into members of the host-society (Alba 2005; Alba and Nee 2003; Bauböck 1994; Zolberg and Woon 1999). Also intermarriage could be seen as a phenomenon of boundary change in which mixed couples cross intergroup boundaries defined by ethnicity *sensu lato*, whereas their children blur these boundaries through multiple affiliations. Over time, the phenomena of boundary-crossing and blurring can lead to boundary shifts through the inclusion of former ‘others’ into the domain of the ‘self’ and the ‘remaking of the mainstream’ (Alba 1999; Qian and Lichter 2007).

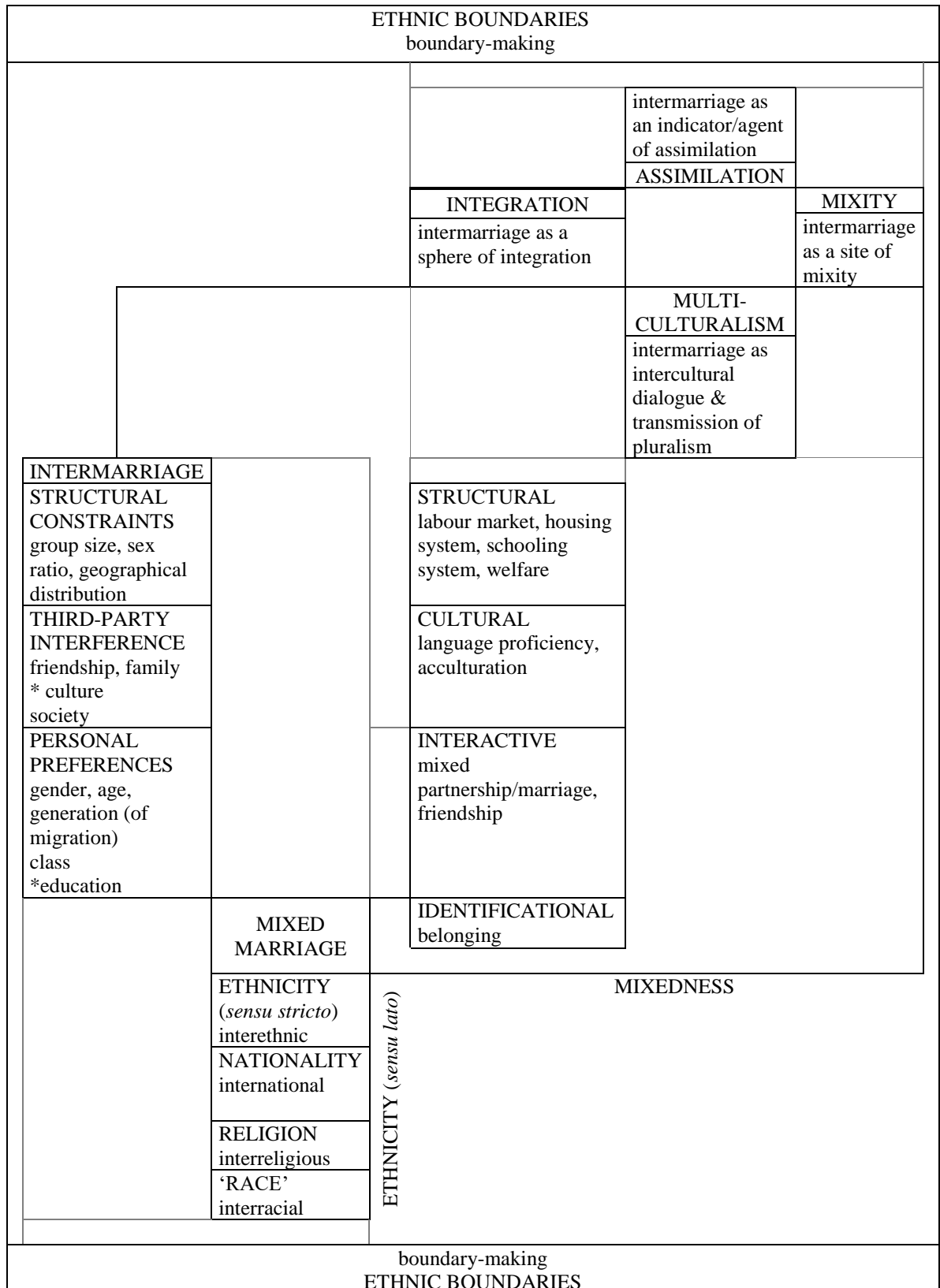
The concept of integration is discussed in the second section. The term ‘integration’ has been used by scholars and policy-makers in Europe, with reference to the the long-term consequences of immigrants’ settlement and to the measures taken by host-societies in this respect. It is also present in ordinary language, as an ‘umbrella term’ encompassing both political discourses and social practices (Favell 2003). It is the term commonly employed in Italy by both officialdom and civil society, with regard to what

happens after immigration. Initially, the term ‘integration’ and further terms such as ‘incorporation’ and ‘inclusion’ – which recall parallelisms between bodies and territories and also refer to societies as organic and holistic entities – are analysed. In particular, the multi-level and multi-dimensional model of integration proposed by Heckmann (2006) is introduced. Besides integration, further correlated concepts like assimilation and multiculturalism are presented, summarising fundamental theories as well as revisions – segmented assimilation (Portes and Zhou 1993); interculturalism, superdiversity, and conviviality (Moodod 2012; Gilroy 2004; Vertovec 2007). Lastly, the concept of mixity (Grillo 2005), as bottom-up integration taking place in sites of interactions such as mixed couples and families, schools and playgrounds, is presented and linked with notions like ‘ethos of mixing’ (Wessendorf 2011) and ‘culture of mixing’ (Caballero et al. 2008). In this way, the analysis of the *continuum* made of assimilation, integration, multiculturalism, and mixity – which Grillo (2005) defined as ‘visions of diversity’ – is completed. This section also reviews the nexus between intermarriage and integration, as it has been conceived within each of these four visions: a stage following acculturation and structural assimilation, a sphere of interactive integration, an intercultural dialogue and transmission of pluralism, and a site of mixity.

The third section deals with intermarriage. The phenomenon of intermarriage has been considered as evidence of intergroup social distance reduction – in immigrant societies, interpreted in terms of integration. According to Bogardus (1925), marriage represents the highest level of social acceptance, which would indicate that an individual belonging to a different group could be accepted, in principle, into one’s closest sphere: the family. However, as Song (2009) suggested, the nexus between intermarriage and integration is more tenuous and complex than it has been theorised in the literature. In fact, intermarriage may not only constitute an indicator of integration, but also promote it; moreover, it could imply both integration and marginalisation. Intermarriage is then analysed throughout the model proposed by Kalmijn (1998), composed of structural constraints, third-party interference, and personal preferences. As a consequence, various elements are taken into account – group size, sex ratio, and geographical distribution; the influence of friendship and family networks, as well as the role of society; gender, age, generation (of migration), and class. Lastly, meanings beyond patterns of intermarriage are analysed. Mixed marriages are thus deconstructed in interethnic, international, interreligious, and interracial marriages – depending on the space, time and actors under consideration. A final note reflects on the bulk of the

literature reviewed in the whole chapter and identifies a few main gaps that my study contributes to fill.

Figure 2. Theoretical framework



2.1 Ethnic boundaries

2.1.1 *From ethnicity to ethnic boundary-making*

The concept of ethnic boundary was introduced in social anthropology by Barth (1969), who advocated a constructivist approach to ethnicity against a primordialist view according to which to each ethnic group would correspond a distinct culture self-perpetuating in isolation and separation from the others. Barth instead proposed that ethnicity needs to be understood not as an inventory of cultural differences of which groups are bearers, but as a product of an ethnic boundary and as a construction derived from an interactive process of self/other identification. The subsequent distinction between who ‘plays the same game’ and who does not entails different assumptions and consequently affects social relationships. In fact, ethnicity is a superordinate identity – similar to gender and class – which implies the kind of roles that individuals are allowed to assume in society. The essays collected in this seminal book showed that ethnicity is precisely the result of intergroup contacts and relations and that social interactions across an ethnic boundary are often based on dichotomised statuses to which identificational categories refer. However, ethnicity is not only a way to organise social interaction, but also identification – being based on the combination of self-ascription and categorisation, which means that social actors identify themselves and are classified by others in ethnic terms for the purpose of interaction. This point was also remarked on by Jenkins (1997), who argued that ethnic identity is produced at the interplay between internal and external categories, resulting from ingroup identification as well as outgroup categorisation.

Gossiaux (2002) developed this further, noting how ethnicity is a relation of identity/alterity and specifically a three-term relation in which reciprocal similarities and differences are measured in comparison to an implicit third pole. The third pole is necessary for understanding if x is similar or different from y , namely if it is ‘another self’ or ‘other’ – since a binary opposition would quickly reach an impasse. This ethnic relation may be at the basis of an ethnic structuration of social space, although not necessarily. Gossiaux’s observation resonates with another by Brubaker (2002), who reflected on the distinction between ethnic groups and ethnic categories, claiming that there could be ethnicity without groupness. In fact, assuming that ethnicity is not a ‘thing’ in the world, but a perspective on the world, also means that ethnicity has to be

conceived as a socially constructed system of classification, categorisation, and identification which does not necessarily produce groupness. To illustrate this point, Brubaker gave the example of the Hungarian minority of Romania, starting from the categories of 'Hungarian' and 'Romanian' rather than from the groups of 'the Hungarians' and 'the Romanians'. In this way, he explained why phenomena of ethnic mobilisation had occurred in some contexts (Târgu Mureş), but not in others (Cluj-Napoca). This distinction makes it possible to understand ethnicity as a process rather than a substance, which can be occasionally used 'to make sense of problems and predicaments, to articulate affinities and affiliations, to identify commonalities and connections, to frame stories and self-understanding' (Brubaker 2002:183) and which does not necessarily result in ethnic mobilisation. Following this constructivist approach, in my research I do not look at Albanians, Italians, and Romanians as alleged ethnic groups, but as ethnic categories in a non-ethnically structured social space, which is defined as 'immigrant' rather than 'multi-ethnic'. These categories became the basis for drawing boundaries and establishing hierarchies between 'selves' and 'others' in the transition of Italy from an emigrant to an immigrant society and inevitably come into play in social interactions between those individuals who can be identified accordingly, having not only a denotative but also a connotative meaning.

Wimmer (2008a, 2008b, 2014) represented processes of ethnic categorisation through the boundary-making framework, arguing that the boundary constitutes a useful metaphor able to show that ethnic categories are not merely cognitive. Lamont and Molnár (2002) had previously suggested an opposition between symbolic and social boundaries, matching with the notion of ethnic boundary in Wimmer (2014). In particular, symbolic boundaries are conceptual distinctions made by social actors to classify reality. They separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership; by comparing ingroup and outgroup, social actors differentiate themselves from others and positively evaluate the self in order to either maintain or achieve a higher status in certain social arenas. Instead, social boundaries are symbolic boundaries which are widely agreed upon and take a constraining character, affecting social interactions in important ways (e.g. racial segregation). Symbolic boundaries are thus the necessary but not sufficient condition for social boundaries and, although both are equally real, they have a different cogency.

Turning back to the processes of ethnic boundary-making, Wimmer (2008a, 2008b) showed how ethnic boundaries are the outcome of classifications taking place in the

wider social space – under the influence of institutions, power relations, and politics which produces either consensus or conflict around the meaning and location of the boundaries themselves. Wimmer also elaborated a fundamental taxonomy, indicating how ethnic boundaries change through endogenous and exogenous mechanisms. In fact, although boundaries vary in political salience, social closure, cultural differentiation, and historical stability; nonetheless, they are made, unmade, and remade through recurring mechanisms – which can be defined ‘ethnic’ in a broad understanding of this term. As opposed to much of the US literature which differentiates between ethnicity and ‘race’ and even considers ethnicity as a sub-type of ‘race’, Wimmer (2008a) demonstrated that ethnic boundary-making processes are universal, despite the particular categories which are at stake in specific time/space conjunctures. Similarly, my research refers to what I call ethnicity *sensu lato* – which encompasses ethnicity *sensu stricto*, nationality, religion, and ‘race’ since all these categories operate through comparable logics and are often interrelated within the sphere of intermarriage. To illustrate this point, for instance, I could note that an Albanian-Italian marriage may be not only considered ‘international’ but also ‘interreligious’ (see Cerchiaro et al. 2015). In particular, Wimmer (2008a) identified five processes of boundary-making, distinguishing between those aiming at changing the location and those aiming at changing the meaning of a boundary. These processes range from boundary expansion and contraction, which result in the inclusion of former ‘others’ or in the exclusion of former ‘selves’ (e.g. nation-building, separatism); to the inversion of established hierarchies through transvaluation or equalisation (e.g. Black power) as opposed to individual/collective repositionings across the boundary, which do not alter such hierarchies (e.g. social mimicry); up to the overcoming of an ethnic boundary through non-ethnic categories (e.g. class warfare).

In another article, which discusses on how (not) to think of ethnicity in immigrant societies, Wimmer (2007) considered integration primarily as a process of boundary-shifting. Groups that were formerly treated as aliens and immigrant minorities, are subsequently treated as members of the nation – which is not only a process finalised by citizenship acquisition, but also depends on acceptance by the majority population. While the ethnic boundary-making framework constitutes a promising approach also in migration studies, because of the social dynamics and transformation that it entails, Wimmer noted that both the assimilationistic and multiculturalistic strands of literature are rather based on a primordialistic understanding of ethnicity and tend to conceive

immigrant groups as ethnic groups which are bearers of cultural differences. Nonetheless, Wimmer not only supported the constructivist approach to ethnicity, but also called for a de-ethnicisation of the research design saying that we should avoid interpreting too much of the social world through the lens of ethnicity (Wimmer 2007, 2008a). Wimmer made precisely the example of intermarriage, which is commonly understood in ethnic terms and especially as a phenomenon of boundary-blurring – in opposition to ethno-racial stereotypes – although it could also go beyond ethnicity. These observations open the way to a more nuanced understanding of integration and intermarriage, which will be pursued in my study.

Therefore, after having introduced the concept of ethnic boundary as it is used in this research, departing from a constructivist approach to ethnicity and arriving to the promises of the ethnic boundary-making framework in migration studies, the following pages will look at how the literature has interpreted both integration and intermarriage as phenomena of boundary-making. In fact, the boundary is such an important heuristic device because it captures an essential social dimension: relationality. Through application of the boundary-making framework to integration and intermarriage – two phenomena concerning the boundary between ‘selves’ and ‘others’ – my study will shed a new light also on their nexus.

2.1.2 Integration as boundary-making

Bauböck (1994) interpreted integration as a phenomenon of boundary-crossing and boundary-blurring, making a distinction between assimilation and pluralism¹¹ specifically on the basis of the conceptualisation of the boundary between natives¹² and immigrants. In fact, while assimilation indicates an insertion without any change in the social structure, leaving the boundary between natives and immigrants unaffected and basically consisting of individual boundary-crossing; pluralism instead conceives social membership as a matter of grades, leading to intergroup boundary-blurring and finally to changes in the social structure. Zolberg and Woon (1999) further developed this interpretation of integration as a process of boundary change, noting how boundaries are not all alike. For example, migrations have drawn a boundary between ‘us’ and ‘not us’

¹¹ Elsewhere multiculturalism (see Cesareo 2004).

¹² In my thesis I do not use the term ‘native’ unless reported in the literature, because of the fact that also the second generations were born in the reference society. However, my sample is not composed of second-generation individuals, due to the relatively young age of this sub-group – the Albanian migration started in the early 1990s – and their consequent marital/family status at the time of my fieldwork.

through religion (Islam) in Europe and through language (Spanish) in the US. Zolberg and Woon also argued that the negotiation of social membership between immigrants and natives involves multiple processes of boundary-crossing, blurring, and shifting. Boundary-crossing indicates individual-level integration, moving an individual across the boundary without challenging the state of the boundary itself – as exemplified by language learning, religious conversion, and citizenship acquisition. Boundary-blurring implies that the boundary has become less distinct and the group membership unclear – as exemplified by bilingualism, public recognition of other religions, and dual citizenship. Boundary-shifting means that the boundary is finally transformed and former outsiders have now become insiders, although shifts can only take place after substantial boundary-crossing and boundary-blurring (Alba 1999). Moreover, boundary-crossing/blurring may involve an ‘in-between’ phase, where the transformation of strangers into members is seen as an ‘unnatural’ act. However, this phenomenon can be opposed by both majority and minorities, since integration is an interactive process which involves both immigrants and natives – although they do not have an equal status. In fact, not only the group size – whereby we speak of a national majority and immigrant minorities – but also the fact that integration occurs into a society which is the ‘home-society’ for the majority and ‘host-society’ for the minority generates asymmetries. Nonetheless, there may be buffer zones of indifference (e.g. cuisine, arts, etc.), where what was formerly thought unacceptable is finally accepted, leading to boundary-crossing also among majority individuals.

The triad composed of boundary crossing, blurring, and shifting was also adopted by Alba and Nee (2003) in their revision of assimilation theory. Interestingly, Alba and Nee considered boundary-blurring as more common than boundary-crossing now because of the changing make-up of the American mainstream – which indicates how social change does not concern the immigrant minority only, but also the national majority. Moreover, although the divide between immigrants and natives tends to be less salient among the second generation, born and raised in the parental host-society, different boundaries have different implications in terms of social membership and endurance. Referring to this, Alba (2005) noted that while religion constitutes a bright boundary among second-generation Maghrebins in France and Turks in Germany, ‘race’ represents instead a blurred one among Mexicans in the US. It follows that integration is expected to be highly individualised in the former case, whereas it would

have a broader basis in the latter. Alba added that this hypothesis seems to be confirmed by intermarriage rates – low for Turks in Germany and high for Mexicans in the US.

2.1.3 Intermarriage as boundary-making

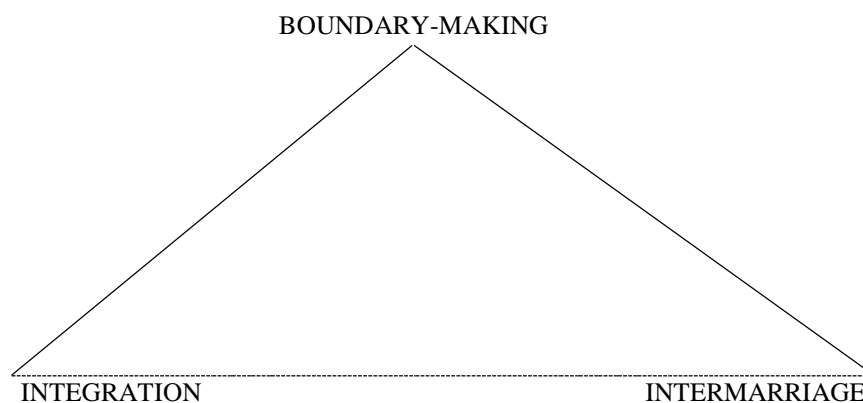
Marriage is one of the social institutions most involved in boundary change and maintenance. High rates of intermarriage are deemed to indicate that ethnic boundaries have weakened over time, intergroup social distance has reduced, and individuals belonging to different groups accept each other as equals (Qian and Lichter 2007). However, interactions across a boundary depend on the two sides of the boundary itself and there may be even more reluctance among immigrant minorities than among the national majority, although in most cases it is the other way around (Alba and Foner 2015). Clycq (2014), for instance, investigated parental attitudes towards intermarriage and showed that exogamy does not constitute the norm among any group – giving the example of Belgians, Italians, and Moroccans in Belgium – although it seems more accepted when it comes to sons rather than daughters within each group. It follows that marital boundaries are not only ethnically marked, but also constructed at the intersection between ethnic and gender categories. Interestingly, Breger and Hill (1998) reflected on women in intermarriage not only because of their symbolic value in group reproduction, but also in terms of a ‘gendered ethnic centre’ corresponding to the last domain in which minorities could exercise their control.

Nevertheless, intermarriage not only reflects intergroup boundaries, but also influences their state through the formation of mixed families. Stephan and Stephan (1989) showed that most mixed-heritage Japanese-Americans in Hawaii and Latin-Americans in US South-West recognised their multiple identity – taking into account various factors from self-ascription to categorisation from others, up to phenotype and cultural heritage. Although this was more common in a pluralist social space like Hawaii and within a higher status group like the Japanese, the multiple ethnic identification of the offspring of intermarriage, together with an increase of these unions, would justify the expectation that ethnic boundaries may be fading, at least for some groups. Although most studies have focused on intermarriage as boundary change, some authors have also approached intermarriage as boundary maintenance. In fact, as long as children of intermarriage become affiliated to one family line only, exogamy can be seen as a temporary lapse in the endogamic trend and as an exception to the rule, which does not really weaken group boundaries, neither reduce social distance, nor lead

to the acceptance of others as equals – as illustrated by Özgen (2014) in a study on Arabs, Kurds, and Turks in Antioch (Turkey). Also Wimmer (2008a) looked at the re-classification of children of intermarriage as a phenomenon of individual crossing. Of particular interest here is the study by Finnäs and O’Leary (2003), which shows how especially educated parents may decide to make their children members of the minority, in settings where this holds a higher status and social prestige – as in the case of Swedes in Finland and Protestants in Northern Ireland. Finally, authors have also shown that intermarriage may not challenge ethnic boundaries at all, but rather reinforce them by reproducing stereotypes and inequality – as exemplified by the hypersexualisation of African men and Asian women over their counterparts (Jacobs and Labov 2002).

Therefore, by applying the boundary-making framework to integration and intermarriage, this research explores the processes of boundary change and maintenance between Albanians, Italians, and Romanians in Italy. The key questions that this study aims to answer are: *What can mixed couples and families tell us of the state of socially constructed boundaries, in the case of Albanian-Italian/Romanian couples and families in Italy? What kind of social change do they bring about? How are ethnic boundaries and categories kept or modified through this typology of interaction inside and outside the couple/family sphere?* We have seen how both integration and intermarriage can be interpreted as phenomena of boundary-making; however, to understand the implications of intermarriage in immigrant societies, it is necessary to draw a second-level connection (Figure 3) – now between intermarriage and integration. Through this ‘triangle’, my study will offer an alternative interpretation of the intermarriage-integration nexus.

Figure 3. Integration and intermarriage as boundary-making



2.2 Integration

2.2.1 Integration

Integration can be defined as a process by which immigrants become part of the host-society (Castles et al. 2002). Referring to its etymology (*integrare*, *integer*), integration recalls wholeness and implies a holistic representation of societies, conceived as composed of interrelated parts (Heckmann 2006). Bauböck (1995:9) described integration as an ‘elusive term’ encompassing two different interpretations; one corresponds to the ‘internal cohesion of a system or aggregate composed of a multitude of singular units or elements’, while the second one designates ‘the entry into the system of elements which had not been part of the environment before, or the extension of the system to incorporate such external elements or units’. Additional terms with a similar meaning, that can be found in the literature, are ‘incorporation’ – which recalls an organicist representation of societies as social bodies (*incorporare*, *corpus*) – and ‘inclusion’ – which instead refers to enclosed spaces (*includere*, *clausus*). These terms not only suggest a parallelism between societies, bodies, and territories; but also evoke the concept of boundary, where categories are (re)produced and dynamics of ingrouping/outgrouping take place. Another correlated term, which is commonly used in the US – also with a physiological acceptance, i.e. ‘absorption’ – is ‘assimilation’ (*adsimulatio*, *similis*), which indicates the direction of ‘making similar’ and ‘becoming similar’ (Brubaker 2001). In addition to these terms, Castles et al. (2002) list a few alternative terms such as ‘settlement’, ‘adjustment’, and ‘adaptation’ which contribute to conceptually map the field of integration.

Integration takes place after immigrants’ arrival in the host-society, as a way to ‘function effectively in the new environment’ (Castles et al. 2002:113). Being a process by which immigrants acquire social membership within the host-society, it occurs at every level and in every sector in which immigrants need to gain access and acceptance. Therefore, integration involves a wide range of social actors besides immigrants: public officers, policy-makers, employers, trade-union workers, co-workers, service providers, neighbours, etc. Various analytical frameworks of integration have been developed, approaching integration across multiple levels, dimensions, and spheres in which social actors integrate. In particular, Heckmann (2006) proposed a multi-level model of integration, able to overcome the opposition of structure/agency between system

integration (institutions) and social integration (social actors), through the articulation of macro-level integration (laws, policies, etc.), meso-level integration (workplace, school, associationism, etc.), and micro-level integration (social relationships). Referring to social integration as the inclusion of social actors within the system on the basis of interpersonal relationships and personal attitudes towards the host-society, Heckmann divided social integration into four dimensions: structural, cultural, interactive, and identificational. Structural integration indicates the immigrants' inclusion within the core institutions of the host-society (labour market, schooling and housing system, welfare, etc.); cultural integration refers to phenomena such as acculturation and multilingualism; interactive integration points at social relationships like mixed partnerships/marriages and friendships; and identificational integration indicates attachments and feelings of belonging to the host-society. Engbersen (2003) acknowledged the existence of tensions between and within these spheres as well as the fact that, although all dimensions and spheres of integration are equally important, only some can be subjected to integration policies (see also Grillo 2005).

Therefore, integration is not only a matter of objective indicators such as labour market participation and educational attainments, but it also refers to intersubjective perceptions of social distance expressed by attitudes and behaviours of all social actors involved – both natives and immigrants. This fourfold model of integration was adopted by King and Mai (2008) in their study on the Albanian migration to Italy, which is the reference point for my research. In fact, although my study specifically focuses on the sphere of intermarriage, and thus on the interactive dimension of micro-level integration, thanks to what we could call the 'total social fact'¹³ character of marriage, it extends its analysis to further levels, dimensions, and spheres. Referring to this, Fulas-Souroulla (2010) argued that integration into one dimension does not necessarily mean integration into another – as illustrated in her research on the socio-economic/legal/cultural integration of foreign women married to Greek-Cypriot men, which shows that citizenship acquisition via marriage does not eliminate discrimination, for instance. The second set of research questions is thus developed around the query: *'How do mixed couples relate to integration?'*

¹³ Marriage understood as a 'total social fact' refers to its being a phenomenon with implications all throughout the society: at an individual and collective level; in the economic, legal, religious, etc. sphere; and with a physical and psychological effect (Lévi-Strauss 1950).

Castles and Miller (1993) distinguished between assimilationist, multiculturalist, and differential exclusionist national models of integration – exemplified by France, the UK, and Germany – which would provide prototypes for thinking of integration policies and philosophies. Of particular interest is the case of the differential exclusionist model, which reflects the philosophies and policies first adopted by former guestworker countries (Germany, Switzerland, and Belgium) and then by the host-societies of Southern Europe. The differential exclusionist model conceives immigrants as temporary labourers without possibilities of permanent settlement and this conception is further confirmed by citizenship regimes based on *ius sanguinis* rather than *ius soli*. Brubaker (1992) opposed instead civic-territorial and ethno-cultural models of integration – exemplified by France and Germany – showing that integration occurs into a tradition and an idea of nationhood which cannot be easily eradicated. The fact that integration had been mostly investigated through a national lens has been subsequently questioned by Wimmer and Glick-Schiller (2002), according to whom this approach would reproduce ‘methodological nationalism’ – namely the conflation of societies with nation-states. Alternatives to methodological nationalism have been provided by transnational and city-scale approaches to immigrant incorporation, especially referring to global cities and urban neighbourhoods and to a lesser extent also to rural areas (Glick-Schiller and Çağlar 2009; Morén-Alegret 2008; Sassen 2005). In my research, I look at the urban/rural divide, focusing on one Italian region and above all on a cluster of provinces where immigrants have intensively settled over recent decades.

Within the literature on integration, Lucassen and Laarman (2009) analysed intermarriage patterns in post-war Europe along the divide between colonial and non-colonial immigrants, identifying in religion rather than in ‘race’ an emerging boundary (Alba 2005; Zolberg and Woon 1999). However, although historical intra-European migration flows were comparable to overseas flows, studies on intermarriages between European host-society members and immigrants are either lacking or limited to national-language literatures. The literature on intermarriage and integration available in English has developed in Europe only recently, and has mostly focused on non-European immigrants – like Caribbeans/Southern Asians in the UK and Maghrebins in France (e.g. Muttarak and Heath 2010; Safi and Rogers 2008). Within the TIES project on the ‘European second generation’, Hamel et al. (2012) specifically delved into the partner choice and union formation among children of immigrants in selected European countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands),

focusing on the Turkish, Moroccan, and former-Yugoslavian second generations. Although Hamel et al. recognised the importance of combining qualitative and quantitative analysis, through the above mentioned studies we still know rather little about mixed couples besides demographic information. Moreover, the plurality of levels, dimensions, and spheres characterising integration has also led to the fragmentation of research on the intermarriage-integration nexus in Europe – as opposed to what had happened in relation to the concept of assimilation, developed much earlier in the US.

2.2.2 Assimilation

Within the ‘race-relation cycle’ theorised by Park (1950), assimilation appeared as the final stage, after contact, competition, and accommodation. Gordon (1964) later elaborated a seven-stage assimilation model, composed of cultural, structural, marital, identificational assimilation, plus absence of prejudice, discrimination, and conflict. Whereas cultural assimilation had the priority over structural assimilation, structural assimilation was seen as the necessary condition from which all the other types of assimilation could develop. Within this model, intermarriage – also defined as ‘marital assimilation’, ‘intermixture’, and ‘amalgamation’ – played a major role, being the ‘pathway on which diverse people meet and mingle’ and ‘cultures blend’ (Gordon 1964:265). However, Gordon also acknowledged that, instead of a ‘melting-pot’, what had actually occurred in American society had been mainstream-conformity (i.e. Anglo-conformity). This not only depended on power relations, but also on the ‘assimilability’ of pre-1965 immigrants, mostly coming from Europe. Referring to this, researchers have shown how immigrant groups such as the Irish, Italians, and Jews managed to enter the mainstream, ‘becoming White’ (Brodkin 1998; Guglielmo and Salerno 2003; Ignatiev 1995), and how this also influenced intermarriage patterns with Anglo-Americans (Alba and Golden 1986; Judd 1990; Pagnini and Morgan 1990). In addition to majority-minority intermarriage, a much smaller amount of studies have also dealt with minority-minority intermarriage. In particular, Kennedy (1944) elaborated the notion of ‘triple melting-pot’, identifying in religion a supra-national boundary. In fact, looking at intermarriage patterns in the US East Coast (1870-1940), Kennedy suggested the existence of Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish ‘melting-pots’ – although these values were later questioned by Peach (1980).

Conversely, the ‘new era of migrations’ to the US (post-1965) has been characterised by Latin American and Asian immigrants, for whom assimilation has followed other trajectories, ultimately because of the racial divide. As a consequence, the concept of assimilation has been revised (Alba and Nee 1997) and especially renewed through the segmented assimilation theory (Portes and Zhou 1993). By ‘segmented assimilation’, Portes and Zhou (1993) intended different pathways of incorporation – focusing on the second generations – like assimilation within the mainstream middle-class, within a plural underclass, or within an immigrant minority enclave. In particular, Portes and Zhou associated upward/downward mobility to the modes of incorporation as well as to the role of human capital. It follows that, on the one hand, state-policies may be receptive, indifferent, or hostile; host-society members may or may not have prejudice against the reference immigrant groups; and immigrant groups may constitute strong or weak co-ethnic communities. On the other hand, segmented assimilation has been connected with consonant, dissonant, or selective acculturation, emphasising the role played by the family in the adaptation of the second generation (Portes and Rumbaut 2005). In fact, as Rumbaut (2004) suggested, age, life-stage, generation, and cohort all influence immigrants’ incorporation from a genealogical, demographic, and biographical point of view. On the basis of place of birth and socialisation, Rumbaut traced a line between first and second generation of migration, showing how the parents’ host-society would turn into their children’s home-society. A further distinction concerns those who migrated in their childhood or adolescence (1.5 generation) – whose experience of incorporation would resemble either the first (1.25) or the second generation (1.75), depending on the age of arrival. Although my research mostly refers to what could be defined an Albanian ‘1.5 generation’, I prefer using the phrase ‘in-between generation’ which better describes a generation which emigrated during adolescence either with or without the family. Turning back to the segmented assimilation theory, authors have shown that there could be acculturation with structural assimilation, but also structural assimilation without acculturation or acculturation without structural assimilation – the last two combinations being exemplified by the cases of Punjabi Sikhs and Black Caribbeans in the US (Portes and Zhou 1993). With reference to this, authors had earlier acknowledged the fact that stigmatisation may lead to ethnic revival and revolt rather than decline (Gans 1979, 1992; Glazer and Moynihan 1963; see also ‘reactive ethnicity’ in Rumbaut 2008), and thus passed from a ‘straight-line theory of assimilation’ to a ‘bumpy-line theory of ethnicity’.

Although the segmented assimilation theory focuses on intergenerational social mobility rather than on intermarriage, it seems to suggest that high-achieving immigrant minorities would outmarry with Whites or inmarry, whereas those who are not structurally assimilated would inmarry or outmarry with non-Whites (Gonsoulin and Fu 2010). US scholars have further developed this argument along the divide between Whites and non-Whites, which has basically led to the incorporation of Asian and Latin American immigrant minorities within the mainstream and the pool of marriageables via ‘honorary Whiteness’ (Anderson and Sáenz 1994; Hwang et al. 1997; Lee 2015). These two macro-groups have been also protagonists of a strand of studies on pan-ethnicity, which have instead shown the emergence of intermarriage among pan-ethnic immigrant groups on the basis of shared pre/post-migration features like the Spanish language and the Catholic religion, in the case of Latin Americans; or the racial prejudice and discrimination in the case of Asians (Kibria 1997; Rosenfeld 2001). Fu (2007) defined this phenomenon as ‘multiple melting-pots’, recalling the above-mentioned expression ‘triple melting-pot’ introduced by Kennedy (1944), and suggesting a transition from religion to ‘race’. Therefore, the US literature presents the advantage of considering also minority-minority couples, whereas these are still perceived as ‘exceptional’ in Europe (Milewski and Hamel 2010) and rather included for the sake of completeness in descriptive tables and log-linear analyses (Muttarak and Heath 2010; Safi and Rogers 2002). Yet, the fact that minority-minority couples are usually smaller numbers in comparison to both majority-minority and co-ethnic minority couples makes them particularly suitable for qualitative analysis, although this has very rarely been done. My research also gives this valuable contribution to the literature, exploring the role played by pre/post migration features in the union formation and maintenance of Albanian-Romanian couples in Italy.

Moving the debate from the US to Europe, Song (2010) reflected on the relevance of segmented assimilation for understanding intermarriage in immigrant societies. Song showed that, providing that Black-White marriages are the least common typology of intermarriage in the US and the most common in the UK¹⁴, they involve both upper and lower class partners among Blacks and Whites alike. This example makes clear the fact that immigrant societies are not only segmented but also superdiverse and thus composed of minority middle-class as well as of majority working-class, both involved

¹⁴ This could be also related to the brightness of racial (Black/White) and religious (Muslim/Christian) boundaries in US and Europe mentioned by Alba (2005).

in intermarriage. It is therefore necessary to decouple cultural and structural forms of assimilation also with reference to intermarriage in order to understand what kind of assimilation is linked with intermarriage (if any). Song (2009) also questioned the assumption that intermarriage constitutes a good indicator of integration, since it could indicate even marginalisation – as exemplified by the stigmatisation of intermarried partners within their in/outgroup. In addition to this, Kalmijn (1998) noted that intermarriage could represent both an indicator of and a driver to assimilation – as indicated by the validity of both the intermarriage premium and selectivity theories when it comes to linking intermarriage with labour market participation (Irastorza and Bevelander 2014)¹⁵.

2.2.3 Multiculturalism

The concept of multiculturalism was instead developed in the US after assimilation and before segmented assimilation. The transition to the post-1965 ‘new era of migrations’ produced a differentialist turn, based on the acknowledgment that the ‘melting-pot’ had not occurred, whereas diversity had survived (Glazer and Moynihan 1963). Multiculturalism has been defined as the ‘politics of recognition’ by which the cultural majority recognises the equal worth of the cultural minorities (Taylor 1992). Vertovec and Wessendorf (2009) argued that multiculturalism – in spite of the suffix ‘-ism’ which actually suggests an ideology – encompasses a variety of practices, discourses, and state-policies, pointing at the recognition and promotion of cultural differences within the various societal spheres. Cesareo (2004) made a distinction between pluralism and multiculturalism, as the former concept limits the acceptance of cultural difference to the private sphere, while the latter extends equal rights also in the public sphere. A further distinction concerns radical and moderate multiculturalism, on the basis of the recognition of universal principles as a touchstone of equal rights. Multiculturalism has also been approached as differentialist and communitarian, depending on the emphasis put either on cultural differences or ethnic communities. Cesareo also identifies several risks connected to multiculturalism, like the exacerbation and crystallisation of diversity and the overrepresentation of specific groups. Vertovec and Wessendorf (2009) listed typical accusations against multiculturalism like ‘multiculturalism fosters

¹⁵ According to the selectivity theory, partners who are better integrated in the labour market are expected to be more likely to intermarry; according to the intermarriage premium theory, instead, intermarriage itself may give the immigrant minority partner a better access to the majority labour market.

separatedness', 'multiculturalism refuses common values', 'multiculturalism supports reprehensible practices' – leading to 'clashes of civilisation' exemplified by the current Islamophobia. Authors have thus spoken also of a 'backlash against multiculturalism', which contributed to the 'return of assimilation', after the maximally differentialist moment and its relativistic drift (Brubaker 2001; Grillo 2005). With reference to multiculturalism, intermarriage has been approached as transmission of pluralism. Meintel (2002) showed how parents in mixed unions in Montréal aim at transmitting multiple simultaneous affiliations to their children, looking at ethnic markers like name, language, and religion as symbolic resources in highly individualised identity-projects which are cumulative rather than mutually exclusive. However, both the multicultural context and the profile of the sample (urban and educated) may contribute to interpret mixedness in terms of cosmopolitanism and intercultural adaptation (Djurdjević and Roca-Girona 2016). It follows that findings may be different when participants are immersed in a context characterised by a different official discourse as well as when they present a different profile.

While multiculturalism has mainly focused on the top-down relationship between nation-state and its cultural minorities, interculturalism has instead focused on the bottom-up relationship between individuals and groups in civil society (Bouchard 2011; Moodod 2014). Meer and Modood (2012) advocated the necessity of moving from coexistence to dialogue, stressing the importance of interactions for social cohesion. Nonetheless, interculturalism has been criticised for its vagueness (Wieviorka 2012) and because it does not seem to offer an alternative political strategy for addressing popular discontent with diversity (Kymlicka 2012). Significantly, this approach has been used in the private sphere and especially referring to intermarriage (e.g. Breger and Hill 1998; Bystydzienski 2011; Remennick 2009; Rodríguez-García 2006). However, both multiculturalism and interculturalism imply the key limitation of cultural essentialisation, which, applied to intermarriage, tends to explain mixed couples' wellbeing in terms of 'intercultural dialogue'; and crises – eventually ending up in divorce – in terms of 'intercultural conflicts'. Instead, Brahic (2013) noted that culture seems to be relevant only at the moment of couple formation, raising curiosity and attraction, and at the moment of its dissolution, being blamed for the failed relationship. Also Cottrell (1990) highlighted that, by asking participants about the impact of cultural differences in the sphere of marriage and family, nearly everybody would find some problem – it is not a coincidence that the intercultural strand of the intermarriage

literature is mainly problem-oriented and related to family therapy (see Riva 2010). From a research point of view, it follows that not only the interview schedule needs to be designed as close to an informal conversation as possible – thus without academic jargon and analytical categories – but also that theoretical assumptions may prevent the researcher from a really grounded approach open to what can actually emerge from the field (Menz 2013).

Besides interculturalism, other concepts like conviviality and superdiversity (Gilroy 2004; Vertovec 2007) have stemmed from the frame of multiculturalism, trying to move beyond barriers of incommensurable otherness and absolute difference and thus operate an anti-essentialistic shift towards relationality and agency (Grillo 2005). Conviviality refers to the ordinariness of contacts, cooperations, and conflicts across multiple boundaries and within multiple arenas of interactions; whereas superdiversity indicates the ‘diversification of diversity’, namely the intersection of multiple ethnic and non-ethnic categories of social differentiation in immigrant societies. Both these concepts have been reconfigured as ‘superdiverse convivialities’ by Padilla et al. (2015), who tried to capture the ‘quotidianisation’ of social relations between immigrants and host-society members in Spanish and Portuguese cities. Wessendorf (2011) instead utilised the expressions ‘commonplace diversity’ and ‘ethos of mixing’ in a study focused on intergroup relationships within a neighbourhood in London, showing how the immigrants themselves reproduce the multicultural discourse and positively evaluate diversity. A distinction between who mixes and who does not – in public, not in private though – means participation in the mainstream society. In fact, although this would actually lead to lived experiences along rather than across ethnic boundaries, it could also contribute to a decline of prejudice and discrimination (Allport 1954). The passage towards mixity is further developed by Caballero et al. (2008), who used the expression ‘culture of mixing’ in relation to public as well as private interactions. Caballero et al. argued that, while the concept of mixedness had been largely employed with reference to ‘mixed race’ individuals in the UK (e.g. Caballero et al. 2007; Song 2012), it had been somehow overlooked in relation to the sphere of mixed partnerships/marriages – which is precisely the focus of my research.

2.2.4 Mixity

Listing four models for thinking of diversity (‘visions of diversity’), Grillo (2005) defined integration as a ‘messy middle ground’ in between the opposite poles of

assimilation and multiculturalism, whereas mixity (*'mixité'* in French) would differ from all the other visions, as it does not correspond to state-policies, but to the ground-level everyday reality. Grillo argues that mixity cannot be a model of governance, but it rather indicates a syncretic and hybrid cultural production which – not always harmoniously – is created day by day in sites of interaction such as schools, playgrounds, mixed couples and families. While the literature on cross-boundary friendship has rarely employed the term 'mixed' preferring instead the prefix 'inter' (Parks 2015; Savelkoul et al. 2014), this term has especially been used with reference to intermarriage – starting from the French literature.

Collet (2012) specified that mixedness in mixed marriages does not stand in opposition to 'unmixedness', but rather implies the distinction between 'normal' and 'non-normal' differences. This is to say that while gender, age, and education are perceived as ordinary differences in marriage, ethnic differences are instead perceived as anomalous – turning 'marriage' into 'mixed marriage'. Collet also suggested that there may be a gap between internal and external visions, and partners in mixed couples may thus stress reciprocal affinities rather than differences – e.g. education over ethnicity as also suggested by the educational homogamy theory (Furtado and Theodoropoulos 2010). Conversely, social actors may perceive reciprocal differences which are not relevant within the normative discourse, and stress local over national attachments, for instance. Referring to this, Collet (2012) made the example of a couple composed of a Northern and a Southern French, which would not be considered mixed, whereas a couple composed of a French and non-French would – in spite of the fact that a marriage involving a non-French person born in France would not be recorded as 'mixed'. In fact, mixed marriages are defined by the combination of ethnic differences, considering ethnicity in the broad understanding of the term (ethnicity *sensu lato*). In particular, the categories of ethnicity *sensu stricto*, nationality, religion, and 'race' would define mixed marriages as international, interethnic, interreligious, or interracial marriages. However, we have already mentioned not only how these categories are often interwoven in the sphere of intermarriage (Collet 2012), but also how they actually operate through a similar logic of boundary-making (Wimmer 2008a). For this reason, in my study the term 'mixed marriage' is preferred.

While in France studies on mixedness have focused on mixed couples (Collet 2012, 2015); in the UK, they have dealt with the children of these unions (Edwards and Caballero 2008; Edwards et al. 2010). Mixed people are not only the fastest growing

minority and even a census category in the UK, but also a group increasingly studied in terms of marriage and parentage (Edwards and Caballero 2008; Song 2015; Song and O'Neill-Gutierrez 2015). Moreover, despite the negative stereotyping of mixed people in terms of educational/occupational achievements and psychological/behavioural issues, authors have also shown how current discourses on mixedness increasingly report celebratory views, characterised instead by a positive stereotype (Caballero et al. 2007; Platt 2012). Specifically referring to parenting in mixed families, Edwards et al. (2010) showed how three approaches to mixedness are possible: open individualised, mix collective, and single collective. The first approach (open individualised) points at cosmopolitanism, the second (mix collective) promotes dual-heritage recognition, the third stresses one parental background only. These three approaches which define mixedness in mixed couples and families are also produced at the intersection between specific ethnic and non-ethnic categories (e.g. gender); therefore they should be understood with reference to the identity-projects that parents elaborate for their children (Meintel 2002) and not be seen as mere alternatives. This means that, for example, naming could show the multiple heritage of a child, whereas religious affiliation would rather imply the choice of one religion over another. The third set of research questions thus concerns *the experiences, characteristics, and configurations of mixedness among Albanian-Italian/Romanian couples and families*.

2.3 Intermarriage

2.3.1 Intermarriage

Intermarriage could be understood as a marriage between individuals who do not belong to the same group or category; therefore, it depends on the variables which are considered to define such groups and categories (Rodríguez-García 2015). Referring to a broad understanding of ethnicity, the academic literature talks about 'interethnic', 'cross-ethnic', 'bi-ethnic', 'trans-ethnic'; 'international', 'cross-national', 'cross-nativity', 'bi-national'; 'interreligious', 'interfaith'; 'interracial', 'cross-racial', 'trans-racial', 'bi-racial'; 'intercultural', 'bi-cultural' marriages. However, as Rodríguez-García (2015) noted, the same couple may be perceived differently in different contexts: an interreligious marriage in the Middle-East may have higher visibility and also meet a stronger opposition than in the US, for example. This means that intermarriage is not

only a question of what (who marries whom), but also where and when. While endogamy has been historically promoted as the social norm, exogamy has been seen as an unconventional and even forbidden practice. Yet, due to an increase in transnational mobility, communication, and transport technologies in the ‘age of migration’ (Castles and Miller 1993), cross-boundary encounters and relationships have become more and more common. Authors have spoken of the ‘internationalisation of intimacy’ and the ‘globalisation of the marriage field’, leading to a growth of mixed couples and families especially in the last decades (Rodríguez-García 2015). In addition to this, the idea of romantic love has become widely popular, engendering so-called ‘love migrations’ and also marking a distinction between the West and the rest in terms of marital behaviours through a dichotomy between arranged and love marriages (Mai and King 2009). With reference to this, Sterckx (2015), for example, explored the opposition between marrying in and marrying out among Turkish and Moroccan-origin individuals in the Netherlands and showed the risk of oversimplification associated with the interpretation of arranged marriages as traditional and backwards *vs* mixed marriages as modern and liberal.

The study of intermarriage has played a central role in the social sciences because of the fact that crossing ethnic boundaries through partnering not only reveals individual choices, but also divisions and relations between different social groups (Rodríguez-García 2015). Marriage interdicts have been considered at the basis of an ethnic structuration of the social space and also instrumental in the division of society into marriage classes between which exchange is (not) allowed (Gossiaux 2002). It follows that intermarriage has been considered a ‘barometer’ of intergroup relations and a ‘litmus test’ of social integration with profound implications in terms of social change (Qian and Lichter 2007; Song 2009). We have seen earlier in this chapter that, within immigrant societies, intermarriage has been related to integration. According to Bogardus (1925), intermarriage represents the highest level of social acceptance, which would indicate that an individual who belongs to a different group could be accepted, in principle, into one’s closest sphere: the family. Bogardus’ cumulative scale presents a bottom-up ranking encompassing the right of entry and stay in one’s own country, co-citizenship, work and neighbourhood relationships, friendship, and lastly marriage. Authors have also interpreted intermarriage as an indicator of integration, due to the fact that meaningful encounters need some minimal requirements (e.g. language skills) in order to happen and develop into partnership and marriage. This is one of the reasons

why the second generation is expected to intermarry more than the first generation (Kalmijn 1998). On the other hand, scholars have examined what kind of integration can be achieved via marriage – referring to acculturation, employment, citizenship acquisition, social networks, etc. (De Hart 2015; De Miguel-Luken et al. 2015; Irastorza and Bevelander 2014; Stevens 1985). Moreover, assuming that intermarriage indicates social cohesion and integration, a failure in intermarriage would automatically be considered in terms of social division and (dis)integration (Irastorza 2016). Intermarriages are thus considered more likely to end up in divorce than intramarriages (Kalmijn et al. 2005) – especially when the woman comes from a higher status group than the man (Ho and Johnson 1990), from a society with a high divorce rate, or when she is not subjected to the supervision of co-ethnic social networks (Furtado et al. 2013). The following two sections will give a brief overview of the quantitative and qualitative literatures on intermarriage, focusing on two complementary aspects of patterns and meanings.

2.3.2 Patterns of intermarriage

Research on intermarriage in immigrant societies has been largely done through quantitative methods, on the basis of census datasets and with a longitudinal approach. Although my research project has been carried out with qualitative methods, it has also drawn a lesson from quantitative studies and especially from the model of intermarriage proposed by Kalmijn (1998) – which considers intermarriage as a coalescence of structural constraints, personal preferences, and third-party interference. Structural constraints would encompass group size, sex ratio, and geographical distribution. As Blau et al. (1982) noted, the larger the group taken into account the less likely to intermarry, because of the size of the inmarriage market. However, group size cannot be considered apart from sex ratio and geographical distribution. Gendered migration may in fact develop high rates of intermarriage, as group dispersion does (Sassler 2005). Isaksen-Leonard (1993), for example, explored marriages between Punjabi men and Mexican women in rural California during the early 20th century, which were often characterised by a noticeable age gap between spouses and a high incidence of marriages within the same network of Punjabi male co-workers and Mexican female kin. Besides structural constraints, these marriages were also possible because of migration and racial segregation laws. While Dadabhay (1954) had earlier suggested that Punjabis assimilated into the American mainstream via Mexicans – calling this

process ‘circuitous assimilation’ – Isaksen-Leonard (1993) stressed the plurality of ethnic choices, from everyday life to child-rearing practices up to the marital behaviour of the bi-ethnic offspring. Referring to place, Cready and Sáenz (1997) showed that, consistent with the assumption that in urban areas people are less traditional and more tolerant than in rural areas, Afro-Americans living in metro-settings were more likely to intermarry than their non-metro counterparts. Moreover, not only urban/rural destination, but also urban/rural origin may affect intermarriage patterns. Lancee and Seibel (2014) found that rural-origin Turkish immigrants are less likely to have contact with the host-society population and intermarry than their urban-origin counterparts. Lancee and Seibel explained this phenomenon through cultural and social capital; countryside people would not only be more traditionalist, but also invest in bonding rather than bridging ties – kin *in primis*.

Instead, by third-party interference is intended the influence of friends and family members on the decision of the spouse, as well as the limitations posed by state-policies and further reflected in societal attitudes towards intermarriage. Van Zantvlijet and Kalmijn (2013) showed that having mixed friendship networks increases the likelihood to enter a mixed partnership by lessening intergroup prejudice and intragroup identification. Friends may also affect the union formation by mediating between people and places, providing contact opportunities without directly influencing choices – which is instead a prerogative of the family. Van Zantvlijet and Kalmijn also showed that, although the ‘winnowing hypothesis’ posits that the transition from dating to cohabitation and marriage is marked by an increasing selectivity in the mate selection process (Blackwell and Lichter 2004), cohabitation may present a higher level of heterogeneity than marriage, becoming an alternative typology of union not only due to personal preferences but also to third-party interference – namely the disapproval of the family of origin. Carol (2011) investigated the role of parents and the values that they try to convey to their children, including the appropriateness of friends and partners, among Turks in Germany, the Netherlands, and France. Carol sought to understand whether parents actively influence their children’s choice in this matter and if children actually conform with parental attitudes. Findings show that parents influence their children’s friendship choices in childhood rather than adolescence, although they also tend to exercise their influence over mate selection later on. Idema and Phalet (2007) specifically showed that mothers are effective intergenerational transmitters of values, whereas fathers play a normative role – especially with reference to daughters’ partner

choice. This role is further extended by societal norms, which may regulate or even prohibit intermarriage. De Hart (2015) reflected on the developments of citizenship law in the Netherlands, demonstrating how it had been historically used as a tool to prevent ‘undesirable’ types of mixed couples and how this had especially affected national majority women and their children. This was not only the result of legalised gender inequality; but was also linked with the representation of women as naive victims of fraud, in need of state patriarchal protection. Kringelbach (2013) analysed ‘the policing of intimacy’ with reference to the current legal scrutiny of intermarriage, which represents a ‘grey zone’ under migration control – being a privileged route to citizenship. In order to reduce the number of marriages of convenience in France, couples composed of a French and a non-EU citizen currently need to prove the genuine nature of their partnership – providing common bills, tax invoices, rent receipts, bank accounts, and photographs together – in order to get married. The atmosphere of suspicion around mixed marriages apparently justifies the discrimination of both foreigners and nationals on the basis of partner choice. The intrusion of the state, perceived as an abuse of authority and invasion of privacy, may also have destabilising effects on the couple’s wellbeing. Intermarriage thus represents the ‘internal boundary’ of the nation, where actions of ‘moral gatekeeping’ are required in order to detect sham citizens (Wray 2006).

Lastly, personal preferences in intermarriage are conditioned by elements such as gender, age, generation (of migration), and class. Jacobs and Labov (2002) examined gender differences in US intermarriages, showing that Afro-American men and Asian-American women are more likely to marry Euro-Americans than their counterparts. While the status exchange theory of intermarriage specifically addressed the phenomenon of Afro-American men entering intermarriage by trading class for ‘race’ (Merton 1941), it does not explain why this pattern reverses in case of Asian-Americans. With reference to this, it may be relevant to look at the gendered dimension of ethnic stereotypes, as we shall see in the next section. Turning back to class, since family status largely depends on the status of the man, women are expected to marry up or at the same level rather than down the social ladder – a phenomenon called ‘hypergamy’ which applies to intra/intermarriage alike. In particular, education has been usually considered as a proxy for class, able to speak for occupation, incomes, and life-style. It is a central feature of the status exchange theory, but it is also present in the educational homogamy theory. According to the latter theory, intermarriage does not

occur across but within social class. Educational homogamy is thus deemed to constitute an alternative to ethnic endogamy, especially if education is not widespread within the ingroup – leading mainly educated women to outmarry, consistently with the hypergamy principle (Furtado 2012). Furtado and Theodoropoulos (2010) noted that education may also imply a lower degree of prejudice and discrimination among partners, a diverse environment where meeting up like universities, and affinities in terms of achieved rather than ascribed values – educated individuals are usually less religious, more prone to equality in the division of domestic labour, etc. Education also means delaying marriage and this may also relax preferences to endogamy by declining the number of eligible co-ethnic unmarried partners (Lichter 1990) – as also occurs in second unions. Besides age, another dimension of time which affects intermarriage preferences is generation (of migration). The assimilation theory predicts that the longer an immigrant stays in a country, the more he/she would adjust to the host-society and this especially applies to intermediate and second generations. However, marriageability depends on both the national majority and immigrant minorities. As a consequence, some immigrant groups may not access the intermarriage market even in the second generation, either because of stigmatisation or because of the prevalence of collectivist over individualist attitudes (Huijnk et al. 2010). My thesis will try to understand patterns of Albanian-Italian/Romanian intermarriage, investigating the structural constraints, third-party interference, and personal preferences which affect these typologies of union. In particular, being a qualitative study, it will focus on the role of family and friendship networks in union formation and maintenance, as well as on the interplay between ethnic, gender, and class categories within the sphere of partnership and marriage. Naturally background information on group size, sex ratio, geographical distribution, state-policies, etc. will also be given.

2.3.3 Meanings of mixed marriage

By unpacking mixed marriages on the basis of the ethnic categories employed in qualitative studies, it is possible to gather the existing literature in a thematic fashion around interethnic, international, interreligious, and interracial marriages. In what follows, I have selected illustrative examples mainly from migration studies. As far as ethnicity *sensu stricto* is concerned, all those intermarriages which occur in an ethnically structured society could be defined as ‘interethnic marriages’. Valenta and Gregurović (2014), for instance, analysed the dynamics of boundary-making in Istria

(Croatia), showing the different attitudes of the Croatian majority towards the Italian minority, on one side, and towards the Croatian minority from Bosnia-Herzegovina, on the other. Italians have a higher status, are considered insiders, and maintain symbolic boundaries with the Croatian majority despite high intermarriage rates. On the other hand, Croats from Bosnia-Herzegovina have a lower status, are considered outsiders, and are portrayed within a process of transcending the majority-minority boundary via assimilation through small-scale individual ‘passing’ (i.e. social mimicry), intermarriage, and upward mobility. Another kind of intermarriage – that between Hungarians and Romanians in Romania – is specially important for my study. In this case, the opportunity (since 2011) to request the Hungarian citizenship by ethnic Hungarians influenced the choice of citizenship transmission among mixed couples, both in instrumental and identitarian terms (Dumănescu 2015). The advantage of the Hungarian over the Romanian citizenship is particularly related to the membership of the Schengen Area and the greater freedom of movement allowed abroad. My research also examines the impact of citizenship on ethnic identity transmission among Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples, aware of the different EU and non-EU statuses.

All those marriages which instead concern spouses with a different national background can be defined ‘international marriages’. Interestingly, while the adjective ‘international’ characterises the recent literature on Euromarriages (Gaspar 2009), mixed marriages between European and non-European citizens have usually been defined through the adjective ‘interethnic’. Euromarriages have been mainly approached with reference to a supra-national European identity formation and cosmopolitanism. The study carried out by Brahic (2013) in Manchester is interesting also because it takes into account both minority-majority and minority-minority marriages, although it does not focus on specific nationalities but on a sample of educated urban couples. Moreover, this typology of intermarriage between EU free-movers generally includes Western European nationals and excludes Central/Eastern European ones, showing the existence of what Djurdjević (2013) called ‘hierarchies of Europeanness’ – namely a divide between privileged nationals and immigrants, for whom cosmopolitanism does not seem to apply (see also Kofman 2005 about Muslims in Europe). Central/Eastern European women are instead present in several studies on intermarriage in Northern/Southern Europe at the intersection between female migration, domestic employment, gender and ethnic stereotypes. With reference to this, Djurdjević (2013) argued that mixed

marriages are judged on the basis of power relations, thereby turning ethnic boundaries into moral ones. Therefore, while love is taken for granted in mixed marriages among Western Europeans, instrumentalism is often considered the foundation of Western-Eastern European marriages. Moreover, Central/Eastern European brides are not only seen as subordinated subjects, but also as prototypes of femininity and care. Luehrmann (2004) investigated match-making agencies from Russian rural areas, showing the increasing importance of the internet in transnational marriage migration and the destiny of mail-order-bride in the West as the only opportunity that women have to leave depressed areas affected by male migration and alcoholism. By contrast, Domić and Philaretou (2007) and Roca-Girona (2011) explored the social construction of the Central/Eastern European bride as ‘fantasy trophy-wife’ and ‘traditional housewife’, and interpreted intermarriage as the quest for ‘a lost woman’ in the age of globalisation and transformation of gender roles. The element of machismo among Southern European men also emerged in a study on marriages between Anglophone women and Greek/Italian men, in Greece and Italy respectively (Isaakyan and Triandafyllidou 2014). The connection between this typology of mixed marriage and another kind of mobility – tourism – is further examined by Lauth-Bacas (2010) and Trundle (2009), which looked at the transition between romance tourists, foreign wives, and retired migrants in the South. Moreover, Fulas-Souroulla (2010) showed how Southern Europeans (in this case, Greek-Cypriots) find themselves in between Northern and Central/Eastern Europeans also when it comes to intermarriage. Therefore, not only do foreign spouses have a different status based on a hierarchy of Europeanness, but there is also a divide between Northern European grooms and Central/Eastern European brides. Although my study deals with three specific nationalities (Albanians, Italians, and Romanians) and three different stages of EU accession, it shows two types of intermarriage which do not fall under the conventional definition of ‘Euromarriage’. Moreover, the Albanian and Romanian post-communist migrations present noticeable differences – e.g. sex ratio – which also complicate intermarriage patterns within the Central/Eastern European macro-group.

Interreligious marriages have instead mostly focused on the Christianity/Islam divide in Europe, especially with reference to migrations from Northern Africa. Cerchiaro et al. (2015) researched couples mainly composed of Moroccan men and Italian women, identifying four strategies through which partners deal with religious differences (renunciation, closeting, conversion, and spiritualisation). In the first case, one religion

prevails over the other, generally that of the majority partner; in the second case, religious differences are erased and religion becomes a private issue; in the third case, one partner converts to the religion of the other and the family acquires a unified religious identity; in the fourth case, religion is perceived as spirituality based on ecumenical tolerance. Riva (2010) instead approached Christian/Muslim unions from the perspective of cultural adaptation, arguing that marriages between believers and non-believers are likely to end in the first years of marriage, while they seem to last more when both partners are either believers – although with different faiths – or non-believers. Riva also identified two main reasons behind the choice of a Muslim husband, in between globalisation (taste for the exotic) and tradition (towards a breadwinner/homemaker family model). Moreover, the Italian female partner generally holds a higher status than the immigrant male partner, who corresponds to the union either in terms of assimilation or ethnic retention. In fact, removing religious differences could represent a legitimisation for intermarriage, while marking them could be seen as a compensation. However, the subsequent decision of raising the children in one of the two religions could also lead to feelings of alienation, expropriation, and deculturation among one of the partners. Riva identified further challenges with this typology of couple, corresponding to different views on gender, family, and friendship networks – which would basically mean subordination of the woman to the man, close ties with his kin, and only same-sex friendships. Instead, Streiff-Fénart (2000) focused on Franco-Maghrebin couples and specifically analysed the ‘coming out’ of women in front of their family, providing that intermarriage may be tolerated among Muslim men but not among women. Streiff-Fénart approached this event as part of a long-lasting process constituted by five different phases (anticipation, disclosure, ban, reparation, and balance restoration) which demonstrate the vulnerability of interreligious marriages – a point to which I will also return in interracial marriages.

Interracial marriages constitute the largest share of the intermarriage literature in the US and UK, although they present opposite trends in Black-White intermarriage, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Killian (2001) approached US Black-White couples as a family-therapist, investigating the relationship between the couple and the ‘outside’ and finding a higher degree of prejudice awareness among Black rather than White partners. Britton (2013) researched instead White mothers of bi-racial children in the UK, paying particular attention to stereotypes which portray them as valueless and sexually promiscuous working-class women and also question their ability to

understand the discrimination to which their children are expected to be subjected. Also their Whiteness is questioned and this process of othering may produce reactions like the decision to distance themselves from the ingroup. However, while crossing religious boundaries may lead towards entering the religious community of the partner through conversion, crossing racial boundaries may be followed by double isolation.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the theoretical framework of my research, focusing on three key concepts (ethnic boundaries, integration, and intermarriage) and the relevant theories related to each strand of literature. Each concept has been analysed separately as well as in relation with the other two concepts, as illustrated by the diagrams presented at the beginning of the chapter (Figures 2 and 3). The theoretical and empirical studies here reviewed have been selected on the basis of ideas which will be useful in the analysis of my research findings. However, by reviewing the literature, I have identified not only overlaps but also gaps. My research intends to offer its original contribution also in this theoretical direction. In fact, by linking the two concepts of integration and intermarriage through a third term of relation (boundary-making), my thesis proposes a novel understanding of their nexus. Therefore, through application of the boundary-making framework to both integration and intermarriage, these have appeared as interactive and identificational phenomena – defined through the terms ‘mixity’ (Grillo 2005) and ‘mixedness’ (Collet 2012). The boundary proved to be a useful heuristic device, pointing to the action of individuals on both sides of a boundary and their interaction across the boundary itself (Wimmer 2007) and making it possible to overcome the two main limits of the literature on integration and intermarriage: unidirectionality and cultural essentialisation.

In fact, although integration is commonly understood as a process of reciprocal adjustment which affects both nationals and immigrants (Castles et al. 2002), migration studies have mostly overlooked one of these components and rather focused on one immigrant minority – either nationally or transnationally situated. On the other hand, when also the national majority has been taken into account, this has usually occurred on an asymmetric basis, referring to the immigrant integration into the labour market, housing system, schooling system, and welfare. In these cases, the minority-majority relation has been articulated as a relation between minority employee and majority

employer, minority tenant and majority landlord, minority pupil and majority teacher, or minority user and majority service provider. Another strand of qualitative migration studies has instead explored relatively more symmetric relations such as neighbourliness, friendship, and partnership/marriage. In these cases, however, the main limitation has been the essentialisation of culture – which goes back to a primordialistic view of ethnicity and to the conflation of immigrant minorities with ethnic groups which are bearers of distinctive cultures. The adoption of the boundary-making framework makes it possible to understand differences and affinities, through which social actors identify themselves and their partners, as a process of self/other positioning which is not only contextual, situational, and relational but also happening at the intersection of ethnic and non-ethnic categories.

Furthermore, it should be noted that immigrant social spaces are not made of only one immigrant minority and the national majority. However, when another immigrant minority is involved in migration research, this usually means adding another minority-majority relation and thus comparing two or more immigrant minorities in terms of ‘who fares better’. This research tries to avoid this second-level unidirectionality by exploring instead both minority-majority and minority-minority relationships. To the best of my knowledge there is no qualitative research which combines the two specific typologies of these relationships. Although some qualitative studies like Meintel (2002) in Canada, and Brahic (2013) in the UK, involved both majority-minority and minority-minority couples, they did not focus on specific typologies of mixed partnership/marriage, but rather on mixedness with reference to a cosmopolitan educated middle-class in multicultural urban settings. Also the literature on segmented assimilation recognises the existence of minority-minority relations, talking about a plural underclass with special reference to ‘race’ – as exemplified by studies on Afro-Americans and Black Caribbeans, although not primarily focused on intermarriage (Portes and Zhou 1993). Therefore, by looking at mixedness through specific typologies of mixing – namely through selected combinations of minority-majority and minority-minority partnership and marriage – my research makes it possible to understand not only specific configurations of mixedness which are in place among Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples and families, but also specific processes by which ethnic boundaries have been made, unmade, and remade in the transformation of Italy into a society of immigration and integration. Thanks to the ‘total social fact’ character of marriage (Lévi-Strauss 1950), the couple and family sphere will not only reflect but

also shed a light on this social change, looking at integration and intermarriage via both etic and emic viewpoints.

METHODS**Introduction**

This chapter examines the methodology and methods employed in my research. First, it presents the epistemological approach taken and the research design implemented, focusing on sampling strategies, data collection and analysis. Then, it discusses ethical issues and reflects on the key issue of researcher positionality.

This research project was carried out through qualitative methods and broadly reflects the constructivist epistemological paradigm, according to which knowledge is socially constructed and the researcher acquires this knowledge through interactions with participants, who are thought of as dialogical partners rather than objects of study (Flick 2009). As far as sampling and setting are concerned, the research is based on a sample of 61 Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples living in Tuscany (Italy), in the cities and provinces of Florence, Prato, Pistoia, Pisa, and Arezzo. The sample was recruited from a plurality of sources and through various techniques (wedding banns, Facebook, and snowballing). Within a sociological ethnographic research design (Knoblauch 2005), multiple methods were employed to collect data – in-depth interviews, photo-elicitation, and participant observation. First, through the combination of individual and joint couple interviews I could access the lived experiences of mixed couples and families in the words of the participants themselves; second, photo-elicitation made it possible to deepen my understanding of specific life-episodes and also combine etic and emic views in the thesis through photographs taken by myself and the participants; third, participant observation added non-verbal and contextual information to the narrative accounts during the interview encounters – especially in joint couple interviews – and beyond. Data were analysed following a grounded-theory approach and putting in relation pre/post-codes (Atkinson 2005), namely codes borrowed from the literature and codes emerging from the fieldwork itself. Towards the end of the chapter, the procedures used to protect the privacy of the participants and the confidentiality of the data are described in the section about ethics. The chapter is rounded off by an analysis of insiderness/outsiderness in the field and the acknowledgement that various intersectional axes of social differentiation define the relative position of both researcher and participants during research encounters, having an impact in the production of the knowledge itself (Sánchez-Ayala 2012).

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 *Epistemology*

At the basis of the selection of methods – namely the techniques used to collect and analyse data – are situated methodological assumptions referring to what knowledge is, how it can be acquired, and considered true (Castles 2012). Therefore, although methods and methodology are connected, they do not coincide. In fact, methodology is about the underlying logic of the research and it is linked with the branch of philosophy known as epistemology, namely the ‘theory of knowledge’. The main dispute in epistemology concerns the opposition between positivist and constructivist paradigms: the former claims that there is an objective world which can be observed, the latter states that meanings are constructed in social interactions. This research relates to the constructivist paradigm, according to which knowledge is socially constructed. The researcher gains knowledge through dialogical interactions with participants (Flick 2009). Qualitative researchers could be seen as ‘travellers’, who through a plurality of methods co-construct knowledge at the intersection between their own and others’ viewpoints. The research project is seen as a journey, an exchange of views, and a conversation in its etimological derivation of ‘being together’ (Kvale and Brinkman 2009).

Within the constructivist paradigm, the three main questions of epistemology – ‘what is knowledge?’, ‘how can knowledge be acquired?’ and ‘how can we know something to be true?’ (Castles 2012) – can be answered with reference to the fact that knowledge is a construction rather than an object. This means that the knowledge that the researcher can achieve through qualitative methods is not objective but subjective – relative to the subjects – and intersubjectively constructed. However, although social sciences do not generate, nor aim to generate, objective knowledge, this does not mean that the knowledge acquired cannot be considered ‘scientific’ because it is not valid or reliable in accordance with the positivistic paradigm. In fact, further criteria like credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability have been introduced in order to define this knowledge as conforming with the understanding of science as ‘systematic knowledge’ (Guba and Lincoln 1994).

Besides the opposition between positivism and constructivism, another distinction has to be made between constructivism and relativism. While the constructivist

paradigm does not question the objectivity of the world in itself and therefore does not invalidate the scientific method *per se*, relativism instead reduces reality to its interpretation and ontology to epistemology (Flick 2009; Iosifides 2012). Although scepticism has been considered as a distinctive trait of the postmodern condition, the adoption of a relativistic stance in terms of methodology, politics, and morals is risky. Iosifides (2012) discussed the key flaws of relativism, such as the failure of relating discursive subjectivities to extra-discursive contexts and the resorting to autoreferential fictional literature. As a consequence, Iosifides suggested a ‘critical realist way out’ which does not conflate ontology and epistemology, and overcomes the opposition between positivism and relativistic constructivism through ‘ontological realism, epistemological relativism and judgmental rationality’.

Qualitative methods specifically enable the researcher to focus on subjective experiences and thereby reconstruct individual and collective production of meanings, as well as social contexts and interactions in the making (Flick 2009). According to a symbolic interactionist approach, subjects act on the basis of the meanings they attribute to the world; these meanings derive from, and are modified through, interactions. For understanding meanings and thus the ways in which social actors make sense of the world they inhabit, interviews and photo-elicitation represent suitable methods of data collection, designed to give voice to social actors. For understanding interactions occurring in a particular context, participant observation is instead the most appropriate method. While this research has been implemented through qualitative methods, it should also be mentioned that most of studies on intermarriage in immigrant societies, including in Europe, are quantitative (e.g. Caballero et al. 2008; Collet 2012, 2015; De Miguel-Luken et al. 2015; Díez-Medrano et al. 2014; Guetto and Azzolini 2015; Hamel et al. 2012; Lucassen and Laarman 2009; Muttarak and Heath 2010; Rodríguez-García et al. 2015; Safi and Rogers 2008). Although these studies provide information on patterns of intermarriage, they cannot explain the meanings underpinning these social phenomena. Therefore, for understanding the ways in which intermarriage is experienced and interpreted by social actors in specific time/space conjunctures, studies of a more anthropological bent are necessary (e.g. Brahic 2013; Britton 2013; Cerchiaro et al. 2015; Djurdjević 2013; Djurdjević and Roca-Girona 2016; Domić and Philaretou 2007; Edwards and Caballero 2008; Edwards et al. 2009; Fulas-Souroulla 2010; Gaspar 2009; Peruzzi 2008; Rodríguez-García 2006; Roca-Girona 2011; Santelli and Collet 2012; Streiff-Fénart 2000).

3.1.2 Sociological ethnography

Ethnography constitutes the anthropological method *par excellence*, although it has now been adopted by various social sciences like sociology and pedagogy. It can be conceived as full-immersion into the field, enabling the researcher to integrate a large amount of data through a variety of structured, semistructured, and unstructured methods (Johnson et al. 2006). The main features of the ethnographic method are a long-term commitment to the field – traditionally a village or community – and systematic observation. Although Malinowski (1922) made participant observation the foundation of anthropology as a discipline and of ethnography as a method, the fact that most anthropologists have actually stood as outsiders within the field has led them to highlighting the observational rather than participative element of the expression. In fact, since the status of ‘stranger’ might pose a limit to the information which the researcher could access (Agar 1980), one of the main challenges of ethnography is the attempt of the researcher to reduce this limit. One of the ways in which an outsider ethnographer might narrow the distance between ‘self’ and ‘other’, and so gain the trust otherwise precluded to him/her as a mere observer, is through participation – for example, through the adoption of strategic roles other than the role of ethnographer. Adler and Adler (1987) discussed the implications of the various levels of integration of the researcher into the field, distinguishing between peripheral/active/complete membership and among a plurality of roles ranging from observation to participation in a continuum which takes place in the field itself, but which cannot be theorised in advance and also depends on the researcher’s skillset.

Cohen (2000) noted how the researcher does not enter the field as a neutral observer, but with assumptions and personal details which influence his/her work. Moreover, not only is neutrality impossible because of the subjectivity of the researcher, but also because of the field: power relationships configure interactions in the field and each configuration which is actually observed also reminds the researcher of all the possible configurations which have not been observed and could not have been observed. It is however believed that the longer the researcher is in the field, the more he/she can access the ‘backstage’ of the presentation of the self and gradually obtain more information (Goffman 1959). Moreover, the presumption of deliberate neutrality in order not to ‘contaminate the field’ could instead indicate lack of engagement and lead to mistrust rather than to scientific detachment (Cohen 2000).

Besides the problematique of outsidership, linked with its vocation for exoticism, anthropology has been progressively carried out by researchers belonging to the societies which constitute their own object of study. As a consequence, also insidership has been problematised, especially in terms of instrumentalism and group interest (Cohen 2000). Yet, insidership can also provide the researcher with advantages, such as the ability to understand the context and handle situations. Insidership lies at the basis of what Knoblauch (2005) defined as ‘sociological fieldwork’, stressing the different construction of otherness which this implies in comparison to anthropological fieldwork. Starting from an understanding of ethnography as ‘bestrangement’ – namely as a process of making the familiar unfamiliar – Knoblauch argued that there is a distinction, in terms of (un)familiarity, between anthropological and sociological ethnography. In fact, while the anthropological ethnographer has only a mediated knowledge of the field, the sociological ethnographer holds an explicit and implicit background knowledge of the field. In particular, the sociological ethnographer already has this background knowledge before he/she starts getting interested in the field itself, and this element introduces further nuances about reflexivity within the practice of doing fieldwork¹⁶. Knoblauch also linked sociological ethnography with ‘focused ethnography’ – namely the possibility of short-term intense and intermittent fieldworks, as suggested by the term ‘yo-yo fieldwork’ (Wulff 2002) – and with further developments within the ethnographic method like ‘multi-sited ethnography’, ‘go-along ethnography’, or ‘mobile methods’ (Kusenbach 2003; Marcus 1995; Nadai and Maeder 2005). Furthermore, sociological ethnography, unlike anthropological ethnography, does not generally have a site as an object of research and therefore its field is not ‘somewhere out there’ but has to be constructed through research questions. It deals with ‘fuzzy fields’: connections across multiple sites in correspondence to social actors and networks of settings interrelated in some kind of cohesive social structure (Nadai and Maeder 2005). Furthermore, within sociological fieldwork, the specific topic the researcher is interested in emerges only occasionally and this has practical implications not only in relation to the length of stay in the field, but also to the fact that the researcher has to rely on interviews more than on participant observation (Knoblauch 2005; Nadai and Maeder 2005).

¹⁶ I understand this difference also because, while my PhD thesis is based on sociological fieldwork about Albanian-Italian/Romanian couples and families in Italy, my BA and MA dissertations in Social Anthropology were based on anthropological fieldwork about indigenous populations of Guatemala.

I approached this fieldwork therefore as a sociological enterprise. Having a reasonably thorough background knowledge of the field, I could implement a ‘focused ethnography’ (less than a year) based on interviews, photo-elicitation, and participant observation. Interviews played the major role in data collection, and especially joint couple interviews gave me the chance to gather observational data as well as reflect on my own position in the field. Coming from the area where I did the fieldwork, as well as sharing ascribed/acquired identificational categories with several research participants, helped me to get ‘closer’ to them. This meant that, although I had no prior relation with any participants, yet I was often perceived as somebody who they had already met or they could meet again – in the university canteen or at the next Albanian Flag Day, for instance.

3.2 Sampling and setting

3.2.1 Sample

My fieldwork lasted six months, between February and August 2016. In this period I interviewed 96 individuals in 61 Albanian-Italian/Romanian couples, divided into 48 Albanian-Italian and 13 Albanian-Romanian couples. Across the sample were 32 Albanian-Italian couples with an Albanian woman, 16 Albanian-Italian couples with an Albanian man, 2 Albanian-Romanian couples with an Albanian woman, and 11 Albanian-Romanian couples with an Albanian man (Figure 4). These ratios broadly reflected intermarriage patterns as they are reported in the official statistics – although acknowledging their limits, especially with reference to Albanian-Romanian couples, for whom official data is limited. I conducted 35 joint couple interviews and 26 individual interviews, of which 21 were with the female partner and 5 with the male partner alone (Figure 5). A subsample of these interviews was conducted in the sequence composed of one joint couple and two individual partner interviews. The overall number of interviewees reported below (Figure 6) does not take into account the occasional presence of relatives and friends during the interview encounter.

Figure 4. Couples

ALBANIAN-ITALIAN COUPLES		ALBANIAN-ROMANIAN COUPLES	
Albanian woman & Italian man 32	Albanian man & Italian woman 16	Albanian woman & Romanian man 2	Albanian man & Romanian woman 11
48		13	
61			

Figure 5. Interviews

JOINT COUPLE INTERVIEWS				INDIVIDUAL FEMALE PARTNER INTERVIEWS			INDIVIDUAL MALE PARTNER INTERVIEWS		
35				21			5		
Albanian-Italian 29		Albanian-Romanian 6		Albanian 12	Italian 3	Romanian 6	Albanian 4	Italian /	Romanian 1
Albanian woman & Italian man 20	Albanian man & Italian woman 9	Albanian woman & Romanian man 1	Albanian man & Romanian woman 5						
61									

Figure 6. Participants

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Albanian	18	33	51
Italian	20	12	32
Romanian	2	11	13
TOTAL	40	56	96

Although a more detailed profile of each couple is provided in the appendix of the thesis, here I summarise some key information about the sample. In particular, 27 couples are married, 20 cohabiting, 12 engaged, and 2 divorcing; 23 couples have children, including 2 ‘blended families’ in addition to 4 couples in which one of the partners had a child from a previous relationship only. Moreover, some participants were organising their marriage at the time of this fieldwork, whereas others were expecting a baby. Participants are aged approximately 25-45 (average age 33) and the foreign partner has been living in Italy for 15 years on average. However, because of the different timing of the Albanian and Romanian migrations to Italy, the average length of stay differs between the two groups. Albanian participants mostly arrived in Italy in the 1990s and early 2000s (average age at migration 17), Romanian participants in the 2000s (average age at migration 20). Some participants have also experienced multiple

migrations: this is mostly the case of Albanian men who migrated first to Greece and then to Italy. Within the Albanian sample, migration was related to asylum, family reunification, healthcare assistance, study, work and also included unaccompanied minors; whereas within the Romanian sample there were mostly cases of labour migration, to a lesser extent family reunification and study migration. As a starting point in my sampling strategy, I looked for what I have called the Albanian ‘in-between generation’¹⁷ – namely a generation born in Albania between the mid-1970s and late 1980s, who arrived in Italy during adolescence between the early 1990s and mid-2000s – therefore consciously ‘in-between’ two places, life-stages, languages, and cultures – as the participants themselves also noted. This definition is grounded in my own experience of growing up in Italy and having Albanian social networks. I was basically looking for a sample of peers with whom I could have shared an imaginary made up of TV programmes watched on the two sides of the sea; a larger sample of those who were my classmates, flatmates, and friends. It is a generation of those who were children in Albania and became adults in Italy – which also includes couple and family formation. From there, I moved in two directions, towards an Italian and a Romanian partner of these primary participants. However, because of the fact that couples are not necessarily equal in age (although the average age gap was 5 years and there were only a few cases of 10+ years difference – differently from Peruzzi 2008, for instance), and due to the limits of the snowball technique, as well as for comparative reasons¹⁸, the final sample is more differentiated than the sample I had initially planned to recruit.

Educational/occupational statuses vary across and within the three groups. Participants are equally divided into those with secondary and third-level education – actually ranging from primary school to PhD – as well as in lower/higher-income jobs: accountants, baristas, bloggers, cleaners, cooks, couriers, cultural mediators, dentists, engineers, firefighters, gardeners, hairdressers, journalists, lawyers, lorry-drivers, masons, musicians, policemen, shop-assistants, waitresses, wedding-planners – to name specific examples. Similarly, the residential setting varied from historical buildings to social housing in the city centre of Florence, up to residential neighbourhoods in the

¹⁷ As mentioned in the previous chapters, Rumbaut (2004) coined the phrase ‘1.5 generation’, although this mainly concerns secondary migrants, namely those arriving in the host-society together with their family or reunifying with their migrant parents. In my sample, instead, there are several cases of primary migration especially among Albanians (unaccompanied male minors and 18-year-old female student migrants joining male relatives). In these cases, parents sometimes joined the migrant son/daughter later on, therefore family reunification followed another trajectory.

¹⁸ I also included a subsample of participants who arrived during early adulthood and childhood – although no one was born in Italy.

outskirts, family owned houses and rented flats in cities, towns, and villages. Unpacking the broad category of ethnicity, Albanian participants are Muslim (Sunni and Bektashi¹⁹) and Christian (Catholic and Orthodox); Romanians are mostly Orthodox, but also Catholic and Protestant (Adventist and Evangelical); Italians were exclusively Catholic. Among them there are also children of mixed marriages (interethnic, international, and interreligious) and members of national minorities: Albanian Aromanians²⁰, Romanians partly belonging to the German, Hungarian, and Ukrainian minorities, Italian-Austrians/Greeks/Hungarians, Gypsy-origin Albanians/Italians/Romanians²¹. Referring to the place of origin, most of Albanian participants come from the coast around Durrës, Shkodër, and Vlorë; whereas Romanian participants come from various areas although a sub-group could perhaps be located around Buzău and between Drobeta-Turnu Severin and Târgu Jiu; instead, Italian participants mainly come from Central (Tuscany *in primis*) and Southern Italy (especially Calabria, Campania, and Apulia). Lastly, 31 couples live in Florence, 9 in another city (Pisa, Pistoia, Prato), 21 in the outlying and more rural areas of the provinces of Arezzo, Florence, Pisa, Pistoia, and Prato.

3.2.2 *Setting*

The fieldwork took place in Central Italy, Tuscany, in the above mentioned cities and provinces (Figures 7 and 8). By including a variety of urban and rural settings, I aimed to explore intermarriage taking into account contextual differences relating to the size of the resident population, incidence of migration, labour and housing markets, because the experience of being in a mixed couple/family may be also affected by the setting.

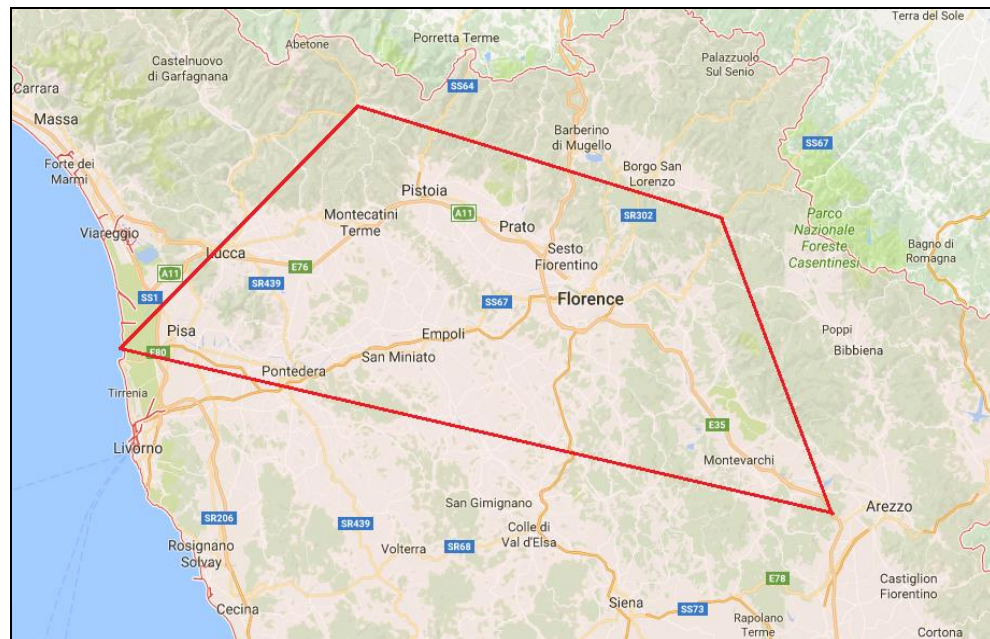
¹⁹ Sufi order related to the Janissaries during the Ottoman Empire, which historically mediated between Islam and Christianity (Doja 2006).

²⁰ Aromanians are a Latin Orthodox minority scattered across the Balkans, traditionally practising transhumant pastoralism. The Albanian Aromanian ethnic mobilisation has been divided into pro-Romania, on the basis of the language, and pro-Greece, on the basis of religion (Schwandner-Sievers 1999).

²¹ I use the term ‘Gypsy’ as an exonym encompassing a plurality of subgroups which not always define themselves as Roma. Albanian Egyptians, for example, are an Albanophone Muslim Gypsy minority whose members are commonly identified as ‘Albanianised Gypsies’ and identify themselves as descendents of Egyptians *vs* the Roma (Trubeta 2005). Also Italian Gypsies are divided into two main subgroups: Roma and Sinti (Clough-Marinaro and Sigona 2011).

Figure 7. Map

Source: Map Data © 2017 GeoBasis-DE/BKG (© 2009), Google, Inst. Geogr. Nacional, Mapa GISrael, ORION-ME

Figure 8. The field

Source: Map Data © 2016 Google

Florence is the main city of Tuscany. According to ISTAT²² data, on the 1st of January 2015, the resident population in Florence consisted of 381,037 people, while the overall resident population of the Tuscan region corresponded to 3,752,654 people. Foreigners represented 10.5% of this amount (395,573). Considering the metro area Florence-Prato-Pistoia, the resident population was 1,557,676 people – this is the area where I set most of my fieldwork. In addition to this, I also conducted some interviews in the areas of Pisa and Arezzo. The resident population in these cities and provinces is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Resident population in the fieldwork area

	CITY resident population	PROVINCE resident population
Florence	381,037	1,012,180
Prato	191,002	252,987
Arezzo	99,434	346,442
Pistoia	90,542	292,509
Pisa	89,523	421,816

Source: Elaboration on ISTAT data (01/01/2015)

The area taken into consideration broadly reflects national patterns related to the Albanian and Romanian population. Although it has to be said that Tuscany contains a somewhat higher relative concentration of foreigners than Italy as a whole (10.5% vs 8.2% in ISTAT 2015 data). In particular, Tuscany is the first region in Central Italy and the second in Italy for the Albanian population (after Lombardy); while it is the second in Central Italy, and the sixth in Italy for the Romanian population (after Latium, Lombardy, Piedmont, Veneto, and Emilia-Romagna). In particular, 14.3% of Albanians and 7.3% of Romanians in Italy live in Tuscany, accounting respectively for 17.7% and 21% of the foreign population of the region. While the regional presence of the Romanian population is close to the national average (22.6%), the Albanian population is instead regionally over-represented (17.7% vs 9.8%). Romanians and Albanians are the largest and second largest immigrant groups in Tuscany – like in Italy – although it is interesting to check the incidence of these populations also at a local level. In the municipality of Florence, for instance, the incidence of Albanians is slightly lower (15.4%), while diversity is higher – with immigrants from Romania, Peru, China, Albania, Philippines, etc. In the province of Pistoia, instead, Albanians make up for

²² The Italian Institute of Statistics.

40.3% of all foreigners, and in the province of Arezzo, Romanians constitute 35.3% of the whole foreign resident population²³. These demographic patterns are further displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Albanian and Romanian resident population at national and regional level

		MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	% of the group	% of foreign resident population
Albanian	Italy	254,622	235,861	490,483	100%	9.8%
	Tuscany	36,753	33,466	70,219	14.3%	17.7%
Romanian	Italy	487,203	644,636	1,131,839	100%	22.6%
	Tuscany	32,263	50,981	83,244	7.3%	21%

Source: Elaboration on ISTAT data (01/01/2015)

Referring to the Albanian immigrant group, Tuscany presents two interesting features: on the one hand, Florence is the first province in Italy in terms of Albanian enterprises (5.3%), preceding even Milan (4.8%); on the other, the high presence of Albanian students is confirmed by the fact that, between them, the University of Florence and the University of Pisa enrolled 14% of all Albanian students in Italy in the academic year 2014/15, for example (LPS 2015). In particular, in 2015, 1 out of 10 foreign enterprises in Italy was located in Tuscany, which was also the first region by incidence of foreign enterprises (12.6% of all enterprises). Half of these foreign enterprises are concentrated in the area of Florence and Prato, 83% are individual and 10% limited-company enterprises – although the latter typology is rapidly growing. Building and trade are the main sectors; while China, Romania, and Albania represent the main nationalities of foreign entrepreneurs. Chinese entrepreneurship, especially in the area of Prato, has been stable over the last 15 years; whereas the Romanian and Albanian entrepreneurship are growing – corresponding to 7,923 and 7,372 enterprises in 2015 (Unioncamere Toscana 2016). In particular, 75.8% of Albanian and 66.5% Romanian individual entrepreneurs work in the building industry (IDOS 2015).

Moreover, the number of Albanian students working part-time has been consistently high (81% in AlmaLaurea 2016 data) and concentrated in cafés, pizzerias, pubs, and restaurants. Therefore, while the building industry proved to be an interesting male

²³ I have used ISTAT data on resident population because they consider all the three groups involved in this study (Albanians, Italians, and Romanians). However, it should also be considered that, as EU citizens, Romanians do not need to register their residency in Italy. Moreover, although the presence of Albanian students is particularly high in Florence and Pisa, this does not necessarily appear in residency patterns.

language environment (see Chapter 7), the restaurant industry provided prospective partners with shared cross-gender workplaces (see Chapter 6). Referring to third level education, Albanians and Romanians respectively count for 15% and 10% of all foreign students who graduated in Italy in 2015. While the share of Albanians in total foreign graduates has decreased in the last 5 years (from 21% to 15%), the number of Romanian graduates has instead increased (from 3% to 10%) – AlmaLaurea (2016). This phenomenon is further reflected in current enrolment trends: in 2014/15, 14.6% of all foreign students entering Italian universities were Romanian and 13.6% were Albanian (MIUR 2015). These changing patterns can be understood along with the growing up of the second generation and in terms of citizenship acquisition, but they also indicate changes in the phenomenon of student migration, which has greatly characterised a generation of Albanians (especially women) born in the 1980s – some of them protagonists of my study. This phenomenon is now fading for various reasons, ranging from the replacement of Italian with the English language among younger Albanian cohorts, to the recent economic crisis (especially harsh in Southern Europe), up to the increased opportunities for international mobility (including student mobility) among Albanian citizens as well. The following pictures portray some of the fieldwork settings, showing the variety of environments where research participants live (Figure 9-10-11).

Figure 9. Street in Florence



Figure 10. Village in the province of Prato



Figure 11. Countryside in the province of Pisa



3.2.3 Banns of marriage

Participants were recruited through various purposive sampling strategies: banns of marriage, Facebook, and the snowball technique. In Italy, banns of marriage are published in the websites of the various municipalities and are accessible for 8 days. In

case of no impediment, couples need to get married within 6 months – after this period the bann expires. Banns of marriage report personal details of the prospective spouses: name and surname, date and place of birth, residency and citizenship. By regularly checking the websites of the main municipalities in the fieldwork area, I managed to identify several couples whom I then tried to contact via Facebook. The first limit of this strategy for recruiting participants was that at least one of the partners needed to have a Facebook profile recognisable by name and surname. The second limit concerned the fact that banns of marriage only indicate couples who are about to get married and in this way I would have only come across newly married couples. Therefore, I asked permission to access the banns of marriage archive. I started this enquiry in Florence, which is the capital city of Tuscany and a favourite wedding location also for non-resident couples (Bertella 2017). However, I was not given this permission, and instead invited to change research topic since ‘all mixed marriages end up in divorce’ in the opinion of the head of the office. Although the town halls in smaller municipalities proved to be more collaborative, the probability of finding potential participants would have been much lower and this more dispersed line of enquiry more time-consuming. The third limit was Facebook privacy settings. In fact, not all the messages I sent were actually received, but rather diverted to spam folders.

3.2.4 Facebook

I created a Facebook profile for this project, I put an appropriate picture of myself and a posting about my research. Some key informants supported me in this operation, sharing my postings and recommending me to their Facebook friends and followers. Facebook worked as a tool to recruit participants and also keep in touch after the fieldwork. It was useful also to identify participants without the mediation of common Facebook friends, especially through ethnic/local/thematic pages. I accessed Albanian and Romanian Facebook groups in the fieldwork area as well as those in relation to local Catholic and Orthodox churches. I also found pages relating to tourism and migration from Italy to Albania, gathering actual and potential tourists and migrants – among them several mixed couples. The UEFA Euro 2016 Albania-Romania football match was a happy coincidence of timing and gave me the opportunity to witness Facebook arguments between Albanian, Italian, and Romanian women around the themes of patriotism and morals (see Chapter 7). In these cases, the limitation was instead matching the Facebook profile with the fieldwork area. All in all, most of the

people I tried to recruit via Facebook ‘from scratch’ did not reply or did not want to meet; some were instead willing to chat or to be sent a questionnaire; but only a few accepted to be interviewed. Another challenge of accessing a sample via Facebook without first/second level contacts was gaining the trust of users as well as group administrators – especially when these were men, sometimes confusing my request for help with my research project with an opportunity to date online/offline.

3.2.5 Snowball technique

The snowball technique leads to the identification of a non-probability sample through the use of personal networks. This sampling technique is especially useful for reaching a population which presents specific socio-demographic characteristics and which is difficult to locate because it is small, scattered, ‘invisible’, and – as Sánchez Ayala (2012) suggests – ‘well-integrated in the mainstream’. It also offers advantages in terms of recruiting time/costs and in relation to the participants’ trust, facilitated by the mediation of common acquaintances, called ‘sources’. The disadvantages of this technique are instead linked with its representativity. In fact, since the snowball technique consists of a self-directed chain-referral mechanism, it could lead to the over-representation of a specific population – as opposed to a probability sampling technique. In this case, results could not be generalised, although a plurality and variety of sources (gatekeepers, postings, social media, NGOs, trade-unions, religious institutions, ethnic shops, etc.) may partly overcome this limit by making the sample less biased and the findings more reliable. Other problems arising from snowball sampling are related to the fact that the researcher does not have control of the information circulating around him/herself, and that being introduced ‘on behalf of’ a common acquaintance makes him/her dependent on the source (Enguix 2014).

After having realised that I would not have been able to access a sample, nor to get any additional statistics through institutions (town halls, Albanian/Romanian embassies/consulates, etc.), I contacted trade-unions and NGOs. In the fieldwork area there are quite a few organisations of Albanian entrepreneurs and students, as well as Albanian ethnic organisations based on nationality and religion (Catholicism, Islam). The Romanian associationism is instead linked with the Romanian Orthodox Church, but there is also a strong presence of Romanian immigrants in Protestant churches. While ethnic associations based on nationality were neither interested nor helpful, Albanian and Italian Catholic priests as well as Romanian Orthodox priests helped me

to identify some participants – not necessarily church-goers. Entrepreneurial organisations were not particularly available, whereas ethnic and non-ethnic business (Romanian groceries, Albanian-owned bakeries and cafés) became more important as a setting for participant observation than as source for snowballing. Instead, I found great support from the organisation of Albanian students and alumni of the University of Florence – without this help, my fieldwork would have progressed much more slowly from the beginning.

From these ethnic and non-ethnic starting points, I managed to reach most participants through the snowball technique, especially thanks to the fact that almost every couple would have at least another Albanian-Italian/Romanian couple within their social networks, among kin and friends. I started from Albanian participants, these being central in both Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian partnerships and marriages. However, the snowballing did not necessarily follow an ethnic divide, but rather a gender one – e.g. Albanian gatekeepers/participants not only mentioned Albanian acquaintances, but also Italian and Romanian ones; although women would usually name other women and men other men. In some cases, the snowball technique also bridged social classes within the same neighbourhood. I also tried to combine ethnic and non-ethnic sources and look at workplaces and neighbourhoods; in this way, I could also get in touch with participants through (a few) gatekeepers who were not Albanian, Italian, nor Romanian. Another strategy I tried for recruiting participants was engaging with people on the street, bus, or train whenever I could hear somebody speaking Albanian, for instance. While this strategy was effective for Vathi (2015), during her fieldwork on Albanian adolescents in Florence, it was completely unsuccessful in my case – possibly due to her co-ethnicity as well as the more ‘intimate’ nature of my research topic.

3.3 Data collection and analysis methods

3.3.1 Interviews

Interviewing does not consist only of asking questions, the selection of the interview technique depends on the type of information desired. In-depth interviewing is the most interactive interview technique, while questionnaires require the lowest level of interaction between researcher and participants. In-depth interviews allow the researcher

to gather rich data about participants' experiences, and it enables participants to describe and interpret their lives in their own words (Sánchez-Ayala 2012). Interviews can be distinguished on the basis of the structure and defined 'structured', 'semistructured', or 'unstructured' – if they follow a prederminate plan, establish a direction within the conversation, or arise from the research encounter itself. They can be also distinguished on the basis of the questions as either open-ended or close-ended – if they make it possible to collect stories or identify patterns. A further distinction corresponds to the fact that interviews can be individual or collective (e.g. joint couple interviews and focus groups). In the case of collective interviews, not only meanings but also interactions can be captured. Another specific trait of collective interviews is the intersubjective dynamics of storytelling, made of multiple consonant/dissonant voices, which is instead precluded in individual interviews. With reference to this research, a key issue concerned whether couples should be interviewed together or apart.

In my fieldwork, interviews were semi-structured and open-ended, which means that the questions were loosely organised around a few main themes so to allow participants to develop their own narratives (Kvale and Brinkman 2009). I collected both individual and joint couple interviews, although I had actually started from an ambitious strategy of combining these two interviews in a sequence – which, in spite of being theoretically the most suitable data collection method in couple/family research, is often practically unfeasible. The main limitations of this combination consist in the fact that it is too time-consuming and stressful from an ethical point of view – in fact, the researcher may find him/herself unintentionally mediating between 'secrets' and causing an unintended negative impact on the wellbeing of the couples themselves (Bjørnholt and Farstad 2012). Moreover, not only did partners often prefer to be interviewed just together, but also the separation produced by the combination of individual and joint couple interviews within the same research encounter is rather ineffective – as exemplified by the backstage supervision that one partner exercised over the interview with the other, also mentioned by Luke and Luke (1999). Therefore, through alternation of these two typologies of interview – individual and joint couple – I tried to make most of their respective advantages. While individual interviews enabled participants to speak of some topics in a way in which they might have not been able to speak in front of the partner – I am thinking of stigmatisation and family reactions – they also had the disadvantage of showing just one side of the story. On the other hand, joint couple interviews made it possible to develop common reflections and even arguments, as well

as to observe couple dynamics. Joint couple interviews also have the methodological advantage of putting into practice the constructivist assumption of a relational self (Bjørnholt and Farstad 2012) and they may even give the researcher access to details through a ‘cueing phenomenon’ by which participants basically help each other to divulge information. Moreover, they are often the only way to achieve gender balance within the sample and basically involve men – since intermarriage research is mostly made up of female researchers/participants (Edwards et al. 2010). However, joint couple interviews could be criticised by saying that partners would tell consistent stories, and one of them would lead the discussion. Nonetheless, it should be always kept in mind that, in both individual and joint couple interviews, what emerges in the interview is always limited to what participants wish to say and to the impressions that they want to maintain, acting either solo or as a team.

Following a dramaturgical approach, in fact, couples can be seen as if they were acting like a team, managing together the overall impression and also taking the individual roles which are socially required. Especially in first encounters, Goffman (1959) noted how the wife would show a more respectful subordination to the husband, so that he could assume the dominant role, and the impression of conjugal unit which is expected by the audience could be sustained. We can think of joint couple interviews as first encounters, in which the couple performance could be disrupted any time due to an inappropriate conduct of any partner. Therefore, each teammate has to rely on the conduct of the other and the necessity of cohesion in front of an audience makes it possible to overcome inner divisions. It follows that, in a joint couple interview, the definition of the situation projected by each partner would be commonly sustained by the intimate cooperation of the other, as shown in the following illustrative quotation from my fieldwork – in which Dorina, despite her initial reaction, chooses not to contradict her partner.

Rachele: *What about you, referring to this discourse of being an Albanian-Italian couple, instead of Albanian-Albanian, Italian-Italian, let's say, what do you think is more, less, different, similar?*

Massimiliano: She thinks the same as me, I guess...

Dorina: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

Massimiliano: ...she also noted this superficiality...

Dorina: Yes, I agree.

(Dorina & Massimiliano: Albanian woman and Italian man, cohabiting)

Yet, discontinuities and breakages do occur. In order to avoid collusions, the usage of irony can be used to contrast the direction of the performance, or partners could even postpone public declarations until the couple's decision has been made. However, they could also disclose 'secrets' to the researcher, not necessarily because he/she is seen as a confidant. By acquiring what Goffman (1959) called 'destructive information', I occasionally found myself at a crossroad between either playing a 'discrepant role'²⁴ or discrediting the definition of the situation and possibly the relation between the participants. I chose the first option, although this meant cooperating with one of the partners at the expense of the other, in order to 'save' the performance. I chose to do so, when I realised that what I might have initially interpreted as a wrong assumption, could actually have been made intentionally. In this way, I found out that citizenship acquisition and transnational mobility were not simply the realm of bureaucracy, but rather territories of contention embedded in power relations within the couple (see Chapter 7). Moreover, crises in terms of dramaturgical loyalty within a team could open the way to potential re-alignments – with the audience, for example – or simply show emotional dissociations, awaiting external mediation or team defensive practices. In the following quotation, Bekim and Alina recall their main controversy. This is linked with Alina's lack of supervision over a young single female cousin of Bekim, who was hosted at their place. While Bekim asks my opinion, pushing for a re-alignment on the basis of the Albanian-Italian 'Mediterranean' cultural proximity, Alina instead refers (not in the quote) to our shared category of education for justifying her position about female independence and needless supervision. Although I ignored the question twice, the third time I felt I had to answer. Yet, I did not want to take sides. Therefore, I gave Bekim a general and rather unsatisfying answer and then, having taken the floor, I changed topic.

Bekim:...an open-minded person, Italian, like you, how would (s)he feel? [...] Among us this thing...I don't know in Italy, among you...what you think about it, as an Italian, but among us, in Albania, it's serious, I can't understand how they could...[...] but for you as well, here in Italy, as far as I know, it's not such a small thing...

Rachele: *Yes, indeed, but it also depends on people, on what part of Italy, it depends on many things...another thing...that was your first time in Albania, right, other times in Albania? How often do you go now, together, with the kid?*

(Bekim & Alina: Albanian man and Romanian woman, married, one child)

²⁴ By 'discrepant role', Goffman (1959) means the privileged position of someone whom, in spite of not being a member of the team, has acquired 'destructive information' which is potentially able to endanger the whole performance.

In the next quotation, instead, Federica (Italian, practising Catholic from a practising Catholic family) plays along with the jokes of Dritan (Albanian, non-practising Muslim from a practising Muslim family) until the conversation shifts from a blurry boundary (language) to a bright boundary (religion), where irony is no longer welcome and the collusion finally occurs, quickly turned into a postponement.

Rachele: *I don't know if you have ever thought about it, anyway, what about kids, would you be interested in both languages, in teaching both Albanian and Italian, or...*

Federica: Both, it's normal.

Dritan: Both would be better...

Rachele: *Ok.*

Dritan: Albanian first, because it's more difficult [she laughs], Italian is here...[everybody laughs]

Rachele: *And in that case what about religion?*

Dritan: Religion? Muslim! [he laughs]

Federica: No. We don't know. We'll see. [she is getting upset]

(Dritan & Federica: Albanian man and Italian woman, cohabiting)

Joint couple interviews were also opportunities that participants had for speaking about specific topics for the first time, enquiring about the state of the partnership and its future, or launching some remarks. Below, Aurora indirectly asks for the officialisation of their relationship in front of the family of Klejdi.

Rachele: *Are you planning to meet his family, not yet, or...*

Klejdi: We don't know...

Aurora: Thank God you've asked this!

Rachele: *Wrong question...*[everybody laughs]

Klejdi: No, it's not a wrong question...my parents are people who've lived their life in a certain way...an Albanian way...

(Klejdi & Aurora: Albanian man and Italian woman, engaged)

Moreover, sometimes partners were not even alone during the research encounter, being accompanied by relatives/friends. While this may have further limited their freedom of speech, multiplying the levels in which the presentation of the self was being performed and the (meta)communication was being addressed; it also provided interesting insights into the partnership itself and/or triggered short anecdotes from the everyday. In fact, not only joint couple interviews, but also those interviews with one participant and a 'witness' were also occasions to (re)tell stories. This was specially interesting when children were present, as it would turn the interview performance into a parenting practice and a means for intergenerational value transmission. Furthermore, children were not only observing the scene, but they would also occasionally participate

in the construction of the story – as here the 7-year old son of Chiara, supporting her viewpoint on gender.

Chiara: What's more, I go to the bar for a coffee, so...

Rachele: *Ah, ok...*

Chiara: 'She goes to the bar!' 'By herself!' 'To have a coffee' 'Shameless, reckless!'

Chiara's son: Yes, my old granny, that one over there, in Albania, she can't even go to the bar!

Rachele: *But were you told this in your face or behind?*

Chiara: They tried to tell it to me as well, but as I don't accommodate to them, as I do whatever I want...no, at the beginning they tried, they tried a lot: 'Why...why don't you have it at home...' 'No' 'But...' 'No'. In fact, they gave up. My parents-in-law...no, they didn't...at the beginning my mother-in-law, then she gave up, my father-in-law instead: 'No, go, go, go, go!'

Rachele: *She also...*

Chiara: Sometimes she tried: 'But...take it (at home)' 'Where are you going? By yourself...' 'Where do you think I'm going?! I'm in the middle of nowhere, there's nothing around here, where do you think I'm going?!'

Chiara's son: You're not going to war, are you?!

Chiara: While his brothers still try: 'Tell her to stay at home' Who?! Me?!

(Chiara: Italian woman cohabiting with an Albanian man, one child)

All these features make it also possible to understand how joint couple interviews do not simply represent another interview format in between individual interviews and focus groups; but, in virtue of the intimate relationship between participants, they could be a fertile ground for a better understanding of couples²⁵.

3.3.2 Photo-elicitation

Photo-elicitation can be defined as an interviewing technique in which the researcher elicits information by using photographs, a way in which the dialogue is promoted through pictures (Harper 1994). Adding photographs to an interview not only provides a way to generate information, but also to address the unobservable and gain a deeper understanding of participants' lived experiences. In fact, although the photographs themselves might not contain new information, yet they can stimulate the memory of participants and so produce reflections and further meanings loosely associated to the content of the picture – which not only includes what it displays, but also what it does not display. It is also noted how photographs constitute inventories of things and people, records of events, and diaries of intimacy – making it possible to document objects as well as explore the subjective dimension of emotions and cognitions. Therefore, since they are polysemic, namely capable to generate multiple meanings in the viewing

²⁵ I further developed this topic in a methodological paper (Bezzini 2017).

process, photographs can work as a medium of communication between researcher and participants (Harper 2002). In particular, they can be used as a tool for the researcher to expand questions as well as a unique way for the participants to communicate specific aspects of their own lived experiences (Clark-Ibáñez 2004). Photo-elicitation may also complement omissions, enabling participants to express what could not be described in an interview, and somehow empowering them. Researchers have utilised different approaches to photo-elicitation, either based on participant-generated or researcher-generated photographs (pictures taken in the field, archival pictures of the field, decontextualised pictures with no connection with the field, family albums, etc.). Another issue concerns instead the setting in which photographs should ideally be viewed. In this respect, a group setting may trigger extended narratives and also provide observational data, similarly to what has been discussed above with reference to joint couple *vs* individual interviews.

I had planned to use photo-elicitation as a way to approach a sub-sample of participants and deepen my understanding of their life-stories through the recollection of episodes supported by the analysis of visual material belonging to the them (e.g. wedding photo-album, see Fieldnotes 2 at page 161). In this way, I intended to put into practice a more collaborative approach and let participants elaborate topics which were relevant for them and might not have been touched upon during the interview. The use of photographs, I thought, would enable participants to speak about their own social networks, either present or absent in the pictures, and so open up the stream of consciousness to memories of places and times other than those of the photographs themselves. However, the photo-elicitation that I ended up doing was very different from that planned. After a few trials, I realised that archives were mostly digital and photographs were all over unnamed folders in USB pendrives, external memories, and old laptops downloading never-ending updates. Yet, everybody had smartphones and Facebook profiles. In this way, I could have a look at pictures and videos during the interview, as well as in further meetings, in a more unstructured way. The next quote refers to Ioana's Facebook profile picture – which I was allowed to use (Figure 12).

Ioana: Now I show you a picture, here you go, have you seen the picture in my profile?

Rachele: *That lovely kid?*

Ioana: She's my daughter. Have you seen what she's holding in her hands? [i.e. the Albanian and Romanian flags] [...] My kid is wearing...by the way, I made that blouse, on my own, for her...

Rachele: *Ah, God!*

Ioana: I made it...

Rachele: *Really beautiful, bravo, so traditional...*

Ioana: It's a traditional thing, Romanian...

Rachele: *A traditional blouse...*

Ioana: And she had...look, this is what I made on my own, and she had the flag...

Rachele: *And what about the mat?*

Ioana: It's from Romania too, we've bought it recently...

(Ioana: Romanian woman married to an Albanian man, two children)

Figure 12. Albanian-Romanian child



Photo-elicitation has made it possible to integrate verbal narratives with visual material belonging to the participants in addition to the photographs I have personally taken – somehow thereby integrating emic and etic viewpoints on mixed couples and families, as shown by the pictures which will appear throughout my thesis. All in all, photographs have represented a tool by which specific episodes selected by the participants themselves were approached (weddings, baptisms), or have just accompanied the disentanglement of life-stories through the presentation of their main characters (the family).

3.3.3 Participant observation

As a cornerstone of anthropology, participant observation corresponds to the act of 'being there' in the field (Geertz 1988; Hannerz 2003). Goffman (1989) defined

participant observation as a method of data collection in which the researcher ‘physically and ecologically’ penetrates the situations involving a group of individuals. It is a process in which the researcher’s presence constitutes the condition for scientific investigation (Schwartz and Schwartz 1955). However, participant observation cannot be reduced to the personality of the researcher, but it also relies on his/her experience and, therefore, should be considered as a craft to learn and master through the practice of ‘doing’, as well as through theoretical/methodological preparation (Clifford 1983). Harrington (2002) argued that the credibility of participant observation as a method of data collection depends on ‘walking a fine line between participation and observation’ and thus conjugating in-depth knowledge and critical analysis of the context. In fact, the researcher has to gain the trust not only of the participants, but also of the readers.

The role of participant observation in my research has been twofold. Firstly, participant observation has been collaterally employed in the interview encounter, adding complementary/contradictory information to participants’ narratives, especially in the already mentioned joint couple interviews. Also the interview setting often provided valuable opportunities for participant observation; half of the interviews took place in participants’ houses and this was especially common among Albanian-Italian couples with Albanian women. I could visit the houses of Albanian-Italian couples with Albanian men and of Albanian-Romanian couples only in further meetings and to a much lesser extent – the other half of interviews were conducted in participants’ workplaces as well as in public spaces like squares, parks, and cafés. Having the chance to interview participants in their own house was useful not only because they could feel more comfortable, as the control of the setting gives a sense of security (Goffman 1959), but also because I could have an insight into the layout of their everyday-life, with signs and symbols of mixedness which were (not) exposed – taking pictures, with permission.

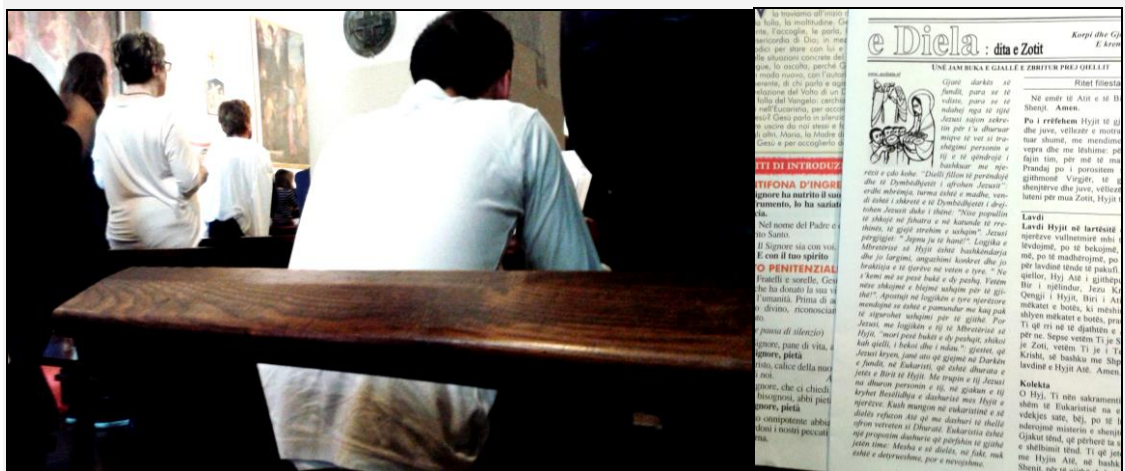
Secondly, participant observation was the main data collection method on all those occasions in which I could either take part in participants’ routines or just have the chance ‘to be there’. Through participant observation I could seize interactions in the field and so combine information gathered from interviews/photo-elicitation with further data provided by actions and informal conversations – producing rich data annotated in fieldnotes. I was invited, for example, to an Albanian get-together for the

Spring Day (*Dita e Verës*)²⁶ – which occurred immediately after the 25th anniversary of the first Albanian migrations to Italy. I also attended a Romanian wedding in a Romanian Orthodox church and the refreshment party which followed the ceremony, while in the other corner second-generation children were gathered around the map of Romania. I attended a Catholic mass in a mixed Albanian/Italian language service, listening to the priest speaking of integration and meeting future participants over the sign of peace (Fieldnotes 1, below)²⁷. I was sometimes invited (and accepted) to stay for dinner, after the interview, and was able to meet again some participants/gatekeepers in various leisure venues.

Fieldnotes 1. *Corpus Domini*

I'm sitting at the back of the church. Two young couples arrive, just before it starts, and quickly sit in front of me. I observe them during the mass. One of the two guys seems to have difficulties in following the text, which is in Albanian (Figure 13). The girl shows him the passage where we are. Either he's not able to follow a mass or can't understand Albanian, nor does he make an effort for understanding it, as the other girl seems to be doing...is he a Muslim Albanian? An Italian? At the moment of exchanging a sign of peace, they turn to me, at first the other guy, he addresses me in Albanian, I answer in Italian, then his partner addresses me in Italian, smiling, and so do the other two. The former guy doesn't follow the others' behaviour, when to sit and when to stand, although everybody goes to take communion. The other three kneel down, he doesn't. Then, everybody stands, the girl pulls his shirt to get him up. The other two partners hold their hands, kiss each other, both know what to do. At the end of the mass, before they leave, over the last chant, I ask the other girl whether they are an Albanian-Italian couple. She answers that actually both of them are. I'm lucky. We exchange contacts.

Figure 13. Albanian-language mass and leaflet



²⁶ Literally 'Summer Day', it is a pagan festival taking place in Albania on the 14th of March.

²⁷ Further sets of fieldnotes presented in the thesis concern a Saturday spent in Italian and Romanian Adventist churches with an Albanian-Romanian couple and the Romanian kin (Fieldnotes 3 at page 194) and the UEFA Euro 2016 Albania-Romania football match that I watched in two Kosovar-owned pubs and then in an international pub in Florence (Fieldnotes 4 at page 207).

3.3.4 Grounded theory

I transcribed the interviews during the fieldwork and simultaneously started analysing the data. Most of the analysis was done on anonymised transcripts and notes that I took about the research encounter and about my impressions. Since I was using public transport only – mainly the train – I had plenty of time to read my notes from the start of my fieldwork. I also kept a record of all interviews, summarising key information that I managed to collect about each couple such as age, age at migration, marital and family status, place of origin, residency, education, occupation, religion, etc. I wrote down these details immediately after every encounter when they were still fresh in my mind. This was really helpful in order to systematise, compare, and identify codes from the beginning and monitoring the composition of the sample. My analysis developed as a combination of pre and post-codings, namely codes borrowed from the literature and codes emerging from the fieldwork itself. I followed the grounded theory approach, according to which all productive anthropological and sociological analysis is somehow ‘grounded’ and thereby depends on abductive reasoning and a creative interplay between findings and ideas (Atkinson 2005). After the completion of my fieldwork I also attended a NVivo course. However, while this software may be useful to organise data, it also presents some pitfalls such as the tendency of over-coding. In fact, especially in joint couple interviews, it was important not only to pay attention to the content of the speech, but also to other details given by the interplay between meta-communication, performance, and positionality. This means that not only what participants were saying was relevant, but also when and how – all aspects which could not be taken into account through NVivo segmentations. I started drafting the first set of research findings towards the end of my fieldwork – after having reached the point of saturation in which nothing new seems to be added, the snowball chains did not move into new directions, the quota of participants were already reached, and the hot Italian summer was at its peak. I drafted the second set of findings only later on, as I felt that I needed to take a step back and a break between the fieldwork and the writing-up of the richest part of its reportage, in order to analyse the data in a more systematic way, merge the various codes into a smaller amount of themes, and detach myself somewhat from the field.

3.4 Ethics and reflexivity

3.4.1 *Ethics*

Ethics is embedded in research encounters, in the relation between participants and the researcher. Before starting the fieldwork, I checked the ethical guidelines and became acquainted with informed consent and distress protocols, privacy and anonymity measures, as well as safety precautions. Referring to security, I tried to schedule interviews during day hours and early evenings, in places served by public transport, carrying my mobile-phone with me, and dressing in an appropriate way for a researcher. With reference to privacy, I changed the names of participants in order to protect their anonymity and the confidentiality of the data. I also adopted a careful approach to distress management. In fact, interviewing members of immigrant groups who had undergone a phenomenon of stigmatisation – such as Albanians and Romanians in Italy, especially in the 1990s and 2000s – meant thinking in advance about the possibilities that sensitive topics would arise during the interview, in relation to experiences of xenophobia, for example. One of the questions I asked participants, at the end of the interview, was about their opinion on contemporary societal attitudes towards Albanian/Romanian immigrants. This question generated answers about changing trajectories of stigmatisation, whereas episodes of discrimination were occasionally mentioned throughout the interview – although they never represented the focus of the attention, nor they were a source of distress. However, personal stories were often emotional; in these cases, I stopped the interview for a while and asked for confirmation to continue or simply changed topic. Nonetheless, while stigmatisation was not usually perceived as a sensitive topic, mixedness sometimes was. Being interviewed on such an intimate topic, like the experience of being a mixed couple/family, was sometimes refused. In several cases the initial availability of the woman was then countered by the refusal of the man and the interview could not take place. In a few cases, women accepted to be interviewed with the permission of the man, but this actually posed further challenges. In one case, for example, as soon as the man had a detailed account of the meeting, I was asked to withdraw the interview; in another case, I could not ask anything which would have even indirectly concerned the male partner such as couple's meeting, family's reaction, etc. – actually the core of the interview!

Referring to the procedure for obtaining informed consent, I informed participants about my research before arranging the appointment, specifying topics and methods. Additional information was provided prior to interviewing, together with details about anonymity and privacy. I clarified that they could refuse to answer any question and pause the recorder on their own, whenever they wished. Participants were also made aware of the fact that they could withdraw from the interview without prejudice, in case they did not want to continue. The recorder was seen as an interesting object by curious children, a ‘blackmailing’ instrument by playful couples, and an intimidating tool by reserved participants. In a few cases I was asked not to record the interview, so I took some quick notes and mostly wrote down the story after the interview, so to maintain eye contact with the participants and not hinder the flow of the speech. I also took notes about what preceded and followed each interview, which sometimes was really enlightening. To give an example, after a while that I was interviewing an Albanian-Romanian couple, it came out that the Albanian partner was Aromanian and this shifted the narration from mixedness to perceived co-ethnicity. The interview finished, the recorder was switched off. Only then did the Romanian partner reveal that she partly belonged to the Ukrainian minority of Romania and this was another turning point in the interpretation of mixedness within the couple, denoting not less but more commonality on the basis of a shared minority status in both their countries of origin. The fact that the Romanian participant herself was the child of a mixed marriage (interethnic, but intrareligious) also helped me to understand the role that the Adventist religion had acquired in the couple’s identity construction.

3.4.2 Reflexivity

Due to the fact that the subjectivity of the researcher is part of the construction of knowledge and therefore influences the way in which data are collected and analysed, the researcher has to consider his/her own positionality before implementing ethnography both as fieldwork and writing-up (Sánchez-Ayala 2012). By ‘positionality’, it is thus meant that the researcher has to know his/her own location in the social structure and acknowledge that this location affects the way in which the world is understood and the research project carried out. In fact, the relationship between the researcher and the field, and thus the way in which the researcher interprets the field and is interpreted within the field, is necessarily influenced by his/her multiple social memberships.

Earlier in this chapter, we have seen that both the positions of insiderness and outsiderhood can bring advantages and disadvantages in research. While insiderhood would ideally mean shared background and mutual understanding between researcher and participants, it could also lead to emotional attachment, conflicts of interest, and bias. Instead, outsiderhood could ideally provide the researcher with a more critical viewpoint and the participants with a further guarantee of confidentiality, although it could also raise problems in terms of accessing participants and gaining their trust. However, insiderhood/outsiderhood should really be conceived as an oscillatory movement rather than as an outcome of essentialised categories – which would otherwise lead to the paradox of autoreferentiality. Enguix (2014) argued that the researcher continuously negotiates his/her own position in the field within social relationships with participants, and on the basis of his/her attributes (age, class, ethnicity, gender, etc.) is identified as an individual like all individuals belonging to a specific group. Through this typification, participants construct their own expectations towards the researcher and behave consequently. Therefore, the researcher needs to consider his/her own attributes within the presentation of the self in the field, remembering that identificational categories are relatively ‘fluid’, and that sharing an attribute with participants does not necessarily mean insiderhood, just as not sharing an attribute does not mean outsiderhood. Starting from a ‘position of uncertainty’ (Nowicka and Ryan 2015), commonalities and differences should never be taken for granted, but continuously negotiated in the research encounter.

A starting point for understanding insiderhood/outsiderhood in migration research corresponds to the identification of the researcher as a part of the national majority or the immigrant minority – in fact, since not everybody migrates, who migrates could rightly be considered a minority (Sánchez-Ayala 2012). Immigrant groups have often been perceived as ‘vulnerable groups’ in terms of discrimination and linguistic impairments; a co-ethnic researcher could thus have a better insight not only in terms of language skills, but also in terms of background knowledge – which would be especially the case of a researcher who is not only co-ethnic, but also migrant him/herself. Yet, Ryan (2015) showed how the category of migration *per se* may produce temporary commonalities in research encounters, beyond co-ethnicity. Although this may be especially relevant when the migrant researcher and participants are settled in the same host-society, it sometimes emerged also in my fieldwork when some Albanian/Romanian participants would link open-mindedness not only with my own

education or generation, but also with migration ('You know it, because you're abroad' as Ioana put it) or even when some of them would enquire about my supposed experience of stigmatisation as an Italian emigrant. On the other hand, Moroşanu (2015) discussed how co-ethnicity may reduce suspicion towards the researcher and also provide a cultural/linguistic baggage, although this may not mean familiarity. In fact, the interaction between researcher and participants, before, during, and after the interview is actually shaped by the interplay between multiple categories: intermittent moments of co-ethnicity would alternate to gender solidarity, urban/rural oppositions, and perhaps kindness towards a third-level student.

Wimmer (2004) asserted the importance of moving beyond an ethnic lens in migration research and rethinking in/outsiderness through further ascribed and acquired categories like class, generation, and individuals – as already mentioned, I started from the category of generation. Issues of in/outsiderness were also further complicated by the fact that I was interviewing mixed couples. Therefore, while I could have been, for example, 'female' or 'Italian', like or unlike my interviewee, in a one-to-one relationship; I was at the same time like and unlike my interviewees in a one-to-two relationship. My 'association with', 'affiliation for', and 'alienation from' them (Marcus 1995) were more contingent and fluid in joint couple than in individual interviews and thus required an extra monitoring. I tried to balance proximity and distance with each of the partners, in order not to overlap with any of them, yet not being perceived as a complete outsider – although this was not always possible. Nationality was not enough, when all the other identificational categories would put me far away from a participant, turning perhaps into a Northern/Southern Italian divide (*vs* emigration/internal migration as a commonality within the Albanian-Italian couple). Similarly, gender was not the most salient trait, when a common experience ended up reinforcing co-ethnicity, instead.

Going around with backpack, papers, and pens, put me in the position of the student, which was seen with kindness among older participants, and with empathy among younger ones. Third-level education was also the main identificational category among several couples, who would see me as a peer. In the case of an educational gap between the two partners, third-level education tended to put me on the side of the educated partner, usually the woman. In this case, however, enduring gender hierarchies implied downplaying such commonalities and listening to the opinion of the Italian male partner about women and education with complicit silence, for instance. Handling joint couple

interviews has been complex, not only because of the efforts in maintaining the role of mediator between the two partners, but also in the struggle to control the impressions in between the poles of participation and observation. This included learning by mistakes: when to laugh and with whom, managing bewilderment, holding back smiles and also tears. In an individual interview, for example, listening to a female participant who was visibly moved, I put my hand on her shoulder, so as to show my empathy. On the contrary, I refrained from any physical contact and opted instead for changing topic, when something similar occurred during a joint couple interview, as I felt my reaction would have further embarrassed the woman's husband.

Another element which contributed to create familiarity with participants was the fact that I am from the area where I conducted the fieldwork. This provided me with background information to understand places of origin and settlement, to be familiar with landmarks cropping up in the narratives, and also to make a strategic usage of language codes. This meant attuning myself to participants by using words from the local variant of the Italian language, so to be further identified as an insider. This linguistic element produced interesting outcomes also in terms of participants' self/other categorisation, reshuffling the cards and making locals out of foreigners (see Chapter 7). Moreover, I adopted the same expressions that participants had used to define a concept. In particular, I did not use the term 'mixed', its derivatives and synonyms unless used by the participants. Then, at the end of the interview, I would ask their opinion about mixedness and what often came out was the usage of mixedness as an etic category – namely a category for defining the others, rarely the self. Furthermore, although I do not master either Albanian or Romanian, my basic knowledge allowed me 'to pass the test' when some participants asked me for translations and to show that I was not unaware of narrative coordinates. All interviews were conducted in Italian, which is also the common language of all the Albanian-Italian/Romanian couples whom I interviewed. In addition to this, either because of the several years spent in Italy, or because of the young age at migration, or even because of the phenomenon of 'anticipatory acculturation' (King and Mai 2009), especially the Albanian participants often defined themselves as 'bilingual'; whilst the Romanian participants generally picked up Italian quickly because both are Romance languages.

Furthermore, both insiderness and outsiderhood can be strategically employed. For example, I had Albanian friends since my adolescence and have been travelling to Albania for many years now – whereas my personal knowledge of Romania is mediated

by social networks which I have more recently developed, also because of the different timing of these two migrations to Italy and the different profile of migrants. However, I was often dubious about disclosing details on this topic during the interview (unless asked) and especially in joint couple interviews to Albanian-Italian couples, because I felt that this would have somehow led to indirect comparisons with the Italian partner – specially if female. As a consequence, I emphasised/de-emphasised my own involvement depending on that of the participants. This interest, which was usually interpreted as a proof of commitment towards the research, contributed to negotiate degrees of proximity and distance in a ‘three-player game’ involving both partners and me. In the following quote, it comes out that Chiara and I attended the same Albanian language course in Prishtina, although in different years. I selected this element also because it occurs in other interviews with Italian female participants.

Chiara: My best friend [...] was volunteering with a NGO [...] a bit in Albania, a bit in Kosovo, so, every year I would go and visit her, once he also came over...

Arjan: You were also in a course, in Kosovo...

Chiara: Yes, indeed, I also attended a language course...

Rachele: *Me too!*

Chiara: Oh my God! [...] Who was your teacher?!

(Arjan & Chiara: Albanian man and Italian woman, cohabiting, two children)

However, while I could similarly engage in conversations about Elbasan, Gorani²⁸, and Turkish coffee – being sometimes turned into a ‘honorary insider’ – I could not ‘follow the people’ along the metaphoric multi-sitedness of their narratives (Marcus 1995) all those times I was unexpectedly asked if I remembered *that* well in Krujë, where she used to get water as a child, or *that* neighbourhood in Shkodër, where his in-laws still live. Moreover, simulating a lack of expertise may also be a way to elicit richer data (Ryan 2015) as shown in the following quotation, in which Xhuljana and Matteo describe the wedding of her sister, which took place in Albania, suggesting the existence of hierarchies of in/outsiderness and introducing the ‘anthropological gaze’ within the sphere of mixed partnership/marriage.

Matteo: If you don’t know it, I can explain to you how Albanian weddings are...

Xhuljana: You really want to know...

Rachele: *Tell me, tell me...* [he laughs]

Xhuljana: Come on, tell her, you’re an expert now!

(Xhuljana & Matteo: Albanian woman and Italian man, cohabiting)

²⁸ Slavophone Muslim population inhabiting a geographical region (Gora) divided between Albania, Kosovo, and Macedonia.

Also shared outsidership can create commonality, though, as exemplified in the quotation below, in which Giacomo – born and raised in Florence, although originally from Northern Italy – alternates a feeling of belonging to Florence (earlier defined ‘his own city’) to a declaration of ‘non-Florentinity’, which moves the two interviewees as well as the interviewer temporarily closer one to another.

Giacomo: When somebody tells you that the Florentine is hospitable, don’t believe it.

Rachele: *No...*

Gerta: You don’t believe it! [she laughs]

Rachele: *No way...*

Giacomo: The Florentine is mocking, makes fun of the tourist, doesn’t consider him a resource, considers him a bother instead, the same with foreigners, he’s a bit racist, the Florentine is racist with the Tuscan [i.e. with people from other parts of Tuscany]...

Gerta: A bit close-minded...

Giacomo: Very close-minded!

Gerta: In fact, over these years I wasn’t able to befriend Florentines, I mean, it’s incredible, I simply couldn’t! [everybody laughs]

(Gerta & Giacomo: Albanian woman and Italian man, married, one child)

A final note concerns the reception of this research among participants. Some participants welcomed this project as a proof of integration, as an effort towards the revaluation of stigmatised immigrant groups, as a sign of changing times. Other participants, instead, viewed this study with suspicion, as if it would add to mainstream negative stereotypes on mixed marriages and bring performances of social mimicry out of invisibility. The following quotation illustrates how research encounters constitute processes of mutual identity construction, in which not only the researcher interprets the participants, but also the other way around (Ryan 2015) – creating expectation adjustments as well as misunderstandings.

Enkelejd: Maybe for your study it would have been better if there were some issues...

Rachele: *No! I do prefer when everything is fine!*

Enkelejd: Just kidding! Just kidding!

(Enkelejd & Irene: Albanian man and Italian woman, cohabiting)

CONTEXT**Introduction**

This chapter introduces the context of my research. First, it presents the transition of Italy from emigrant to immigrant society and then it gives a brief overview of the Albanian and Romanian post-communist migrations and integration processes in Italy. In particular, King and Zontini (2000) talked about a ‘Southern European model of migration’ characterised by plurality of immigrant nationalities, gender asymmetries, heterogeneity of migrant types, specific labour market niches, high levels of clandestinity and illegality, spontaneity, temporariness, and mobility. Precisely because of these peculiarities which distinguish them from Northern Europe, Southern European countries offer an original insight into migration and integration processes. Moreover, thanks to its position in the Mediterranean, in between South-North and East-West migrations, Italy represents a paradigmatic case of the Southern European model. The chapter goes on to show that, since the early-1990s, the categories of ‘foreigner’, ‘immigrant’, and ‘non-EU citizen’ have progressively been used in the public discourse in order to identify otherness and justify exclusion in Italy (Sciortino and Colombo 2004). Since the way in which states deal with migration is closely tied with the idea of nationhood, which makes integration pathways context-dependent (Brubaker 1992), Triandafyllidou (1999) argued that, in the case of Italy, a civic idea of nationhood has been subjected to a process of ethnicisation due to migration. The Albanian and Romanian migrations played a major role in the process of ethnic boundary-making and in the whole transformation of Italy into an immigrant social space (Adler-Hellman 1997). The alternation of Albanophobia and Romanophobia thus needs to be considered within a broader frame, together with the processes of nation-building and EU integration which have contributed to create hierarchies of sameness and difference in Italy (see also Triandafyllidou and Veikou 2002 about Greece).

While these processes, and especially the implications of self/other identificational categories on the interactive dimension of integration, will be discussed at length in the next chapter, this chapter continues by examining the Albanian and Romanian migrations with reference to the extant literature. Historical patterns and general trends are summarised, and specific attention is paid to a selection of themes which will be also relevant to analyse the findings. The two brief overviews introduce each migration

referring to key host-societies – Italy, Greece, and the UK in the case of Albanian immigrants (King and Mai 2008, 2009; Lazaridis and Koumandraki 2007; Mai 2010; Vathi and King 2013); Italy, Spain, and the UK in the case of Romanian immigrants (Anghel 2008, 2012; Fox et al. 2015; Marcu 2015; Moroşanu 2013; Moroşanu and Fox 2013). I will also refer to the impact of migration on the Albanian and Romanian family sphere (King and Vullnetari 2006; Pantea 2012a, 2012b; Vathi 2012, 2013, 2015; Vullnetari 2012b). The conjunction of these two levels – the personal and the societal – leads us to the sphere of the mixed couple and family as an ideal laboratory for understanding the social change brought about by migration, which will be further developed in the next three chapters.

Finally, this chapter presents the profile of the Albanian and Romanian immigrant groups in Italy, 25 years after the first migration from Albania and 10 years after the Romanian migration ‘boom’. Indicators of structural integration based on official statistics are discussed. In addition to group size, sex ratio, geographical distribution, labour market, schooling, and citizenship acquisition – which also contributes to understanding structural constraints influencing intermarriage – the topic of intermarriage is introduced in relation to the integration process, with reference to both Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian marriages.

4.1 Immigration and integration Italy

Like other Southern European countries, Italy has experienced a remarkable historical turnaround from emigration to immigration (Iosifides and King 1996; King and Zontini 2000). Indeed, no other country in Europe sent abroad so many emigrants (26 million between 1876 and 1976), experienced a larger scale internal migration (2 million from Southern to Northern Italy between 1951 and 1971) and a more dramatic switch from mass emigration to mass immigration (King and Andall 1999). This turnaround officially occurred in 1973, when in-migration exceeded out-migration rates, although these inflows were initially largely made up of return migrants. The foreign population, in the 1970s and 1980s, was composed of Yugoslavs working in the building industry in the North-East; Tunisian fishermen in Western Sicily; Eritreans, Ethiopians, and Somalians in Rome through colonial links; Filipino and Cape Verdean women working as domestic servants in wealthy urban households thanks to the mediation of the Catholic church; and Iranian university students (Colombo and Sciortino 2004; King

and Andall 1999). Moreover, also Northern American and Northern European citizens were residing in Italy – especially in Lombardy, Latium, and Tuscany (King et al. 2000). The first regularisation of migrants took place in 1982, whereas the first migration law – regulating entry, stay, employment, and family reunification – came into force in 1986 (Foschi law). Subsequent laws became effective in 1990 (Martelli law), 1998 (Turco-Napolitano law), and 2002 (Bossi-Fini law). All these laws included regularisations, allowing ‘illegal’ immigrants to legalise their status. Additional regularisations were made in 1995, 2006, 2009, and 2012. In 2009, illegal immigration became a crime (*reato di clandestinità*). In 2012, the first integration measure was implemented through the Integration Agreement (*Accordo di integrazione*), which immigrants now need to sign at the moment of requesting the first permit of stay and which commits them to fulfilling specific requirements (language-learning, civic education, training courses, etc.) in order to obtain the renewal within a two-year time frame.

Although the initial response to immigration flows was *laissez faire*, more restrictive stances gradually followed under internal and external pressures – due to the implications of a porous Southern European flank for illegal migration in the EU (Iosifides and King 1996). However, the conflation of migration policy with border control policy basically led to a ‘non migration-policy’ in Italy and beyond (Urso 2009); in fact, Southern European countries did not have a clear normative model of migration and integration. None of the models used in Northern American and Northern European countries (assimilationism in the US and France, multiculturalism in Canada and the UK, differential exclusionism in Germany – Castles and Miller 1993) were officially applied. Furthermore, instead of using their emigration experience to inform immigration policies, these countries rather adopted *ad hoc* measures like regularisations and repatriations. Adler-Hellman (1997) asked how extensive the presence of immigrants had to be, before Italians could finally acknowledge the transformation of their society from an ‘emigrant space’ to an ‘immigrant space’, and how long it would take to make the structural and cultural adjustments necessary to correspond to this changing reality. In fact, immigration into Italy was perceived as an ‘emergency’, due to the situation of permanent precariousness in which immigrants were inserted (informal economy) and also because of the inadequacies of the social structures supporting immigrants’ settlement (Campani 1993). The lack of a normative model, apt to control immigration flows and manage the immigrant population already

established in the country, can be exemplified by the plurality of approaches which Zincone (2006) retrieved in the migration-policy debate in Italy. Each approach addresses specific targets, some of them complementary and some of them contradictory: the protection of vulnerable groups like unaccompanied minors, undocumented migrants, and victims of trafficking (solidarist approach); the regulation of migration flows by matching demand and supply in the labour market (functionalist approach); the reduction of illegality, clandestinity, and criminality (legalistic approach); the recognition of foreign languages and religions in accordance with the law (multiculturalist approach); the fear of national identity loss and pursuit of cultural assimilation (identitarian approach). By analysing the policies implemented in eight Italian regions, Campomori and Caponio (2013) identified three distinct approaches to integration – assistance, assimilation, and citizenship – and argued that immigrants are treated differently not only at a national, but also at a regional level. With reference to this, it could be useful to recall a criticism made by Favell (2002) of the Italian migration research, whose main limits – the ‘triumphant and nonsensical localism’ and the ‘false hope of emulating the post-colonial countries of Northern Europe’ – had partly impeded the acknowledgement of a ‘multiculturalism Italian-style’ and the appraisal of the social change brought about by immigration.

However, besides confirming the backwardness of migration policy in Italy, scholars have also dealt with the implications of immigration for the idea of nationhood in the country. Triandafyllidou (1999) approached immigration as a process of redefinition of the national identity, raising symbolic boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’. National identity can be seen as a double-edged relationship which, on the one hand, is inward looking and refers to a set of commonalities; on the other hand, it is outward looking and implies differences. Although the Italian nationalism is civic rather than ethnic, Triandafyllidou argued that immigration into Italy has led to the ethnicisation of nationalism, namely to the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ on the basis of ‘race’ and culture. Sciortino and Colombo (2004) investigated the emergence of new categories of ‘non-us’ through the passage from ‘foreigner’ (*straniero*) to ‘immigrant’ (*immigrato*) to ‘non-EU’ (*extracomunitario*) in the Italian press between the 1980s and the 1990s; noting how, at the same time in which immigrants became a structural component of the Italian labour market, the public discourse shifted from economy to security issues, leading to the criminalisation of immigration. It has also been shown how immigration has been basically defined through evocative terms such as ‘flow’ and ‘flood’ as well as

through the ‘myth of invasion’ (De Haas 2008). Later in this chapter and especially in the next one, we will see how the role of ‘constitutive other’, which had been necessary for articulating a new idea of the national ‘self’ during this transition, happened to be assigned to the Albanian immigrants in the 1990s and to the Romanian immigrants in the 2000s (King and Mai 2009; Mai 2010).

According to ISTAT data (Table 3), in 2014, there were 5,014,437 immigrants in Italy corresponding to 8.2% of the resident population (60,795,612 individuals). The top 5 countries of citizenship represented 51.2% of all foreign residents. In addition to this, the year 2014 seems to have inaugurated the beginning of a new cycle, characterised by the ‘EU migrant crisis’ and by outflow rates exceeding again inflow rates – although this time made of both Italian-origin and foreign-origin Italian citizens (IDOS 2015).

Table 3. Foreign resident population in Italy – Top 10 Countries of Citizenship

COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP	POPULATION	MALES	FEMALES
Romania	1,131,839	487,203	644,636
Albania	490,483	254,622	235,861
Morocco	449,058	243,052	206,006
China	265,820	135,447	130,373
Ukraine	226,060	47,393	178,667
Philippines	168,238	73,320	94,918
India	147,815	88,838	58,977
Moldova	147,388	49,929	97,459
Bangladesh	115,301	81,185	34,116
Peru	109,668	45,653	64,015

Source: Elaboration on ISTAT data (31/12/2014)

The idea of nationhood also influences the citizenship regime. As Bianchi (2011) noted, despite the growing second generations, the Italian citizenship regime makes naturalisation difficult, even for those who are born in Italy. This relegates second generations to a marginal position, excluding them from civic integration. In fact, children of immigrants do not need an individual permit of stay, being listed on their parents’ permit; however, at the moment of turning 18, they are legally considered immigrants although born and/or raised in Italy. The Italian citizenship regime is based on the *ius sanguinis*; therefore, it privileges Italian ancestry. In order to naturalise, immigrants need to prove continuous legal residency in Italy for 10 years in case of non-EU citizens (prior to 1992 only 5 years were required) and for 4 years in case of EU-citizens. The children of immigrants inherit citizenship and immigrant status from the parents; if they did not acquire the Italian citizenship during their period of minor

age thanks to cohabitation with a naturalised parent, they have one year between the 18th and the 19th birthday in order to request it.

Besides residency, the Italian citizenship regime also admits the possibility of acquiring citizenship through marriage to an Italian citizen: 2 years of co-residency in Italy are required (3 years if the couple resides abroad), halved in case of children. Like in other European countries (see De Hart 2015 on the Netherlands), also in Italy the acquisition of citizenship via marriage and its transmission to the children of intermarriage has been subjected to major changes. Until 1983, Italian women would automatically lose the Italian citizenship at the moment of marriage to a foreign citizen, whereas foreign women would automatically acquire the Italian citizenship at the moment of the marriage to an Italian citizen. Moreover, only Italian men could transmit the Italian citizenship to the children. Since 1983, instead, the Italian citizenship can be transmitted both patrilinearly and matrilinearly; whereas citizenship acquisition became subjected to request and a period of co-residency was also required (6 months, extended to 2 years in 2009). In 1992, dual/multiple citizenships were allowed. In 2011, a further restriction affected marriages between Italian and non-EU citizens, forcing foreign partners to provide also evidence of their legal status in Italy – namely the permit of stay – in order to get married in the country. This restriction can be seen as an instrument for dissuading would-be ‘sham citizens’ from turning marriage into a route to legalisation (Parisi 2014, see also Kringelbach 2013 on France). In 2012, an amendment recently judged unconstitutional (Nadotti 2016), was introduced for limiting the burden of ‘convenience marriage’ on the Italian welfare. This amendment prevented the foreign spouse of a deceased Italian citizen from benefitting from the full spouse pension, if the marriage lasted less than 10 years, the Italian spouse was above 70 years of age at the moment of marriage, and there was a 20+ age gap between the spouses. This amendment was defined as a ‘norm against caregivers’ (*norma anti-badanti*), since it specifically targeted intermarriages between elderly people and their relatively younger carers in order to avoid welfare frauds. Since most of caregivers in Italy are Central/Eastern European – especially Romanian (19.4%), Ukrainian (10.4%), Polish (7.7%), and Moldovan (6.2%) according to Censis 2010 data – this amendment not only fomented the negative stereotype about intermarriage with Central/Eastern European brides, but it also contributed to the enlargement of this stereotype to those intermarriages involving Albanian women, in spite of the different migration history and intermarriage patterns.

4.2 A brief overview of the Albanian migration

King (2005) defined Albania as a ‘migration laboratory’. No other country in Europe has been so deeply affected by migration as post-communist Albania. After four decades of isolationism during the communist regime, in which international migration was impossible and internal migration tightly controlled, everything changed in the 1990s. In the space of a census interval (1989-2001), 1 out of 5 Albanians left the country (approximately 600,000 individuals), whereas the share of urban population increased from 35% to 42% (more than 200,000 individuals moved to the capital city) – King (2003); Zezza et al. (2005). Demographic and development gaps, together with political and humanitarian crises – the first democratic election in 1991, the ‘pyramid crisis’ in 1997²⁹, and the war in Kosovo in 1999 – led to mass departures over the mountains towards Greece and across the sea towards Italy (King 2003). Albanians soon became half of the total immigrant population in Greece and approximately 1/10 of the more heterogeneous immigrant population of Italy. Zezza et al. (2005) showed that, initially, the more likely to emigrate were the less well off from urban areas and the better off from rural areas. However, these patterns rapidly changed, leading also the less well off from rural areas to emigrate. In many cases, this meant a two-stage migration – at first internal and then international. Zezza et al. also showed that while international migration affected the richer districts in the Centre and South of Albania, due to their geographical proximity to Italy and Greece, internal migration stemmed from the poorer areas in the North. In addition to this, a smaller number of Northern Albanians later emigrated to the UK, passing as Kosovar refugees (Vathi and King 2013).

King (2005) identified specific traits of the Albanian migration: scale and intensity, suddenness and spontaneity, irregularity and clandestinity; as well as two main reasons behind this migration: household economic survival and individual self-realisation. In fact, Mai (2004) noted that, among young Albanians, emigration was seen as a strategy against not only unemployment but also social control. By illegally watching foreign – mainly Italian – television during the transition, Albanians were also longing for ‘a more modern life’ made of leisure, consumption, and sexuality. Albanian migrants in the 1990s were predominantly men aged 18-35, women migrants were less represented

²⁹ Since 1992, private savings, mainly fuelled by remittances, had been invested in Ponzi schemes which collapsed in 1997. This led Albania to an economic and political crisis: half of Albanian households lost all their savings and Southern Albania fell into a state of temporary anarchy (King and Mai 2008).

and more likely to be married than men – this meant that they would basically follow their husbands (Carletto et al. 2006). Carletto et al. also reported that 9 out of 10 Albanian men emigrated for reason of work vs 1/3 of Albanian women. Upon migration, Albanians became the most stigmatised immigrant group in both Greece and Italy, not because of ‘essential’ differences, but rather because of the intersection of Greek post-Ottoman irredentism and Italian fascist colonialism with the legacies of emigration, poverty, and backwardness of these ‘new’ immigrant societies (King 2005; Urso 2009). Albanians became the most criminalised immigrant group, perceived as a collectivity of thieves, drug-dealers, traffickers, pimps, and prostitutes (Pittau and Ricci 2010). This phenomenon of Albanophobia, propagated by mass media, also led to the first mass expulsions in the history of Italy. The social construction of the Albanian immigrant in Italy needs to be understood in relation to the transition of Italy from emigration to immigration via internal migration, thereby replacing that of the Southern Italian ‘constitutive other’ represented as an emigrant and internal migrant in the collective imaginary (Mai 2003). The arrival of Albanian immigrants in Italy and specifically the encounter between Albanophobia and Italophilia (King and Mai 2009) will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, as a starting point for exploring mixed partnerships and marriages.

Since 1995 in Italy and 1998 in Greece, Albanian immigrants managed to achieve legal status and ‘get papers’ through regularisations. This contributed to the normalisation of the Albanian migration through family reunification (King and Mai 2004; Lazaridis and Koumandraki 2007). The year 2000 was a turning point, lowering emigration rates from Albania and widening the range of destination countries, towards Northern Europe and Northern America (Azzarri and Carletto 2009). According to ISTAT data, in 2002, Albanians became the largest immigrant group in Italy, exceeding the number of Moroccans (216,282 vs 215,430 individuals). Azzarri and Carletto (2009) related to this period also the development of another typology of migration flow, namely the emigration of the ‘high-skilled’ – including youngsters pursuing university education abroad. However, female student migration was partly curbed because of the association of independent women’s migration with trafficking and prostitution (Van Hook et al. 2006) and also because of the ‘shame’ that the ‘uncontrolled’ sexual conduct of single young women could have brought to the family back home (Nixon 2009). In her research set in Southern Albania, Vullnetari (2012b) reported the widespread opinion according to which the proper way for women to migrate is together with the

husband – which applies also to educated women. My fieldwork has instead revealed the role of ‘moral guardian’ played by a male relative (brother, cousin, or uncle) towards single young women moving from Albania to Italy for studying at university. This role of ‘moral guardian’ did not end with the exercise of control over the girl, but it was often extended to the mediation between the Italian boyfriend and the Albanian family.

Still referring to gender, King et al. (2006) showed that despite the modernising effects usually associated with migration, traditional gender roles had been basically maintained during the transition from Northern Albania to London. King et al. also noted that, although migration in itself might not lead to the renegotiation of gender roles within the household, nor to the emancipation of women, this does not necessarily mean a further level of oppression either. Slightly different findings came up from a study set in Thessaloniki, which shows instead an increasing collaboration of Albanian men in house-chores (Vullnetari and King 2011) also due to the crisis – as shown in my thesis too. Among the consequences of mass emigration on the Albanian household, Lerch (2009) also accounts for the decline in fertility. At the time of the transition from communism to post-communism, the average number of children per woman had already been reduced from 7 in 1950 to 3 in 1990 (Falkingham and Gjonça 2001), but it further decreased in 2000 (to 2 children per woman). Lerch (2009) further explored the interplay between migration, improved living standards, and fertility decline, showing that women in households exposed to migration have fewer children than their counterparts, although they give birth for the first time slightly earlier (27 years of age vs 28). These values can be further compared to the average age of women at the birth of their first child in 1950 (23 years of age) and in 1990 (24). Within my sample, the average age at the first childbearing among Albanian women married to Italian men is even more similar to that of Italian women (32 years of age in 2014 according to ISTAT data).

Gender has been also explored with special reference to remittances (King et al. 2006; Vullnetari and King 2011). The authors showed how remittances not only mean investment (see also Nicholson 2004), but also empowerment and intergenerational care among women – although divided into money transfers to the husband’s family of origin and ‘gifts’ to the wife’s family of origin. Although my research does not focus on remittances, it will also mention the typology of investments and gifts exchanged across countries in cases of intermarriage. Gender and care have led scholars to discuss another

consequence of migration on the household, namely the abandonment of elderly people (King and Vullnetari 2006). Yet, some of the so-called ‘zero generation’ (i.e. the parents of the first generation migrants) joined their children abroad in order to look after the grandchildren, so that both parents could work. This mutual aid proved to have a positive impact on the grandparents’ wellbeing, although being away from home is often temporary not only because of adaptation issues but also because care is embedded into a specific tradition – according to which it has to be administered by the youngest son and his wife to his parents (King et al. 2014). While these authors showed the empowerment of elderly people as cultural transmitters in case of migration of the zero generation, the possibility to perform this role in mixed families is also subjected to the overall attitudes towards mixedness among partners. Moreover, the tradition of care, already affected by the youngest son’s migration, may be further jeopardised by the youngest son’s intermarriage (see Chapter 6).

All in all, intermarriage is only briefly mentioned in the literature on the Albanian migration. King et al. (1998) noted how Albanian women in Greece became not only prostitutes and domestic workers, but also wives for Greek men in rural areas. In fact, a steady demand for ‘obedient wives’ and ‘good mothers’ from a simple background not spoiled yet by the progress had been especially created by mature bachelors and widowers. Kasimis and Papadopoulos (2005) referred to intermarriage as one of the positive contributions of immigrants to the improvement of the demographic composition of rural areas and to the preservation or expansion of economic activities. In fact, when ingroup young women move to urban areas to study and young men are left behind with herds and fields, outgroup women – in this case Albanian Orthodox women in Greece – may be the solution for the survival of a traditional rural society³⁰. Similar findings have been presented by De Rapper (2008) about Southern Albania, where the abandonment of the villages by young women led Orthodox men to marry Muslim women – although Orthodox-Muslim marriages had been more common the other way around³¹. Besides clear similarities, these two cases also present two main differences: in the former case, intermarriage occurs in the context of international

³⁰ Also emigration from rural Serbia has led to transnational matchmaking and specifically to marriages between Orthodox men from Southern Serbia and Catholic women from Northern Albania – perceived as ‘Albanianised’ Serbian women (M. Sindjić, personal communication).

³¹ Here it is also important to consider that the status of Muslims in Albania became downgraded after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and even more so during the period of ‘post-post-communist’ EU integration (De Rapper and Sintès 2008).

migration and can be framed as intrareligious; in the latter case, it occurs in the context of internal migration and can be framed as interreligious.

Mantzios and Peglidou (2010) showed how Albanian-Greek couples in border areas have also played the role of gatekeepers in the migration from Albania to Greece, hosting the Albanian undocumented kin. In this case, we could even see a continuity between boundary-crossing and border-crossing through the ‘pioneer’ role of the intermarried kin. While in a few cases, intermarried kin also helped some of my research participants to settle in Italy, the above-mentioned pattern of rural marriage did not emerge in my fieldwork – which could mean that other nationals are performing this role. Relevant details also come from a study set in three Arvanite³² villages in the Peloponnese, Greece (Lawrence 2007), showing the existence of a hierarchy between local farmers and immigrant labourers, further articulated in a distinction among the immigrants themselves. This distinction is not only based on the time of immigration, but also on group sex ratio and gender stereotypes. Since Greek women are ‘out of reach’ and Albanian women are already married, Central/Eastern European single/divorced women may become a viable alternative for casual sex – also because of their widespread participation in the sex industry in Europe (Mai 2013). Referring to this, the figures of ‘the Albanian pimp’ and ‘the Romanian prostitute’ have often appeared in the accounts of the Albanian-Romanian couples that I interviewed – as well as in the views from the ‘outside’. However, in my research I excluded this stereotyped couple profile, trying to portray the ‘normality’ of Albanian-Romanian partnerships and marriages too³³.

The Albanian migration has been rapidly evolving, involving mobility within and across destination countries, circular migrations, and return migrations. Authors have researched Albanian integration in Greece, focusing on the cities of Thessaloniki (Hatziprokopiou 2003; Pratsinakis 2005) and Athens (Lyberaki and Maroukis 2005) as well as on border areas (Gialis 2011). As far as Italy is concerned, King and Mai (2008) conducted fieldwork in three cities across the peninsula (Lecce, Modena, and Rome), Kosić and Triandafyllidou (2003) focused on the Albanian immigrants in Florence, whereas Melchionda (2003) analysed Albanian integration in ten Italian regions. The high mobility of the Albanian immigrant group has been also demonstrated by its widespread geographical distribution: Bonifazi and Sabatino (2003) showed that

³² Arvanites are an Albanian-speaking Orthodox minority settled in Greece since the XII century.

³³ I excluded this couple profile also for safety reasons.

Albanians are the immigrant group with the most similar distribution to the Italian population – present in all the regions, although more concentrated in the richer North and Centre with the exception of the South-Eastern region of Apulia, coast of arrival and region of transit. Authors have also provided evidence of onward migration from Greece to Italy in the 1990s and from Italy to the UK in the 2000s (King and Mai 2008; Vathi and King 2013). Patterns of internal and international migration also shine through the stories of the Albanian male research participants: some spent a few years in Greece before coming to Italy, some moved especially from Apulia to Tuscany, others sought to relocate abroad. Moreover, by enquiring about the family of origin I could understand the mobility of participants' social networks.

Mai (2011) discussed the circular mobility of Albanian migrants, showing the existence of different typologies beyond seasonal workers and returnees, like students, entrepreneurs, and migrants with a long-term permit of stay or the host-society's citizenship. Return migration started in the 2000s and increased after 2008, as a consequence of the economic crisis which has been especially harsh in Southern Europe. Labrianidis and Lyberaki (2004) showed that Albanians who had emigrated to Greece are more likely to return and better re-integrate than those who had emigrated to Italy. King and Vullnetari (2003) also analysed the nexus between internal and international migration, referring to an alternative type of two-stage migration: the resettlement of return migrants, originally from rural areas, in urban areas of Albania (mainly around Durrës and Tirana). Both configurations of the internal-international migration nexus are also present in my research: on the one hand, some of the families of origin of the Albanian participants moved from rural areas (e.g. Kukës, Pukë, Rrëshen) to the capital Tirana before the participants' emigration; on the other hand, some of the participants' relatives who returned to Albania settled in Tirana rather than in their home-towns and villages (e.g. Fier, Skrapar, Vlorë) – especially in case of educated males. Nowadays, emigration and return migration go hand-in-hand (King and Vullnetari 2009).

Gemi (2014) showed the impact of the crisis on Albanian immigrant families, which had forced unemployed men to move temporarily back to Albania, while their wives and children would stay in Greece – for the children's sake. This situation seems to reproduce the transnational disruption suffered by Albanian immigrant families in the 1990s, although the other way around. Moreover, the fact that the crisis impacted male sectors of the labour market such as the building industry, whereas it only marginally

affected female employment in private households, for instance, created a power imbalance between partners and challenged traditional gender roles of breadwinner/homemaker. This also affected mixed couples in my sample and especially minority-minority ones. Research into the attitudes towards return among the second generation showed that while Albanian parents may be divided between staying in Greece or returning to Albania, the latter option is not really considered by the second generation – which associates Albania only with summer holidays at the grandparents' place (Vathi and King 2011) and with a language they are not fluent in (Gogonas 2009; also Zinn 2005 about Italy). Conversely, they see their future either in Greece or abroad, in a country which is better off than Greece. Similar cosmopolitan orientations have been found among Albanian teenagers in Italy, together with the emergence of local identifications (Vathi 2012, 2013). Moreover, Vathi and Duci (2016) discussed the implications of return on the wellbeing of the children of return migrants, showing the mismatch between expectations and reality, the feelings of belonging, and the problematic notion of 'homeland' among second-generation 'returnees'. The opportunity of re-emigration may be also facilitated by the visa lift since 2011³⁴, which allows Albanian citizens to freely circulate in the Schengen area for 3 consecutive months (or 6 non-consecutive months per year). In addition to this, also the Italian/Greek citizenship may be an incentive to move within the EU and beyond, especially for the second generation. According to Eurostat 2016 data, in 2014, Albanians were the second non-EU group (after Moroccans) to acquire the EU citizenship: 51.6% from Italy, 44.9% from Greece, and 0.9% from the UK.

Participants' stories also involve the above-mentioned typologies of circular, return, and onward migration – in addition to tourism. Circulation would involve parents periodically travelling from Albania to Italy for healthcare assistance, spending the winter with their children abroad or helping with newborns – in a combination of given and received care (King et al. 2014). Return was instead seen as an alternative to unemployment especially among middle-age men (mainly fathers of Albanian participants), but it could also refer to entrepreneurial projects which intermarriage further complicates without necessarily obstructing³⁵. Onward migration was especially

³⁴ Precisely since the 15th of December 2010.

³⁵ This should also be linked to a recent Italian migration to Albania – defined 'the 21st Italian region' in Berizzi (2013) – made up of labourers hit by the recent economic crisis, entrepreneurs mainly involved in the decentralisation of call-centres and in the hospitality industry, students at the University of Our Lady of Good Counsel in Tirana (in partnership with the Universities of Milan, Rome, and Bari), and retirees.

common among Albanian-Romanian couples (both as a dream and reality), leaving Italy towards better opportunities and lower stigmatisation. Lastly, tourism plays an important role not only with reference to the children's identity project – similarly to what Vathi (2015) found in relation to the second generation – but also because it represents an important step in the advancement of the partnership itself, making it official in front of the Albanian kin and being an occasion for 'discovering together' a country largely ignored by the foreign partner and left in adolescence by the Albanian one.

4.3 A brief overview of the Romanian migration

Sandu (2005) distinguished the post-communist Romanian migration into permanent/temporary international migration and internal migration. Sandu notes how, immediately after the end of the communist regime, rural to urban migration increased by five times. This trend reversed in 1997, when also international migration started to develop on a large scale. International migration during communism involved political refugees and ethnic minorities (Hungarians, Germans, and Jews). In the 1990s, emigration rates did not exceed those of the previous decade, but they started to target new destination countries besides the US, Canada, France, Germany, and Hungary – whereas migration to Israel progressively declined. In the late 1990s, migration flows were mostly directed to Southern Europe. By that time, the profile of the Romanian emigrants had also changed, involving people from rural areas, with low levels of education, and belonging to the national majority population. However, my sample includes several ethnic and religious minorities: German-Hungarian-Romanian, Romanian Roma, Ukrainian-Romanian, Catholic and Protestant participants – as well as majority individuals coming from bilingual towns and villages around Braşov, Cluj-Napoca, and Drobeta-Turnu Severin. Referring to this, Sandu (2005) also showed that the presence of large minorities – the first to leave the country – in the place of origin had an effect on the mobility of the majority population too.

The 2001 census indicated 17% of the whole population as temporary migrants (Sandu 2005). In 2002, Romanian citizens were allowed to freely circulate in the Schengen area for 3 consecutive months (or 6 non-consecutive months per year). Anghel (2008) analysed the ways in which this freedom 'from above' influenced the development of transnationalism among Romanian migrants, who in the space of a few

years passed from irregular migration to free circulation in the EU. Anghel also noted how this free circulation changed the structure of migration, letting individual initiatives emerge from an otherwise social network-based organisation. As a consequence shuttle-migrations developed, flowing into the informal economy of Southern Europe. The 2000s were characterised by temporary migration and by the feminisation of Romanian migration. The free circulation reduced costs and risks of migration, enabling women to emigrate on their own for work (although officially for tourism), leaving behind their families (Piperno 2007). Ricci (2008) noted how the age profile of Romanian migrants changed in this period, starting to involve also middle-aged female labourers (mainly the 30-59 age group), seeking employment in the domestic care sector. Authors like Piperno (2007) have thus spoken about a phenomenon of ‘care drain’ which has greatly affected the Romanian migration; in fact, since women are the primary carers of young children and elderly parents within the household, their departure turned into a ‘*de facto* abandonment’ partially compensated through transnational practices (frequent trips back home, daily phone calls, remittances, etc.) as well as through the substitutive support from kin women (grandmothers, aunts, sisters, etc.).

Pantea (2012a) focused her study on those ‘left behind’ by migrants, with special attention to the figure of grandmothers as the main caregivers in the context of parental migration. Unlike other immigrant groups, there was not a widespread pattern of family migration/reunification among Romanian migrants, although it was legally possible. Pantea sought explanations in the higher costs of childrearing abroad, in the extended family support available at home, in the typology of parental employment (i.e. women working as caregivers in private households), in the unwillingness of adolescents to adapt to a new environment, and in their prospects of continuing education in Romania. Another pattern, which could help to explain the lack of family reunification and which also emerged in my fieldwork, corresponds to the incidence of divorce that may lie at the basis of women’s decision to emigrate. In fact, my sample includes Romanian women who opted for emigration after the disruption of their first marriage, once they became lone-parents as well as main providers in the household³⁶. In addition to financial reasons, emigration may also be a way to cope with the stigma of divorce – especially in rural communities – but could also be perceived as a ‘second-chance’, as

³⁶ According to Eurostat data, between 1990 and 2015, the crude divorce rate (per 1,000 persons) in Romania passed from 1.4 to 1.6, in Italy from 0.5 to 1.3, in Albania from 0.8 to 1.3 – all below the EU-28 threshold. In the same period, the crude marriage rate passed from 8.3 to 6.3 in Romania, from 5.6 to 3.2 in Italy (below the EU-28 threshold), from 8.9 to 8.7 in Albania (the highest rate in the group).

in the words of some participants. In a complementary paper, Pantea (2012b) investigated the point of view of the adolescents ‘left behind’ – in between transition to adulthood, ageing grandparents, and younger siblings. In contrast with mainstream views which see all minors of 18 years of age as care-recipients, Pantea showed how adolescents can also act as care-givers. Significantly, the literature on Romanian adolescents focuses on those ‘left behind’ more than on those settled abroad with their families.

In 2007, Romania joined the EU, although this did not mean free access to the labour market in Europe – since all restrictions were completely lifted only in 2014 (in Italy in 2012). According to ISTAT data, in 2007, Romanians became the largest immigrant group in Italy, exceeding the number of Albanians (625,278 vs 401,949 individuals), doubling from the previous year (from 342,200 to 625,278 individuals), and increasing 10 times in the space of 10 years (from 95,039 in 2002 to 933,354 individuals in 2012). Anghel (2012) compared the cases of Romanians in Germany and Italy, showing how state policies affect immigrants’ integration³⁷. In the former case, Romanians (of German ancestry) were somehow co-ethnics, entitled to the German citizenship, with full access to the labour market and to the social welfare. However, the misrecognition of their ethnicity (Germans in Romania, Romanians in Germany) fuelled a perception of lost prestige. In the latter case, Romanians were illegal immigrants in Italy and had to rely on their social networks in order to find accommodation and jobs. They adapted to a ‘handicapped context of reception’ by closing into their community and, through regularisation, gradually accessed the formal labour market and social welfare. Moreover, after the EU enlargement in 2007, Romanians upgraded their position *vis-à-vis* other immigrant groups in Italy. In a study on Romanian immigrants in Spain, Marcu (2015) also showed how transnationalism (or the lack thereof) affects identity construction. Interviewing Romanians who migrated to Spain in three waves, Marcu defined the first phase (before 2002) as ‘identity loss’ characterised by illegality and deskilling; the second phase (2002-2006) as ‘identity recomposition’ through free mobility; and the third phase (after 2007) as ‘cosmopolitanism’ thanks to the EU citizenship. Among Albanian-Romanian couples in Italy, the EU citizenship made it possible to question previous hierarchies between new-comers and old-timers in the host-society, and between women and men in the household.

³⁷ See Pratsinakis (2009) for a parallelism between Albanians and Pontic Greeks in Greece.

Within a borderless territory, there is thus space for temporary return and permanent circularity. Anghel et al. (2016) reported that mainly low-skilled men, over 45 years of age, from rural areas highly exposed to migration, and who had previously emigrated to Southern Europe are more likely to return and start up their own business in Romania. In a study on Romanian family return migration from Italy, Vlase (2013) showed the different transnational ties that returnees keep with Italy in order to ensure their livelihood in Romania: men stay in touch with Romanian men (co-workers), whereas women stay in touch with Italian women (employers). However, this does not seem to be merely instrumental: having worked in Italian households as cleaners or caregivers, having had everyday interactions with family members, Romanian women also developed an emotional involvement which is absent among their husbands. Vlase also noted how even a deskilling job abroad had brought more independence to women, which upon return is lost. Bringing back home more egalitarian values such as the division of the housework may be criticised by the extended family and women tend to postpone the return, which would mean strong social control and interference of the in-laws too. Vlase (2012) also noticed the high share of Romanian women marrying Italian men, as opposed to their male counterparts, suggesting that new ideas on gender may be at the basis of the choice of a foreign partner (see also Vullnetari 2012b about Albanian women). Although Vlase (2012) drew attention to an important phenomenon – most marriages between an Italian groom and a foreign bride actually involve a Romanian bride (19.6% in 2014, according to ISTAT data, as discussed later in this chapter) – we also need to look at intermarriage from the male point of view, which perhaps may not imply any ‘new’ ideas on gender (see Benjamin and Barash 2004 about Ashkenazi men in Israel, and Domić and Philaretou 2007 about Greek-Cypriot men). While these ideas could be understood among marriage preferences, it is important to consider also the structural factors affecting intermarriage and contributing to explain the preeminence of one typology of union over the other – e.g. the group sex ratio.

Authors have researched the Romanian migration with a strong emphasis on transnationalism as exemplified by studies between Borşa and Milan (Anghel 2008), Focşani and Rome, or Marginea and Turin (Cingolani and Piperno 2005). Referring to integration, instead, Moreh (2014) detected a phenomenon of social differentiation within the Romanian immigrant group in Spain exemplified by a variegation in careers besides building industry/domestic work and beyond ethnic entrepreneurship – mainly consisting in food stores (Dinu et al. 2015). In Moreh (2014:1773), we can also see,

through the words of a Romanian immigrant interviewee about an acquaintance who ‘had made it; she now lives like the Spaniards’, how outgroup inner differences are often overlooked not only among host-society members but also among immigrants. This assumption will instead be questioned in my thesis through the analysis of multiple combinations of class within the sphere of intermarriage. Yet, opportunities for social differentiation in Southern Europe are still low, if compared to Northern Europe – as shown by research on Romanians in the UK, where migrants have a higher level of education/professional qualification (Csedő 2008) and migration has followed more individualistic routes than in Southern Europe (Boswell and Ciobanu 2009). This topic has been further developed by Moroşanu (2013), who showed how immigrants’ social networks are also shaped by the shared experience of migration besides co-ethnicity, in the case of Romanians in London. The relatively small size of the Romanian immigrant group in the UK (until 2014), together with the superdiverse environment of London, makes it possible to establish daily contact and relationships among immigrants from different countries. Moreover, also the lack of confidence in the English language and a common feeling of ‘outsiderness’ contribute to foster a sense of solidarity, although these relationships are often characterised by fleetingness and convenience. Everyday cosmopolitanism thus occurs also in ‘low-skill’ job environments, where most immigrants are steered. However, Moroşanu noted how these ‘non-native ties’ only offer limited support in terms of social mobility, similarly to co-ethnic ties, whereas immigrants’ strong ties with natives prove to be useful for professional advancement (Moroşanu 2016). By focusing also on Albanian-Romanian partnerships and marriages, this research will add more details in the understudied field of ‘non-native ties’.

In a study on Romanians and Hungarians in Bristol, Fox et al. (2015) illustrated how the experience of migration may be detached from feelings of discrimination thanks to the self-perception of Whiteness within a superdiverse context. Whiteness is automatically linked with Europeanness – similar to the ‘true Americanness’ reported by Romanian immigrants in the US (Crăciun 2013) – and it is perceived as an advantage *vis-à-vis* African and Asian immigrants. By denying discrimination and claiming Whiteness, Romanian (and Hungarian) immigrants not only position themselves within the host-society racialised hierarchy, but they also reclaim the dominant position that they had in their home-society (*vs* the Roma) and was lost in the context of migration through misrepresentation. Moroşanu and Fox (2013) also noted how Romanian immigrants in the UK cope with stigmatisation either by transferring the stigma to

Romanian Roma, with whom they are commonly associated, or by differentiating themselves from the group on an individual basis – which can be seen as a consequence of the internalisation of the social stigma and as an obstacle in co-ethnic community formation, as in the case of Albanians in Italy (King and Mai 2009).

In fact, at the time of the EU enlargement, a widespread phenomenon of Romanophobia arose, soon developed into Roma Romanophobia. In Italy, Mai (2010) interpreted this phenomenon as a continuation of Albanophobia, once Albanians started to be considered integrated; thus Romanians became the new ‘other’ against which to measure a EU-compatible identity. As discussed in the next chapter, however, this social stigma quickly passed from Romanians to Romanian Roma. Crimes perpetrated by Romanian Roma in 2007 led to securitisation measures, dismantlement of Roma camps, and mass expulsions through emergency decrees promulgated by the Italian government and implemented with the cooperation of the Romanian government. At the same time, the Romanian government also promoted nation-branding campaigns to modify the image of Romania in Europe and eliminate the confusion between Romanians and Roma – turning the latter into abject citizens and stateless foreigners (Popescu and Kaneva 2014). Although the ‘Gypsy question’ has been associated with the Romanian migration, significant shares of Roma population characterise several Central/Eastern European immigrant groups as well as EU host-societies. Even within my sample, Gypsy-origin individuals can be found among all three groups taken into consideration (Albanians, Italians, and Romanians).

4.4 Albanian and Romanian integration in Italy

After having provided an overview of the transformation of Italy into an immigrant society and of the Albanian and Romanian post-communist migrations, this section focuses on the Albanian and Romanian integration processes in Italy – with special reference to the sphere of intermarriage. The 6th of March 2016 was the 25th anniversary of the initial Albanian migration to Italy. On that day, in 1991, boats such as *Lirija*, *Tirana*, and *Legend* brought to Brindisi harbour, in Apulia, around 25,000 people in less than 24 hours (Tempera 2016; Tundo 2016). Further arrivals followed that year and throughout the 1990s. The anniversary also corresponds to one generation’s time and, for this reason, it has been argued that 2016 could be considered the year in which the Albanian immigrant group in Italy has finally ‘come of age’

(Shani 2016). Over this period, Albanian immigrants have in fact turned themselves from an ‘emergency’ into ‘the case of best performance in the field of integration and development’ (Pittau et al. 2009).

LPS³⁸ reported that, on the 1st of January 2015, 498,419 Albanian citizens were legally present in Italy; 52% were males and 48% females, 48.9% were under 30 years of age and 27.7% were minors. Both these features, namely a balanced sex ratio and a high incidence of minors, indicate a stable settlement. As far as geographical distribution is concerned, 6 out of 10 Albanian citizens were living in Northern Italy (26.3% of the total in Lombardy), 3 in Central Italy (14.6% in Tuscany), 1 in Southern Italy (4.6% in Apulia). The construction industry accounted for 28% of the Albanian labour and 76% of the Albanian entrepreneurship. Some 48% of Albanians had a lower-secondary education and Albanian pupils represented the first non-EU group in both primary and secondary schools in Italy – the second foreign group, after Romanian pupils. Albanians were also the first foreign group in Italian universities³⁹, although this percentage is currently decreasing – while the percentage of Romanian university students is instead increasing, as mentioned in the previous chapter.

Citizenship acquisition is another index which has to be considered in order to update the profile of the Albanian immigrant group in Italy. In this respect, it can be observed that the number of permits of stay yearly issued is diminishing⁴⁰, while the number of citizenship acquisitions is rapidly augmenting (from 13,671 to 21,148 in 2014 only, i.e. +55%). Being non-EU citizens, Albanians need 10 years of residency in Italy in order to claim the Italian citizenship or 2 years of co-residency with an Italian spouse, halved in case of children. Albanian immigrants, especially males, tend to acquire the Italian citizenship more by residency than by marriage and this has recently become also the case of female claimants (LPS 2015). This specific phenomenon could relate not only to the average length of stay among Albanian immigrants, but also to the growing-up of a generation entitled to the Italian citizenship either upon request during the year of the 18th birthday or thanks to the naturalisation of one of the parents – in case of cohabitation and minor age. Between 2014 and 2015, the number of Albanians holding a permit of stay fell from 502,546 to 498,419; the above-mentioned trends in citizenship

³⁸ The Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

³⁹ 66% of Albanian university students were females, although this percentage is also diminishing (LPS 2015).

⁴⁰ 70% of Albanian citizens hold a long-term permit of stay, while 52.5% of short-term permits of stay were issued for family reasons (LPS 2015).

acquisition suggest that this phenomenon not only results from return/onward migrations, but also means that there are fewer Albanian immigrants and more Italian citizens (Devole 2015).⁴¹

Citizenship is also important when it comes to analysing intermarriage patterns. In fact, since mixed marriages are recorded on the basis of citizenship, a high rate of premarital citizenship acquisition within the Albanian immigrant group would reduce the number of Albanian-Italian marriages which are registered as ‘mixed’: they would in fact appear as marriages between Italian citizens. Conversely, marriages between Albanian citizens could be either recorded as ‘mixed’ or as between Italian citizens in case one or both partners already have the Italian citizenship before the marriage. The phenomenon of citizenship acquisition could then provide a further element of equality against the assumption that mixed marriages are, first of all, instrumental. Referring to this, although a recent study on intermarriages between Italian men and Central/Eastern European women (Guetto and Azzolini 2015) also included Albanian women within the sample, it seems to me that the specificity of the Albanian immigrant group within the Central/Eastern European macro-group – in terms of sex ratio, average age, educational/occupational profile⁴² and migration history – could provide a basis for a differentiation in terms of intermarriage patterns as well⁴³. In fact, while Guetto and Azzolini suggested an interpretation of intermarriages aligned with the status exchange theory, on the basis of consistent age/education gaps between the two partners, together with the occupational/legal precariousness of the foreign spouse at the moment of the marriage, this pattern seems to be only marginally present in intermarriages featuring Albanian brides – as further shown in my findings.

As far as the Romanian immigrant group is concerned, ISTAT reported that, on the 1st of January 2015, 1,131,839 Romanian citizens were living in Italy (22.6% of all foreign residents); 57% were females and 43% males. The highest concentrations of the Romanian resident population were in Latium (19.8%), Lombardy (14.1%), and Piedmont (13.2%). Some 55.7% of the Romanian workforce was employed in the tertiary sector – mostly in caring jobs – and 22.9% in the secondary sector – mostly the

⁴¹ In 2014, 9.4% of Albanians acquired the Italian citizenship via marriage, 57% via residency, and 33.6% via transmission/election (LPS 2015).

⁴² This specificity can be observed in the overall profile of the Central/Eastern European macro-group, which according to LPS 2015 data is mostly composed of women (57.8% *vs* 48% of Albanians), in between 30 and 59 years of age (56% *vs* 42.4% of Albanians), holding a high secondary or third level education degree, mainly employed in the caring sector (48% *vs* 11.5% of Albanians).

⁴³ See also De Rapper and Sintès (2008).

building industry (IDOS 2015). Moreover, Romanians were not only the largest immigrant group in Italy and the most represented in the Italian labour market, but also the largest foreign group in the Italian schooling system and especially this element seems to indicate an ongoing process of permanent settlement (see Saint-Blancat and Zaltron 2013). In addition to this, Romanians are the largest EU group applying for Italian citizenship (6,442 in 2014) – in this case, 4 years of residency are required.

Turning to the the topic of Albanian intermarriages, LPS showed that, in 2014, the Albanian group was the second non-EU group to intermarry Italian citizens – the first non-EU group was Ukrainian, while the first foreign group was Romanian. Among Albanian-Italian intermarriages could be observed a relatively more balanced sex ratio compared to both the Ukrainian-Italian and Romanian-Italian cases: in fact, among 1,038 intermarriages, 722 involved an Albanian bride and 316 an Albanian groom; while in the other two cases intermarriages mostly concerned Ukrainian brides (1,464 brides, 38 grooms) and Romanian brides (2,078 brides, 204 grooms). Here, it is also important to remember the sex ratio of these immigrant groups and refer to the gendered phenomenon of female migration – 79% of Ukrainian immigrants and 57% of Romanian immigrants are women. In 2014, 12.8% of all marriages recorded in Italy involved a foreign spouse, among these 78% involved a foreign bride – in 1 case out of 2 a Central/Eastern European bride. However, although 1/3 of Central/Eastern European women in Italy were Albanian, Albania was only the sixth country of citizenship among foreign brides (after Romania, Ukraine, Russia, Brazil⁴⁴, Moldova). Instead, Albanian men accounted for the half of Central/Eastern European men and ranked second among foreign grooms (after Morocco) (Table 4).

Besides marriages between Italian and foreign citizens, ISTAT also documents marriages among foreigners with same and/or different citizenship, provided that at least one of the spouses resides in Italy and that the marriage takes place in Italy (Table 5). In 2014, 355 marriages involving Albanian citizens were recorded in Italy: 230 concerned two Albanian citizens, 125 an Albanian and a foreign citizen (neither Albanian, nor Italian); 98 were between an Albanian groom and a foreign bride, 27 between an Albanian bride and a foreign groom. Romanian citizens represented the first foreign group in Albanian-other intermarriage, especially within the combination of

⁴⁴ Latin America represents the second macro-group of foreign brides; whereas foreign grooms mostly come from Northern Africa, but also Northern European and Northern American countries.

Albanian groom and Romanian bride (49 out of 98) – the second-ranked option corresponded to Moldova. This preeminence similarly occurred in the Romanian case: Albanian grooms were the first option also for Romanian brides, slightly preceding Moroccan grooms; while Romanian men mostly married perceived co-ethnics (78 out of 151 foreign brides were Moldovan, as opposed to 12 out of 242 foreign grooms). This further typology of intermarriage, namely intermarriage between foreign spouses, constitutes not only a sign of the (super)diversification of immigrant societies, but also provides additional elements for discussing the nexus between intermarriage and integration.

Table 4. Marriages between Italian and foreign citizens in Italy

TYPOLOGY OF COUPLE				TYPOLOGY OF COUPLE			
COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP	Italian groom & foreign bride	COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP	foreign groom & Italian bride	COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP	Italian groom & foreign bride	COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP	foreign groom & Italian bride
ABSOLUTE VALUE				RELATIVE VALUE			
Romania	2,678	Morocco	520	Romania	19.6	Morocco	13.5
Ukraine	1,464	Albania	316	Ukraine	10.7	Albania	8.2
Russia	904	Tunisia	243	Russia	6.6	Tunisia	6.3
Brazil	734	Romania	204	Brazil	5.4	Romania	5.3
Moldova	723	UK	178	Moldova	5.3	UK	4.6
Albania	722	Egypt	165	Albania	5.3	Egypt	4.3
Poland	702	Germany	136	Poland	5.1	Germany	3.5
Morocco	451	France	118	Morocco	3.3	France	3.1
Peru	316	US	115	Peru	2.3	US	3.0
Cuba	296	Nigeria	106	Cuba	2.2	Nigeria	2.8
Ecuador	272	Senegal	96	Ecuador	2.0	Senegal	2.5
Nigeria	230	Spain	87	Nigeria	1.7	Spain	2.3
China	226	Brazil	72	China	1.7	Brazil	1.9
Germany	223	Cuba	67	Germany	1.6	Cuba	1.7
Dominican Republic	203	Dominican Republic	61	Dominican Republic	1.5	Dominican Republic	1.6
Other	3,517	Other	1,361	Other	25.7	Other	35.4
TOTAL	13,661	TOTAL	3,845	TOTAL	100.0	TOTAL	100.0

Source: Elaboration on ISTAT 2014 data

Table 5. Marriages between foreign citizens in Italy (at least one spouse resides in Italy)

CITIZENSHIP OF THE BRIDE	CITIZENSHIP OF THE GROOM																TOTAL
	Romania	Nigeria	Albania	UK	Morocco	China	Moldova	Peru	Ukraine	Ghana	Germany	Ecuador	Tunisia	US	Ireland	Other	
Romania	698	3	49	2	44	-	12	4	2	-	1	-	34	6	-	84	940
Nigeria	-	369	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	14	395
Moldova	78	-	10	-	5	-	152	-	11	-	-	-	2	1	-	14	273
UK	-	2	1	224	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	4	7	28	269
Albania	6	-	230	1	3	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	2	-	12	257
China	-	-	-	2	-	235	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	4	243
Morocco	5	-	3	-	151	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24	-	-	46	229
Ukraine	32	-	6	-	7	-	22	1	114	-	-	-	5	1	-	41	229
Peru	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	125	-	-	-	15	-	-	-	17	160
Germany	1	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	107	-	-	-	-	21	133
Ghana	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	114	-	-	-	1	-	5	123
Ecuador	2	-	1	-	1	-	-	9	1	-	-	85	1	-	-	21	121
Russia	4	-	2	2	-	-	8	-	13	-	-	-	1	-	-	54	84
Poland	3	3	6	2	5	-	-	-	-	-	6	1	8	-	1	44	79
Ireland	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	58	2	68
Other	18	43	19	30	21	1	4	15	5	7	10	26	20	51	1	854	1,225
TOTAL	849	424	328	274	238	236	198	155	146	132	128	127	96	68	67	1,262	4,728

ABSOLUTE VALUE

Source: Elaboration on ISTAT 2014 data

CITIZENSHIP OF THE BRIDE	CITIZENSHIP OF THE GROOM																TOTAL
	Romania	Nigeria	Albania	UK	Morocco	China	Moldova	Peru	Ukraine	Ghana	Germany	Ecuador	Tunisia	US	Ireland	Other	
Romania	82.8	0.7	14.9	0.7	18.5	-	6.1	2.6	1.4	-	0.8	-	35.4	8.8	-	6.7	19.9
Nigeria	-	87.0	-	0.7	-	-	-	-	-	7.6	-	-	-	-	-	1.1	8.4
Moldova	9.2	-	3.0	-	2.1	-	76.8	-	7.5	-	-	-	2.1	1.5	-	1.1	5.8
UK	-	0.5	0.3	81.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.3	-	-	5.9	10.4	2.2	5.7
Albania	0.7	-	70.1	0.4	1.3	-	-	0.6	-	-	0.8	-	1.0	2.9	-	1.0	5.4
China	-	-	-	0.7	-	99.6	-	-	-	0.8	-	-	-	1.5	-	0.3	5.1
Morocco	0.6	-	0.9	-	63.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25.0	-	-	3.6	4.8
Ukraine	3.8	-	1.8	-	2.9	-	11.1	0.6	78.1	-	-	-	5.2	1.5	-	3.2	4.8
Peru	0.2	-	-	-	0.4	-	-	80.6	-	-	-	11.8	-	-	-	1.3	3.4
Germany	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	83.6	-	-	-	-	1.7	2.8
Ghana	-	0.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	86.4	-	-	-	1.5	-	0.4	2.6
Ecuador	0.2	-	0.3	-	0.4	-	-	5.8	0.7	-	-	66.9	1.0	-	-	1.7	2.6
Russia	0.5	-	0.6	0.7	-	-	4.0	-	8.9	-	-	-	1.0	-	-	4.3	1.8
Poland	0.4	0.7	1.8	0.7	2.1	-	-	-	-	-	4.7	0.8	8.3	-	1.5	3.5	1.7
Ireland	-	-	-	2.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.5	86.6	0.2	1.4
Other	2.1	10.1	5.8	10.9	8.8	0.4	2.0	9.7	3.4	5.3	7.8	20.5	20.8	75.0	1.5	67.7	23.8
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

RELATIVE VALUE

Source: Elaboration on ISTAT 2014 data

The following statistics (Table 6 and 7) illustrate the historical series of Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian marriages recorded in Italy and the number of Albanian-Italian children born in Italy in the same period (2006-2014). There are no data available on Albanian-Romanian children, although ISTAT accounts for children born in Italy from two foreign parents by citizenship of the woman. Albanian-Romanian children are likely to be accounted among Romanian children because of the sex ratio characterising this typology of intermarriage (Albanian man and Romanian woman).

Table 6. Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian marriages in Italy

YEAR	ALBANIAN-ITALIAN MARRIAGES		ALBANIAN-ROMANIAN MARRIAGES	
	Albanian bride Italian groom	Albanian groom Italian bride	Albanian bride Romanian groom	Albanian groom Romanian bride
2006	716	511	n/a	n/a
2007	734	598	-	50
2008	738	569	3	63
2009	596	392	2	65
2010	512	217	-	36
2011	619	260	2	43
2012	763	343	2	45
2013	726	357	4	55
2014	722	316	6	49
	6,126	3,563	19	406
	9,689		425	

Source: Elaboration on ISTAT 2006-2014 data

Table 7. Albanian-Italian children born in Italy

YEAR	ALBANIAN-ITALIAN CHILDREN			
	Albanian mother Italian father	Albanian father Italian mother	Albanian mother Italian father	Albanian father Italian mother
	absolute value		relative value	
2006	859	486	4.9	11.2
2007	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2008	888	546	4.6	11.7
2009	981	547	4.6	11.5
2010	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2011	1,099	647	5.2	11.8
2012	1,170	703	5.4	12.4
2013	1,234	580	5.6	13.2
2014	1,444	708	6.1	13.2
	7,675	4,217	100	100
	11,892			

Source: Elaboration on ISTAT 2006-2014 data

Conclusion

This chapter has contextualised the overall research topic, showing the transformation of Italy into an immigrant society and its status as a paradigmatic case of the Southern European model of migration, characterised by specific geographical, historical, and

social patterns (King and Zontini 2000). It has then given an overview of the Albanian and Romanian post-communist migrations, which could be seen as an integral part of this model. The Albanian migration was mostly targeted to Greece and Italy, whereas the Romanian migration was mainly to Italy and Spain. These two migrations played a major role in the social and symbolic construction of these ‘new’ host-societies. Among the features which make Italy unique within the Southern European model and within a broader European comparative context, we could also identify the intersection between the Albanian and the Romanian migration flows (not present, for instance, in Greece or Spain).

The studies here reviewed have shown affinities and differences between these two post-communist migrations. While the Albanian migration to Italy developed in the 1990s, the Romanian migration intensified a decade later. The Albanian migration was closely linked with political/economic/humanitarian crises (1991, 1997, 1999), whereas the Romanian migration greatly developed through the process of EU integration (2002, 2007). Furthermore, the Albanian migration evolved as a mainly male migration subsequently followed by post-legalisation family reunifications, and only recently have Albanian citizens been allowed to freely circulate in the Schengen area for a limited amount of time. In contrast, the composition of the Romanian migration has been affected by the EU enlargement and has been progressively characterised by a large share of female labour migrants as well as circularity. The different migration history and profile of the two immigrant groups differently impact intermarriage patterns too. In particular, Albanian-Italian marriages should be seen not only as marriages dominated by the foreign bride – similarly to what happens for the Central/Eastern European macro-group – but also, and especially, as marriages with a relatively higher gender balance than the rest of the macro-group. Moreover, we have seen that Romanian women are not only significantly present in minority-majority but also in minority-minority intermarriage – differently from Albanian women. Nonetheless, patterns of geographical distribution and rates of labour market/schooling system inclusion as well as those of citizenship acquisition show parallel trajectories of incorporation of the Albanian and Romanian immigrant groups in Italy.

In the next chapter, we will see how these migrations have not only formed the two largest immigrant groups in Italy, but also produced a set of categories which have been functional for the transition of Italy from an emigrant to an immigrant social space. These categories, at the basis of processes of stigmatisation called ‘Albanophobia’ and

‘Romanophobia’ (King and Mai 2009; Mai 2010), have drawn boundaries between the national majority as well as between immigrant minorities in Italy. My findings will show how changes in these boundaries are reflected and further modified by mixed partnerships and marriages.

MIXEDNESS THROUGH AN ETIC LENS

Introduction

This chapter answers the following research questions: *How do minority-majority (Albanian-Italian) and minority-minority (Albanian-Romanian) couples relate to integration? Is there any space, within the integration framework, for understanding intermarriage also from the perspective of the national majority partner? Could we speak in terms of co-integration, for instance? What about intermarriage between immigrant minorities? Is the concept of integration still suitable in such a ‘three-player game’?* In Chapter 2, we saw that intermarriage has generally been considered as an indicator of integration, able to reveal intergroup social distance reduction (Bogardus 1925), and that, in immigrant societies, intergroup social distance reduction has been interpreted in relation to the assimilation process (Gordon 1964). While the concept of assimilation has been mostly used in America, in Europe the term ‘integration’ has been preferred; moreover, authors have stressed the importance of conceiving integration as a two-way process (Castles et al. 2002). However, intermarriage is commonly investigated either as an indicator or as an agent of integration; which means focusing on one immigrant minority and its trajectory of incorporation within the host-society either leading to intermarriage or resulting from it (Song 2009). Yet, we know little about the nexus between intermarriage and integration from the other side – the national majority viewpoint – and even less from the point of view of multiple immigrant minorities involved in both intermarriage and integration. By applying the boundary-making framework to this nexus (Bauböck 1994; Wimmer 2008a; Zolberg and Woon 1999), this chapter aspires to make a contribution to the understanding of intermarriage and integration from the point of view of multiple social actors related to each other in a process of construction of a shared social space.

The chapter traces the Albanian and Romanian migration to Italy between 1991 and 2007, namely the years in which Albanians and Romanians became the ‘public enemy’ in Italy through generalised phenomena of stigmatisation known as Albanophobia and Romanophobia, which drew specific boundaries between ‘selves’ and ‘others’, nationals and foreigners. Building on earlier key studies (King and Mai 2008, 2009; Mai 2010); the Albanian and Romanian migrations are analysed through their contribution in making Italy a society of immigration and integration. The ways in which these

boundaries are drawn via stigmatisation, crossed through social mimicry, and blurred thanks to individualistic/universalistic counter-discourses are illustrated in the accounts of participants – specifically focusing on their reactions to the encounter with the ‘other’ and on the reaction of their social networks, mainly kin. The chapter continues by showing how boundaries change, highlighting the role played by meaningful interactions like partnership/marriage in creating a new kind of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Thanks to the ‘total social fact’ character of marriage (Lévi-Strauss 1950), the chapter moves back and forth between the personal and the societal, showing how the ethnic categories of ‘Albanian’, ‘Italian’, and ‘Romanian’ are not only reproduced or countered by partners in Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples, but also how these partnerships and marriages have a transformative role to play. Three additional mechanisms (redefinition, repositioning, and resemantisation) are then introduced, pointing at the centrality of the category of migration in the reconstruction of boundaries and categories in an immigrant and former emigrant society.

5.1 Applying the boundary-making framework to the construction of an immigrant social space: Albanians, Italians, and Romanians

5.1.1 Shifting

Although the term assimilation has been used in America rather than in Europe, King and Mai (2009) spoke of ‘asymmetric assimilation’ in their study on Albanian immigrants in Italy. In this case, the term ‘assimilation’ and its root ‘similarity’ reveals specific characteristics of the Albanian migration to Italy⁴⁵. An analysis of the Albanian integration process can be articulated across a few key moments. At the beginning, in early 1991, Albanians were accepted as refugees (others). Very soon, however, they became rejected as immigrants (other selves). Also the fact that Albanian migrants were able to speak Italian – thanks to the clandestine watching of Italian television in Albania – contributed to turn figures of refugees from the Eastern Bloc into memories of Southern Italian emigrants and internal migrants. King and Mai (2008) showed that media played a central role in making the Albanian migration part of the Italian

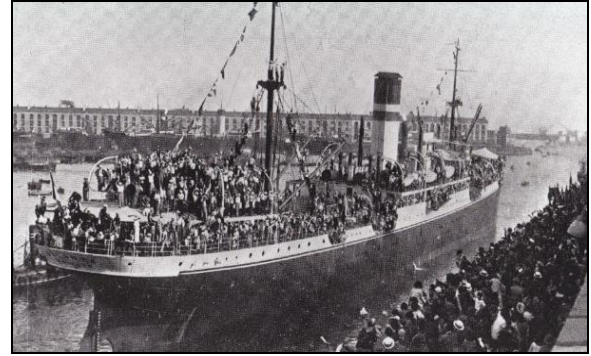
⁴⁵ Similarity rather than difference has been at the basis of the stigmatisation of Albanians in Italy and Greece (see also Pratsinakis 2009).

collective imaginary and, by reflex, part of the Albanian imaginary too, transmitting images of ‘partial familiarity’ – as illustrated in Figures 14 and 15.

Figure 14. Albanian migration⁴⁶



Figure 15. Italian migration⁴⁷



A new phenomenon was thus interpreted through old codes and the boundary between ‘self’ and ‘other’ was redrawn, shifting the existing boundary into a more inclusive one through the creation of further exclusion (from Northern/Southern Italian to Italian/Albanian), and also giving an additional meaning to the ‘other’ as a foreigner (*straniero*) and a special kind of foreigner: the non-EU immigrant (*extracomunitario*). King and Mai (2009) defined the encounter between Albanians and Italians as ‘Italophilia meets Albanophobia’. On one side, Albanians held a positive attitude towards Italy as an outpost of modernity, consumerism, and emancipation; on the other, Italians developed a negative attitude towards Albanians as personifications of backwardness and criminality.

A representation of this encounter between *philia* and *phobia*, with reference to the sphere of intermarriage, could be seen in the story of a research participant, Blerina. In the following quotation, she takes us to her adolescence in rural Albania, a destiny of migration and intermarriage written on the bottom of a coffee cup, the meeting with her future mother-in-law as a proof to dissolve the doubts about a marriage of convenience.

Blerina: It was always my dream, even when I was little, I remember my aunt enjoyed reading the coffee cup, you know it’s a tradition over there, in Albania, reading coffee cups, eh, my auntie: ‘My niece will marry an Italian!’ I swear it, and she guessed it right...

Rachele: And when did she tell you this?

⁴⁶ ‘I vent’anni della Vlora negli scatti di Luca Turi.’ [Twenty years since the Vlora in Luca Turi’s photos] *La Repubblica*, 9 September 2011. bari.repubblica.it. (photo credit Luca Turi, 8 August 1991).

⁴⁷ ‘Quando i migranti eravamo noi, i contadini italiani si imbarcano per la Libia.’ [When we were migrants, Italian farmers embark for Libya] *La Repubblica*, 11 May 2011. genova.repubblica.it

Blerina: I was still a little girl and I still remember it, I said: ‘Auntie, this can’t be possible!’ ‘I’ve seen a very long journey...’ and it ended up great, I came to Italy, so, more or less...

[...]

After having met each other a few times, he (=her partner) came and said: ‘I told my mum, I’ve already spoken to my parents [...] and they would be happy to meet you, so they told me if you could come tomorrow for lunch’. I told him: ‘Come on! Wait a moment! So early?!’ ‘You know, my mother would like to meet you...’ Later, my mother-in-law explained everything to me: ‘To tell the truth, I wanted to meet you because, you know, we hear so many things going on...foreign women who get married, get engaged with...’ she said: ‘...and he’s my only child, he doesn’t have brothers or sisters, so I trusted him just to a certain extent’ and I said: ‘Mmh’ and she said: ‘You know, as women, we’re a little bit nasty’ and I said: ‘Mmh, yes, indeed...’

(Blerina: Albanian woman married to an Italian man)

Interestingly, in the end of the reported speech, the Italian mother-in-law turns Blerina from a foreigner into another woman like her, through a pronoun shift passing from ethnic alterity to gender identity. However, while Blerina’s mother-in-law does not explicitly use the term ‘Albanian’, this emerges instead in the story of Agim and Letizia, in which his ‘being Albanian’ is perceived as a problem. In fact, Albanianess was usually more problematic with reference to the male partner, because of the gendered dimension of stereotypes (Albanian man-criminal-oppressor *vs* Albanian woman-prostitute-oppressed, as in the case of Romanian man/woman). As a consequence, Albanian-Italian partnerships with an Albanian man were more likely to face opposition from Italian relatives and friends than those with an Albanian woman. On the other hand, ‘not-being-Albanian’ rather than ‘being-Italian’ was the main problem among Albanian families and especially in case of the partnership of a son. Being Italian was not problematic in itself (see Vathi 2015), but rather because of its association to a set of stereotypes linked with Western and Southern Europeanness (divorce⁴⁸, female emancipation, and male Latin-lovers). Therefore, although some Italian participants interpreted the preference for endogamy within the Albanian family as a sort of ‘reverse racism’ (‘In the end, they’re more racist’ as Davide put it), the principle at the root of this opposition differed from that in place within the Italian family. Among Albanian participants, in fact, what was at stake was primarily the non-Albanianess of the Italian partner; whereas among Italians it was the Albanianess of the Albanian partner (rather than non-Italianess, or even foreignness). In the case of Letizia, her in-laws – especially her father-in-law – started to change his opinion about

⁴⁸ Although the divorce rate has increased also in Albania in the last 25 years, this may only marginally affect the perception of Albanian parents, because of their generation as well as migration.

her only after she began to learn some Albanian, showing her willingness to move a step towards the other.

Letizia: Well, my mum...I was less persuaded than my mum, I mean, I was less persuaded when I went to her and said: 'Look, mum, I met a guy, a nice guy, but there's a problem: he's Albanian'. So, for me this was a problem [...]

Agim: My parents...no, the issue was that I wasn't persuaded myself, I took her there...the sentence which was...

Letizia:...blunt...

Agim:...blunt [he laughs] I told her: 'In order to exchange your family's courtesy, I invite you at my place, but we're together...we're together, although we don't know how long it will last'. I had no intention of marrying her at all, at the beginning, I was fine, we were fine. I told her: 'Don't get any strange ideas, we go home, I show you where I live, we go on holidays together'. I was speaking like this. It really hurt her, but she didn't tell me anything.

Letizia: No, grr [she laughs]

Rachele: *And what about your parents?*

Agim: [...] My dad: 'Meantime you're together, then, when you decide [...] you come back, find an Albanian girl, get married...'

Letizia: They liked me, but his dad didn't accept this, that I'm not Albanian.

(Agim & Letizia: Albanian man and Italian woman, married)

Figure 16. Albanian flag⁴⁹



5.1.2 Crossing

The process of stigmatisation which surrounded Albanian immigrants during the 1990s and early 2000s made it possible to reiterate the existence of a boundary between

⁴⁹ The six pictures at the end of each subsection (Figures 16-17-18 and 20-21-22) are meant to represent the boundary-making processes here analysed (shifting, crossing, blurring, redefinition, repositioning, resemantisation).

Italians and Albanians – portrayed as prototypes of alterity. The social stigma, expressed in metaphors and similes still present in common speech, contributed to maintain the boundary in spite of and along with an ongoing successful structural integration (Pittau et al. 2009) and in addition to the already mentioned phenomenon of ‘anticipatory acculturation’ (King and Mai 2009). While stigmatisation can be considered a mechanism of boundary construction, practices like social mimicry and counter-discourses based on individualism/universalism can be seen as ways in which social actors deal with social stigma and try to breach the boundary, either crossing or blurring it. Social mimicry can be interpreted as a practice by which individuals cross an established boundary more or less intentionally (Goffman 1963). Romania (2004) specifically analysed this phenomenon among Albanian immigrants, who by the mid-2000s had not only disappeared from the Italian TV screens, but had also become ‘invisible’ in everyday life. In fact, the practice of ‘passing for Italians’, on an individual basis but also on a large scale, was possible not only because of the absence of visible markers which could distinguish Albanians from Italians, but also thanks to achievements in structural and cultural integration. Among participants’ stories, performances of boundary-crossing can be found not only in the phase of socialisation with the future partner, but also at the moment of meeting the partner’s family – as illustrated in the accounts of Martina and Iliriana. While Martina’s future partner basically conceals his being Albanian, the strategy adopted by Iliriana does not simply fall into what Romania (2004) called ‘expert mimicry’⁵⁰ as it even includes the cooptation of the Italian partner within the presentation of the self.

Martina: If you see him, he doesn’t look Albanian and speaks Italian correctly, so I thought he was from Sardinia. Only when I went to fill the application form for the gym, I discovered he was Albanian, so, little by little...

Rachele: *Didn’t he tell you he was Albanian?*

Martina: Not in the first moment, I discovered it only later when I was filling this application form, the first month was a bit like banter and digs, banter and digs, because, I told you, there was this thing...he used to call me ‘racist’ and I used to call him ‘Albanian’, and that’s it. Then, he asked me out for a date, after a month, I told him it was fine and since then we’ve never left each other...

(Martina: Italian woman cohabiting with an Albanian man, two children)

Iliriana: Then he told me: ‘Look, I’ll introduce you to my parents’. At the beginning he was...afraid of a certain...reaction from his parents, because, obviously, having some sort of prejudice...he told me: ‘Let’s do it this way, let’s do that I’ll introduce you the way

⁵⁰ Romania (2004) distinguished between three typologies of social mimicry: concealment (not passing for Albanian), camouflage (passing for a foreigner from a non-stigmatised group, e.g. Greek), expert mimicry (passing for Italian).

you are', because I was already able to speak the language well, 'So, let's see how they react, I'll tell them later' [...] and so we did, I went to their house, I acted normally, I was Tuscan, although the accent wasn't that...you couldn't hear too much, anyway, after a while he told them: 'Mum, look, I wanted to tell you something...' and, in that moment, you know, she felt... 'What?!' because you know one could say...

Rachele: ...pregnant!

Iliriana: Exactly... 'I wanted to tell you that Iliriana...' because, as a diminutive, I'm called Anna, which blends quite well, and even my surname is quite...is not that... 'So, I wanted to tell you that Anna is Albanian...' 'Ah! That's fine! God knows what I was thinking you were going to tell me! What's the problem?!' and since then there has been no problem...

(Iliriana: Albanian woman engaged to an Italian man)

A further step is represented by the practice of 'passing for Italians' performed by the Albanian partner in front of a foreign partner, here Romanian. This phenomenon shows how the ethnic categories which are in place in an immigrant social space circulate not only between the national majority and the stigmatised immigrant minority, but also inform social relationships among immigrants themselves, resulting then in additional boundaries. The next quote is about Ionela, at work with her future husband in a restaurant in the city centre of Florence.

Rachele: *Didn't you know he was Albanian?!*

Ionela: No, I had no idea!

Rachele: *Ah...*

Ionela: I had no idea, because the maître, all the time somebody made him angry, he used to say either 'You, shitty Moroccan' or 'You, shitty Albanian'. And this thing, that all Moroccans and Albanians had to be shitty, was rooted in me so deeply that I told him: 'Look, I would never have a relation with an Albanian or a Moroccan' and then I saw him making a strange face, but how could I have known?! To me he could speak Italian perfectly, he actually was...

Rachele: *And what about the name, does he have an Italian name as well?*

Ionela: No, but he lets people call him Gianni, so how could I have known!

(Ionela: Romanian woman married to an Albanian man, three children)

Only through an argument over traditional recipes (what tradition, whose tradition?), Ionela discovers he is Albanian. Now, they run an (Italian) restaurant and have three children. While this encounter had happened at the end of the 1990s, thus before the intensification of the Romanian migration to Italy and the subsequent process of stigmatisation, the encounter between Bekim and Alina occurred after this, in the early 2000s. In this case we can see how the stigma about Albanian men is countered by the stigma about Romanian women.

Alina: My mum: 'No way! No way! No way! Not only he doesn't believe (in God), but he's even Albanian!' and she told me: 'Try to avoid, try to...' she tried by all means to separate me from him...

Rachele: *Why? What did she know about Albanians and Albania?*

Alina: Well, you know, it was that period when also the TV was always speaking badly about them, thieves and so on...

Bekim: Our fame is everywhere [...] even in Romania, but also their fame, because I can't introduce myself easily when people ask me: 'Where is your wife from?'. It's a question I hate [...] I mean, it's difficult to say: 'She's Romanian' because they immediately change their expression, it's like I say 'prostitute'...

(Bekim & Alina: Albanian man and Romanian woman, married, one child)

The interpretation of Albanian-Romanian couples as couples composed of an Albanian pimp and a Romanian prostitute can be found not only among Italians, but also among Albanians and Romanians – which was perhaps the major challenge to address in recruiting the Albanian-Romanian sample. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the mother of Alina, at that time, was living in Romania. This cross-border circulation of the social stigma is further explained by Simona and basically concerns the Eastward enlargement of the Albanian prostitution racket in the 2000s.

Rachele: *Did you know anything about Albania before coming to Italy?*

Simona: No, (I knew) that the capital was Tirana and to keep away from Albanians.

Rachele: *Already from Romania?*

Simona: Yes, [...] because they used to go (to Romania), take girls, and force them into prostitution in Italy, in France [...] precisely when I arrived...2000...2002...it was a period when it was full of Albanians coming to look for girls, I understood they had also gone to Ukraine, Moldova [...] you could hear in the news...

(Simona: Romanian woman cohabiting with an Albanian man, one child)

Interestingly, Simona's partner passed for Greek at the time of their encounter, thanks to his fluency in the language due to a previous migration to Greece and to his friendship with an Italian-Greek couple that had actually made their encounter happen. Also this kind of social mimicry ('camouflage' in Romania 2004) only lasted a couple of weeks, after which he 'confessed' his being Albanian to Simona, on the verge of tears.

Especially 'anticipatory acculturation' – namely the linguistic/cultural baggage about Italy already acquired in Albania – gave an advantage to Albanians among all the other immigrants. As a consequence, the phrase 'not-looking-Albanian' (explicit) standing for 'looking-Italian' (implicit) was often meant as a compliment given by Italians to Albanian participants – sometimes even within the couple during the research encounter, as we will see in Chapter 7 – although this clearly implied the reproduction of the stigma. On the contrary, Constantin speaks of his 'not-looking-Italian' and of a time (the early 1990s) when Italians held a different attitude towards Romania and Romanians.

Constantin: Once, when people would ask me: ‘You don’t look Italian, where are you from? Your accent is strange...’ I would say: ‘Romanian’ ‘Ah, Romanian! Where? Wait a moment...Dracula, right?! Tell me something about...’ this was the attitude of people once, then because of the episodes which occurred over time...‘I mean, you don’t look Italian...’ ‘No, I’m Romanian’ ‘Ah’ [he makes an alarmed expression] ‘I have to go...’ these were the expressions of the people, in front of me, so that at a certain point I said to myself maybe I’d better not say that I’m Romanian [...] (but) then, I said to myself: ‘It’s a shame to let Romania be represented only by this Mailat⁵¹, or by that playing the accordion on the street, or by that shaking a can with three coins in it, we’re another kind of people too’...

(Constantin: Romanian man cohabiting with an Albanian woman)

In addition to this ‘not-passing-for-Italian’, it is also interesting to see another kind of social mimicry in the encounter between Nevila and Florian at her workplace – where the composition of the staff, his name and reticence made him ‘pass for Albanian’.

Nevila: The first time I saw him I thought he was Albanian and I was speaking to him in Albanian...

Florian: Everybody would speak to me (in Albanian)!

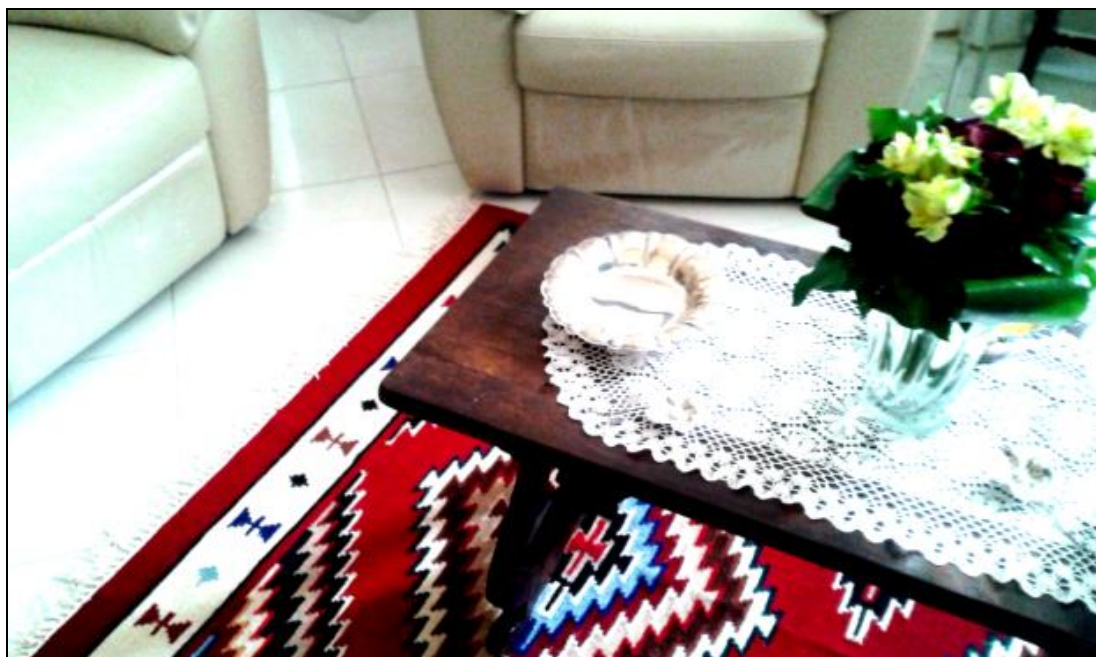
Nevila:...and he told me: ‘Look, I can’t understand you!’ [...] then he has a name, Florian, (that’s used) also among us [...] so in that very moment I was a bit confused and I think everybody meets him confuses him for Albanian...

Rachele: *Is this also because everybody in this (work)place is Albanian, the majority?*

Nevila: [...] No, not the majority, because let’s say there are 10 people (*sic*), maybe 4 Albanians, 4 Italians, 1 Romanian [...] he’s the only one [...] but is more than enough [she laughs]

(Nevila & Florian: Albanian woman and Romanian man, engaged)

Figure 17. Albanian rug



⁵¹ Romanian Roma convicted for the rape and murder of an Italian woman in 2007.

5.1.3 *Blurring*

Phenomena of boundary-blurring are exemplified in discourses against the social stigma based on individual/universal allegiances. This means that individuals try to overcome the social stigma which affects the ascribed group, by advocating individualism or universalism (Lamont et al. 2002). In the former case, an individual who belongs to a stigmatised group is considered unlike it and unique; in the latter case, the group itself is considered like all the other groups and equally heterogeneous. An example of counter-discourse based on individualism is given by Valentina, who talks about her husband and sister-in-law (Blerina, we have already met her). She defines them ‘atypical’ and different from most of the Albanians that she knows. The two siblings have rarely been back to Albania in the last two decades and Artur has never taken Valentina there, in spite of her willingness. She speaks of their detachment from Albania and identification with Italy, using a term which has a performative meaning (*‘calarsi’*). Interestingly, after having applied this term to her husband and sister-in-law, she finally applies it to herself – introducing the possibility of individual repositioning on both sides of the boundary, as we shall see later.

Valentina: Then, if you have the chance to meet my sister-in-law, she has absolutely nothing of Albanian, on the contrary, she has an accent perhaps more Tuscan than mine, she’s even more detached from the Albanian reality than he is, really...yes, both of them, he and his sister, in my opinion, according to what I could experience of the Albanian reality, they’re really atypical...

(Artur & Valentina: Albanian man and Italian woman, married, two children)

Instead, a counter-discourse via universalism is exemplified by Gerta, who speaks of a too-slow change in Italian societal attitudes towards Albanians and mentions both negative and positive stereotyping, opening the way to the revaluation illustrated in the next stages of boundary-making. In particular, this characteristic of (counter-)idealisation will resurface as the resemantisation pattern, namely as a condition for renegotiating boundaries. Significantly, we can see how these counter-discourses can be performed by both majority and minority individuals.

Gerta: Well, I think, when you speak, everything depends on the people you meet, both Italians and Albanians, I mean, if you meet a dodgy Albanian you think...you become more discouraged, but if you meet an Albanian who’s good, well, you think all of them are good, there’s a bit more trust, but the overall opinion is not a big deal...

(Gerta: Albanian woman married to an Italian man, one child)

Figure 18. *Xhezve* (i.e. pot for making Turkish coffee) among mugs



Turning back to the boundary-making framework, over time, phenomena of boundary-crossing and blurring help to change the state of the boundaries (Zolberg and Woon 1999). In the late 2000s, the boundary between ‘selves’ and ‘others’, which had structured Italy as an immigrant society around the opposition between the categories of ‘Italian’ and ‘Albanian’, poles of core positive and negative values (e.g. capitalism/communism, democracy/anarchy, modernity/backwardness, work/criminality, etc.), was subjected to further changes. The number of Romanian immigrants in Italy progressively increased and then doubled in 2007. That year, Romania joined the EU and Romanians quickly became the largest immigrant group in Italy, overtaking Albanians. At the same time, the social stigma passed from Albanian to Romanian immigrants and this boundary-shift was articulated in two directions. At first, Romanians substituted Albanians in the representation of alterity and in the opposition nationals/foreigners (Italians/Romanians). However, this alterity was soon questioned due to two main features: Romanians were not only claiming commonalities such as a Latin past and an EU present, but also availed of an ‘other within’ (Romanian Roma) which could play the scapegoat role and thus receive all the projections of moral degradation and barbarity needed to requalify the national self. Therefore, the phenomenon of Romanophobia soon evolved into Roma Romanophobia and the negativity associated with Romanians was then associated with Romanian Roma, flowing into a shared comfort-zone of intolerance (Mai 2010). Moreover, it seems to me

that when Romanian immigrants entered the scene, a further opposition between Romanian new-comers and Albanian old-timers also happened, in terms of integration/non-integration. By that time, in fact, Italy had completed its transformation into a society not only of immigration but also of an ongoing integration, acknowledging that a process of integration had actually occurred in the Albanian case (Pittau et al. 2009) and would possibly occur in the Romanian case as well (IDOS 2013).

The following quotations illustrate participants' perceptions of the Albanian and Romanian integration in Italy, either in relation to each other or to a third term of comparison, corresponding to other non-EU immigrant groups that have gradually diversified the make-up of Italy as an immigrant society. We can see how integration is a process which involves multiple social actors among both the national majority and immigrant minorities and also how meaningful interactions like partnership and marriage not only reflect the state of the boundaries by reproducing or countering social stigma, for instance, but they also constitute a vantage point for detecting social changes. In the first quote, Fabrizio talks about the Albanian integration, stressing the importance of personal contacts and mutual knowledge for achieving (co-)integration. Several participants pointed to the fact that now 'there's willingness to know each other' (as Esmeralda put it), also enhanced by the opportunity to travel to Albania for holidays – although this is mostly limited to the coast and the capital – thanks to friendships and partnerships, as we will see in the next chapter. In Fabrizio's words, not only do Albanians overlap with Southern Italians in their trajectory of stigmatisation and destigmatisation, but Albania itself becomes an overseas extension of Southern Italy.

Fabrizio: In Italy, nowadays, more or less everybody has an Albanian friend who is OK, right? [...] and maybe it's changing a bit because of that, then, alright, there were...there were problems because of us (=Italians) and because of them (=Albanians) too [...] I don't want to deny it, but I think gradually...[...] a bit like in the 1960s when somebody from the North (of Italy) couldn't stand somebody from the South and nowadays everybody goes on holidays to Salento⁵² and everybody befriends those from the South, so I think things will move – I hope they'll move – in that direction, a bit of integration is needed indeed...

(Tina & Fabrizio: Albanian woman and Italian man, married)

Instead, Agim and Letizia note the upgrade of Albanians *vis-à-vis* Romanians and Moroccans. While the fact that Romanians are perceived less integrated than Albanians

⁵² Geographic region of Apulia, Southern Italy.

can be related to the more recent average time of arrival, the fact that Moroccans are not considered integrated yet, even though the Moroccan presence in Italy dates back to before the Albanian one, should be rather put in relation with the current Islamophobia⁵³. Interestingly, Romanians are often considered to follow the footsteps of Albanians and this is exemplified by a feeling of having been leading the transformation of Italy into an immigrant society, which several Albanian and Italian participants noted.

Letizia: It seems to me that this issue about Romanians, about Moroccans still remains, but about Albanians I feel less...less hostility...

Agim: Because we're people who integrate more easily, it took a bit of time, because at the beginning, in the 1990s the reputation wasn't good and still...but people are integrated now...

(Agim & Letizia: Albanian man and Italian woman, married)

With reference to this, it comes to mind the difference between the processes of integration of Romanians in Germany and Italy analysed by Anghel (2008). In this case, instead, despite the Latin language, Christian religion, and EU citizenship, Romanians in Italy appear integrated from above as opposed to the integrated-from-below Albanians. This is also reflected in the general feeling of Europeaness among Romanians, as opposed to that of Italianness among Albanians. This gap between integration from below and integration from above characterises also Albanian-Romanian couples' dynamics, in which each of the partners tries to downgrade the other on the basis of ascribed/achieved reciprocal (dis)similarities to the third term of comparison, the Italian host-society (see Gossiaux 2002).

A step further is advanced by Chiara, who works in the immigration sector and identifies a new trajectory of social change brought about by migrations. Besides religion (Islam vs Christianity), she argues that 'race' has currently become the main category for constructing otherness in Italy⁵⁴.

Chiara: Nowadays, the public opinion is very much focused – as we were saying – to the disembarkations, so (the perception of) the foreigner, of the different, it's not funnelled any longer through the Balkans, like when there were waves of Albanians, as well as Romanians, and so on, but it's rather towards the Africans...

(Arjan & Chiara: Albanian man and Italian woman, cohabiting, two children)

⁵³ Albanians in Italy, differently from Greece (Urso 2009), are not perceived primarily as Muslims. Interestingly, a Romanian gatekeeper was persuaded that all Albanians were Catholic.

⁵⁴ Especially since 2014, when the arrivals by sea from Northern Africa, mostly concerning Sub-Saharan Africans, increased.

This has also led to a distinction between Whites and non-Whites, despite the national majority/immigrant minority status. It should be noted that Whiteness in this fieldwork – more than likely because of the Southern European context – encompasses a variety of groups (Northern Africans, Middle Easterners, Latin-Americans, etc.) and this continuity seems to emerge all those times in which Southern Italians are defined ‘Moroccan’ or likewise by both Italian and Albanian participants. To give an example, Lirjona thought that Patrizio was Tunisian – it was summer, he was tanned – ‘You speak Italian really well!’ she addresses him; ‘But I’m Italian!’ he replies. Similarly, the first question that the father of Adisa, who comes from an Albanian city with a high number of Gypsies, asked about Samuele was whether he had a fair complexion or not. This upgrading of Albanians and Romanians in comparison with other non-White immigrant groups also shines through the opinions of Ionela and Elvisa about integration and the deservingness of membership within the host-society.

Ionela: I think each foreigner should attend some training a bit, I mean, all who come here can’t live as they want, right, a minimal of history, culture, tradition, arts, everything...you understand better and appreciate more...

(Ionela: Romanian woman married to an Albanian man, three children)

Elvisa: To take (the Italian citizenship) you need at least 10 years and you have to present a form in which you say what jobs you do, you’ve done, if you have some investments, properties – if you have some possessions obviously you have the intention to stay – then they check because...they take your fingerprints, check everything, rightly enough, because Italy doesn’t have to accept everybody in the world and open the borders to everybody, it should do its bit...

(Elvisa: Albania woman divorcing from an Italian man)

5.2 Albanian-Italian/Romanian partnerships and marriages as sites of boundary reconstruction

The above-mentioned dynamics of stigmatisation and destigmatisation have framed integration processes through the boundary-making framework and its shifting, crossing, and blurring mechanisms (Zolberg and Woon 1999). All these mechanisms have contributed to outline the identity/alterity/(dis)similarity within the immigrant social space under consideration. Interrelated ethnic categories of ‘Italian’, ‘Albanian’, ‘Romanian’, and their variants, thus come into play in everyday encounters, as well as in the formation and maintenance of interpersonal relationships between individuals who can be defined accordingly. However, interactions are not only ways in which pre-existing categories are reproduced or countered, but also ways in which new categories are produced. Keeping the focus on mixed partnerships/marriages, this section explores

the ways in which the boundary between ‘self’ and ‘other’ is being renegotiated among Albanian-Italian/Romanian couples. While operations of boundary redefinition question an established boundary, acting on the reference system and thus producing an alternative identity through commonality; operations of repositioning and resemantisation maintain instead the boundary and the value of alterity/(dis)similarity, although fostering changes of position and meaning.

5.2.1 Redefinition

The binary of ‘self’ and ‘other’ exemplified by the opposition between the categories of ‘Albanian’ and ‘Italian’, or ‘Albanian’ and ‘Romanian’, is overcome through the acknowledgement of a common migration experience. The migrant identity is shared by the Italian partner either in terms of autobiography or of family biography. In fact, among Italian participants there are not only internal migrants from Southern Italy, but also descendants of guest-workers (in Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland) and of the Italian diaspora in the Mediterranean (Egypt, Greece, and Tunisia). This common non-ethnic identificational category makes it possible to reflect on the universality of boundary-making processes and on the hierarchical organisation of social space, subverting established oppositions, reversing roles, and finally reducing mutual distances. This is illustrated in the following three quotations. First, shifting the reference system from contemporary Italy to Second-World-War Egypt enables Federico to speak sensitively about hierarchies of foreignness, adopting a relativistic perspective explicitly focusing on his family of origin and implicitly looking at Rozalba, his wife. The incorporation of her family history within his own family history, which I could observe in his collection of family heirlooms, is also symbolised by his desire of inheriting a Second-World-War belt which had passed from her grandfather – a boy at the time of the Italian fascist invasion of Albania – to him (Figure 19).

Federico: If a Sardinian did something (it was because he) was Sardinian, then came the Albanian...

Rozalba: Well, it went down a bit, the Romanian instead is still there, in my opinion, is still seen with some...indifference...

Rachele: ...indifference?

Rozalba: The mentality is still the same. The foreigner is always...marked...

Rachele: Do you mean all foreigners or Albanians, Romanians...?

Rozalba: Well, I think all...

Federico: Actually it's a bit different when is French...

Rozalba: In my opinion, yes, you're marked, I don't know, the Albanian I guess more...

Federico: I don't know, I was thinking of my father, he used to tell me that in Egypt there were three (*sic*) levels, the indigenous people were at the bottom, then the Italians, then the French, and then the English. English people felt superior to anybody else, so they looked at everybody with contempt and the same one after another...

(Rozalba & Federico: Albanian woman and Italian man, married, one child)

Figure 19. Belt of an Albanian participant's grandfather, from the Italian invasion of Albania in the Second World War to an Albanian-Italian household three generations later



Second, Arjan notes that the encounter with the family of his wife was facilitated by a common understanding of migration experience ('the immigrant's story'), which created a bridge between his father-in-law – once a guest-worker in Germany and later a returnee in Italy – and him, strengthening a masculine bond.

Arjan: I met her family after one year since we were together, one year since the engagement...

Rachele: *Do you remember how the meeting was?*

Arjan: [...] With the father it was very easy, because also the father had an experience of immigration...

Rachele: *Germany?*

Arjan: Germany, exactly. So, how to say, he knows a bit of the immigrant's story...

(Arjan: Albanian man married to an Italian woman, two children)

Third, Enkelejd points to the interrelation of two reference systems marking alterity (Albanian/Italian and Southern/Northern Italian) as well as commonalities (Albanians in Italy and Southern Italians Northwards). In his words, the importance of the family sphere in defining one's own place also emerges.

Rachele: *How often do you see your families?*

Irene: I see my family only during the summer, at Christmas, and when they come and visit me, well, actually when my mother comes and visits me, no more...We see his family every week-end [...]

Enkelejd: She's like a foreigner in Italy, because she usually sees her family just once or twice per year, and I see mine every week. So, it's a bit like roles are reversed...

(Enkelejd & Irene: Albanian man and Italian woman, cohabiting)

The condition of foreigner and the experience of migration represent, instead, among Albanian-Romanian couples a commonality which is expressed less than mutual differences – as we shall see in the next two chapters. However, in the following quotation, Mădălina refers to the stigma against Albanian and Romanian immigrants in Italy as opposed to the stigma against Italian emigrants, suggesting a divide between 'foreigners' and 'nationals' rather than a universalistic solution.

Mădălina: Albanians steal, prostitution, drugs. Romanians: prostitution, the girls, you know...obviously if you ask to an Italian: 'What do you think of Albanians?' he'll tell you the usual things...'What do you think of Romanians?' he'll tell you the usual things...instead, if you ask us: 'What do you think of Italians?' the same things you can hear: mafia...

(Mădălina: Romanian woman married to an Albanian man)

This shared foreignness and the interchangeability of the social stigma against Albanian and Romanian immigrants has two main consequences: the quest for another reference system through onward migration – not only because of the recent economic crisis, but also because of the legacy of stigmatisation⁵⁵ – and the foundation for a more equal status of the two partners in stigmatised minority-minority couples, which we will see being confirmed also in family formation.

Nevila: Maybe here in Italy...maybe it's seen as the most dangerous couple...Albanian-Romanian... 'Oh my God! The explosive couple!'⁵⁶

Rachele: *Did anybody tell you this?*

Nevila: No, I'm joking...

Florian: Somebody would mock: 'If the police stop you, they'll arrest you both!'
[everybody laughs]

(Nevila & Florian: Albanian woman and Romanian man, engaged)

Ionela: We (=Albanians and Romanians) are more similar to each other, more close-minded, more ignorant as well as racist, I think, in comparison with you (=Italians)...we always complain we have to cope with racism in various situations...but nobody is more

⁵⁵ Almost all Albanian-Romanian couples interviewed were thinking or had thought about onward migration. Sometimes they also knew other Albanian-Romanian couples that had actually left Italy. I managed to chat with a few of them (again the Romanian woman) on Facebook.

⁵⁶ In the original '*La coppia che scoppia!*' in which '*scoppiare*' means both 'to explode' and 'to decouple' – also hinting the supposed vulnerability of not only mixed but especially minority-minority couples.

racist than us [...] we get along well with each other because we're similar [...] you really show yourself (for what you are), you open up easily [...] because among us, as peoples, each of us believes himself a bit more advanced, you're there boasting 'I'm this way' 'I'm that way' [...] you don't feel bad, you don't feel subordinated, basically, as if you had to be (different)...

(Ionela: Romanian woman married to an Albanian man, three children)

However, also among Albanian-Romanian couples, there were observations about migration as a universal – although space/time-bound – phenomenon. Some Romanian participants, for example, had remote Italian origins, dating back to the emigration from North-Eastern Italy to Romania during the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Ricci 2008) – which reminds us that who immigrants are and what a host-society is can be only relatively understood. Moreover, an interesting continuum based on historical migrations was identified along the axes Albanian-Arbëresh-Italian and Albanian-Aromanian-Romanian among Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples, respectively. Arbëresh are an Albanian-speaking mainly Greek-Catholic minority settled in Southern Italy since the Ottoman occupation of Albania in the XV century (Derhemi 2003). The geographical proximity with Arbëresh communities contributed to create familiarity between a few Southern Italian participants and their Albanian partners. This also happened between some Southern Albanian participants and their Romanian partners, thanks to the geographical proximity to Aromanians – a Romanian-speaking Orthodox minority present in the Balkans (Schwandner-Sievers 1999). This familiarity not only concerned participants but also their social networks and thus mediated the reception of the Albanian or Romanian partner within the family of the other. Esmeralda was the first Albanian who her Italian partner, coming from an Arbëresh area with low Albanian immigration, met. Similarly, her in-laws associated Simona with the local Aromanian minority.

Esmeralda: He knew a lot (about Albania) because he really loves history, right, and besides this, since he had been living in the South (of Italy), where there are also these villages where Arbëresh is spoken [...] he knew something about Albania, but obviously from another angle, because Arbëresh are Albanian indeed but [...] it's a different kind of Albanian, it's an Albanian from the 1400s, different, very Italianised, in fact, when I went there I didn't really understand that much [...] So, when he met me, when he started talking to me about Skanderbeg⁵⁷, about history, I was...[she makes a shocked expression, then everybody laughs] [...] it was fantastic, great, so we had many commonalities from the beginning...

(Esmeralda: Albanian woman cohabiting with an Italian man)

⁵⁷ The Albanian national hero, who also epitomises the intermingling of religions in Albania – being born Orthodox, having lived as a Muslim, and died as a Catholic (Young 1999).

Rachele: *How did his parents react to the fact you're Romanian?*

Simona: Well, because he told me they always had towards Romania...they...there in Albania, I don't know if you know it, there have been Romanian immigrants for 600 years (*sic*) [...] there was a kind of migration, transhumance with sheep, they went through (former) Yugoslavia and arrived to Albania, these are called *çoban* (i.e. 'shepherd' in Albanian), they call them this way [...] so, by hearing 'Romanian' they automatically situated me in that 'race' [...] they speak a kind of Romanian I barely understand, maybe out of 10 words I can understand 5, the half, because it's a 600-year old (*sic*) Romanian language [...] one of his cousins married one of them, who's a doctor [...] in his classroom, the top three (pupils) were all *çoban*...

(Simona: Romanian woman cohabiting with an Albanian man, one child)

Figure 20. Ottoman heritage from the Italian diaspora to Greece



5.2.2 Repositioning

The opposition between the categories of 'Albanian' and 'Italian' is also overcome by moving forward from the negation of a complete Albanian identity (not-looking-Albanian) to the affirmation of an incomplete Italian identity (being-almost-Italian). While the former expression, already reported with reference to social mimicry, indicates that the individual under consideration is dissimilar from the group-other, the latter expression indicates that he/she is instead similar to the group-self. The reference subject is therefore legitimately repositioned within a border-zone in between similar/dissimilar rather than self/other. Moreover, as each border has two sides, this analysis can be extended from the categories referring to the Albanian partner in Albanian-Italian couples to the categories referring to the Italian partner alike.

Gerta: Let's say, they (=Italian acquaintances) highlight the fact that I'm a foreigner...

Giacomo:...even more than necessary, because in my opinion...

Gerta:...also because, to tell the truth, I feel I'm Italian.

Giacomo:...she, poor thing...

Gerta: I've been living here since 2003! Thirteen years! [...]

Giacomo: But she's considered too Albanian somehow, because I think she's half and half.

Gerta: What's more, about Italy, I know a bit of the history, I'm into what's going on, I read newspapers, magazines, I'm well-informed about politics...

Giacomo: She's more into politics and news than I am.

Gerta: So, sometimes I feel I'm more Italian than the Italians I'm speaking with!

(Gerta & Giacomo: Albanian woman and Italian man, married, one child)

An example of repositioning from the other side is given by Giacomo himself, who later in the interview says: 'If people tell me I'm a bit Albanian, I'm happy, I mean, I'm pleased, because it makes me feel integrated also with reference to her story'. Feeling integrated within a friendship network, a family, or a group-other, tells us something about the majority partner's self-identification, about legitimate reciprocity, and about what we may call 'co-integration' (see Rodríguez-García et al. 2015). Erion points to the quasi-Albanianness of the Italian partner, instead, which often includes all those positive elements (e.g. hospitality) that Italians and above all Northern Italians seem to have forgotten.

Erion: She looks almost Albanian and then, should I reflect on this, maybe, you know, also this relation and so on is because I saw a person very similar to me...should I reflect, I repeat, it wasn't a choice...

Rachele: *Sure, rational...*

Erion:...rational...because I had to...it just happened, a coincidence, but actually we got along well with each other precisely because there was this affinity of...of characters, let's say, from the point of view of...of...relating to...to the other...

(Erion: Albanian man married to an Italian woman, one child)

A step further then consists in analysing the categories of legitimated repositioning used by Albanian-Romanian couples, which not only correspond to reciprocal definitions but are also informed by Italy as a third pole. Below it is first reported some variations on the theme of 'quasi-Italianness' among Albanian-Romanian couples, and then an interpretation of mutual (dis)similarity – rather than otherness – with reference to quasi-Romanianness.

Rachele: *What about the future, are you planning to stay in Italy or...?*

Roland: Yes, yes, yes...

Adriana: Ah! He's more Catholic than the Pope!

Rachele: *What does it mean?*

Adriana: It means that he's more Italian than Italians, he's in love with Italy...

Roland: Yes, because...

Adriana: My brother told us: ‘Come and stay in the US, come, come!’

Roland: No, no, no, no...

Adriana: Well, I wouldn’t go either...

Roland: We went to the US, but...

Adriana: We went as soon as we got the (Italian) citizenship, as we didn’t need a visa any longer...

Roland: Yes, we went...

Adriana:...but, no, not to live, not to live there...

Roland: Look, in Italy you can live well, can you see all the foreigners who come? I mean foreigners like, I don’t know, English people, Germans, Americans, they come, why do they come? Because it’s a beautiful place! It’s sunny...

Adriana: Yes...

Roland:...there’s art, there’s culture, there’s food, there’s nature, come on, baby, there are many wrong things, but...

(Roland & Adriana: Albanian man and Romanian woman, married, two children)

Constantin: The old saying ‘Choose wife and cattle from your hometown’⁵⁸ doesn’t apply to me, what’s more, I can tell you I found in her the Romanian who’s not Romanian, I found the right woman for me, who somehow brings me back to traditions, flavours, stuff a bit linked with my nostalgia and so on, but she’s not Romanian, because I don’t want a Romanian wife, I don’t know how to explain it...

(Constantin: Romanian man cohabiting with an Albanian woman)

Figure 21. Painting of Florence made by the father of an Albanian participant



5.2.3 Resemantisation

In the final boundary re-working, the existing boundary is maintained but receives a new meaning. This new meaning could suggest an alternative horizon – for instance,

⁵⁸ In the original: ‘*Moglie e buoi dei paesi tuoi*’ (literally: ‘Choose wife and cattle from your hometown’) – Italian proverb, which worked as a refrain all throughout my fieldwork, and basically means ‘Stick with your own kind’.

more traditional values in terms of gender and generation – but could also reflect general dissatisfaction and convey both escapist fantasies and self-realisation dreams. Below, Massimiliano, awaiting his forthcoming wedding and the birth of his first child, identifies a hierarchy of Italianness where Southern Italians and Albanians overlap. Values such as the importance of the family, indissolubility of marriage, respect towards elderly people, as well as a tighter control on women, are mentioned among values which are now lost in the Italian society but still alive in Albania.

Massimiliano: Sometimes they (=Albanians) have a culture that I prefer to some Italian cultures, which are more superficial on some issues. They care more about some values you could hardly find here or, in order to find them, maybe you would need to go to the South of Italy, where there's still a little bit of...

Rachele: ...of?

Massimiliano: Of some family values, they have some basis, in the South they have some basis, like in Calabria, in Sicily, they have faults, as everybody, but they do have some family basis...

(Dorina & Massimiliano: Albanian woman and Italian man, cohabiting)

This continuity between Southern Italy and Albania, which we have seen being negatively connotated through emigration, backwardness, and criminality, is countered by a positive view focused on tradition and above all family values. On this basis, Ilaria – who defines herself as a Southerner (*'terrona'*), although raised in Northern Italy from a Northern-Southern Italian marriage – defines Albanians 'more *terroni* than us'.⁵⁹ The revaluation of the term *'terrone'* and its application to foreigners also reflects the beginning of a process of revaluation of the term *'albanese'* and perhaps suggests some incipient Albanophilia⁶⁰. In fact, not only does the Albanian partner embody principles deemed essential for the creation of a certain family model, but also Albania becomes 'the Paradise on the other side' onto which expectations of a better future are projected. So, what in a recent past was considered negative is currently acquiring positive

⁵⁹ It is not a coincidence that, in this fieldwork, the films which were mentioned by participants were not only *'Lamerica'* (1995) but also *'Benvenuti al Sud'* (2010; i.e. 'Welcome to the South', remake of the French film *'Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis'*). In the former film, Italy is represented as Albanians' America at the time of the first migration waves (see King and Mai 2009). In the latter film, the Northern Italian protagonist is transferred to the South, where reciprocal stereotypes are somehow countered through mutual knowledge as well as the acknowledgement of commonalities – which was perceived by participants as a parallel with Italians in Albania. Moreover, although it happened after the completion of my fieldwork and I could only follow this event and related discourses on Facebook, I should also mention the award received by the singer Eralda Meta – another member of the Albanian in-between generation in Italy, arriving as teenager and then raised to adulthood in Apulia – at Sanremo 2017. The singer presented a cover version of the song *'Amara terra mia'* (i.e. 'Bitter land of mine' sung by Domenico Modugno in 1973) that refers to emigration and loops together Apulia, Italy, and Albania – which is specially relevant also considering the importance of Sanremo music festival among Albanians, who were clandestine-TV-watchers before the emigration wave to Italy.

⁶⁰ See Zola (2016).

connotations. Nonetheless, in this process of meaning reversal, an element of idealisation still remains, and this seems to suggest the need of another time and another place, the archetypal ‘Italy-sixty-years-ago’ expressed by some participants. The recent economic crisis has inevitably contributed to magnify dissatisfaction towards the labour market and the housing system. The perspective of self-employment and a house built ‘on the other side of the sea’ could thus represent the return of the Albanian (male) partner and a compensation for the Italian/Romanian (female) partner.

In the following quotation, Martina speaks of her dream to move to Albania – otherwise Canada through the lottery or maybe the UK where she has some friends – which, however, seems to be a reaction to the present situation. The inability to get a mortgage due to the precarious employment contract of her partner; the awareness of downward mobility exemplified by the large family-owned house where she was raised and the small rented one where she is raising her children; the rejection of her partnership by her own family and its acceptance by the Albanian one, are all elements which emerge from her story. Yet, the key role that she had taken on within the Albanian extended family, as a national majority individual, and her integration into her partner’s kin-based social network made her re-discover basic values, learn, grow up, and change. All this led Martina not only to adopt a different perspective on several topics, after the partnership, but also to think of herself as a potential migrant or, at least, push her children to migration as the way to succeed in life.

Rachele: *And how did you come up with the idea of going away?*

Martina: We came up with this idea because we both had, over the years, a series of working situations in which we were really exploited, so we got tired and we don’t want our children, when they grow up, to suffer from the same situations we suffered, because, I mean, I have no degree but I have a leaving certificate and some work experience, he doesn’t have a leaving certificate which is valid in Italy, but he has an Albanian one, he attended the lower secondary school, and here he didn’t have the chance to do an exam in order to get it recognised, he’s doing humble jobs but he’s exploited, we’re looking for something different...

(Martina: Italian woman cohabiting with an Albanian man, two children)

While Martina nurtures her imaginary through Facebook pages and Youtube videos about Albania, awaiting summer holidays; Chiara has built her self-realisation dream around Albania. Over time, she learnt Albanian through a language course at the university, turned Albania into the topic of her degree in the field of tourism, started to deal with the online renting of a flat that her partner bought on the Albanian coast and with a more ambitious project of a restaurant in a valley.

Chiara: Actually the idea is to start this business, this small restaurant, right there on the lake-shore, and to deal with it, maybe to implement also an organic orchard, a park...

Rachele: *And are you planning to deal with it personally, to move there for good?*

Chiara: During the summer for sure, because that will be the busy period, anyway over there he has a brother, his father, it doesn't mean that we have to be there all the year, at the beginning I think so, at the beginning of the project...

(Chiara: Italian woman cohabiting with an Albanian man, one child)

Hence, two different attitudes about their own integration into the home-society of the partner characterise the two women. Martina mentions the fact that she has gradually accepted what at the beginning she could neither understand nor agree with, such as the custom of male/female separation at meals in Albania, in an effort of countering her own partner's integration in Italy. Instead, Chiara mentions the fact that she still opposes what she simply considers backwards, like denying the opportunity for a woman to go out alone and take a coffee, as illustrated by her account in Chapter 3.

Although most participants, who had been to Albania at least once⁶¹, referred to Albania in holidays terms only, some like Mădălina would 'return' to Albania – introjecting the return migration project of her partner – on the basis of the lifestyle that she could afford there ('I was amazed, the food is cheaper, we would go to the restaurant almost every evening'). She also mentions some parallelisms between Albania and Romania although, possibly because of the male breadwinner role, Albania rather than Romania seemed to be the favourite return destination among Albanian-Romanian couples, at least ideally.

Mădălina: I'd like to go back to Albania, I tell you the truth, but there the problem is that you can't go to work for 200 euros, 100-200 euros, you rather go there to start something yours [...] because otherwise you can't make it, anyway he already has the house there, you don't pay the rent [...] he wanted to start some business in the building industry...

(Mădălina: Romanian woman married to an Albanian man)

However, as Kevin notes, there is a gap between holidays and routine. His partner, Nadia, worked for a month in an Italian-owned restaurant on the Albanian coast, experiencing the local salary and somehow crashing into reality.

Kevin: Eh, you see nice touristic places and you say: 'It's nice being here' and we also go in the summer, and more or less it's nice being there for 15-20 days, but then when you live there all the time it's completely different, because you go there with the money

⁶¹ This usually relates to the officialisation of the partnership in Albania, as shown in the next chapter. However, there were a few cases in which the Albanian male partner had basically cut all relations with Albania and was not predisposed to taking the partner there, whereas in other cases the Italian male partner was not interested in going. A similar disinterest was also observed among some Albanian men in Albanian-Romanian couples towards Romania.

you bring from here, but if you try to live there with the money you're supposed to earn there, you can't [...]

Nadia: Those Italians who go there nowadays, the retirees who get a 1,000-euro pension, (those) live well there...

(Kevin & Nadia: Albanian man and Italian woman, cohabiting)

As an alternative, the couple was thinking to seek employment in a call-centre in Tirana, where the Italian language is required, although finally, they agreed on the possibility of spending their retirement in Albania – similarly to many Italians nowadays.

In one case, the return project was somehow put into practice, although unsuccessfully. Simona describes the experience of her partner's return and her own onward migration to the outskirts of an Albanian town in winter. Not only the place of settlement, but also the immobility, inactivity, and dependence which this meant, together with the difficulties in keeping transnational ties with Romania through international phone calls and lack of direct transports, brought her back to Italy followed by her reluctant partner, whose business was actually going well.

Simona: Three months...and I came back (from Albania), he accompanied me, very disappointed that I couldn't...we loved each other so much that I thought it would have been enough, but it's not enough, it's not enough...I found myself doing nothing, waiting for him, he would go out, take the car, go here and there to deliver these vases and I would stay at home, gosh, sometimes without electricity, no, I tell you, it was a tragedy... (Simona: Romanian woman cohabiting with an Albanian man, one child)

Figure 22. Souvenirs from Albania



The three typologies exemplified in the second part of this chapter have shown how the boundary between ‘self’ and ‘other’ is being reinterpreted among mixed couples through operations of redefinition, repositioning, and resemantisation. Alterity and dissimilarity have thus become identity and similarity on the basis of the recognition of a common migration experience, a pathway of (co-)integration or even projects of future migration. Firstly, a background of migration has made it possible to transcend previous divisions and reduce mutual distances, putting together yesterday’s and today’s migrants. Secondly, the acknowledgement of integration processes can move foreign partners from the domain of the ‘other’ to the domain of the ‘self’, for minority and majority partners alike. Thirdly, when identificational categories are revalued, intermarriage might also create – from a cluster of return projects, escapist fantasies, and self-realisation dreams – the migrants of tomorrow.

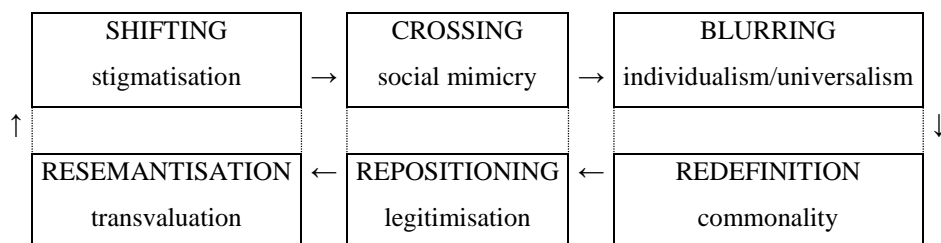
Conclusion

This chapter has tried to answer the following questions: *How do minority-majority (Albanian-Italian) and minority-minority (Albanian-Romanian) couples relate to integration? Is there any space, within the integration framework, for understanding intermarriage also from the perspective of the national majority partner? Could we speak in terms of co-integration, for instance? What about intermarriage between immigrant minorities? Is the concept of integration still suitable in such a ‘three-player game’?* My account has shown that, by rethinking integration as a multi-way process of boundary change, intermarriage within an immigrant social space can be approached both as a minority-majority (Albanian-Italian) and minority-minority (Albanian-Romanian) phenomenon, giving voice also to those who have been largely neglected within the literatures on intermarriage and integration, namely the national majority and multiple immigrant minorities. In doing so, the chapter has moved forward from the interpretation of intermarriage as an indicator/agent of integration to the view of intermarriage as a site of integration (not only co-integration, but mixity as per Grillo 2005), where categories are transformed and demarcation lines redrawn.

In particular, the chapter has applied the boundary-making framework to both intermarriage and integration, investigating the process of construction of an immigrant social space in the case of Italy, by focusing on Albanians, Italians and Romanians, and from the viewpoint of Albanian-Italian/Romanian partnerships and marriages. As

shown in Chapter 2, already Bauböck (1994) and Zolberg and Woon (1999) had looked at integration as a process composed of boundary-shifting/crossing/blurring mechanisms. From this starting point, Wimmer (2008a) specifically elaborated a taxonomy made up of shifting (expansion, contraction), transvaluation (inversion, equalisation), individual/collective positional moves, and blurring (localism, humanitarianism, etc.), which could be applied to a plurality of processes of ethnic boundary-making (e.g. nation-building, ethnogenesis, assimilation, etc.). Drawing inspiration from the above-mentioned literature, this chapter has explored ‘mixedness from an etic point of view’ – thus in relation to the ethnic categories imposed from outside the couple and marking a partnership/marriage as mixed, as opposed to those categories arising from inside the couple (emic) which will be analysed in the next two chapters. In the case of Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples, these etic categories of mixedness are based on nationality and its attached social stigma. We have seen how these categories developed and how they are being renegotiated in meaningful interactions, along with a process of boundary change. My analysis has also shown the importance of dealing with specific typologies of mixing, rather than with general mixedness, because of the fact that although all mixed marriages are marked by an ethnic boundary, each boundary differs in its location and meaning. Therefore, in order to understand the transformative role of intermarriage also at a societal besides personal level, we cannot overlook this specificity. The chapter has systematically organised the main findings along a model of boundary-making specially tailored for this study (Figure 23), which has made it possible to analyse the Albanian and Romanian integration in Italy from a processual and a multi-actor viewpoint.

Figure 23. Boundary-making processes through etic categories



By focusing on the sphere of intermarriage, this chapter has thus reviewed the modalities in which the boundary between ‘self’ and ‘other’ has been established alongside Italy’s transition from an emigrant to an immigrant society (Adler-Hellman 1997; King and Mai 2009; Mai 2010), and those in which the boundary has been

subsequently challenged through social mimicry and counter-discourses based on individualism/universalism. It has then presented mechanisms of boundary change through operations of redefinition, repositioning, and resemantisation of the boundary itself. The oppositions between ‘self’ and ‘other’ at the basis of the construction of the categories of ‘Albanian’, ‘Italian’, ‘Romanian’ and their variants are hence modified within social relationships and specifically in the case of mixed couple/family formation and maintenance. Intermarriage has thus appeared as a site of integration where boundaries are reconstructed from below, where national majority and immigrant minorities interact, renewing the meaning of identificational categories and redrawing demarcation lines. This chapter has shown that the phenomenon of migration in itself generates boundaries, which may not only divide but also unite, and this provides additional features to the interpretation of intermarriage within an immigrant social space, enriching the notion of integration itself. Integration has in fact appeared as a process by which host-societies change, shifting internal/external boundaries throughout the interaction of multiple social actors, their encounters and relations, here gathered within the sphere of partnership/marriage. Thence, through the case-study of Albanian-Italian/Romanian couples and families, we have seen how migration may not only produce alterity through stigmatisation, but also provide the means for turning destigmatisation into the creation of new identities.

MIXEDNESS THROUGH AN EMIC LENS: ENCOUNTER AND COHABITATION

Introduction

The next two chapters answer the following research questions: *what are the lived experiences of Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples? What is the role of friendship and family networks in couple formation and maintenance? What intersections of ethnic and gender categories characterise these partnerships and marriages? What are the characteristics of these mixed families? What configurations of mixedness are in place among them? What are the main (dis)similarities between minority-majority (Albanian-Italian) and minority-minority (Albanian-Romanian) couples and families?* These two chapters follow a life-course approach, from couple formation (this chapter) to family formation (next chapter). They focus on key moments of the partnership: the encounter with the partner, the encounter with the family of the partner and between the two families, the wedding, cohabitation, and child-rearing; concluding with a reflection on mixedness from the point of view of the participants themselves (emic). This life-course approach has been chosen to present findings in a systematic way; clearly not all couples have followed the same trajectory. Moreover, the couples interviewed are actually at different stages of their partnership (engaged, cohabiting, married, divorcing; with or without children); in this way it has been possible to understand both attitudes and behaviours and also to focus on different turning points, either deemed important by participants or simply closer in time and more vivid in their memory.

This chapter specifically deals with the encounter with the partner, which mainly happened with the mediation of common friends, in universities or workplaces. Subsequently, the encounter with the family of the partner and between the two families is examined. The first characteristic which emerges is the time of the encounter, which among Albanian participants was generally delayed, conforming to family expectations. The chapter goes on to cover arranged marriages, official engagements, and the hospitality of the Albanian family as opposed to the informality of the encounters with the Italian and Romanian families. The second characteristic is the place of the family encounter and consequently the format of the encounter itself, often in correspondence to events like graduations or summer trips – assuming the character of a rite of passage.

Afterwards, the topic of weddings is discussed. These occurred more in town halls than in churches. Instead, those who opted for a religious wedding were mostly couples with an Albanian partner who was originally Christian or who converted to Christianity either independently from marriage – sometimes even before migration to Italy – or in order to get married in Italy and, to a lesser extent, in Romania. The marriage consisted of one or two wedding parties. This depended on the period in which it occurred and its mobility constraints/opportunities (visa and transports), on the place of residence of the kin, on the typology of marriage – taking also into account the custom of multiple wedding parties among Albanians. Nonetheless, not all partners decided to marry. This could be related to an increasing secularism and incidence of divorce, either within the family of origin or even among a few participants, which might affect attitudes towards marriage. However, cohabitation was rather a stage within the partnership than an alternative to marriage, especially due to the lack of civil rights, which is particularly disadvantageous in the case of children. In the last part, the chapter deals with the life together, paying special attention to household and house-chores. Themes like neighbourhood, virilocality/neolocality, leisure time and food, as well as the figures of the breadwinner/homemaker and those of the youngest son/foreign daughter-in-law will be analysed.

6.1 Couple formation

6.1.1 The encounter with the partner

In Chapter 2, we saw that mixed friendship networks may enhance the likelihood to enter a mixed partnership by lessening outgroup prejudice and ingroup attachment (Van Zantvliet and Kalmijn 2013). Friendship networks can also mediate between people and places, making meaningful encounters happen. Moreover, the environment itself can foster encounters which simply occur by chance. Within my sample, Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples mostly met through friendship networks – within a plurality of settings – whereas the most common meeting point without prior mediation was the workplace. Referring to encounters mediated by friends, these exercise their influence over all environments and especially within schools and universities. Among the participants there are Albanians who attended school in Italy –

mainly the secondary school – and Albanians who came to Italy to enrol at the university, especially during the 2000s.

Below, Iliriana remembers the first encounter with her partner, more than ten years earlier. She was a bright student and used to give a speech in the Albanian language at the beginning of the school year – as other classmates would do in their own mother-tongues. Like other participants, she found school ‘outperformance’ as a way to demonstrate her value and be gradually accepted by her peers. Iliriana describes a process of integration into a social network (here a friendship network, elsewhere an extended family). In particular, the mediation of a classmate makes the encounter with her future partner possible. In the quotation, we can also see how the term ‘foreigner’ swiftly passes from indicating the ‘other’ (Italian) to indicating the ‘self’ (Albanian), showing an introjection of the reference system and thus the adoption of a context-specific meaning of self/other identificational categories.

Iliriana: We met each other when I was 17, through a friend of mine, he was the best friend of my friend’s brother. She (=her friend) always wanted to find me a boyfriend, but at that time I had some difficulties with the language and I was also a bit afraid of (having) a foreign boyfriend...[silence] foreign! Italian! [she laughs] I was afraid of approaching...because he was my first boyfriend and still is...so, I was afraid. Anyway, we got to know each other, he had (a group of friends)...we went out together the first time because he (=her friend’s brother) invited me out with this group. He (=her partner) didn’t really agree...he was, let’s say, the group leader: ‘Ah, you know, a foreign girl...perhaps it’s better not...’ but his friend insisted: ‘Look, she’s a really nice girl, let’s take her out, she wouldn’t do anything (wrong)’ and since then...he actually liked me... (Iliriana: Albanian woman engaged to an Italian man)

Some participants remembered having had Albanian classmates, although this was not put in relation with their current partnership, whereas having had an Albanian friend or even a former partner was. We could relate this fact with what Lőrincz (2016) found with reference to dating preferences among Roma and non-Roma secondary school students in Hungary. The exposure to a diverse environment may decrease prejudice, although this does not necessarily mean increasing the willingness to date out of the group. The quality of interpersonal relationships thus becomes necessary in this respect. Clearly, it was possible to explore the topic of previous partnerships only occasionally and mostly in individual interviews. Similar patterns are also reflected at a university level, where it was relatively common to meet students coming from Albania. Instead, due to a more recent migration history, only younger participants had Romanian classmates, although none of the Albanian-Romanian couples directly originated at school/university.

I now present a few examples about the quality of interpersonal relationships as a foundation of subsequent partnerships. During her adolescence, Chiara (Italian, fortyish) befriended an Albanian girl equal in age but a victim of trafficking and living in a shelter house in her village. Federico (Italian, thirtyish) lived instead together with his ‘Albanian adopted brother’ for a few years in his family house and they are now living as neighbours. Also in this case, two different life-stories – an Italian student from a well-off urban area and an Albanian labourer from a deprived rural area – but being the same age made it possible to establish a relation which is still in place. Fatmir (Albanian, thirtyish) sketched a nostalgic portrait of a previous partnership with another Romanian woman in the few seconds in which his current partner left us alone. In all these (few) cases, a journey to Albania/Romania had occurred before meeting the current partner. Moreover, the importance of the previous relationship was also indicated by the fact that the other partner would actually bring up this topic.

Turning back to the role played by the environment in couple formation, the university was an important meeting point for Albanian-Italian couples. Especially student accommodations fostered encounters between Albanian and Southern Italian students, sharing the status of *fuorisede* (i.e. ‘boarders’ as opposed to commuters). This shared status produced interesting parallelisms: participants, for instance, often referred to Albania as ‘*giù*’ (‘down there’), which is also the way in which Southern Italy is commonly indicated. We saw in the previous chapter how the categories of emigration and internal migration may overlap to create commonality within Albanian-Italian couples. However, we could further develop this theme with reference to third-level education, analysing the story of Olger and his partner, for example. Both of them arrived in Florence to pursue university education, the former from Albania, the latter from Southern Italy. Shortly after, his brother and her sister followed them, enrolling in the same university. The couple met in the student accommodation.

Olger: We met each other in the student accommodation, when I entered the student accommodation, then we...we already knew each other, actually, then we started dating [...]

Rachele: *Did you have the same group of friends or (did you meet) just because you were in the same student accommodation?*

Olger: No, no, we just were in the same student accommodation. She had another group of friends, but, you know, during the exams period, the study period, the study rooms are the same, everybody meets there...

(Olger: Albanian man engaged to an Italian woman)

The two universities taken into consideration in my research, the University of Florence and the University of Pisa, host a high number of Albanian students – as illustrated in Chapter 4. During the decade 2000-2010, the Albanian associationism was strongly developed on a university basis, thanks to the commitment of Albanian boys and girls who had moved to Italy to study. This phenomenon has now faded, once this generation graduated and the profile of Albanian students changed into a second-generation one, as participants also noted. Distinctions between those who arrived for enrolling in the university and those who had already attended some years of schooling in Italy seem to concern also the composition of friendship networks (Albanian the former, Italian the latter), although this did not hinder mixed couple formation within the former subgroup either. Moreover, Albanian student associations have contributed to create familiarity within the university premises, through their international buffets and the organisation of events like festivals and music concerts. At an Albanian Flag Day at the university, for example, Enkelejd and Irene were introduced to each other by an Albanian-Italian couple that they both knew. Talking about their encounter, Enkelejd plays around the phrase ‘not-looking-Albanian’ – which we have seen being commonly used by Italians towards Albanians, here used to refer to Irene and to stress her ‘out-of-placeness’.

Enkelejd: We met – even this will be interesting for you, since it’s nice – at the Albanian independence festival.

Rachele: *Ah! Ok, ok!*

Irene: [...] a university party organised by Albanian students, but obviously open to everybody, I...

Enkelejd: Yes, yes, I saw her and I said to myself: ‘Mmh, she doesn’t look Albanian!’ [he laughs] No, I didn’t think of this [he smiles], but we met there, we’ve been living together for long time now.

Irene: Well, we basically moved in together immediately [...]

Rachele: *But were you at this festival because you already had Albanian friends?*

Irene: Yes, yes, I had Albanian friends because at the university there are many Albanian students and I had friends, especially a very close friend of mine, at that time, she was actually engaged to an Albanian guy, so we went to this party...

(Enkelejd & Irene: Albanian man and Italian woman, cohabiting)

Furthermore, we should also think of the share of Albanian university students working part-time to get extra money beyond the scholarship that they were awarded by the Italian government. Within my sample, consistent with LPS 2015 data, Albanian women pursuing third-level education outnumbered Albanian men. During their studies, they lived in student dormitories, Italian private households, with next of kin, and to a lesser extent in shared flats with other students. Many prolonged their study period, working also for turning the student-permit into a work-permit and then into a long-term

permit of stay. This also allowed family reunification with parents later on. In other cases, the student-permit was basically a way to legally emigrate for work and studies were soon interrupted, especially among men. Workplaces – mostly cafés, pizzerias, pubs, restaurants – have thus been common meeting points. Particularly interesting is the case in which these encounters involved Albanian female university students working part-time and Italian full-time male workers (as in the case of Floriana and Alberto), as they would also present class differentials – which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Alberto: I had actually come to Florence to work in that place [...] She was working there [...]

Floriana: We worked together for a year, almost a year...

Alberto: I told her immediately: 'You will be my wife'

Rachele: *From the beginning?!*

Floriana: Yes, he said it that way. I told him: 'How dare you?!' [...] We were working, then at the end of the evening we had our first argument, because he made a joke: 'You're too serious, you can't be that way in this job!' and I said: 'How dare you?!' he was laughing, carrying on (making jokes), I was annoyed, but I was also a bit attracted to him...

Alberto: So, I told her: 'You will be my wife!'

Rachele: *That way...*

Alberto: Yes.

Floriana: That remains to be seen! [she laughs]

(Floriana & Alberto: Albanian woman and Italian man, cohabiting)

Differently from educational settings where an atmosphere of tolerance and equality is deemed to have a positive effect on intergroup relations, workplace and neighbourhood are not considered to significantly influence attitudes and behaviours (Johnson and Jacobson 2005). This is because, while intergroup contacts depend on opportunities, intergroup relations are more influenced by preferences (Savelkoul et al. 2014). It follows that manual workers are likely to experience intergroup contact at work without developing close relationships, for instance. However, while workplace relationships have been mainly studied in terms of minority-majority relations, some authors have shown the existence of 'everyday cosmopolitanism' also within the immigrant working class, thanks to a shared foreign status (Moroşanu 2013). This may lead to romantic encounters too, as in the story of Kevin (Albanian), who is now engaged to an Italian woman but who also recalled some previous flirtation with a Romanian woman with whom he had been working in a greenhouse. Moreover, for both Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples, workplaces represented favourable environments also beyond co-worker relations; in some cases, in fact, future partners

met in the workplace of one of them only, performing complementary roles such as (female) barista/cashier/shop-assistant and (male) customer. Also when the workplace itself does not directly foster romantic encounters – due to its gendered dimension – it may still create some familiarity with the ‘other’, as shown in the next chapter about the building industry as a linguistic environment.

Besides workplaces, also neighbourhoods may offer the opportunity for intergroup contact. Research on intermarriage from a spatial perspective suggests that neighbourhood diversity and premarital residential proximity lie at the basis of intergroup relations leading to partnership too (Ellis et al. 2006). In the following quote, Ariana recalls the beginning of her relationship with Pietro. Earlier in the interview, Pietro has described neighbourliness as an exchange of favours, remembering a time when all doors were open and neighbours would lay a long table in the courtyard for dinners in summer evenings. This nostalgia permeates his lifestyle: an Albanian traditional engagement, an early marriage, and virilocality. Moreover, in this case, both the Albanian and Italian families live in the same staircase, reproducing the same residential pattern – consisting of two young couples (Ariana and Pietro, her brother and his Albanian marriage migrant wife-to-be) and the parents of the male partner living together.

Ariana: Actually, everything started when we moved here, we were painting the house [...] One day his parents came downstairs, with a plant, and told us: ‘If you need any help, let us know’...something like that...thence everything started, I was looking for a job, his mother needed a haircut, I came upstairs, I cut her hair, so everything started that way, more or less...

(Ariana & Pietro: Albanian woman and Italian man, married)

As Bozon and Héran (1989) noted, with reference to meeting-places in France, while the neighbourhood lost its relevance by the end of the 20th century, leisure time activities have instead acquired great importance. Participants also met in leisure venues and sporting events. Engaging in leisure activities is positively associated with immigrants’ acculturation – although we could also look at this also the other way around – as leisure activities would provide the opportunity to interact, improve mutual understanding, enhance language/cross-cultural skills, and reduce social distance (Kim et al. 2016). In the next quotation, Ioana talks about the meeting with her future husband in a restaurant; an atmosphere of celebration – her name-day, a victory of his team (he was playing basketball in the local team) – two groups of youngsters in the province.

Ioana: We met when I was celebrating my name-day [...] I was in a restaurant with my girlfriends and on the other side of the restaurant there was this long table with all his friends, they were celebrating something, all the team, I don't know, and he, together with the others, said: 'Why don't you join us and we party together?' since we were there as well, that's it. For two months he was wooing me, asking for my phone number [...] I used to get home late and I would find him on my own doorstep, in his car, with flowers, sweets...

(Ioana: Romanian woman married to an Albanian man, two children)

Another meeting point was related to the church. This concerned mainly Albanians who had converted to Catholicism but also some Catholic Albanians partnering Italians. Choirs, masses, parishes, and pilgrimages were opportunities to meet. In this case, as in that of universities, the environment itself works as a frame, able to define the whole encounter and establish the common ground onto which the partnership itself will be built. The absence of an Albanian religious community also led participants to approach local churches, networking with Italian church-goers. The church played a major role in Rozalba's migration trajectory, from arrival to settlement. She is heavily involved in religious volunteering and in the difficult organisation of an Albanian Catholic community. Here, she describes her meeting with Federico.

Rozalba: At the mass...I entered by chance, I was waiting for a friend of mine, she was late, so I said to myself: 'Meantime, I'll go to the mass' [...] I liked the church and I said to myself: 'On Sunday I'll come back here, to attend the mass and have a walk'. Then, I entered the church and he also entered, thence...he actually asked me to read (the Bible): 'No, because I'm a foreigner, I can't read well (in Italian)' so I didn't. Then, he told me: 'See you next Sunday'.

(Rozalba & Federico: Albanian woman and Italian man, married, one child)

Interestingly, a few encounters happened within the frame of migration itself: around the police headquarter (*Questura*) where Liliana went to collect her permit of stay; in an internet café, where Bekim used to call home.

Liliana: That day I went to renew my permit of stay, I (was) at the traffic light, with my bike, in a rush to take it, he (was) with his motorbike, obviously nobody in the street, a girl, a boy. This guy followed me...

Massimo: Come on! 'This guy followed me'! [everybody laughs] [...] She was following me!

Liliana: You had to turn!

Massimo: You were following me, I was on my way! [everybody laughs]

Liliana: He had to turn right, I had to go straight, well, I don't know what we said to each other at that very moment...

Massimo: It must have been love at first sight...

Liliana: I don't know, he made some jokes [she laughs] [...] he asked me my phone number, he didn't have anything to write it down, I said it was destiny, I'm not fatalist, I don't believe in destiny, but...anyway, he asked me my phone number, I said to myself:

‘Let’s give him the right one [...] because, anyway, without writing it down...and he remembered!

(Liliana & Massimo: Albanian woman and Italian man, married, two children)

Bekim: During my break, my daily break, I used to go to speak to my family, because there weren’t...I mean, there were mobiles but it was cheaper from there, there weren’t these deals that there are today, I went to an internet café, there a friend of hers was working, she used to visit her (friend) quite often and there I saw her [...] I don’t know, it was something that had to happen, I didn’t go there thinking I would have found her, who knows...

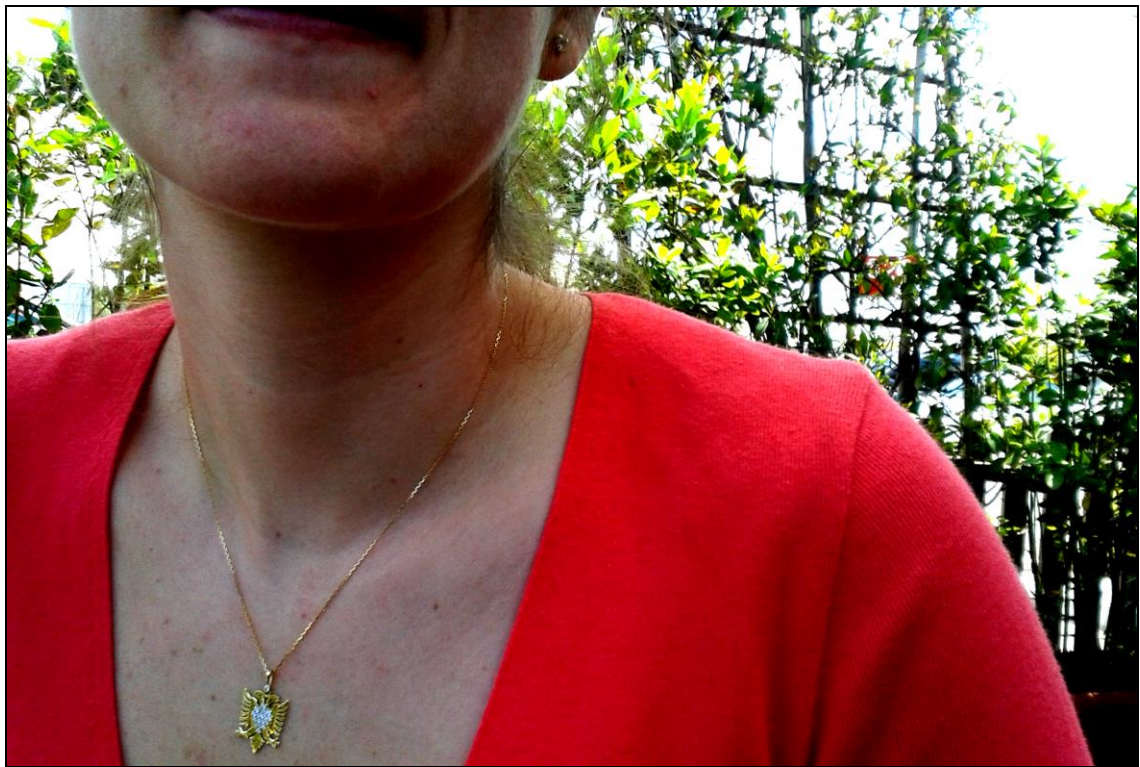
(Bekim & Alina: Albanian man and Romanian woman, married, one child)

Lastly, Facebook. Although social media have become an increasingly common meeting-place (see Peruzzi 2008), only few couples met through Facebook. This meant through common Facebook friends or through Facebook pages about their place of residency and even about Albania. Upon the suggestion of some gatekeepers, I also joined some of these pages, specially those divulging information about Albania for Italians who are considering the possibilities of travelling and/or moving there for good. Nadia and Kevin met online, then offline, and finally decided to move in together. The Facebook encounter followed an interest in Albania that Nadia had already developed having Albanian neighbours and co-workers, studying Albanian language and literature at university (in times of economic crisis in Italy, having lost her job and thinking of moving to Albania), and having had an Albanian former boyfriend who she had also met online. The Facebook encounter anticipated a sort of ‘love migration’ leading Nadia from Southern Italy to Tuscany – like Federica, who met Dritan through a common Facebook friend, her university colleague in Italy and his acquaintance from Albania, and moved in her case from Northern Italy to Florence.

Nadia: Well, I just give you a quick insight, in another blog – not my own blog – I’m a co-administrator, a multilingual (blog), people give language classes and the administrator of the blog was looking for Balkan languages (tutors) and I proposed myself for Albanian [...] At that time it was only a ‘professional’ exchange, I used to contact him once per week because he was doing me the favour of revising my notes before publication (online)...

(Kevin & Nadia: Albanian man and Italian woman, cohabiting)

Figure 24. Romanian woman, Albanian necklace



6.1.2 The encounter with the partner's family and between the two families

The second turning point in couple formation consists of the encounter with the family. Generally speaking, the encounter with the Italian family happened a few months after the beginning of the relationship, which could be interpreted either as a sign of openness or as a strategy to verify stereotypes. The encounter with the Albanian family, even when this resides in Italy, was commonly postponed for longer. This delay concerned both Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples. Also the Romanian family was often met before the Albanian one, regardless of their residency – in fact, it was especially common to meet Romanian mothers during their visits to Italy, which were sometimes related to temporary jobs in private households. The reason usually put forward for explaining this delay is the official character of engagement in Albania. While this could be understood in terms of morality, among Albanian women; it was rather linked with filial duties, among Albanian men. Meeting the family thus represented the officialisation of a relationship to be finalised by marriage and family formation.

Massimiliano: We went on a Sunday, really stressed out, because for an Albanian girl...

Dorina: Yes, also because I hadn't said anything...

Rachele: Anything like?

Massimiliano: Because she had never introduced anybody...

Dorina: But I hadn't even said anything...anyway, my mum always wanted to see me together with...with...

Massimiliano: No, it went this way, she got to know that you had an Italian boyfriend [...] it was obviously because of the photos on Facebook [...]

Dorina: Yes, yes, that's true, they had seen the photos and...

Massimiliano: [...] but they didn't take it badly, did they?

Dorina: No, gosh, they were really happy, they were actually worried, you know, a 30-year-old daughter...

(Dorina & Massimiliano: Albanian woman and Italian man, cohabiting)

Bekim: She told me: 'Why didn't you bring that girl here, because I've heard you have one' 'No, mum' I told her: 'Don't listen to them (=his siblings), I don't have any girlfriend' because I wasn't sure how we would have ended up, she and I...she told me: 'I know you have one' then she said: 'But I tell you, don't joke with her, either you let her go or if you think it (seriously)...don't joke with her' because she used to think with that mentality there: 'Mum, I don't joke with anybody' if we're together we're together, if we don't get along with each other any longer we break up and that's it, it's not a tragedy like in Albania: 'She was left, she remained (alone), nobody wants her now!'. [he laughs]

Alina: Well, for me it's the same, I understand her because she said that with a woman's kindness: 'Don't joke with her, don't treat her badly, remember you also have a sister, treat her as if she was your sister'...

(Bekim & Alina: Albanian man and Romanian woman, married, one child)

In both Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples, Albanian men were often uncertain about their foreign partner. This could be explained by the fact that while daughters are considered to leave the family of origin – they are 'lost' by their family of origin and 'gained' by the family of the husband (Vullnetari 2012a) – sons would instead remain. Therefore, the preference for an Albanian wife should be seen not only as the preference of the man, but also as the preference of his family of origin. However, such expectations in terms of marriage do not hinder premarital relationships, which among men are instead acceptable and mainly concern non-Albanian women, due to the different benchmark against which Albanian and non-Albanian women are judged. As a consequence, many partnerships with Italian and Romanian women commenced without 'serious intentions', although some continued and eventually resulted in family formation. Conformity to norms and respect towards elderly kin sometimes led Albanian men not only to deny these partnerships, but also not to impede alternative arrangements. In fact, although arranged marriages are deemed to have become less and less common, they were still present in the stories of participants. Referring to (Albanian) Kosovars in the UK, Kostovicova and Prestreshi (2003) noted how arranged marriages are preferred also because of the subordination of a co-ethnic marriage migrant woman, as opposed to host-society women – even when these latter are co-ethnics. In fact, the integration achievements of primary/secondary migrant

women and above all the lack of social control over them, ensured by the environment, would make them less marriageable. Besides criticising this custom and showing empathy towards the women who were involved in these arrangements and ended up eventually rejected ('I was a bit upset too, putting myself in that poor girl's shoes' – Ionela says), participants often criticised the indecisiveness of their male partners, their lack of resolution and unwillingness to contradict what had been agreed without their consensus. Below, Ionela explains what she would have expected from her partner and did not happen. In fact, instead of openly opposing his father, he preferred to interrupt his home-visit and suddenly return to Italy.

Ionela: I couldn't swallow this for a long time and still nowadays, when I'm speaking of it, I don't understand, because I'll never be able to understand a situation like that. Sorry about that but you (=her father-in-law) didn't do anything for me (=her partner), I escaped as a kid, I grew up alone, I lived...I lived as I could, trying to get by, right, what do you want from me now? Why should I be displeased in telling you: 'No, I don't want' or 'I want to live my life as I want'?

(Ionela: Romanian woman married to an Albanian man, three children)

Also with reference to Turkish migrants in Europe, authors have shown that different family models coexist in the same society and that more traditional families are usually larger, of rural origin, and lower social status; among these families, arranged marriages are more likely to take place (Huschek et al. 2012). Generally, those Albanians coming from smaller size families of urban origin and with higher social status distanced themselves from this custom, which was judged as a sign of backwardness. This was strongly condemned also by Romanian women, who would hint at the modernity of Romania as opposed to the backwardness of Albania in this way: 'This doesn't happen among us, not even my parents experienced something like that' – Ionela says. Therefore, the choice of a female partner often took place at the intersection between two opposite viewpoints; on the one hand, an introjected collectivism according to which marriage is primarily a kinship alliance (Saltmarshe 2001; see also Huijnk et al. 2010) and, on the other hand, personal aspirations to individualism – one of the reasons which Mai (2004) actually identified as the basis of the Albanian migration. Also the adventurous character of many of these stories tells us something about these aspirations to individualism, about modernity as self-realisation, and about the assumption of romantic love as the foundation of modern marriages (Mai and King 2009). This opposition between arranged and love marriage is also evident in the account of Simona, who speaks of what made their 'troubled romance' unique and was

instead lacking in the official engagement back in Albania: ‘With this virgin who was younger and more beautiful than me, for instance, [...] basically he found himself having nothing in common, he missed the spice of our (relationship)’. Bekim, instead, after having tried to find an Albanian fiancée through his kin, asked himself: ‘Should I leave Alina, because she’s not Albanian and everything else is right, to take somebody who has nothing right but is Albanian?’. Interestingly, in the account of Bekim, we also have a male viewpoint on arranged marriages: ‘There (=in Albania) they have the bad habit of looking at your success, at your savings, at what you own, I mean, when you get to speak to a woman, she doesn’t look at you as a person, first she gets some info about what you bought’. Another male participant, Bledar, describes the havoc caused by his rejection to let his kin find him a spouse: ‘If I had been listening to them, I would have been given a wife already when I was 20 and nowadays I would have 5-6-7 children and only God knows!’.

While Romanian women spoke of these arrangements in cultural terms⁶²; some Italian participants also linked them with migration. Nadia, for example, identified a parallelism with the encounter, engagement, and marriage of her parents in the space of a few weeks in Southern Italy, followed by their reunification in Germany, where she was born. Also the tradition of official engagement was interpreted in two different ways by Italian and Romanian partners, whose families accepted to take part in it. In the account of Denada, her partner and his parents compared this Albanian custom to traditions which are now lost in Italy but once were present; in the second account, both Mădălina and her mother remark on how they simply ‘went along’ with something that for them was extraneous.

Denada: He told me: ‘[...] to me nothing will change, either doing the engagement party or not, anyway this is something that for you is important, let’s respect the traditions’ [...] He agreed, I mean, maybe here it’s something people don’t do, but if I understood correctly, it used to be done before...since his parents are rather old, let’s say, they said that this is something they also used to do long ago...
(Denada: Albanian woman engaged to an Italian man)

⁶² I believe that my own positionality played a role in this. In fact, while some Romanian women presented themselves as sort of anthropologists, explaining in detail what they perceived as different and even inferior among their Albanian male partners, by virtue of our common gender and EU status; some Italian women would rather keep a distance between us and carefully control their own interview performance. Although I tried to meet some of them more times, in order to overcome this barrier, subsequent encounters did not always result in greater confidence.

Rachele: *Do you remember the official meeting with his family, I mean, if it happened, did you go alone, with your mum...?*

Mădălina: No, with my family. My dad was there...who was there? [she looks at her mother] My uncle, my granny, my cousin...

Rachele: *(Was) this because they had asked for it or did you decide that way?*

Mădălina: No, because we followed his tradition, exchanging the rings in front of everybody, it wasn't our idea...

(Mădălina: Romanian woman married to an Albanian man)

However, it should also be said that this kind of official engagement occurred only among very few participants. In fact, having a foreign partner allowed the Albanian participant to skip several traditions, as Simona notes: 'They have some traditions they have to respect, with me he had a bit evaded this'. Also Valbona bitterly remarks: 'He hasn't seen the real culture, how it's (really) done, because it changes from one city to another, and from the city to the countryside up to the mountains, in the mountains it's completely different! But absolutely, it's a tradition, the man has to introduce himself to the family (of the woman)'. Following this tradition, Selma and Cosimo, together with her uncle and a friend of his, left one day for Albania, in order to meet her parents ('I didn't want my parents to come for meeting him, I wanted him to go first, it would have been nicer towards my parents' – Selma says).

It is now important to unpick the format of the encounter with the partner's family and between the two families and its venue, besides the official engagement described above. Referring to this, Valbona also distinguishes between the meeting in Italy and the meeting in Albania, where her parents could perform a more traditional hospitality: 'There it was completely different, he was immediately made part of the family'. Erion instead remembers, with a smile, the first time his wife met his family in Albania.

Rachele: *And how was the meeting with the relatives, do you remember anything?*

Erion: Nice, nice...a festival, a festival, a festival, a festival. They were waiting for her. It looked like Queen Elizabeth had come, d'you know what I mean? I mean, we are a family, maybe other families are also like that, but as far as my family is concerned, we're really sociable, I mean, they were inviting us, maybe even too much...for an Italian, going there may be a bit annoying, you go there, you have to eat, you have to visit all, a lot...if you go there, you have to go visiting, it's called that way, you have to go visiting other relatives, it's a tradition. At the beginning, my wife didn't like it, at the end she liked everything but these visits, a bit formal...

(Erion: Albanian man married to an Italian woman, one child)

While just a few women provided details about these first encounters – referring to the gifts received from the Albanian family (jewels, watches, etc.); several participants remembered instead the visits to the various Albanian relatives, characterised by coffee, money, and sweets. De Rapper (1998) also noted the formal structure of these visits,

their sequence and order – I will come back to this topic when referring to the figure of the foreign daughter-in-law, later in this chapter.

Rozalba: Then we went for visiting...

Federico: They also came to visit us [...] and we had to take this *grappa*⁶³...

Rozalba: Yes...[she laughs]

Federico: The coffee, the *grappa*, they would put money under the plate...I was a bit puzzled...because sometimes somebody would whip some money out and put it under the coffee cup...

Rozalba: It's a custom, when they come and visit you, when you get married, for the engagement...and you go to Albania...now it has changed, they put it in an envelope there as well [she laughs], they became modern, but before that they would put...you would give them coffee and they would leave you something like 10 euros, 5 euros in lekë⁶⁴ [...] under the cup...

(Rozalba & Federico: Albanian woman and Italian man, married, one child)

The encounter with the Albanian family has often taken place within the frame of a journey through Greece or former Yugoslavia. The journey itself could be seen as an experience of identity formation and transition to adulthood, symbolically mirroring the journey taken years earlier by the foreign partner – here Gerta, who left Albania just after the secondary school and went back with Giacomo at the end of their university career in order to make their partnership official.

Rachele: *How was your encounter with her parents?*

Giacomo: Eh, really pleasant, for two reasons. First, because I had the opportunity to think about it during this journey. Second, because it happened within the frame of a journey itself, namely with the appeal of a journey into a new country...

Gerta: The first time in Albania...[she laughs]

Giacomo: I already identified myself with some values, some traditions, some stories. So, it was nice from a personal as well as a cultural point of view, let's say. It worked out well. Her parents really welcomed me, I mean, I didn't expect such a treatment, not because I had prejudices, but because I have seen the relationship between my brother-in-law (=the Italian partner of his sister) and my father...

(Gerta & Giacomo: Albanian woman and Italian man, married, one child)

The character of rite of passage of this journey is further stressed by the presence of proofs of masculinity (mainly about eating meat and drinking alcohol), which some participants accepted to perform so as to be considered part of the new family and of the outgroup more in general (“‘You’re one of us’ they would tell him’ – Gerta says about Giacomo, laughing; or ‘Are you sure you’re Italian?’ Ariana’s kin would ask Pietro). Similar experiences are mentioned in Romania, where Roland and his father-in-law met.

⁶³ Here the term ‘*grappa*’, which indicates the Italian alcohol made of grape residual, stands for ‘*raki*’, the Albanian alcohol, although this is not distilled from grapes only.

⁶⁴ Albanian currency.

Roland: They (=Romanians) drink so much! Look, we (=Albanians) also drink, but they drink like fish over there, they have the guts...

Adriana: In fact, my dad immediately: 'Ah, come, come!' whipped the vodka out. I (said): 'Dad, don't give him that stuff, he's not used to!'

Roland: That vodka, oh my, in plastic bottles, rubbish, oh my God, like fire! Fire!

Adriana: I said: 'Dad!' 'What do you want? Leave me alone with my son-in-law!' and I looked at him desperately and he...[she makes an expression of dread]

Roland: What you wouldn't do! [...] I like *grappa*, I like wine anyway, but that's a whole other thing!

(Roland & Adriana: Albanian man and Romanian woman, married, two children)

Turning back to the encounter with the family of the partner, when some Albanian relatives already reside in Italy, usually this encounter preceded the official meeting with the family. Especially in the case of young women, an uncle, cousin, or brother would be the first to meet the male partner. Again Giacomo remembers his first encounter with Gerta's uncle: 'I got so drunk [...] She left us alone, her uncle and me. After one hour she came back, we were hugging each other!'. This figure of 'moral guardian' plays an important role also in the meeting with the Albanian family, not only because of his male authority but also because of his bilingualism. In the absence of this mediator, Italian and Romanian participants often referred to the 'broker' role of children and women in the extended family, who were able to speak Italian thanks to the television and in spite of living in Albania. The Italian language has been the *lingua franca* between the two partners and between the two families also among Albanian-Romanian couples. In the next quote, Ionela describes the encounter between the two families, in which the Albanian tradition of asking for a bride is performed not only in her hometown in Romania but also in the Italian language.

Rachele: *Did also his brothers come?*

Ionela: Yes. 'We want your daughter!' My mum told them: 'But what do you want?! He got her long time ago!' [she laughs] [...] There, my mum was funny [...]

Rachele: *But in what language all this?*

Ionela: In Italian [...] They speak Italian perfectly [...] The first time I went to their place it was amazing, I didn't even expect I could communicate, whereas his sisters were able to speak (Italian) better than me! Really!

(Ionela: Romanian woman married to an Albanian man, three children)

Besides being inserted within a journey, the encounter with the partner's family also corresponded to graduations; the joyful atmosphere contributed to mediate the first impact and impose education as the primary identificational category and commonality within the couple also to an external vision. Here, Arjan speaks about the meeting between the two families.

Arjan: The first meeting was at my graduation [...] it was cordial, jovial, at that moment I had already known my wife's parents for 3-4 years, so I was one of the family, I could say, and they were proud, if I may say so, of me and of what was going on, of how everything had gone, so everybody was happy, my parents too, it was a nice moment of sharing, of celebration, towards myself.

(Arjan: Albanian man married to an Italian woman, two children)

The importance of the encounter with the Albanian family was instead countered by the informality of that with the Italian family. Floriana, for instance, did not hide her disappointment, talking about her first meeting with her future mother-in-law: 'In Albania, when a son, a daughter, takes home a person, the parents take it seriously, really, to give you an example, they wash the curtains, change the bed linen, the sofa covers, put everything as if it was a wedding, here instead it's not a big deal, it seems something normal'. Or Dorina: 'His mum disappeared immediately. His dad, who is much more talkative, much more easy-going, stayed there, chatting and so on [...] I think we were speaking (about it) one week ago (and his mum) said: 'No, I couldn't bear it any more, every time he was bringing home a new one!'. Moreover, in a few cases, not only disappointments but also misunderstandings occurred, either during the meeting with the partner's family or between the two families, as in the account of Adisa and Samuele.

Samuele: Then, we decided to have a religious marriage, in the church [...] her dad, who until that moment had only seen my parents in pictures, expressed the wish...rightly enough said: 'I'd like to meet his parents' [...] but this open mentality on their side and that close mentality on my side caused a conflict, due to some questions...

Adisa:...misunderstandings, questions, indeed, questions like: 'What kind of house do you have?' 'How many storeys?' 'How many metres square?' 'How much do you pay the bank?' for us (=Albanians) this means knowing, knowing another country, another life-style, the life on the other side of the sea, it's not for meddling in someone's affairs, but for understanding what kind of life [...] this created some confusion, leading then to misunderstandings after misunderstandings [...]

Rachele: *And then?*

Samuele: Then, it didn't get straight any longer, let's say.

(Adisa & Samuele: Albanian woman and Italian man, married, one child)

6.1.3 The wedding

Moving on now to the marriage, this happened either in the town hall or in the church – or it did not happen at all, and we will see also this possibility – and consisted of one wedding party, two parties, or no party. The marriage between Albanian and Italian partners took place mostly in Italy, whereas the marriage between Albanian and Romanian partners happened in Albania, Italy, or Romania. The relatively small size of the Albanian-Romanian sample does not allow the identification of a more common

practice. Marriages mainly occurred in town halls, which depended not only on the different religions of the partners, but also on an increasing secularism. In fact, religious marriages in Italy have been steadily decreasing – corresponding to 56.9% of all marriages in 2014, according to ISTAT data. However, while 63.3% of marriages between two Italian citizens were celebrated in the church, only 14.5% of marriages with a foreign bride and 17.8% of marriages with a foreign groom were – and 9.1% of marriages between foreigners with same or different citizenship. In Tuscany, civil marriages outnumber religious marriages (6,913 vs 4,717 marriages in 2014). To get married in the church, participants who were not baptised had to attend catechism classes. While some Albanian participants decided to get baptised during their adolescence either before or after migration, a few participants were baptised instrumentally to prepare for a religious marriage. This mainly concerned Albanian women who were baptised Catholic in Italy and a (very) few Albanian men who were baptised Orthodox in Romania. In these cases, the baptism was rather related to the desire of the Italian/Romanian partner to get married in the church – especially because of the family of origin – but also to the willingness of the Albanian partner to have a ‘beautiful’ wedding, as shown in the quotation below. Tina comes from a Muslim-Orthodox marriage, whereas Fabrizio is originally Catholic, although both define themselves as atheist.

Tina: Well, first of all, we got married in the town hall, because he didn’t want it in the church, although I wanted [...]

Fabrizio: Sometimes men rule [everybody laughs] [...]

Tina: A bit because of the scenery, I like that kind of stuff, it’s more emotional, instead he put it in a way that only believers get married in the church and so on. So, he considered it a bit superficial, but in my opinion not all those who get married in the church believe [...] So, at that point we decided to go to a beautiful town hall, so we went to Florence...

(Tina & Fabrizio: Albanian woman and Italian man, married)

The decision to get married in Florence, rather than in the town where they live, should be also associated with the development of the wedding industry in Italy, which has turned Tuscany and especially Florence into a favourite setting – also for foreign non-resident citizens – because of the landscape, art, and eno-gastronomy (Bertella 2017). The two pictures in Fieldnotes 2 (page 161), which were part of a photo-elicitation session, show an Albanian-Italian marriage taking place in the Catholic church, followed by a detail of the wedding party: an Albanian circle dance with the Tuscan hilly countryside in the background.

Fieldnotes 2. An Albanian-Italian wedding

Figures 25 and 26 portray the wedding of an Albanian-Italian couple of participants. The former picture belongs to the official wedding photo-album, which is specially focused on the couple and on the ceremony in the church – somehow stressing the couple identity and the importance of religion in its definition. The latter picture was instead part of the large amount of unofficial photos that wedding guests had taken and I could visualise on a TV screen only, since they were not printed.

Having a look at the pictures, I listened to the participant giving me a detailed account of her wedding. The mass was partly in Italian, partly in Albanian – both the readings and the chants. An Albanian girlfriend, one of the marriage witnesses, had proposed also Albanian music for the party. She started the dances, together with one sister of hers – who I had also met. Albanian relatives and friends followed the handkerchief, forming a circle. It was the first time for the Italian wedding guests, who also joined the dance, but it was the first time also for bride, who had only watched Albanian dances in videos until then.

Figure 25. Albanian-Italian wedding in a Catholic church



Figure 26. Italian bride and Albanian circle dance



The story of Roland and Adriana, who got married in her hometown in Transylvania in the late 1990s, shows instead how, for mixed couples, marriage may be also the way to cohabit and overcome legal barriers and border controls. After her visa had expired, Adriana went back to Romania. They tried a long-distance relationship in times of hand-written letters. After marriage, Adriana re-entered Italy through family reunification with Roland⁶⁵. This is about their marriage in both the town hall and Orthodox church.

Roland: I did everything the same day, I got baptised, I got married, she made me a saint! [he laughs] [...] and I didn't understand anything, anything!

Adriana: Yes, also in the town hall they told us: 'Ah, but if you are a foreign citizen, by law you would need an interpreter during the marriage...'

Roland: I had. [he looks at her]

Adriana: '....but how can we find an interpreter of Albanian?! We can't. Do you know any other language?' 'Italian' 'Eh, maybe an interpreter of Italian...' but we said: 'Hey, how much will it cost us?!' So, he declared he could understand Romanian and signed.

Roland: Yes.

Adriana: So, although now he tries to tell me: 'Ah, but I...'

Roland: [...] I could question the marriage by saying I didn't understand anything!

Adriana: Anyway you signed, so no there's no way out anymore!

(Roland & Adriana: Albanian man and Romanian woman, married, two children)

Besides the bureaucratic aspects of intermarrying like *nulla osta*, certified translations, and multiple wedding banns, intermarriage is not publicly controlled in Italy, differently from other European countries (see Kringelbach 2013 about France). Moreover, in Romania, there are also medical tests which spouses need to pass in order to get married. Interestingly, this point encourage us to reflect on the fact that states are not only about controlling territories, but also bodies.

Adriana: I think still nowadays you need lots of medical analyses before getting married [...] chest X-ray – I think for tuberculosis – blood test, urine test [...] something about sexually transmitted diseases [...] we had to do a psychological interview...I mean, they really wanted to make sure that two people who get married are healthy and, if not, they should know there might be problems, I don't know, maybe they think about reproductive health...

(Roland & Adriana: Albanian man and Romanian woman, married, two children)

The marriage was celebrated in the church in all those cases in which both Albanian and Italian partners were practising Catholics – none of the Albanian-Romanian couples was composed of two practising Orthodox partners. It is also important to mention the role of the Catholic church in the reception of unaccompanied minors and integration of

⁶⁵ In another case, instead, the legalisation of the Albanian partner happened thanks to the marriage to the Romanian one.

immigrants also beyond their religious affiliation and conversion, as experienced by some participants. Understanding this, Valentina decided to make the unconventional decision of getting married in the parish of the groom instead of that of the bride (as per the Italian tradition), where Artur felt to belong. Moreover, an Albanian priest, whose biography closely resembled that of Artur himself (another converted former unaccompanied minor) was appointed there.

Valentina: Father Endri married us, we were his first married couple [...] I was a bit detached from my parish and I didn't have one where I really wanted to get married, so...also this displeased my mother a lot [...] because usually one goes to the church of the bride and I really disappointed her also in this, I knew he was tied to this (parish), so we chose Father Endri and we came here...

(Artur & Valentina: Albanian man and Italian woman, married, two children)

The choice of an Albanian priest, who could speak both Albanian and Italian during the mass, so as to involve the two groups of wedding guests, could be associated with the subsequent decision of including Albanian elements in the wedding party, practically performing a 'mixed marriage' – in fact, the adjective 'mixed' was often used to define the wedding. Therefore, while some couples performed Albanian dances, others wore Albanian traditional clothing in order to make their wedding unique and memorable.

Tina: We also inserted something Albanian, like the traditional dances I love [...] Everybody danced.

Rachele: *'Everybody'...Italians too?*

Fabrizio: Italians too [...]

Tina: In fact, when I watched the recordings, later on: 'Look, he was dancing! Also that one!' Everybody danced, yes, it was nice to see your friends making an effort to understand (what to do) [...] Yes, I have to say they enjoyed. Several times they said: 'No, how nice! How nice the Albanian wedding, I want to see (more)'

Fabrizio: There was a lot of wine, so they enjoyed...

Tina: ...and a lot of money. In this dance they give money to the bride. When you dance with the bride, you have to give her money, but they don't give 5 euros but 50! And my friends were saying: 'No, I also want (it), I also want an Albanian wedding, I want to get married there!'

(Tina & Fabrizio: Albanian woman and Italian man, married)

Erion: I had seen hundreds of weddings, I was working in the catering service, all default weddings, always the same things: starter, main course, side dish, cake, cutting the cake...we wanted to make it a bit more special, for this reason, at the end of the evening, at the moment of cutting the cake, we dressed up with our (=Albanian) traditional clothes...

(Erion: Albanian man married to an Italian woman, one child)

Marriages abroad were opportunities for wedding guests to visit the country, creating an increasing familiarity. This was especially the case of Italian and Romanian partners

and their relatives in Albania, although it also happened among friends and co-workers. Below, Mădălina talks about her 3-day wedding in Albania, starting from the decision taken the first summer she travelled to Albania for another wedding.

Mădălina: Two years earlier, when I was in Albania for the first time, we went to a wedding, right, so to pick up some traditions myself, you know, how they do and so on. I told him: 'Hey, if it's something like that, we'll do the same, because I like it' [...] You go to take the bride, with cars, it's beautiful! He said: 'Alright, if you like it too, it's fine' so we followed his traditions.
(Mădălina: Romanian woman married to an Albanian man)

Some couples preferred having two wedding parties; one for each group of kin. This was especially common when transnational mobility was hindered by bureaucracy and transport. In fact, we should remember that Albanians can freely circulate in the Schengen area since 2011 only. Therefore, the possibilities for the Albanian kin to attend a marriage in Italy or Romania were limited, like those of the Romanian kin before 2002. In addition to this, marriages among Albanians are often made up of two different wedding parties: 'the wedding of the daughter' (*dasma e vajzës*) and the 'wedding of the son' (*dasma e djalit*), which take place on different days during the same week (De Rapper 1998). Although slightly time-deferred, the possibility of having a wedding in Italy and another in Albania, or in Italy, Albania, and/or Romania was thus interpreted as a revisitation of this tradition. The following case is especially interesting because the two parties had actually taken place in Italy – although in two different regions. The partners preferred not to mix up the weddings, and have an Italian-style plus an Albanian-style wedding for each family.

Liliana: Who pushed a lot for a religious wedding were his parents, because they said: 'A kid will be born, how can you baptise him if you're not married in the church?' and so on. So we got married in the church, here, nearby [...] His friends were there, all, almost all his relatives, a dozen of mine, a few couples of co-workers and friends of mine.

Rachele: Why?

Liliana: Because there wasn't enough space, anyway, since I have most of my relatives spread all over Italy we preferred to organise another party [...] We were about 60 people there as well, we took his aunts [...] because, obviously, as it was among Albanians, we had to do it in the Albanian way, the minimum necessary...

Massimo: ...ten relatives of mine, all the rest hers...

Rachele: What does 'in the Albanian way' mean?

Massimo: Dancing.

Liliana: Dancing, partying, dancing, partying. Albanians like toasting, roistering, at the end we even called him in (the circle). He even danced, he hates dancing...

Massimo: Yes.

Liliana: His aunts danced, yes, it was nice...

Massimo: They led us, her cousins took us from the table, took us to dance...

(Liliana & Massimo: Albanian woman and Italian man, married, two children)

Weddings also differed in size, ranging from a hundred of guests to none. Small ceremonies did not involve relatives, rather friends and above all other mixed couples. The following quotation refers to Tanja and Davide, an Albanian-Italian couple about to move to America. The decision of getting married first in the town hall and then elsewhere, in the future, implies a clear-cut distinction between marriage as bureaucracy and marriage as a family get-together. Both her sister and his best friend, who witnessed the wedding, were in Albanian-Italian couples as well.

Rachele: *Going back to the wedding, who was there? Friends, relatives?*

Davide: Her mum, her sister were there, and on my side a close friend of mine, a couple of friends, let's say, I didn't really say it to anyone from my side. I told my parents I didn't want them to come, because it was something simple, because we wanted to have a more serious wedding later on, anyway...

(Tanja & Davide: Albanian woman and Italian man, married)

Although for most couples cohabitation represented a stage preceding marriage, in some cases, participants were opposed to the institution of marriage as such. It may not be a coincidence that this was especially the case of Italian participants whose parents had divorced, or Romanian participants who were divorced from a relatively early marriage back in Romania. Referring to this, Arosio (2015) discussed the social inheritance of attitudes towards marriage, showing how children of divorced parents are more inclined towards de-ritualised marriages (if any). Despite their opposition to marriage, some couples also reflected on the importance of having their conjugal and family rights recognised. In Italy, in fact, a law regulating civil partnership entered into force only at the time of this fieldwork (June 2016). In the following quotation, Cosimo remembers the difficult birth of his child and the discovery of the limitations of cohabitation.

Cosimo: In this kind of situation you realise that you're (only) the partner, therefore you don't count at all, we (rather) needed her brother, for anything, luckily we didn't go through such a difficult situation that would have needed more difficult decisions, but in situations like that you realise that you actually don't...we live together, she's the mum of my daughter, we're...giving birth, but...you don't count [...] so we think that by getting married...it's useless to form a civil partnership, a *de facto* couple...no, we get married and that's it.

(Selma & Cosimo: Albanian woman and Italian man, cohabiting, one child)

It is thus important to note that not all marriages preceded the conception or birth of a child, as in the case of Selma and Cosimo. ISTAT reveals that, in 2014, 35% of children of mixed couples were born out of the wedlock (38% in the case of a foreign father,

33.6% in the case of a foreign mother), in contrast with 28.7% of children of Italian couples and 17% of children of foreign couples with same or different citizenship. In some cases, however, the pregnancy also brought forward the date of marriage and contributed to speeding up the parents' acceptance of the relationship.

Valentina: We had decided to get married [...] and I had already started putting it out there and my mother (was) always [she laughs] very negative about the possibility of this event. Then, I happened to get pregnant, so we anticipated the marriage and that's it, inevitably she had to accept, but has always shown some disapproval...
(Artur & Valentina: Albanian man and Italian woman, married, two children)

The decision to marry after a number of years of cohabitation and after the formation of a family was sometimes related to the decision to wait for obtaining the citizenship by residency rather than by marriage, in order to show the genuine nature of the partnership. Gloria, who still holds a work permit (which needs to be renewed every 2 years) despite the actual time spent in Italy, as a student and part-time worker, makes this point (see Djurdjević 2013).

Gloria: I have the permit of stay, but I converted it, initially I had it for studying [...] then I converted it for working, because I was working full-time, so, with that permit, I couldn't work full-time and I converted with the quota and now I could request the citizenship because I have 10 years of residency, but my incomes are lower than (threshold) [...] 'Maybe' I said 'Now, I renew it and later on when we get married maybe I get the citizenship' but I wanted to get it on my own! [she laughs] Because one could also say: 'Ah, but you may be together also because of that kind of interest!', right?!
(Gloria & Maurizio: Albanian woman and Italian man, cohabiting)

Lastly, it should also be mentioned that a few participants were not only in 'mixed families' but also in so-called 'blended families' – namely families composed of a couple and their children also from previous partnerships. In these cases, Albanian and Italian women had their children born from previous endogamic unions together with them in the new mixed family; whereas Romanian women left their children in Romania with grandmothers. The relationship with a partner who had already had a family was specially not welcomed by the family of origin of the other partner.

6.2 Cohabitation

6.2.1 Household

Most Albanian-Italian couples were living in owner-occupied houses. Especially couples with an Albanian woman were living in houses owned by the Italian family –

which usually belonged to the grandparents – and close to the parents of the Italian partner, if not together with them. Given that virilocality is a common pattern for both Albanians and Italians, among Albanian-Italian couples with an Albanian woman this produces an overlap of ethnic and gender categories – putting the majority male partner in a completely dominant position (see Benjamin and Barash 2004 about Mizrahi-Ashkenazi marriage in Israel). With reference to Arbëresh-Italian marriage, Resta (1996) noted that the custom of virilocality would promote patrilineal cultural transmission through the support of the patrilineal social networks among which the new family will be formed. While this strategy seems to have allowed the Arbëresh language to survive, it also contributes to the virtual dismissal of the Albanian language after intermarriage in the case of Albanian-Italian couples with an Albanian woman.

Albanian-Italian couples with an Albanian man had a more diverse situation, instead. In this case, the gap between ethnicity and gender – the male partner being a minority member – is adjusted through the acquisition of a dominant/equal position through a house either fully or partly bought by the Albanian man – even before the partnership. It is not a coincidence that most Albanian-Italian couples with an Albanian man took a mortgage together or were renting; whereas these two options rarely appeared among Albanian-Italian couples with an Albanian woman. Another reason for neolocality, among Albanian-Italian couples with Albanian man, was the intention of the foreign daughter-in-law to avoid virilocality, whenever the Albanian family was living nearby – as shown later in this chapter. Two quotations exemplify the patterns discussed above: virilocality of Albanian-Italian couples with an Albanian woman *vs* neolocality of Albanian-Italian couples with an Albanian man. Moreover, it is also interesting to see the link between integration (host-society) and settlement (house) in the words of participants.

Blerina: I liked his parents very much, terribly nice, my father-in-law [...] told me: ‘Where do you live?’ [...] How much do you pay?’ I told him how much I was paying [...] ‘Take your baggage and come here, the house is big enough!’ you know how my father-in-law was [...] a kind-hearted person...[she gets emotional] [...] he was really born with a Florentine DOC⁶⁶ heart [...] he (=her partner) did everything, he (registered me) as a cleaning-lady in his house, so they gave me immediately the permit of stay, then

⁶⁶ DOC indicates ‘*Denominazione di Origine Controllata*’ (literally: ‘Controlled Designation of Origin’). It is one of the quality assurance labels which designates food and beverages. The phrase ‘*Florentino DOC*’ is commonly used to indicate those who have a solid Florentine origin, also referring to the major role played by the tourism industry in Florence.

I worked...I was a cleaner for long time, with the (previous) lady I finished, that (job) was off-the-books...

(Blerina: Albanian woman married to an Italian man)

Toni: I was the first (brother to buy a house) because at that time mortgages were a bit...it was hard [...] to take a mortgage, with our money even [...] in Albania people said I was crazy, you know what I mean, because it was a big deal...but I was...I think I was one who...[...] I was quite integrated within the environment here, then I had lots of friends who helped me...

(Toni & Chiara: Albanian man and Italian woman, cohabiting, one child)

Instead, Albanian-Romanian couples were mainly living in rented accommodations and only a few in owner-occupied houses. The decision to rent rather than buy a house was not only linked with return/onward migration projects, but also with the difficulties of getting a mortgage, especially in times of recession – as in the case of some Albanian-Italian couples with an Albanian man. In the previous chapter, we saw how the precariousness of the male partner – made up of short-term and nominally part-time contracts, redundancy and unemployment – can fuel escapist fantasies. In fact, having to pay the monthly rent or mortgage instalment without a secure job and relying instead on the income of the female partner was perceived as a loss of masculinity and created some frictions, especially among Albanian-Romanian couples, who in spite of the shared immigrant status were differently exposed to the economic crisis on the basis of gender. In the following quotation, Ioana talks about her decision to settle down in Italy and put aside the idea of returning to Romania, investing not only her inheritance and savings but also the flat already bought for her return in the place where her children will be born.

Ioana: It was difficult (to buy the house), I had to sell...I had, how to say, some inheritance from my grandfather and then I sold a flat, I had bought a flat (in Romania) [...] I sold it, we couldn't buy in [neighbouring town], we bought here instead, my sister helped me a lot because I left her our family house, they took a loan from the bank and they're paying it back, because I left them all the house [...] everything, all our savings after 20 years in Italy [...] putting together the money for building our future, we didn't have other expenses, like weddings where you spend thousands (of euros), no, we only had this...our...how to say...our target was to create a family and to put a roof over our family, under this roof we feel safe...

(Ioana: Romanian woman married to an Albanian man, two children)

Conversely, Simona speaks of the lack of an agreement on the place of settlement and of the plurality of options still available, giving a sense of uncertainty to the couple and the family's future. In fact, her decision to raise her child in the city centre of Florence rather than in the place of origin of her Albanian partner did not mean her

partner giving up all his return projects, nor taking a mortgage in Italy. This uncertainty is also found in the comments of other women in Albanian-Romanian couples. In fact, while having a majority partner was perceived as a reference point (the host-society of one, the home-society of the other) and having a co-ethnic minority partner could also mean a common return project (the home-society of both); having a non-co-ethnic minority partner makes necessary an agreement, which usually coincided with a third-space (the host-society of both), in the absence of reference points.

Simona: He has a house there (=in Albania), I have a flat in Romania, my own (flat), I mean, my mum's (flat) she donated to me, let's say, here we rent, but I don't think...I don't know where we'll live, since the kid believes he's Florentine, we'll stay here, I think...he (=her partner)...he...I don't think...he still dreams of his house, he built a nice house [...] he would go back tomorrow...

(Simona: Romanian woman cohabiting with an Albanian man, one child)

On the other hand, this lack of reference points was also appreciated because of the freedom that it gives. In fact, Simona herself found in Florence a third-space, allowing her to enact her cosmopolitan orientation and 'tourist mood' – occasionally criticised by her partner, who tends to bring her back to her status of a Romanian immigrant in Italy ('You're not American!' or 'Look, the Romanian from Romania!').

Simona: The neighbourhood is really beautiful, but the house is small and as it isn't your own house you can't even invest too much in it [...] but I'm happy with it, I'm fine here, for me it's enough having a walk along the Arno⁶⁷, in the city centre, or going to the Uffizi, I feel great, I swear it, and earlier on, now with the kid a bit less, but earlier on we used to go to the countryside, discover a bridge, a church, every place you go you find something peculiar, we used to go around everywhere, every Sunday...

(Simona: Romanian woman cohabiting with an Albanian man, one child)

However, it should also be said that Florence and Tuscany are among the most expensive housing markets in Italy. As a consequence, several couples had to move to the outskirts or out into the province, in order to find affordable and sufficiently spacious houses to raise a family. Interviewing people in different environments was useful as it allowed me to compare cosmopolitan settings like Florence – where participants live among exchange students, immigrants, and tourists and where there is also more diversity when it comes to countries of origin – to the province and its coexistence of narrow-mindedness and community life. The passage from city to province is here described by Ermira, once a university student in Florence and now an employee in another Tuscan city – living in a village deep in the province.

⁶⁷ River passing through Florence.

Ermira: Here they're much more narrow-minded, much more provincial, much more...here, even at the beginning: 'What's your name?' 'Ermira' 'Eh?!' but it's not that difficult [...] (in Florence) if you introduce yourself, Albanian, you're a girl of the world, like that one from Florence, that one from Spain, from where you want...
(Emira: Albanian woman married to an Italian man, two children)

On the other hand, the province may be appreciated for various factors: safety, face-to-face relationality, and outdoor activities. Below, Roland and Adriana talk about hiking, a hobby that they discovered together and which contributed to the construction of the couple's and then family identity (Hickman-Evans et al. 2017). This hobby was not only useful for making new friends and finding a new house, but also rewarding as it made them feel part of the life in the mountain village where they had chosen to live (see 'ruralphilia' in Morén-Alegret 2008):

Roland: We started a hiking course with [association], once per week we would go to the mountains, we had some friends, we knew a couple of families, we were doing the course together, and there by word of mouth, they found this house for us [...]

Adriana: At the beginning we didn't know anybody there, it was a bit hard [...] everybody knew us, everybody knew who we were, they knew he was Albanian [...] I was Romanian [...] they knew everything about everybody [...] I would meet people saying (to the kids): 'How much have you grown up!' and I was like: 'Well...' [she makes a puzzled expression]

Roland: But it's a kind of people we get on well with, anyway, really well...

Adriana: Now we get on well, yes, also because we created a kind of friendship network, acquaintances...

(Roland & Adriana: Albanian man and Romanian woman, married, two children)

The couples living in Florence were settled in different zones, ranging from the city centre to the outskirts, from social housing to historical buildings, working-class and upper-class neighbourhoods – although in Florence and in Italy, class distinction is not strongly marked by place of residency. This means that participants with different social status might live a few metres away from each other, without necessarily knowing each other unless the children play in the local playground – about the 'broker' role of children in neighbourhoods see Schaeffer (2013). Half of the sample was living in Florence, whereas the other half was in urban/rural areas in the provinces of Florence, Pisa, Pistoia, Prato, or Arezzo – in a plurality of environments from the countryside, to the mountains, and the seaside. Although I could only sketchily explore mixedness in very rural areas, since I was relying on public transport and also because of the greater extent of suspicion that I found in the provinces, I believe that structural constraints play an important role in these environments where Albanian and Romanian immigrants are overrepresented within the immigrant population, and also present an opposite group

sex ratio. Meeting places like the rare nightclubs and discos available in the provinces, also enable encounters and interactions of groups of young Albanian men and Romanian women – interestingly, several Romanian discos and nightclubs are now including also traditional Albanian music.

As far as neighbourly relations are concerned, with the exception of those participants already living in the neighbourhood prior to the partnership, couples established some relations with their neighbours ‘from scratch’, especially when they had children (Schaeffer 2013). Some participants had Albanian or Romanian neighbours – even other Albanian-Italian/Romanian couples – although most of them were Italian. A few also mentioned other nationalities, especially when they were living in Florence centre or in areas with specific concentrations like the Chinese in Prato. Neighbourly relations were especially important when couples did not have family networks nearby, as in the case of Ioana who established strong ties with her Romanian neighbours through the first haircut of her children – a tradition which is common in both Albania and Romania and basically substituted religious ceremonies.

Ioana: We have good neighbourly relations, our neighbours come (home) often, we go out with the kids, we have Romanian neighbours who come home, let’s say that when...at the first child’s birthday we do a kind of ritual, basically the first haircut, you know what I mean, we tie them (and cut), and who does it is like a godmother, like during baptism [...] this is done both in Romania and in Albania, this thing, at the first birthday, so to say: ‘I wish you a long life’ [...] we go out for a pizza, to the restaurant, when we can, otherwise we stay at home, we have a barbecue together...

(Ioana: Romanian woman married to an Albanian man, two children)

Engaged participants were instead living with their families of origin, in student dormitories, or renting separately. Several reasons were put forward to explain this choice besides the stage of the partnership, from the cost of the rent (some partners preferred putting aside money for buying their own house later on), to the decision of finishing the university study career and maybe working at the same time (rather than being absorbed by the house-chores), up to the importance of marriage over cohabitation in terms of social status and female morality. Cohabitation was also seen as a period of trial, in which partners got to know each other better and tested the feasibility of a life together. Elvira specifically identifies the lack of premarital cohabitation as one of the reasons for her ongoing divorce, which she filed for a couple of years after marriage.

6.2.2 *House-chores*

Women were usually in charge of the house-chores, although almost all of them were also working either part-time or full-time. The breadwinner/housewife family model was usually in place among those couples with young children and no relatives nearby, and mainly involved Albanian-Italian couples with an Albanian woman. Among Albanian-Romanian couples, instead, female labour migration led to the renegotiation of gender roles also in the domestic sphere – as pointed out by Simona.

Simona: He's the male and has to be right, even if he's not, still nowadays we get into this, but he has improved, changed, a lot [...] look, I find him hanging out the laundry [...] which was unimaginable earlier on, which...by the way, downstairs, where we live, we have an Italian family [...] they both work a lot, but, in order to get along well with each other, she told me: 'My dear, do you know what we do? We have specific tasks at home. He does the laundry and I iron everything, if I cook he clears the table, if he cooks the other way around' [...] so, seeing him (=the neighbour) there, in the courtyard, hanging out the laundry, collecting it, he does it too [...] he helps me, well, he doesn't help me, we collaborate, because this is what I was trying to tell him: 'You're not helping me, it's not my task, it's not a contract where it's written I have to do this, and this, and this and sometimes you help me, no, we do everything together'.

(Simona: Romanian woman cohabiting with an Albanian man, one child)

Authors have shown that, in the context of migration, men may accept to take up some duties – especially when the couple has children and there are no grandparents around – an arrangement which they would promptly dismiss when back in the country of origin, due to the greater social control to which they are exposed (Vlase 2013; Vullnetari and King 2011). However, some degree of social control may also be present in the host-society, especially in the case of migrations based on kinship networks such as the Albanian. Bekim, for example, prefers not to invite his relatives home, since they would have the impression that in his house 'the woman rules' – referring to the smoking ban enforced by Alina and applied also to the elderly male kin, which would be perceived as a lack of respect.

Having a foreign partner also implies different and often unknown expectations from the family of origin. Some participants gathered information within their social networks in order to be up to these expectations – especially Italian and Romanian women, understanding the widespread preference for an Albanian daughter-in-law. However, two different attitudes characterised the way in which these women dealt with family expectations: the former mostly marked their outsidership and only marginally took part in practices not belonging to them, as in the words of Irene; the latter tried to become insiders and make a good impression, as in the account of Adriana about her

first time in Albania and the role of bride/daughter-in-law that she unexpectedly had to perform in front of the Albanian kin.

Enkelejd: My parents know the Italian culture quite well [...] and they don't want to impose their own, also because luckily enough my parents don't have that kind of mentality...because there are also those who unfortunately...

Irene:...and I have to say that I'm not particularly...I mean, I know the youngest daughter-in-law should serve, for example [...] but, sincerely, since it's something that doesn't belong to me, I mean: 'I'm happy to do it, but help me a bit!'

Enkelejd: So, we do it together [...] I don't know if I should say that it's 'stupid' for those girls who are engaged to these (guys), who...for pleasing them...basically you change your...your culture, let's say, your habits, for love, I mean, it's stupid also because it isn't love any longer, I wouldn't like her to make an effort to do something (just) because it's usually done in Albania...

(Enkelejd & Irene: Albanian man and Italian woman, cohabiting)

Adriana: I didn't drink coffee, I wasn't able to make it, I didn't care about coffee at all. I arrived in Albania: 'Make coffee'. What's more, I had learnt from my mother-in-law, but she drinks it quite short, I made it quite short, they sent it back to the kitchen, it was shameful to bring to the guests such a short coffee, it seems you...

Roland:...you're mean...

Adriana:...you're mean, yes, indeed [she laughs]. So, I went back. When I brought it again, I remember, oh my God, there were these relatives from your mother's side, some aunts from Tirana, I don't know who they were, these elderly ladies, scrutinising me: 'Ah, she's the foreign *nuse*⁶⁸, isn't she?' and I stumbled, I broke a cup, the coffee on the floor, let's drop it, I really got performance anxiety! Then, there are rituals for entertaining the guests when they come, you have to offer sweets first, then drinks [he looks at her, astonished] you don't know because you're a man! [she looks at him]

Roland: But you got into it, eh!

(Roland & Adriana: Albanian man and Romanian woman, married, two children)

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the youngest son – or the only son – is expected to take care of his parents. The case of Valentina is emblematic, since she rejected this custom and made Artur choose between his parents and her; as opposed to her sister-in-law, Blerina, who had accomplished her duty of bride through virilocality, going to live with her Italian in-laws and taking care of them in their old age. However, participants also noted that, although this tradition is still common in Albania, also for practical reasons, the mentality is changing and neolocality as well as premarital cohabitation and divorce are not uncommon any longer (Çaro et al. 2012).

Valentina: We should have come to live here with my in-laws, but I made it clear and, for this reason, my in-laws went away, because I said: 'If we carry on, (it will be) me and you without them'. So, they went away. Am I wrong?

Artur: No, no, you're right.

Valentina: But he didn't oppose this, therefore I'm saying that...

Artur: I chose the wife. One has to choose.

⁶⁸ '*Nuse*' in Albanian 'bride' as well as 'daughter-in-law'.

Valentina: [...] As much as I love them I couldn't have shared...

Artur: No, neither could I. I couldn't live (together) either.

(Artur & Valentina: Albanian man and Italian woman, married, two children)

The choice of Artur tells us something about changing family relations and about the increasing importance of the nuclear over the extended family among Albanian immigrants and their descendants (see Vathi 2015). Nonetheless, some Italian/Romanian women still perceived as an interference the strong ties that their Albanian partners kept with their kin, which sometimes they felt inappropriate and overwhelming.

Lastly, as a result of the various house-chores, women had less free time for themselves. While Albanian women in Albanian-Italian couples would spend this free time together with their partners (dining out, doing sport together, going to the seaside, meeting-up with couples of friends, etc.), a few women with Albanian partners criticised instead the gendered division of the free time, according to which men would go out and women stay at home, which sometimes they experienced directly or indirectly – referring to intramarried Albanian women in their social networks. In fact, not only was being seen out with the female partner sometimes perceived as non-masculine (especially back in Albania), but also the right of going out with (girl)friends needed to be negotiated by some female participants at the beginning of the partnership – as further mentioned in the next chapter.

6.2.3 Cuisine

Lévi-Strauss (1962) indicated how food can work as a sign, drawing its meaning from symbolic resources and becoming something 'good to think with'. Chytkova (2011) investigated how Romanian women in Italy negotiate their gender and migrant identity through food preparation and consumption. Oppositions between tradition/modernity and home/host-society would distinguish cuisines; showing that food is not only an ethnic marker, but also a broader domain of meaning-making. While tradition is associated with house-keeping and time-consuming slow-cooking, modernity is instead associated with female participation in the labour market and functional fast-cooking. It follows that traditional food is defined by its difficulty and elaboration (Romanian soups and Albanian pies), as opposed to modern food which is easy and quick to make (Italian pasta), as illustrated by Ionela in the next quote.

Rachele: *What do you cook? Albanian, Romanian, Italian?*

Ionela: Look, a bit of everything...the Romanian cuisine is a bit more...is a bit more difficult, because you need more time to cook, there are many kinds of soup, of stew [...] I cook Italian for convenience, because it's really much easier [...] a plate of pasta, you throw in two tomatoes, in ten minutes you're ready [...] We cook almost nothing Albanian. It's not easy. They have all these *byrek*⁶⁹, these pies [...]

Rachele: *Don't you make bakllava⁷⁰ at home?*

Ionela: No, no! Come on, you can't spend a day! [...]

Rachele: *Weren't you told: 'Come on, start making bakllava, learn how to...'*

Ionela: Yes, indeed, she (=her mother-in-law) tells me: 'Look at me, look at me! You have to do it, you'll be the one who remains doing it'. Maybe when I get old, yes, I'd like to, when I'll be a housekeeper. For sure, now that I have a day off once in a blue moon I'm not staying (at home cooking).

(Ionela: Romanian woman married to an Albanian man, three children)

Food thus conveys an opposition between traditional and modern gender roles at home and away. In most cases, both partners work and men also contribute in cooking to some extent. However, this male participation may also indicate some degree of dissatisfaction due to different food habits. Especially Italian men took up the cooking duties, becoming the 'home chefs'. This was also common when men had some work experience in the catering sector. In fact, several participants had worked or were working in restaurants, either as full-time professionals or part-time students.

Floriana: When I cook Albanian stuff he doesn't eat, for instance...

Rachele: *What (dishes) do you make?*

Alberto: Eventually she made *byrek*, I ate it, she knows I like it...

Floriana: Come on! You just took two bites, you didn't really eat! [...]

Rachele: *And what other dishes, besides byrek?*

Alberto: Referring to this I have to mark her down, because she doesn't like cooking.

Rachele: *Ah...*

Floriana: That's not true!

Alberto: That's her only flaw, to tell the truth, that is. She likes when I cook, prepare (the meal)...under this respect she's happier. It's not that she can't cook, she can. But she likes overcooked pasta, I don't like overcooked pasta...

Floriana: In Albania you don't eat *al dente*⁷¹, got it? [she looks at him]

Alberto: But the Albanian cuisine has also dishes that are close to ours (=Italian)...

(Floriana and Alberto: Albanian woman and Italian man, cohabiting)

In some cases, the mothers of the youngest Albanian and Romanian participants had already introduced the Italian cuisine at home before the partnership itself, and thanks to their participation in the Italian labour market, differentiating themselves from the housekeeper counterparts who would instead prepare only traditional food. This can be exemplified in the opposition between the mother and mother-in-law of Mădălina: the

⁶⁹ Baked filled pastry typical of Ottoman cuisine.

⁷⁰ Sweet dessert pastry typical of Ottoman cuisine.

⁷¹ Cooked until just firm.

former running a family restaurant in Italy, which occasionally combines Italian and Romanian dishes; the latter staying at home, making dairy products on her own and cooking traditional Albanian dishes which Mădălina is gradually learning. Also Alina prefers cooking Italian, not only because she has been working in exclusive restaurants around Florence for many years now, but also because her transition to adulthood coincided with migration to Italy. This point also introduces the meaning of food as an individual choice, further developed by non-conformist diets and cosmopolitan orientations. Answering my question about what food they cooked at home, some participants would also mention international cuisines such as the Chinese, Indian, and Mexican; others would refer to vegetarianism, noting how this diet would have been more difficult to implement in countries like Albania and Romania. However, rather than code-switching, cuisine is about ‘mixing’: it is not a coincidence that the adjective ‘mixed’ often emerged with reference to cooking habits too.

Besides modernity/tradition, the opposition between ‘self’ and ‘other’ via food was developed through adjectives like ‘heavy’, ‘greasy’, ‘poor’ (Albanian and Romanian cuisine) vs ‘light’, ‘healthy’, ‘rich’ (Italian cuisine). In this specific case, besides integration into the host-society food culture, we should also consider the fame of the Italian culinary tradition and its association not only with the national labour market and international tourism, but also with catering businesses brought by return migrants and Italian emigrants to Albania and Romania as well – therefore, a kind of transferable skill. On the other hand, Chytкова (2011) found that the domain of the ‘self’ was usually positively characterised by the naturalness of products along with the opposition rural/urban. This was especially the case of Albanians, whereas Romanian participants mediated the neverending quest for the taste of home through ethnic shops – also considering the fact that in Italy there are Romanian groceries, but no Albanian ones.

Food is also an emotional issue. Klodiana would drink Turkish coffee only with her sisters, remembering a time when everybody gathered to read the coffee cup – ‘It was funny, although nobody really believed’ she says, laughing. Valentina notes how despite his detachment from Albania, Artur really enjoys eating the food prepared by his mother – ‘Food is deep in the unconscious’, he replies. Food is also a bond between generations according to gender rather than ethnicity (see Moses 2015): Ionela (Romanian) will be baking *baklava* one day, Alda (Albanian) makes *pastiera*⁷² every

⁷² Neapolitan tart.

Easter, Ilaria (Italian) kneaded the dough for *byrek* together with her partner's mother: 'Mine was rubbish, hers was so beautiful and so good, but at least I tried'. Food is also a bridge between families: bakewares of *byrek* and *bakllava*, bottles of *raki*, sealed containers of home-made cheese, olive oil cans, and bundles of mountain tea (Figure 27) travel between houses and countries; whereas recipes are discussed over the phone in a more or less common language (usually Italian). On the contrary, a lack of these exchanges may draw a line of separation between family networks – as exemplified by Kevin, speaking of Nadia and laughing: 'I told her a few times: "Will you make me *bakllava*? She told me: "Go to your mum!"; whereas Chiara bakes *byrek* in a sort of competition with her sister-in-laws ('Women's stuff' – her partner says).

Rachele: *How did you start making byrek; on your own, together with some sisters-in-law?*

Chiara: With an Albanian girlfriend, because they wouldn't teach me, because I'm the nasty one, you can't teach her anything, but mine is better than theirs [...] my partner likes mine better, so I'm satisfied.

Rachele: *Have also your relatives ever eaten byrek?*

Chiara: Yes, indeed. My mum, every time she has the chance (or) invites somebody, asks me: 'Will you make me that thing that you usually make?' because she doesn't know how to call it...

(Chiara: Italian woman cohabiting with an Albanian man, one child)

Figure 27. Albanian mountain tea



When this circuit is not interrupted, food becomes a way to create familiarity; but it is also a way to get to know each other, beyond the family sphere. Giacomo, for example,

remembers having already tried Albanian dishes at the university and workplace prior to the partnership; Florinda and Thomas organise thematic dinners with her co-workers from a local NGO – all coming from different countries and all in mixed couples composed of a foreign woman and an Italian man.

The social constructedness of food as a domain of meaning-making shines through the different interpretations of social distance given by participants, marking their own and other cuisines through reciprocal similarities or dissimilarities. The Albanian cuisine is alternatively defined as Greek, Italian, or Turkish-like – rather than having its specificity recognised, especially among Italians. The Albanian and Romanian cuisines are variously defined as Eastern, Balkan, or Ottoman cuisines. These links are sometimes exemplified by similar dishes or even terms like *pastiçe-pasticcio*⁷³ (Albanian-Italian) or *çorba-ciorbă*⁷⁴ (Albanian-Romanian), for instance. It follows that partners either stress affinities or differences between the Albanian and Italian cuisines, as well as between the Albanian and the Romanian ones. In the latter case, two different hierarchies of tradition/modernity would follow through the comparison to Italy as a third pole. In fact, Albanian and Romanian dishes were sometimes seen as equally time-consuming, but differently associated with the Italian cuisine. Fatmir, for example, learnt how to cook Albanian, Italian, and Romanian dishes on his own and defines the Italian and Romanian cuisine (a plate of *carbonara*, a bowl of *ciorbă*) easier than the Albanian one – as opposed to Dana, who considers the Romanian the most difficult one, and notes how the Albanian and Italian cuisines are similarly Mediterranean, saying that this is what she cooks.

As Chytkova (2011) noted, in fact, women perform their role of carer within the couple/family, cooking food for pleasing their partner and children. In mixed couples, this also means drawing from the male partner's culinary tradition and this was common among women across the three groups. Food habits were also strongly influenced by the host-society also in minority-minority couples – who talked about eating together rather than separately (as in Albania) and at specific times of the day rather than 'randomly' (as in Romania), for example. Food habits also become an index of integration into the host-society – associated with socialisation, leisure time, consumerism, and modernity. Ionela, who has been working in the restaurant sector for about twenty years now, illustrates this point.

⁷³ Baked pasta.

⁷⁴ This term is spread in the former Ottoman Empire although it indicates slightly different soups.

Ionela: We (=Albania and Romania) are the two countries which more easily feel...with less problems, with less...we're the closest to you (=Italians), we're those who consume and spend, we're those...think of this, take a Chinese, have you ever seen a Chinese out? Have you ever seen a Chinese eating out? Have you ever seen an Indian? Think of all the Indians that are around here, all the Indians in these small (ethnic) groceries and so on...have you ever seen them eating pizza? I haven't. And here around it's full. No! Instead, we're for partying too. What's more, any opportunity is good for us to party! (Ionela: Romanian woman married to an Albanian man, three children)

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with couple formation from the first encounter between the two partners, to the encounter with the family of the partner and between the two families, moving on to weddings and life together. Besides describing the experiences of Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples from couple formation to cohabitation, the chapter has answered the questions: *what is the role of friendship and family networks in couple formation and maintenance? What intersections of ethnic and gender categories characterise these partnerships and marriages?* We have seen that friendship networks played a major role in establishing contacts and mediating between participants and various places of encounter. We have also seen that while exposure to diversity may reduce prejudice, it does not directly affect dating preferences; friendships thus become central in the creation of positive attitudes towards the outgroup, which may lead to consequent behaviours like the willingness to date across boundaries (Lőrincz 2016; Van Zantvlijet and Kalmijn 2013). As opposed to friends, who have a kind of facilitator role, family usually has an obstructive role, explicitly through sanctions via stigmatisation – which were discussed more in detail in the previous chapter – and implicitly through the intergenerational transmission of values also resulting in introjections, exemplified by the pressure to find a co-ethnic partner and especially a marriage migrant partner among Albanian men (Kostovicova and Prestreshi 2003; also Özgen 2014). We could also note that while stigmatisation also contributes to identify who should not be married, the intergenerational transmission of values rather points to whom should instead be married.

In the previous chapter we saw that stereotypes not only have an ethnic but also a gendered dimension; therefore, mixed partnerships and marriages do not have the same societal recognition, nor the same reception within the family, when they involve an outgroup man or woman. In this chapter, we have seen that intermarriage differently affects women and men, being linked with expectations of morality and filial duties. Therefore, although authors like Clycq (2014) have detected a higher level of concerns

in relation to the intermarriage of the daughters – referring to parental attitudes – their subsequent behaviour, at least in the accounts of participants (i.e. daughters and sons), introduces further aspects which need to be taken into consideration like sexuality and age. Also traditional patterns of residency and care affect the reaction of the family of origin; especially the youngest son and above all the foreign daughter-in-law were figures around which parental disapproval was concentrated, somehow embodying the social change brought about by migration within the most intimate sphere: the family. Lastly, through house-chores, we have seen that women play a central role in the domestic sphere – this point will be developed in the next chapter in relation to intergenerational transmission.

The chapter also discussed the key topic of the wedding, which rarely represents a theme *per se* in the literature on intermarriage. However, this could provide important details on the relationship between the couple and their kin and also between the two sides of the family, gathered (or not) in a ritual performance which is usually portrayed in family albums and therefore suitable for analysis through photo-elicitation. Furthermore, the theme of wedding – as well as that of cuisine – introduced the category of mixedness from inside the couple (emic), which will be further analysed in the next chapter with reference to family formation and self-identification.

MIXEDNESS THROUGH AN EMIC LENS: FAMILY FORMATION AND BEYOND

Introduction

Following the life-course approach mentioned in the previous chapter, this chapter goes on to answer the second set of research subquestions. In particular, it focuses on family formation through family identity-projects based on naming, religion, language, and citizenship. Then, it concludes with the identification of four configurations of mixedness in place among Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples – not necessarily fully aligned with the ethnic boundaries mentioned in Chapter 5. In fact, these four configurations are based on the intersection of the axes ethnic/non-ethnic and particular/universal and correspond to the categories of nationality, religion, education, and cosmopolitanism. By including couples both with and without children, the chapter also refers to the gap between potential and actual identity-projects. It also shows the importance of considering the whole context in which children's identity-projects are elaborated and put into practice, involving various degrees of parental consciousness, environmental influence, and support from social networks. Moreover, by dealing with specific types of mixing rather than with general mixedness, this study attains a deeper understanding of mixedness in mixed couples, taking into account the interplay between ethnic, gender, and class categories. This does not mean dismissing the category of ethnicity as such, but rather providing a more complex picture of mixed partnerships and marriages, considering both etic and emic viewpoints on mixedness. In fact, in Chapter 5, we saw how boundaries produced through ethnic categories imposed from outside the couple (etic) have been modified in couple interaction and how the sphere of intermarriage itself plays a transformative role, calling for a new understanding of integration as a multi-way process of social change. In this chapter, instead, we will see how boundaries between 'selves' and 'others' are negotiated inside the couple and family sphere (emic), alongside (or not) the above-mentioned ethnic divide. Lastly, by focusing on family formation we will be able to grasp key features of minority-majority *vis-à-vis* minority-minority couples, not only related to the number of naming systems, languages, religions, and citizenships involved, but also to the power relations within the couple, especially affecting attitudes and behaviours towards the identity-projects for the next generation.

7.1 Family formation

7.1.1 Naming

Edwards and Caballero (2008) analysed naming among mixed couples, distinguishing on the basis of personal taste or group affiliation and suggesting the importance of understanding this practice in a processual way, which not only takes into account the outcome – i.e. the name which is eventually chosen – but also the negotiation behind this choice. Although analysing naming practices through participants' pseudonyms is not easy, I have tried to keep the sense of the original names (national, international, religious, etc.) for both parents and children, due to their interdependence – as in the words of Naomi: 'How could I give an Albanian name to my kid, having an international name myself?'.

Since 2011, ISTAT lists the 10 most popular names which each year are given to newborn Italian citizens and to the top 4-5 groups of newborn foreign citizens in Italy (Romanian, Albanian, Moroccan, Chinese, and Indian). On the basis of my fieldwork, I understand that Albanian-Italian children would sit within the Italian group and Albanian-Romanian children within the Romanian group. This because of the EU citizenship (Italian/Romanian), which also contributes in re-shaping power relations within the couple beyond gender, as shown later in this chapter. Looking at these lists, we can see that among newborn Romanian citizens, only 1-2 out of 10-12 names could be recognised as Romanian (Alexandru and Andrei); all the others are Italian (Alessandro, Davide, Matteo, Alessia, Giulia, and Stefania) or international (David, Gabriel, Maria, Sara, and Sofia). Among newborn Albanian citizens, there are no Albanian but Italian names (Alessio, Andrea, Enea, Matteo, Mattia, Alessia, Aurora, and Martina), international (Samuel, Gabriel, Emma, Melissa, Noemi, and Sara) and English (Kevin, Noel, and Emily). Among newborn Italian citizens, the most popular names are Italian (Alessandro, Andrea, Francesco, Gabriele, Leonardo, Lorenzo, Matteo, Aurora, Giulia, Martina, and Giorgia) and to a smaller extent international (Emma, Sara, and Sofia). There are affinities, rather than differences, in the choice of names across the three groups – also for this reason, I have used the same pseudonym when there was the same name in the original.

The choice of an Italian-looking name among Romanians may be also linked with the fact that several Romanian names actually have the same spelling of the Italian ones.

In the case of female children, the Romanian custom of double naming is sometimes maintained although the names which are combined are Italian or international (Alessia-Maria, Giulia-Maria, and Sofia-Maria)⁷⁵. Instead, the tendency of giving Italian (and English) names among Albanians is not new and even preceded emigration, being associated with TV programmes from the West. Therefore, also some Albanian participants belonging to this in-between generation have Italian/English names (see Vathi 2015). In addition to this, during communism, in Albania, all religious names were banned and a list of ‘proper’ names was instead proposed (Kostallari et al. 1982). The choice of a foreign name or even a name created *ex novo* – through the combination of parental names, for instance – could also be interpreted as an opposition to a certain legacy from the past (see De Rapper 1998).

This quest for uniqueness through creative naming, among a few mixed couples, is exemplified in the following two quotations. In the former, Simona talks about her partner’s decision of adding a made-up second name to the child’s first name. While the first name looks international, it is embedded in her family tradition; while the second name looks English, it is actually made of the parents’ names. However, two names were rarely given and never for stressing dual heritage – differently from what Meintel (2002) or Edwards and Caballero (2008) found. In the latter quote, Ionela instead remembers a proposal coming from her father-in-law; the invention of a name indicating the triple identity of the child (Albanian, Romanian, and Italian) – although, in the end, they preferred an Italian name as for all the other children.

Rachele: *What about the name, what’s the kid’s name?*

Simona: Marcel. It’s a Romanian name, because it’s the name of my dad, who passed away, so everyday somehow I have him with me. By the way, my dad, my grandfather, my grand-grandfather, my grand-grand-grandfather, all were named Marcel. I should have been male myself...

Rachele: *Did he accept immediately this choice?*

Simona: Yes, sure, he accepted immediately, indeed, but...but he put some Leon, God knows what...[she laughs] [...] Everybody call him Marcel, but in order to contribute himself he also put Leon and I couldn’t say: ‘No’...

Rachele: *And where did he find this Leon?*

Simona: [...] He says that since my second name is Lenuța and he’s called Oni back in Albania, he found this Leon...

(Simona: Romanian woman cohabiting with an Albanian man, one child)

⁷⁵ Although it is not specifically Romanian, double naming is here marked as a Romanian practice as opposed to Italian and Albanian naming practices. In fact, dual names are much less frequent in Italy and uncommon in Albania – as shown also by their absence in the above-mentioned ISTAT lists.

Ionela: The (Albanian) grandfather had also chosen a couple of names. I'm still laughing at it [she laughs], look, Alitaro, something like that... 'Sorry, but from what...' 'Dad, that's not a name!' 'No, it's from Albania-Italy-Romania!' 'Come on, leave me alone!' [she laughs] [...] 'At this point I'd rather call him Thor!' [everybody laughs]
(Ionela: Romanian woman married to an Albanian man, three children)

The reaction to a unique or unusual name may however be sanctioned, either within the extended family or even by law – in order to protect the child's wellbeing (Edwards and Caballero 2008). In the following two cases, Selma and Cosimo decided to add an Italian second name, proposed by the Italian grandmother, to a first name inspired by some music listened to during one of their first encounters. Bekim and Alina opted instead for giving the child the father's name – a practice which is common in Romania, but not in Albania, nor in Italy – in order to adopt a shortening that they were not allowed to use as the first name.

Selma: I wanted a name which would have been easy to pronounce in Albanian too [...] but Rea with his surname was too RRR, so everybody shot it down [...] We told it to his parents, they didn't like the name Rea at all...

Cosimo: My mum told me: 'How will you name her?' 'Rea' 'What?!' 'Rea' 'What kind of name is that?!' [he laughs]
(Selma & Cosimo: Albanian woman and Italian man, cohabiting, one child)

Alina: Here in the hospital, after you give birth, they immediately ask you what the kid's name is. I told them: 'Look, I want my kid to be named this way' and he (=the staff member) told me: 'Madame, what kind of name is this?! A two-letter name you can't!' [...] So he wrote Bekim jr, you know what I mean, but the idea was BJ, that's it.
(Bekim & Alina: Albanian man and Romanian woman, married, one child)

The protagonist of an Italian series from the 1990s, a cartoon watched in Yugoslavian times, or a Turkish soap-opera now broadcast on Romanian television provided sources for naming among participants. Through naming, they also stressed their own independence and identity as a couple, since the transition from custom to taste could be seen as a pursuit of individualism and modernity (Edwards and Caballero 2008). Therefore, while some participants contested traditional names *tout court* as a sign of backwardness; others combined multiple names or adopted a different spelling in order to 'renew' a family name without breaking the tradition. Especially Albanian women defined Albanian names as 'old' compared to modern foreign names. The usage of international names should be understood not only as an effect of globalisation but also as a pathway to cosmopolitanism, keeping in mind the identity-projects for the children and the various expectations carried by names (academic achievements, attractiveness, employability, etc. – see Lawson 1984). Here in the words of Nevila.

Nevila: What matters is a nice modern name, poor thing, I would never give those old-fashioned Albanian names...[she laughs]

Florian: Something in between...

Nevila: I mean, no grandparents' names, to be honest I don't like that kind of stuff. Maybe a name which is nice, which could be both Romanian and Albanian...

(Nevila & Florian: Albanian woman and Romanian man, engaged)

On the other hand, giving a name after the kin may be seen as a way to strengthen bonds with one of the two family sides. Liliana, for instance, explains the choice of her daughter's name as a tie among three generations of women within a traditional household composed of two brothers, their wives, children, and parents. While Italian and Albanian women often referred to the norm of giving a family name from the grandparents on the patrilineal side – especially Albanian-Italian couples with an Albanian woman drew upon this norm – Romanian women sometimes imposed their own family side, as in the case of Simona reported above. Nadia explains this custom.

Nadia: I'd like an Albanian name too...

Kevin: Or a name which is fine both in Italian and...

Nadia: Yes, maybe...I come from a tradition, in the South of Italy, we give the grandfathers' names [...] first of all, his parents' names.

(Kevin & Nadia: Albanian man and Italian woman, cohabiting)

Moreover, common observations concerned the fact that the name has to fit with the surname and its length, but also it has to be easy to pronounce for both families. This is especially challenging among Albanian-Romanian couples, since not two but three phonetic systems are involved. Given names were usually Italian or international, in combination with Italian or Albanian surnames⁷⁶. Therefore, since names which could be recognised as Albanian/Romanian were not given and rarely figured among the options of participants without children, the foreign background was commonly stressed by the recognisability of the surname only⁷⁷. Referring to this, Arjan explains the choice of popular Italian names for his children, saying that they already have a surname which is impossible to pronounce. Talking about the patrilineal transmission of the surname, Arjan also thinks of the foreignness which this means and its inheritance.

⁷⁶ This because Albanian-Romanian couples mostly involve Romanian women and Albanian men, also in my sample.

⁷⁷ In Italy patrilineal surnames were the only option until November 2016, namely after the completion of this fieldwork. Although the possibility of a dual surname was already in place, this was never taken into account (see Meintel 2002). Moreover, in Italy, married women do not take the surname of the husband, differently from what happens in Albania and Romania. Referring to this, Adriana notes how, as a Romanian citizen, upon marriage in Romania, she changed her surname into that of her Albanian husband; whereas, at the moment of becoming Italian citizen, she had to take back her Romanian surname.

Arjan: We chose the names on our own, we tried – since they have an unpronounceable surname, poor things – to facilitate them at least with the names, making their names easier, as they will probably live in Italy [...]

Rachele: *What about their surname at school, you said ‘unpronounceable surname’...*

Arjan: Exactly [...] it’s the same with me, it’s still the same, it has always been the same, the surname gets mangled in all possible ways, rightly enough. I got used to it, I don’t know when they will get used to. For the moment it’s fine, because obviously they still identify themselves mainly in the name, when they grow up and identify also in the surname, they’ll get used to. Meantime, I try to teach them too. There are letters, there’s (especially) a letter, that an Italian hearing cannot (perceive).

(Arjan: Albanian man married to an Italian woman, two children)

Instead, Chiara explains the choice of a Florentine name highlighting belonging to a place and its cultural heritage, in addition to a recognisable Albanian surname.

Chiara: I told him ‘If you give him the surname, I give him the name’. He wanted to give him the surname, so I told him: ‘Alright, I’ll choose the name’ and I chose a Florentine name...

Chiara’s son: Niccolò.

Chiara:...thus making a strong statement...

Chiara’s son: ...and I was even born the same day as Niccolò Machiavelli!

Chiara: Yes, indeed.

Rachele: *Really?!*

Chiara’s son: Yes, on the 3rd of May.

(Chiara: Italian woman cohabiting with an Albanian man, one child)

In most cases, however, the choice of an Italian name with an Albanian surname, rather than showing the child’s dual affiliation, was seen as a way to make him/her less of a ‘foreigner’. Referring to this, we should consider that it is not a foreign name *per se* which is disadvantageous to its carrier, rather the typology of foreignness which it indicates. While Agim, for instance, notes that in a cosmopolitan space like Florence a foreign name would not seem too strange, making the example of a couple of Italian friends who gave their child a Slavic name, his partner, Letizia, tries to hint at the existence of hierarchies of foreignness, keeping in mind also the recognisability of her partner’s surname. This underestimation may be linked with the fact that Agim is originally from Kosovo, although he left the country as an adolescent, first to Albania and then to Italy. Therefore, another reference system (Albanian vs Serb) seems to be present through his words, together with a stronger ethnic identification than most of Albanian participants. It is quite telling the fact that, in the very few cases in which an ‘Albanian’ name was considered among the possibilities, this was not an actual Albanian name but a name also used in Albania (e.g. Artur, Emiliano, etc.). The following quotation clarifies this point and is perhaps the only case in which an Albanian name was supported by the Italian partner. An element which may influence

this openness could be also the high status of the family of origin of the Albanian participant and the usage of particularly meaningful Albanian names also in the generation of the participant himself.

Irene: I'd like a name, even an Albanian name which could sound well also in Italian...

Enkelejd: It also depends on the writing, I mean, you cannot name your daughter Jennifer, which in Albanian is written with /xh/ and one /n/ because at the end of the day she would be called Xenifer [everybody laughs] I mean, you have to be careful [...] I'd like (a name) which could be written and pronounced in the same way...

Irene:...both in Italian and Albanian [...] but which could be also understood that it's an Albanian name, for example, Arben, I'd like it very much...

(Enkelejd & Irene: Albanian man and Italian woman, engaged)

The social stigma which has targeted Albanians and Romanians in Italy is possibly one of the reasons at the basis of non-Albanian/Romanian names, as already shown by the choice of Italian names for Albanian and Romanian newborns⁷⁸. Although referring to another kind of stigmatisation (based on criminalisation and welfare scrounging), Fibbi et al. (2006) reported the discrimination of Kosovar job-seekers in Switzerland, on the basis of their Albanian names, for example. Moreover, with reference to social mimicry, we have also seen the tendency of Albanian immigrants, mainly male labourers in their workplace, to use Italian names – whereas this has been mostly linked with baptism in Greece (Kretsi 2005). Therefore, we could expect that parents adopting Italian names for themselves would be likely to give Italian names also to their children.

Yet, among Albanian-Italian couples, a non-Albanian name with an Italian surname may erase any trace of mixedness. In this case, the choice of an international name could represent an alternative, somehow stressing multiplicity although not clearly defining it. Valbona is aware of the fact that the name would be the only visible mark she could leave to her future children, although had not talked about this with her partner before the interview. Erion, coming from an Albanian Orthodox family and married to a Catholic Italian-Greek woman, stresses the multiple identity of his child through the choice of a Greek pagan name – they are both atheist – added to an Albanian surname which would have otherwise looked Italian.

⁷⁸ Although it falls outside the focus of this research, we could see that Moroccan citizens mainly give their children Arabic names, Indians give Indian names, whereas Chinese give Italian names – which should also be linked with the practice of dual naming among Chinese migrants, who basically give both a host-society and a Chinese name to their children, using the latter in the family sphere only (Z. Wang, personal communication).

Rachele: *Have you ever thought about names: Albanian, Italian, international?*

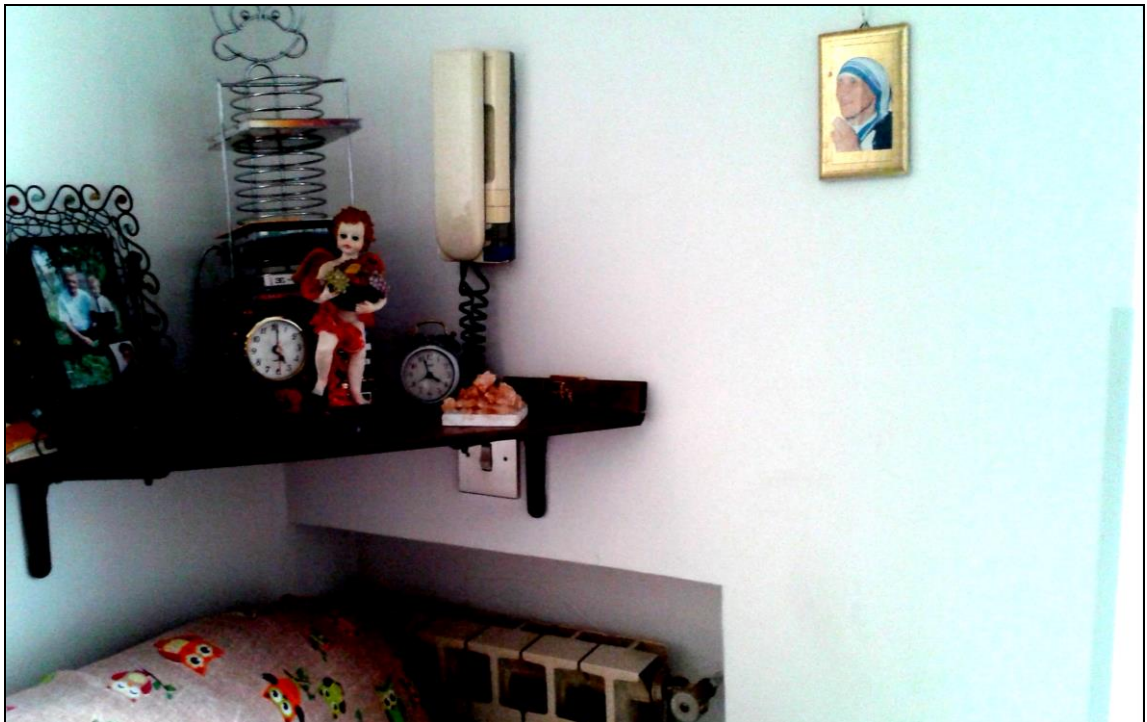
Valbona: An Albanian name, because I think we will live here, hopefully, and so on and so forth...and I'd like they (=their future children) have something from me.
(Valbona & Federico: Albanian woman and Italian man, cohabiting)

Erion: Athina, from the goddess Athina, we wanted to give her a name which could represent us. Naming her Chiara (i.e. a popular Italian name) seemed to me...seemed to me really strange, it would have seemed to me strange, whereas Athina satisfies both of us, that's it.

(Erion: Albanian man married to an Italian woman, one child)

Another symbolic resource from which partners drew upon for naming is religion. Interestingly, Mother Teresa (Figure 28) was at the origin of several children's names among Albanian-Italian couples, stressing the Albanian and Christian elements together. As Endresen (2015) noted, the beatification of Mother Teresa/Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu, ethnically Albanian and born in the Ottoman Empire⁷⁹, contributed to depict Albania as a pluralist country where a Muslim majority and a Christian minority cohabit in peace. Moreover, the figure of Mother Teresa has been progressively constructed as the 'mother of the nation' and a Westward-looking symbol in times of EU integration, Islamophobia, and de-secularisation of the Albanian state⁸⁰.

Figure 28. Picture of Mother Teresa in a (Muslim) Albanian-Italian house



⁷⁹ Mother Teresa was born in the territory of present day Macedonia, from a Kosovar-origin family which subsequently moved to Albania.

⁸⁰ Interestingly, the resurfacing of religions in the public sphere, and especially of Islam in post-post-communist Albania (Trix 1994), was rarely mentioned by participants.

7.1.2 Religion

As we have seen with reference to marriage, a few couples shared the same religious affiliation – basically Catholic Albanian-Italian couples – although most of them did not. In these latter cases, the religious affiliation of the children had to be negotiated and was subjected to a higher pressure from the families of origin than marriage itself. Therefore, although most couples did not get married in the church, they raised their children either Catholic (Albanian-Italian children) or Orthodox/Protestant (Albanian-Romanian children). Among Albanian-Italian couples, non-Catholic Albanian participants did not generally oppose baptism, religion classes at school, and catechism, associating religion with education, inclusion within a group of peers, and membership of the Italian society. Those practising Catholic (either converted or originally Catholic) even enrolled their children in religious schools. Instead, this was not so straightforward among Albanian-Romanian couples. While some couples opted for raising their children either Orthodox or Protestant, others preferred not to affiliate them to one side of the family (the Romanian one, usually after the mother), but to follow the host-society customs. Therefore, while a few Albanian-Romanian children were baptised either in Romania or in Italy, where the Romanian Orthodox church is well represented, other children were not baptised Orthodox but would attend Catholic religion classes at school. Some children were instead raised Protestant and would attend Romanian/Italian Protestant churches, although baptism may not take place during childhood.

Especially Muslim Albanians or those coming from Christian-Muslim marriages, defined themselves as ‘without religion’, ‘without a religious education’, or ‘without a religious culture’, stressing their tolerance/atheism and downplaying their Muslim affiliation, which was also scaled down by their partners (see Romania 2004). In fact, Catholic and Orthodox Albanians rarely minimised their affiliation; whereas the term ‘Muslim’ would be generally accompanied by ‘so to say’, ‘on principle’, ‘in theory’, etc. distinguishing Albanian ‘nominal’ Muslims from ‘real’ Muslims like Moroccans, Arabs, etc. This byproduct of Islamophobia should be related not only to integration into Italy (differently from the generally more problematic integration into post-Ottoman Greece, see Urso 2009), but also to EU integration (therefore to the association between Christianity, Europe, the West, and modernity – see Nixon 2010). In fact, although several participants converted upon their arrival – also due to the role played by the Catholic church in the reception of immigrants and especially unaccompanied minors and families with young children – this had also occurred independently from

migration. Erion, for example, defines the arrival of a Protestant church in a town of post-communist Albania and his instrumental decision to get baptised in the following way: ‘Albanians are xenophiles, every bullshit coming from (abroad was seen as an opportunity)’ – an opportunity to network, learn about the outer world, and facilitate migration.

Much has been written about the Islamisation of Albania within the Ottoman Empire, about ‘Albanianism’ as the Albanians’ religion, and about state-atheism in Albania⁸¹ (Young 1999); however, religion did play an important role as an ethnic category of boundary-making and was secretly present in the private sphere also during communism – as shown by the endurance of baptisms, circumcisions, feasts, pilgrimages, etc. (Lederer 1994). Kevin, for example, who comes from a Muslim-Orthodox marriage and declares himself atheist, remembers his childhood and the various religious festivals at home: ‘It’s something which remained, let’s say you belong to the Muslim part, you belong to the Orthodox part, but most of Albanians grew up (atheist) [...] my mum used to make red eggs (for Easter) and my grandparents from my dad’s side use to cook the lamb when there was some Muslim festivals, but that’s it’. This religious syncretism within the family of origin, among several Albanian participants, may also explain their openness towards intermarriage⁸².

In the following quotation, Floriana (Muslim) gives an insight into the religious pluralism and secularism of Albania to her partner and me. Floriana also mentions the educational role of religion, further developed in the words of Gerta (coming from a Muslim-Orthodox family and living in a Catholic family, as she put it) about catechism – at the time of the interview, her child was getting prepared to receive communion for the first time.

Alberto: I’m very Catholic, since I was a child. I used to go to catechism classes, to be an altar boy, and stay beside the priest on Sunday [...]

Rachele: *And what about you, what religion?*

⁸¹ Persecutions of religious people commenced with the establishment of the communist regime in 1944. In 1967, all religious buildings were closed down, demolished, or turned into storehouses, museums, etc. In 1976, Albania officially became the first atheist state in the world until 1990 (Tönnies 1982).

⁸² Apparently interreligious marriages were encouraged during communism as a mean to promote the ‘unity of the nation’ and as a result of state-atheism (De Rapper 1998). Although Tönnies (1982) reported that in the year 1980 still 95% of marriages were intrarreligious, De Rapper and Sintès (2008) showed that during the 1980s interreligious marriages started to become increasingly common – this is also the decade when most of my research participants were born. Moreover, the fact that several Albanian participants in my sample were coming from an interreligious marriage could be also put in relation with the over-representation of ethnic and religious minorities within the Romanian sample, which seems to positively affect the likelihood to enter an international partnership.

Floriana: I'm...we're Muslim, but in Albania there's no religious culture, because it was under communism for 50 years, all religions were forbidden, so churches, mosques were all closed down, just since the democracy in 1992 (*sic*) people have...in my family only my granny is practising [...] I remember she would observe the Ramadan, read the Koran, secretly, and so on [...] In Albania there are Muslims in the middle, Catholics in the North, Orthodoxes in the South, religion is the last thing to be worried about [...]

Rachele: *And what about (child's) baptism?*

Floriana: I'm not against, what's more, I like religion, I think it's...very useful to educate people, you know, then there will be time to lose those limits, those...but at the beginning yes, religion is a positive thing...

(Floriana & Alberto: Albanian woman and Italian man, cohabiting)

Gerta: I wanted him [=her child] (to go to catechism classes) maybe because I didn't have a (religious) education, because I think you can learn certain things (only) when you're a kid [...] I wanted this also because it's part of the territory, it's part of...it's the country where he was born and raised, it's a question of belonging...

(Gerta: Albanian woman married to an Italian man, one child)

The last quotation also refers to religion as an element of landscape and as a category of identification; a similar comment is made by Adisa, who got married in an Orthodox church in Albania and baptised her daughter in a Catholic church in Italy, not only because that is the country where her child was born and will grow up, but also because the religion of the father comes first. Still following the patrilineal religious affiliation but alternating marriage in Italy to baptism in Albania, Gerta and Giacomo (she is a Muslim Albanian converted to Protestantism and he is a Catholic Italian) made a step towards the dual identification of their child.

Rachele: *Was it a Catholic or an Orthodox baptism?*

Adisa: No, no, Catholic, we chose Catholic because she'll live in Italy, anyway, that's clear, she has to reflect the traditions [...] the father is Catholic and I have no problems at all, also because at the end of the day there's not too much difference between Orthodox and Catholic, so she's Catholic...

(Adisa & Samuele: Albanian woman and Italian man, married, one child)

Gerta: (We wanted) to do something also there (in Albania), to make my family happy and make me happy, I mean, the kid was young, he couldn't understand, but maybe in the future he'll be happy to have kind of two identities, because since the mother is actually Albanian, it's good for him to have some ties...

(Gerta & Giacomo: Albanian woman and Italian man, married, one child)

The following two quotations refer instead to Albanian-Romanian couples. Authors have noted that post-communist Romania ranks among the most religious countries in Europe (Ciobanu and Fokkema 2016)⁸³; participants like Kevin found a higher level of religiosity among Romanian than among Italian peers – which had also affected his

⁸³ Voicu and Constantin (2012) specifically discussed the religious revival of post-communist Romania, where church attendance is the highest among the Orthodox European countries, linking it with both backwardness and nationalism.

previous flirtation with a Romanian woman. In particular, Muslim Albanian men stressed atheism more than tolerance (as opposed to women) and the transmission of a religious identity to the children was sometimes matter of discussion, as in the account of Simona. Interestingly, she does not attend a Romanian Orthodox Church but a Greek one, although they are actually close to each other, also in this way enacting her cosmopolitan orientation given by living in the city centre of Florence. On the other hand, Ioana talks about the plurality of religions at home – reflecting also the Albanian custom of celebrating all religious festivals – and reports the decision to ‘let the children decide when they grow up’, which in other cases was a cause of distress.

Simona: He (=her partner) doesn’t believe but...‘Alright, I don’t take your part of secularism and you don’t take my part (of religiosity)’ ‘Yes, but he’s my kid, I don’t want him to be baptised’ ‘Meanwhile, I’ll give him this, when he’s grown up, he’ll decide if he wants to follow it and be Orthodox, Muslim – I hope to hell not – Catholic, or...I refused to let him attend religion classes at school, so as not to confuse him [...] because those are Catholic, right, he doesn’t attend, but he comes to church with me, we baptised him, I think we gave him something more...

(Simona: Romanian woman cohabiting with an Albanian man, one child)

Ioana: He’s Muslim and I’m Orthodox, therefore we agreed, in case of kids, not to mix religions, I mean, you take mine, I take yours, stuff like that, no, everyone has to keep his own religion, the highest respect me for yours and you for mine, forthcoming kids will have to decide on their own, later on. We didn’t even prevent them from attending religion classes at school, they attend religion classes, we’re in Italy [...] we follow your customs, you know what I mean, we celebrate Easter twice, the Italian Easter and the Romanian Easter, my husband celebrates Ramadan, although he doesn’t care, he doesn’t practise, anyway, let’s say that day⁸⁴ I cook something a bit more special, although he hasn’t observed the Ramadan [...] because those Albanians who are Muslim are not like the Muslims from Saudi Arabia...

(Ioana: Romanian woman married to an Albanian man, two children)

All in all, just few couples were against baptism and religious education. This mainly depended on secularism among Italian partners. However, the religious homogeneity of Italy, as opposed to Albania and Romania⁸⁵, led many Italian participants to understand religion in terms of personal faith rather than in terms of social membership. Therefore, the subsequent gap between an understanding of religion as an ethnic category able to draw boundaries and establish hierarchies between social groups sharing the same space, which is a typical feature of the Balkan system (De Rapper 2008), and an

⁸⁴ *Bajrami i Madh*, the final day of Ramadan.

⁸⁵ About 70% of Albanians are Muslim (of which 80% Sunni and 20% Bektashi), 20% Orthodox, and 10% Catholic (Doja 2006; Young 1999). Instead, 86% of Romanians are Orthodox, 4.7% Roman-Catholic, 3.2% Reformed, 0.9% Greek-Catholic (Turcescu and Stan 2005). Besides further Protestant denominations, there is also a small endogenous Muslim minority (0.3%), although this was never mentioned by any Romanian participant.

alternative understanding of religion as an individual, intimate, and arbitrary practice (Dahinden and Zittoun 2013), also seems to lie at the basis of misunderstandings between partners – as shown later in this chapter. Nevertheless, these individualistic/collectivistic understandings should not be essentialised as prerogatives of individuals ascribed to specific groups. In fact, all those religious conversions which took place mainly during adolescence, either before or after migration, could also be seen as acts of individualisation, independently from the reasons at their basis. Below, Chiara stresses the consistency between principles and actions, identifying a common atheism between her and her partner despite their Catholic/Muslim origins.

Chiara: Anyway his family has Muslim origin...

Chiara's son: Muslim?!

Chiara: ...so to speak, I have Catholic origin, but I don't believe, so we don't care...

Rachele: *And does he (=her child) attend religion classes at school, catechism?*

Chiara: No, he doesn't.

Rachele: *Baptism?*

Chiara: No, he wasn't baptised [...] precisely because we didn't know how to explain to him the reasons for going to church, since we don't go...

(Chiara: Italian woman cohabiting with an Albanian man, one child)

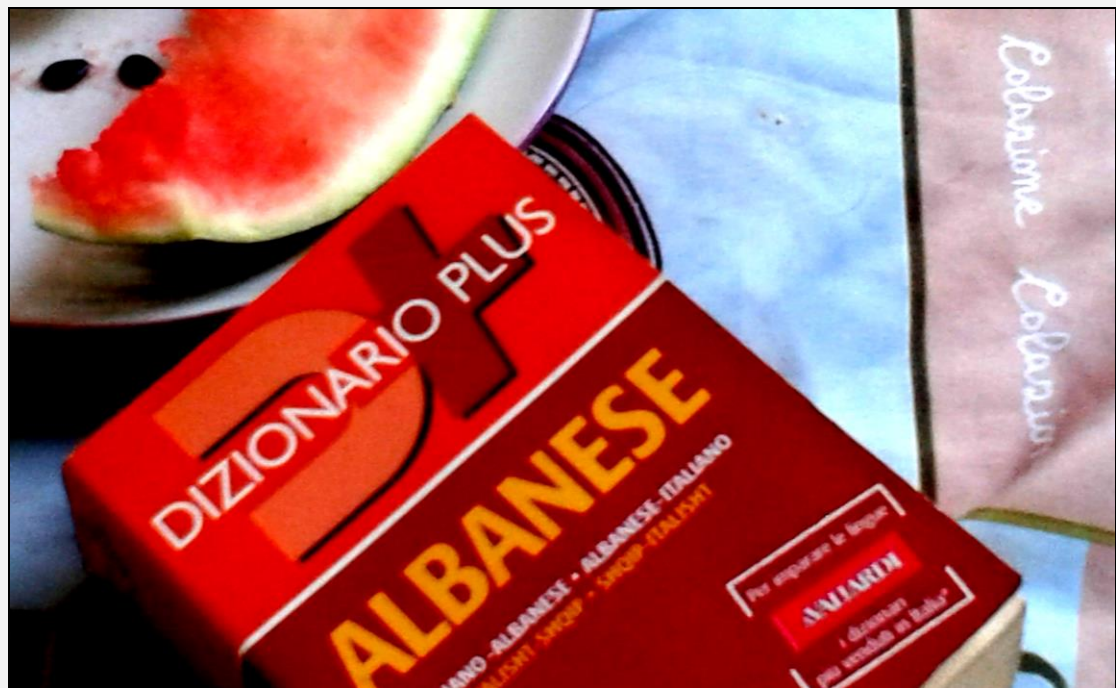
Therefore, the choice of transmitting one/none religious affiliation is either based on similar or different views on religion, but is necessarily the outcome of an agreement, as religion admits one affiliation only (see Edwards et al. 2010). The partnership itself may also change partners' religious views, not only leading to pre-marital baptisms, but also influencing personal trajectories of faith and its 'loss'. An example of 'religiosification' is given by Tanush and Monica, with whom I spent a Saturday (Fieldnotes 3 at page 194); whereas an example of 'laicisation' is given by Roland and Adriana. Adriana remembers that, at the beginning of her migration, religion was a sort of shelter. Ciobanu and Fokkema (2016) specifically discussed the protective role of religion among Romanian migrants in Switzerland, to whom the Orthodox church would give a sense of belonging and a place of encounter, where churchgoers could establish social ties and exchange support. However, religion is not only a way to cope with loneliness. In fact, especially the Orthodox church seems to have acquired a great importance in overcoming Romanophobia and constructing a positive image of Romanian immigrants after the suspicion developed in the last decade within the Romanian community itself – as I could understand from a conversation with a Romanian Orthodox priest.

Fieldnotes 2. Tanush & Monica

Tanush (Albanian) usually goes to the Italian Adventist church, where he can better understand the language; Monica (Romanian) goes to the Romanian one. Also in the former there are several Romanians (plus Latin-Americans, Africans, and mixed couples), in the latter the pastor is Italian now. She pays her tithe there. He used to go also to the Evangelical church. Despite his faith, he's not a member of the church and works on Saturday, which is the day for the Adventist celebration – he could actually take it off, she notes. I meet Tanush in front of the church and I'm introduced to a Bible study group, a sermon about vices like drinking and smoking follows. The pastor gives me a DVD, just in case. I'm invited for lunch at their place, so I could also meet Monica again.

As I enter their flat, I see the Albanian-Italian dictionary (Figure 29) in a cupboard, over the stove, close to an English dictionary and some more books: 'Where is it?!' he asks, without seeing it. Everybody is now looking for the dictionary: 'Can you see it?' 'I can't' 'Come here' 'I see it'. 'He gave it to me as a present' – Monica says – 'But I've never opened it' 'In fact, now it's dusty' – he remarks. They speak of God during the meal and pray before. Monica's brother-in-law perhaps knows how to pray in Italian (usually they pray in Romanian, but since I'm there...). It's his turn, but he only remembers the beginning of 'Our Father' in Italian and continues improvising it. He's Romanian and grew up in Italy, in a foster home where had learnt Albanian before Italian from his peers – he says – now he's about to get baptised in the Adventist church and marry Monica's sister during the next holidays in Romania. His mother is working in Italy, his father in another country – they're not divorced, but nor do they keep in touch. The two couples live together, close to Tanush's workplace, which I had already visited. The meal consists of ciorbă, potato salad, Greek salad, and watermelon. Tanush's mother has just brought cheese from Albania. He tells some anecdotes about his recent efforts to make baklava, his brother-in-law replies with some of his favourite recipes, which involves boiled cornmeal ('mămăligă' in Romanian, 'polenta' in Italian). The conversation shifts to the 'healthier' Italian cuisine and pasta – which Tanush and his kid like very much. After lunch, I'm invited to the other worship, now with Monica, her kid, sister, brother-in-law, and his mother.

Figure 29. Albanian-Italian dictionary in an Albanian-Romanian house



Funnily enough, the topic of the sermon is intermarriage. The pastor says that the Adventist church does not encourage and will not encourage mixed marriages – even those marriages within the church are increasingly at risk of divorce – in fact, mixed marriage are dangerous, adventurous, they cannot be celebrated, nor can the couple receive a blessing. What could be done is to welcome the non-Adventist spouse and lead her/him to accept the faith through baptism. The sermon goes on to say that the destiny of the man is the couple and what God unites the man should not divide (unless in case of adultery or widowhood). The final message is about the fact that, even within the local Romanian community, there are not only divorced people but also families which are de facto separated, couples divided in different countries, children raised by grandparents at home, and this is not good – the pastor admonishes.

To conclude, the role played by women in the religious affiliation of their children – although when this was patrilineal – is evident through all the quotations reported above, which had Albanian, Italian, and Romanian women as protagonists. Female partners are more involved than their male counterparts in the upbringing of children, and this is especially clear by looking at the way in which religion is enacted within the family sphere (e.g. food, prayers, etc.). Besides religion, the role of women as cultural transmitters is also central in terms of language.

7.1.3 Language

We have seen that, among Albanians, religion may be associated with integration into the host-society, but it does not represent a key marker of ethnic identification and groupness, nor it is instrumental in language diffusion – differently from religion among Romanians. Religious services are deemed to play a major role in minority language/culture transmission, providing minorities with a public space, a social environment, and a linguistic repertoire other than the household (see Tamis 1990 about Greeks in Australia). However, among my participants, religion had a multi-lingual rather than a monolingual character; mixed couples and families would attend masses, divine liturgies, and services in Italian, Albanian-Italian, Italian-Romanian, and Romanian, without approaching churches as language carriers. Participants did not refer to churches in ethnic terms; although the Romanian Orthodox church offers educational activities for children focusing on Romania. Referring to non-religious institutions, neither the Albanian nor the Romanian ethnic associationism is particularly developed. During my fieldwork, only one research participant brought her family to an Albanian get-together in which children could listen to Albanian music and dance, besides watching the Italian national football team playing. This kind of initiatives are rather extemporaneous and do not specifically target second-generation language teaching and

learning (see Vathi 2015). Moreover, neither Albanian nor Romanian are widely taught in Italian universities – with some exceptions in the case of Albanian, due to the Arbëresh minority in Southern Italy (mainly Calabria). As a result, the overall situation of these two languages is quite critical, especially in comparison to Arabic – which is actually the second most common language among immigrants in Italy, after Romanian and before Albanian; being spoken by citizens of Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, etc. (ISTAT 2014).

Therefore, while some Italian participants have been unsuccessfully looking for local Albanian language classes, in order to learn some basic Albanian, some managed to enrol in short-term university courses, whereas some attended the annual seminars which are organised at the universities of Tirana and Prishtina. In the first quotation below, Tina and Fabrizio talk about Fabrizio's decision to learn Albanian, taken during an improvised wedding competition among Italian men married to Albanian women belonging to the same extended family. The couple often travels to Albania, also because of their job in the tourism and wedding sectors. Later in the interview, they give some examples of his learning progress written down in his self-teaching notebook 'Learning Albanian with love' (ordering a meal in the restaurant, booking a rental car, wishing happy birthday to the father-in-law, etc.). In the second quotation, Olger remarks upon his partner's ability in speaking Albanian, usually performed in Skype conversation with his parents. In this case, the interest of the Italian woman preceded the partnership itself, being based on previous friendships; however, the subsequent partnership has increased the exposure to the Albanian language and consequently enhanced her communication skills.

Fabrizio: 'Good morning' 'Good evening' 'Good night' 'My name is Fabrizio'...you learn these things over time, a bit, but the idea: 'Ok, I want to learn Albanian' came out...

Tina:...at this Albanian wedding [...] he was competing with another guy, who had actually married my cousin, and he had to be the one who knew (Albanian) a bit better [...] then, he met the husband of my...of another cousin of mine [...] and they started to speak in Albanian, but, at a certain point, he asked him something and he (=Fabrizio) was (speechless)...

Fabrizio: Besides 'Hi!' and 'How are you?' I (couldn't)...

Tina: Therefore, he said: 'Come on!' and he (=Fabrizio) said: 'No! She doesn't teach me!' and I said: 'No way! As if you had asked me!' 'Alright, from tomorrow you'll teach me' 'Alright, from tomorrow I'll teach you' and now he's improving, makes sentences... (Tina & Fabrizio: Albanian woman and Italian man, married)

Olger: She also speaks Albanian, let's say [...] because she learnt, also during the Bachelor's she had a module of Albanian, so she had some basis [...] She's able to carry

out a conversation in Albanian, well, not too complex, eh, because Albanian...well, when it's too complex is difficult even for me!

Rachele: *But was this because of you or was she already interested in learning Albanian?*

Olger: Well, she had already attended the module earlier on, because she already had Albanian friends, at the student accommodation there are many Albanians [he laughs] so, sooner or later, you meet someone for sure, then, together with me she has obviously learnt something more...

Rachele: *Does this mean that you're helping her or you've helped her in studying, or that you would speak with other Albanians (in Albanian)?*

Olger: No, I would speak with other Albanians (in Albanian), let's say.

(Olger: Albanian man engaged to an Italian woman)

Without a school-based approach, but also thanks to the previous experience in learning another foreign language (Italian) 'from scratch', more Romanian than Italian participants have actually managed to learn Albanian over time, mainly through everyday interaction within the family network. The two couples below (one Albanian-Italian and one Albanian-Romanian) lived for a few years together with the Albanian family of origin of the male partner. In the former case, family reunification followed the standard procedure (from the father to the son), in the latter case, the opposite. Moreover, Elisabetta, the Italian participant, is a child of a mixed marriage herself (Hungarian-Italian), although she was raised monolingual Italian. Instead, Adriana, the Romanian participant, grew up among bilingual children of mixed couples (Hungarian-Romanian) trying to learn some Hungarian despite the opposition of her father. The cohabitation with the Albanian family led Elisabetta to understand Albanian without speaking it; whereas Adriana became fluent also in Albanian.

Rachele: *Are you interested also in speaking it (=Albanian)?*

Elisabetta: Yes, indeed, I would be interested, I'd like, sure, to start speaking...

Enzo: If she wasn't ashamed about speaking, she would learn, otherwise...

Rachele: *Did anybody remark on this?*

Elisabetta: He did...

Rachele: *Ah, he did...* [she laughs]

Enzo: I may correct you, but if you don't try, if you don't make mistakes, you can't learn!

(Enzo & Elisabetta: Albanian man and Italian woman, cohabiting)

Adriana: The best thing is to speak with someone who doesn't speak other languages, otherwise you always tend to take the shortcut, in fact with all the others...at the beginning, his sister taught me a lot, but later on, since she could also speak Italian, to ease the communication, we would immediately slip into Italian, so...I think I've mostly learnt from your mum...

Roland: Really?!

Adriana: Yes, also because his dad is more shy [...] whereas his mum [...] also wanted to welcome me in the family, you know what I mean, she's a person who brings the

family together around her, right, so from her I learnt a lot, also because she couldn't speak Italian, so it was a kind of mutual effort...

(Roland & Adriana: Albanian man and Romanian woman, married, two children)

Women were usually more supportive than men on this issue, which means that they would not only appreciate the learning progress of their male partners but also overestimate their male partners' language skills and underestimate their own, as I could note especially in joint couple interviews. Having grown up monolingual was perceived as a disadvantage by several Italian participants – who would blame the schooling system, the dubbed TV programmes, the country, and finally themselves for this. Yet, this did not lead them to make efforts in developing bilingualism among their children – although it is recognised that also the majority partner plays a role in this (Venables et al. 2014). Meintel (2002) also noted how the majority partner may promote the minority language instead of the minority partner him/herself, even when the minority language does not have high international prestige. However, like other female participants, Martina found it difficult to implement the identity-project that she had in mind for her children, without the collaboration of her partner. In fact, although some Italian and Romanian women may have learnt some Albanian, they cannot teach it instead of their native-speaker partners.

Martina: And it's me who really insists also about speaking Albanian to our kids [...] because he'd rather tend to speak to them in Italian and I don't like this, because I want them to know that they have also another root, not only the Italian one...

(Martina: Italian woman cohabiting with an Albanian man, two children)

Moreover, although women rather than men were more pro-active towards the foreign language in both Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples, there was a higher degree of reciprocity among Albanian-Romanian than among Albanian-Italian couples. This means that Albanian participants would learn Romanian to some extent and *vice versa*. Also the language status affects the attitude towards language acquisition and transmission, being closely related to group status. Therefore, the more advantageous a language in socio-economic terms, the higher the chance that this will be promoted (Stephan and Stephan 1989). Although this is usually the case of the national majority language, there may be high-status national minority languages (Finnäs and O'Leary 2003) or highly ranked international languages which also enjoy institutional support abroad and may be sustained within the family sphere, despite their local minority status – see Isaakyan and Triandafyllidou (2014) about the English

language, Anglophone women, and intermarriage in Italy. When it comes to Albanian-Italian intermarriage in Italy, not only does the higher status language correspond to the host-society language, but the lower status language had its market value further reduced by stigmatisation. In the case of Albanian-Romanian intermarriage in Italy, instead, the minority status of the two languages is not only made of a relatively low international prestige, but also of overlapping stigmata. Therefore, while some participants, like Ioana, instrumentally gave priority not only to the Italian language, but also to the English language *vis-à-vis* Albanian and Romanian, others would primarily see in language a marker of ethnic identification and group membership and either promote or hinder its transmission.

Ioana: My kid will go to the primary school now, so he'll study English. I would be very happy if he learns English, because with Albanian and Romanian you don't really go to America, (whereas) everybody speaks English, so I would be happier if...I mean, if he speaks Italian (and) speaks English perfectly, he already has some future, you know what I mean, whereas he doesn't need to be a translator ['translator' also in the original] (of Albanian and Romanian)...

(Ioana: Romanian woman married to an Albanian man, two children)

In fact, the account of Elvisa, who is divorcing from her Italian husband, suggests another possible explanation for this lack of interest: stigmatisation and a 'bright' boundary despite intermarriage. What is more, in this case, it seems that the majority partner did not recognise his marriage as an intermarriage, denying otherness and its ethnic markers like language in the transition from couple to family.

Elvisa: He doesn't accept differences, he says he does, but actually he doesn't...the Albanian way of...for instance, he said that in case he had become father he wouldn't have accepted that...that in his house, one day, Albanian could be spoken...

Rachele: *Did you talk about this only later on?*

Elvisa: No, well, yes, we didn't talk about this later on, he said this later on [...] I mean, if you have this kind of problem, already from my name and surname you could see that I'm a foreigner, so...

(Elvisa: Albanian woman divorcing from an Italian man)

Authors have also shown that the phenomenon of stigmatisation and the internalisation of this stigma might lie at the basis of the Albanian linguistic assimilation both in Italy and Greece (Gogonas 2009; Zinn 2005). However, in the case of Italy, not only Albanophobia but also Italophilia may have contributed to the low vitality of the Albanian language. In the account of Erion, the Italian language has been not only a vehicle for 'anticipatory acculturation' (King and Mai 2009) but also a key for opening a door to the outer world. Visibly moved, Erion remembers an elderly

Albanian teacher, who had studied in Italy during fascism, giving him private tuition at the end of communism. He gifted him with ‘not only the language, but also the love’ he still feels towards Italy. Kevin, instead, like most of the sample, grew up in Albania watching Italian television: ‘The same cartoons children would watch here, teenagers would watch here, we would watch them over there’. He started working during adolescence, shortly after his arrival to Italy. By that time, he was already able to speak the language well and since then he also picked up the local accent – as Nadia notes. This observation of the majority partner is important, since her Southern Italian accent actually prevented Nadia from getting a job upon her arrival in Tuscany. Several non-Tuscan participants also stressed this point, feeling that their Albanian partners who were settled in Tuscany were speaking a more correct Italian than their own⁸⁶. Referring to other Italian dialects, some Albanian participants opposed them as uncultured language varieties, whereas others also learnt the dialect of the partner (see Romania 2004). Below, Aurora talks about her father and his fears of not being able to communicate with Klejdi – also considering the fact that Aurora’s sister lives abroad with a partner who does not speak Italian. Aurora comes from a village in the South and Klejdi grew up not too far from there; therefore he is not only able to speak Italian perfectly, but also masters that local dialect.

Aurora: My dad asked: ‘But can he speak well...Klejdi?’ because he was afraid of speaking with somebody who couldn’t speak well: ‘Well, dad, look, he speaks better than you, than how we speak at home’. You don’t know how we speak!

Klejdi: Actually, I even spoke in dialect to your father...

Aurora: Yes, we’re close...

(Klejdi & Aurora: Albanian man and Italian woman, engaged)

Dialects and languages also created a sort of familiarity with the ‘other’ beyond the sphere of intermarriage. The building-industry proved to be an interesting language environment, where Albanians learnt local varieties of Italian plus some Southern Italian dialects as well as some Romanian later on. Roland, for example, started working with Italians (both locals and internal migrants) and often performed the role of ‘Italian-Neapolitan interpreter’. Afterwards, he became self-employed and had Albanian and Romanian apprentices. He would come home everyday with new Romanian words – first of all swear words, those that Adriana did not teach him.

⁸⁶ The standard Italian language is based on the Florentine dialect.

While Albanian participants mostly learnt Italian via TV before migration and thus developed some ‘elective affinities’ with the Italian language; Romanian participants learnt Italian after migration, facilitated by the fact that both Italian and Romanian have a Latin origin. Interestingly, although Albanian is a unique language within the Indo-European family, it presents some links with Romanian too: a shared Thraco-Dacian-Illyrian substratum and above all Turkish loanwords – ‘another point in common’ as Simona puts it.

Simona: We both (=Albania and Romania) were under the Ottoman Empire and some words remained, which we found in common, a lot...

Rachele: *Did you already know this or did you discover it?*

Simona: We discovered it together [...] at the beginning, we were puzzled, the two of us, I wanted to check where they come from, the etimologies of these words, because it’s true that the Romanian language has a Latin origin, however, it has been influenced by many others, but I wanted to know why we (have common words) with the Albanians, because those are two completely different languages, different, different, different, and I discovered (these words) have a Turkish origin...

(Simona: Romanian woman cohabiting with an Albanian man, one child)

Turning back to language transmission, Vathi (2015) found the degree of linguistic assimilation of the Albanian second generation higher in Florence than in Thessaloniki or London and reported a feeling of regret among the first generation, which may be partially solved through the presence of grandparents and their Albanian monolingualism. In Greece, Gkaintartzi et al. (2014) identified three main attitudes towards language maintenance and change among Albanian parents: those who embrace bilingualism and claim for an institutional support aiming at the development of their children’s oral and written skills in both languages; those who believe that heritage language transmission is only a family responsibility and differently rank home and host society languages, afraid that the development of one would interfere with the development of the other; and, finally, those who are indifferent and do not promote bilingualism, feeling that fluency in the host-society language would be more useful also in terms of their children’s social mobility. Most participants also in my research fell into the second subgroup, among whom positive attitudes rarely correspond to effective behaviours. Gogonas (2009) thus spoke of language shift, foreseeing a turn with little space for ‘ancestral home’ transnationalism already within the Albanian second generation in Greece. The low level of linguistic vitality among Albanian endogamic couples indirectly concerns Albanian exogamic couples, since it limits their exposure to the Albanian language also within the kinship network.

Irene: Well, I'd like them (=their future children) to learn both (languages), yes, indeed, (I'd like) us to work hard to make them learn Albanian, because having already seen his nephews, who have both parents Albanian and do not speak (Albanian), right, we have to work hard...

(Enkelejd & Irene: Albanian man and Italian woman, engaged)

Adriana: There's this idea: 'Let's speak Italian to our kids immediately, so that they don't feel different'. So, they (=her children) don't have...I feel sorry because, given all the Albanians and Romanians who are in Italy, they don't have playmates in (these) languages...

(Roland & Adriana: Albanian man and Romanian woman, married, two children)

Adriana, who holds a degree in foreign languages, is aware of the fact that, for raising multilingual children, the family sphere is not enough; children need to develop a vocabulary suitable for their age through peer interaction and a variety of settings other than home. Despite these limitations, her children grew up trilingual and are now aware of it. Authors have shown that there are two main approaches for engineering bilingualism; one is based on fixed choices, the other on free alternation. In the former case, each parent consistently speaks one language in a one-to-one relation ('one person, one language') and children tend to successfully develop monolingual norms in each language; whereas, in the latter case, parents often fail in getting their children to use one language. Therefore, unless parents are really motivated in raising their children as bilingual, they tend to give up after some time and one of the two parental languages becomes dominant also at home (De Klerk 2001). Only a few educated women in Albanian-Romanian couples mentioned the one-person-one-language method, whereas this was not explicitly mentioned among Albanian-Italian couples. Roland and Adriana have successfully put it into practice and believe that it has been a worthwhile effort for both adults and children – although speaking their own mother-tongues in public spaces has been specially challenging.

Adriana: Each of us speaks his own language to the kids, we never speak Italian to them, we speak Italian between us, but with the children everyone (speaks) his own language and the kids up to now...

Roland:...have respected this [...]

Rachele: *And when they speak to each other?*

Adriana: It depends on the situation. When they play something [...] from the school, they speak Italian [...] if I'm in the kitchen and they play in the other room, they speak Romanian, if he's there, they speak Albanian, or if it's a game they played together with him...

(Roland & Adriana: Albanian man and Romanian woman, married, two children)

However, this case is the exception rather than the rule. The following quotation shows not only the common mismatch between attitude and behaviour, but also the child's

agency. Bekim, for example, is not patient; his child is now able to switch TV channels – they have been watching the Albanian television for a couple of years and Alina greatly improved her Albanian thanks to that. Rozalba, instead, spends the summer in Albania together with her child and Federico usually joins them later. Their child understands Albanian – which in Italy is their ‘secret language’ – but is not self-confident enough in Albania, as the other children would laugh at his foreign accent. Once Rozalba enrolled him in a summer camp in order to make him an active language user, although this did not give the expected results.

Bekim: No, he (=his child) doesn’t like languages, he doesn’t like also because I don’t have...I mean, I didn’t spend time in teaching him willy-nilly, I don’t have patience, I tell him once, twice, in Albanian, he answers in Italian, I want to solve what I’m saying, instead you would need a lot of patience...

(Bekim & Alina: Albanian man and Romanian woman, married, one child)

Rachele: *And what about languages, does he (=their child) speak Albanian, does he understand it?*

Rozalba: He understands it perfectly, but speaks...speaks very little, because he’s always among...I speak more Italian than Albanian [...] if I speak to him in Albanian, instinctively he answers in Italian [...] Last year I took him to a summer camp there (=in Albania) and I told him: ‘Go and learn Albanian!’ [she laughs]

Federico: Instead, he found a kid who could speak Italian...

Rozalba:...an Albanian kid, but he could speak Italian perfectly, so they became friends and everything was over, bye bye! [everybody laughs]

(Rozalba & Federico: Albanian woman and Italian man, married, one child)

Having a part-time or homemaker mother did not particularly increase the likelihood of developing active bilingualism – differently from what Isaakyan and Triandafyllidou (2014) found among Anglophone mothers, who would give up their careers precisely to achieve the identity-projects that they had planned for their children born and brought up in Italy, despite the Italian extended family. In fact, full-time working mothers usually delegate their authority to grandparents. Almost all couples with children had grandparents nearby, Albanian-Italian children were mostly in care of their Italian grandparents, whereas Romanian grandparents – the matrilineal kin – would usually look after Albanian-Romanian children. In some cases, all grandparents were present, although especially Albanian and Romanian grandparents would alternate and provide their grandchildren with the opportunity to practise a language other than Italian at home. This type of caregiving was based on convenience rather than on specific identity-projects and also depended on the health, employment, and legal status of the grandparents. In the following quotation, Liliana reports having been criticised by both

Italian and Albanian acquaintances for not teaching Albanian to her children. Among the reasons for her decision, she lists her own bilingualism and the courtesy towards her partner and his family with whom she lives. Moreover, Liliana arrived in Italy at the age of 13, speaks Italian perfectly and has never been to Albania since the beginning of her partnership (15 years).

Rachele: *And about the language, do you speak a bit of Albanian (to the kids)?*

Liliana: No, [...] and also here I was criticised a lot, but...

Rachele: *Who criticised you a lot?*

Liliana: People, in general, 'How come...' [...] Even friends, anyway, the point is the following, my viewpoint, I'm alone here, there's already an intimate tie between mother and kid at the very beginning, he (=Massimo) doesn't speak Albanian, his mum doesn't speak Albanian, if I speak Albanian, if I had spoken Albanian to these kids, I mean, I would have felt like lacking respect, like closing the relationship...

Massimo: With whom would they speak then?

Liliana: ...and second, which is even more important, I went away when I was 13, I mean, I'm almost bilingual myself, I speak and write perfectly in Albanian, but when I think, during the day, I think in Italian rather than in Albanian...

(Liliana & Massimo: Albanian woman and Italian man, married, two children)

The influence of social networks and especially that of caregiving arrangements on the linguistic development of the children – in addition to the environment – is also suggested by Dana, whose child learnt Albanian during the prolonged unemployment of the father and is now improving her Romanian thanks to the widowed grandfather, who has recently joined the family.

Rachele: *What language does your kid speak better, Albanian or Romanian?*

Dana: Albanian because – now I tell you why – there was a period my husband was out of work, so basically he would stay at home with her and at home he would speak Albanian only, Albanian and that's it. I mean, she speaks (Albanian) perfectly, Romanian the same, but...I taught her too, but it was especially my father, who takes care of her, takes her to school, brings her back home...

(Dana: Romanian woman married to an Albanian man, one child)

To sum up, Albanian-Italian children are basically monolingual Italian; whereas Albanian-Romanian children speak Italian at home and away, although they understand or even master one/both parental language(s) – usually Romanian. Stevens (1985) noted how the maternal minority language is more likely to be transmitted than the paternal minority language, above all, because of caregiving arrangements. In the case of Albanian-Romanian children, the exposure to Romanian is not only higher than that to Albanian because Romanian mothers/grandmothers are the primary carers, but also due to the co-ethnic friendship networks that almost all Romanian female participants have

– different from the social networks of Albanian participants, which often included Italians rather than Albanians (besides kin).

7.1.4 Citizenship

Almost all the Albanian participants had a long-term permit of stay or the Italian citizenship; only very few had a renewable permit of stay. Women acquired the citizenship mainly via marriage, whereas men usually via residency. Romanian women did not generally request the Italian citizenship, due to their EU status, although when this happened, it was rather because the Albanian partner had applied. Similarly, Albanian partners who had the Italian citizenship transmitted this to their children rather than the Albanian citizenship. All Albanian-Italian children had Italian citizenship and rarely also the Albanian one; whereas Albanian-Romanian children usually had the Romanian citizenship and in few cases also the Albanian or Italian, but never the three of them, although legally possible and apparently ignored. Most participants explained citizenship in instrumental terms, but some also gave it an emotional value. This means that citizenship transmission to children was seen as a practical matter, although its affiliative value was sometimes mentioned either with reference to the promotion of the children's dual identity or its hindrance – as illustrated by Gerta and Giacomo, on the one side, and by Simona, on the other.

Gerta: (The kid) has already taken the (Albanian) citizenship, he (=Giacomo) wanted to register him there, so he has both, at least from a formal point of view, let's say, and (by) taking him there as often as possible...maybe when my mum gets retired, I'll take him there over the summer...

Giacomo: I think it's a good thing [...]

Gerta: But he'll stay more Italian obviously...

Giacomo:...since he was born here...

Gerta:...since he was born here and lives here...

Giacomo: But I think he'll feel – with the right mindset – I think he'll feel a lot about this tie with the grandparents, with Albania...

Gerta: Well, I have to work on it myself, let's say, I have to be more determined, I mean, I talk about the grandparents, about Albania less, because we speak of more concrete things...

Giacomo: Well, anyway he's still young [...] I think over time it will be like a myth, this far-close land, as for me it was the sea, right, for him it will be the land across the sea, I think he'll be fascinated by this dual identity, he'll defend it, I believe...

(Gerta & Giacomo: Albanian woman and Italian man, married, one child)

Simona: If you ask him (=her child): 'Are you Albanian or Romanian?' 'Florentine!' woe betide you if you say...there's no chance to make him say 'Albanian' or 'Romanian'...Florentine! He has a Romanian passport, I really wanted it, with the excuse that we're part of the European Union and so on, but...

Rachele: Will he have also the Albanian one, in the future?

Simona: Maybe, but until he's a minor I'll never give him this permission! [she laughs]

(Simona: Romanian woman cohabiting with an Albanian man, one child)

None of the Italian partners had the Albanian citizenship, nor Albanian and Romanian partners had each others' citizenship, since both the Albanian and Romanian citizenship regimes require a period of continuous residency in the country also for spouses of national citizens – differently from what occurs in the Italian case.

Turning back to the Italian citizenship acquisition by residency or marriage, when the Albanian family of origin was settled in Italy, the decision to request it was usually taken by the whole family. Therefore, some Albanian participants had the Italian citizenship independently from their partnership – this rarely happened in the Romanian sample, because of the different immigrant profile. Moreover, Albanian men were more likely to get the citizenship by residency also because, unlike the Albanian women, they were labourers rather than former students – as the time spent with a study permit is not accounted for residency purposes. While marriage contributed to regularise illegal status in the 1990s, as we have seen in the case of Blerina; it later became rather an alternative to the conversion of a study permit into a work permit after graduation. However, some participants postponed marriage or did not marry at all, in some cases because of the prejudice about intermarriages as marriages of convenience (see Djurdjević 2013). Furthermore, when the Italian citizenship was obtained via residency, participants specified it – like those who specified the means of transport used to arrive to Italy (i.e. a ferry, not a rubber dinghy). The next quotation is quite telling in terms of the relation between self-identification and citizenship. Ermira, who married her partner only after the children were born and she had acquired the Italian citizenship by residency, explicitly states her Albanianness although shortly after implicitly uses the adjective 'Italian' to define also herself.

Ermira: I became an Italian citizen before the marriage [...] because of the long residency, so, I mean...but I'm still Albanian, that's a dual citizenship basically, bureaucratic, but I feel I'm Albanian...

Rachele: *And the kids, what citizenship do they have?*

Ermira: Italian. They were born here from two Italian parents, indeed...

(Ermira: Albanian woman married to an Italian man, two children)

As mentioned earlier, there was a lot of disinformation about citizenship which seemed to be intentional to some extent. A few participants believed that dual/multiple citizenships could not be held at the same time. Therefore, some did not request the Italian citizenship or did not transmit their own citizenship to the children, thinking that

this would have led to an exclusionary choice later in life. Similarly, especially Albanian-Romanian couples were not updated about changes in constraints and opportunities concerning transnational mobility, justifying in this way visits and cross-family meetings which have never taken place. In the 1990s, in fact, the entry of an Albanian citizen in Romania – this was the most common case – was subjected to a plurality of requirements that often neither the Albanian partner nor the Romanian in-laws could meet.

Adriana: We needed an invitation, but there were some conditions, some requirements absolutely unfeasible for a normal person living in Romania...a bank account in dollars, one in lei⁸⁷, an owned house with a contract, a housing certificate saying that it was suitable for a number of people – my house was really small. So, there was no way...I got angry with the police officer and I told him: ‘How can someone meet all these requirements?! How can a Romanian citizen meet all these requirements?! How?!’ There was a list of countries for which these requirements were asked, starting from Afghanistan, Albania, Angola [...] the police officer told me: ‘Madame, where is the dignity of Romania, though?’ So, there it was...

(Roland & Adriana: Albanian man and Romanian woman, married, two children)

The complex intermingling of nationality, citizenship and belonging is shown in Fieldnotes 4 (below). The UEFA Euro 2016 tournament, in which the football teams of Albania, Italy, and Romania participated spurred both alliance and animosity among supporters. Below we can see some examples of how this affected mixed couples and their children among research participants and beyond.

Fieldnotes 4. UEFA Euro 2016

At UEFA Euro 2016, Albania made its debut at a major football tournament – with an Italian coach. The first match was against Switzerland, whose team was largely composed of the Albanian second generation originally from Kosovo and Macedonia. The second match was against France, the country hosting the tournament. Italian participants and Italian-Albanian couples/families supported Albania too, as illustrated in the following quote and picture (Figure 30).

Ilaria: *There’s a song, it’s not the actual Albanian anthem, but it’s a song that’s sung at the stadium, that’s named ‘Kuj e zi’ (‘Red and black’ i.e. the colours of the Albanian flag) and in fact I have that song in my USB, in the car, I listen to that when I’m in the car, when we go for a trip, stuff like that, here you have his sister-in-law and me singing in Albanian and there he is, looking at me, saying: ‘What the hell, you know the Albanian anthem, if I don’t even know that, I mean, I’m Albanian and I don’t know that, you’re Italian and you know it!’*

(Ilaria: Italian woman engaged to an Albanian man)

⁸⁷ Romanian currency.

Figure 30. Albanian-Italian child supporting the Albanian football team and making the crossed-hand gesture, which symbolises the double-headed eagle in the Albanian flag



On the 19th of June, after two defeats, Albania finally scored its first goal in a European championship precisely against Romania, winning the match. I watched the match – or rather what was going on around the match – in Florence city centre: first, in two pubs owned by Kosovars, where mostly Albanian men were gathered; then in a pub with a more diverse audience, males and females, tourists and residents, Albanians and not (Figure 31).

Figure 31. Albanian, Italian, and Romanian friends watching Albania-Romania UEFA Euro 2016 in Florence



On Facebook, the match was accompanied by teasings like 'Between 7pm and 11 pm you can leave doors and windows open' hinting at the fact that all thieves in Italy – allegedly

Albanians and Romanians – would be watching the match. Reactions to this barb ranged from self-mockery, to scorn by the others (Albanians/Romanians), to bringing into the discussion also Southern Italians and mafia. But even more interesting were a few Facebook pages, that I was following during the fieldwork, in which several Romanian women from all over Italy and even abroad started to post messages of congratulations to Albania, because of their partners. Also some Italian women in mixed couples joined these discussions, cheering Albania. From football, the discussion quickly turned to nationalism and gender; Albanian, Italian, and Romanian women and Albanian-Italian/Romanian couples were compared and judged by the various users, mainly in-between/second generation Albanians, on the basis of their patriotism, sexual behaviour, marriage, and family values. These pages were also useful to recruit some participants matching with the fieldwork area. Here a selection of postings, the letters A/I/R stand for Albanian/Italian/Romanian and M/F for male/female.

AM1: Tomorrow evening 80% of Romanian women in Italy will cheer Albania □□□who knows why □□□

RF1: We played badly...it's not the national team it once was...we didn't really want to win, you did instead...congratulations, bravo, you deserve it!! Respekt and forca Shqipe!! (i.e. Respect and go Albania!!) [...] I have Romanian blood, but my boyfriend is Albanian, so I became half and half, I love Albania and I'll love it forever □□□

AM2: Ah, and will you love it although things don't go well with your boyfriend? [...]

RF1: Sure, I'll love it despite how it goes, I'm really interested in Albania because you're almost like us □

AF1: For sure I don't need an Italian because I did all the papers on my own [...] It's just a matter of respect! I'm not the servant of anybody and I don't lock myself in the house because the man is jealous. You, Albanians, keep the woman in the house and go partying with your friends, don't tell me it's not true!! So, 100 times better an Italian man who respects you and lets you free [...] than an Albanian man who leaves the woman at home [...]

RF2: I've been married to an Albanian guy for more than 8 years!!!! And I can tell you that we go to the disco, on holidays, everywhere, we're almost 30 years old both of us and we don't have children yet, because we want to enjoy life...it's because of the respect and love towards him that I would never think of going out alone, we do everything together [...]

IF1: Hurrah for Albanian and Italian girls! Ahahahah! I'm saying this because I'm Italian married to an Albanian guy □□□□7 great years! Btw is not true that Albanians don't let you go out, maybe at the beginning, but my hubbie trusts me and I go out, of course not to the disco since we have a baby [...] aw most of the Albanians are together with Romanians for papers, sorry about that, but it's true [...]

RF3: Why? With Italian women is for love?

Interestingly, we can see how each mixed couple tries to counter the stereotype of a convenience marriage by showing the genuineness of their relationship and transferring the stereotype to the other typology of couple.

A few days after the match, an Albanian man (previously engaged to an Italian woman) was describing to me one of his acquaintances in the following way: 'She's Romanian, he's Albanian, they have a restaurant, three young kids, the day of the match she came here, with the Albanian t-shirt. I told her: "Weren't you Romanian?" "Yes, but I'm a minority, I've got four Albanians at home!" Later on, I could also interview her. By combining this account with the next quotation, we can have an insight into the multiple co-existing identificational categories of mixed and especially minority-minority families.

Rachele: *What about the Albania vs Romania match, how was it at home?*

Ionela: *Listen, shall I tell you the truth? [she smiles] After 15 minutes I was already supporting Albania, because...not because I wouldn't have liked Romania to win, I would be crazy to deny it, but watching them play, you could see a great team against another team which didn't care at all, they didn't care about sticking together, I mean, they looked like a bunch of people picked up from the street and put together: 'Look, today you play for me!' but they didn't play for the country...*

Rachele: *And what about the kids?*

Ionela: *Well, they were also (saying): 'May the best team win!' especially the older one, he loves football [...] yesterday they took it badly...*

Rachele: *Yesterday? [silence] Ah, yesterday! [i.e. Germany vs Italy, Italy was eliminated]*

Ionela: *They took it badly indeed...*

(Ionela: Romanian woman married to an Albanian man, three children)

7.2 Configurations of mixedness

7.2.1 Nationality

In this study, Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples have been approached as mixed couples; partners have a different nationality and usually differ in religion, language, and citizenship. In Chapter 5, we saw how 'Albanian', 'Italian', and 'Romanian' in Italy represent ethnic categories which have informed boundaries and hierarchies structuring the Italian society as a space of immigration and ongoing integration. These ethnic categories are imposed from outside the couple and should thus be seen primarily as etic categories. We also saw how meaningful interactions like partnership and marriage could lead to a novel understanding of these ethnic categories, based on the phenomenon of migration in itself. It is now time to turn to the emic categories used by participants to identify differences and affinities within the couple, which does not necessarily occur along ethnic lines. This more analytical second part will build upon the rich material presented in the first half of this chapter and in the previous one.

One of the final questions that I asked participants in the interview was whether they considered themselves, or happened to be considered by someone else, as a mixed couple. Participants were then asked to think of positive or negative aspects of being in a mixed couple, provided that they had accepted this definition. What emerged was first an etic usage of the adjective 'mixed': thus several participants would not consider themselves as a 'mixed couple', although they had often employed this adjective to define other couples in their social networks throughout the interview. Moreover, they

would also define as ‘mixed’ the composition of their social networks (friendships, neighbourhood, or workplace) and speak of mixed weddings and cuisine. The verb ‘to mix’ and its synonyms such as ‘to meld’ and ‘to mingle’ (*mescolare*, *mischiare*, etc.) were also commonly used in relation to the interactive dimension of integration (‘I think this “mixed” maybe will disappear because people increasingly mix’ – Roland) and to social mimicry (‘There are lots of Albanians, who can easily mix’ – Liliana). Instead, especially those participants who were themselves the product of a mixed marriage by nationality/religion would unproblematically accept the adjective ‘mixed’. The reasons for rejecting an emic usage of the phrase ‘mixed couple’ are multiple. Collet (2012) noted that partners in mixed couples would stress commonalities over differences in their everyday life; thus answers like ‘I never think of it’ (Alda) could be interpreted in this way. However, the silence which often preceded the answer, the decision whether to agree or disagree with what the partner had replied – in a joint couple interview – suggested a disavowal of the concept of mixedness also because of the otherness that it implies and because of the fact that nationality and social stigma are here interlinked. A few examples to illustrate this point are represented by the comment ‘She’s not Albanian’ made by Thomas (Italian) about Florinda (Albanian), leading her – despite an initial puzzlement – to back up this affirmation, which was meant to be a compliment, with examples of what would distinguish her from other Albanian women met in the crèche, for instance. Similarly, Klodiana compares herself to a girlfriend who is ‘very much Albanian, she could easily live there’ after the comment of Filippo, who again does not detach the social stigma from nationality: ‘She doesn’t look Albanian, maybe also for this I’m together with her’. Interestingly, one couple was introduced to me by some Albanian acquaintances as follows: ‘I don’t know how they can stay together, he’s too Albanian’ – although I later understood that it was precisely this Albanianess which had initially interested the Italian partner.

The denial of differences has also to do with the integration process, as showed in a quotation drawn from the interview to Klejdi and Aurora. On principle, their couple would be considered ‘mixed’ because of the different nationalities; however the time spent in Italy and the process of integration into the host-society turned the Albanian participant into ‘almost-Italian’ and occasionally ‘more-Italian’ than the Italian partner. Klejdi is an emblematic example because of the citizenship acquisition, religious conversion, and third-level education which have basically redefined the divide marked by traits such as language, religion, and citizenship (Zolberg and Woon 1999).

However, also the fact that the time spent in Italy usually corresponded to the transition to adulthood was deemed to have irreversibly affected processes of identity construction even in absence of integration signs like a baptism certificate, an academic degree, or a passport. Aurora also makes a distinction between her viewpoint and the viewpoint of those who deny differences because they do not accept them.

Rachele: *If I say to you 'mixed couple' does this make sense to you as a phrase, or doesn't, what do you think?*

Aurora: To me it doesn't, no, because I don't see him as a guy from Albania, I've never seen him this way, but it's not even that attitude: 'No, I don't want to say he's from Albania, better to pretend he's not'. No, it's just because I don't see it. He's more Italian than me, sometimes, so I don't know...

Klejdi: To me it doesn't...I mean, 'mixed couple' is a phrase, how can I say...well, if we want to speak...actually it is, indeed...

Aurora: That's true...

Klejdi:...it's a mixed couple, no doubt about it, but, concretely speaking, because I've been living in Italy for so many years and I integrated myself really well, this leads our couple not to be considered 'mixed', although actually it is, it shouldn't be considered 'mixed'...

(Klejdi & Aurora: Albanian man and Italian woman, engaged)

Nonetheless, we have seen that integration, as distinct from assimilation, has been primarily conceived as a two-way process. Therefore, not only the Albanian but also the Italian partner may not be perceived as different. Considering the fact that the language was generally seen as the major divide, by learning Albanian also the Italian partner could move a step towards the other.

Olger: I don't perceive her different from me, different – I don't know – from an Albanian, so...in fact, I often forget to whom I speaking and carry on speaking in Albanian, straight away [he laughs] and she tells me: 'You should wait a bit, because I didn't understand something' [...] (but) there's always somebody saying 'How come...' 'Different' [...] 'What do you have in common?' I don't know...or somebody, for example, who has this idea that all Albanians are conservative and close-minded, that mistreat the wife...

(Olger: Albanian man engaged to an Italian woman)

While we can understand (co-)integration in terms of achieved similarities, participants have also located their denial of reciprocal differences in ascribed similarities and basically through the category of culture. As Thomas put it: 'The (Albanian and Italian) cultures are not that far from each other, only a sea divides us'. Other participants would identify a common Mediterranean culture, linking Albanians with Italians and above all with Southern Italians – an 'affinity of cultures' which includes also Greece, according to Erion. Geographical distance thus becomes a symbol for social distance, on the axis North-South among Albanian-Italian couples (Albanians

and Italians as Mediterranean) and on the axis East-West among Albanian-Romanian couples (Albanians and Romanians as Balkan⁸⁸). Bledar, for example, speaks of the intermediary position of Albania, in between Italy and Romania, and of the importance of ‘getting to know each others’ neighbours’ – Albanians being the Italians’ neighbours and Romanians the Albanians’ neighbours. Through geographical distance, Bledar not only indicates social distance but also hints at the hierarchy based on the opposition between new-comers and old-timers, integration from above and integration from below, as discussed in Chapter 5. Through the metaphor of neighbourhood, Bledar also implies the role of mediator played by Albanians in the Romanian integration process in Italy – which resonates with the concept of circuitous assimilation in Dadhabay (1954). Instead, Romanian participants would rather skip the acknowledgement of this Albanian mediation, stressing Latin heritage and EU membership (similar to Italians) rather than communism and the Balkans (similar to Albanians). As a consequence, while Albanian participants would see in Romania a sort of Albania and so downgrade the image of modernity that Romanian participants usually proposed, Romanian participants would rather draw comparisons with Italy and stress differences rather than affinities with Albania and Albanians.

Bledar: (Albania and Romania) are two similar countries, in mentality, traditions, eating habits, food and all the rest, so, I feel quite at home (in Romania) [...] and I’ve noted that almost all the Balkans have...the style...more or less the same way of hosting, of...approaching, introducing, meeting and so on...
(Bledar & Nicoleta: Albanian man cohabiting with a Romanian woman)

Rachele: *What are the positive things of being a family with people from different countries?*

Dana: Well, it’s nice, but there are several contradictions too [...] because Romania is a bit...it’s true indeed that until a few years ago, when we were under communism, (the situation) was a bit tighter, but now it’s more relaxed, people are more open-minded, easy-going. Instead, Albanians have a bit tougher character, are more close-minded...both women and men...it’s a bit different back home, it’s a bit different, it’s much less...it’s more similar to Italy. So, there are several contradictions too and also arguments...

(Dana: Romanian woman married to an Albanian man, one child)

Therefore, culture (also indicated as mentality and traditions) may represent a source of either similarities or dissimilarities, whose meanings are constructed in relation to the significant ‘other’ as well as in the context and situation of the interview encounter. In Chapter 6, we saw how food – far from being neutral – works as a signifier, able to

⁸⁸ The most extensive definition of the Balkan peninsula includes also Romania. See also Pratsinakis (2009) about Albanians and Greeks in Greece.

indicate social distance and proximity, bright and blurred boundaries, higher and lower rankings. Below, Bekim and Alina further illustrate the dual usage of cultural differences. While Brahic (2013) noted how cultural differences play an important role especially at the beginning and at the end of partnerships, the following quotation shows how they can be differently perceived within the same couple as an element which puts together or takes apart.

Alina: (It's) positive, also because when you come from the same country you argue more easily, instead when you are like we are, sometimes before...before I get upset to the point of telling him: 'Look, that's enough, let's break up now!' I think twice and say to myself 'Wait a bit, at first I need to understand your way' so I think this also keeps us together a lot [...] I think it's something good, because I think if I was together with a Romanian, I'm afraid now I wouldn't have been together any longer...

Bekim: I've thought about this differently, instead, I mean, we have more ways to...we have more...it's easier to argue because we think of many things in a different way [...] things perhaps you do without (intention)...

(Bekim & Alina: Albanian man and Romanian woman, married, one child)

Various factors from the social status of the groups involved, to the absence of institutional multiculturalism, to the diversity in the profile of the sample (not only urban and educated participants as in most research on intermarriage) contributed to paying relatively little attention to the category of culture. It is not a coincidence that 'interculturalism' and 'multiculturalism' were mentioned only by those educated urban participants who are actively trying to pursue multiple affiliations for their children. Interestingly, both Erion and Arjan saw mixed families also as laboratories where children could develop 'antibodies' against racism and discrimination and also communicate a message to the wider public opinion – showing how mixed couples and families have a societal role to play too.

Erion: If you're an open-minded person I think this thing of...of multiculturalism...I think it's just beneficial, I understand this because I see it in my kid, kids are...you can't see it otherwise, you can only see it when kids grow up, because they grow up with...with many things taken from the different...from each culture of the parents [...] as if these were antibodies a kid develops in this lived experience, you know what I mean, so it's something good...

(Erion: Albanian man married to an Italian woman, one child)

Arjan: (The advantage of a mixed couple) is also that of showing to the public opinion, to whom lives around us, that it's feasible, that it's not wrong or dangerous, but it's important to do everything with love, following shared principles, so, what we put at stake is not our different culture or our belonging to two different nations rather than to the same nation, but our principles...

(Arjan: Albanian man married to an Italian woman, two children)

7.2.2 Religion

The latter quotation also introduces the possibilities of overcoming the definition of ‘mixed couple’, which is based on differences, through commonalities. In the case of Arjan these commonalities are the Christian values shared by his wife and him, which have been central in his own trajectory of incorporation. The identification of common principles through religion only characterised a few Albanian-Italian couples, who were not simply Catholic by conversion or origin but, above all, practising Catholic. However, it is worthwhile discussing this topic because religion constitutes an ethnic yet universal category, whereas nationality represents an ethnic and particular category unable to produce identity within the couple. In fact, Arjan sees in Christianity a primary source of identification at a personal and couple/family level, beyond different nationalities and cultures. While Lamont et al. (2002) found that the common belonging to the *umma*⁸⁹ enables French Muslims to overcome further divisions, here the Catholic faith becomes the glue holding partners together. This supra-national value of religion is exemplified in the story of Rozalba. Her family was not particularly happy about her engagement to an Italian man – her grandfather even had memories of the Italian invasion of Albania during the Second World War – although the fact that Federico was a practising Catholic like them somehow bridged this gap. Rozalba then says that her family was also unhappy for the engagement of one of her sisters to a non-practising Muslim Albanian, precisely because this would have obstructed the transmission of the Catholic religious affiliation to the next generation.

Therefore, while religion was never perceived as a primary source of difference within the couple, also because of the fact that Muslim Albanian participants were non-practising, it did contribute to create commonality. Moreover, participants also mentioned their common atheism in opposition to the definition of ‘mixed couple’ since religious differences may be perceived as more compelling than the national ones. Below Chiara and Toni talk about their atheism, but we can also see a mismatch between an understanding of religion as a group affiliation (Toni) and one as personal faith (Chiara).

Rachele: *If I say to you ‘mixed couple’, does it make sense to you?*

Toni: Actually...

Chiara: No.

⁸⁹ Muslim religious community.

Toni: ...I don't care, also because maybe it has to do with this, it has to do with churches, mosques, these are terrible, eh, maybe if you come from a country a bit more radical like Morocco, they're a bit more resolute in these things, but we...about mosques – because I'm Muslim, let's put it clear – about mosques, churches, I don't care at all, right, maybe this (=Chiara) goes to church and crosses herself and tells me: 'Do it yourself, otherwise people look at you!'

Chiara: No, what has that to do with it?!

Toni: I mean, why should I do it, if I don't care, why would I need to do it?

Chiara: It's not about the church, I'm not Catholic, but when I enter a holy place, because I respect the place I enter, the same way you take off your shoes in a mosque, I think you should...

Toni: But it's not (the same)...

(Toni & Chiara: Albanian man and Italian woman, cohabiting, one child)

7.2.3 Education

In the previous chapter, we saw that religion may also offer a place of encounter and frame the whole relationship – like education. In fact, universities have been key meeting points, able to identify commonalities in values and class. Therefore, by considering education and the consistency between the educational level of the participant, his/her partner, and their parents, intermarriage could be approached in terms of same/different class background and with reference to upward/downward social mobility via marriage. This means that couples could be made up of upper class men and women, lower class men and women, upper class men and lower class women, lower class men and upper class women – all these combinations assuming a proxy equivalence of education to class. Within my sample, almost all possible combinations of nationality/gender/class statuses were covered – only two combinations are missing among Albanian-Romanian couples, also because of the low number of couples with an Albanian woman I managed to interview.

Nonetheless, some combinations were more common than others. Albanian-Italian couples with an Italian man were on average more affluent than those with an Italian woman. Albanian-Italian couples were also more educated than Albanian-Romanian couples. The number of Albanian women with third-level education was almost the same as that without, as it was among Italian men; Italian women with third-level education outnumbered their counterparts, as opposed to Albanian men and above all Romanian women. Albanian educated men were found in Albanian-Italian couples rather than in Albanian-Romanian ones, although most Albanian-Italian couples with an Albanian man were composed of partners with the same educational level and to a smaller extent of a more educated Italian woman – this pattern was also found among Albanian-Romanian couples with an Albanian man. Patterns attributable to educational

homogamy rather than status exchange were more common. According to the former theory, education may substitute ethnicity in creating affinities within the couple. According to the latter theory, instead, educated individuals from lower status groups would marry non-educated individuals from higher status groups. What is more, most couples had the same either high or low educational level. Moreover, not only class, but also other elements (e.g. age) are also likely to be traded through marriage. However, in my sample partners were usually roughly equal in age and gaps of more than 10 years were not only rare but also variously distributed and followed gender rather than ethnic categories. This means that men were usually older than women across the three groups and that the rare 10-year gap would affect not only Italian, but also Albanian and Romanian men partnering Albanian, Italian, and Romanian women. Below, I report some examples of intermarriage and similar/different class background, in order to flesh out these patterns through lived experiences – which is one of the advantages of qualitative studies.

In the case of Erion (dentist), the same high social status is reproduced through intermarriage: he, his wife, parents, and in-laws all hold third-level education degrees – although this pattern was extremely rare. Moreover, there are further parallelisms between the mixed couple composed by Erion and his wife and the mixed couple made up of his in-laws; since they all met at the university, in the city where they had moved for studying. Therefore, although his father-in-law did not have a good opinion of Albanians, Erion makes a difference between the typical Albanian immigrant and himself on the basis of education and class background.

Erion: My father-in-law had also been working together (with Albanians): ‘Precisely because I work with them – he would say – I avoid them’ [he laughs] [...] he’s an architect and of course had to do with masons, but [...] we are (what we are) also on the basis of the culture we have, of what we’ve been transmitted (by parents) and so on, obviously somebody educated has more, let’s say, not culture but...can relate in a completely different way in comparison with a mason, a manual worker, right, so...
(Erion: Albanian man married to an Italian woman, one child)

Nonetheless, intermarriage may also imply the reproduction of the same low social status. Lirjona and Patrizio have low-secondary education and a working-class background, both have been employed in low-income jobs – the day after the interview Patrizio was due to start working as a courier after a few months of unemployment and no social welfare support. Referring to this, Patrizio believes that it would have been more advantageous for Lirjona to be a single mother or even married to another

foreigner. In fact, he feels that institutions tend to help foreigners rather than Italians in need, for supporting their integration; whereas minority-majority couples are basically considered integrated thanks to the national majority partner and thus not eligible for the same support – see Campomori and Caponio (2013) about integration as assistentialism. Both partners also share an experience of migration in their childhood/adolescence: after divorce, the mother of Patrizio returned to Italy with his siblings and him; whereas the mother of Lirjona emigrated to Italy with her. None of them keeps in touch with their fathers. In the following quotation, Lirjona and Patrizio joke about their financial situation and the view that intermarriage is usually a deal for the immigrant partner.

Lirjona: People think: ‘She’s a foreigner, maybe wants to marry him for interest, maybe he has money...’ I didn’t know you only had debts!

Patrizio: I didn’t have debts!

Lirjona: You?!

Patrizio: I didn’t have anything...

Lirjona: Indeed...

Patrizio: ...therefore, I didn’t have debts either!

(Lirjona & Patrizio: Albanian woman and Italian man, married, one child)

Class, however, can be an additional source of inequality too. In the case of Floriana and Alberto, education rather than nationality/religion is identified as the main divide. She holds a degree in medicine from Italy and he only attended the lower-secondary school. Her father had a prestigious job in Albania and would have expected an educated husband, at least. Similarly, Simona has a degree in economics from Romania, whereas her partner has just few years of schooling. Education is a sort of empowerment and although, at the beginning, he liked her emancipation, later on, he found it rather challenging.

Floriana: The issue in our relationship is...

Alberto: ...the issue is rather because of the education [...]

Floriana: ...it’s not really the fact of being...sure, cultural differences can be seen from many respects, it’s not that (they can’t be seen), but are rather...anyway I’ve been living here for 10 years, also when I go to Albania I feel I’m a foreigner even there, you know what I mean, so it’s not that...the difference is in two jobs, two very different worlds, because I did it (=his job) but I did it only temporarily, to earn some extra money, that’s it...

(Floriana & Alberto: Albanian woman and Italian man, cohabiting)

Simona: ‘You, from Romania, do you think you’re smarter?!’ ‘No, I am!’ you know, just to tease him, I’m smarter anyway, eh, so sometimes he criticises me about this thing of Romania [...] initially [...] he was fascinated by my fighting spirit [...] but then gradually...I think – my girlfriend also thinks – he feels inferior, because he attended

(only) 8 years of school [...] then he couldn't [...] continue, eh, this annoys him a bit...a lot...

(Simona: Romanian woman cohabiting with an Albanian man, one child)

7.2.4 *Cosmopolitanism*

The last category by which participants rejected and reworked the definition of 'mixed couple' was cosmopolitanism. In the 'age of migrations', cosmopolitanism is not any longer the privilege of an élite, but concerns a larger diasporic population. However, cosmopolitanism does not coincide with globalisation, since it is not taking place 'out there' but happens 'from within'; it is an attitude, a disposition, and a worldview which enables individuals to adjust everywhere, be familiar with strangeness, and manoeuvre different systems of meanings (Beck and Sznaider 2010). After a few seconds of silence, Tanush came out with the following affirmation, smiling: 'By checking the map, we're a mixed couple, because she's Romanian and I'm Albanian, we're born in different places [...] but still they're two countries of the same world'. Similarly, Giacomo defines himself as a 'citizen of the world' and draws attention to the social constructedness of the category of mixedness – also a Southern/Northern Italian couple could be considered 'mixed' in his view (see Collet 2012). Nonetheless, the minority partner may have more awareness of mixedness and its implications than the majority one (see Killian 2001).

Giacomo: If people say to me we're a mixed couple I would say 'No', because every couple is a bit mixed, I mean, I think we're a bit citizens of the world, so I think it's a mixed couple also one made up of one from Milan and one from Caserta⁹⁰, I mean, one and one [...] we do have these different cultures, but the couple is made up of two people, not of two cultures, so each person filters the culture [...] if somebody says to me (we're a mixed couple), I would say: 'No, we are Giacomo and Gerta and these are our stories'.

Gerta: Yes, but I think from outside people would consider us...

Giacomo: Maybe...[looking at her]

Gerta: ...more than what we consider ourselves...

(Gerta & Giacomo: Albanian woman and Italian man, married, one child)

The quotation also shows that mixedness is time/space bound. Not only Italian, but also Albanian participants sometimes considered as a sort of intermarriage also that between Northerners and Southerners – although in the Albanian case, the stereotype is overturned in favour of Southern Albanians. Instead, Adriana would define as a 'mixed couple' primarily the Hungarian-Romanian ones, saying that her father accepted more easily her relationship with a foreigner rather than to a national 'other'. Other

⁹⁰ City in Southern Italy, near Naples.

participants would instead link mixedness primarily with ‘race’. Fabrizio distinguishes between his ‘unmixed’ marriage and a mixed one involving a Sub-Saharan African or an Eastern Asian partner, for instance. Ionela’s mother – worried about some pictures portraying Ionela with Nigerian friends at an Italian language course – was happy enough to know that her partner was White, although she had no idea where Albania was. References to ‘race’ were also present in expressions like ‘half-breed’/‘half-blood’ about the children of intermarriage, which some parents would ‘jokingly’ use; but they can be also employed in a serious and worrisome way. (Another) Rozalba, now divorcing because of racism, remembers the accusation ‘You mixed us with the Albanians!’ coming from the former wife and children of her husband, for instance.

Turning back to cosmopolitanism, this also needs a place; a touristic city like Florence may sustain a cosmopolitan orientation – similar to what Vathi (2015) found among the local Albanian second generation. Nevila and Florian, for example, live in the city centre of Florence and work in exclusive pubs; they are in their late 20s, and do not cohabit yet. Their friendship network is composed of his sister plus a few mixed couples, among which both Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples. On the other hand, Roland and Adriana live and work out in the province, they are in their early 40s, and have two children. Their social network is composed of his family of origin and Italian friends. The two couples approach cosmopolitanism from two different although complementary angles: the former, from (super)diverse Florence *vis-à-vis* Albania and Romania; the latter, from rural Tuscany, comparing the Italian provincialism to the American melting-pot.

Nevila: We’re two foreigners in a foreign place, how to say, while in their case (=an Albanian-Italian couple friend of hers) at least one of the two is a reference point, is from the country, (in our case) it’s different...

Florian: It depends on the country, maybe here in Italy the mentality is more open, so couples are more mixed up than..I mean, you may even find mixed couples more easily than Italian couples, there are a lot...for example, among us (in Romania) everybody is from the same country, there’s little tourism, few foreigners [...] we would have been more impressed if we were in our countries, but here we don’t even think of it...
(Nevila & Florian: Albanian woman and Romanian man, engaged)

Roland: What I think is missing, in my opinion, in Italy, is that spirit...in the US, when we went there, everything...everything was mixed up, you know what I mean, in the way of speaking too...nobody cares about where you’re from [...]

Adriana: Maybe now is changing, especially among youngsters...

Roland: Still many years are necessary, baby...

Adriana:...because there’s more interaction [...] now the second generations are growing up and I think things will change, but between the first generation of both hosts and new-comers things are still at a rather superficial level...

(Roland & Adriana: Albanian man and Romanian woman, married, two children)

The last quotation makes a very important point: integration as a two-way process not only involves both foreigners and nationals, but also multiple generations among them. The core sample of this research was composed of an in-between generation: a generation which emigrated in adolescence, but also a generation which witnessed immigration in its adolescence.

Moreover, cosmopolitanism is not only matter of place, but also of setting. The following quotation shows, again, the important gap between etic and emic viewpoints. Selma and Cosimo pass from being ‘citizens of the world’ among their diverse friendship network to becoming a couple based on a marriage of convenience in the *crèche* where Selma is swiftly turned into an immigrant wife.

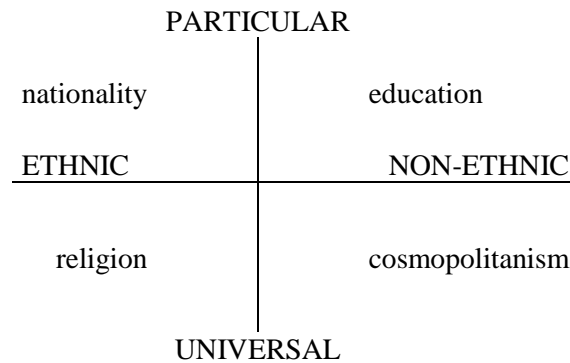
Cosimo: The last evening we were four mixed couples [...] you and me [he looks at her], then Japan-Italy was there, Italy-Argentina too...José, where is Alessia’s boyfriend from? [...] Mexico, yes, he’s Mexican [...] you know what I mean, this is not a coincidence...

Selma: We actually have a lot of friends who are mixed up...

Cosimo: We’re really freak [‘freak’ also in the original] in this and I like it very much, indeed...

(Selma & Cosimo: Albanian woman and Italian man, cohabiting, one child)

The four configurations of mixedness discussed in the current and last part of this chapter are represented in the following diagram (Figure 32). These configurations are organised along the axes ethnic/non-ethnic and universal/particular and consist of nationality (ethnic particular), religion (ethnic universal), education (non-ethnic particular), and cosmopolitanism (non-ethnic universal). We can think of these four configurations through a semiotic square (see Greimas 1967), in which nationality (ethnic particular) and education (non-ethnic particular) are contrary; religion (ethnic universal) and cosmopolitanism (non-ethnic universal) are sub-contrary; nationality and cosmopolitanism as well as religion and education are contradictory; nationality and religion as well as education and cosmopolitanism are instead complementary.

Figure 32. Configurations of mixedness through emic categories

First, nationality as an ethnic category marks a primary divide between partners and legitimates the phrase ‘mixed couple’. This legitimation also makes etic and emic categories coincide, which means that the couple accepts the definition imposed from the outside. However, two different strategies are employed to deal with the conflation of nationality with its social stigma. In the former case, nationality is detached from the social stigma (e.g. ‘Albanian’ only has a denotative meaning, which means somebody coming from Albania); in the latter case, the embedded connotative meaning is modified through the category of migration – as we saw in Chapter 5 – and mainly through the acknowledgement of a process of (co-)integration. This may further lead to deny mixedness and the alterity which this implies. Interestingly, especially participants coming from ethnic and religious minorities or from mixed marriages themselves accepted the definition of ‘mixed couple’ on the basis of the category of nationality. Instead, Albanian-Italian couples were often opposed to the term ‘mixedness’ because of the overlap between nationality and social stigma. Therefore, by denying the social stigma attached to the nationality, also the nationality was somehow denied and Albanianness was turned into ‘quasi-Italianness’. On the contrary, Albanian-Romanian couples saw this definition as less problematic also due to the relative symmetrical status that Albanian and Romanian immigrants hold in Italy not only as immigrant minorities, but also because of the legacies of the parallel processes of Albanophobia and Romanophobia (King and Mai 2009; Mai 2010). This could also be influenced by the incidence of interreligious and/or interethnic marriages within their home-societies.

The other three configurations illustrated in the diagram do not simply indicate participants’ rejection of the definition of ‘mixed couple’ based on nationality, but rather the proposal of alternative reference systems for making sense of the partnership. In the first case, religion works as a marker of couple identity. In this case-study,

religion represented a universal (supra-national) ethnic category able to create commonality, rather than a particular (sub-national) category producing fundamental divisions. This is mainly due to the fact that Albanian Muslims were not practising; rather, they were atheist, or open to any Christian affiliation and intergenerational transmission. Therefore, when the Albanian partner was either originally or a converted Catholic and both partners were practising, religion became the main source of commonality within the couple and family sphere. This is exemplified by the decision of enrolling the child in a religious school, to attend masses in both Albanian and Italian, to have the wedding celebrated by an Albanian priest in Italy, to name the child after Mother Teresa, etc. In all these cases the division linked with nationality is overcome through religion, which becomes the primary framework around which the couple's self-identification is organised. Therefore we could speak of a passage from endogamy to ecumenism.

In the second case, couples identify themselves in the non-ethnic category of education, which I consider particular because it enables participants to distinguish themselves from other (non-educated) co-ethnics and find more affinities with the educated partner despite his/her nationality. Education not only represents a proxy for occupation and class, but also means shared values (e.g. less religiosity) and compatible life-styles (Furtado and Theodoropoulos 2010). We have seen that especially when education is not equally distributed within the ingroup, educated individuals tend to outmarry and this is especially the case of women who are more likely to marry at the same level or up rather than down the social ladder (Furtado 2012). As shown in Chapter 3, the Albanian student migration which developed in the 2000s was especially made up of women joining some male next of kin, often a labourer. This sub-group is likely to intermarry for several reasons ranging from the uneven sex ratio to the fact that studies usually imply delays in marriage as well as suspicions about the morality of single independent women abroad, making them less marriageable within the ingroup (Lichter 1990). Moreover, some educated female participants mentioned their unwillingness to marry a co-ethnic and therefore to possibly return to a more traditional household structure and kinship system. As a result, we could speak of a passage from endogamy to educational homogamy.

Lastly, the couple moves beyond the concept of mixedness through cosmopolitanism, namely through the reference to a global citizenship and the feeling of belonging to the whole world, beyond nations and nationalities. Intermarriage is thus

seen as the effect of globalisation and as a phenomenon which will be increasingly common in the years to come not only in the immigrant-receiver but also in the immigrant-sender societies, where weddings and summer holidays bring together an increasingly intermarried kin spread all over the world. Although this internalised dimension of globalisation more often emerged in interviews to urban educated individuals, it was also found within a working-class of non-free-movers. Referring to this, it is also important to note that the basis for cosmopolitanism may also differ, ranging from localism to humanitarianism (see Kofman 2005).

Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen what the experiences of Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples are with reference to family formation. The chapter has answered the following research questions: *What are the characteristics of these mixed families? What configurations of mixedness are in place among them? What are the main (dis)similarities between minority-majority (Albanian-Italian) and minority-minority (Albanian-Romanian) couples and families?* We have seen that these two typologies of partnerships and marriages not only differ because of the number of reference systems involved when it comes to naming, language, religion, and citizenship; but also because of the power relations embedded in these unions, which result in more or less asymmetrical identity-projects for the children. In fact, although women play a major role in the elaboration and implementation of these identity-projects, being open to the transmission of the patrilineal affiliation together or even instead of their own affiliation because of introjected gender hierarchies (see Santelli and Collet 2012), the extent to which each affiliation is transmitted depends on the interplay between ethnic, gender, and class categories. To give a few examples, while multilingualism seems to concern mainly educated majority-minority and minority-minority couples, it has been more successfully developed among minority-minority couples, regardless of their educational level, precisely because of the multilingualism of the parents, the multiplicity of languages at home (Albanian, Italian, and Romanian), and the similar language status of parental mother-tongues (Albanian and Romanian). In fact, when the language of one of the partners is the mainstream language, this prevails despite the openness of majority women towards bilingualism. Therefore, while some Italian women learnt Albanian on their own, they rarely managed to make their partners teach

it to the children. Similar dynamics in minority-minority couples led instead to the transmission of the matrilineal language (usually Romanian), although there was some extent of trilingualism also due to the circulation of grandparents from both sides and to the gendered dimension of the economic crisis, which had temporarily left working-class men unemployed, taking care of the children while their female partners were at work. Instead, when the majority partner is male there is a higher power imbalance within the couple and bilingualism is rarely an option. Moreover, raising children in a largely monolingual society with no institutional support to immigrants' languages, like Italy, may also lead to the dismissal of bi/trilingualism plans sooner or later.

Similarly, while non-practising Muslim partners in majority-minority couples may be open to the Catholic affiliation of their children as it is the dominant religion within the host-society; this not so straightforward in minority-minority couples, since it would mostly result in an 'improper' matrilineal transmission of religion – Romanian mothers being usually religious. Instead, when it comes to citizenship, this debate does not take place because of the recent EU accession of Romania, leading Albanian men to accept the transmission of the Romanian citizenship to their children for instrumental reasons, although this also has a symbolic meaning for Romanian women. The intention of some Albanian men to transmit the Italian citizenship (rather than the Albanian) to their children and even their willingness to apply for the Italian citizenship, differently from their Romanian partners, for whom it would be actually easier due to the EU status, could also be seen as a way in which men may try to readjust the power imbalance created within the couple. It is important to note that sometimes, at the moment of couple formation, Romania was still non-EU – similar to Albania. Therefore, the Albanian male partner held a hegemonic position not only because of his gender, but also because of his longer history of migration. This gave him some advantages which were initially useful for supporting the Romanian female partner when it came to finding accommodation, employment, etc. This situation changed with the accession of Romania to the EU.

The chapter then discussed the four configurations of mixedness which emerged from the fieldwork, with reference to the interpretation that participants gave about their partnership and marriage. This implies the acceptance or rejection of the phrase 'mixed couple' on the basis of nationality and its conflation with the prevailing social stigma. In the first case, boundary-making within the couple occurs in ethnic terms and there may be an overlap between etic and emic viewpoints. Also in this case, Albanian-Italian

couples perceived themselves less ‘mixed’ than Albanian-Romanian couples, not only because of ascribed but also because of achieved affinities. Yet, couples also found other common grounds onto which they could build their relationship; these were religion, education, and cosmopolitanism. Therefore, starting from the category of mixedness has made it possible to explore the categories used by the participants themselves to make sense of their own experiences and attain a deeper understanding of intermarriage. This could take into consideration both ethnic and non-ethnic categories and especially the gap between external and internal visions, which distinguishes intermarriage from marriage (Collet 2012). In fact, while outsiders would point out the differences leading to possible separations, partners tended to identify the commonalities which are making their unions take place and last. Furthermore, we have seen that by not employing a research design based on ‘culture’, this acquires a relative and limited value of meaning-making. In this way, the shortcomings of ‘finding what the researcher is looking for’ are consequently reduced (Menz 2013).

Figure 33. Albanian-Italian couple in Krujë, Albania, showing an Albanian-Italian flag



CONCLUSION

8.1 Catching up

This final chapter gives an overview of the main findings of my research in the light of the theoretical framework – which has brought together the literatures on ethnic boundaries, integration, and intermarriage – in order to discuss the theoretical contribution of my study beyond its empirical value. It then concludes by identifying the main limitations of this thesis and possible directions for future research.

This research has aimed at investigating the state of socially constructed boundaries between ‘selves’ and ‘others’ in the case of Albanians, Italians, and Romanians in Italy and thus understanding how ethnic categories are kept or modified through interaction by focusing on Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian partnerships and marriages. The thesis departed from a constructivist approach to ethnicity. First, it recognised that ethnicity is a superordinate identity marked by the boundary between ‘self’ and ‘other’ rather than by the ‘cultural stuff’ which it encloses (Barth 1969). Second, it showed that ethnic boundaries are the outcome of processes of self/other identification taking place in social space and thus vary in political salience, social closure, cultural differentiation, and historical stability (Wimmer 2008b). Third, it acknowledged that these processes are based on ethnic categories which are relevant in specific time/space conjunctures – corresponding to ethnicity *sensu stricto*, nationality, religion, and ‘race’. Fourth, it noted that ethnicity is a relation of identity/alterity in which a third pole is necessary in order to measure reciprocal (dis)similarities, although this does not imply an ethnic structuration of the social space (Gossiaux 2002). Fifth, it argued that ethnicity is not a ‘thing’ in the world but a perspective on the world, which makes it possible to speak of ethnicity also in non-ethnically structured societies, by looking at ethnic categories and boundaries rather than at ethnic groups (Brubaker 2002).

Following Zolberg and Woon (1999), the thesis approached integration as a process of boundary-making turning ‘others’ into ‘selves’; furthermore, along with Qian and Lichter (2007), intermarriage was similarly interpreted. As far as integration is concerned, the opposition between host-society and immigrants is progressively overcome through processes of boundary-crossing and boundary-blurring like language learning, religious conversion, citizenship acquisition, etc. which make host-society members out of immigrants. In the case of intermarriage, instead, mixed couples could

be seen crossing ethnically-marked intergroup boundaries, which are subsequently blurred by the multiple affiliations of their offspring and progressively shifted by ‘remaking the mainstream’ (Alba 1999). Afterwards, the literatures on integration and intermarriage were reviewed.

Integration was approached as a process rather than as an outcome and through the involvement of a plurality of social actors across multiple levels, dimensions, and spheres (Heckmann 2006). Four ‘visions of diversity’ were discussed: integration, assimilation, multiculturalism, and mixity (Grillo 2005). Within each vision, the nexus between integration and intermarriage was explored with reference to the literature, mentioning both theoretical and empirical studies. In Europe, the concept of integration has been generally preferred. In particular, Heckmann (2006) proposed a four-part model of integration composed of structural, cultural, interactive, and identificational integration. Within this model, intermarriage constitutes a sphere of interactive integration; however, thanks to the interdependence between levels, dimensions, and spheres, intermarriage could appear both as the result of and the condition for further types of integration (labour market, acculturation, social networks, etc.). The assimilationist literature, instead, first recognised the importance of intermarriage in terms of social distance reduction and social cohesion (see Bogardus 1925). The trajectories of incorporation of European immigrants in the US enabled Gordon (1964) to theorise straight-line assimilation; whereas the post-1965 arrivals of Asian and Latin-American immigrants complicated this picture, leading to new assimilation theories (Alba and Nee 1997, Portes and Zhou 1993). While the straight-line assimilation theory understood intermarriage as a step ‘necessarily’ following cultural and structural assimilation, these new theories did not specifically address the implications of intermarriage for assimilation and social mobility (Song 2010). By contrast, the multiculturalist literature highlights the concept of culture, focusing on cultural differences in the public and private spheres. While the notions of superdiversity and conviviality have allowed authors to investigate ‘mixing’ in public spaces like urban neighbourhoods, the notion of interculturalism has especially been adopted within the household. Intermarriage has thus been turned into an intercultural encounter and a channel for transmitting pluralism (Meintel 2002; Remennick 2009). Finally, Grillo (2005) defined ‘mixity’ as a ground-level integration, going on in sites of interaction like mixed couples and families. The literature on mixity/mixedness – both translations of the French *mixité* – has focused on intermarriage as well as on the offspring of

intermarriage, an increasing share of population in times of globalisation (Collet 2012, 2015; Collet and Régnard 2011; Edwards and Caballero 2008; Edwards et al. 2010). Nonetheless, the existing literature is primarily centred on ‘race’ and religion as categories of mixedness. My thesis instead contributed to show that the ethnic categories which define mixedness in mixed marriages are multiple and context-bound. This was also illustrated in the last building block of my theoretical framework – that about intermarriage.

Intermarriage was approached through the combination of two models, drawn from both quantitative and qualitative literatures. The former model conceives intermarriage through the interplay of structural constraints, third-party interference, and personal preferences (Kalmijn 1997). The latter model approached the multiple ethnic categories used to define intermarriage and consequently subdivide the academic literature (ethnicity *sensu stricto*, nationality, religion, and ‘race’). I reviewed specific studies within the international literature on interethnic, international, interreligious, and interracial marriages which mostly involved the phenomenon of migration. Despite the ethnic categories turning ‘marriage’ into ‘mixed marriage’, Collet (2012) also pointed at the possibility of a gap between the visions of mixedness viewed internally and externally to the couple. This gap was the starting point of my own analysis.

The application of the boundary-making framework to both integration and intermarriage made it possible to link these two phenomena in a new way. In fact, one limitation that I found in the literature on intermarriage in immigrant societies is the unilinear approach to integration and intermarriage. This often results in understanding the intermarriage-integration nexus basically in terms of cause-consequence and also leads to focus the attention on one immigrant group only and its trajectory of incorporation into the host-society, overlooking the national majority as well as multiple immigrant minorities. Furthermore, I found that intermarriage is usually approached because of the otherness (i.e. cultural differences) which it allegedly implies and which is either problematised in terms of ‘cultural clash’ or celebrated in terms of ‘cultural dialogue’. In both cases, the category of culture is essentialised. My study challenged also this latter assumption, starting from (dis)similarity rather than alterity and without imposing the analytical category of culture – as discussed in the next section.

8.2 Taking stock of the situation

Focusing on three national groups (Albanians, Italians, and Romanians), two specific typologies of mixing (Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian), and one setting (Italy) has made it possible to delve into the complexity of intermarriage within an increasing (super)diverse social space, obtaining an in-depth understanding of this phenomenon beyond unilinearity and essentialism. Moreover, the ‘total social fact’ character of marriage itself (Lévi-Strauss 1950) has enabled a multi-level analysis linking the personal and the societal, the emic and the etic viewpoint, the individual, the couple, the family, and the in/out-group. As a result, intermarriage has appeared as an ideal vantage point for understanding the social changes brought about by migrations and, in this case, to investigate the state of the boundaries between Albanians, Italians, and Romanians in Italy 25 years after the first Albanian migration and 10 years after the Romanian migration ‘boom’. The main questions which my thesis has tried to answer were: *What can mixed couples and families tell us of the state of socially constructed boundaries, in the case of Albanian-Italian/Romanian couples and families in Italy? What kind of social change do they bring about? How are ethnic boundaries and categories kept or modified through this typology of interaction inside and outside the couple/family sphere?* I divided this main set of research questions in two sets of subquestions, respectively answered in Chapter 5 and Chapters 6-7, which were developed around the concepts of ‘mixedness through an etic lens’ and ‘mixedness through an emic lens’ – about the social change brought about by migration in society as a whole as well as in the most intimate sphere of the couple and family life (mixedness as integration and as intermarriage).

The first set of subquestions was: *How do minority-majority (Albanian-Italian) and minority-minority (Albanian-Romanian) couples relate to integration? Is there any space, within the integration framework, for understanding intermarriage also from the perspective of the national majority partner? Could we speak in terms of co-integration, for instance? What about intermarriage between immigrant minorities? Is the concept of integration still suitable in such a ‘three-player game’?* We have seen that both minority-majority (Albanian-Italian) and minority-minority (Albanian-Romanian) couples can relate to integration, if we think of integration as a multi-way process of boundary change which involves the national majority as well as multiple immigrant minorities interacting with and identifying each other in a common social space. Given

these premises, my study has not only shown that integration is necessarily co-integration (two-way), but also mixedness (multi-way). Therefore, Chapter 5 proposed a novel understanding of the intermarriage-integration nexus, rethinking integration as a multi-way process of boundary change and intermarriage as a site of integration able to reflect as well as shed light on migration-related dynamics of social change. The chapter explored the transformation of Italy into an immigrant society through the contribution of the Albanian and Romanian migrations and subsequent trajectories of incorporation, which were analysed through the application of the boundary-making framework and from the viewpoint of mixed partnership/marriage as a sphere of interaction and self/other identification. These boundary-making processes appeared as based on etic categories, namely categories proceeding from outside the couple, and constructed through the ethnic category of nationality and its attached social stigma. Significantly, the chapter showed how the phenomenon of migration itself plays a major role in making, unmaking, and remaking boundaries between ‘selves’ and ‘others’ – which I believe it is the added value of a study set in an immigrant and former emigrant society like Italy (see Favell 2002).

In particular, Chapter 5 was organised around the alternation of six mechanisms of boundary-making, which I drew from the extant literature as well as from my fieldwork. These mechanisms consisted of boundary-shifting, crossing, blurring, redefinition, repositioning, and resemantisation. I illustrated each mechanism through six phenomena which had Albanian-Italian/Romanian couples as protagonists. At first, I showed that stigmatisation may be understood as a phenomenon of boundary-shifting, able to draw boundaries between ‘selves’ and ‘others’. In this case, the opposition between national and foreigner was represented by the opposition first between ‘Italian’ and ‘Albanian’ (1990s) and then between ‘Italian’ and ‘Romanian’ (2000s). The so-called phenomena of Albanophobia and Romanophobia (King and Mai 2009; Mai 2010) specifically turned ‘Albanian’ and ‘Romanian’ into ethnic categories constructed through the overlap of nationality and social stigma. Besides this parallelism, I also put in relation the categories of ‘Albanian’ and ‘Romanian’ by virtue of their succession – resulting in a further opposition between ‘Albanian’ and ‘Romanian’ as old-timers/new-comers in Italy. This succession reminds us of another which had occurred one decade earlier, between the categories of ‘Southern Italian’ and ‘Albanian’ – leading from the internal opposition between North/South Italian to the creation of an Italian identity *vs* an Albanian alterity. All these ethnic categories linking Albanians, Italians, and Romanians

were basically organised around the opposition between core positive and core negative values (modernity and backwardness, wealth and poverty, work and criminality, etc.). The interrelation of these categories allowed me to conjointly analyse boundary-making processes in the case of Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples. These ethnic categories are, in fact, in place in the social space under consideration and affect interactions and identification between social actors who can be so defined. Therefore, they were analysed first.

The chapter showed how boundaries drawn via stigmatisation were reproduced through the reaction of couples' partners and of their social networks – mainly kin – at the encounter with the other. However, social stigmata could also be opposed through practices and discourses in everyday interaction. In fact, socially constructed boundaries might be crossed through social mimicry and blurred through counter-discourses against the social stigma based either on individualism or universalism. In the former case, an individual ascribed to a stigmatised group would hide or mask his/her own identity or even perform alterity through social mimicry (Romania 2004). In the latter case, social actors would instead speak of individuals over groups or alternatively call for a more encompassing 'humanitarian' approach (Lamont et al. 2002). Meaningful interactions like partnership and marriage made it possible to take a step forward. The chapter then showed that partners in mixed couples implement additional mechanisms, for making sense of their union, and actively transform socially constructed boundaries. Significantly, those boundaries established as a consequence of migrations are modified on the basis of the category of migration itself. First, a common emigration background – either in terms of personal biography or family history – may enable partners to redefine a common ground able to transcend previous divisions, putting together yesterday's and today's migrants. Second, the acknowledgement of (co-)intergration processes can legitimately reposition the foreign partner from the domain of the 'other' to the domain of the 'self', for majority and minority partners alike. Third, the transvaluation of identificational categories (i.e. their meaning reversal) could also create – from a cluster of return projects, escapist fantasies, and self-realisation dreams – the migrants of tomorrow. It follows that by looking at the intermarriage-integration nexus through a new lens – the boundary-making framework – we can have a novel insight into both integration and intermarriage, discovering the importance of the phenomenon of migration *per se* in the understanding of intermarriage in immigrant societies, beyond ethnic reductionism.

The second set of subquestions was: *What are the lived experiences of Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples? What is the role of friendship and family networks in couple formation and maintenance? What intersections of ethnic and gender categories characterise these partnerships and marriages? What are the characteristics of these mixed families? What configurations of mixedness are in place among them? What are the main (dis)similarities between minority-majority (Albanian-Italian) and minority-minority (Albanian-Romanian) couples and families?* Chapters 6 and 7 presented the experiences and characteristics of Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples/families in Italy and looked at the configurations of mixedness in place among them. Chapter 6 showed that friendship networks tend to facilitate couple formation by providing shared contacts and meeting places as well as by influencing personal attitudes towards the ‘other’ (Van Zantvlijet and Kalmijn 2013); whereas the family has an obstructive role through the intergenerational transmission of values and through sanctions via stigmatisation. It also showed that the social stigma has a gendered dimension; therefore, not only do outgroup men or women correspond to specific stereotypes, but also women and men are differently affected by the decision to intermarry because of different family and societal expectations (see Breger and Hill 1998; Clycq 2014). Gender is also central within the household, with reference to house-chores, care, and intergenerational transmission – as further shown in Chapter 7.

In particular, Chapter 6 dealt with the encounter with the partner, with the family of the partner, and between the two families; the wedding and life together. Firstly, it showed that these encounters happened in a plurality of places, mainly workplaces and universities (in the case of minority-majority couples), often mediated by common friends. This element, together with the rather equal age of partners and their various occupational profiles, contributed to present the normality of these couples – not coinciding with ‘Eurostars’ (Brahic 2013), nor with ‘outcasts’ (Peruzzi 2008). The chapter also showed that relatives may oppose intermarriage not only because of stigmatisation, but also because of the disruption of traditional patterns of intergenerational transmission and care. These expectations have a specific gendered dimension – as illustrated by the figures of the Albanian youngest/only son and the foreign daughter-in-law. Moreover, in accordance with ISTAT data, also within my sample most participants who got married had a civil ceremony rather than a religious one – this was also the case of minority-minority couples. Depending on the time of the marriage and its mobility constraints/opportunities in terms of visa and transport as well

as on the Albanian custom of double wedding parties, partners had one wedding in Italy or a plurality of parties in Italy, Albania, or Romania. The wedding itself was an opportunity to perform mixedness, through the inclusion of Albanian music, dances, and traditional clothes. Another realm in which mixedness emerges is food, which follows a gender rather than an ethnic divide, being the duty of women. The division of the domestic labour was found more equitable in minority-majority couples, although this was mainly about the cooking task, which may also indicate some dissatisfaction among Italian men. When it comes to residential arrangements, the main difference is between the virilocality of Albanian-Italian couples with an Albanian woman as opposed to the neolocality of Albanian-Italian couples with an Albanian man.

Chapter 7 dealt with the configurations of mixedness in place among mixed couples and families as the product of emic categories, namely categories originating from inside the couple, and not necessarily falling under the broad definition of ethnicity. Importantly, the chapter called for a more nuanced understanding of mixedness in mixed couples and families, by taking into account both ethnic and non-ethnic categories. It follows that intermarriage needs to be understood through the interplay between ethnicity, gender, class, age, generation (of migration), and place; that not only who marries whom, but also when and where intermarriage happens, is relevant from an external as well as an internal viewpoint – therefore, the importance of focusing on particular typologies of mixing rather than on general mixedness. Moreover, by starting from mixedness (instead of inter/bi prefixes) we could not only appraise differences but also commonalities in intermarriage, which may lead one to question the term ‘mixedness’ itself. Finally, I found that minority-majority intermarriage differs from minority-minority intermarriage not only because of the number of naming systems, languages, religions, and citizenships involved, but also because of the different power relations within/without the couple and family sphere – which is something never taken into account.

In fact, Chapter 7 examined family formation, with reference to the choice of a name for the children as well as to the transmission of religion, language, and citizenship. By interviewing both couples with and without children, I could investigate attitudes and behaviours related to these topics and observe their consistency (e.g. unwillingness to give an Albanian name), but also variation (e.g. bilingualism in theory, but not in practice). In agreement with ISTAT data, there are affinities, rather than differences between the names chosen among Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples,

although there may be a higher incidence of international names in the latter typology of couples. When it comes to (different) religion, an agreement is more easily reached among Albanian-Italian than among Albanian-Romanian couples because of fact that the religion of the Italian partner corresponds to the religion of the whole society; whereas in minority-minority couples religious transmission would rather turn into an ‘improper’ affiliation to the Romanian matrilineal side. As far as languages are concerned, while bilingualism is rarely developed among Albanian-Italian children, trilingualism is sometimes actively pursued among Albanian-Romanian ones. Various factors come into play from social network composition to parental multilingualism up to language status. Finally, citizenship is approached more in instrumental terms than as a matter of belonging. Not too many children have dual citizenship, and triple citizenship – although possible – was never considered. Usually the citizenship which was transmitted was either Italian or Romanian (both EU). Furthermore, Albanian partners in minority-minority couples preferred to transmit the Italian over the Albanian citizenship – which could be seen as a way to reaffirm the dominant male role in the family sphere.

After having given a detailed portrayal of Albanian-Italian/Romanian couples and families in Chapter 6 and 7, the second half of Chapter 7 turned back to the key concept of boundary-making and demonstrated that, within the couple and family sphere, boundaries may be drawn through ethnic or non-ethnic categories, producing further basis of self/other identification. In the first case, the couple accepts the definition of ‘mixed’ based on nationality. Partners may come from mixed families themselves, consciously perform mixedness through multiple religious festivals, or seek multilingualism. However, mixedness may be also rejected because of the social stigma associated with a particular nationality and the couple may look for another definition based on religion, education, or cosmopolitanism. This means that the same religion (usually Catholicism among Albanian-Italian couples) would become the primary identificational category within the couple. Partners may give a religious name to their children, enrol them in religious school, or attend bilingual masses. On the other hand, the couple may consider achieved commonalities, like education, rather than ascribed differences like nationality, as the foundation of their relationship. This would happen if they met in the university, have a professional career, or a similar upper class background. Couple identity could also be based on a similar lower class background, although in this case the lack of education was not used as a primary identificational

category. When the class background instead differs, education may turn into an additional boundary – similarly to a different religion. Lastly, partners may think of themselves as citizens of the world, beyond nations and nationality. They would mostly have a background made of international travels and student exchanges, live in a touristic city like Florence and enjoy the company of a diverse friendship network. Therefore, in Chapter 7, we saw that mixedness is a useful concept to start with. In fact, thanks to its openness, it has been possible to analyse ethnic and non-ethnic categories of boundary-making in place within the couple and families interviewed, not only moving beyond the frame of cultural differences, but also beyond that of mixedness itself.

Going back to the main set of research questions, the answer can be that mixed couples and families – in this case Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples and families in Italy – tell us a lot about the state of socially constructed boundaries, both reflecting and shedding a light on the social changes brought about by migration. These social changes concern the society as a whole as well as the most intimate sphere of couple and family life, so that we could explore them in terms of integration and intermarriage. It follows that the ethnic categories which have been employed for drawing boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’ in an immigrant social space are not only reproduced or countered within the couple and family sphere through the reiteration of stigmatisation and destigmatisation practices and discourses, for instance, but are also transformed. What is more, intermarriage itself not only consists of dealing with ethnic categories, but also of a quest for a common ground which is not necessarily ethnically marked.

8.3 Moving forward

Besides the theoretical, also the empirical value of my research is multiple. In the introduction, I noted that the topic of intermarriage had not been investigated in the extant literature about the Albanian and Romanian immigrant groups, neither in Italy nor elsewhere. Therefore, my thesis is the first full-length study on this topic. It also adds to the limited literature available on intermarriage in Italy and makes an original contribution to the field of intermarriage in Europe. In fact, the existing literature is rather focused on interracial/interreligious marriages between Europeans and non-Europeans and, to a lesser extent, also on international marriages between

Northern/Southern European men and Central/Eastern female labour/marriage migrant women or among cosmopolitan EU nationals (e.g. Brahic 2013; Britton 2013; Cerchiaro et al. 2015; Djurdjević 2013; Domić and Philaretou 2007; Gaspar 2009; Guetto and Azzolini 2015; Luehrmann 2004; Riva 2010; Rodríguez-García 2006; Streiff-Fénart 2000). Instead, my research participants are basically White, although from that Southern/Southern-Eastern/Eastern flank of Europe which has been also subjected to racialisation and with the presence of a racialised ‘other within’ (the Gypsy). This Whiteness, however, also shows that intergroup boundaries exist also beyond the visible divides – first of all ‘race’ – which have catalysed the attention of intermarriage research and may perhaps encourage future researchers to work on less mainstream topics, adding richness to the intermarriage literature. Moreover, the fact that the Albanian and Romanian post-communist migrations developed differently made it also possible to draw distinctions within the Central/Eastern European macro-group, whose inner differences are often overlooked (see Guetto and Azzolini 2015).

Furthermore, the combination of minority-majority and minority-minority intermarriages is largely absent in migration studies and this makes my study relevant also within the international literature. In fact, I believe that my research design, based on the combination of specific minority-majority and minority-minority couples, can be also applied to other social spaces and with reference to other social groups, which are significant in the symbolic construction of the societies under consideration – at various levels and not necessarily at a national one. I am here thinking of Southern Europe and its transformation from an emigrant into an immigrant social space. It could apply to Spain, for example, in between the colonial Latin-American ‘other’, the religious Moroccan/Moor ‘other’, as well as the European Romanian ‘other’ – with a high proportion of Gypsy population, as in Spain. But I am also thinking of ‘Balkan’ Greece and its (co-)ethnic/immigrant minorities: Albanians and Arvanites; Aromanians and Romanians; Bulgarians, Macedonians, and Pomaks; Pontic and Asia Minor Greeks. I also believe that the four schemes I elaborated in my study – the first and second about my theoretical framework, the third about boundary-making processes through etic ethnic categories, and the fourth about configurations of mixedness through emic (non)ethnic categories – could also be useful in future research.

My thesis has also contributed to develop the understudied field of research represented by minority-minority intermarriage. A lot can be done in this direction, in Europe and beyond. Referring to this, I am not only thinking of immigrant societies, but

also of multi-ethnic societies. It is perhaps worth mentioning that one of the episodes which triggered my reflection on this subject was an encounter – during the fieldwork for my BA dissertation – with a Mopan-Q’eqchi’ girl. She was living in a Mopan town, surrounded by Q’eqchi’ and Ladino (i.e. non-indigenous) rural settlements, in a Ladino region of an indigenous country like Guatemala. I had not asked her anything, but she decided to tell me that – although she was dressing in Mopan traditional clothes and working for the main Mopan institution – she actually felt more Q’eqchi’, her matrilineal side. I thought of the opposition between locals and new-comers in those Guatemalan lowlands, of hierarchies and boundaries between different groups sharing the same space and about how this could have related to the pan-Mayanist official ideology. I linked this encounter with another one, which had occurred in Northern Italy a few years earlier, when I met my first Albanian-Romanian couple through an Albanian friend and I started to think of the differences between minority-majority and minority-minority couples and families. Similar dynamics could perhaps have been found, in the early 20th century, between Punjabis and Mexicans in California (Isaksen-Leonard 1993) and later on between Irish and Italians in New York (Moses 2015). With my thesis, I also hope to have fixed a moment in the history of Italy as an immigrant society, in which partnerships and marriages developed also between Albanians and Romanians. The marital behaviour of the Albanian and Romanian second generations, born and raised in Italy, will be another avenue to explore in the years to come.

This may in turn lead to a deeper discussion on the complex influence of family on mixed partnership and marriage. In my thesis I have generally focused on the phenomenon of ‘coupledom’ rather than deeply engage in family theory, but the latter is of course significant. I have shown the importance of looking at mixed couples in the wider picture, beyond the specific couples and their present/future offspring. When it comes to the family of origin, the role of siblings is, I feel, especially interesting and yet understudied; and this avenue of enquiry could be relevant for both integration and intermarriage. We have also seen from the evidence presented in this thesis that, by thinking of mixed couples and their offspring as part of a wider kin-based network, we can gain a deeper understanding of intergenerational transmission too – as illustrated by the example of the Albanian language.

Additional elements which emerged in my study and which could be further developed in marriage and family research are the interlinked dimensions of place, class, and gender. In my thesis, I have shown that place, locality, and scale matter, and

that mixedness is, or can be, differentially expressed and experienced in urban vs rural settings as well as with reference to multiple home/host societies. These variegated spatial settings produce different opportunities and constraints – for socialisation, meeting potential partners, putting into practice identity-projects for the children, etc. – but also affect definitions of ‘self’ and ‘other’, cosmopolitan orientations and local identifications⁹¹. Future research would benefit from fieldwork in less urban settings, with more attention paid to intermarriage and family life in rural and more ‘peripheral’ areas. Similarly, also a more diverse sample in terms of educational and occupational backgrounds would be important. In my thesis, I made the example of the usage of the category of ‘culture’ especially among educated participants and of the risk of generalisation of cultural differences in intermarriage, which may also prevent the researcher from understanding further non-ethnic differences (e.g. education) which are relevant inside and outside the couple and family sphere.

Finally, gender may be at the basis of specific intermarriage patterns, not simply because of the gendered dimension of ethnic stereotypes, but also in relation to a range of other family dynamics – including intergenerational transmission, expectations relating to care, residency patterns, naming practices, etc. As a consequence there may be patterns of intermarriage more related to gender than to ethnicity. Certainly, future research should be more aware of (in)consistencies connected to different combinations of class, ethnicity, gender, generation (of migration), and place in intermarriage.

Before concluding, I should mention what can be seen as the limitations of the present study. First, positionality; being a national majority female myself may have been the reason for preventing some individuals from participating in my research as well as being a factor necessarily influencing interview encounters. However, I believe that my positionality has rather helped me in carrying out this project. In fact, gender has been a resource for speaking of an ‘intimate’ topic like partnership/marriage (often defined as ‘women’s stuff’), while my majority status has been important for understanding migration and integration in a wider picture linked with the transformation of Italy in the last 25 years and with my own lived experience. Second,

⁹¹ In my research, place played out slightly differently from Vathi (2012, 2013). In fact, while Florence did enable certain degrees of cosmopolitanism also among mixed couples, local identifications were not emphasised. This may depend on my different sample, who arrived in Italy mostly in adolescence rather than childhood – therefore belonging to the in-between generation rather than to the second generation – and composed of adults rather than teenagers. It may also depend on the fact that identificational categories are inherently interactive, which means they are (in)directly influenced by counterparts (there the Albanian parents, here the Italian/Romanian partners) as well as by the researcher’s positionality in the field.

referring to the methods employed, while I quickly understood the most effective way to interview participants (half in single interviews, half as a couple – rather than in a sequence), I could have also tried to schedule more follow-up meetings for photo-elicitation and participant observation. In that way, I would have been able to pay more attention to a sub-sample also in terms of daily routines and social networks – which I did only occasionally, due to my ambition of interviewing a fairly large sample of couples. The way in which I proceeded enabled me to gain a broad understanding of the phenomenon under study, which a deeper but also narrower approach would not have allowed me. In fact, by looking at a smaller sample, I could have missed the structure beyond the multiplicity and complexity of these unions. Probably, a smaller sample would not have shown so clear-cut recurring patterns, beyond the unique meaning of each lived experience. Third, while focusing on one region and its rural/urban division enabled me to explore the influence of place on mixedness and to attain a more diverse sample than most of existing intermarriage research, it would have been interesting to extend this study to other regions in the North and South of Italy – which was not possible due to time constraints and financial costs. However, I must say that I have some background knowledge of this research topic beyond the fieldwork area – also enhanced during my PhD thanks to the information retrieved through the geographical dispersion of participants' social networks as well as through Facebook. Fourth, my study has mostly focused on a generation which has only recently started to form a family and which has been portrayed at specific stages of its life-trajectory. It would be interesting to follow these participants and especially look at the growing up of their children and at the way in which they perform their multiple identity beyond the projects elaborated by their parents – with reference to their language skills, religious affiliation, citizenship and self-identification, relationships with the kin and the places of origin of the parents, social network composition, and finally partner choice. These are all questions that only time will answer. Lastly, although my study does not specifically aim at policy recommendations, I believe that it could also help to demystify stereotypes around stigmatised immigrant groups and around intermarriage. By researching Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Romanian couples and families in Italy, I portrayed the 'normality' of these partnerships and marriages. Is this a happily-ever-after story? Not necessarily. Some of these mixed couples will split up, like other 'unmixed' couples in their social networks, but in the same way in which we should rethink the intermarriage-integration nexus beyond causality and by taking into

consideration a plurality of (non-)ethnic factors, we may want to revise also the divorce-(dis)integration one.

Figure 34. Snowglobes and a frame



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Appendix – List of participants 1. Age, years in Italy, and marital/family status

No.	PARTICIPANTS	AGE	YEARS IN ITALY	STATUS
ALBANIAN-ITALIAN COUPLES WITH ALBANIAN WOMAN				
1	Adisa & Samuele	33-36	15	Married with child (2)
2	Alda	34-37	16	Married with children (4-1)
3	Ariana & Pietro	22-28	15	Married
4	Blerina	43-45	24	Married
5	Bleta	24-24	6	Engaged
6	Denada	24-26	6	Engaged
7	Dorina & Massimiliano	30-33	11	Cohabiting
8	Elvisa	36-36	19	Divorcing
9	Ermira	37-50	19	Married with children (7-5)
10	Esmeralda	35-37	16	Cohabiting
11	Floriana & Alberto	30-37	11	Cohabiting
12	Florinda & Thomas	36-45	7*	Cohabiting**
13	Gerta	42-53	17	Married with child (10)
14	Gerta & Giacomo	31-33	13	Married with child (4)
15	Gloria & Maurizio	30-43	11	Cohabiting
16	Ilira	30-32	14	Married
17	Iliriana	28-30	14	Engaged
18	Iliriana & Pietro	27-32	24	Cohabiting
19	Klodiana & Filippo	26-24	15	Engaged
20	Laureta & Antonio	30-33	12	Cohabiting
21	Liliana & Massimo	38-46	22	Married with children (10-9)
22	Linda & Fabrizio	31-37	18	Married
23	Lirjona & Patrizio	36-47	18-40	Married with child (10)
24	Lule	33-36	14	Married with child (2)
25	Naomi	30-33	9	Engaged
26	Rozalba	44-61	21	Divorcing with child (11)
27	Rozalba & Federico	41-52	18	Married with child (10)
28	Selma & Cosimo	35-44	10	Cohabiting with child (2)
29	Tanja & Davide	28-32	10	Married
30	Tina & Fabrizio	33-33	17	Married
31	Valbona & Federico	30-35	11	Cohabiting
32	Xhuljana & Matteo	26-26	21	Cohabiting

The Albanian partner is the first listed.

No.	PARTICIPANTS	AGE	YEARS IN ITALY	STATUS
ALBANIAN-ITALIAN COUPLES WITH ALBANIAN MAN				
33	Agim & Letizia	27-26	8*	Married
34	Arjan	40-35	25	Married with children (6-3)
35	Arjan & Chiara	39-37	19*	Cohabiting with children (4-2)
36	Artur & Valentina	37-31	21	Married with children (5-2)
37	Dritan & Federica	35-32	11	Cohabiting
38	Enlir	23-20	20	Engaged
39	Enkelejd & Irene	30-27	16	Cohabiting
40	Enzo & Elisabetta	26-24	12	Cohabiting
41	Erion	37-38	18-19	Married with child (6)
42	Ilaria	37-22	19	Engaged
43	Kevin & Nadia	33-36	16-34	Cohabiting
44	Klejdi & Aurora	25-27	18	Engaged
45	Martina	41-36	20	Cohabiting with children (6-2)**
46	Melissa	27-25	3*	Married
47	Olger	28-29	9	Engaged
48	Toni & Chiara	43-32	21	Cohabiting with child (7)
ALBANIAN-ROMANIAN COUPLES WITH ALBANIAN WOMAN				
49	Constantin	23-46	15*-21*	Cohabiting***
50	Nevila & Florian	30-27	11*-6	Engaged
ALBANIAN-ROMANIAN COUPLES WITH ALBANIAN MAN				
51	Bekim & Alina	35-32	15*-12	Married with child (4)
52	Bledar & Nicoleta	38-34	22-10	Cohabiting***
53	Dana	47-37	14-19*	Married with child (5)
54	Diana	24-23	13-12	Engaged
55	Fatmir & Marina	32-39	19*-9	Engaged***
56	Ioana	36-39	18-21	Married with children (6-4)
57	Ionela	38-34	25-18	Married with children (10-7-5)
58	Mădălina	29-24	14-13	Married
59	Roland & Adriana	41-39	22-18	Married with children (10-8)
60	Simona	47-41	25*-14	Cohabiting with child (5)***
61	Tanush & Monica	34-31	14-12*	Married with child (4)

* onward migration

** plus one child from a previous partnership, living together or ***not

Appendix – List of participants 2. Occupation

No.	OCCUPATION	No.	OCCUPATION
	ALBANIAN-ITALIAN COUPLES WITH ALBANIAN WOMAN		ALBANIAN-ITALIAN COUPLES WITH ALBANIAN MAN
1	Student – Unemployed	33	Factory worker – Factory worker
2	Student/Bed & Breakfast – Engineer	34	Unemployed – PhD student
3	Estate agent/Wedding-planner – Blogger	35	Restaurant – Restaurant
4	Student – Cook	36	Courier – Receptionist
5	Housewife – Musician	37	Student – Student
6	Housewife – Banker	38	Canteen – Greenhouse
7	Taylor – Lawyer	39	Factory worker – Painter
8	Student/Waitress – Barista	40	Teacher – Dentist
9	Doctor – Engineer	41	Barista – Mason
10	Barista – Courier	42	Office worker – Unemployed
11	Research assistant – Engineer	43	Shop-assistant – Hotel
12	Office worker – Book-keeper	44	Bed & Breakfast – Canteen
13	Housewife – Healthcare assistant	45	Housewife – Factory worker
14	Shop-assistant – Gardner	46	Public servant – Healthcare assistant
15	Shop-assistant – Factory worker	47	Labour inspector – Consultant
16	Student/Ice-cream seller – Bus-driver	48	Research assistant – Musician
17	Journalist – Journalist		ALBANIAN-ROMANIAN COUPLES WITH ALBANIAN WOMAN
18	Student/Waitress – Research assistant	49	Doctor – Barista
19	Accountant – Lawyer	50	Barista – Shop-assistant
20	Cleaner – Insurance		ALBANIAN-ROMANIAN COUPLES WITH ALBANIAN MAN
21	Cultural mediator – Sale representative	51	Cleaner – Cook
22	Doctor – Barista	52	Shop-assistant – Unemployed
23	Student/Waitress – Student/Private tutor	53	Cultural mediator – Mason
24	Union official – Surveyor	54	Housewife – Mason
25	Secretary – Technician	55	Restaurant – Restaurant
26	Receptionist – Firefighter	56	Cleaner – Bouncer
27	Student/Shop-assistant – Research assistant	57	Cleaner – Courier
28	Student/Waitress – Student	58	Caregiver – Barista
29	Public servant – Craftsman	59	Market – Catering
30	Housewife – Cook	60	Bed & Breakfast – Bed & Breakfast
31	Travel agency – Travel agency	61	Waitress – Lorry-driver
32	Housewife – Policeman		

For the sake of anonymity, the profiles of the couples in the two lists intentionally do not match. The female partner is the first listed.