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**Return Migration and Integration: A Comparison of  
Italian Returnees from Argentina and Europe**

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A dissertation submitted to the Department of Sociology at Trinity College,  
University of Dublin, in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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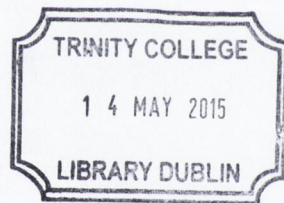
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## Abstract

Italy has a long history of outward migration, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century through to the 1970s. In recent decades this has been reversed with a strong pattern of return migration emerging. This thesis examines and compares the phenomenon of return migration of third-, fourth- and fifth-generation Italian descendants from Argentina and of second generation Italian descendants from a number of European countries, paying particular attention to France. It goes on to examine how generational differences and geographical distance from the country of origin impact on the experiences and attitudes of returnees from Europe and Argentina.

In order to do so, it draws upon different theoretical approaches including transnationalism, migration systems and push-pull theories. Transnationalism helps to theoretically locate return migration from Europe to Italy, whilst migration systems and push-pull theories better explain return migration from Argentina to Italy, in the context of this study. Other theories such as the 'dual frame of reference', 'relative deprivation' and 'bright versus blurred boundaries', are also employed to explain the experiences of integration of returnees in Italy. The data for this study was collected through 38 semi-structured interviews across the two groups which were carried out during fieldwork in the region of Piedmont, northern Italy. The data collection was conducted by exploring the integration processes of these two groups of returnees from economic, social, and cultural perspectives.

This study argues that returnees from Argentina can draw on similar socio-cultural and economic practices between Italy and Argentina which positively impact on their processes of settlement and integration. Returnees from Europe, despite their familiarity with Italy prior to their moving to the country, encounter more difficulties in this respect. This is because they perceive socio-cultural and economic norms in Italy to be very different from the country they grew up in. Moreover, while returnees from Argentina experience a process of identification towards Italy, returnees from Europe often experience quite the opposite. The study explores to what extent the identity of both returnee groups has been transformed since they have been living in Italy and how this impacts on their return experience. It shows that identity is an essential aspect of integration and one which permeates every aspect of return migrants' experience.

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## **Introduction**

In the aftermath of the Second World War, over a period of three decades, a substantial and continuous flow of predominantly southern Italian labour migration, which eventually accounted for approximately 7.5 million people, spread towards the north-west of Europe: France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Switzerland, and the former West Germany (Bevilacqua 1997). This pattern of migration lasted until 1973 when, partly as a result of the impact of the oil crisis, the phenomenon of return migration to Italy began.

Between the 1870s and 1930s around seven million Europeans migrated to Argentina. The migration flow from Italy and Spain accounted for nearly eighty per cent of the total migration to the country at this time (Solimano 2003). In contrast, since the 1990s, a reverse migration pattern emerged with many Argentinians, mainly with European origins, returning to Europe being spurred by high unemployment rates and an unstable political situation that have continued to occur in Argentina.

This thesis examines and compares the phenomenon of return migration of Italian descendants from Argentina and a number of European countries, paying particular attention to France. These can be considered 'postponed' European return migrations since those who came back to Europe were not the same Europeans who first migrated, but were their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren (Bramuglia and Santillo 2002).

It is important to acknowledge that the socio-economic and cultural background in which the decisions of migrants to return to their country of origin were made varies enormously from Western Europe to South America. The majority of return migrants from Argentina to Italy, who took part in this study, started to migrate as a consequence of Argentina's recent financial crisis in 2001. In March 2005, an estimated 1,050,000 Argentinians were living abroad (Jachimowicz 2006). However, it is difficult to provide an accurate number of Argentinians of Italian ancestry who are residing in Italy, since as Italian citizens, they do not need to register with the immigration offices (Fusaro 2008). Much like their Italian ancestors a century earlier, many Argentinians base their



return migration hopes on creating a better future for themselves and their families. This is the principal reason why many Argentinians have claimed an inherited citizenship. They could therefore, also be classified as economic migrants. However, since these migrants are returning to the country from which their ancestors came, 'the reverse directionality of the migrant flow introduces interesting new dynamics to previous studies of immigration' (Tsuda 2009a: 8). Moreover, the ethnic affinity of these migrants with Italians raises specific issues around identity that other immigrants in Italy do not face.

In contrast, the returnees of Italian origin from Europe are not migrating because of a recent economic and political crisis. Return migration to Italy from Western Europe commenced in the aftermath of the 1973 international oil crisis. However the return phenomenon did not end in the 1970s but continued, albeit on a smaller scale, throughout the 1980s and until the present day. While returnees from Western Europe to Italy face a more challenging economic situation in comparison to their previous country of residence in Western Europe, returnees from Argentina to Italy enter a more stable economic situation in comparison with the tumult that has been experienced in recent decades in Argentina. This study takes all these elements into account and explores how they impact on the return experience of the groups in question. Italian returnees from Europe are typically motivated by extra-economic concerns, often related (even if not necessarily openly) to an Italian identity, while Italian returnees from Argentina are generally responding to economic pressures. The latter must negotiate integration and can draw on their Italian origins to do so in a number of different situations, from the process of passport application (which involves demonstrating Italian origins and often takes a long time to process), to their interaction with Italian society and culture.

The majority of studies carried out in the field of return migration focus on first-generation return migrants who usually have a strong link and sense of belonging to their country of origin prior to their return. One of the most significant studies carried out on Italian return migration is Cerase's (2001) research on Italian returnees from the United States in the 1970s. Cerase (2001) suggests four subdivisions of return migration:

1. *ritorno di fallimento* (failure return), is seen as a consequence of lack of economic success of the immigrants while abroad 2. *ritorno di conservazione* (conservation return) happens when the migrant reaches his or her economic ambitions abroad and, once returned home, invests in a conservative fashion i.e. buying house 3. *ritorno di pensionamento* (retirement return) occurs when the immigrant returns to his or her place of origin after having worked all their lives abroad 4. *ritorno di investimento* (investment return) occurs when the immigrant goes back to his or her country of origin in order to invest capital in an innovative fashion (Cerese 2001: 117-123). Overall Cerese, and the structuralist tradition in general, view return pessimistically because returnees have remained abroad for too long, thereby losing their social networks in the country of origin (Cassarino 2004). King's (1986) study on return migration to Italy, principally from the United States to southern Italy as well as Cinel's study (1991) on return migration to Italy from the United States from 1870-1929 are other major investigations into this phenomenon. These authors advocate that return migration has to be analysed not only with reference to the individual migrants' experiences and expectations but also by taking into account the larger socio-economic context that migrants encounter upon their return.

Some examples of the most recent and significant studies carried out on first generation (working age) returnees are: Huseby-Darvas (2004) on Hungarian returnees from the United States; Stefansson (2004) on Bosnian refugees returning to the post-war state of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Rodman and Conway (2005) on returnees to Grenada in the Caribbean islands from North America and Europe; De Souza (2005), again in the context of Caribbean return migration, on returnees from Trinidad and Tobago. The literature on second generation returnees is more recent and less conspicuous. Some examples of these studies are: Potter (2005b) on second-generation Caribbean-English returnees to St. Lucia and Barbados; Christou (2006a; 2006b) on Greek returnees from the United States; Wessendorf (2007; 2013) on second-generation Swiss-Italian returnees to Puglia (Italy); Potter and Phillips (2005) on Bajan-British second-generation returnees. The studies carried out on second- and third-generation Japanese-Brazilians, Japanese-American, and Japanese Peruvian experiences in Japan since the 1980s (Tsuda 2003; 2009c; Ishikawa 2009; Takenaka 2009) and on Italian returnees from Argentina to Friuli (Italy) (Grossutti 2005) are particularly relevant in the context

of my research because they are some of the rare studies that investigate the experience of return migrants beyond the second generation. However, before addressing this issue further, some commonalities among the findings on studies of return migration are underlined below.

The studies mentioned so far and studies on return migration in general, reveal that returning is a complex, ambivalent and contested experience even among those people who return to countries where they lived prior to emigration. Diversity is a core aspect of what Stefansson (2004: 4) calls homecomings, arguing that there is a 'variety of ways in which homecomings are imagined, motivated, practiced, and experienced'. Thus there is no singular process of return but a spectrum of ways in which the return is experienced by returnees, sometimes providing 'cultural creativity and inventiveness' (Stefansson 2004: 4). Apart from the varieties in which return migrants experience their return, these studies, carried out in different states and different contexts, often reveal that the return experience for many returnees, instead of being rewarding and fulfilling, is disappointing and unsatisfactory. By reading through the return migration literature I have identified five reasons that frequently appear to explain discontent among returnees. The list does not reflect any order of importance among the identified issues. The first common font of profound disappointment for returnees is to find a different homeland from the one they have always remembered/imagined and looked forward to.

'This opposition between 'imagined Italy' and 'real Italy' is for most return migrants' a great disappointment (Grossutti 2005: 6). The discovery that pure, essentialised countries of origin no longer exist (if they ever did) appears to be an issue upon return (Christou 2006a; 2006b; Huseby-Darvas 2004; Grossutti 2005). The second issue causing disappointment among returnees concerns the aspect of westernisation. Huseby-Darvas (2004) argues that Hungarian returnees from the United States are disappointed to find out that the Hungarians who never left have acquired a foreign, western culture. We find a similar sense of disappointment among the Bajan returnees from the United Kingdom who are negatively surprised to find out how Barbadian society has become highly Americanised (Potter 2005b). On the other hand Japanese-Brazilian, Bosnian, Korean-American, and Greek-American returnees, among others, feel discriminated against on the basis that they are perceived to have been assimilated by western/foreign

cultures by local people upon their return home (Tsuda 2003; Stefansson 2004; Kim 2009; Christou 2006a; 2006b). Being perceived as outsiders seems to be the third source of disappointment among returnees. Studies on British-Caribbean, Swiss-Italian, Brazilian-Japanese, Korean-Chinese, and Finnish-Swedes highlight that being perceived as outsiders can provoke identity issues among returnees (Potter 2005a; 2005b; Wessendorf 2007; Tsuda 2003; Song 2009; Hedberg 2009). Caribbean returnees, stress the irony that while they had generally felt Bajan or West Indian in the United Kingdom now, that they live in the Caribbean, they feel more English than they have ever felt previously in their lives. Therefore their national identity clashes with their racial identity (Potter 2005b). Tsuda (2003) describes a very similar process for the Brazilian Japanese. In fact the Brazilian Japanese in Brazil identify with the Japanese culture, while in Japan they feel more like Brazilians. Tsuda (2003) argues that this happens subsequent to the disorientating experience felt among returnees, resulting in a loss of stable identities, during their transnational lives. Grossutti (2005: 11-12) argues that the experiences of many return migrants in Friuli 'made it possible for them to recover their sense of belonging to Argentina' when they (Argentinians of Italian origin) realised that they are different from Italians who always lived in Italy. This realisation happened when they 'came face to face with a society whose characteristics they did not recognise'. This is very common among the majority of the studies mentioned. Dissatisfaction with returnees' material circumstances and prospects, difficulties in their professional and educational environment (corruption and personal networks are often the only ways to find employment) following 'return' migration, is the fourth most common source of disappointment. Difficulties regarding structural conditions are primarily based on the contrast between economic and social security in the countries of migration, with reliable incomes and a functioning welfare state on the one hand, and precarious conditions in the country of origin, with a labour market characterized by illegal work, unreliable incomes, and little or no social security net on the other (Wessendorf 2007). Resentful feelings towards return migrants who are perceived to have had a better and easier life, compared to people who stayed behind, is the fifth source of disappointment among returnees. Feelings of resentment are described in first-generation returnees, as in the case of Bosnians and Hungarians (Stefansson 2004;

Huseby-Darvas 2004), but also in second-generation returnees such as in the case of Caribbean returnees (Potter 2005b).

From the above findings it emerges that return migrants tend to overestimate their familiarity with the country they are originally from and expect to adapt ‘naturally’ upon their arrival; instead they often encounter structural and socio-cultural issues they did not predict. Therefore upon their ‘return’, their expectations based on having the same ancestral origins are crushed and this provokes a sense of disorientation and disappointment among returnees. Return migrants often state that they felt closer to the country they grew up in and they start identifying with it. The question of identity seems to play a fundamental role in the overall process of integration since it poses, in certain cases, a barrier to it. As Chapters IV, V, and VI will demonstrate, the experiences of the second-generation returnees from Europe in this study have a lot in common with the general experiences of return migrants that are outlined in the return migration literature. This is in contrast with the experiences of returnees from Argentina, who arrive in Italy as a direct or indirect consequence of the most recent economic crisis in Argentina.

The majority of return migration theorists focus on a single return phenomenon in their research. Studies based on the comparison of different groups of returnees seem to be rare. Apart from the most well-known examples such as the millions of Jews that have migrated to Palestine since World War II and the 4 million ethnic German descendants from Eastern Europe who returned to their ethnic homeland between 1950 and 1999 (Tsuda 2009b), there is a lack of research on third (or fourth or fifth) generation return migration. This scarcity of studies seems to suggest that only the second generation is likely to identify with the country of origin and hence be suitable subjects for the study of return migration. The underlying logic of such an assumption would be that identity or connection with the country of origin is simply bred out. However, given that Italian descendants of third, fourth and later generations can draw on their Italian origins to access citizenship, it is equally likely that they can draw on their Italian origins and identity to negotiate the processes of cultural, economic, and social integration. The extent to which multi-generational migration history impacts on the processes of

integration and return migration is what this research sets out to investigate, rather than simply assume. In this context of scarce literature a comparison between the experiences of return migrants across generations is necessary and it is here, in this vacuum, that the interest of this research takes place. This research project not only contributes to the knowledge of second generation studies but helps to push the return migration literature further into the new and unexplored realms of the third-, fourth- and fifth-generation returnees who form a neglected area of research. Therefore it contributes to knowledge in the literature in the specific case of return migration from Argentina to Italy, which is almost non-existent (Fusaro 2008: 234).

### *The Research Question*

This study aims to contribute to knowledge about return migration from Argentina and Europe by exploring how the resources returnees bring with them help towards their socio-cultural and economic integration. It also looks at the extent to which the identity of both returnee groups has been transformed since they have been living in Italy and how this impacts on their integration. In order to do so, it draws upon different theoretical approaches including transnationalism, migration systems and push-pull theories. A combination of theoretical perspectives is used in the dissertation because while transnationalism helps to theoretically locate return migration from Europe to Italy, migration systems and push-pull theories better explore return migration from Argentina to Italy, in the context of this study. Other theories such as ‘bright versus blurred boundaries’, ‘dual frame of reference’ and ‘relative deprivation’, are also employed to explain the experience of integration of returnees in Italy. These theories will be fully outlined in Chapter II.

The research question thus is:

- 1. How do generational and geographical distance from the country of origin impact on the integration experiences among return migrants in Italy?*

This project aims to find out how generational differences and geographical distance from the country of origin impact on processes of integration of second-generation returnees from Europe and third-, fourth- and fifth-generation returnees from Argentina. In Chapters IV, V and VI, by casting light on questions such as: ‘do the labour market conditions from the countries where the returnees grew up in, impact on their economic integration in Italy?’, ‘how do return migrants use the specific resources they bring with them to find employment in Italy?’, ‘how does the level of fluency in the Italian language impact on social integration?’, ‘does having an Italian identity prior to returning to Italy, aid the process of social integration?’, ‘how do cultural differences and similarities, such as food consumption and the role of family, impact on the overall process of cultural integration?’. This study attempts to understand how the level of familiarity with the Italian context affects the socio-economic and cultural integration of returnees. This study also aims to understand how the relative heterogeneity or homogeneity of return migrants’ backgrounds impacts on their integration and how they negotiate their identities in a country which they are partially from. In order to do this, 38 semi-structured interviews, 22 with returnees from Argentina and 16 with returnees from Europe, were carried out during fieldwork in the region of Piedmont, northern Italy, in 2012.

While this study focuses on the experiences of returnees from Argentina and Europe in Italy, it is essential to understand their experiences as ‘migrants’ in the country they grew up in. The importance of the immigration policies of the host country and the attitudes of the citizens in the receiving countries had a major impact on Italian migrants’ experiences, as this research will show. Argentina and France (but also the other European countries taken into consideration in this study), adopted different policies towards migration: the first encouraging European migrants in shaping the newly established Argentinian state and the second forcing migrants to assimilate into a well established French state. Therefore, it is essential to outline a short history of Italian migration in general, and its relation to that of the specific countries in which the interviewees grew up (Argentina, France, Belgium, and Switzerland) in the next chapter. However, before moving on to Chapter I a clarification of some of the terms employed throughout the thesis and the dissertation structure must be outlined.

## **Definition of Terms**

This section addresses and clarifies the distinctions between the terminology employed in the study, namely that of 'return migrants' and 'second-generation migrants'. It is important to do so because as Remennick (2009: 212) states, terms have 'strings attached'. The term 'return' is quite controversial when used to refer to the second, third, and so on generations because it can be argued that people cannot 'return' to a place where they have never lived (Wessendorf 2013: 111; Christou 2006a: 833). Wessendorf (2013) argues that her interviewees did not classify themselves as returnees therefore she coined the term 'roots migrants' to refer to their moving to Italy. Tsuda (2003) instead describes the return of migrants' as 'ethnic return'. This study refers to 'return migrants', to indicate the descendants of Italian migrants from Europe and from Argentina who took part in this project. This is due to the fact that many (but not all) of the interviewees in this study, classify themselves as return migrants. Furthermore, I believe the word 'return' automatically implies an intrinsic ethnic connection with the country of origin which does not need any added qualifier adjective if it is coupled with the word 'generation'.

In this study, when I refer to the second generation, I refer to children born abroad to an emigrant parent or parents (first-generation immigrants), and to those children born at home but who emigrated with their parent(s) at an early age, typically prior to school age.

## **Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is divided into six chapters in addition to this introduction and the Conclusion Chapter. Chapter I provides the historical context in which Italian migration towards Europe and Argentina took place. It highlights immigration policies in the host countries, some of which are referred to throughout the dissertation and shows how they indirectly impact on the process of integration of returnees. Chapter II provides the theoretical framework which guides this research project. Transnationalism, migration system and push-pull theory are the approaches drawn upon to orientate this study.



After a brief overview of the theories of assimilation and multiculturalism, a clarification is provided on why this thesis has adopted the concept of 'integration' to indicate the process of settlement of the two groups of returnees in this study. Chapter III explains the methodology behind this case study research. It gives an account of semi-structured interviews as the principal research method employed to collect data in this study. It also explains the choice of sampling technique and access issues that arose. Furthermore, the chapter illustrates questions related to thematic content analysis, equivalence problems and ethics in comparative case studies.

In Chapters IV, V, and VI the research data of this study is analysed and interpreted. Specifically, in Chapter IV the experiences and attitudes of returnees in the Italian labour market are explored. This chapter investigates how return migrants use the specific resources that they bring with them to find employment in Italy. The 'dual frame of reference' and the 'relative deprivation' theories are drawn on to understand the different experiences of the two groups of returnees in relation to employment. In Chapter V, the different ways in which returnees socialise and the extent of their interactions with non-migrant Italians are illustrated. This chapter explores several themes such as the importance of language, identity and belonging, and the north/south divide in Italy, showing how they intertwine with one another and how they impact on the experiences of social integration of returnees in Italy. Chapter VI explores the experiences of returnees from a cultural point of view in Italy. It investigates how familiarity with Italian cultural practices such as food consumption and the role of the family, among others, impacts on returnees' experiences. The chapter also looks at how different policies on migration influence the overall cultural attitudes of returnees by using the 'bright versus blurred boundaries' theory devised by Alba (2005). Issues around racism and discrimination are also examined, along with how they impact on the overall process of integration. In the conclusion, the major findings of this research project are summarised and the contribution it makes to return migration literature is highlighted. The conclusion also analyses whether the research question was fully addressed by following the methodological and the theoretical framework chosen. Finally, the limitations of this study are identified and suggestions on which aspects of this research could be further explored are discussed.

## **Chapter I: Overview of Italian Emigration History**

In this chapter, the history of Italian emigration is outlined to provide the historical context for the study. A brief examination of the history of Italian emigration to Argentina and France is also discussed as these are the principal countries from where the returning migrants come from in this project. Finally, a concise history of migration patterns from Italy to Belgium and Switzerland, is also presented, as a minority of returning migrants interviewed in the study come from there.

### **Italian Emigration**

It is not always clear when and how stages of emigration follow one another, nor when each concludes and, if in effect, they ever finish, as the chain of events is continually disassembled and reassembled. A complex phenomenon such as this cannot be interpreted uni-dimensionally (Sanfilippo 2005: 136). Therefore, with this limitation in mind, the following summary of the history of Italian emigration is only meant to provide a general framework of this multifaceted phenomenon. Italian emigration can be broadly divided into three phases: the first phase lasts from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the First World War; the second coincides with the interwar years; while the third phase runs from the period immediately following the Second World War to the international economic crisis in the mid-1970s. The seventies witnessed the first waves of immigration that would transform Italy from a country of emigration to a country of immigration. It should be noted that, even if Italy has been considered a country of immigration for the last few years, Italian emigration between 1990 and 2000 was higher than immigration and there are more Italian citizens living abroad than foreigners living within Italy (Sanfilippo 2005: 11). Moreover, since 2008 there has been a renewed emigration flow mainly towards European countries caused by the current economic crisis (Del Prá and Tirabassi 2014).

#### *The First Phase: The Great Emigration*

After Italian unification (in 1861) Italian emigration reached such significant levels that there was an epoch-making exodus known as 'the great emigration' which ended with

the start of the First World War. Besides overpopulation caused by a significant demographic increase coupled with a lack of resources and a slow rate of development, the main motives included an agricultural crisis, a crisis in manufacturing, low wages, and the seven-year military service introduced by the new Italian state. The exodus heavily affected regions of northern and southern Italy. The northern regions of Italy fuelled emigration mainly of a temporary nature towards continental Europe, to France, Switzerland, Germany and Belgium. Many emigrants from Piedmont and Liguria took advantage of their proximity of the port of Genoa to head for Argentina. The regions of southern Italy were part of a wave of permanent trans-oceanic emigration, especially towards the United States, Canada, Argentina, Brazil and Australia. Official records of Italian emigrations only exist from 1876. According to the 1881 census, there were over a million Italians abroad of whom over half lived in the Americas. From 1900 to 1914 an annual average of 600,000 Italians emigrated, heading mainly to countries over the Atlantic, reaching a peak of over 800,000 in 1913 (Audenino and Tirabassi 2008).

#### *The Second Phase: The Interwar Years*

This second phase is characterised by 20 years of Fascism and the anti-emigration policies of its government. Mussolini did not encourage the integration of Italian migrants abroad and he actively encouraged a politics of return to Italy (Franzina and Sanfilippo 2003). The Fascist laws of 1927 placed a limit on Italian emigration (Devoto 2002). After the large decrease in emigration which coincided with the First World War, Italian emigration increased until the 1930s. This wave of emigration was directed mainly towards France and Argentina. France received four fifths of the entire Italian migration and of these, ten per cent were for political reasons (Sanfilippo 2005).

Between 1935 and the beginning of the Second World War, Italian emigration was focussed almost exclusively on Germany, where foreign labour was required. This migration, regulated by agreements between the states, was based on the exchange of Italian manpower for raw materials, above all coal (Pugliese 2002). Italian emigration towards Germany began in 1937 with the request from Berlin for several thousand agricultural workers. Italy understandably responded to the call since it was a period

when about 150,000 farm workers were unemployed. Further requests for building workers, farm labourers and miners from Germany were to follow and 271,667 workers were involved in the industrial, building and mining sectors in the period from 1941-1942. This was due to the transition from the economy of the 'Lightning War' (*blitzkrieg*) to the economy of the 'War of Attrition' (Mantelli 2001).

### *The Third Phase: Second World War to the Mid-1970s*

It is useful to further divide this third phase of emigration into two distinct periods: the first was the period prior to the establishment of the European Economic Community, from 1945 to 1956; the second period, from 1957 (the year of the signing of the Treaty of Rome which marked the beginning of the European Economic Community) until the international economic crisis in the 1970s which closed off many international opportunities in northern Europe.

After the Second World War the Italian economy was in a terrible condition, due to the strains on the economy of war and defeat, and the damage which had been done to the country. There was a big gap between demographic development and the shortage of capital. In fact, in Italy there was a surplus in the workforce of almost four million people (Romero 1991; 2001). To solve the balance of payments crisis and to combat unemployment and possible social unrest, the early governments of the Italian Republic regarded emigration as an absolute necessity (De Clementi 2003). Emigration between 1945 and 1956 was tackled by the Italian state by signing bilateral agreements for the recruitment of Italian workers. The agreements included an accord signed with France, Great Britain, Belgium, and Argentina in 1946, an agreement with Switzerland in 1948, an agreement with Brazil and Australia in 1950 and an agreement with West Germany in 1955. The flows of migrants were, to quote Tosi (2002: 451), 'predetermined in terms of quality and quantity and arranged with the technical, organisational and financial assistance of the countries concerned'. The bilateral treaties which the Italian government had signed in the decade after the Second World War with various European countries had resulted in Italian migrants being employed in agriculture and construction in France, in mining in Belgium and in industry and construction in

Switzerland and Germany (Colucci 2008; Sanfilippo 2005). Although these bilateral agreements had opened up some channels of emigration, they continued to be insufficient as the demand for Italian workers was less than the supply of Italian labour. The demand for labour in this period and in these countries was unstable due to the fact that it was concentrated in sectors which were highly cyclical or even seasonal such as agriculture and construction. The relative geographic proximity with the European countries in which work was to be found fostered a fluctuating transfer of temporary labour which differed greatly from overseas emigration in which the movement of entire family units was recorded (Sanfilippo 2005).

With the signing of the Treaty of Rome (1957) and the subsequent freedom of movement of workers, state-regulated emigration declined in importance in favour of the freedom with which workers could choose more remunerative markets and follow pre-existing waves of migration. In this period, Italian emigration abroad moved almost exclusively towards West Germany where the Italian community was strongest in the decade from the mid 1960s to the mid 1970s (Pugliese 2002), and Switzerland. In their statistical analysis of Italian emigration, Favero and Tassello (1979) assessed the migrations in the post World War Two period as almost seven and a half million emigrants (of whom five million emigrated to European countries) as opposed to 4,319,560 repatriated Italians (of whom three and a half million returned from European countries). The difference exceeded three million people: 1,646,064 from non-EU countries, 1,481,430 from European countries. Campania, Veneto and Puglia were the regions with the highest numbers of emigrants. Almost four million workers left from the south of Italy and two million returned (Bevilaqua 1997). In this phase, Italian emigration was not only directed abroad but also within Italy itself as a result of the economic boom. This emigration was mostly to the cities of the industrial triangle of northern Italy: Milan-Turin-Genoa. In fact, there were about 9,140,000 Italians who were part of this inter-regional migration. This provided the opportunity for a mixing of the Italian populace. This phenomenon mainly affected the peasants of the south and the north east of Italy who moved towards the cities of the industrialised north-west. The peasants of Italy's central regions moved to the cities of their own regions. The main reasons they left the land were the very high likelihood of getting a higher, regular

salary in the cities, along with a more regular working day (Ginsborg 1989). On the other hand, the oil crisis of 1973 and the subsequent economic crisis closed off many employment opportunities in northern Europe.

### **Italian Emigration to Argentina**

The presence of Italian immigrants in Argentina can be traced back to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century (Devoto 2002). The majority of Italian immigrants were originally from Liguria. The *Rio de la Plata* region saw the first settlements of people from Genoa as early as the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century (Tirabassi 2010). Immigrants from Genoa were therefore the first Italian pioneers in Argentina and traced what became a 'beaten path' for the following, more consistent waves of Italian emigration to Argentina. This first wave of Italian immigrants had the opportunity to participate in the foundation of the Argentinian state after Argentina obtained independence from Spain in 1816. As Tirabassi (2010) points out, Italian emigration to Argentina is older than the birth of the Argentinian state.

Tirabassi (2010) summaries the long history of Italian emigration to Argentina in three different stages: the first phase from the 1830s until the 1870s was characterised by the arrival of business men (traders) mainly from Genoa and Liguria and by political exiles, the *mazziniani* and *garibaldini*<sup>1</sup>; the second phase between the 1880s and the beginning of the First World War was characterised by mass Italian emigration (more than two million migrants, the majority of whom came from Piedmont); the third phase took place after the Second World War, between 1947 and 1960, when about 480,000 Italians, mainly from the south of Italy, emigrated to Argentina (Devoto 2007; Tirabassi 2010). These three different phases are further discussed below.

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<sup>1</sup> Followers of Mazzini and Garibaldi who were among the most prominent figures of the Risorgimento. They fought for the independence of Italy from foreign domination and to establish a Democratic Italian Republic (Cantarella and Guidorizzi 2010).

### *The First Wave: 1830s-1870s*

In Argentina many people died before the 1830s as a consequence of that country's wars of independence and the civil wars. These deaths left an economic vacuum that was filled by immigrants (Devoto 2002). The mazziniani and republican exiles, escaping the repression of the 1821 rising in Italy, joined the first flux of Italian immigrants between the 1830s and 1870s. Among them, there were many professionals and intellectuals from Piedmont that had participated in the Italian insurrections. Political exiles became a fundamental part of Argentinian society from the very beginning and they contributed to shaping the new state of Argentina that had recently been founded (Tirabassi 2010). In 1853 the Argentinian Constitution<sup>2</sup> was promulgated. Buenos Aires adhered to it in 1862<sup>3</sup>. From its preamble the Constitution guaranteed freedom to migrate to Argentina 'for all the men of the world who want to live on Argentinian soil' (Tirabassi 2010: 34). I will discuss this topic further in Chapter II.

In 1855 in Buenos Aires, ten per cent of the population was made up of European migrants and by that time, the Italian community was well established and integrated in Argentina (Devoto 2002).

### *The Second Wave: 1880s-First World War*

More than four million immigrants arrived in Argentina between 1881 and 1914 (Devoto 2002). During these years, the second period of Italian exodus to Argentina took place. Over two million people (initially mainly men) relocated from Italy to Argentina, through a system of chain migration. Italians formed 70 per cent of immigrants to Argentina between 1880 and 1886 (Devoto 2002: 33). Between the 1870s and the First World War there was significant demographic and economic growth, facilitated by a renewed transport system. The railway network expanded by a factor of

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<sup>2</sup> Argentina's Constitution is the second oldest constitution in the Americas.

<sup>3</sup> 'The Argentine Constitution was revised extensively in 1994 to further emphasize the allotment of economic and social rights not only to citizens, but to all inhabitants of Argentina' (De La Torre and Mendoza 2007: 52).

46 from its original size, covering many of the areas between the port and migrants' destinations around the country (Bonifazi 2013).

Immigrants from Piedmont constituted by far the largest number with over 300,000 people leaving the region. In that period Argentina offered land to immigrants and this was an important pull factor. In 1876 the government promulgated the law on immigration that was in place for 100 years. This law created a series of incentives to immigrants such as free accommodation for six days in the *Hotel de Inmigrantes* and a train ticket so that the immigrants could get to their chosen place of settlement (Devoto 2003; Tirabassi 2010). Immigrants from Piedmont settled initially in the provinces of Santa Fe and Cordoba, in the centre of the country, in Mendoza in the west of the country and in Buenos Aires in the east. They also settled and 'colonised', together with immigrants from Lombardia, the Pampa. They played a fundamental role in what is known as the 'revolution of the pampa' thanks to the cultivation of grain which would go on to make Argentina the world's third largest exporter of grain (Tirabassi 2010). In 1872, there were 200,000 hectares cultivated with grain while in 1888 there were 1,600,000 hectares (Devoto 2002). However, Italian immigrants were not only working as farmers but were also employed in other sectors such as on construction sites. There were not only opportunities for manual workers, but also for professional/specialised workers such as doctors, teachers, musicians and priests (Devoto 2002). The availability of land together with the possibility of establishing a business promoted chain migration from Piedmont until after the Second World War. In 1910, Italians were the largest group of immigrants in Argentina, at almost one million people. As the 1914 census showed, Italians represented 11.7 per cent of the entire population. The number of Italian immigrants in Argentina was almost equal to the percentage of all the immigrants living in the US combined (14.5 %) in that year (Devoto 2005).

Italian emigration to Argentina decreased drastically with the beginning of the First World War. At the end of the war, emigration started again, but not to the same extent. This decrease in the flow of emigration was due to several reasons ranging from the international economic crisis at the end of the 1920s to the implementation of the fascist



regime in Italy. Fascism in fact tended to contain Italian emigration. Many anti-fascist exiles went to Argentina where they established anti-fascist movements (Fanesi 1991).

### *The Third Wave: Post War Period*

The Argentinian economy grew after the Second World War. This economic growth meant that the state needed immigrants and this brought a new wave of migration to Argentina. Peron's government had started to actively offer incentives to migrants to come to Argentina since 1946 (Tirabassi 2010; Devoto 2002). The *Delegacion Argentina para la Inmigracion en Europa (DAIE)* (Devoto 2002; 2007; Barbero and Cacopardo 1993; Tirabassi 2010) was established in Rome which was followed by many bilateral agreements (Rosoli 1993; Tirabassi 2010). These bilateral agreements had the role of promoting migration and protecting the rights of the Italian workers abroad. These agreements concerning accommodation and working conditions, which were not fully respected in other European countries (De Clementi 2001), were implemented in full in Argentina through the so-called *emigracione assistita* (assisted emigration) (Tosi 2002). Peron's government actively encouraged immigration to Argentina and aimed to receive four million immigrants between 1947 and 1950. Italian and Spanish immigrants were preferred over other nationalities (Tirabassi 2010). In this period approximately 300,000 Italian immigrants arrived in Argentina while the Argentinian government was expecting 500,000 (Devoto 2007; Tirabassi 2010). In 1953 the right to family reunification was stipulated in Argentina. This was in line with the politics of the Peron government that aimed to augment and stabilise immigration. In the period after the wars the provenance of immigrants changed; in these years it is immigrants from the south of Italy relocating to Argentina that are mainly recorded. At the beginning of the 1950s migrants from Calabria were the most conspicuous group. The other southern Italian migrants originally came from the following regions: Campania, Abruzzo, Molise, Sicily and Basilicata. People involved with the fascist dictatorship in Italy also migrated to Argentina to escape potential revenge (Bertagna 2006; Tirabassi 2010; Devoto 2002). Between 1952 and 1955, the Italian flow of migrants towards Argentina started to decline and other destinations started to be favoured such as France, Belgium, Switzerland and Germany. Between 1955 and 1959,

the number of Italian migrants arriving in Argentina did not exceed 10,000 people per year (Devoto 2002). However, Italian migrants to Argentina continued to arrive during the sixties and seventies and it can be stated that Italian migration to Argentina never fully ended (Tirabassi 2010). According to Grossutti (2005) individuals of Italian descent formed at least thirty per cent of Argentina's population of 36 million, by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many of these Italian descendants held Italian citizenship.

### *Italian Citizenship*

In 1976, General Videla together with his army carried out a coup and overthrew Isabelita Peron's government. This dictatorship lasted for seven years and is infamously known for the tragic phenomenon of *desaparecidos* (Devoto 2007). About 30,000 people disappeared in these years. During this period, many people tried to escape from Argentina and consequently the question of how to access Italian citizenship became a fundamental one. In theory, Italian migrants who migrated at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, should have informed the Italian consular authorities of the births of their children who in this way would have been automatically entitled to citizenship; however, this very rarely happened. Argentina is the country with the highest percentage of people with Italian origins (Tirabassi 2010). The discovery of entitlement to Italian citizenship first happened in the 1970s during the era of dictatorship. Later on, at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s and with the onset of a new economic crisis, the search for Italian citizenship started to become more common, culminating in the search for citizenship after the Argentinian economic crisis in 2001. The possibility of accessing Italian citizenship meant automatic access to Europe and the United States. Before 2002 there were 20-25,000 *ius sanguinis* (citizenship by blood) citizenships approved on average per year; in 2002 alone, there were 43,339 citizenships granted and in 2003, 74,704 (Del Prá and Tirabassi 2007). In 2006 in Argentina, according to consular sources, there were 534,670 people with Italian citizenship in Argentina (Tirabassi 2010).

## **Italian Emigration to France**

Italian immigration in France is a phenomenon with a long history in which cultural, political, and economic aspects intertwine with each other over centuries (Milza 1984) however the period of mass migration towards France from Italy took place between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The historian Corti (2003) maintains that over this period Italian immigration can be divided into three stages. The first period coincides with the years of the 'great emigration' from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to the First World War. The second period coincides with the period between the two World Wars. The third stage continues from the immediate post Second World War period to the end of the 1960s. Although each of these stages saw different destinations, trades and regions of origin, the trends which influenced them are similar. These include the complementary demographics of both countries (lack of population in France, overpopulation in Italy), the staggered economic growth and industrial developments of the respective states (earlier economic growth and industrial development in France compared to Italy), Franco-Italian political relations (which on the international stage were often found to be in opposition to each other with regard to the colonial question and during the Second World War). Also, as has been illustrated by the work of the historian Rinauro (2009), amongst the factors which characterise the long period of Italian immigration in France is the continuing presence of waves of illegal migrants. Furthermore, during the long history of Italian immigration in France recurring episodes of xenophobia against Italians can be found as Italian immigrants were seen as scapegoats in times of economic crisis or recession (Corti 2003).

### *The First Stage: End of 19<sup>th</sup> Century to the First World War*

During the first stage of Italian immigration in France, in 1876, the Kingdom of Italy began counting its citizens living abroad. At this time the number of Italians in France amounted to 163,000, by 1881 this had become 240,000, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century over 300,000, and by the eve of the First World War almost half a million, by which time Italian immigrants constituted the largest group of foreigners present in the territory of the French Republic (Audenino and Tirabassi 2008). In the first stage, the

South East of France was the area most widely affected by the phenomenon of Italian immigration, that is to say, the region closest to the Italian border, which accounted for 20 per cent of all Italian immigrants. These Italian workers came principally from the north of Italy with the largest number being from Piedmont. The male workers found employment mainly in construction and agriculture, the female workers in the textile and domestic sectors (Corti 2003).

### *The Second Stage: Between the Two World Wars*

The second stage of Italian immigration in France took place between the two World Wars. With the outbreak of the First World War the influx of Italians reduced greatly only to resume at its cessation. Italian workers moved towards both northern France where they found employment in post-war reconstruction, mining, chemical, iron and steel industries, and to the agricultural regions of south western France which had been left under-populated. In this second stage of Italian immigration it was workers from Veneto who were the greatest in number surpassing even the people from Piedmont (Corti 2003). In 1921 there was a total of 420,000 Italians in France, by 1926 this had become 760,000 and by 1931 reached its highest number of 880,000 (Vial 2002). Apart from migrant workers who constituted the vast majority of Italians in France during the 1920s, 10 per cent of the Italian immigrants in France were political exiles. They were principally socialists, communists, anarchists and republicans who were escaping from Fascist Italy (Sanfilippo 2005). During the 1920s France became the primary destination for Italian migrants (also due to the closure of US borders to Italian immigrants). By the end of the 1920s a number of Fascist laws were promulgated, aiming to forbid permanent emigration of families and to block the clandestine migration of anti-fascists. The Great Depression also ended many job opportunities beyond the Alps. The outbreak of the Second World War would go on to drastically reduce the flow of migration between 1936 and 1945 with only 47,045 departures being recorded (Audenino and Tirabassi 2008).

### *The Third Stage: Post War Period*

The third and last great wave of migration is that of the post Second World War period which began immediately after the end of the conflict and lasted until the middle of the 1960s. The areas of France most concerned were those of the industrial north east. The Italian population increased in the areas around Paris and in industrial Lorraine, and these immigrants were principally employed in the mechanical and automobile industries. Workers from southern Italy predominate in this last stage over those from the north (Corti 2003).

In the aftermath of the end of the war the flow of migration resumed. While France and Italy sought to ratify the first post-war bilateral treaty on Italian immigration in France, many Italian workers were crossing the border illegally (Rinauro 2005; 2009). Irreconcilable political and economic interests delayed and hindered the implementation and functioning of the accords while the need for manual labour for reconstruction and repopulation on the one hand, and unemployment on the other, fed the unstoppable movement of illegal immigrants (Rinauro 2005; 2009). The repeated agreements between Italy and France for the recruitment of Italian labourers and the management of the movement of migrants through the ONI (National Immigration Office) for France and through the Ministry of Labour and Social Security for Italy were barely suitable for managing the demand and supply of foreign labourers. In 1947, for example, out of 200,000 workers agreed by the second emigration agreement, only a total of 51,575 was reached of whom 13,312 were illegal immigrants regularised after their arrival (Rinauro 2009). The complexity, slowness and qualitatively poor results of the public recruitment prompted employers to take on Italian workers who had already arrived in France illegally, while the French authorities fostered this situation by periodically regularising illegal workers (Rinauro 2009). For employers, hiring illegal workers had several advantages; this recruitment was faster and more economical, illegal workers were paid less and could be fired more easily than those hired legally to whom the bilateral treaties assured minimum labour and guaranteed housing. Rinauro observes that for the French authorities 'illegal immigration represented a flexible mechanism which allowed the rigid official policy to adapt to every situation' (Rinauro 2009: 328). The phenomenon

of illegal workers was not new in the history of immigration in France, but in the post Second World War period it constituted an important factor contributing to French economic growth. Emigration to France grew until 1949 when the economic recession dealt it a serious blow. A worsening of Italian workers' contractual conditions was observed until the middle of the 1950s, while living conditions and above all the poor standard of accommodation were never improved. The economic boom and war with Algeria sparked the next great flow of migration which concluded with the recession of the late 1950s and signalled the end of Italian emigration to France. Italian workers from this point preferred the more remunerative markets of Switzerland and Germany or of Italy's own industrial triangle (Rinauro 2009).

From a high point of over 800,000 Italian born citizens recorded in the census of 1931, we see the decline to 629,000 in the census of 1962 to little more than 460,000 in 1975, when the period of mass exodus had already reached its conclusion. The number of Italians in France was destined to fall even further due to naturalisation, *ius soli* (by which the children of emigrants were given citizenship of their countries of birth) and the progressive decrease in the number of new arrivals. Today, as the historian Eric Vial records, almost five million French people have at least one Italian ancestor (Vial 2002).

### **Italian Emigration to Switzerland**

The Italian presence in Switzerland is recorded as early as the Middle Ages, however, the first wave of Italian migrants started in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1860 there were 10,000 Italian workers in Switzerland rising to more than 100,000 in 1900. The number of Italian workers doubled in the following ten years, reaching 200,000 – this made up 36 per cent of the entire foreign population in Switzerland. Italian immigrants, in those years, mainly came from northern Italy to build the Alpine tunnels such as the *Gottardo* in 1882 and the *Sempione* which opened in 1906 (Audenino and Tirabassi 2008). In 1896, Italian immigrants were subject to xenophobic episodes in several Swiss cities where some of their houses and shops were destroyed; in one of the working class areas in Zurich, *AusserSihl*, thousands of Italian immigrants returned to Italy over night (Meyer Sabino 2002). As a consequence of xenophobia and of difficult

working conditions, Italians started to organise the first trade unions and organisations. Italian migration towards Switzerland declined during the First World War and during Fascism only to start again after the Second World War. In the post-war period the majority of Italian migrants, mainly from the south of the Peninsula, migrated to Switzerland (Wessendorf 2013).

The Italian presence became significant again from 1948 with the signing of bilateral agreements between the two countries. In 1950, Italians were the most numerous national group and represented 49 per cent of the entire foreign community. The Italian population continued to grow, reaching its peak in 1975 when there were 573,085 Italians living in Switzerland. They represented two thirds of the foreign population. Two million Italians had migrated to Switzerland by the 1970s, the majority with seasonal work contracts, however only half a million stayed for several years (Wessendorf 2013). In the middle of the 1970s, 200,000 workers were dismissed during a period of economic crisis and more than 120,000 Italians left Switzerland at that time. In contrast, the economic crisis at the end of the 1990s did not lead to the same exodus of Italian migrants. This is because immigrants were protected by a welfare system (Meyer Sabino 2002). In 2006 there were 296,000 Italian immigrants in Switzerland, of whom 122,000 were members of the second generation (these numbers refer to Italians who have only Italian citizenship; there were about 400,000 people of Italian origin in Switzerland) (Wessendorf 2013: 23).

The Helvetica policy on immigration went through two different phases that concerned foreigners in the post-war period. Until the middle of the 1970s, Switzerland adopted a 'rotation' system for manpower whereby foreigners had to go back home after a period spent in the country, afterwards this was replaced by the adaptation of a policy of integration. Until the 1970s immigration policies were aimed at the temporary residence of *Gastarbeiter* (guest-worker) schemes to ensure that labour migrants would not stay in Switzerland on a permanent basis (Colucci 2008; Wessendorf 2013; De Clementi 2001). These so called 'rotation policies' led to the rotation of the work force each year and were linked to 'seasonal permits' which prohibited family reunification. According to Wessendorf (2013) these policies contributed to what she describes as 'state-imposed

transnationalism' where migrants travelled back and forth between southern Italy and Switzerland not only because they saw themselves as temporary settlers but also as a result of the Swiss policies towards migration (Wessendorf 2010; Wessendorf 2013: 24). Anti-immigration feelings were widespread in Switzerland during the 1960s and 1970s; in those years, Italian immigrants were socially marginalised (Audenino and Tirabassi 2008). However the restrictive immigration policies were eased over time due to the economic growth in Switzerland. While during the 1950s and 1960s the Swiss government imposed an assimilation approach towards migration, since migrant culture(s) were perceived as a problem, in the 1970s the government set up a commission to support the socio-cultural integration of immigrants (Wessendorf 2013). Therefore, over the span of thirty years, Italian immigrants in Switzerland went from being in a situation of marginalisation to a situation of acceptance (Meyer Sabino 2002).

### **Italian Emigration to Belgium**

The Italian presence in Belgium goes back to ancient times. However, the origins of the current Italian population in Belgium can be traced back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the exception of a few wealthy Italian families, the majority of Italians living in Belgium were organ grinders or mendicants while in the second half of the century they were employed as roadmen and in the construction of train stations (Morelli 2002). Political exiles who left Italy during the Italian *Risorgimento*<sup>4</sup>, were also among the Italian population in Belgium in those years (Battistini 1986). The overall Italian population in Belgium was very modest before the First World War. During this period, Italians suffered from several xenophobic attacks as they were perceived as a threat by the local population (Morelli 2002).

The number of Italians increased drastically during the period of the First World War. After the end of the First World War, Belgium needed labour for the factories and coal mines, and Italians, spurred by these pull factors, went to work in these sectors in Belgium. During this period, apart from migrant workers, political exiles that

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<sup>4</sup> Risorgimento is a movement developed in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Risorgimento is a process pushing towards a cultural and political rebirth for the affirmation of an Italian national unity (Patriarca and Riall 2012).



participated at the *Biennio Rosso*<sup>5</sup> and anti-fascists were also present among the Italians that arrived in Belgium. However, many of them were arrested and deported by the Belgian authorities because they were seen as citizens of an enemy state during the Second World War (Morelli 2002). The first bilateral agreement, concerning migration, was signed between Italy and Belgium in 1946. These agreements heralded the departure of thousands of Italians towards Belgium. The agreement stated that Italy would exchange 2,000 Italian young people every week to work in the Belgian mines, while Belgium would sell coal to Italy for each worker received (Audenino and Tirabassi 2008; Morelli 2002). This agreement, however, presented numerous ambiguous conditions regarding the exchange between migrants and coal (Colucci 2008). Coal from Belgium was essential for the reconstruction of Europe. It seems that the Italian government, in those years, was more worried about addressing the high unemployment rate in the country than considering the health repercussions, such as the *silicosis*<sup>6</sup>, that work in the mines would bring to Italian miners (Cumoli 2013; Morelli 2002). Many migrants were not fully aware of the working conditions when signing their contract and those who refused to work under those conditions were arrested and sent to *le Petit-château* (the small castle) and deported to Italy. Accidents in the work place were frequent and in the first decade after the Second World War, more than 1,000 miners died. The work in mines proved to be very difficult and the type of accommodation that the Belgian government provided for Italian immigrants was substandard. Italian immigrants were accommodated in shacks that had been used as concentration camps during the war. This situation was also exacerbated by the shortage of houses in Belgium in those years. According to Bonifazi (2013) not all the conditions stipulated in the bilateral agreement were met by the 'host' countries, and often Italians faced worse living and working conditions than what they had been promised.

Italian immigrants, apart from the harsh working and living conditions experienced, suffered from negative stereotypes. They were referred to as stabbers, violent, lazy, dirty, lady-killers, and fecund, for example. Until the catastrophic event in the mine of

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<sup>5</sup> The term *Biennio Rosso* (1919-1920) marks the mobilisation of farmers and workers and the riots against the high cost of living. The factories of the industrial triangle above all were occupied by labourers and involved almost a half million workers in the protests (Zorzi et al. 2009).

<sup>6</sup> This illness provokes respiratory insufficiency and it is very common among miners.

Marcinelle in 1956, where out of 262 of miners who died, 136 were Italians, there had been a constant flow of Italian migrants to Belgium. After this event, the Italian government blocked all the official channels of migration towards Belgium. However, while official migration towards Belgium from Italy ended in 1956, the movement of Italian families and individuals migrating autonomously towards Belgium never ended. From 1956 until the 1970s, the flow of migrants from Italy came mainly from the south of the country and in 1970, Italian immigration to in Belgium reached its highest point with 300,000 individuals. According to Morelli (2002), the catastrophic event of Marcinelle represents the first step towards the process of integration of Italian immigrants in Belgium. The accident was so significant that it revealed the terrible working conditions of Italian migrant miners to the Belgian population, who were often unaware because Italian immigrants used to work and be accommodated outside the cities.

Italian immigration to Belgium remains the most significant migration phenomenon that the country has ever known. Nowadays, Italians in Belgium form a very important part of Belgium's population and are present in all social strata (Morelli 2002).

## **Chapter II: Theoretical Framework**

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework on which this study of the experiences of integration of return migrants from Argentina and Europe is built. In order to do so, the chapter is divided into two main parts. In the first section, three of the main theoretical approaches to the study of return migration are introduced and I discuss which aspects are relevant for the purpose of my research. The approaches drawn upon to orientate and guide my study are: transnationalism, migration system and push-pull theories. Castles and Miller (2003: 21) note that ‘migration is a process which affects every dimension of social existence, and which develops its own complex dynamics’, and therefore it is difficult for a single theory to incorporate all the aspects needed to analyse a migration phenomenon, such as return migration; hence the need to employ several. Moreover, while transnationalism is more helpful to contextualise the experience of return migrants from Europe, migration system and push-pull theories are more useful to understand the context of return migration from Argentina.

In the second part of the chapter, I explain why I have chosen ‘integration’ as a concept, to indicate the process of settlement of the two groups of returnees in my study. In order to do so, I first provide a brief overview of theories of assimilation and multiculturalism and then, after having clarified their meanings and having analysed the major findings, I provide a working definition of integration that guides this study. I particularly focus on three aspects of integration namely: economic, social, and cultural.

### **Return Migration in Transnational Theory**

As a theoretical approach to explain migration movements, transnationalism only emerged in the field of social sciences in the early 1990s. This concept appeared as a way of understanding contemporary globalisation (Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Basch et al. 1994) where international movements of capital are associated with international movements of labour (Portes 1996). It is founded on the idea that improvements in transport and communication technology – an aspect of globalisation – make it easier for migrants to maintain closer links with their areas of origin (Castles and Miller 2003). According to Portes et al. (1999: 219), transnational activities are maintained by

'regular and sustained social contacts over time across national borders'. Transnationalists consider the phenomenon of migration to be dynamic and transnationalism does not consider return migration as a permanent dislocation at the end of a migration cycle. Instead, return migration is considered to be an integral and normal part of a circular system of socio-economic relations in migrants' lives. Transnationalists believe that returnees prepare their reintegration with regular visits to their place of origin and maintain strong relations through the sending of remittances, for example. Cassarino (2004: 261) argues that a transnationalist approach is particularly useful 'to interpret the back-and-forth movement of people crossing borders' and that 'transnationalism constitutes an attempt to formulate a theoretical and conceptual framework aimed at a better understanding of the strong social and economic links between migrants' host and origin countries'. In the context of this study, this approach is therefore relevant to an analysis of how return migrants from Europe have developed and maintained linkages between sending and receiving countries both prior to and following their 'return' to Italy. Second-generation migrants from Europe were exposed to regular visits to their ancestral land prior to moving to Italy and when they returned, they maintained a very significant relation with the country they grew up in.

Returnees from Argentina, on the other hand, did not maintain transnational relationships with their ethnic homeland prior to returning to Italy and therefore they cannot be classified as transnational migrants as such. Moreover, as this study will show, they do not seem to have even had a 'transnational consciousness' prior to their return to Italy. Vickerman (2002) elaborates on the concept of 'transnational consciousness', to refer to a consciousness of ties with the parents' home country, in the absence of transnational activities. Cohen instead speaks about a 'diasporic consciousness' to refer to this awareness of ties to the homeland, without transnational engagement (Cohen 1997). Returnees from Argentina in my study become transnational in the classical sense upon arrival in Italy when they develop transnational relations with the country they grew up in. The majority of the interactions between returnees from Argentina and their friends, family in Argentina occur in what Calhoun (1992) calls 'non-contiguous' spaces where they communicate through telecommunications

because of the geographical distance between the two countries. On the other hand, 'contiguous' (face to face) transnational interactions are much more frequent among returnees from Europe and their family friends. This is facilitated by the geographical proximity between European countries in general and between Piedmont and France in particular being geographical neighbour. Some of the interviewees in the study have stated they 'return' to France on a monthly basis. Appadurai's (1996) notion of 'spatialised' and 'virtual' neighbourhoods is equivalent to the 'contiguous' and 'non-contiguous' spaces concept. Rouse (1991) argues that transnational relationships in general are no less real than relationships that have developed locally. This is because many migrants live far away from circles of kin and friends and yet they manage to maintain these relationships actively in their lives. This consistent transnational exchange either in contiguous or in non-contiguous spaces enables both groups of returnees to remain involved in two nations.

Social scientists have debated if transnationalism is a relatively new phenomenon in human history or not. Vertovec (2013) notes that as a relatively recent concept, transnationalism has been scrutinized, attacked, elaborated, and debated upon, and therefore he feels that transnationalism has emerged from this intense examination to become an accepted body of theoretical understanding and methodological approach in migration studies across disciplines. Other scholars have questioned, however, the idea that transnationalism is a new model of international mobility (Conway 2000; 2005; Foner 1997, 2001; Mintz 1998) and 'recent disciplinary interest in transnational processes has led some critics of the approach to openly wonder what is so new about transnationalism' (Tsuda 2003: 257). Tsuda (2003: 258), among many other theorists, states that while communications and transports have, without any doubt, increased the speed, frequency, and volume of migration flows across national borders, 'this does make current transnational communities appear different from past ones, the difference is mainly a matter of degree and not of kind'.

The concept of transnational identities that has been elaborated by transnationalist scholars has often been subject to criticism among social scientists. Transnationalists believe that transnational identities spring from the blend of migrants' origin identity

with the identity they acquire in the country they relocate to. According to this school of thought, migrants have the ability to become 'hybridised' by developing double or even multiple identities and become 'global citizenry' (Basch et al. 1994; Glick Schiller et al. 1992; 1995). Transnationalist scholars argue that transnational identities have the power to ignore national borders and therefore undermine the nation state's hegemony over people's consciousness (Basch et al. 1994; Glick Schiller and Fouron 1990; Kearney 1991). They also argue that transnational activities detach migrants from their national homes and view them as deterritorialised people who move between two or more places. Al-Ali and Koser (2002: 4) state how 'the development of new identities among migrants, who are neither anchored (socially, culturally and physically) in their place of origin nor in their place of destination' has been conducive to the gradual deterritorialisation of citizenship. This concept of deterritorialisation has also been referred to as 'diaspora'. The use of the term is often disputed in migration studies and while some theorists like Faist (1999) argue that it is not accurate to apply the term to labour migrants because they have not experienced traumatic events, other theorists would use the term more widely indicating a variety of diasporas ranging from victim diasporas to indicate people who suffered ethno-political persecution, to economic diasporas referring to migrants who look for economic opportunities and colonial diasporas to indicate migrants who continue to have ties with past colonisation (Cohen 1997). Clifford (1994: 311) states that 'diasporist discourses reflect the sense of being part of an ongoing transnational network that includes the homeland, not as something simply left behind, but as a place of attachment in a contrapuntal modernity'. Guarnizo and Smith (1998) argue that the subversive potential of transnationalism is celebrated even if transnational migrants themselves do not always want or have any conscious intention to subvert the power of nation-states.

There seems to be an assumption, among transnationalists, that transnational practices create new forms of identities that are not only linked to a sole national identity. For example, Guarnizo (1997) states that Dominican migrants cannot be classified as either Dominican or American but as both. Dual, multiple and new forms of identities in general, are assumed to emerge from transnational lives based on the cultures of the host and the home country (Glick Schiller and Fouron 1990). Tsuda (2003: 258), among

others, argues that in opposition to the majority of national communities which infuse a sense of belonging and loyalty, most transnational migrant communities lack a sense of consciousness. Therefore transnational migration does not always involve a movement from the national to the post-national and 'communities are frequently unable to transcend traditional forms of national belonging' (Tsuda 2003: 258). Having said the above, some transnational theorists do take into account the relevance of national loyalties and the power of nation state on the identities of transnational migrants (Glick Schiller 1997; Guarnizo and Smith 1998).

Regarding the interviewees in this study, they certainly cover a wide variety of identities. Returnees from Argentina fit much more into the transnational tradition of viewing identity. In fact despite their almost non-existent transnational life, prior to moving to Italy, the majority of them go through a process of 'identification' with Italian culture once they 'return' to Italy. The identities of the returnees from Europe develop in a much less linear way compared to their Argentinian counterparts. Despite the fact that all of the interviewees in this group grew up transnationally, upon returning to Italy the majority of them identify either with the 'host' country or stop identifying with any of the countries. This topic will be further explored in Chapters IV, V and VI.

### **Return Migration in Systems Theory**

A migration system is comprised of two or more countries which exchange migrants with each other. The migration systems approach is concerned with studying all the linkages that exist between localities attempting to cover all dimensions of the migration experience (Castles and Miller 2003). This theory has firstly focused on internal migration systems (Kritz and Zlotnik 1992) and then on international migration systems. Mabogunje (1970) carried out an internal migration system study that paid particular attention to migration movements between countryside and city analysing the impact of these movements on both emigration and immigration areas. In the 1980s there was a focus on international migration systems, such as Fawcett and Arnold's (1987) examination of population movements in the Asia-Pacific region. Migration systems theory holds that migratory movements are based on the existence of prior

connections between sending and receiving countries, such as colonisation, political influence, trade, and culture. Thus Italian return migration from both Argentina and Europe is a direct consequence of a history of Italian labour migration between these countries. The basic principle on which the migration systems approach is based is that any migratory movement is the result of the interaction between macro and micro structures. The first one refers to large-scale institutional factors while the second one embraces the informal social networks developed by migrants themselves, in order to cope with migration and settlement. However, these two structures are not separate, but are interlinked by intermediate mechanisms which are referred to as meso-structures (Castles and Miller 2003; Ambrosini 2000).

The macro-structures include the roles of international political relations among states seeking to direct migrant movements which are often influenced by world economies. Italian state policies have often been contradictory and undertaken in an *ad hoc* fashion: they favour citizenship along lines of descent and tightening naturalization processes at the expense of 'foreign' migrants while extending citizenship to Italian descendants' abroad (through legislation in 1992 (law 91) (Peixoto 2009; Andall 2002; Zincone 2009). The 1992 legislation on citizenship increased residency requirements for citizenship from five to ten years while granting Italian citizens abroad the right to 're-acquire' citizenship. In Italy, the law on citizenship has directly impacted on the choice of many Argentinians, and South Americans in general, with Italian origins to claim the right to Italian citizenship even if they are fifth-generation migrants. It is estimated that there is a potential 60 million people of Italian descent in the world who are entitled to claim Italian citizenship (Zincone 2009). It is argued that this was an unpredicted consequence of this law. Italian regions, Piedmont being one of them, subsidise travel expenses to Italians living abroad under the law L.R.1/87, if they decide to 'return home' but do not have financial means to do so. This is another example of how state/regional policies influence migrant movements. A few of the returnees from Argentina interviewed in this study availed of these subsidiaries during times of financial crisis in Argentina. On the other hand, this financial assistance was not utilised by any of the returnees from Europe, as shown in the table below.



**Table 2.1: Statistics on subsidised return migration to Piedmont**

<b>Country of Provenience</b>	<b>Region of Residency</b>	<b>Years of return</b>	<b>Total number of family units</b>
Argentina	Piedmont	1999-2012	222
France	Piedmont	1999-2012	0
Belgium	Piedmont	1999-2012	1
Switzerland	Piedmont	1999-2012	4
Rest of the World	Piedmont	1999-2012	112

Source: Ufficio Emigrazione Regione Piemonte

The table above clearly shows that Italian returnees from Argentina utilise the subsidies more than both Italian returnees from Europe and Italian returnees from the rest of the world. The data collected by the Piedmont Region between 1999 and 2012 reveal that the rate of returns were not spread out uniformly over those years but were clustered between 1999 and 2005; 2002 and 2003 were the years with the highest numbers by far, with 51 and 66 family units returning respectively. Those were the years that followed the climax of the institutional and financial crisis which occurred in Argentina in 2001. The correlation ‘between the increase in arrivals (in Italy) and the evolution of the economic crisis in Argentina’ noted by Grossutti (2005: 5) is also relevant for the previous wave of returnees from Argentina to Italy, who came as a consequence of the socio-economic crisis in Argentina at the end of the 1980s.

Micro-structures refer to the informal social networks among migrants themselves which support them in facing the challenges that moving to a new country presents, such as language, finding accommodation and employment. This social network concept is based on the previous ‘chain migration’ theory (Price 1963). Theorists in the 1960s and 1970s studied how the information provided by and the support of kin, friends, and family impacted on the process of chain migration (Anderson 1974; MacDonal and MacDonal 1964; Hugo 1981). A migrant network is a ‘set of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community origins’ (Massey et al. 1993: 448). These ties augment the possibility of international movements because they decrease the costs and risks of migration. ‘Network linkages

are a form of social capital<sup>7</sup> that provides fundamental resources for individuals and groups' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 119) on which people can rely on in order to enter, for example, foreign employment. As argued in later chapters, the majority of returnees from Argentina relied on either friends or family members when they moved to Italy. Since the majority of them did not have a relationship with their Italian relatives when they were in Argentina (which the majority of them would go on to redevelop once they moved to Italy), they initially relied primarily on their Argentinian connections in Italy. This was different again for the returnees from within Europe who did not rely on social networks to integrate in Italy and, apart from their partner, often did not have any other type of network. Very often these return migrants did not have their family of origin since they were from different parts of Italy. Social networks instead were crucial in the integration of returnees from Argentina for many reasons ranging from accommodation, employment, social life, and emotional support.

Meso-structures refer to individuals, organisations, and institutions for example, that mediate between migrants and political or economic institutions. This mediation can occur legally or illegally, formally or informally. Undocumented migrant movements, for example, are often organised by smugglers and traffickers while the movements of return migrants can also be assisted by organisations that inform migrants on their rights and entitlements prior to and after migration (Castles and Miller 2003). A few of the returnees from Argentina stated that they had been in contact with Argentinian organisations; those who had not were also aware of them. Again, returnees from within Europe did not tend to rely on any meso-structure for their integration in the country, and there are no organisations (apart from the diplomatic missions) that can support them in a more informal way. However, some of the return migrants from France mentioned that they felt like going 'home' when they attended events in cultural institutes and met people with a similar background. These mechanisms that facilitate migration and migrants settlements are referred to as the 'migration industry' by Harris (1999).

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<sup>7</sup> Social capital has been defined as 'cultural and moral resources that help to promote social cohesion, political stability and prosperity' (Heywood 2002: 431).

There are no sharp divisions between the macro, micro and meso structures, rather they are constantly interrelating and engaging with each other. Although this study cannot be fully analysed through a migration systems theory, since it mainly focuses on one part of the system ('the return'), this framework is essential to understanding the broader picture in which the experiences of returnees takes place.

### **'Push-Pull' Theory: Returnees from Argentina to Italy**

The 'push-pull' model, founded in neo-classical economics, can be helpful in understanding the reasons why returnees from Argentina migrated to Italy. These returnees disclose a basic dynamic in international migration theory: some factors 'push' migrants from their origin country and some others 'pull' migrants to a host country. The push factors that usually impel people to leave the areas of origin include 'demographic growth, low living standards, lack of economic opportunities and political repression' (Castles and Miller 2003: 22); while the pull factors, that attract migrants to specific receiving countries include 'demand for labour, availability of land, good economic opportunities and political freedoms' (Castles and Miller 2003: 22). The combination and the interaction of push and pull factors determine paths of migration. Some of the most significant factors that influence migration flows, identified by Solimano (2003: 15), are the following: real wage differentials (between sending and receiving countries); network effects (informal social networks among migrants help to face the challenges that moving to a new country presents, such as language, finding accommodation and employment, therefore the value of friends and relatives represents a significant factor when choosing the country of destination); policies toward immigration (favourable migration policies in host countries tend to attract migrants); cultural differences across countries (cultural similarities such as language, traditions, and family structure affect migration patterns); and geographical distance and proximity (immigration to geographically close countries seems to be favourable compared to immigration to countries located far away). The following section will show how some of these factors influence the decisions of Italo- Argentinians to return to Italy.

### *Argentinian Push Factors*

The combination of push and pull factors can provoke significant movements of migrants. The history of Argentinian migration to Italy is the result of these factors in action. In the case of returnees from Argentina to Italy, the push factors can be found in the political and economic history of Argentina. Solimano (2003: 11) states that ‘the combination of macroeconomic instability (higher inflation), slow and unstable growth in the 1960s, 1970s<sup>8</sup> and 1980s’, and the ‘the political history of Argentina combining populist–nationalist regimes and repressive military regimes (particularly in the second half of the 1950s), combined with unstable and fragile democracy’, were the main push factors of Argentinian migration<sup>9</sup>. Outward migration from Argentina continued even after the return to democracy in 1983 which failed to stabilise the economic, social, and political situation in the country. The threat of a return to military dictatorship characterised the 1980s and 1990s. Severe macro-economic crises and two periods of hyperinflation took place during the late 1980s, which although they were followed by relative calm in the 1990s, were destabilised by another macro-economic crisis at the end of the decade and economic meltdown in 2001 (Gasparini and Cruces 2008).

### *Italian Pull Factors*

Argentinian migrants started to arrive in Italy as political refugees in the late 1970s and early 1980s. However the number of Argentinian migrants reached its peak after the 2001 economic crisis in Argentina which led to a massive increase in the number of Argentinians in Italy within a short period of time. The most significant pull factor that explains Argentinian migrants of Italian descent moving to Italy are the loose requirements necessary to achieve Italian citizenship which, through the Schengen agreement, guarantees the right of freedom of movement for EU citizens throughout the EU region.

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<sup>8</sup> ‘The political situation worsened again after the military coup of 1976. In that period, the military again led a massive deportation of scientists, professionals and students as part of an overall repressive strategy to control and eliminate potential opposition to the military regimes that tried to consolidate in Argentina at that time’ (Solimano 2003: 11).

<sup>9</sup> These migrants were typically highly skilled migrants predominately destined for the U.S.A. or Spain (Jachimowicz 2006).

Italy is the easiest European country in which to obtain citizenship by descent. Between 1998 and 2008 almost 900,000 Latin Americans, primarily from Argentina, obtained Italian passports on the basis of *ius sanguinis*. It is sufficient to prove that one's ancestor (there is no generational limitation) was Italian and that they never renounced Italian nationality voluntarily (Tintori 2011). Therefore, Italian descendants of the third, fourth, fifth and so on generation are entitled to claim their Italian origins and therefore an Italian passport. Italian law establishes that the acquisition of Argentinian citizenship does not cause, for those who adhere to this special agreement, the loss of original citizenship. This law was ratified in Italy on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1973 and was in force from 12<sup>th</sup> September 1974 (Tintori 2011).

Some Italian regional laws, such as the L.R.1/87 in Piedmont, subsidise the travel expenses of Italians living abroad if they decide to move to Italy but do not have the financial means to do so. This is another example of how regional and state policies act as pull factors that influence migrant movements. However, other pull factors are discussed in Chapters IV, V and VI, such as: economic stability, cultural-linguistic similarity (Peixoto 2009), and the existence of deep and well-inserted social networks. In the next section, I firstly provide a succinct overview of theories of assimilation and multiculturalism and clarify how they have developed over time, moving on then to explain why I have decided to use the word 'integration', and what it stands for in the context of this study.

### **Assimilation, Multiculturalism and Integration**

Starting from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a substantial literature on assimilation, acculturation, pluralism, multiculturalism, integration or one of the many overlapping yet often contradictory terms started to develop in the field of migration studies. All these concepts are concerned with and try to explain the complex phenomenon of migrant groups settling. Some of the challenging questions that migration theorists try to address are: what are the factors which explain divergent patterns of integration/assimilation among migrant groups/ individuals? Is it possible to develop a theoretical framework applicable across different nations and among different ethnic groups? Is the

level of integration/ assimilation of migrants measurable? To exhaustively answer all of these questions is beyond the scope of this dissertation; however, the aim here is to address a number of key points that are directly relevant for this study.

Even though the word assimilation has appeared in the migration literature relatively recently, to think of assimilation as a relatively new phenomenon would be adopting a biased view of history. Throughout the centuries and particularly since the rise of nation-states, groups have been 'assimilated' into the mainstream culture. Individuals and groups were thus obligated to shed much of their distinct culture, in terms of language, customs, religious observance and political organisation. This was done by empires and nation-states to attempt to compel homogeneity on migrants, with the aim of ensuring political stability and social cohesion (Zolberg 2003). Specifically, assimilation attempted to absorb peripheral groups into a centre; when effective, they would go on to become an indistinguishable part of it.

When Park and Burgess (1969: 735) wrote their seminal work *Introduction to the science of sociology* in 1921 they asserted that 'assimilation is a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life'. Park (1950: 150) defines assimilation happening through a four-stage process: contact, competition, accommodation and assimilation. According to this process when individuals from different ethnic groups first come into contact they enter into competition 'as groups struggle to gain advantages over one another' which is eventually followed by accommodation, where an understanding of group position has been achieved (Alba and Nee 1997: 828). The final stage of this race-relations cycle is assimilation which happens when personal relationships cross group boundaries (Alba and Nee 1997: 828). Park believed that, in modern society, forces of change (such as industrialisation and democratic political institutions based on meritocracy), would eventually eliminate discrimination and ethnic antagonism based on language, culture and race (Alba and Nee 1997: 400). Even though Alba and Nee (1997) argue that Park and Burgess's definition of assimilation, quoted above, does not necessarily imply the erasure of all

signs of ethnic origins, there is a general acceptance that in practice assimilation, from the 1920s to the 1960s, involved the assimilation of ethnic minorities into the mainstream Anglo-Saxon majority in the United States.

Gordon (1964) divided assimilation into seven phases: cultural (acculturation), structural, marital (amalgamation), identificational, attitude receptional (absence of prejudice), behavioural receptional (absence of discrimination), and civic (absence of value and power conflict) (Hirschman 1983). As Rumbaut (1997: 926) explains, identificational assimilation (for example, a self-image as American) was the end point of a process that began with cultural assimilation, proceeded through structural assimilation and intermarriage, and was accompanied by an absence of prejudice and discrimination in the 'core society'. Once structural assimilation had taken place (i.e. extensive interaction with members of the 'core group') the remaining types of assimilation would follow in a domino effect (Rumbaut 1997). Gordon explored the many dimensions of assimilation; however, he maintained that it was a one way process (religion excepted) leading to an increasing convergence of ethnic groups on the Anglo-Saxon 'core'. He argued that the 'core' would remain unchanged by this absorption (Alba and Nee 1997).

France, in the European context, is the classic example of an assimilationist state with a long tradition of assimilation discourse and techniques, apart from the beginning of the 1980s when France went through a short 'multiculturalist' period (Simon and Sala Pala 2010). The French Republican model of assimilation is 'based on the central idea that by becoming integrated into the political community as French citizens, minorities will assimilate into a dominant culture based on linguistic homogeneity and civic nationalism' Vasta (2007: 735). According to Simon and Sala Pala (2010: 95) the French model of assimilation is based on a 'non-negotiable' French cultural superiority that actively seek the reduction of immigrants' cultural specificities with the aim of assimilation. However, this model of ethnic minority incorporation has failed in the case of the majority of the second-generation returnees from France who were interviewed in this study. These returnees in fact state that in France they never felt that they fully belonged there or that they were fully 'French'; and the majority of them were exposed

to racist comments while growing up. I will expand on this issue later on in this chapter and also in Chapters IV, V, and VI.

During the civil rights movement in the United States at the end of the 1960s, some scholars who rejected much of the classic interpretation of assimilation started to gain prominence. Critics of assimilation theory argued that it was un-testable: when the argument was made that assimilation had not occurred, assimilationists could, in theory, maintain that the process of assimilation was still ongoing (Lyman 1972). Others such as Barth and Noel (1973), as well as Blumer (1965), raised a number of doubts around the determinism inherent in the theory, the one-way direction of change within it, and the argument that industrialisation would necessarily lead to a decline in racial discrimination. The latest reaction to the assimilation theory came from the revival of the ethnicity school when in the late 1960s and 1970s many scholars agreed that ethnicity remained a fundamental source of identification (Hirschman 1983: 402) and that it could come back even more strongly after a few generations. Arnold (2011: 18) argues that by the 1960s the assimilation concept was discredited. Glazer and Moynihan (1963) famously noted that the melting pot never happened and their quote became symbolic of the crisis of the assimilation concept from the end of the 1960s onwards. By the 1980s the notion of difference gained eminence. Brubaker (2001: 531) calls this process the 'differentialist turn' during which multiculturalist concepts were predominant. These concepts believed that migrant groups were retaining ethnic customs and identity over time, and therefore assimilation was not occurring (Gans 1997). From the early 1960s a consensus started to emerge among scholars that it was incorrect to assume that minority ethnic groups would take on the cultural characteristics of the core ethnic group over time (the fundamental idea of assimilation theory) (Brubaker 2001).

In the 1960s struggles for multicultural societies started to surface. In those years, academics and policymakers began to challenge assimilation policies, instead promoting policies of multiculturalism and integration, 'prompted by the realisation that many immigrants and refugees maintain elements of their home country culture and identity as well as symbolic, and to some extent also practical, links to their places of



origins' (Stefansson 2004: 6). Kymlicka (2007) states that it is very difficult to pin down a definition of multiculturalism, instead he suggests that a more effective way to understand the logic of multiculturalism is to understand what it is a response to. He (2007: 61) states that 'all struggles for multiculturalism share in common a rejection of earlier models of the unitary, homogenous nation-state'. Kymlicka (2007: 62) also argues that since most nation-states did not exist naturally, they had to actively construct a national homogeneity through 'nation-building policies that encouraged the preferred national identity while suppressing any alternative identities'. However, as seen from the late 1960s onwards, some minorities have rejected this homogenisation and have campaigned in favour of diversity and for a multicultural state which must be seen as belonging to all citizens and not only to a single group (Kymlicka 2007). The multicultural state also needs to 'recognise cultural identities (as opposed to assimilation) and open up public spaces for their representation; and foster acceptance of ethnic pluralism and cultural understanding across all groups' (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010: 4). Therefore, according to Banting and Kymlicka (2006: 1) multiculturalism policies 'go beyond the protection of the basic civil and political rights guaranteed to all individuals in a liberal-state, to also extend some level of public recognition and support for ethno-cultural minorities to maintain and express their distinct identities and practices'.

Leading articles published in the early 1990s demonstrated that a range of outcomes could come from processes of ethnic relations (Portes and Zhou 1993) and that a false dichotomy had been allowed to emerge between pluralists and assimilationists. Gans (1997: 875) argues that this division was 'conceptually and otherwise defective'. Portes and Zhou (1993: 75) theorising on the second generation argued that 'the process of growing up American oscillated between smooth acceptance and traumatic confrontation depending on the characteristics that immigrants and their children bring along and the social context that receives them'. Responding to the 'straight-line assimilation' concept, they posit that the process of assimilation has become segmented, with 'several different forms of adaptation. One of them replicates the time-honored portrayal of growing acculturation and parallel integration into the white middle-class; a second leads straight in the opposite direction to permanent poverty and assimilation

into the underclass (downward mobility); still a third associates rapid economic advancement with deliberate preservation of the immigrant's community values and tight solidarity' (Portes and Zhou 1993: 82).<sup>10</sup> Portes and Zhou (1993: 83) explain these different outcomes among second-generation migrants through three features of social context: colour, location, and the absence of mobility ladders. I will expand on these features later in this chapter.

Gans (1997) argues that the traditional polarisation of assimilationist and pluralist theories is unnecessary and can be reconciled through the concept of acculturation. According to Gans (1997: 877), 'acculturation refers mainly to the newcomers' adoption of the culture of the host society' while assimilation 'refers to the newcomers' move out of formal and informal ethnic associations and other social institutions into the non-ethnic equivalents'. Drawing on the acculturation and assimilation concepts conventionally used at the Chicago School in the late 1940s, Gans (1997) argues that acculturation is always a quicker process than assimilation for two reasons. First he (1997: 877) explains that 'American culture is a powerfully attractive force for immigrants (...) particularly those coming from societies that lack their own commercial popular cultures'; Second he (1997: 878) explains that immigrants 'can acculturate on their own but they cannot assimilate unless they are given permission to enter the 'American' group or institution' since discrimination can deny this permission. Acculturation therefore helps explain why assimilation is not a straight-line process. Gans (1997: 878) moreover points out the importance of distinguishing between voluntary and involuntary retention as 'members of the second generation remain loyal to the immigrant family and honour the obligations it demands, these members must also retain some cultural practices they might otherwise give up'. For instance he (1997) explains that the second generation may retain the ethnic language because this might be the only way to interact with their parents. Gans (1997: 878) asserts that 'if the

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<sup>10</sup> Zhou (2005), expanding on the concept elaborated with Portes (1993), that ethnic cohesion is an alternative route to upward mobility, introduces the idea that ethnicity can be mobilised as social capital. These concepts will be both employed to explain the experiences of returnees in the labour market in Italy in Chapter IV.

assimilation-acculturation distinction is used in research, researchers will discover the virtually inevitable lag of assimilation behind acculturation’.

Brubaker (2001: 539) argues that since the middle of the 1980s there has been ‘a renewed theoretical concern with assimilation in the scholarly literature’. He (2001: 533) calls this phenomenon the ‘return of assimilation’. Brubaker (2001: 539) specifies that ‘recent work on assimilation is agnostic about its directions, degrees, and modalities, and ambivalent about its desirability’. Therefore ‘the new theorists of assimilation do not simply replicate the old, pre-1965 approaches’ which ‘posited, endorsed, and expected assimilation towards an unproblematic conceived white Protestant ‘core culture’’ (Brubaker 2001: 540). Brubaker (2001: 542) states that the concept of assimilation has involved a significant shift from focusing on difference to focusing on emerging commonalities; ‘it does not amount to a return to the bad old days of arrogant assimilationism’. He (2001: 542) argues that while ‘the *term* ‘assimilation’ has returned, the *concept* has been transformed’ in the following six ways. First, a shift from understandings of assimilation focusing on absorption, to focusing on processes of becoming similar has occurred. Second, there has been a shift from seeing ‘populations of immigrant origin as mouldable’ objects, to perceiving them as active subjects (Brubaker 2001: 542). Third, there has been a shift in the unit within which change occurs – ‘the unit that undergoes assimilation is not the person but a multi-generational population’ (key changes such as in language and in other domains occur inter-generationally) (Brubaker 2001: 543). Fourth, ‘a shift from thinking in terms of homogenous units to thinking in terms of heterogeneous units’ has happened (Brubaker 2001: 543). Fifth, there has been ‘a shift in the focus of normative concern informing research on assimilation from cultural to socio-economic matters’ (Brubaker 2001: 543). Sixth, a shift from an approach that conceptualised assimilation into a ‘core culture’, to an approach that envisions divergent paths by which assimilation can occur has taken place (Brubaker 2001).

The case of Argentina can be seen as an example of Brubaker’s (2001) concept of the ‘return of assimilation’ in action. The Argentinian Constitution promotes immigration from European countries. In Article 20 it states that foreigners are guaranteed the same

civil rights as Argentinian citizens, and in Article 25 immigration is promoted with the following words: ‘the Federal Government shall foster European immigration; and may not restrict, limit or burden with any tax whatsoever, the entry into the Argentine territory of foreigners who arrive for the purpose of tilling the soil, improving industries, and introducing and teaching arts and sciences’ (De La Torre and Mendoza 2007: 52). Therefore European immigrants are not only seen as labourers but also as fundamental contributors that can fully participate in the construction of the country. Many aspects of Brubaker’s (2001) concept of assimilation are relevant here. What took place in Argentina can be seen as a process of becoming similar, undertaken by active, heterogeneous subjects, across the course of generations. While there are differences across space and time, and with regard to the exclusion suffered by indigenous peoples from other neighbouring countries, there are similarities between his theory of the evolution of assimilation and the practices undertaken by the Argentinian state.

Since 2000, a series of terror attacks and several instances of riots by ethnic minorities’ started to emerge in many European countries and in the United States<sup>11</sup>. These events have forced a re-think on what the consequences of multicultural and assimilationist integration policies are. Since the more common socio-economic indicators would suggest that second-generation ethnic minorities were integrated, there was a newly increased emphasis placed by researchers on less easily measured factors such as ethnic or religious identity, citizenship and race (Thomson and Crul 2007). This change in emphasis was in accordance with the view argued by Zolberg and Long (1999: 8), who held that focusing on ‘particular elements of culture as the focal points of contentious debate provides an entry point into the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion’. These elements form a boundary which differentiates between host and migrant groups. Zolberg and Long (1999: 9) state that ‘though incorporation is an interactive process, involving both hosts and newcomers, the actors are not equal: since the negotiations take place in the host country, power relationships are generally asymmetric in favour of the host majority, which naturally has the upper hand’. They argue that negotiation between the hosts and the newcomers can take three forms: *boundary crossing*,

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<sup>11</sup> Riots between British Bangladeshi and Pakistani youths against White youths break out in several northern British cities in May 2001 and the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers, in the USA, in September 2001 are just some examples of this (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010).

*boundary blurring* and *boundary shifting*. *Boundary crossing* refers to the classic version of individual assimilation: migrants acquire some attributes of the host society while the structure of the receiving society remains unaffected (for example migrants replace their mother tongue with the host language, naturalisation, and religious conversion). *Boundary blurring* refers to changes in the structures of the receiving society. It is characterised by ‘the tolerance of multiple memberships and an overlapping of collective identities’ (for example bilingualism is accepted, dual nationality is possible and the institutionalisation of migrant faiths are welcomed) (Zolberg and Long 1999: 9). *Boundary shifting* refers to the reconstruction of a group’s identity which redefines the line differentiating between members and not members of a group. This can occur either in the direction of inclusion or exclusion (Zolberg and Long 1999).

Alba (2005), building on the work of Bauböck (1994) and Zolberg and Long (1999), attempts to build ‘a conceptual framework (on boundaries and assimilation) that will apply beyond U.S. society’ (Alba 2005: 21). Alba states ‘that the processes involved depend crucially on the precise nature of the ethnic boundary. The nature of the minority-majority boundary depends on the way in which it has been institutionalised in different domains. In turn, the nature of the boundary affects fundamentally the process by which individuals gain access to the opportunity afforded the majority’ (Alba 2005: 21-22). Alba (2005) posits that the ethnic majority creates social distance between itself and minorities by imposing its values (for example on religion, language, citizenship, and race) through key institutions. Alba (2005: 41) also states that the construction of boundaries depends ‘on the materials available in institutional domains of the receiving society, as well as on characteristics and histories that the immigrants themselves present’ therefore, the extent to which assimilation happens, change from one societal context to another. Alba (2005) develops the concepts of ‘blurred’ and ‘bright’ boundaries to indicate how ‘porous’ or exclusive boundaries are to migrants: ‘‘bright’ boundaries represent sharper divisions between ethnic groups which, especially for a community as a whole, are much more difficult to cross than the more malleable, less divisive ‘blurred’ boundaries’ (Thomson and Crul 2007: 1037). The analysis of Alba’s study on second-generation Mexicans in the United States, North Africans in France,

and Turks in Germany 'leads to the specific conclusion that blurred boundaries generally characterise the situation of Mexicans in the United States' while bright boundaries characterise the European context for Muslim groups (Alba 2005: 20). Therefore Alba (2005), through his study, acknowledges the 'path-dependence' of each process of integration but he also provides a framework of analysis that can overcome problems of comparability.

The concept of blurred and bright boundaries elaborated by Alba (2005) has been useful in understanding the experience of the returnees interviewed in this study. In fact, as will be demonstrated in Chapter VI, the majority of interviewees from Europe (and specifically from France) face similar assimilation issues to the ones faced by North African second-generation migrants in France, while the experience of third-, fourth- and fifth-generation of Italians in Argentina is closer to the experience of Mexicans described by Alba (with the exception of the race factor) (Alba 2005).

'Dual frame of reference' and 'relative deprivation' are also very useful theories to help understand the experiences of Italian returnees from Argentina and from Europe respectively. In relation to the 'dual frame of reference' Röder and Mühlau (2012: 779) argue that 'as long as the circumstances in the host countries [in the context of this study, the host country is Italy] compare favourably to the situation in their home country [in the context of this study, the home country is Argentina], the 'dual frame of reference' will induce a more positive evaluation relative to people who lack this anchoring'. Therefore as it will be evident by reading Chapter IV, V and VI, that the returnees from Argentina tend to value their experience and particularly the financial side of it in positive terms upon their return to Italy because they compare it with their previous life experience in Argentina.

Instead, it can be argued that the experience of second generation Italian returnees from France, is a specific example of relative deprivation. According to Runciman (1966: 9) the notions of relative deprivation and reference group 'depend on the frame of reference within which they are conceived'. Runciman (1966: 11) states that 'relative deprivation' should always imply a sense of deprivation and involves 'a comparison

with the imagined situation' of a reference group. Runciman (1966: 9) argues that if people 'have been led to see as a possible goal the relative prosperity of some more fortunate community with which they can directly compared themselves, then they will remain discontented with their lot until they have succeeded in catching up'. One of the most significant studies where the concept of 'relative deprivation' is explored is *The American Soldier*. The authors (Stouffer et. al 1949) of this book do not provide an exact definition of 'relative deprivation' however they provide a series of examples through which it is possible to grasp the concept. The main idea behind the examples is that a soldier can adjust more or less easily to the camps where he was situated depending on the 'reference group' against which he compares his situation. The authors of the book argue that it was manifestly more frustrating for northern Negro soldiers, in the United States army, to adapt to their army life compared to the northern Negro soldiers located in the south of the country, because while the first group compared themselves to the situation of northern Negro civilians who enjoyed more rights, the northern Negro located in the southern camps tended to compare their situation to the civilian Negro living in the south, who were entitled to less rights.

This concept of 'relative deprivation' is useful to explain the disappointing experience of the second generation Italian returnees from Europe in Italy. This cohort kept measuring their standard of living in Italy in terms of services, employment, welfare system etc. with what they were used to in the European country grew up in.

From the assimilation theories reviewed until now, it emerges that several factors such as colour, location, absence of mobility ladders, citizenship, religion, and language 'account for different patterns of second-generation integration in different countries' (Thomson and Crul 2007: 1025; Alba 2005; Portes and Zhou 1993). However, it is important to underline that these are not the only issues faced by second-generation migrants. In fact as Alba (2005) points out, the factors that influence assimilation, change from context to context. Portes and Zhou (1993) argue that colour is the first source of vulnerability for the process of assimilation because the majority of contemporary second-generation immigrants in the States are non-white; the second source of vulnerability is the location of immigrant households which are often in close

contact with concentrations of native-born minorities<sup>12</sup>; the third source of vulnerability has to do with changes in the American economy which followed a rapid process of national deindustrialisation which has left a gap between minimally paid unskilled jobs and the high-tech and professional occupations which require college degrees occupied by native elites. This, as Portes and Zhou (1993: 83) argue, has led 'to the evaporation of occupational ladders of intergenerational mobility'. Alba (2005: 27), on the other hand, argues that apart from race there are other aspects that influence the process of assimilation of second-generation migrants such as: citizenship, religion, and language. Alba (2005) makes the point that citizenship is a fundamental aspect because not only does it confer political rights but it also affects the sense of membership. Alba (2005) states that since the United States legislation on citizenship is based on *ius soli* (therefore it is a straightforward process for the second generation to acquire citizenship), Mexican Americans feel quite American, while many Turkish migrants in Germany do not have German citizenship (because of restrictions on the acquisition of the citizenship), and therefore do not identify themselves as German<sup>13</sup> (although in recent years a reform which loosened the citizenship criteria came into force in Germany). In the case of French naturalisation, Alba (2005) states that although prior to 1993 and after 1998 citizenship has been acquired passively (automatically granted at age 18), there exists confusion over citizenship status among second-generation migrants. Alba (2005) speaks about the importance of language to assimilation, and he argues that although second-generation migrants usually speak the language of the majority, in some countries such as France, the use of their own language is not encouraged. This implies that French institutions promote assimilation in a 'classical' sense - where the minority is expected to adapt to the 'core' majority culture. Regarding religion, Alba (2005: 32) makes a similar point stating that even in secular countries such as France, Christian religions have been institutionalised through customs and habits of thought and therefore it is difficult for other types of religion, such as Islam, to achieve parity.

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<sup>12</sup> Portes and Zhou (1993) illustrate this point using the example of the Haitian immigrant community (Little Haiti) which is adjacent to Liberty City, the main black inner-city area in Miami. They argue that Haitian adolescents attend predominantly inner-city schools where black Americans are the majority.

<sup>13</sup> Since 1 January 2000, it has been possible to acquire German citizenship based on the principle of birthplace, according to which a child of foreign parents automatically obtains German citizenship by being born in Germany if, at this time, at least one parent has had their main place of residence in Germany for at least eight years, and is entitled to permanent residency (Sachsen 2014).



Contrary to the third-, fourth- and fifth-generation returnees from Argentina who did not experience any of the barriers mentioned above while growing up, second-generation returnees from Europe and especially from France did. As it will be further explored in Chapters IV, V, and VI returnees from Europe often explain that the area where they grew up was mainly populated by ethnic minorities: often they refer to these areas as ‘ghettos’. A few of the interviewees from France also state that they were unaware for a long time that they were entitled to French citizenship, showing that many second-generation migrants were confused about their legal status while growing up, especially those who were born in Italy but arrived in France prior to starting school. Many of the interviewees who participated in this study and who grew up in countries such as France and Belgium recalled that school teachers encouraged their Italian parents to speak French to their children to promote assimilation - the use of Italian in families was seen as counterproductive in the process of assimilation. Finally, the returnees who grew up in the Lorraine region (France) describe the issues that people in this region face as a consequence of the governmental decision to scale down the steel industry there at the end of the 1970s (Chapman 1989). The interviewees in fact grew up in a very industrial area and they saw it changing with the closure of many factories where a large number of migrants used to be employed. They explain that these changes in the regional economy, characterised by a process of deindustrialisation, left many social problems, above all unemployment.

It is interesting to note that the majority of the issues outlined above, which are faced by second-generation migrants differ from the issues faced by second-generation return migrants reported in the literature, as outlined in the Introduction. This difference is important since it clearly shows that return migrants cannot be considered the same as economic migrants who do not have an ethnic link to the country they migrate to.

### *Integration – Working Definition*

Wessendorf (2013) specifies that there is a different terminology employed in North America and in Europe when it comes to the process of incorporation among the second generation. While in Europe the word ‘integration’ is generally favoured when talking

about the settlement process of migrants and their families, in North America the term ‘segmented assimilation’, which is currently the predominant theory of assimilation in the United States, is commonly used (Wessendorf 2013). As seen throughout this chapter, assimilation is a very contested concept and even if in current academic debate it does not refer to a process of absorption of the minority cultures into the mainstream culture in a forced manner any longer, non-American theorists are critical of it and tend to avoid the use of the word (Vasta 2007: 734). The concept of integration as described by Grillo (2001: 6) implies ‘immigrants becoming an integral part of, though not necessarily absorbed by, the receiving society and culture’. It is also often referred to ‘as a two-way process which also involves social and cultural transformations in the majority society’ (Wessendorf 2013: 7).

In this study, following the European tradition, I will employ the word ‘integration’ to conceptualise the process of settlement for the two groups of returnees. In the following section, I explain what I mean by integration and which aspects were considered when analysing the experiences of return migrants in Italy.

In this study, I analyse the processes of integration of return migrants by looking at economic, social, and cultural aspects in Chapters IV, V, and VI respectively. Although political participation is considered to be an essential element of integration, I decided not to have a separate chapter on it because all my interviewees, with the exception of two, have the right to vote in Italy, as Italian citizens. While carrying out my interviews for this study, I realised that even though there was a significant mistrust towards politics and politicians, there was a high political participation rate when it came to voting among return migrants in both groups. I have integrated the most significant information on political participation in Chapters IV, V and VI, and decided to pay more attention to the other three dimensions of integration selected, which in my opinion presented more interesting data.

Economic integration, in this study, refers to the socio-economic status acquired by return migrants in Italy. This is often but not always dependant to the level of education, professional skills, and work experience that return migrants accrue prior to moving to

Italy. Important areas to be explored to gain an understanding about the levels of economic integration of return migrants are their ability to use their skills to determine their professional career, in which sectors are they employed despite their qualifications, and if they have experienced discrimination either while searching for employment or trying to access education. The level of support they receive from their social networks, the state and the civil society are also fundamental aspects to consider while analysing the economic integration of return migrants.

Social integration refers to the relationships that return migrants manage to establish with members of the receiving country. An important aspect of social integration is the type of social networks possessed by return migrants as well as their participation in civil society organisations. Participation in civil society organisations by return migrants provides a medium for them to gather together, whether in relation to socio-cultural events or as a channel for political action. Social networks are important disclosers of integration as they tend to indicate the roots which migrants and their communities have put down in society. This can be seen by who their partners and friends are, which language they mainly speak in their social interactions on a daily basis and how they spend their free time.

Cultural integration refers to the capacity that return migrants have to culturally fit in and coexist with the values and principles of their ethnic country. This includes language, knowledge of customs, values and social norms as well as freedom of religious and cultural expression. The speed and degree of cultural integration is often influenced by the values of return migrants, their educational background, social networks, employment opportunities, locations available for return migrants to settle and above all their familiarity with Italian culture.

## **Conclusion**

In the first part of this chapter I have revisited transnational, migration system, and push-pull theories as useful approaches to orientate and guide my research. I have argued that both groups of interviewees conduct a transnational life after their return to

Italy but that while returnees from Europe have always conducted a transnational life, returnees from Argentina only become transnational when they return to Italy. I have argued that being transnational does not automatically imply that returnees identify with two countries. I have argued therefore that growing up in two countries, like the majority of the returnees from Europe did, is not synonymous with identifying with two nations, a concept which is central to the idea of transnationalism and identity. I have also highlighted the structures that make return migration from Argentina to Italy possible by employing both migration system and push-pull theories.

In the second part of the chapter I have provided a brief overview on the theories of assimilation, multiculturalism, and integration. I have argued that in the context of this study, following a European tradition, I avoid the use of the word assimilation and employ the word integration to refer to the process of settlement of return migrants in Italy. I have finally provided a definition of integration and provide the rationale for why I mainly focus on the economic, social, and cultural aspects of returnees' integration in the context of this study.

In the next chapter the methodology followed to gather and analyse the data for this research project is outlined.

### **Chapter III: Methodology**

This chapter discusses the methodological framework behind this dissertation. Firstly, it provides a short description of the research design: a comparative case study. Secondly, methodological questions regarding the sampling rationale and access issues are identified and explained. Thirdly, it illustrates the research method employed to collect data: semi-structured interviews. Finally, the chapter closes by exploring questions related to data analysis and ethics, and addresses issues concerning insider/ outsider debate in comparative case studies.

#### **Research Design: Comparative Case Study**

Case study is the research design employed in this project. It has become ‘extremely widespread in social research, particularly with small scale research’ (Denscombe 2010: 52). Case studies are usually associated with qualitative research but are not restricted to this (Rutterford 2012). The use of case study offers a detailed account of events, social settings, and experiences that unravel and effectively explore the complexities of a phenomenon. It deals with the case in its entirety, discovering how different parts influence one another. Therefore a case study adopts a ‘holistic’ approach to considering a phenomenon rather than considering it in isolated parts (Denscombe 2010: 53). Case study entails an intensive analysis of, not necessarily a single case as the term might suggest, but often the study of two or more cases for comparative purposes. Yin (2003) prefers a multiple case over a single case design arguing that the evidence derived from a multiple case study is more compelling. A case-study is ‘an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context’ (Yin 1993: 23). Since this thesis is based on a contemporary comparative case study, the choice of this research design has fallen into place quite naturally. The comparative approach was chosen to develop ‘robust explanation of similarities or differences’ (Hantrais 1999: 93) between two social phenomena, the Italian returnees from Europe and the Italian returnees from Argentina, in the same context – present day Italy. Hantrais (1999) states that the methods employed in cross-national comparative research are the same as those used for within-nation comparisons of sociological research. May (2002) asserts that investigators should pay attention to contextual

conditions by being sensitive to multifarious historical, cultural, and political specificities in the context of their research. I therefore examine the experiences of returnees in the context of Italy, taking into account the interviewees' background contexts and experiences in Argentina and in different countries in Europe.

This study on return migration tries to overcome the scepticism that a single-country study does not allow theoretical generalisation (Kohn 1989; Keman 1993) by identifying 'general factors within social systems that can be interpreted with reference to specific societal contexts' (Hantrais 1999: 94). The value of concentrating on a case study is found in the fact that its depth can reveal wider implications that might not be seen through a broader approach, such as through undertaking surveys. In this fashion, the general can be illuminated by looking at the particular (Denscombe 2010). Yin (2003: 5) distinguishes between three different types of case studies: *descriptive* which provides a description of the phenomenon, *explanatory* which tests existing theories and *exploratory*, which examines social phenomena, and which can also help to generate new theories. While my study does not aim to create new theories, it is 'exploratory' in nature because it tries to explore the reasons why returnees from these two groups experience a different level of integration upon their return to Italy. According to Fusaro (2008: 234) the investigation of a phenomenon that is still in evolution, such as the topic of this research, is a 'work in progress' that requires a personal interpretation of the data.

This study is based on both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources were gained through the interview process while secondary sources were gained through the existing reading on return migration and integration (Bell 1993). However, before moving on to talk about data collection techniques, I would like to describe the samples of interviewees who have participated in this study.

### **Sampling Rationale**

The subjects of this research are two separate groups; one is composed of second-generation Italian returnees from Europe and the other being third-, fourth- and fifth-

generation Italian returnees from Argentina. The respondents for this study were selected through purposive and snowball sampling. A purposive sample is a non-random sample where individual units are selected deliberately to achieve a certain goal (Mason 1996). A snowball sample, on the other hand, is a method which 'involves contacting a member of the population to be studied and asking them whether they know anyone else with the required characteristics. The nominated individuals are interviewed in turn and asked to identify further sample members' (Sturgis 2008: 179-180).

Prior to my field research, I intended to interview as many respondents as necessary to reach what is known as saturation point in qualitative research. I anticipated that a total of about 40 return migrants would need to be interviewed: 20 second-generation returnees from France and 20 third-, fourth- and fifth-generation returnees from Argentina. Apart from the generational dimension, which was the basic criterion of selection, I identified a set of criteria to follow when choosing my interviewees. I planned to interview return migrants from both working-class and middle-class backgrounds, and intended to observe a gender balance between them. The sample included recent migrants who returned within the past five years, as well as more established migrants who returned more than five years ago. I planned to interview respondents living in Turin and its surroundings, in Piedmont a region in the north-west of Italy. These criteria were set up to explore the different resources these groups brought with them and their potentially different levels of socio-economic and cultural integration upon their arrival in Italy.

How my field research developed in practice was quite different to that which I had planned. In fact, while I managed to select returnees from Argentina following all the criteria set up prior to my field research, when it came to returnees from France I was obliged to drop many of the criteria of selection apart from the generational and the location dimensions. This was because returnees from France were very difficult to identify and to get in touch with because they do not gather in any specific place in Turin. I carried out 14 interviews with returnees from France but when I realised that I could not obtain any further respondents from this country, I opted to look for second-

generation Italian returnees from other European countries. I therefore interviewed two more returnees from Belgium and Switzerland respectively. Despite the fact I had anticipated difficulties in locating second-generation migrants, my field research proved more challenging than predicted. I expected to find third- and fourth-generation Argentinian respondents of Italian origin more easily than my second-generation European-Italian respondents. This is because, in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the size of the return migration phenomenon from Argentina is much more significant than the size of their European-Italian counterparts. The period of Italian return migration from Europe began, instead, with the oil crisis in the 1970s, as discussed in the historical outline of Italian migration in Chapter I.

In order to answer my research question I decided to conduct my field research in Piedmont. This region was chosen because between the 1880s and the beginning of the First World War more than two million Italian migrants, the majority of whom were from Piedmont, migrated to Argentina. Moreover, in that period, the first mass migration from Italy to France took place; the majority of this migration was also from Piedmont, which borders France. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, France was the most popular destination in Europe and the third most popular worldwide, following the United States of America and Argentina (Vial 2002). Moreover, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Piedmont went through a massive process of industrialisation in which leading Italian industries, such as FIAT, attracted many migrants particularly from the south of Italy (Castronovo 2010; 2013). In contemporary Piedmont, many return migrants are from Argentina; this is partially because of schemes that facilitate the return of Italian descendants. These schemes encourage the return and the integration of returnees from Europe and from overseas countries through retraining courses, assistance finding housing, help entering the labour market, facilitating access to social networks and aid for young people adapting to a new school system (Tintori 2011). Therefore, Turin and its surroundings have been chosen because of their strong existing links with both Argentina and France.

It is important to clarify that my study is not a regional case study that exclusively focuses on return migrants originally from Piedmont. This region was chosen because I



felt it was the most likely to offer the potential to reach interviewees of second, third, fourth, and fifth generation with all the characteristics mentioned above. In fact, many of the interviewees both from Argentina and from Europe are originally from other regions of Italy.

### **Access issues**

My field research lasted from January until June 2012 - however, the preliminary preparation for it started about six months earlier. In this preliminary phase I was concerned with figuring out how to locate second-generation French interviewees and third-, fourth- and fifth-generation interviewees from Argentina. Since the process of recruiting the interviewees for these two groups follow different patterns, I will first describe the process of locating second-generation interviewees, and then how I located third-, fourth- and fifth-generation returnees.

#### *Access to Second Generation Returnees*

In order to locate this group of returnees, the first step I took was to prepare a list of all the southern Italian organisations, seven in total, in Turin. I contacted these organisations by email and by phone because I thought they might be able to connect me with second-generation Italian migrants who had decided to relocate in the north of Italy for family or employment reasons upon their return. However, even though I managed to obtain a meeting with the director of one of these organisations, none of them were able to link me with any potential interviewee who matched my primary criteria of selection: Italian second generation living in Turin. I also contacted three Italian restaurants specialising in southern Italian cuisine with the same aim, but I also received a negative answer. Secondly, I contacted the branch of the regional office that deals with migration issues in Turin and arranged an appointment with one of the officers. Even though this officer was not in a position of providing me with any contacts of second-generation Italian returnees due to privacy issues, he gave me a list of all the organisations from Piedmont around the world to contact to access potential interviewees. Unfortunately, these contacts were unhelpful (I got in touch with nine

organisations from Piedmont in total: one in Belgium, one in Switzerland, and seven in France) because either I never received a reply or I was told that they were not aware of any return migrant that would fit my criteria. The regional officer for migration also presented me with a number of publications dealing with the migration history of Piedmont. This material was very useful for the purposes of this research. Thirdly, I contacted the French, Belgian and Swiss consulates in Turin but again I had no luck. I also visited some cultural institutes such as the Goethe Institute and the Alliance Française in an attempt to reach potential interviewees but again with no success. I also contacted several primary, middle and secondary schools in Turin by phone, email and in person hoping that any of their foreign language teachers would be second-generation Italian. Again I received a negative reply.

However, when all the official channels failed and when I thought I would never find any second-generation returnees a lucky coincidence happened, which radically changed the course of events. One afternoon, I was supposed to interview a returnee from Argentina, but as I arrived early to the appointment I decided to go for a short walk to pass the time. During the course of my walk, I saw a French delicatessen shop called *Si Vuplè* and I decided to enter and ask if they knew anybody who I could interview. When I went in, one of the managers of the shop told me that she was French and that she could not think of any Italian second generation living in Turin. However, she asked me for my contacts and she offered to display them in the shop. I thought that while her offer was very kind, it was unlikely to work. Instead a couple of days after having been in the shop, contrary to all my expectations, I received an email from one of the customers of the delicatessen: a second-generation Italian from France, living in Turin. This person also stated in the email that she knew many second-generation migrants, and that she would be happy to be interviewed. This person became the gatekeeper<sup>14</sup> to access my second-generation interviewees. She sent an email to her contacts with my details and as a result of this I managed to interview several second-generation returnees' and some of these returnees in turn introduced me to other

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<sup>14</sup> A gatekeeper can be a professional or an administrator that can deny or 'grant permission on behalf of clients or customers or patients frequenting the milieu' (Bulmer 2008: 152). However, a gatekeeper can also simply be any person who introduces the researcher to new potential interviewees.

interviewees. Moreover, through her contacts, she placed an advertisement about my research and the criteria of the people I was looking to interview in a French newspaper in Turin: *le petit journal*. Two interviewees got in touch with me through reading these advertisements. My first interviewee took place in *Si Vuplé* and while I was concluding it, a customer entered the shop, who also turned out to be an Italian second-generation returnee from France. She agreed to carry out an interview with me, and also referred me to one of her friends. Finally through a snowball effect I managed to interview 16 second-generation return migrants. My gatekeeper, since she used to work in a French language school, tended to introduce me to second-generation interviewees who were also French teachers. However through the advertisements in the newspaper and the snowball effect I managed to gain access to a varied sample in terms of occupation including people working in catering and in the health sector. What I did not manage to obtain was a gender balance among the sample - my interviewees were predominantly women. As mentioned previously in this chapter I had to drop many of the criteria I set up for the study, apart from the generational and the geographical dimensions. The age of interviewees ranged from thirties to sixties with the majority of them being in their forties and fifties. Almost half of my French returnees grew up in the Lorraine region, making this my predominant cluster of returnees.

#### *Access to Third-, Fourth- and Fifth-Generation Returnees*

The access to my interviewees from Argentina was much smoother than my attempts to access interviewees from Europe. First of all, one of the people I interviewed during my pilot study referred me to one of their friends who lived in Turin. Therefore by the time I started my field work, I already had an interview arranged. This interviewee in turn linked me with his brother and friends. Prior to going to Turin I had prepared a list from the internet of all the Argentinian restaurants and tango classes available in the city. I had also arranged an appointment with people involved in an Italo-Argentinian organisation with the intention of recruiting interviewees, but this channel failed. As such, the list which I had prepared of restaurants and tango classes became vital in locating and accessing interviewees. I also got in touch with an academic who is an expert on migration policies between Argentina and Italy and he referred me to one of

his Argentinian friends, as well as directing me toward research institutes in Turin and some readings.

I was surprised at the high level of willingness of this group of returnees to be interviewed and to help me find new interviewees that would fit my research criteria. Thanks to all the collaboration received, I managed to construct a sample respecting all the criteria I had set up. The age group of this group of interviewees ranged between people in their twenties and thirties, with only three interviewees over forty. The majority of interviewees from Argentina grew up in the Province of Cordoba prior to moving to Italy.

Summarising, the vast majority of interviewees from Europe grew up in France (14), the remaining two come from Belgium (1) and Switzerland (1). All the interviewees grew up in French speaking areas. Despite numerous efforts, it proved impossible, to obtain a gender balance among this group of interviewees due to the difficulties encountered in finding returnees of second generation from Europe in a set period of time. On the other hand, it was possible to observe gender balance among the returnees from Argentina due to the wider sample group I succeeded in getting access to. The gender breakdown of the returnees is as follows: 14 female interviewees and two male participants from Europe; eleven male interviewees and eleven female participants from Argentina. It is also important to note the very pronounced difference in age between the two groups. The second-generation returnees from Argentina, with 60% of interviewees being under thirties, was a much younger cohort of interviewees compared to the more mature cohort of returnees from Europe, with three quarters of the interviewees being over forties. In Chapters IV, V and VI it is explained how this age difference impacted on the overall experiences of returnees' integration in more details. However in general terms it was possible to note that, during the interviews, returnees from Europe were reflecting over their lives' experiences and how they could have gone differently if they had stayed in the countries they grew up in while the opposite was visible for the returnees from Argentina, who were often just starting their adult lives. In Appendices 1 and 2 the profile of the interviewees' from both Europe and Argentina are listed.

## Research Methods

Semi-structured interviews were the main data collection tool employed in this study. The data collection based on the interview process was undertaken in two distinct periods of time. The first phase consisted of carrying out three pilot interviews which informed how to adjust my interview guide questions, based on the reflections made within and after these interviews. The second phase consisted of the 38 semi-structured interviews carried out for this study. Below I describe the process of conducting pilot interviews.

### *The Pilot Study*

My data collection began with a number of pilot interviews, constituting the first stage of the interview process. The main reason why I carried out pilot interviews was to establish whether the semi-structured interview guide I designed generated enough information, as a technique of data collection, and whether any changes or adjustments were needed (Sarantakos 2013: 266). Gilbert (2008) states that many studies begin with pilot interviews to gather basic information about the topic before imposing more precise methods.

Due to time constraints, I conducted my pilot interviews in Ireland even though my field research took place in Turin, Italy. The pilot interviews were carried out between September and December 2011. I interviewed three people: two men and one woman. One of the male interviewees is second-generation Italian and was born in Buenos Aires in 1964; the other two interviewees are third/ fourth generation<sup>15</sup> Italian and were born in Buenos Aires and in Las Pampas both in 1982. Two of the interviewees (one second-generation interviewee and one from the third/ fourth generation) have southern Italian origins – the other interviewee is of northern Italian origin. All three of them speak Italian perfectly. The two interviewees of third/ fourth generation learnt Italian in Italy while the second-generation interviewee spoke Italian prior to moving to Italy. They all

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<sup>15</sup> I have generally not distinguished between generations of returnees from Argentina, as this can be very difficult – in many cases the same interviewee could have been both third generation Italian from the father's side and fourth generation Italian from the mother's side.

lived in Turin when they first moved to Italy. They all lived for at least a year in Italy before moving to a different country.

I employed both a purposive sampling technique and a snowball sampling strategy to recruit interviewees of the second and third/ fourth generations for my pilot interviews. A friend of mine, who is involved in the tango scene and is well connected with Argentinians in Dublin, was instrumental in this pilot phase. She linked me to my first interviewee, an Italo- Argentinian man, third/ fourth generation Italian and who lived in Dublin at the time of the interview. This interview was very informative because this respondent lived in Italy for about four years and specifically in Turin for about a year, prior to moving to Ireland. This interview gave me a real insight into which questions were relevant for my field research. He also referred me to my second interviewee, an Italo- Argentinian woman, third-generation Italian, who lived in Dublin at the time of the interview but who, like him, had lived in Turin for a year prior to moving to Ireland. She was instrumental as gatekeeper to accessing my interviewees in Italy.

In this process, I also used purposive sampling, specifically aiming at finding a second-generation interviewee. From the beginning, I was aware that it would have been very difficult to find, in Ireland, a second-generation Italian from Europe who returned to live in Italy prior to moving to Ireland. This is because, contrary to Argentinian people, there are no places where they visibly socialise or can be identified (such as restaurants, cultural organisations). Instead of wasting months looking for this type of interviewee, without necessarily being sure of achieving a positive outcome, I opted to look for a second-generation Italian from Argentina who lived in Italy prior moving to Ireland. I did not opt to interview a second-generation Irish returnee because the background contexts and the cultural experiences would have been too different to be relevant for my interview questions. I selected the second-generation interviewee by calling a few Argentinian restaurants in Dublin, asking if there was any Argentinian there that would match my criteria. By doing so, I finally managed to secure an interview with a person who works in the restaurant trade and who lived in Turin for about a year, and for about eight years in Italy in total, prior to moving to Ireland. He was my third interviewee.

In the pilot interviews, I used a broad semi-structured interview guide which included the three main themes I wanted to gather information on. These themes aimed to unravel the social, cultural and economic experiences of returnees from Argentina and from Europe in Italy. The pilot interviews gave me an opportunity to practice my semi-structured interviews, discovering the weaknesses and strengths of my interview guide, before the actual data collection took place.

While carrying out a content analysis of my pilot interviews, I firstly realised that some of my questions were too general and therefore the interviewees found it difficult to relate to them and answer on a personal level. I realised that questions such as ‘can you tell me about your employment situation in Italy?’ did not produce the outcome expected and therefore I decided to add sub-questions that would encourage the respondent to complete and expand on their answer. I also realised that certain socio-cultural topics, not included in my interview guide, were brought up in all the interviews. Recurrent themes such as football, tango and food were mentioned in all the interviews, often to explain the cultural similarities between Argentinians and Italians (as will be discussed in Chapter VI). Therefore, I then decided to include questions related to these topics such as ‘what is the role that football plays in your social interaction with Italians?’

The pilot interviews were digitally recorded and were one and a half hours long, on average. I conducted the three interviews in Italian. I then transcribed and translated them into English.

### *Semi-Structured Interviews*

The main study consisted of a total of 38 interviews: 22 with returnees from Argentina and 16 with returnees from Europe. All my interviews were conducted in Italian and were electronically recorded with the interviewees’ permission. Each interview was on average one and half hours long – the same as my pilot interviews. However, very often the interviews continued on into lunches and dinners, either formally or informally, and as such lasted much longer. These extended interviews gave me a

greater insight into interviewees' experiences of return. Interview locations were generally chosen by the respondents according to their availability. They were mainly conducted in my apartment, in interviewees' houses, in their work place or in coffee shops.

'Semi-structured interviews lie somewhere between the structured and unstructured types' (Sarantakos 2013: 278), containing elements of both. Semi-structured interviews allow respondents to not only answer the questions asked, but also to expand on other issues. They have been referred to as 'conversations with a purpose' (Mason 1996: 38; Byrne 2012: 208). This type of interview allows a picture of respondents' background to develop whilst focusing on the themes the researcher wants to investigate (Bryman 2004; Cavallaro 2005). My interview guide drew on Atkinson's (1998) categories which, although designed for life stories, remained a valid starting point. This is because, during my interview, I enquired about my interviewees' lives prior to moving to Italy in order to better understand their experiences upon their return to Italy. Categories include: childhood, cultural settings and traditions, social factors, employment, education, historical events, religion, and visions of the future.

My interview guide (please see Appendix 3), designed before my field research and modelled after my pilot interviews was comprised of five sections. The questions in the first section of the guideline aimed to gather respondents' basic demographic information such as name, place and date of birth, and length of time spent in Italy. They also aimed to gather information on respondents' backgrounds in Argentina and Europe with the intent of creating a picture of interviewees' lives prior to their moving to Italy. The next three sections, before the closing questions, were designed with the intention of gathering as much information as possible on the three themes I selected (social, economic, and cultural) to understand the process of integration experienced by returnees. Questions related to labour market inclusion and social networks aimed to understand the socio-economic integration of return migrants, while questions related to cultural adaptation - strategies of adjustment to Italian society – were designed to understand the cultural integration of the interviewees. The questions related to the economic integration theme were first in the sequence because usually the economic



factor plays a fundamental role in peoples' decision to migrate and to remain in a country. For the majority of the returnees from Argentina economic reasons played a central role in 'returning' to Italy. While this may not have been the most important factor for all of the second generation in their decision to move to Italy, economic issues became increasingly important to them simply because of the need to make a living. Employment is often the first channel to interact with people in a 'new' country, to socialise and to directly interact with a 'new' culture. Finally, the last part of the interview guide was characterised by closing questions. This was the time when interviewees had the opportunity to add any additional information that they perceived to be important in the context of the interview.

It was interesting for me to note that even though I followed the same interview guide for all the respondents, some interviews would run smoother than others, with very few questions and probing needed, while with other interviewees the conversations would be tiring from the start and needed constant probing and prompting to encourage interviewees' answers. This probably reflected the experiences of returnees and their personalities.

### **Data Analysis**

Data Analysis is 'the interpretative activity of making sense of human artifacts by conceptually connecting them with other meaningful information' (Marvasti 2004: 82). It is a wide spread opinion among sociologists to believe that, in qualitative research, data analysis cannot be considered a distinct portion of the research process; rather, it is an integral part throughout (Marvasti 2004; Silverman 2002). 'Analysis is not, then, the last phase of the research process' (Coffey and Atkinson 1996: 6) and analysis should be seen as part of the research design and of the data collection (Burgess 1984). The method I used to analyse my data fits into this view of seeing data analysis. In fact, I carried out the analysis of the data not only at the end of my data collection but as I was collecting it. Wolcott (1990) suggests that it is never too early to start writing on the analysis of data and Bryman and Burgess (1994) state that analysis begins upon entering the field. After each interview I used to spend some time reflecting and writing about

the recurrent themes that emerged. These notes were very useful once I started with the 'official' phase of data analysis.

### *Transcription*

The first stage of my 'official' data analysis consisted of transcribing the interviewees, this started once all of the data was collected. Transcription is a valuable process because the subject's voice is treated as an appropriate substitute for observation of their behaviour (Heritage 1984). While transcribing verbatim was a time-consuming task, it was extremely useful from an analytical point of view. I started identifying recurrent themes while transcribing and I started familiarising myself with the information contained in my data. This helped me to manage and organise my data, creating a coding system. All my interviews were carried out in Italian since all my interviewees felt comfortable to speak the language. While I transcribed the interviews fully, I did not translate all of them into English apart from the parts I decided to quote in my data analysis chapters (IV, V and VI). I was extremely careful when I translated transcription excerpts from Italian into English, so as to not change the meaning of the sentences (Cipolla and De Lillo 1996). Equivalence problems are always an issue in comparative studies. In order to manage linguistic equivalence problems I translated as closely as possible to the original version because I believe that their words reflect the interviewee's cultural heritage. However, some modifications were inevitable in order to make the interviews more accessible to the reader. According to Clifford (1990) transcription includes a wider set of activities than just transcribing audio-tapes. It also includes the selection of extracts of the original data and this implies a greater responsibility in order to try to report data faithfully. The selection of which parts of the interviews to translate was difficult at times, and I am conscious of the fact that even if I tried to report the experiences of returnees as objectively as possible, my own background and my way of interpreting my interviewees' words influenced this process of selection. I will explore this issue in further detail in the final section of this chapter.

## *Coding*

The second stage of my data analysis was coding. During the process of coding 'the data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences' (Strauss and Corbin 2004: 303). Rivas (2012: 367) argues that 'it is easier to make sense of the data when they are divided up into themes, or patterns in the data'. Rivas (2012: 367) also states that coding 'reduces the volume of the original data and turns it into something meaningful and easy to digest'. Miles et al. (2013: 72) see coding as analysis and argue that codes are 'used to retrieve and categorise similar data chunks so the researcher can quickly find, pull out, and cluster the segments relating to a particular research question, hypothesis, construct, or theme'. Coding is necessary because as Marvasti (2004) suggests, it is very likely that data collection will generate more data than needed. I generated roughly 600 pages of transcription data, which was much more than I used. By coding, I selected the themes relevant to my research question. Since my dissertation focuses on three main themes (cultural, social and economic integration) I created two documents for each of them, one for the returnees from Argentina and one for the returnees from Europe. In each of these (six) documents I copied the parts where my interviewees spoke about those specific topics. Subsequently, within each document I identified several subthemes. These subthemes, which broadly reflected the topics covered during the interviews, emerged during the course of my analysis of the interviews and in relation with my research question. I consequently clustered those sub-themed parts together with the aim of contrasting and comparing the different answers within each of the groups first, the Italian returnees from Argentina and the Italian returnees from Europe, and then between the two groups. Travelling and football were two of the subthemes that emerged for analysing social integration. These were the social activities carried out by returnees during their free time. Other subthemes that emerged in relation to the experience of social interaction for returnees were racism and discrimination. One of the most significant subthemes relating to economic integration were employment positions and conditions. The subthemes identified to understand the cultural integration experiences of returnees were: food consumption, language, and the role of the family among others.

The bulk of the quotes in the texts reflect a significant level of group opinion; whenever a majority of my interviewees shared similar experiences and opinions I specified it throughout the text. I pointed out when a minority (less than half of the interviewees) shared different opinions. I also tried to identify and underline some exceptional cases, aiming to show the multifaceted experiences that interviewees reported.

### *Qualitative Content Analysis*

The last phase of my data analysis was to use qualitative content analysis to examine the data. Seal (2004: 299) defines 'qualitative content analysis' as the activity of looking for interesting themes in qualitative data. According to Seal (2004) the term 'content analysis' is not popular among qualitative sociologists because it has been associated with quantitative methods; this is why he adds the adjective 'qualitative' in front of the term 'content analysis'. Content analysis classifies material, 'reducing it to more relevant, manageable bits of data' (Weber 1990: 5). My analysis relies on this method, rather than on the linguistic structure of my interviews, to interpret the data (Cipolla and De Lillo 1996). In my study, a comparative content analysis is employed in examining the sorts of cultural values manifested through verbal expression (Ahmed 2002). According to Denscombe (2010: 282), the idea behind content analysis is that 'the text carries some clues about a deeper rooted and possibly unintentional message that is actually being communicated'. During this phase of data analysis, I began to relate to one another the themes and the subthemes identified in the previous phases of data analysis, and I started to explore why that might have been the case; for example, I noted that some second-generation interviewees that experienced identity issues, grew up in a mono-cultural environment where to be different was 'wrong' and had experienced racism while growing up. I also realised that returnees from Europe, with southern Italian origins, tended to be more prone to experiencing issues of identity, both in the country they grew up in and in the country they were originally from, compared to the rest of the interviewees. This is because they not only experienced racism in the country where they grew up in because of being Italians but they also experienced either racism or felt different and separate from the northern Italians upon their return to a

northern Italian region. These issues will be further addressed in Chapters IV, V, and VI.

### **Ethical Issues**

Any form of research raises, to a greater or lesser extent, the question of power relations between the researcher and those studied. A fundamental ethical decision was to maintain confidentiality with regard to identities, to protect privacy and foreground mutual respect (Weiss 2004: 451). Therefore, in accordance with the guidelines of the Irish Sociological Association, I firstly discussed my research agenda with my interviewees prior to the interviews; secondly I obtained informed written consent from all participants; and thirdly I protected the identities of all return migrants interviewed through the use of pseudonyms. I used Spanish and Italian names as substitutes for the real names of the interviewees from Argentina, and I used popular French names for the second generation from Europe. All these practices were employed with the final aim of avoiding causing any harm to the participants in my study. All my interviewees were over 18 years old.

Even though I followed all of the above ethical guidelines while carrying out the interviews, sometimes I questioned whether I was being fully ethically correct in asking some questions related to interviewees' background. For example, during the course of certain interviews, some questions I thought to be quite unproblematic, such as questions related to interviewees' parents' experience of migration, prompted tears in some interviewees (mainly from the second generation group). I noticed that questions related to the past, that involved people remembering, were likely to generate feelings of sadness among interviewees. Some of the interviewees' narratives were impregnated with feelings of nostalgia and grief, particularly if the parents' of the interviewees were deceased. I tackled these emotional moments by asking the respondent if he/ she preferred to stop talking about that topic or if he/ she preferred to interrupt the interview altogether. In most cases what happened was that once the interviewee calmed down, the interview continued on its course. Third-, fourth- and fifth-generation interviewees from Argentina also got emotional sometimes speaking about their family background

even if more sporadically compared to the second generation. This is probably because the interviewees from Argentina were generally younger than the interviewees from Europe and therefore the majority of their parents were still alive.

When it came to selecting interview narratives to insert in the data analysis, I was extremely careful to do so in a way that would not disclose the identity of the interviewees. For example, one of the interviewees 'confessed' to me that she always lied about the origin of one of her parents because she was ashamed to say that her mum was originally from the south of Italy. She told me that I was the only person who knew about this. While I felt privileged that she decided to share such information with me, I also felt a moral duty to protect her identity. I decided to omit that whole section from my thesis avoiding the danger that anybody would recognise her by the context, despite the fact that it would have been very beneficial in the context of proving some of my arguments.

All interviews were audio-recorded for accuracy and for facilitating coding and analytical processes.

### **Overall Reflections: The Insider-Outsider Dilemma**

My position as simultaneously an insider and an outsider shifted all the time between the interviews and sometimes even during the course of an interview, depending on how interviewees related to me. It emerged from the interviews that the majority of my respondents perceived me in different ways but predominantly as southern Italian and as an Italian migrant living abroad. I usually clarified my background and where I am from at the start of the interview because my interviewees were curious to know why I was living in Ireland and where I was originally from in Italy. I therefore explained that I am originally from the south of Italy (I was born in Napoli and grew up in Lecce), and I moved to Dublin when I was 19 years old, where I have lived ever since.

Before my field research I often reflected on my own positioning in relation to my Italian migrant background and how it could have inhibited my interviewees from answering my questions openly and honestly. What I did not think was how my

southern Italian background would have impacted on the answers of the interviewees. I was genuinely surprised to realise that being southern Italian turned out to be an advantage in the majority of the interviews but also a disadvantage in some cases. It was very interesting for me to notice that returnees from Argentina, with northern Italian origins, perceived southern Italians to be culturally closer to Argentinians than to northern Italians. This association allowed them to talk openly to me about their experiences in the north of Italy because by being aware of the north/ south divide in Italy, they assumed that I would not feel personally offended if they criticised the behaviour of many people from the north of Italy. I felt that some interviewees used this as a strategy to try not to offend me while trying to communicate discontent with aspects of their lives in Italy. With regard to the second generation from Europe, I felt that being southern Italian helped me to relate to the returnees who had southern Italian origins and who had relocated to the north of Italy. They felt I could understand their background and their experiences as southern Italians living in the north of Italy. Being southern Italian proved difficult for me when some of the second-generation returnees used racialised comments towards southern Italians. I realised that those comments were not made with the purpose of offending me, as despite the fact that they knew I come from the south of Italy originally, I felt they did not fully associate me with southern Italy. This was the case because they were aware during the interviews that I had been living abroad for about ten years. Therefore being perceived as an Italian living abroad helped me to gather more honest answers.

I also need to acknowledge that being southern Italian represented a test of my own capacity to be objective. Even though I made conscious efforts to minimise the impact of my background on the research, my views on Italian society as a whole – and the affective and emotional links I have to it – have most likely influenced the way I have interpreted the data. Kinnear (1987) has shown how the problems of interference of the researcher's own background affect all aspects of comparative studies.

I also felt that generally all the interviewees (but especially the returnees from Argentina, who were often of a similar age to me), could relate to me because I also knew what it meant to live abroad. The experience of living abroad that I shared with all my respondents enabled me to relate in a broader way to their experiences and went

beyond the question of national/ local identity. Therefore my positions as both insider and outsider were constantly negotiated rather than being one or the other (Lal 1996; Naples 1997).

My position as insider/ outsider also changed according to how the interviewees perceived themselves. When they identified themselves as Italians they often used the word 'us' implying that I was one of them, while if they did not identify as Italians they would use the word 'you', as opposed to 'us'. However, it is important to note that many interviewees (especially returnees from Europe) used both words in the course of the same interview, showing a sense of ambiguity with regard to their identities. Also, some other interviewees used the word 'Italians' (instead of using the word 'you') – I believe this was done with the intention of trying not to patronise or offend me, and probably also with the intention of not creating a binary separation where 'you' cannot be also 'us'.

Overall I feel that interviews were conducted in a way in which participants felt at ease to speak about their experiences. Also, every effort was made so that they felt they could decide the direction of the interview, offering information that I had not directly asked for. In some specific cases I felt that this was liberating for the interviewees to share their life experiences of Italy, because they wanted to either clarify or denounce something. I remember one of my interviewees starting the interview by saying that she did not know if she was 'Italian' or 'French' and that this had always been a major issue for her. However, during the course of the interview I noticed that her narratives around identity started to change and became more positive while talking about her life experiences both in France and in Italy. It was extraordinary to notice that by the end of the interview, which lasted two and a half hours, her outlook on her identity had totally changed, and she did not have to be either Italian or French but could happily be both. She thanked me for having listened to her. She told me that the interview gave her the chance to reflect upon her own identity and life experiences, and stated that she found the interview process therapeutic. This clearly shows that interviews can also be empowering processes for respondents (Miller and Glassner 1997) and that in certain cases it is a beneficial process on both sides. It made me feel better, from a moral point



of view, to know that if not all, the majority of the people who were interviewed found the questions of the interview engaging and it was not only interesting to me from a research point of view. This was reflected by the fact that many respondents were so pro-active in linking me with other respondents among their family, friends, and colleagues. However, in a couple of interviews I felt that my research was not being taken very seriously until I made it clear that I was conducting a doctoral study. In both of these cases the interviewees involved were much older than me and I felt that, during the course of the interview, they were giving me more of a lecture on life than sharing their experiences. The majority of interviews were conducted in a relaxed fashion and often after the interview was 'officially' over I would find myself having lunch, dinner, drinking a coffee or having a drink with my interviewee and sometimes with their families. These post-interview discussions were very important, not only to gain more information about my research topic, but also they also gave my interviewee the opportunity to ask questions about me, and on several issues some of what was discussed during the course of the interview. In many cases this seemed to create a reciprocity on my part, due to the removal of the hierarchical barriers of the interview process' instead (Oakley 1981; 1988).

For example, on one occasion I went to interview one of my interviewees from Argentina in a village in the outskirts of Turin. After the interview was over, I was invited to have lunch with my interviewee and her family - her husband, who also is Argentinian with Italian origins, and their two children. During the course of lunch my interviewee's husband wanted to know what my research was about and shared with me some of his views and experiences in relation to his and his family life in Italy. These informal chats added to my understanding of my returnees' experiences in Italy.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have discussed the methodology of my study. I started by illustrating the reasons behind the decision to employ a case study as a research strategy to explain the experiences of the two groups of returnees in question. I then discussed the data collection technique (semi-structured interviews) and the sample rationale illustrating

some of the challenges encountered while researching, and finally I considered some of the ethical issues. Furthermore, I brought to light the issue of the outsider and insider debate.

In the next three chapters the results from my data analysis are presented. I will first analyse economic integration in Chapter IV, then I will examine social and cultural integration in Chapters V and VI respectively.

## **Chapter IV: Economic Integration**

This chapter explores the experiences of Italian returnees from Argentina, as well as from Europe, in the Italian labour market. By employing the ‘dual frame of reference’, the ‘relative deprivation’ theories and by shedding light on some socio-cultural practices, this chapter explains why returnees from Europe are less integrated into the Italian labour market in comparison with their Argentinian counterparts, even though they are objectively employed in more desirable positions.

Firstly, the chapter presents an overview of the family background of interviewees and provides some consideration on upward and downward mobility of returnees in relation to employment in Italy. Secondly, it illustrates the type of sectors that returnees find employment in once they arrive in Italy and identifies some common patterns within each group. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the working conditions that returnees encounter in Italy and their attitudes towards them.

### **Interviewees’ Class Background**

The majority of the returnees from Europe who were interviewed come from working class backgrounds. Their parents have rural origins (peasants) and worked mainly in metallurgy, mining, textile factories or in construction sites in the countries they migrated to. On the other hand, the majority of the returnees from Argentina interviewed come from middle-class backgrounds, with their parents frequently being professionals working in the health and in the teaching sectors. Approximately 70 per cent of the returnees from Europe who were interviewed come from working class backgrounds while approximately 70 per cent of the returnees from Argentina come from middle class backgrounds. In order to better understand the experience of the Argentinian returnees, it is essential to contextualize the term ‘middle class’ in the context of the economic crisis that hit Argentina in 2001. Many of the interviewees and their parents, who are from a relatively wealthy, middle-class background, lost their jobs and their savings during the economic crisis. One of the interviewees explains the situation very clearly with the following words:

**Carlos:** When the banks collapsed my parents were both left with no jobs, everyone was without work, there wasn't any money left, the banks kept people's money, many people committed suicide because suddenly they were poor (...) a starving man and a child with no shoes lived in the same street together with a rich man, they were all equal because they didn't have any money.

Some of the interviewees, although they came from a middle-class background, had no chance of finding employment in Argentina at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The crisis affected all social classes, but in particular the middle class. Some of the returnees, who were economic migrants, explained that their flight tickets were paid through specific schemes, put in place by the Piedmont region, to facilitate return migration. Thus, the migration and employment trajectories of Argentinian returnees took place against the backdrop of a rapid collapse of the Argentinian middle class, a fact which requires a degree of nuance in terms of the question of upward or downward mobility.

All of the interviewees mention the economic crisis in Argentina, while talking about employment, as the context for their stories. Even though there was a general recognition among interviewees that the employment situation in Italy was getting tougher because of the economic crisis, interviewees often made the point that the Italian economic crisis was relatively minor when compared to the Argentinian economic crisis:

**Luis:** [Italians] say that there is crisis, we, Argentinians, laugh when we hear this because for the Italians, crisis is not being able to go for holidays to France or in another country or somewhere else in Italy. I was told that here people change cars every one or two years, there, in Argentina, you bought a car and it would last for all your life, you couldn't go to a bar and drink a coffee, it was something that I saw as unnecessary, a luxury, it was a financial burden eating a pizza at a restaurant all these things that here are normal, you see that there is a higher standard of life.

On the other hand, the returnees from Europe moved from more regulated employment markets and more financially stable countries to Italy, a less regulated employment market and a less financially stable country.

### **Returnees' Reasons for Moving to Italy and Employment Positions**

The reasons why interviewees from Europe and interviewees from Argentina moved to Italy are very different, however, it is possible to trace common patterns within each of these groups. The reasons why returnees from Argentina have migrated to Italy range from economic reasons, to opportunities for studying and gaining work experience. Those who migrated to find employment either had a position which they had arranged in Argentina prior to going to Italy or went to seek employment as a consequence of the 2001 Argentinian financial crisis. Those who migrated to study at third level came through university exchange programs and some have decided to stay on in order to acquire further work experience. They migrated to Italy primarily to study as part of their degree or to pursue a master's degree. Among the students interviewed, there was a common pattern in that they all wanted to gain some work experience in Italy and Europe in their relevant field of expertise, prior to their return to Argentina. This demonstrates that Italy and Argentina have developed strong institutional links as a result of an intense migration exchange between the two countries and that they share a joint history. Moreover, the majority of the returnees from Argentina did not have Italian citizenship prior to moving to Italy. Therefore the choice of living in Italy for an extended period, upon their arrival in Europe, was often dictated by a bureaucratic requirement to be in their ancestors' country in order to process their documents. However during this time, the interviewees of this study, decided to remain and live in Italy for a longer period because they felt quite 'at home'. The returnees from Europe moved to Italy due to several motivating factors. These predominantly range from personal reasons, the most common being a result of having an Italian partner, to wanting to experience a country where they felt familiar with both the language and the culture. Employment, with the exception of a couple of interviewees, was not the predominant reason why returnees from Europe moved to Italy. Therefore, while the vast majority of returnees from Europe interviewed cannot be classified as economic

migrants, over half of the returnees from Argentina interviewed can be classified as such.

Although some of the interviewees work in the sector they are qualified in, most interviewees use their 'Argentinian expertise' in their work place i.e. teaching tango, working as barbeque chefs in restaurants, teaching Spanish, and so on. The following narrative illustrates how interviewees report a perception among Italians that Argentinians automatically possess certain skills or expertise, a fact which helped them in terms of finding employment in sectors such as hospitality:

**Carlos:** I started working in a very large restaurant in a massive amusement park that was always full in summer. The restaurant is a Mexican restaurant but Italianised and I was at the BBQ. It was very nice because I was given the opportunity, I already had the opportunity to work in a restaurant where I used to barbeque meat in Argentina, the employers saw the fact that 'oh you are Argentinian, you can barbeque meat' and therefore they employed me straight away – as soon as my documents were sorted I went for an interview and I went for a trial.

Returnees from Argentina are thus able to mobilise certain cultural resources, particularly those which loom large from the Italian perspective, to obtain employment. This was a central element of labour market integration for a wide range of interviewees, from tango dancers to BBQ chefs.

As with returnees from Argentina, returnees from Europe found employment in Italy through the skills they carried with them - the use of a foreign language being the most appreciated skill within the labour market. Approximately 70 per cent of my interviewees within each of the returnees' groups drew on the skills they brought with them to access the Italian labour market. Bourdieu and Passeron (1991) argue that cultural capital such as linguistic skills, educational level, and ethnic background can be used by people to their advantage or disadvantage in a cultural environment. Therefore Italian returnees from Argentina and Europe 'transform aspects of their stocks of

cultural capital into advantageous symbols in their societal adjustments' (Ishikawa 2009: 61).

The majority of second-generation interviewees stated that they have relatively easy access to specific types of employment which involve the use of a foreign language:

**Claire:** I never had any problems in finding employment, I always did my best to find a job, I have always been open to many experiences also when they turned out to be a bit negative.

**Aurore:** I always found employment, also I had a husband - I wasn't alone - this is very important.

The second sentence above underlines that, for some interviewees and specifically for those who moved to Italy for marriage reasons, employment was not the most important factor in their stay in the country, but they perceived that added to their experience. Therefore employment, for some interviewees, is considered to be an 'extra' bonus.

The experience of returnees from Argentina seems to be slightly different from the experience of returnees from Europe when it comes to entering the labour market. Some of the returnees from Argentina who were interviewed arrived to Italy with an Argentinian passport and for the first few months needed to sort out their Italian documents before being able to enter the labour market legally. This means that they were not allowed to work without a work permit or an Italian passport. In addition to this, with the exception of two cases, the returnees from Argentina interviewed were not fluent in Italian before moving to Italy. The vast majority of them undertook Italian courses either on their arrival to Italy or prior to moving to Italy. The lack of fluency in the Italian language made access to the labour market more difficult at first.

It is also important to notice that the student interviewees from Argentina were relatively young (under thirty years old) and had no dependants. On the other hand, some of the economic migrants from Argentina had dependants, or were thinking of starting a family, when they moved to Italy and by the time of the interview they were

in their thirties and forties. For this group, moving to Italy meant leaving everything back home for a very long time, if not for ever, and therefore they had much more at stake compared to the non-economic migrant interviewees.

### **Social Networks and Employment**

The majority of the Argentinian interviewees found employment through their Argentinian social networks. They often relied on the support of Argentinian organisations set up to help Argentinians who move to Italy to integrate, as well as on their family and friends. They seemed to have broader social networks on which to rely compared to the returnees from Europe. The returnees from Europe often did not know anybody and in some cases they only knew their partners in Italy prior to moving there. This is because more than half of the Italian returnees from Europe have southern Italian origins and decided to relocate in the north of Italy where more job opportunities were available. In contrast, the vast majority of Italian returnees from Argentina had either a relative or a friend who moved to Italy prior to them. These people usually played an important role in the integration of the new migrants not only in respect of employment but also in other sectors. The importance of social networks is also underlined in the study conducted by Grossutti (2005) on returnees to Italy. Grossutti (2005: 9) states that social networks between those individuals born into the second- and third-generation in Argentina and their relatives in Friuli resolved their most pressing problems upon arrival in Italy. Many of the interviewees found employment through Argentinian friends and work with Argentinians which made them feel at ease and at home at the work place:

**Carlos:** In work I'm satisfied, we are among Argentinians therefore it's like being at home. I'm working well here, I'm satisfied, here it's like my home, everyone is Argentinian. In the future I would like to open another restaurant because they [his employers] intend to open other Argentinian restaurants, they want to make a chain. Maybe in the future I'll open a restaurant together with them.



Many of the returnees from Argentina work in Argentinian restaurants - this suggests a degree of clustering of Argentinian returnees via social networks. The working environment is an aspect that was often underlined and emphasised in the interviews where the importance of feeling at home is stressed over other factors (a 'miniature Argentina' is re-created). This was also emphasised in the interviews with the returnees from Europe:

**Yolenne:** Working at the *French school*<sup>16</sup> in Turin was an extraordinary experience from a teaching point of view because you're with French managers that have a real French mentality, absolutely not Italian, you are in a French cultural environment, you are with French colleagues, you are with wonderful students (...) when I went to work I was happy and after work at 9pm, I stayed chatting with my colleagues. It was wonderful; I worked there for more than 20 years.

Zhou (2005) introduces the idea that ethnicity can be mobilised as 'social capital' when ethnic cohesions provide an alternative route to 'upward mobility', a concept previously elaborated by Portes and Zhou (1993). However, in the case of returnees from Argentina and Europe, it can be argued that 'ethnic enclave jobs were much more like safety nets than springboards' (Kasinitz et al. 2008: 202).

Returnees from Argentina seem to get on well, not only with their Argentinian co-nationals at their work place. From the analysis of data it also emerges that interviewees have good relations with both their Italian employers and their colleagues across different sectors:

**Leticia:** When I worked here I was satisfied because obviously I was the only foreigner - 'The Argentinian'. All my boss's friends in the restaurant said 'ah the Argentinian' and they would asked you why you are here, why you do it, and also if you were Italian. I'm proud of being Argentinian and of this double citizenship.

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<sup>16</sup> The real name of the work place has been changed into *school* for confidentiality reasons.

**Miguel:** [My Italian colleagues] always treated me so well, they invited me to their houses, I can only say thanks because I integrated myself very well at the beginning, I didn't have any problems with them.

In the case of the second-generation Italians from France, moving within the specific sectors where use of the French language is required and wanted, they inevitably met other French speakers. While they enjoyed practicing their French mother tongue on a daily basis (making them feel at ease and at home in a working environment), some of them also felt different in some respects from their colleagues who are 'French D.O.C'<sup>17</sup>. Some interviewees describe this dual experience at the workplace with the following words:

**Claire:** At first I started at the *French school*. I went there and met many people who are like me in the end, but I felt much more Italian. I always felt different because my colleagues were French D.O.C. (...) There I have beautiful memories because I went there to relax, there was a beautiful environment back then in which I felt well. It was a little like going back home, speaking my language, listening to my language, I keep saying that French is my language even if I have the two languages.

**Alice:** Then I start teaching French. When I started to spend time in a French environment again I came back to be more French in the way I talked and in every way also when I talk Italian I have now the French accent. (...) but also there you see the small discrimination you see when there was the refreshment course during a dinner a French person said that I looked like a French woman and another French person said but Alice is not French – discrimination is always latent in French people.

Thus, in a manner which parallels (in some respects) the experience of returnees from Argentina, interviewees from France mobilise cultural knowledge learnt in their country of origin in order to gain access to the labour market in Italy. The themes of identity,

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<sup>17</sup> D.O.C. (*Denominazione di Origine Controllata* - 'controlled designation of origin') is a label guaranteeing the quality and authenticity of something. In this case it is used to emphasise French speakers who were born and raised in France by French parents.

belonging, discrimination, and racism will be explored in more detail in Chapters V and VI.

Some interviewees who had expertise in specific sectors, not related to the French language, experienced greater difficulties in terms of accessing the labour market:

**Celine:** In 2001 I said ‘ok, I’ll leave my job and go to Italy, and I will find employment in the same sector’. Instead it wasn’t like this, they were dreams. At first I looked for employment in a financial organisation, in banks, but nobody answered me, then I understood that I had to know someone in order to find it.

This was also true for some of the returnees from Argentina, interviewees who could only find part-time employment, if any, in the area in which they are qualified. The following quote is from a professional dancer who cannot find employment in her area of specialisation:

**Beatriz:** Back then the 11,000 lire (€5.50) per hour that I received twice a week was not enough. I used to teach gymnastics in a gym, then I started working in a pizzeria and then I started working in the factory where my husband used to work until 1997.

However, those who arrived having already secured a position prior to going to Italy, or managed to find employment in the area they were specialised in, are more likely to be satisfied with their employment situation. In fact, while for some second-generation interviewees the search for a job and work conditions were described as ‘shocking’, some other interviewees stressed the fact that in Italy they had an opportunity to affirm themselves from a professional point of view and they are grateful for this opportunity:

**Anne:** I believe that Italy gave me some employment opportunities that in France I wouldn’t have found, this is only my opinion, I don’t know. But in my heart I’m deeply convinced that I could exercise in Italy some things that I couldn’t have exercised in France because there was already a more rigid system

there, linked to less freedom at an employment level, while here I experimented and I liked it. Therefore, from a professional point of view, I'm pleased.

Some interviewees from Argentina are grateful for having a job, given that they are 'foreigners' and are coming from the context of the severe international economic crisis that they had left behind in Argentina:

**Nuria:** I'm lucky that apart from teaching tango I teach these courses to prepare people to work, these are courses that are organised by a temporary employment agency. I'm the teacher at present. The situation is very complicated, as they only provide casual contracts of six months. But I thank them because I teach Italian accountancy, they gave me the opportunity to me even though I'm foreign and they are very honest people, my tutor is a splendid person.

Half of the returnees from Europe had university qualifications prior to moving to Italy, as did returnees from Argentina who either held third level qualifications or were about to graduate.

The recognition of foreign qualifications seems to be quite challenging for both groups of returnees and while some interviewees persisted and had their qualifications recognised, others did not manage to do so for several reasons, the most important being Italian bureaucracy. The following is a quote from a health professional from France who managed to get her qualification recognised:

**Anne:** At first it was a great shock and maybe also for this reason I had to come to live in Italy to understand. I arrived here as an Italian citizen but with my French cultural luggage. To register [as a practitioner] took one year, they made me do some useless things (...) In Turin I was the first Italian with a foreign degree to practice here, they didn't want it; a lawyer helped me, I had to present some laws myself. They told me that my degree was not valid, you have to do it again and I said but we are in free circulation around Europe, the Italian consulate in France helped me as well. It was a do-it-yourself, it was a disaster.

The following is a sentence from a music teacher from Argentina who never managed to get her qualifications recognised:

**Pilar:** When I arrived [in Italy] I wanted to have my qualification recognised but it was too difficult and I left it.

Lack of recognition of foreign qualifications is not an unusual problem among the experiences of return migrants. De Souza (2005), speaking about the experiences of returnees to Trinidad and Tobago, argues that the issue around the recognition of qualifications encourages returnees to leave their 'home' country. Grossutti (2005: 10) states that the complex procedures that return migrants from Argentina in Friuli had to face hindered their access to medium-high employment opportunities.

### **Returnees Working Conditions and Attitudes towards Them**

The returnees from Europe had a limited employment history if any at all in the country they grew up in before going to Italy. This is because the majority of them went to Italy in their twenties. In Italy, half of them are employed in desirable positions with relatively secure working conditions in places such as language academies, international companies, the health sector, and in white-collar jobs more generally. However a minority of them work in very precarious positions with a limited number of hours per week. None of the returnees from Europe work in the catering or retail sectors, with the exception of one interviewee who is a restaurant owner. They are all employed in one capacity or another in non-manual jobs. These second-generation European migrants are confronted for the first time with loosely regulated employment sectors and they perceive Italian working conditions to be very precarious and unstable. The majority of returnees from Europe state that if they had stayed in the country they grew up in, they would have been employed in better paid and more regulated positions. Comparisons between the employment conditions in Italy and the European countries they grew up in are constant when interviewing second-generation returnees. Returnees from Europe compare not only salaries but also working conditions, including whether they receive a contract when starting and a pension at the end of employment. Many of them mention the simplicity of being employed in the country they grew up in, where illegal

employment is not the norm. Many interviewees mention that they do not have the right to sick leave in Italy because they are working illegally, mentioning that this was something that would never happen in the country they grew up in and something they found difficult to adjust to. Social welfare systems are often compared too. Some interviewees explained that while in other European countries, social welfare allowances are accessible and are there to protect the worker if he or she becomes unemployed, they found that in Italy these types of payments do not really exist in the same form. Therefore it is a widespread opinion among second-generation returnees that the state of the country they were raised in looks after its citizens better compared to the Italian state as the below quote demonstrates:

**Agathe:** This makes me very sad, if I had stayed in France unemployment benefit exists, I have only one year of unemployment benefit here, in France I would have had three years, do you understand? But, in general, the French welfare system cannot be compared with this one [Italian welfare state], people are much more protected [in France].

This finding is not unusual in the return migration literature and as Wessendorf (2007; 2013) states, Swiss-Italian returnees find it difficult to adjust to the structural conditions of the 'home' country (Italy), because they compare them to the economic security of their 'host' country (Switzerland).

Overall it emerges that second-generation interviewees believe that the Italian state is less developed when compared to other European countries where the second generation was raised. The idea of Italy being behind when compared to other European countries emerges in several interviews. The narrative below is an explicit example of this:

**Sebastien:** Here [Italy] there is an interpretation of the laws to pay less but it is true that the whole tax system is wrong. It's all very chaotic, and in this the French employment system is much more productive than here, and I think also compared to other countries it's total chaos. Italy is now making some reforms

as this is madness. This was something that should have been done 50 years ago, Italy is 50 years late and 50 years it means that your generation is paying and that mine has already paid.

The quote above refers specifically to the taxation system in Italy, however returnees from Europe find it very difficult to navigate the bureaucratic Italian employment systems in general.

On the other hand, the returnees from Argentina, having experienced the 2001 Argentinian financial crisis, seem to appreciate the more stable economic and political environment in Italy. More than half of the returnees from Argentina had experience of work prior to moving to Italy (65%). As mentioned in the previous section, over 50 per cent of the interviewees from Argentina can be classified as economic migrants. The majority of Argentinian economic migrants (60%) are employed in sectors characterised by poor working conditions and pay and with limited career opportunities, such as catering, factories and the entertainment sector. Among the Argentinian economic migrants less than half (40%) have found employment in desirable sectors working as engineers, chefs and in international companies. Some of them arrived to Italy when work had already been arranged for them. A majority of the returnees from Argentina (30%), who went to Italy for motivations other than economic reasons, are students. These returnees are also employed in Italy, typically in the catering sector in Argentinian restaurants. Apart from the economic migrants and the student returnees, there is a minority of returnees from Argentina interviewed (10%) who went to Italy either to travel or to visit some family members and then decided to stay and work in the country. They work in precarious, insecure positions, mainly in the retail sector. Overall the majority of the returnees from Argentina remain employed in loosely regulated sectors in Italy. In fact, the majority of them did or continue to work in the shadow economy in one capacity or another. The following quote is an example of this:

**Beatriz:** I worked off the books in a Sicilian pizzeria, there I worked a year in the black economy (...) and then I worked in the black economy again in 2000. I used to work in a restaurant in the evening, I was at the counter. Then let's not

even mention when I taught some tango when I arrived in 1995. In gyms, positions are all off the books, I have always tried to work according to the law.

The issue of the shadow economy poses questions in relation to the conceptualisation of labour market integration in the Italian context. For many of the returnees from Europe and from Argentina in particular, integration into work took place in the context of the shadow economy. This form of work is not characterised by some of the elements typically associated with the labour market, such as a degree of security, access to social welfare, pensions, payment of taxes, workers rights and so on. Thus, work in the shadow economy does not involve the same level of integration into Italian society as a whole, in particular with regard to the relationship between the individual/citizen and the state. At the same time, the shadow economy should not be grasped as an anachronistic and exceptional sector – rather it is a central plank of the Italian economy. Indeed, this is a feature of most economies the world over. Those working in the shadow economy may therefore not experience forms of integration that are linked to the payment of taxes, access to rights and so forth, but at the same time they occupy a similar position in the labour market as other Italians. Nevertheless it emerges from the findings of this study, that the percentage of returnees from Argentina working in less regulated sectors is higher compared to the percentage of Italians. The nature of the precarious employment, in which these returnees are often employed, explains why this is the case.

Despite the fact that many of the returnees from Argentina who were interviewed work or had worked at a certain stage in the shadow economy in Italy, they are generally satisfied with their employment conditions. Narratives such as the following were recurrent during the interviews:

**Alfonso:** I'm satisfied with the [working] conditions, I have a casual contract but I work four days per week only, from 6.30pm till 12.30am therefore it's only six hours with that I pay my rent, food, bills and sometimes I go travelling therefore I can't complain.



Some interviewees emphasised that salaries in Italy are higher than in Argentina and this helps to compensate for other aspects such as working in poorly regulated sectors. Some interviewees made inevitable comparisons between the salaries earned in Italy and in Argentina. The following sentence shows this clearly:

**Luis:** I'm very satisfied with respect to the situation here because I do, as everyone does, compare the costs with my country of origin and what it costs here and what it costs there and what you earn here because there in Argentina the Euro is five times stronger than our currency the Peso. Over there things are very expensive - five times more than here. There, let's say they cost the same as here in Euro, only there you earn much less. I'm paid a minimum salary but if I would earn this kind of money there I would certainly not be working as a waiter, I would be working as something else. What I want to say is that there, one who earns the equivalent of my salary here, surely has studied and is working therefore I'm happy because I can pay my rent, because I can save a bit, I can eat I'm thinking of studying and I can do it with my money. With the little I earn I'm satisfied, I'm very satisfied with the whole situation.

Some of the French returnees underline the fact that Italian workers accept some working conditions that in the country they grew up in would never be accepted by employees, such as internship programmes. These programmes, that often require interns to work for free, are highly criticised by second-generation returnees who state that this would never happen in the country they grew up, where even the concept of unpaid internships does not exist. They found it shocking that they were asked to work for free for periods of job trials or they received very low salaries while in employment in Italy. The following is an interviewees' quote which refers to internship programmes:

**Camille:** At first, I was employed like an intern, this shocked me very much because in the 1990s in France there was a considerable economic crisis and we protested (...) and in France the internship contract did not pass. We, the youth, had protested in the streets to stop that from happening and now it is also here because of the crisis, anyhow, the internship job had shocked me. They [employers] paid me very little and I could take it when I was young but what I

could never take was the lack of security, you don't have the health coverage when you are an intern. This thing is dramatic, I found it to be dramatic. You have no right to be ill.

Internships were viewed very differently by returnees from Argentina. For many of these returnees, working in Italy represents valuable international experience which can add to their chances of finding employment if they decide to return to Argentina. Interviewees shared the idea that international work experience would facilitate employment possibilities in Argentina. Therefore working in Italy and Europe are seen as opportunities to learn from. Even though the interviewees never specified that they were referring to unpaid working experiences, it was clear by the context and the phrasing of words that they were:

**Luz:** I'd like to travel for one or two months and also to do some work experience here as a lawyer and then to go back (to Argentina), two years at most and then I go back. Maybe my boyfriend would like to stay here a bit longer for the work experience but both of us want to return.

The quote above reflects the view of other returnees interviewed, mainly students, who see the 'return' in Italy not as permanent but as a stage of a wider migratory project which often includes migrating to other European countries prior to the final 'return' to Argentina (Fusaro 2008).

In order to understand the experiences of the returnees from Argentina the 'dual frame of reference' theory can be helpful. In fact, returnees from Argentina tend to positively evaluate their employment situation in Italy by comparing their working conditions in the two countries. This finding is in contrast with the outcome of the study carried out by Cook-Martin and Viladrich (2009) on Spanish descendants' returnees in Spain. These authors in fact argue that the right to Spanish citizenship that these returnees are entitled to, impacts on their expectations that they should be entitled to the same job opportunities as Spanish people who grew up in Spain. The authors therefore argue that

having the same rights as Spanish citizens hinders the taking on of a 'dual frame of reference' by returnees from Argentina who are descended from Spanish people.

The 'relative deprivation' theory is helpful in explaining the frustrating experience of the second generation Italian returnees from France in the Italian labour market. This is because they kept measuring their employment situation with either what used to be their work experience in France or to what they imagine it could have been like in the French labour market if they had not return to Italy.

The age difference between the interviewees in the two groups most likely played a role in the experiences of the interviewees in both groups. The relative young cohort of Italo-Argentinian returnees viewed working in Italy as a temporary opportunity and an occasion to gain experiences that will increase their job opportunities upon their return to Argentina. However, the more mature cohort of returnees from Europe views its working situation in Italy as a degrading and permanent reality since they will most likely stay in Italy. Therefore the significant difference in age seems to have serious implications on the return experiences' of the interviewees in both groups.

The findings of this study show that, even though returnees from Europe are employed in more desirable non-manual positions compared to the returnees from Argentina, they find it more difficult to adapt to the labour market in Italy because they constantly compare employment conditions in Italy with those in the countries where they grew up. Returnees from Argentina instead value their experience in Italy more highly than the returnees from Europe, based on their past experiences.

### **Mentality: Differences and Similarities at Work**

While not all interviewees from Argentina found ideal employment situations in Italy, they report encountering an employment attitude not very dissimilar to the one they were familiar with in Argentina. In their narratives, they mainly emphasise the existence

of a similar employment mentality<sup>18</sup> in Argentina and in Italy. The quote below refers specifically to the similar attitudes that bosses and managers have towards the employees in Argentina and in Italy (according to interviewees):

**Pedro:** He [employer] had this thing that he felt generous because they [employers] give you a job, you have to thank him because you have a job. They always want people to submit to the boss. This is also an Argentinian thing and for this I tell you that the father and the mother of Argentina is Italy because, in my opinion, these things only happen here and there.

This similarity in mentality at the work place was also underlined in the following quote by another interviewee:

**Miguel:** My bosses were preoccupied; I was part of a group of 20 people where only three were foreign: myself, a Russian guy and a Polish guy. My bosses were preoccupied because you know when you go to the agency to speak to the entrepreneurs, you know Italians are not easy people, in Germany everything is clear, everything is transparent, here no and if you show a bit of sense maybe it is worse and therefore they were worried because we were foreign and I am the only one who survived of that group. The other two foreigners were changed straight away because for them it was very hard. I was doing this job for a year and it went very well and in fact I got promoted thanks to this job because it was as if I was talking to an Argentinian [he refers to the Italian entrepreneurs].

This narrative indicates that forms of social relations and cultural practices can be mobilised by Argentinians to negotiate the social dimension of the workplace environment, thus facilitating integration into the labour market in the formal sense of accessing and maintaining employment, as well as aiding a degree of wider social integration via social networks developed with colleagues. The interview data reports that these cultural resources and skills are very much related to the impact of Italian

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<sup>18</sup> Mentality: similarities in way of thinking, attitudes, behaviours, cultural values in an ethnic group (Garzanti 2005).

culture on Argentinian society in general and on Argentinians with Italian heritage in particular.

The gender dimension came up when speaking with a few of the returnees from both Argentina and Europe. Some of the interviewees stated that it was more difficult for women to advance their career in the workplace compared to men. Although the two quotes below report different experiences of gender and employment, the bottom-line is the same: gender is an issue in the work place, according to some of the interviewees.

One interviewee has underlined the gender inequalities that he has witnessed at his work place in Italy with the following words:

**Miguel:** In Italy I see that a woman at work doesn't progress, maybe also in Argentina but I don't know. I see that women are sexual objects even during discussions with friends, here women accept things that are unacceptable, comments that shouldn't be accepted, that might be normal, common in the culture but if you analyse them, are very offensive. In the office where I work (...) my managers sometimes are shocking, my Italian female colleagues, sometimes I can see them arriving in work destroyed [demoralized], why do they have to experience these things and if I say that this happens in Italy, nobody would believe me. To advance your career you need to give something and if you are good and advance everybody will say that you are sleeping with someone. It's brutal.

Other studies on the experiences of return migrants present gender-specific issues. Studies conducted by Potter (2005b: 41) on the experience of young returnees to Barbados also show that they found difficult to adapt to the 'macho' behaviours of bosses and having to accept things as they are without criticism. Lee-Cunin's (2005: 130) study on return migration of young British-Trinidadians showed that female returnees found it difficult 'to adjust to a new culture of work where men made jokes and comments to their female colleagues'.

The following quote shows that one of the interviewees from France believed that she managed to advance in her career not because she was a qualified woman but because she was a qualified woman from another country which is perceived to be more developed by Italians:

**Anne:** It was a shock because I was asked if I was the assistant, it took me years [to affirm my position], that aspect was hard. I discovered that Italians, the famous ‘padre-padrone’<sup>19</sup> that my father had been brought up in, I have seen it now, I understand that the woman is an object here, that she doesn’t have any place, that her place was at home making food, to bring up children and here I have found again all those things that I found when I went to the south of Italy to visit my grandfather, I have touched it with my hand (...) Italians only accept me because I’m French but if I was Italian they wouldn’t have accepted me. My luck is that I was French - it is paradoxical if you think about it.

Some studies in the return migration literature have demonstrated that coming from a country which is perceived to be more ‘advanced’ can give an advantage in finding employment in certain sectors. In their study on second-generation Bajan-Brits returning to Barbados, Phillips and Potter (2005b: 79) argue that an ‘English accent and perceptions of a superior English work ethic frequently serve to propel returnees into advantageous professional positions’. Similar findings also emerged in the study carried out by Potter (2005b) on second-generation return migrants to St. Lucia where it appears that having a British accent gives an advantage in finding employment. Phillips and Potter's (2009: 97) study also shows that ‘second-generation Bajan-Brit migrants occupy an essentially privileged space within Barbadian society with respect to the employment market, finding it relatively easy to obtain jobs and progress their careers’.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter commenced by providing some reflections on upward and downward mobility. It has been argued that it cannot be automatically stated that returnees from

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<sup>19</sup> This is an expression which refers to the patriarchal system in Italian society.

Europe moved upwards in class terms solely on the basis that they originally came from working-class backgrounds, and now in Italy they are employed in white-collar positions. This is because the majority of returnees in this study state that if they had stayed in the European country where they grew up in, they would have been employed in better paid and more regulated sectors. Considered from this angle, return migration from Europe can be seen as downward mobility particularly for those interviewees that, at the time of the interview, were employed in precarious positions. On the other hand, the majority of returnees from Argentina originally came from middle-class backgrounds; however, the majority of them are now employed in precarious and insecure working-class positions. This would suggest a downward mobility for the returnees from Argentina. However, the majority of them left the country in a period of economic crisis when it was very difficult, if not impossible, to find employment. The passage therefore from unemployment to employment could be considered as upward mobility in itself. It is also important to remember that among the interviewees from Argentina there were a relatively high number of students. Their social status did not alter much in Italy, since all were still in education, with the exception of an interviewee who used to be a student and now is employed in the field in which she is qualified.

The analysis of interviews indicates that while the returnees from Europe did find it challenging to adapt to the Italian labour market, the returnees from Argentina understand and fit within it more easily. This is due to a number of reasons. For the first time, the returnees from Europe are faced with loosely regulated working conditions where rights such as pensions, health and working legally more generally are not taken for granted. Therefore, they tend to compare Italian working conditions with other European countries' working conditions. On the other end, returnees from Argentina do not emphasise the difference between working in Italy and working in Argentina in terms of working conditions. This suggests a similarity in how the labour market operates in the two countries. Returnees from Argentina stress, in fact, a similarity in attitude at the workplace where employers tend to be authoritative and employees are supposed to adapt to whatever working conditions they are presented with. They also make comparisons between Italy and Argentina to emphasise the difference in salaries, higher wages and a more stable financial situation in Italy. The 'dual frame of

reference' and the 'relative deprivation' theory were used here to explain the difference attitudes of returnees in regards to employment.

One of the key findings that emerge from the data is that the returnees from Europe and Argentina are basically limited to working in sectors that are very specific to their migrant background. This suggests a kind of partial or conditional integration into the labour market, in which labour market participation is contingent upon certain limited cultural resources. In this sense, return migrants may have limited capacity to move around different sectors within the labour market, for example, to make use of skills and qualifications other than the 'ethnic' resources they bring with them.

However, while European returnees enjoy objectively superior working conditions, the frustration that emerges from their experiences and perceptions of the Italian labour market are such that on a subjective level they can be considered as less 'integrated'. Instead, despite being employed in lower-paid precarious positions, social and cultural values and practices are such that returnees from Argentina may report a relatively higher level of integration. In the next chapter, I will analyse social integration.



## **Chapter V: Social Integration**

This chapter will adopt a comparative approach to examine the experiences of social integration of returnees from Argentina and Europe to Italy. The main argument put forward in this chapter is that while the question of identity and belonging undermines the social integration especially of those returnees from Europe with southern Italian origins, it strengthens the social integration between returnees from Argentina and Italians.

The chapter starts by exploring different modes of socialising between these two groups of returnees and Italians and then briefly looks at the concept of friendship more generally. Then the chapter moves on to examine the role of the Italian language in social contexts showing that fluency in the Italian language is recognised in both groups as an essential element for integration. It argues that the concept of fluency is different for the two groups and it shows how this impacts differently on their social interaction. Then the chapter addresses complex themes such as the north/south divide in Italy and how this impacts on the experiences of social interaction for returnees. It shows that this divide does not only concern cultural differences but it extends to issues related to racism and discrimination which are important mainly in understanding the experience of social interaction for returnees with southern Italian origins who relocate to the north of Italy. Finally the chapter moves on to illustrate the social activities carried out by returnees during their free time, paying particular attention to travelling and football. It shows that these activities also prompt questions around identity and belonging for a number of second-generation interviewees. This speaks to the more difficult and uncomfortable feelings around identity professed by the second generation generally.

### **Social Interactions and Social Practices**

This section explores how both groups of returnees experience social interaction and social practices when they socialise with Italians. The analysis of data suggests that even though returnees from Argentina notice more differences in social practices between Argentinians and northern Italians than their European counterparts, these

differences are not paramount and do not raise fundamental questions about identity and belonging. Both groups of interviewees socialise on a regular basis with Italians.

Interviewees from Argentina see Italians as open and welcoming towards Argentinians because, as one of my interviewees states, they perceive an Argentinian to be 'one Italian more'. This cohort of interviewees state that they do not encounter major problems in socialising with Italians and that they have both Italian and Argentinian friends. More than half of the Argentinian returnees interact more with other Argentinians at first, but after a few months spent in Italy also interact with Italians and with people of other nationalities. This increase in social interaction seems to go together with the increase in their level of fluency in Italian. The more fluent they become in Italian, the more social interaction they have with Italians. The theme of language and social interaction is explored in more detail in the following section. More than half of the returnees from Argentina have origins in Piedmont and therefore an important part of their socialisation happens within their extended family who they only meet for the first time upon their arrival in Italy. One of the sections in this chapter is dedicated to exploring how the discovery of one's family impacts on the experience of returnees from Argentina. More than half of the second-generation interviewees are from the south of Italy, and therefore they are not in a position to be able to socialise on a daily basis with their extended family. They state that the majority of their friends are Italian; however they also socialise with people from the country they grew up in. Contrary to the returnees from Argentina, this cohort of interviewees interacts more with Italians from the very first moment. This also reflects their language abilities since the majority of them can speak Italian prior to moving to Italy.

Almost half of the returnees from Argentina interviewed are in a relationship with an Argentinian co-national and more than a quarter of them either has previously been or is currently with an Italian partner. With the exception of a couple of interviewees, who have never been in a relationship with an Italian, the interviewees from Europe have been or continue to be in such a relationship. Since intermarriage is considered a fundamental indicator of structural assimilation as it can potentially change ethnic

boundaries (Alba and Golden 1986), it can be suggested that both groups of interviewees show a high level of social integration.

With regard to interaction with Italians, returnees from Argentina observe that Italians from the north of Italy, even though are polite and cordial, take a long time to establish friendships:

**Luz:** They [northern Italians] have been very good to me, in fact there are many good people. Maybe you expected a relationship to develop faster but I saw that people in general are good. Maybe you need to respect that they don't like to develop a close relationship from the beginning.

**Estella:** I think that the sense of friendship is different because we [Argentinians] are too open and here they [Italians] are too closed. All the extremes are bad.

In his study on the experience of returnees from Argentina to Friuli, Grossutti (2005) proves a similar point. He (2005: 8) states that 'Argentines and Friulans [people from the Friuli region in Italy] approach human relationships in different ways: more open and flexible for the former, more rigid and structured for the latter'. Many interviewees from Argentina stated that it is easier to establish a relationship with Italians from the south.

One example, often repeated during the interviews, is that while southern Italians and Argentinians invite acquaintances/friends to their houses, northern Italians rarely do so. The reference to invitations to the home is used as a symbolic expression of welcoming people in some of the interviews. The quote below also shows that returnees from Argentina believe that they have similar social practices to Italians from the south:

**Antonio:** There [in Argentina] for example we meet at home for example before going to dance we start drinking, we chat, we eat and then we go dancing at the time we want when we feel like it; with the people from southern Italy we do the same, we meet at someone's house (...) and we eat, we drink and we go out. But

I know that, not because it happened to me but because it happened to other Argentinians that live here that his friends [northern Italians] meet in a bar and they start drinking in the bar and after go to dance, they don't go to anyone's house, they don't have dinner together.

The perception that northern Italians and specifically people from Piedmont are not very friendly is also shared among the second-generation interviewees. The majority of them state that although the bulk of their friends are Italian, they are not from Piedmont.

Interviewees from Argentina point out some social practices that are different between the two countries: for instance, it is a widespread idea that socialising does not typically occur spontaneously in the north of Italy but instead needs to be planned. Therefore, if someone wants to visit a northern Italian friend they need to make an appointment, a trait which is contrasted with Argentinian and southern Italian culture. It is interesting to note that even though the majority of returnees from Argentina come from the north, they identify more (but not exclusively) with the southern Italian way of life. They do not seem to have a strong sense of regional Italian identity, instead seeming to view Italian identity in a broader way which encompasses regional diversities. They seem to be able to choose the aspects which they identify with most, departing from a regional framework. The fact that they do not strongly identify with their region of origin in Italy helps them to relate to Italians from other regions without challenging their origin and identity as the example below demonstrates:

**Paulo:** In Argentina friends are more united, we always go to eat together, two or three times per week or at the weekends we are together we meet more there than here, here you are supposed to call first, to make a kind of appointment, it doesn't feel natural, with these friends from Puglia<sup>20</sup>, we meet up when we want but for example we have two friends from Turin and to go out with them is like you need an appointment, they need time, with these friends from Puglia they invite us directly if they are doing something.

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<sup>20</sup> Puglia is a region located in the southeast of Italy.

This formality among friends, where people are expected to arrange to meet up with friends as a social practice and where spontaneity is not appreciated, is also documented in the study carried out by De Souza (2005) on Trinidadian returnees from the UK.

None of the second generation mentioned this point. This indicates that returnees from Europe are used to socialising in a way that is similar to the northern Italian way of socialising.

Several interviewees from Argentina also point out the fact that while in Argentina people kiss one another on the cheek from the very first time they meet, this does not happen in Italy where the first time you meet someone new, you shake the person's hand. This Italian habit is seen as creating a barrier from the outset and is symbolic of how many of the interviewees feel distance from the person they are meeting, at first.

One second-generation interviewee thought that it is actually easier to socialise in Italy than in France:

**Aurore:** I believe it is easier to make friends in Italy than in France, but not in Turin, but it is also simpler than it appears.

Some of the interviewees in both groups also pointed out that the friendships built while growing up are difficult to compare with friendships that are acquired later on in life. This underlines the fact that friendship is more related to age than to a place.

Half of the interviewees from Argentina believe that friendship is valued in Argentina to a greater extent than in Italy. Some interviewees speak about a visceral link with their friends in Argentina, a link which in Italy, where family ties are predominant, does not seem to occur to the same extent. Some of the interviewees point out that Argentina has a higher divorce rate than Italy and cite this when explaining why friendship assumes greater significance. Other interviewees explain that family in Argentina is, in a sense, already split at the very origin when the first migrant of the family migrates and leaves the family behind and that impacts on how people create relationships subsequently.

In contrast to the opinion of returnees from Europe who believe that friendship is valued in the same way in the country where they grew up and in Italy, half of the interviewees from Argentina do not share this opinion. These divergent perceptions of friendship do not seem to be based on the length of time spent in Italy. Although it might be assumed that those who have spent longer in Italy will feel that friendship has the same value in both countries, this assumption does not find empirical evidence in the interviews conducted as part of the present investigation.

However, some interviewees from Argentina believe that once you become a friend the relationship is the same in both countries as the quote below states:

**Pablo:** We have very few Argentinian friends, a few friends in the office, but we don't meet up outside. My social life outside work nowadays is 100 per cent Italian and with other European countries (...) this is one of the most important things that at the beginning has helped me to stay here. I have really got friends, some people that I feel very close to. Some of them are couples with children therefore we do many activities together. We go on holidays together, we eat at each other places, our children are together and they are all Italians.

This is very different from the experience of young second-generation return migrants to Barbados who mention the difficulties in making friends as one of the most significant adjustments to make once they relocate from the UK. Young female return migrants to Barbados experience this phenomenon even to a larger extent (Potter 2005b). Also the experience of social integration for returnees from Argentina seems to be very different when compared to the experience of other returnee groups, for example, Japanese Brazilians to Japan. Returnees from Argentina can successfully navigate socio-cultural Italian practices because many of them are very similar to Argentinian ones while the very opposite applies to Japanese-Brazilians, who are socially marginalised in Japan because of their socio-cultural differences (Tsuda 2009c). However, there are some exceptions to this in the experiences of returnees from Argentina with regard to friendship in Italy. A small minority of interviewees stated that they have difficulty making friends, as the following quote reveals:

**Paloma:** It takes a lot for me to make friends, in one and a half years I have only got to know one Italian guy. He is now my best friend and he is my only real friend here in Italy, the others are not friends, they're acquaintances. I miss this [the social aspect] of Argentina very much.

Apart from a few exceptional cases, overall both groups of returnees in this study seem to be relatively well integrated, from a friendship point of view.

### **The Importance of the Italian Language in Social Interactions**

This section illustrates the importance that both groups of interviewees attribute to speaking the Italian language fluently in the context of social interaction. It shows how the interaction with Italians for returnees from Argentina goes together with their increasing familiarity with the Italian language, and increases over time. It is argued that the concept of 'being fluent' in Italian differs among the two groups. This is because while the majority of returnees from Europe spoke the Italian language prior to moving to Italy, the very opposite applies for returnees from Argentina. However, it transpires that some of the returnees from Europe are disappointed that they cannot speak Italian as well as native speakers do, and this creates a sense of frustration in their social interactions. The majority of the returnees from Argentina instead are quite satisfied with their level of Italian, considering that they did not speak the language prior to moving to Italy, and they do not seem to have the same expectations that returnees from Europe have.

Fluency in the Italian language is identified as the most relevant factor in social interactions by both groups of interviewees. The vast majority of the interviewees from Argentina learned the Italian language in Italy. Almost half of them studied Italian for a few months prior to moving to Italy with the exception of two interviewees who studied Italian for a few years prior to moving to Italy. However, all of them state that they have mastered the language since their move to the country. It is important to note that none of these interviewees' parents can speak Italian fluently with the exceptions of two interviewees whose parents also moved to Italy (but who also acquired the language as

adults). Only some of the interviewees' grandparents could either speak Italian or some Italian dialects.

The importance of linguistic competence is also recognised in other return migration studies such as the study conducted by Macpherson and Macpherson (2009: 34) on Samoan returnees from New Zealand. These theorists state that returnees' ability to 'fit in', in Samoan society depended on their level of cultural and linguistic competence. Tsuda (2004: 128) states that 'language was obviously the most common cultural barrier that discouraged the Japanese from interacting with the Japanese-Brazilians'. It is important to point out that, contrary to the examples just mentioned, the majority of returnees from Argentina learn the Italian language easily enough and the language barrier is an obstacle only for the first few months. This is because Spanish and Italian are similar languages and this represents an advantage for these returnees. The time estimated by these interviewees to learn Italian in Italy ranges from two months to one year. Among the interviewees there is the general idea that in three months people can understand and can be understood-however to speak the language fluently takes about a year. Many interviewees stress the importance of learning the language fluently in order to have a more active social life when it comes to socialising with Italians. These interviewees think that learning the language properly is an essential aspect of how they experience life in Italy, stating that mastering the language is one of the best ways to feel integrated into the country. The quote below illustrates how interviewees believe speaking Italian fluently impacts on their social life:

**Pedro:** A lot, more than 70 per cent; language is everything, as you know we need to communicate with others, otherwise you feel more lonely than usual. Not to be able to say what happens to you, you are isolated, you can't read a newspaper (...) [fluency in] language influences a lot, because it also influences your trust in yourself, to be confident socially you have to be confident in yourself because you know the accent, the pronunciation of double consonants etc.



The common experience of steps taken by interviewees' from Argentina to learning Italian are well summarised and explained in the quote below. The quote shows that the level of social interaction increases with the level of fluency in the Italian language:

**Pedro:** I can tell you that up until now, there have been three periods: the first period is the one in which you are practically excluded because you can't express even an idea, you can't speak, you can't understand, in the second period, you start to speak a little, you can relate more but it is difficult anyway because you speak to me in Italian but I have to listen and translate it then I have to think what I want to say in Spanish and translate it in Italian and then step by step you go on [third period].

The majority of Italian returnees from Europe, in contrast to the returnees from Argentina, could speak and understand Italian prior to moving to Italy. However, some of them state that their knowledge of Italian dialects was superior to their knowledge of the Italian language. The majority of the returnees who spoke only dialect prior moving to Italy are from the south of Italy originally. They learned Italian once they moved to Italy.

The quote below is taken from a returnee from France, originally from southern Italy. She moved to Turin when she got married. Her husband is also of southern Italian origin but grew up in northern Italy. The interviewee describes her first period in Italy when she only spoke Sicilian<sup>21</sup> as follows:

**Arielle:** Horrible because when I got here I didn't speak any Italian. I spoke French to my husband, he understood French but he answered me in Italian. *Did he speak Sicilian?* No he didn't because he had lived in Turin for a very long time (...) I understood Italian, I didn't speak Italian but I understood it (...) at first I was afraid of making mistakes, I used to speak very little.

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<sup>21</sup> Dialect spoken in Sicily, a southern Italian region.

The question of dialects is very sensitive in the context of the north/south divide in Italy. This issue is addressed in the next section.

Many returnees from Europe stated that for years they attended Italian courses organised by the Italian consulate in the city where they grew up in. Four interviewees decided to study Italian language and literature in third-level education and two other interviewees studied a degree in translation in Italy.

Interviewees from Europe also shared the idea that fluency in the Italian language is essential to fully participate in Italian life. However, the level of fluency between the two groups seems to be different. This is because, in contrast to the interviewees from Argentina, the majority of interviewees from Europe felt that their Italian language was never perfect and they felt it should have been so, considering their time spent in Italy and their Italian origins. Generational and geographic vicinity, which permitted a transnational life, does not seem to facilitate the language experience of some of the return migrants from Europe. Actually quite the opposite: it seems to charge the life of these return migrants with further expectations on how they should speak. This sense of imperfection, in some cases, shows a sense of maladjustment in the country. The following quotes are by two interviewees who lived in Italy for more than 20 years:

**M.P. [Marianna Prontera]:** How long did you take to learn Italian?

**Arielle:** Still now I don't know it. My children always tell me that I pronounce the double consonants where I don't have to and I can't write it even now.

**Blanche:** I have been living in Italy for 24 years now. I have acquired a good level of Italian but I still speak with a French accent. I'm [considered to be] French [by Italians].

**M.P.:** Does this annoy you?

**Blanche:** A little, not because I have something against France (..) it's because they [Italians] ask me three or four times a day (...) I'm annoyed at myself that I cannot talk it [Italian] perfectly.

Learning Italian language is therefore perceived as an impossible life-long project. Interviewees from Argentina who are in Italy for longer than a few months have more contact on a daily basis with Italians, while the interviewees who have been in Italy for only a few months tend to spend more time among Argentinians. Apart from not speaking Italian, one of the reasons why this happens is that the vast majority of interviewees have some friends or more commonly a family member from Argentina, welcoming them in Italy upon their arrival. All the interviewees began by speaking more Spanish than Italian in their daily lives. However, this seems to reverse after having spent some time in Italy.

**Carlos:** In my daily life I mainly spoke Spanish I think for 1 or 2 years until I lived with my [Italian] wife and have been in contact with other people, the problem is that when one knows so many Argentinians, you arrive from Argentina you meet an Argentinian then you only speak in Spanish, in this way you don't learn, you take longer to learn Italian well, you take a bit longer compared to someone who arrives and doesn't know anyone.

However, with the exception of a couple of interviewees who are fully immersed in an Italian lifestyle, the majority of the interviewees work, study or live with other Argentinians. In Chapter IV it was noted that many interviewees work in sectors strictly related to their 'Argentinian' background, for example, Argentinian restaurants, tango teaching and so on. To different degrees the Spanish language remains part of all of the interviewees' daily lives.

The majority of interviewees from Europe, in contrast, speak predominantly Italian from their very first period in Italy. However as in the case of returnees from Argentina, returnees from Europe work in sectors where the use of their 'foreign' language is required. Therefore, this group of returnees also continue to practice their 'other' language.

Some of the interviewees from Argentina emphasise the difficulty of learning the Italian language properly because they perceive that while, on the one hand, the proximity of

the two languages makes language acquisition relatively easy, but it can also cause difficulties in terms of acquiring fluency.

**Carlos:** I took seven months to learn Italian, I didn't speak well before, I used to mix, sometimes I was under the impression I was talking in Italian but instead I was talking Spanish, since they are so similar it is very simple to make mistakes.

None of the interviewees from Europe experienced this difficulty. This is probably because the majority of these interviewees, as previously mentioned, could already speak Italian prior to moving to Italy and they also had a more direct exposure to the Italian language in their family homes while growing up. Another significant difference is that while returnees from Europe used to return to Italy on a regular basis and therefore had a transnational experience with the country, the majority of returnees from Argentina did not have this transnational experience and their first time in the country was upon migrating.

### **The Impact of the North/South Divide on Returnees in Italy**

This section argues that while different Italian regional origins play a role in the overall experience for some of the returnees from Europe, especially for those who have southern Italian origins, they do not seem to influence the experience of the returnees from Argentina. The question of regionalism and particularly Italy's north/south divide presents difficulties with regard to integration especially for those returnees from Europe with southern Italian origins. It is important to specify that these difficulties do not only represent cultural differences but also refer to issues of racism and discrimination. In contrast, for returnees from Argentina, while they may be aware to a greater or lesser extent of regional issues/differences, they do not operate as an obstacle. In this respect generational distance from one's ancestors plays a fundamental role.

As the quote below shows, some returnees from Argentina had no awareness of socio-cultural differences within Italy and perceive Italy to be one whole nation prior to their moving to the country:

**Pablo:** Now I understand by coming here that the Italians who went there (to Argentina) gathered according to regions, but when an Argentinian thinks of Italy, they think about the country of Italy, one thing, they don't manage to differentiate that in reality Italians are these Piemontesi, those Neapolitans, those Friulani, those Sicilians. In Argentina if one is asked what is a typical Italian song he says *tarantella* but *tarantella* it's something Neapolitan or the *bagna cauda* that is from the north; but the Argentinian doesn't make this link, he doesn't know it, doesn't realise it.

It is also interesting to note that the majority of interviewees from Argentina, even the interviewees that originally are from the north of Italy, identify more with the south of Italy and the southern Italian way of life than with the north of Italy. Many of the interviewees mentioned that they have friends from southern Italy or have travelled there and noticed these similarities. The quote below is from an interviewee with northern Italian origins:

**Pablo:** From the point of view of the way of being, this is also linked to a climatic issue, but I find that the Argentinian is very similar to southern Italian people in their cultural approach: to the Neapolitan, to the Sicilian. Also, my origins are in Piedmont but when my ancestors went to Argentina, they settled in places like Cordoba with a lot of sun, a lot of light, a lot of heat.

Even though Argentinian returnees living in Italy do tend to identify more so with southern Italian culture, this does not tend to affect their experience of integration. For example, they do not report incidents where they felt offended or excluded due to hostile attitudes to southern Italy. Ultimately, this is because their primary identification remains with Argentina. In this sense, Italian regionalism does not appear to present an obstacle to the integration of Argentinian returnees. In contrast, this issue was raised on numerous occasions by European returnees in terms of their experiences of belonging and exclusion in Italy.

Second-generation returnees seem to be aware of the complexities in relation to the south and north of Italy prior to moving to Italy because some of them have already experienced it in the country where they grew up. However, as for the returnees from Argentina, they state that they did not realise the extent of it until they moved to northern Italy. More than half of the returnees from Europe interviewed have southern Italian origins and at the time of the interview were living in northern Italy. The following narrative shows the interviewees' awareness on the topic prior to their arrival in Italy. The quote below is from a second-generation returnee originally from the south of Italy:

**Claire:** There is also (in France) this southern thing, who comes from the south and who comes from the north because I remember that this woman from Val D'Aosta<sup>22</sup> that helped my mum – my mum, the poor thing, was always very humble – and this woman from Val D'Aosta that used to say 'I'm from Val d'Aosta I know how to do things, unlike you people from the south' she had compassion, she felt pity for my mum she said 'poor thing, these people from the south', but that compassion that sometimes irritates you, it really irritates you.

The whole north/south Italian issue is very complex and finds its origins in the history of the country. Historically southern Italians have suffered discrimination from northern Italians in northern Italy, where southern Italians migrated looking for employment from the 1950s onwards. The north/ south divide issue does not only transpire in the narratives of returnees with southern Italian origin. In fact, the following two sentences are from returnees from Europe with northern Italian origins:

**Yolenne:** I only heard my dad one time saying that an Italian that presents himself to him asking for a job if he wears pointed shoes he [my dad] wouldn't hire him and if he wore big shoes he would have hired him, but if he had beautiful, shiny pointed shoes he wouldn't hire that person – and very often southern Italians had beautiful, shiny shoes in the fifties. They had nice shoes

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<sup>22</sup> Semi autonomous region in north-western Italy

because in the south of Italy appearance is important (...) therefore for my dad someone from south of Italy surely would not have accepted the hard work of the construction site in the cold, with the rain.

**Sebastien:** My folks were from Liguria. They said that people from the south didn't know how to eat, I tell you something. My dad was *ligure*<sup>23</sup> so he had a different culture: *liguri* eat meat, can make pasta, can make ravioli, have good wine - there is a culinary culture that according to them, immigrants from the south of Italy in France didn't have.

The quotes above show how southern Italians were often perceived among second-generation northern Italians abroad. Giulia Fassio (2013), in her study on Italian migrants in France, states that the Italian community in Grenoble was and still is far from being homogeneous. She asserts that northern Italian migrants who moved to Grenoble before the Second World War and their descendants have often tried to distinguish themselves from southern Italians who instead arrived in Grenoble after the Second World War. Fassio (2013) mentions that the relationships between these groups of migrants were often (and remain) characterised by tension based on their geographical provenience. Fassio (2013) also explains that frequently northern Italian migrants fomented the already negative stereotypes existing among the French population on southern Italians by emphasising the geographical proximity and the shared history between northern Italians and French people versus the geographical and cultural distance with southern Italians.

On the other hand, the majority of the returnees from Europe with southern Italian origins interviewed seem to have internalised the racial discourse of inferiority directed towards them. Therefore, it is interesting to note that not only some of the narratives of the returnees with northern Italian origins are negative but also some of the returnees with southern Italian origins criticise the southern Italian way of living, as it will be discussed in the next chapter.

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<sup>23</sup> An inhabitant of the Liguria region.

Some of the interviewees revealed, during the interview, that they usually hide their southern Italian origin in the north of Italy because they are ashamed of it and are afraid they will suffer discrimination and racism, as the following quote states:

**Agathe:** I came [to Italy] when I was twenty-two years old, the integration wasn't exactly nice because we used to live in a building where everyone was from Piedmont, we were considered to be southern Italians by them, we are talking about 1975 (...) when I was there I used to say that I was French, I was very silly, I was twenty-two years old, I thought that if I said that, I would have been more accepted. Instead they didn't care in the least. Obviously it wasn't very nice at first (...) there is that distance of integration, I didn't know so many things. My husband's friends were all southern Italians (...) my only two friends, outside work, were from the south of Italy.

The following quote is from another returnee from Europe of southern Italian origin:

**Adeline:** The funny thing is that when I came here my colleagues called me *terrona*<sup>24</sup> and they were laughing but Luke used to say you speak Italian like a goat and Giorgio used to jokingly say 'you are a *terrona*'. But that's what they really thought, and it's the thought that counts even if you say it like a joke, the information is there. There is this difference that you come from the south and they are from the north. Deep inside me I'm hurt; these comments hit the child's wound.

The quotes above show that returnees from Europe are often identified by Italians not as foreign nationals but as southern Italians because of their (and often their partners) southern Italian accent when they speak Italian and because of their generational closeness to their parents who were the first to migrate. Some second-generation interviewees with southern Italian origins state that they do not like to be criticised by northern Italians who had a different history and cannot empathise with them. This shows that regional and local identities and a sense of belonging are very important for the first- and second-generation migrants but do not seem to have the same relevance

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<sup>24</sup> Derogatory term used by northern Italians to refer to a southern Italian. The term implies a strong link to the earth/ soil.



for the third-, fourth- and fifth-generation of Italian Argentinians. This issue between south and north of Italy adds a layer of complexity to the process of social integration for returnees with southern Italian origins living in the north of Italy.

### **Hobbies and Leisure Time Pursuits: the Link to Socialisation**

This section explores football and travelling as the most common topics of conversation and activities capable of bringing returnees and Italians together during their free time. These are regarded as important activities by returnees when it comes to socialising with Italians who were born and reared in Italy. This section also shows how these activities bring out questions around identity and belonging in some of the interviewees in both groups.

#### *Travelling: Recreational Activity or Discovery of One's Roots?*

All interviewees from Argentina have travelled in Italy, to a greater or lesser extent. They all tried to travel as extensively as possible in Italy as well as in Europe. Living in Italy is seen as an opportunity to visit other European countries.

All the returnees from Europe with southern Italian origins have also travelled extensively in Italy, however the majority of the interviewees with northern Italian origins have either never visited the south of Italy or only visited it once. This was very different from the returnees from Argentina who have travelled all over the country, regardless of their origins.

However, travelling also represents the discovery of one's roots for the returnees from Argentina. All of them in fact went or are planning to visit their ancestors' place of origin, with the exception of one interviewee who is planning to move back to Argentina and will be financially unable to visit her grandfather's birthplace in Calabria. The majority of the interviewees who returned to their place of origin report a very positive and emotional experience.

The first two quotes presented below are from interviewees who went back to their village of origin, while the last quote is from an interviewee who has not visited his

place of origin yet but is planning to do so. It is also interesting to point out that the first quote below is from an interviewee who only moved to Italy for work related reasons and who now feels totally integrated in Italy. The second passage is from a woman who migrated to Italy as a consequence of the latest financial crisis in Argentina. She stated that she did not only migrate to Italy because it was her country of origin but also because Italy was well prepared to welcome Italian returnees. By way of contrast, the last quote is from an interviewee who came to Italy to undertake a master's degree.

**Pablo:** Beautiful, it is something amazing (...) the motivation was to understand a little, and you make this effort of looking for your family, it's very beautiful and then you discover something, I don't know, it's something weird you feel that you have a root in the world, even if you come from a far away country, this thing helped me to feel closer to Italy. When I discovered the family they brought me to the farmstead where my great-granddad was born and he left from there to go to Argentina and therefore we went there and I remember that my father was visiting me and we went together to visit the family. I had already met them before and when we got to the farmstead, a man called Giorgio opened a trunk and inside there were some pictures that my great-granddad sent to the family. Therefore in a house that I didn't know before, with people that I never seen before, pictures of my granddad, my great-granddad when he was young, my grandma, my dad when he was a child, the land, still today we have some of that land, my dad lives there, the pictures of the swimming pool he had just built, something incredible, pictures of the small factory that he had in Cordoba.

**Rosalia:** The only thing I know of my paternal grandfather (...) is that he brought me to the *piazza* with him and do you know what he used to tell me? He told me about a village, not his own village but Pinerolo, he told me about the square, of the train station, of the doves, and when I passed to Pinerolo to go to Torre Pellice to bring my documents because by law I'm originally from that village, when I found myself at the station in Pinerolo, I stopped and I said: I know this place. I know it through my granddad's tales. Granddad only spoke of that, the others instead never talked about it because they lived with this melancholy, with this sadness and I perceived, yes I perceived it.

**Paulo:** I would like to go to Palermo I was told that it is beautiful and afterwards I need to travel around Sicily because of the family. I'll go back specifically to my granddad's village.

The above passages show that, even if the vast majority of Argentinian interviewees did not have a direct experience of Italy prior to moving to the country, a collective memory exists of it that has been transmitted from generation to generation. These collective memories pass through stories of villages of origin, stories of their ancestors' boat journeys, culinary traditions and so on and it is received by the interviewees both consciously and unconsciously upon their living experience in Italy. Travelling around Italy and specifically travelling back to the places where the ancestors of return migrants came from, seems to be an important process for this cohort of interviewees towards their process of socio-cultural integration and identification with Italy. Discovering one's roots seems to be a powerful experience which inevitably brought return migrants closer to their ancestral homeland and people.

In contrast with the returnees from Argentina, all the returnees from Europe had visited Italy prior to moving to the country, some with more frequency than others. The majority of them, however, had regular contact with Italy during holiday periods, summer being the most popular time to return. Usually interviewees describe the moment of the holiday with great excitement for them and their parents at being finally reunited with their extended family. However, there are a number of interviewees who did not enjoy going to Italy as they perceived it to be a very backward place with backward habits, such as sleeping in the afternoon. It is interesting to note that these interviewees were all from southern Italy originally. The following narratives are from two of these interviewees:

**Anne:** We didn't like either their ways of being or thinking, we didn't like their mentality, their customs and traditions, it was shocking for us, my dad also didn't like it, he never let us go meet people from Casarano. He used to say that they were old, and they didn't understand anything, my dad in France opened his mind, he doesn't like all these things, mourning for three months, dressing in

black, he didn't like all these customs. He would find it difficult if he was going to come back. For one month we were there, there wasn't running water, it was in-land, 10 km from the beach.

**Arielle:** I don't like it [one of the regions in the south of Italy], I don't feel any link to it. Myself and my oldest brother used to say, when we were there, someone should throw a bomb on that village because they had an old-fashioned mentality.

It is worth noting that the majority of the European interviewees with southern Italian origins state that they would not go to live in the south of Italy, not only because of the lack of employment but also because of the lifestyle.

#### *Football and Social Interaction*

According to the interviewees from Argentina, football is an important interest shared in both Argentinian and Italian popular culture. Most of the interviewees state that football, as a topic of conversation, helps them to relate to Italians and it is an excellent ice-breaker to start a conversation. The majority of the interviewees mention Maradona<sup>25</sup>, as the most common topic of conversation with Italians, in relation to sport. Maradona is perceived by returnees from Argentina to be a very much loved figure in Italy that Italians associate automatically with Argentina but also with Italy since Maradona played for Napoli. Therefore Maradona symbolically brings together both countries:

**Paulo:** Football is useful to interact with people, I always speak about football in work because the clients always ask 'do you know Maradona?' I start speaking, I speak of the teams I support, we speak about the Napoli team, we speak of this and that we always speak about the same: Maradona, Argentina, Messi. We always speak about football.

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<sup>25</sup> Diego Armando Maradona is an internationally famous Argentinian footballer who during his career played for Napoli football team winning numerous trophies and accolades.

**Paula:** We went to eat in a Neapolitan *pizzeria* when we said we were Argentinians, incredibly they went mad, they showed us 300,000 photos of Maradona (...) the passion for football certainly unites.

While football remains a very common topic of conversation among the second generation, it is interesting to see how it is experienced very differently by the returnees from Europe when compared to those from Argentina. Instead of acting as a topic around which to bond, as described by the returnees from Argentina, it is seen instead as something which divided European returnees from the wider Italian population. Italy and France, as neighbouring countries, have a history of rivalry in football.

**Anne:** You don't have an idea of how times I cried in France, because when I was a child and Italy and France were playing against each other, open sky<sup>26</sup>, I wanted to die, I wanted to be German, Spanish, because it came out everything that was inside. The day after a football match Italy-France, you can be sure that in school I had to listen to all the bad things, we won you have lost.

Moreover, football not only brings out a certain rivalry between the two countries, it also raises questions about identity and belonging for second-generation interviewees, echoing the more problematic relationship with identity and belonging reported in more general terms by the second generation prior to and upon their return.

**Claire:** from these somewhat superficial things you realise that you are double (you have a double identity), exactly because Italy got to the final and you support Italy of course, France arrives in the final and you support France but when both arrive to the final it is like you have to choose between two children, it is practically the same, it is like they are two parts of yourself which you can't renounce.

**Agathe:** I don't like football but when there is the World Cup or these European leagues I am not capable of seeing Italy versus France. If I am in France I support Italy of course but I'm happy if France wins and I'm happy if Italy wins,

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<sup>26</sup> This is an expression meaning the end of the world arrived.

I'm never disappointed in the end but when I'm in Italy and the game is over, when I'm in Italy I support France, but if Italy wins I'm happy anyway but it is a big trauma because my husband and my son are big supporters of Italy of course and instead I wish it wins (...) look it is terrible, I get sick, I get sick, I go to bed, I wear ear plugs (...) it is a dilemma for me.

As indicated in the above quote, football loyalties can signal the turbulent identities of European returnees. This sense of feeling split between two cultures and communities, and the wider sense of not belonging have an impact on the process of integration in Italy. The issue of identity will be discussed in further detail in the next section.

Football is not only a convenient topic of conversation for Argentinian returnees, but also an activity which can be practiced with Italians. It is described, particularly by male interviewees, as a good way to meet Italians. It is interesting to note that the issues of identity and belonging do not come into play for this cohort of interviewees who predominantly identify with Argentina.

The following quote clearly shows how football is very important in both cultures. The quote is from one of the interviewees whose grandfather is from Sicily. The quote is a clear example of what is mainly associated with Italian culture internationally: food and football.

**Paulo:** My granddad, if you go to Bahia Blanca you think you are in Italy because they do the same things. This is the first time that I have come to Italy and for me it is like being in Argentina because they do everything in the same way, everything the same, they are crazy about coffee, about football, my granddad is a *Juve* [short for *Juventus*, an Italian football team] supporter, also for what concerns food, they are crazy, crazy about food, also for the *grappa* [Italian alcoholic beverage], *Lavazza* coffee [brand of Italian coffee], that is another thing that my granddad always asked me for 'bring me *la grappa*', after lunch, bring me this, bring me that, *il Fernet*, *il San Simone* [Italian aromatic digestives].

The importance of football is also underlined in the following narrative reported by one of the second-generation interviewees who emphasises the fact that among Italian immigrants abroad football was something through which to identify and one of the factors that symbolised Italianness:

**Sebastien:** You live even when you are young with a very strong sense of being Italian and you try to share it also with other Italians, you imagine that when there was the World Cup league, when Italy won in 1980, all the cars, bangers because these people was poor factory workers, these cars were all painted with the Italian flag, I remember it perfectly and people were celebrating in the street like here but that was in another country. Imagine how people feel, even if can't speak, they feel Italian, all the migrants at least.

**Daniel:** It is because you belong to a group and I think this is the explanation. I'm not the only case, there are many cases. For example, football is very typical. All my Italian friends that were born there (Belgium) support Italy, not Belgium and me too.

This shows that topics or activities such as football can act as either a social glue or as a divisor according to the experiences of the returnees. It shows that for some of the returnees from Europe, football has always been a topic around which identity issues arose. This is also true prior to their moving to Italy. This is not only because the majority of this cohort could not strongly identify with any team (and therefore nation), but also because they were identified as Italians and therefore as rivals in the country they grew up in. This does not apply to the returnees from Argentina who instead always identified as predominantly Argentinian before and after their moving to Italy, and who were perceived as Argentinians while living in each country. The topic of identity will be further explored in the following section.

### **Social Interactions and Identity Formation**

This section aims to give a closer view of the relations between social interaction and identity formation, and how they influence the process of returnees' integration in Italy.

This section shows that the identities of the returnees from Europe develop in a much less linear way compared to their Argentinian counterparts. Despite the fact, that all of the interviewees in this group grew up transnationally between the ‘host’ country and the country of ‘origin’, upon returning to Italy, the majority of them identify either with the ‘host’ country or do not identify with either of the countries. They experience a general sense of ambiguity with regard to the whole question of identity. The quotes below show how this ambiguity comes into play for this cohort of interviewees:

**Adeline:** ‘*Nous avons le cul entres deux chaises*’<sup>27</sup>. You never know if you are here or there, even your name, your surname I never know in practice here in Italy, they call you Russo and if I go to France, they call you Russò, this is not normal. The name should be the same for everyone.

**Anne:** In Italy I feel French and in France, Italian, it’s terrible (...) during this exhibition in Grenoble, where there were testimonies of sons of Italian migrants I was impressed because some women said something that I feel too. That they are French, that they are Italians, they are neither one nor the other and that they are both of them at the same time. It is a bit like if you were without a homeland. You don’t know well who you are, if you are Italian or French, you are both things but you are neither one or the other fully.

As mentioned previously, some second-generation interviewees clearly state that they do not know if they are Italian or French and that this unanswered question has always been at the back of their minds, creating contrasting feelings regarding their identities. This is also because abroad they are perceived to be Italian because of their surnames and in Italy because of their accent, they are perceived to be French. The quote above, apart from exhibiting the complexity of identity issues when it comes to second-generation returnees, mainly shows that identity is not static and that people can have contrasting identities at the same time. Some other interviewees from Europe state that returning to Italy can lead to increased identification with the country of migration rather than to identification with Italian culture, as suggested in the quote below:

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<sup>27</sup> ‘Our ass is between two chairs.’



**Adeline:** Yes, in France I felt Italian and here I feel French because you realise with time that your culture is what counts, you see in the end I have taught songs in French to my son, you have the whole culture and then the way of thinking. It is difficult because these are two different worlds at a thinking level even if there are only the mountains in between.

More than a third of European returnees report that their experiences in Italy actually provoke a misidentification with the country. Less than a quarter of the interviewees from Europe have one parent who is Italian. Of this, half perceive themselves to be from the country they grew up in while the other half is more ambivalent in relation to their identity and state that they felt more Italian while living abroad than in Italy but that still feel either predominantly Italian or French. Only a small minority of the overall number of interviewees felt predominantly Italian after their return.

The sense of ambiguity with regards to identity is not new among the researchers of second-generation return migrants. For example, Christou (2006a; 2006b; 2009) emphasises that Greek returnees and return migrants in general go through a process of de-essentialisation and de-territorialisation whilst trying to adjust to the country they return to. She describes how Greek-Americans felt Greek whilst in the United States and became more American in Greece. A stronger identification with the country where the returnees grew up seems to be a fairly common experience among the returnees (Tsuda 2004; Christou 2006a; 2006b; 2009; Ishikawa 2009: 62; Wessendorf 2013; De Souza 2005; Potter 2005a; 2005b; Grossutti 2005). Wessendorf (2013) argues that while abroad some second-generation Italians are either identified or identify themselves as Italian and therefore belong to a different ethnic group; however they lose this belonging once they move to Italy. Wessendorf (2013: 134) also states that ‘a new axis of difference, defined by an increasing awareness of their *Swiss mentality* emerges’ upon their return. This phenomenon is very similar to the findings of this study where for some interviewees moving to Italy means realising how much in common they have with the mentality of the country they grew up in, and how little they have in common with Italian culture. Therefore as Wessendorf (2013: 135) argues, ‘roots migrants present another example that belonging and social membership cannot be taken for

granted but that they have to be negotiated time and time again, according to context and situation’.

There seems to be an assumption, among transnationalists, that transnational practices create new forms of identities that are not linked to a sole national identity. For example Guarnizo (1997) states that Dominican migrants cannot be classified as either Dominican or American but as both. Dual, multiple and new forms of identities more in general, are assumed to emerge from transnational lives based on the cultures of the host and the home country (Glick Schiller and Fouron 1990; Castles and Miller 1993). Tsuda (2003: 258), among others, argues that in opposition to the majority of national communities which infuse a sense of belonging and loyalty, most transnational migrant communities lack a sense of consciousness. Therefore transnational migration does not always involve a movement from the national to the post-national and ‘communities are frequently unable to transcend traditional forms of national belonging’ (Tsuda 2003: 258). The lack of national identity and collective belonging seem to play a fundamental role in the complex and problematic process of social integration and integration in general for the second generation from Europe, in Italy. A sense of identification or belonging to a group is considered essential and relevant elements for social integration suggesting that not being able to clearly identify as Italian or as any other nationality is, for some interviewees, an obstacle to the overall process of integration. Similar feelings of alienation and ambiguity towards identity are experienced by second-generation migrants to Barbados who describe their identity as being suspended in mid-air between two societies (Potter and Phillips 2009: 97).

As explained in the previous section, from an objective point of view, second-generation returnees seem to be successfully socially integrated in Italy because they have Italian friends and the majority have Italian partners. However, at the same time, a sense of non-belonging underpins all types of social relationships. The two quotes below show how some of the interviewees feel that their position between two cultures and the sense of unease that comes with that, cannot be understood even by their immediate family:

**Caroline:** There are some emotions that come and go [she refers to her sense of belonging to France] and then the conflictuality that I live at home where my husband (Italian) and my son, that when I speak about a French movie or a French book, they don't wanna hear it. It's incredible my son speaks French but if he can he avoids watching a movie in French (...). It's terrible for me. I have always this sense of being split, of wanting to be somewhere else.

One of the interviewees describes her perception of being integrated in Italy in the following passage:

**Claire:** I'm integrated yes and no, I have a job, children, a house, one gets on with things but I always have this unease of being a bit outside of, not really belonging to this place (...). The thing that makes me suffer a little is that my sons don't understand, but children never understand anything, but it's ok when they will be 40 or 50 years old they will understand, my husband also doesn't really understand sometimes. I had to fight to have a satellite antenna, French channels, therefore I miss a constant link [with France] even if at home I speak French with my children, it's like I miss oxygen (...) It's a very contrasted feeling, you feel split, you are neither fish nor meat, it is exactly this, the unease.

The above quotes express a feeling of unease, common among returnees from Europe, where they never feel fully part of Italian society because they also belong to the country they grew up in.

In contrast with the returnees from Europe, returnees from Argentina predominantly state that they identify as Argentinians even if the majority of them also state that they feel a strong link with their Italian ancestors, and do identify with Italy in some respects. As the quotes below show, in the narratives of the returnees from Argentina, the sense of split identity that was predominant in the interviews with the second generation from Europe is absent, and some of them have no problem stating that they are also Italian:

**Leticia:** I'm Argentinian, for example, in my English exam they asked me to introduce myself: I'm Argentinian and I will always say it. Yes, I like also being Italian and I find it amusing it has helped me otherwise I wouldn't be here maybe. It is because I lived in Argentina for 24 years.

**Estefania:** I say it proudly that I'm Argentinian (...) my grandparents are from here and I also feel a bit Italian.

**Paula:** I'm Argentinian, yes yes, I care a lot about this, sometimes people say but you have an Italian citizenship but I only did it for as a question of comfort, it was an opportunity to stay serene, for stability.

The quotes above show that, for some interviewees, Italian nationality is seen as something practical, as an opportunity to study and work, and does not seem to instil uncomfortable questions about identity and belonging. The first two quotes show how for some interviewees Argentinian and Italian identities can coexist. This finding confirms Tizard and Phoenix's (2002) theory<sup>28</sup>, and in more general terms the post-structuralist approach that people can identify in different ways because identities are malleable, fluid and multiple (Faas 2009; 2010; Hall 1992; Caglar 1997; Mac an Ghail 1999; Rassool 1999). This finding also confirms transnationalists theories that migrants have the ability to become 'hybridised' by developing double or even multiple identities, and potentially become a 'global citizenry' (Basch et al. 1994; Glick Schiller et al. 1992; 1995).

Therefore, the majority of Argentinian returnees have a strong and secure sense of their own identity which facilitates their integration to some degree, while half of the returnees from Europe have a more ambiguous sense of identity which undermines their ability to interact socially.

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<sup>28</sup> These authors (2002) carried out a study on the racial identity of a sample of teenagers of 'mixed' parentage (race). They argued that most identify themselves as 'mixed' as a result of thinking identity as something malleable and fluid.

## **Conclusion**

More than three quarters of the interviewees from Argentina state that, despite working with Argentinians, they have Italian friends and more than one quarter of the interviewees state that they have either been, or continue to be, in a relationship with an Italian partner. All the interviewees from Europe report that they have Italian friends and all of them, with the exception of two interviewees, have been or are in a relationship with an Italian partner. These data show a very high level of social integration from both groups in question. Even though returnees from Argentina highlight more differences in social interaction with northern Italians than returnees from Europe, these differences do not represent an obstacle or raise questions about identity. These differences make the majority of the returnees from Argentina realise that they are more similar to southern Italians in the way they socialise, setting aside the question of regional origin, which is instead very important for the returnees from Europe. Half of the interviewees from Argentina believe that the value of friendship in Argentina is different (sometimes described as more important), while the vast majority of interviewees from Europe stated that the value of friendship is the same in Italy and in the country they grew up in.

The majority of the interviewees state that speaking Italian fluently is a very important factor in terms of socialising with Italians and feeling integrated in society as a whole. However fluency is seen differently between the two groups. While geographical and generational closeness generate an expectation in some interviewees from Europe that they should speak Italian perfectly, impacting on their social interactions with Italians, this does not apply for returnees from Argentina.

The chapter also addresses some aspects of the complex north/south Italian divide in relation to returnees' integration. It appears that, while the returnees from Argentina with southern Italian origins do not have any significant experience of discrimination and racism, returnees from Europe with southern Italian origins do experience this. Generational distance with southern Italian origins, together with a well-defined Argentinian identity seem to be the key factors that helped returnees from Argentina to

settle in northern Italy. This seems to be very different for the second generation with southern Italian origins; they had already experienced discrimination in the country of migration because of being Italian, and once back in Italy they are confronted with regional discrimination. Generational closeness to the place of birth of their parents, their southern Italian accents and a complex sense of identity make the experience of returnees from Europe with southern Italian origins more problematic compared to the experience of returnees from Argentina.

Returnees highlight travelling and football as important activities and topics of conversation when it comes to interacting with locals. Travelling is an important experience for returnees from Argentina because the majority of them travel extensively in Italy and also visit the village or region of origin of their ancestors. Travelling therefore assumes a symbolic role in the discovery of one's roots and is an extremely important activity in the process of integration in Italy. From a more pragmatic point of view, the 'acquisition' of the enlarged family plays a fundamental role in the process of socialisation for returnees from Argentina. In fact many interviewees do spend much of their free time socialising with their relatives. As seen in Chapter VI, the role of the family is very much appreciated by the returnees from Argentina and being able to socialise with family members represents an important aspect of their social life. This is different from the experience of the vast majority of returnees from Europe who are usually very familiar with their ancestral homeland prior moving to Italy - therefore travelling is not charged with extra meaning. Moreover, as the majority of this cohort of returnees does not come from Piedmont originally, their social life has to happen outside the family domain.

Returnees from Argentina repeatedly emphasise that football plays an important role in the popular culture of both countries. It is seen as an important ice-breaker in conversation and something which can help them relate to Italians. Second-generation returnees report football as a very common topic of conversation too, however there is a significant and notable difference in how it is experienced by returnees from Europe, *vis-a-vis* their Argentinian counterparts. In contrast with the bonding experience of the

latter group, it is experienced as a dividing factor which raises questions of identity and belonging between the European returnees and the rest of the Italian population.

Finally, this chapter examines the relation between identity and social integration with respect to returnees from Europe and Argentina living in Italy. It illustrates how some returnees from Europe face very complex identity issues which undermine their processes of integration, while returnees from Argentina report a strong sense of Argentinian collective belonging which seems to facilitate their process of integration.

## **Chapter VI: Cultural Integration**

This chapter adopts a comparative approach to examine the process and experience of cultural integration of returning migrants from Argentina and Europe to Italy. It argues that surprising commonalities in cultural traits have enabled returnees from Argentina to feel culturally comfortable and 'at home' in Italy. This is not the case for returnees from Europe, where the opposite can be observed. This is despite the fact that this cohort of interviewees was exposed to Italian culture through frequent transnational activities prior to moving to Italy. Therefore, throughout the chapter it will be underlined that while returnees from Argentina experience a process of cultural identification towards Italy, leading to a sense of belonging towards the country, the opposite seems to be true for European returnees.

The chapter starts by looking at interviewees' exposure to Italian culture prior to moving to Italy. It then examines the roles of Italian culinary tradition, food consumption, language and family in the interviewees' process of cultural integration in Italy. Subsequently the chapter analyses how different politics around migration have impacted on the identity formation of returnees. Finally to further understand the experience of interviewees, the chapter also looks at discrimination and racism and how they influence the process of identity formation prior to their move to Italy.

### **Interviewees' Italian Cultural Background**

This section shows how frequent transnational activities, which imply a high level of cultural familiarity with both the country of origin and the host country, do not necessarily imply a smooth integration process for returnees from Europe. It also demonstrates how unexpected cultural similarities and an initial loose sense of belonging to the country of origin, derived from infrequent transnational activities, can play a fundamental role in the experiences of cultural integration for returnees from Argentina.



All the returnees from Argentina speak about the influence that Italian migrants have exercised on Argentinian culture over the years. They all state that Italian influence in Argentina is everywhere and that it is so embedded in society that it is impossible to separate Italian culture from Argentinian culture. However, prior to moving to Italy, only a handful of interviewees seemed to be aware of the extent of this influence and could point out which aspects of Italian culture were transmitted and apparent in Argentinian culture. The majority of interviewees became more aware of it whilst living in Italy, when they could clearly realise which were the socio-cultural Italian aspects that have influenced Argentinian society. Many interviewees state that before moving to Italy they felt that Argentina was more culturally connected to Spain due to its colonial past and common language than to Italy and only when they moved to Italy did they start to believe the opposite. Younger interviewees are particularly surprised to discover that certain habits, words, characteristics that they had always associated with Argentinian culture actually have Italian origins.

The quote below is indicative of the shared perception among Argentinian returnees with regard to the influence of Italian culture on Argentinian society:

**Javier:** There is a characteristic that we are aware of because the South Americans from other countries always say that we are the Italians of South America, because our accent, our intonation are very much Italian, our gestures are very much Italian. Therefore one is aware of these Italian roots but when you arrive here [Italy] you say it's true we are really Italians in everything, in everything, everything, then there are some things that are Spanish of course (...) but culturally when you arrive here you realise that, yes, we are really Italians.

**Pedro:** We Argentinians we always look at Spain as the mother country of Argentina but in reality after I have been there [Spain] and here [Italy] I understand that this is not the case. The country that is both the father and the mother of Argentina is Italy.

As the above quotes suggest, Argentinians in general are conscious of a strong and pervasive Italian cultural influence in that country; however, this knowledge remains vague and abstract until they experience living in Italy. Their perception of Italian culture before migration tends to be reflected by the actual experiences of returnees in Italy. In this sense the experience of Argentinian returnees of an initial sense of connection with Italy develops into a strong identification, largely based on shared cultural traits, which in turn facilitates cultural integration.

One of the few studies that explores the experience of third-generation returnees is carried out by Tsuda (2003; 2004) when he examines the experiences of second- and third-generation Brazilian Japanese returning to Japan from Brazil. He states that before the Japanese-Brazilian returned to Japan, they felt very close culturally to their ancestral homeland. However, upon their return to Japan many of them are disappointed because they are perceived as foreign and are not accepted as true Japanese by the Japanese who were born and reared in Japan. Tsuda (2004: 140) states that many returnees in his study experienced feelings of ethnic disorientation caused by the dislocations of migration and because they discover that they have, in fact, assimilated and adopted much from Brazilian culture. This contrasts strongly with the results gathered from research on the returnees from Argentina in this study, where the discovery of relatively unexpected cultural similarities, forges a process of identification with Italy to the degree that it becomes the recognised ancestral homeland. This finding, in fact, is not only dissimilar from Tsuda's study. It is quite unique in the literature of return migration where returnees are usually disappointed upon their return and start questioning their identities. Studies carried out by Huseby-Darvas (2004) on the relationships between Hungarian migrants and their homeland, Stefansson (2004) on Bosnians refugees going back home and Christou (2006a; 2006b) on Greek return migrants, are just some examples of this in the literature.

On the other hand, the findings that I describe below, concerning the second generation, are much more comparable to the current literature on return migration. The discovery of cultural connection with Italy is not shared by returnees from Europe who, in contrast

to the returnees from Argentina, had a transnational experience of Italy while growing up. This enabled them to have direct exposure to Italian culture on a regular basis.

Culinary tradition and food consumption, the role of family, and language are the predominant aspects that interviewees from Argentina and from Europe mention when they talk about culture. These cultural aspects are discussed in turn below:

### *Culinary Tradition*

Despite being from different Italian regional backgrounds, the majority of the interviewees from Argentina were familiar with some Italian culinary traditions such as the *bagna cauda* (a traditional dish from Piedmont), prior moving to Italy, without necessarily knowing the origin of the dish. This is interesting in the context of Italy, where people from different regions are not necessarily familiar with the traditional food of other regions. Therefore, it is extraordinary to notice returnees from third-, fourth- and fifth-generations being familiar with them. This underlines the influence of Italian culinary culture, and of Italian cultural in general, on Argentinian culture.

**Pablo:** Here in Turin little things surprised me, here you eat the *bagna cauda* which is a typical dish from the Piedmont region. If you go to Milan and you ask what is the *bagna cauda*, nobody can answer you but if you go to my home in Argentina I eat it.

The discovery of the origin of some Italian dishes, commonly eaten in Argentina without an awareness of their origin, is appreciated and surprising:

**Alejandro:** In these years that I have been travelling around Italy, I discovered that many dishes that belong to our Argentinian culture have Italian origins and it's nice to discover the specific origin of some dishes, in some cities. Some dishes in Argentina have the name in dialect of the town where they are originally from but not in Italian, for example, the *farinata* (traditional dish from Liguria ) was invented in Genoa in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and it was called *Fainà* and

in Argentina is called *Fainà*, in dialect not in Italian, and in this way there are many words, this is very interesting as a phenomenon.

This quote is an example of how some Italian cultural aspects were transmitted from generation to generation until finally becoming Argentinian. Over time, the perception of origin of some common dishes changes from being regional Italian dishes to common Argentinian national dishes. Schneider (2000: 46) states that 'Italian ethnicity in contemporary Argentina has little significance of its own: it always has to be interpreted in the context of other markers of identity, since the symbols by which it is represented (for example particularly food and fashion styles) have become an integral part of a more general *porteño*<sup>29</sup> culture'.

The discovery of food is not mentioned in any of the interviews with the returnees from Europe. This is probably because the vast majority of returnees from Europe do not come from the Piedmont region and therefore it is most likely that they were unfamiliar with its traditional regional food prior to their move to Italy. This is despite the fact that, in general, returnees from Europe have had a direct encounter with Italian food and with the food of their region of origin in particular, either in their daily lives through their parents cooking or during their holiday periods in Italy.

More than half of the interviewees from Argentina have origins in the Piedmont region where they lived at the time of the interview. For many of them, the discovery of the origin of some dishes represents a further cultural link between Argentina and Italy in general and more specifically with their regions of origin - Cordoba and Piedmont.

In the interviews, a couple of returnees from Europe mention that they miss some of the typical products from the country where they grew up, and their way of cooking was not strictly Italian but had some influence from the country where they had spent their youth, as mentioned in the quote below:

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<sup>29</sup> From Buenos Aires.

**Arielle:** Things that are there, some food and at this point also my children when we go there we then come back with the fridge bag full since we always went to France, before we used to go three times, for Easter, for the summer holidays and for Christmas (...) therefore since we went there and ate there they got used to some food and now when I go I buy them [those products]. Before we used to go to the border to go shopping.

It is interesting to note that while in the stories of the returnees from Argentina commonalities in the cooking cultures are presented above differences, the opposite happens for the second generation from Europe. This shows that while the majority of returnees from Argentina go through a process of identification with Italy, the exact opposite happens with the majority of returnees from Europe.

#### *Food Consumption*

Returnees from Argentina not only demonstrate familiarity with Italian cuisine but also discover a similarity in the way food is consumed in Argentina and in Italy as underlined in the following quotes:

**Leticia:** Over there [in Argentina] we all eat together, my dad with all his brothers, with all my cousins, with long tables (...) every time we go [to their grandparent's house] we are a minimum of thirty. In fact we still do it (...) every weekend, more or less every Sunday we went to eat with my granddad, we used to make a *grigliata* [barbeques] for sure in the summer and if it was cold we ate in a enormous dining room, the house was enormous, it's about 100 years old now (...) the big kitchen, I remember some enormous pots, and my grandma used to spend the whole week making filled pasta making *ravioli* or *spaghetti* (...) therefore we always eat pasta first, we used to get there at about 12pm and leave around 5pm. We made the most of our trip, spending time with our cousins, chatting, playing. It was very nice. I have many nice memories of those lunches.

The above narrative uncovers a sense of nostalgia for the past, with the interviewee remembering their childhood and the importance of traditional Italian food and family.

Many interviewees stated that they understand the dynamics within their families much better through their Italian experience. The quotes below refer specifically to the habit of eating together:

**Luis:** By being here, I understood the reasons for some things that my grandma did, why she used to cook so much and why the love for the house, everything clean, these things are from here [Italy], these habits come from here and also Italians are very open, we [Argentinians] too and also in this -how do you say?- we were influenced [by the Italians].

**Leticia:** Yes, you start seeing that many things we have were made by Italians *bueno* like eating all together, I don't know the salami, all these things that you make here, they are made there, I understand a lot of our habits. [This experience] helped me to understand why my family got together to eat every Sunday when a friend of mine didn't do it, for example, and it is like Italians have a nice relationship with their families. I haven't seen this in other European countries, and I also understand now why I have this relationship with my family.

Returnees from Europe on the other hand do not emphasise the ritual of eating together as an aspect of Italian culture. Food and consumption of food is also perceived to be different in Italy and in the other European countries. One of the interviewees states that while she liked the food that her grandfather used to give her during the summer holidays, she did not like the fact that food was eaten very late:

**Anne:** Myself, my sister and my mother detested that place, we only loved my granddad, he brought us in the field to see the almonds, he loved us, he gave us to eat *focaccia* and *mozzarella*. We liked the cherry tomatoes, but we didn't like their way of being, or their mentality, their customs it was shocking for us (...) they had timetables that weren't ours, you know that in Italy you eat at 2pm, you

go to sleep, then you eat at 9pm. Where I was born [Lorraine-France], it's very German, we were very different, therefore for us it was a shock.

The above quote shows that the discovery of cultural origin not only helps the process of integration and identification with Italy, but also serves as an instrument to understand the country where the interviewees grew up, in this case Argentina. Therefore, this discovery seems to be not only useful to further understanding Italian culture, but also to understanding Argentinian culture. On the other hand, there is much less similarity in food consumption between the country European returnees grew up in and Italy, compared to that between Argentina and Italy. This further underlines the cultural difference between Italy and these countries.

### *Language*

The Italian language is also a cultural discovery. The similarity between Spanish-Argentinian (*lunfardo*<sup>30</sup> mainly) and Italian languages is a great discovery for many interviewees from Argentina. Many interviewees have in fact never realised that many words that they thought to be specific to Argentina come from Italian words. The following quote shows the relation between the two languages clearly:

**Antonio:** I didn't know this before coming here that there are some words that you look up in the Spanish dictionary and you can't find them: *gamba* for example, for us *gamba* is leg but if you try to find the word in the Spanish dictionary, it doesn't exist, it is *pierna* and I thought ah this word comes from here [Italy] and I start understanding the origins of these words. This has surprised me, and I liked to discover it. For example *lavoro* - we [Argentiniens] say 'I go to *laburo*' but *laburo* doesn't exist in the Spanish dictionary, *laburo* comes from *lavoro*.

The majority of the interviewees originally from Piedmont had been exposed to the sound of the Piemontese dialect at a certain point in their lives. Returnees with origins

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<sup>30</sup> This language mainly spoken in Buenos Aires is a mixture of Castilian and Italian words and expressions.

in parts of Italy other than Piedmont also reported some experiences of various dialects from their youth in Argentina.

**Antonio:** I remember my granny that she shouted a strange language that afterwards I was told it was the Piemontese dialect. She used to say bad words in something that I didn't understand (...) and when we did something wrong she shouted at us, in something that I didn't understand, but I knew she was angry.

None of the interviewees from Argentina could speak or understand dialect fluently before moving to Italy. However some of them knew some words or expressions. One fifth-generation interviewee says that when she went to visit some of her relatives in Piedmont, she heard one of her cousins singing the same lullaby that her grandmother used to sing to her when she was a child. She recalls this event to underline how much of the regional tradition has been transmitted from generation to generation:

**Luz:** That was also amazing that last time I went, two months ago, to my relatives, the daughter of a Capone sang to his daughter the same song that my grandma used to sing to me; then I started crying (...) so many generations later she sang the same song that my grandma from my mother side used to sing to me (...) then you come here in Piedmont on the other side of the world and they still sing it.

As such, language operates as a further facilitator of cultural identification and in this case assists with the integration of returnees from Argentina. In the case of either shared aspects of Argentinian and Italian, or a nostalgic orientation towards the dialects, these returnees find in language a point of identification and belonging.

Returnees from Europe, once again, had a very different experience to returnees from Argentina. The majority of them were fluent in either one of the Italian dialects, predominantly from southern Italy, or in Italian itself prior to moving to Italy. Therefore, for those who spoke Italian, language was not really a discovery. However, for those who only spoke a dialect from a region other than Piedmont prior moving to



Italy, it was a traumatic experience once in Turin. Some of the returnees were surprised by the difference between Italian and the dialects, and between dialects. Not speaking *Piemontese* was a further signal of difference and of not belonging to that specific region. The issue of dialects was also discussed in the Chapter V.

### *Family*

More than half of the returnees from Argentina state that the role of the family is as important in Argentina as it is in Italy. This is another cultural aspect that interviewees from Argentina underline, showing the similarity between Italian and Argentinian cultures. Strong family links are seen from many interviewees' point of view as something positive in their lives. The number of siblings, cousins and extended family more generally, together with the time spent with them, is perceived as an essential and enriching aspect of their lives. However, a minority of the interviewees from Argentina state that family is less important in Italy than in Argentina. The quote below demonstrates that this is perceived as something negative:

**Beatriz:** We try to spend much more time within the family, I can't speak about the south, but here in the north I see that there isn't so much of this, of the family, I see that anyway each person does something for himself or herself, the father a bit here, the mother a bit there, these children that they make do one thousand physical activities after school to keep them busy.

In contrast, strong family structures are seen as an obstacle towards independence and autonomous life by the majority of returnees from Europe. Some of these returnees are annoyed at the amount of time that one is expected to spend with their partners' family. Some of the interviewees also perceive their in-laws to be quite invasive into their private family life, creating disruption and tensions. The quotes below show how family ties are perceived by some interviewees of the second generation:

**Brigitte:** It's different, very different, how can I say, they are rather intrusive but if you manage to limit them I would say that it's ok but they are intrusive enough

therefore it's difficult. My husband is an only child therefore even more so. For me it was something that was difficult to face because if I call my parents they come but if I don't ask anything we are in touch but that's it. Here it's much, much closer [the relationship]. I had to put some limits, to clarify etc. We always try to limit, now I can manage the situation better otherwise it would have turned into a crisis.

**Catherine:** They [her relatives] are suffocating

**M.P.:** In which way suffocating?

**Catherine:** Who are you going out with? Where are you going to? Why are you not married yet? When are you going to get married? [According to them] I'm therefore strange because my idea of life doesn't not concise with their.

Wessendorf's (2007: 1095) study shows that her returnees in Italy from Switzerland also found it difficult to adjust to the family structure in Italy where 'young roots migrants do not expect to be subjected to strong social control' exercised by family and neighbours.

Another aspect of the family that is often mentioned when talking about young people is the concept of *mammone*<sup>31</sup> (*mama's boy*). Second-generation interviewees often mention that they do not understand how young people in employment in Italy prefer to stay at home with his or her family until they get married. Interviewees state that this would be totally unacceptable in the culture where they grew up in:

**Claire:** When you are 35 or 40 the fact to still live with your parents and pretend that [it's ok that] your Mum washes your shirts, makes food for you, without you helping to pay bills at home, the concept of *mammone* for me it's unbearable (...) when I was working I met so many people, 'I'm 37 years old, I work for this company and I live with my mum', and then I realise that many people live at home with their parents. In France the mentality is completely different, with

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<sup>31</sup> The word derives from *mamma* = mom. It is used to refer to adults who keep relying on their parents and particularly on their mothers.

your first salary you leave (...) of course today the situation is very different because of the crisis and of the unemployment rate<sup>32</sup>.

Sobotka and Toulemon's (2008: 90) demographic research on changing family and partnership behaviour across Europe shows that 'young adults ('mama's boys') in Italy and Spain often prefer to stay in the parental home, even when they have gained economic independence'. Dalla Zuanna (2001) argues that while the postponed departure of children from the parental home in southern European countries often reflects the precarious working situation faced by young people, coupled with limited affordable housing and prolonged education, it also reflects a problematic unwillingness among young adults to take adult responsibilities.

The sentence below is from one of the interviewees from Europe who by stating that she is a Swiss citizen implies a way of being in which human relations are more distanced, in comparison with the Italian ones. In this sentence, a need for independence from the acquired family is stressed as the only way to survive in an Italian family structure:

**Aurore:** It's difficult when one enters into a family, I attempted to keep distance because I'm *Swiss* 100 per cent, I keep distance, the habit of addressing people informally [in the second person] used to irritate me. In Lausanne, people refer to people of my age with the second person plural. I like this because it creates a bit of distance. I had to keep my space and personality (...) what irritated me was that we had to go for Easter, for the Saints, and every weekend to the countryside and we had to stay in the big house (with her husband's parents). There was no intimacy with my husband any longer and I didn't like this.

It is important to notice that the different role of family here may reflect the different role that family assumes in different countries. Family structures in Argentina, as in Italy, are very important in the context of precarious welfare systems that rely heavily on family structures and much less on state support. This is very different in some of the

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<sup>32</sup> The increasing phenomenon of young adults living with their parents is often referred as *génération Tanguy* in France. Valdanbrini (2014) asserts that this phenomenon is a consequence of the international financial crisis.

European countries where it is not the family but social welfare structures that are expected to provide in case of need.

Because of the overlaps between Argentinian and Italian cultures, half of the interviewees state that when they arrived in Italy they felt at home:

**Beatriz:** Argentinians have many things of the Italian [way of life] and therefore you manage to fit in, only a few Argentinians don't manage to fit in the society [Italian] while it's difficult for a Peruvian, a Romanian, for others it's difficult. This means that if an Argentinian manages, it's because he has a lot of the Italian [in them already].

Many of the interviewees from Argentina underline that there is a very strong similarity between Argentina and Italy:

**Paula:** One doesn't realise the relationship, also the cultural relationship, there are so many things, the idea of family particularly I think there is more relationship with the south of Italy than with northern Italy because here in Turin, I have many friends from Sicily, friends from Puglia, Neapolitans, and they tell you about Sundays spent with their families, this is something very important for the Argentinian, Sunday is made to spent time with your family (...) and it's normal, it's traditional in our culture but then you realise that it is normal there [in Argentina] because it's taken from another culture (...) when you live there you don't realise the relation with other places but when you travel you realise it and you say we have taken this from here this from there. It's nice to realise it.

Almost half of the returnees from Europe, on the other hand, find the first period in Italy to be very challenging and difficult:

**Anne:** I used to go back to France every fifteen days because Italy anguished me, it was a difficult impact, I used to go back to my parents' house and say: 'but Italians are strange'.

**Adeline:** When I arrived in Italy, for the first three years, my only desire was to go back to France.

Overall, returnees from Argentina draw on shared cultural traits to better understand who they are and where they come from and, as such, can identify with Italian culture while at the same time having a strong sense of their own Argentinian cultural identity. In contrast, returnees from Europe, despite having lived a transnational life between Italy and the country they grow up in, find it difficult to adapt in Italy since they find some of Italian habits to be backward.

### **Different Ways of Conceiving Identity**

Cultural identity and ethnic affiliation are also structured by the migration politics adopted by different countries. In this respect, the concept of bright versus blurred boundaries, as elaborated by Alba (2005), can be helpful in understanding the experience of our returnees from Europe and from Argentina in the country they grew up in. Alba (2005: 20) argues in fact that bright boundaries characterise the European context for migrant groups. He looks at the second generation of Muslim groups in some northern European countries, including France; however his analysis can also be applied to the experience of other ethnic minority groups. He argues that boundaries are critical to ethnic construction and the nature of assimilation. Alba (2005) believes that the nature of the boundary shapes how ethnic individuals narrow the social distance with the mainstream. He believes that if the boundary is bright like in France there is not much choice left to the migrant other than to conform and fully assimilate to the host country while the boundary remains as it is. This seems to be the case for the second-generation migrants from Europe interviewed specifically for the interviewees from France who felt that Italian culture and the Italian way of life was not complementary to French culture but rather in opposition to it, as underlined in previous chapters. In fact, returnees from Europe who were interviewed, often stated that their

siblings are 'real French people' underlining the fact that they have a very different mentality to Italians and they have accomplished an individual level assimilation where they move from one group to another. Zolberg and Long (1999) call this phenomenon boundary crossing while Milza (quoted in Audenino and Tirabassi 2008) uses the word 'transparency' to describe the loss by migrants of the visibility which characterises them as foreigners. The returnees from Europe do not fit into this category because while living in the 'host' country, they never felt fully assimilated.

The majority of returnees from Argentina acknowledge the complexity of Argentinian history which is the result of a mixture of migration trends as explained in the following quote:

**Alejandro:** In Argentina and in Uruguay the question of identity is very complex. An Italian can say 'I'm Italian' and then he can say 'I'm Neapolitan', for example, but in Argentina the [identity] theme is much more complex because Argentinian roots get lost they are French, Italian, Spanish, Peruvian etc.

In this context Alba's (2005) theory of *blurred boundaries* is very useful. Alba (2005: 25) believes that *boundary blurring* occurs when the mainstream culture and identity are permeable and include aspects of different ethnic groups. Even though Alba in his article refers to US migration history, when he talks about boundary blurring, parallels can be found with Argentinian migration history. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, immigration in Argentina was wanted and desired. Political leaders hoped that immigration from Europe would 'raise the ethnic level and mentalities of Argentine *criollos*' (Luna 2000: 95) and the Argentinian Constitution is very progressive towards the rights of immigrants as explained in Chapter II.

From the narratives of the returnees from Argentina it transpires that when they identify as Argentinian, they automatically identify as Italian, Spanish and all the other nationalities that have influenced Argentinian history. They are conscious that Argentinian identity is influenced by different nationalities, that Argentinian culture

encompasses several cultures, predominantly Spanish and Italian. In contrast, returnees from Europe present the culture of the country they are originally from and the culture of the country they grew up in as utterly different.

Some interviewees state that when they were living in Argentina they felt they were in a borrowed country and they felt the need to get to know their origins:

**Miguel:** In Argentina people have different origins. It's difficult, you feel a bit from everywhere because at the end culture is a bit borrowed, football, cars, traditional festivals, religion, it is all a bit borrowed, we were taken a bit by the Spanish, the Italians.

**Pilar:** My theory is that we live in a country on loan. In Argentina even if we are fourth generation we always remember that we are not from there (...) and then we have to find our roots somewhere (...) because in the collective imaginary Italy is there, at least in the Italian or Spanish families.

It is interesting that returnees from Argentina, rather than Europe, are more concerned with researching and exploring their ancestral homelands.

This can be considered a type of 'roots migration' but contextualised in a different way from Wessendorf (2013), because the second-generation subjects whom the sociologist studied are very familiar with their country of origin and for some of them it is a reaction to transnational life, while for some of the interviewees involved in this study from Argentina, it is a totally new discovery.

Only one interviewee from Argentina states that even if she classifies herself as Argentinian, she does not identify herself with Argentinian culture. Her explanation is the following:

**Carmen:** I was born in Argentina, I'm Argentinian, even if I'm different from the other Argentinians, I feel different because Argentinian culture is very nationalist, at least my generation. I think this is because of the years of military

dictatorship where the idea was injected into society that Argentina was the best country, a nationalist message (...) I don't identify with Argentinian culture, I don't identify with the Argentinian, I don't know why.

It is also important to note that those interviewees, who spoke about their split and conflicted identity, grew up in France, which has historically adopted an assimilationist approach towards immigration. Some of the interviewees appeared to be aware, to some extent, of these politics because of the impact they have had on their lives on a daily basis. The sentences below show how some interviewees were disturbed when they realised the extent of the assimilation politics, including being given Francophone names:

**Adeline:** Since I didn't have a French citizenship I had a residency permit. At the age of 18, I discovered that I was Adeline because at the age of 18 I could choose whether to acquire French nationality without losing my Italian one. In practice they had Francesised all the names from Adelina to Adeline, my brother who was Sebastiano it became Sebastian without asking our opinion. When I came to Italy I had an Italian identity card Adeline Rizzo and one French Rizzo Adeline.

### **Racism and Integration**

In order to further understand interviewees' processes of cultural identification and misidentification upon their return to Italy, it is worth mentioning the experiences of racism and discrimination that shaped their cultural identity, prior to their moving to Italy. Racism is a process 'whereby social groups categorise other groups as different and inferior, on the basis of phenotypical characteristics, cultural markers or national origins' (Castles 1996: 31). Lentin and McVeigh (2006) argue that it would be a mistake to consider racism in terms of individual prejudice and that instead it should be considered in political terms. They argue that it is impossible to understand and contextualise racism, without analysing its relation to the state. Basing their arguments on notions of the 'racial state' and 'biopolitics' elaborated by Goldberg and Foucault



respectively, Lentin and McVeigh (2006) argue that all modern nation-states are 'racist states'. Lentin and McVeigh (2006: 10) posits that 'in a racist state the totalising control over the individual is enforced by the state in its efforts to render the population under its jurisdiction racially coherent through, among other mechanisms, constitutions, welfare nationalism, demography and statistics, border and immigration control, all leading to a marked rupture between those who belong and those who do not'. They explain that 'biopolitics regulates the space of immigration and race' and that the law is essential in modern state formation in 'promoting racial categorization and identification and shaping national identities through legislating on immigration controls and citizenship rights' (Lentin and McVeigh 2006: 12).

Rinauro (2009: 3-4) argues that illegal migration to France was only born as a consequence of the consolidation of the nation-state and the beginning of mass migration at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The new concept of the state, which promoted the concept of racial homogeneity, was implemented through the *ius sanguis* criteria of selecting migrants (Rinauro 2009). On the other hand, European migrants at the time of the Argentinian constitution of the nation-state, were very welcome in Argentina, who had a *ius soli* basis of selecting migrants<sup>33</sup> (De La Torre and Mendoza 2007). Devoto (2005) argues that apart from some historical periods such as the Peron era, the absence of strong Argentinian nationalist politics during the first century of the Argentinian state helped to avoid tension between what it meant to be Italian or Argentinian for Italian migrants arriving in Argentina, and for their descendants. It seems therefore that what constitutes the soul and the body of the Argentinian state is 'Europeaness', while 'Frenchness' was the core of the modern French state. To further examine the concepts of biopolitics, the racial state and the racist state is beyond the scope of this section, however it was necessary to specify that the term racism, in the context of this study, does not merely refer to individual actions.

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<sup>33</sup> It can be argued that the Argentinian state, through its laws, has been very inclusive towards European migration, but has discriminated against indigenous populations from surrounding countries. However, De La Torre and Mendoza (2007: 48) point out that in 2003 Argentinian President Nestor Kirchner introduced legislation 'that reduced the restrictions on immigration from other South American countries and guaranteed access to public health and education for both documented and undocumented immigrants'.

This section will argue that the experience of Italian returnees from Europe has been influenced by forms of racism, both in institutional and non-institutional settings, which have had an impact on their identities. The opposite can be argued for the returnees from Argentina.

The vast majority of returnees from Europe state that whilst growing up they were exposed to several forms of racism. Many interviewees of this cohort recall at least one episode of racism often located in school which involved teachers or school friends calling Italians with offensive words such as *rital*<sup>34</sup>, *spaghetti*, or *macaroni* for example.

The experience of racism in schools, through name calling, is common among migrants' experiences as Wang (2013) points out when talking about the experience of first- and second-generation Hong Kong Chinese in Ireland. The following quote is an example of this:

**Agathe:** When I was in my first year of medium<sup>35</sup> class I had a foolish teacher that resented Italians, very racist, she resented Italians because they supported the Germans during World War II. It was the only ugly episode of this phase of my life in France. She used to teach French and since she couldn't give me bad marks she used to say '*Je ti ritale*' these Italians that came to France, they did not deserve to come to France (...) and I used to say '*but one day I will return to live in Italy*'. It used to hurt me this disregard that she had towards Italians, it was almost a challenge for me to show her that yes, I was Italian, but I was good and I was better than the French [students].

The quote above shows that some interviewees from the second generation react to racism by reinforcing their Italian identity. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) call this phenomenon 'reactive ethnicity'<sup>36</sup>, while Child (1943) calls this process 'in-group reaction'.

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<sup>34</sup> Derogatory word used to refer to Italian migrants in France and Belgium.

<sup>35</sup> Medium school: in between primary and secondary schools.

<sup>36</sup> 'Ethnicity encompasses solidarities based on common culture, common belief systems and practices (religions), and common racial features, all of which are inheritable attributes' (Esman 2004: 28).

However, as Wessendorf (2013: 61) underlines in her study, a sense of belonging and identity are not only fostered by discrimination but that sometimes they are actively created by second-generation people through the celebration of an Italian subculture. This subculture is based on lifestyle, such as supporting an Italian football team, eating Italian food and meeting in Italian associations, as the quote below demonstrates:

**Sebastien:** When I was a child I was always fascinated with everything that was Italian, and with what he [his father] identified himself with, for example cars, just think that in France many [Italian] migrants' children buy Italian cars: Fiat, Alfa Romeo. They cannot afford Ferrari but I remember all the friends I used to go out with bought Italian cars. They did not buy French or German cars, they bought Italian cars. Then they all had bangers that rusted but they bought Italian cars and therefore there was this feeling of belonging, you are in France but you belong somewhere else.

Esman (2004: 27-28) states that 'the need for belonging, to be anchored to a group for security, economic survival, social fellowship, and the fulfilment of spiritual aspirations is what motivates group affiliation and gives rise to collective identities'. Some interviewees mention that even though they were called names, this did not affect them too much because they, the ethnic minority, were often in the majority in classrooms and in the areas where they grew up. However, in the narratives of the second generation it is often mentioned that the level of racism experienced by their parents was more significant than the racism experienced by the second generation. The following quote illustrates this clearly:

**Adeline:** They made fun of us also in school. It is obvious that you felt different because they call you *macaroni*, *spaghetti*, but in the end because we were so many, we were the majority, since in Lorraine there were many immigrants, we didn't suffer too much but maybe my dad did working in the factory. You know, they make you do the worst jobs, they treat you badly, he never said anything but expressed it [his anger] in another way at home.

However, not all interviewees answered questions on racism in the same way and some interviewees were ashamed to be Italian instead, and did not want to be associated with Italy and Italianness. Child (1943) refers to this phenomenon of wanting to be part of the majority and rejecting attachment to the minority immigrant group as ‘rebel reaction’. The quote below is an example of this:

**Anne:** I suffered because I was angry at my dad because I was Italian. I found it difficult to deal with racism. I was angry because I had to carry my name with me for the rest of my life. The name is a label, you can't change it. I know many people that have changed their names, they made them sound French. Many have taken off the last vowel of their name in order to integrate because racism is prevalent [in France].

None of the returnees from Argentina state that they were racially discriminated against while growing up in Argentina proving that the integration of people of Italian descent was relatively unproblematic. Devoto (2005), discussing the successful integration of Italian descendants in Argentina, states that the expression ‘Italo-Argentinian’ does not make sense when speaking about them. This is because the idea of being a second - generation migrant coincides with being first-generation Argentinian in the eyes of most Argentinians. Devoto (2005) argues that the majority of Italian migrants’ children and grandchildren in Argentina consider themselves to be Argentinians, and almost none of them would classify themselves as second- or third-generation Italian. Therefore the starting generational point is located after the migration and not before.

It is interesting to note that when interviewees from Europe speak about contemporary racism in Italy, against the so called *extra-comunitario*,<sup>37</sup> some of them state that Italians are very racist:

**Celine:** It might be only an impression but I find that the average Italian is very racist.

**M.P.:** More than an average French person?

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<sup>37</sup> People that come from outside the European Union Area. This word is often used in a derogatory, depreciating manner.

**Celine:** Yes, Le Pen<sup>38</sup> scored a huge percentage therefore this shows that there are racists in France but in daily life here [Italy], people are still not used to a black waiter (...) I wouldn't say that in France people are not racist but they go beyond the skin colour.

Returnees from Argentina, on the other hand, state that Italians are racist while at the same time they emphasise that Argentinians can also be racist. This is in contrast with the answers of some of the returnees from Europe who believe that Italians are more racist than their European counterparts. This is interesting, because as illustrated above, the majority of interviewees from Europe have experienced racism first-hand in the country they grew up in. Returnees from Europe and from France in particular seem to have internalised the discourse during their youth that France is superior to Italy, probably as a consequence of the French republican assimilationist discourse, as explained in Chapter II. In fact, the second-generation migrants state that France's response to immigration was more successful and inclusive in comparison with the Italian response.

Returnees from Argentina both fall under the *extra-comunitario* category and under the category of Italian returnees. However, the majority of interviewees from Argentina state that they do not feel racialised as *extra-comunitari* but rather as Argentinians/Italians and they experience this on a daily basis. Returnees from Argentina acknowledge the fact that technically speaking they are also *extra-comunitario*, however they explain that they cannot compare their experiences to the 'real' *extra-comunitario* who do not have Italian ancestors and are discriminated against on a daily basis. This is because they have a blood relation and a very strong connection with Italy. The right to citizenship, in this case, seems to justify the right to reside in Italy. This seems to confirm Soysal's (2000) idea that even if citizenship is only the official aspect of belonging it impacts on the formation of migrants' identities as well as Alba's (2005) point that citizenship is a fundamental aspect because not only does it confer political rights but it also affects the sense of membership, as the following quote demonstrates:

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<sup>38</sup> Jean Marie Le Pen, French politician who is famous for his right wing, conservative policies towards migrants.

**Claire:** There is a difference among ourselves [her and her brothers and sisters], because the two older ones, myself and my brother, were born in Italy. We have always known Italian while the youngest two, that were born there, are totally French, my little brother even did military service in France as a French person, and he and my sister both have French citizenship. Myself and my oldest brother have Italian citizenship instead and therefore we are very different.

Alba's (2005) study based on the assimilation of Muslims in some European countries, shows that although prior to 1993 and after 1998 citizenship in France has been acquired passively (automatically granted at age 18), there exists confusion over citizenship status among second-generation migrants. This finding was confirmed in my study where a few returnees from France were confused on their entitlements to French citizenship particularly if they were born in Italy prior to moving to France. In this study, a few of the interviewees state that they were unaware for a long time that they were also legally French.

Many interviewees from Argentina mentioned that it would be very common in their conversations with Italians for the Italians to mention that they have a relative or some friends who migrated to Argentina and therefore this shared ethnic identity seems to help create a commonality from the very beginning. The quotes below demonstrate this link between Italy and Argentina in terms of its migration history:

**Miguel:** There is a link between Italy and Argentina. Here everyone, maybe not everyone but a great majority of the population, has friends or relatives, a granddad that lives in Argentina. Therefore people here are very connected to Argentina.

**Paula:** I have to say that Italians are in contradiction with other nationalities, when you say 'I'm Argentinian' the Italian treats you well, being Argentinian for us, it's a great advantage (...) in Italy you are considered more of a son, you are Italian. I don't know the reason, it might be part of the history, from something that goes way back.

The quotes also reflect what the majority of the returnees from Argentina interviewed believed, and therefore that Italians perceived Argentinian to be ‘basically’ Italian, showing how Argentinian identity overlaps with the Italian one.

It is important to specify that all the interviewees that participated in this study from Argentina come from a white background (some of them privileged) and their experience might have been very different if they were from a different background as the following quote suggests:

**Miguel:** The integration with the Italians has been normal, we haven’t suffered, I haven’t suffered. I think that all people are punished in all parts of the world because of the colour of their skin at the end. I don’t think that the Italians are (...) also in Argentina, Bolivians, Peruvians are discriminated against, therefore it’s normal that it’s like that, I didn’t want to say normal, I don’t say that this is a nice thing and it’s shameful even to say that - but it’s the truth. I think it’s unfair to say that Italians are xenophobic, because they are no more and no less than other nationalities, everyone is like this. Maybe the colour of my skin helped me to integrate but it was normal for me. Italians have never closed the door to me (...) I’m very grateful to Italy for this. I know that my dark skinned Argentinian colleagues suffer from this [discrimination], it’s also fair to say it, but I know that it happens here but it could have happened in any other part of the world.

If, on the one hand, the narratives from returnees from Argentina do not mention any physical difference between themselves and Italians, some interviewees from the second generation did. The following quotes demonstrate that in France, there was an underlying racial discourse in which white skin was superior to dark skin:

**Agathe:** We used to play with some French children and I remember there was one who had very fair skin. It was traumatic for me because I had dark skin and I used to wash with bleach thinking that my hands would become fair like hers.

The quote below also shows that some of the returnees from Europe feel physically different from the citizens of the country they grew up in. Race is not usually a predominant issue among second-generation European migrants, not only in this study but also in the studies carried out on the assimilation of the second-generation Europeans in the United States, as seen in Chapter II.

**Adeline:** Let's say that because of my blood [ancestral origins] I feel Italian, in my head I feel French, even in my body I feel Italian because also my features [physiognomy] but the way I think, my culture is more French.

Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter IV, the theme of racism becomes further complicated when it comes to returnees from Europe with southern Italian origins, who have relocated to northern Italy. While some of them state that they feel personally offended by racist comments towards southern Italians, others do not identify with the south of Italy and even if they condemn these racist comments, they state that they do not take them personally:

**M.P.:** How do you feel when you hear something about the south of Italy?

**Claire:** I feel irritated but not because I'm southern Italian but I get irritated when I hear people saying 'these shitty southern Italians'. The usual horrific things that you hear around, I feel irritated but not because I'm originally from the south of Italy but because in that moment I look at the situation as an outsider almost as if I was French and I think but why you [north and south Italians], you are from the same country, Italy, why do you hate each other so much. I believe that this is one of the biggest, if not the biggest, Italian problem.

This account is also a personal account of a returnee from France with southern Italian origins:

**Adeline:** Inside you feel a bit hurt, because you say 'these people worked their asses off' they left Italy and then they criticise them just for the sake of it without knowing the life that a person can have down there [southern Italy]. You



have to put yourself in someone else's shoes to understand what they went through, what they suffered, what it means to leave your country.

In contrast with the finding above, where returnees from Argentina state that Italians perceived them to be Argentinian but where an overlap between Italian and Argentinian culture is revealed, the majority of the interviewees from Europe interviewed state that they feel that Italians perceived them as either French (particularly when they talk Italian with a French accent) or as southern Italian (when they spoke Italian with a southern Italian accent); a French-Italian identity does not seem to be contemplated from either side. This implies that belonging to two or more nations in terms of identity is not yet common in Italy. This seems to corroborate with the finding of Andall (2002: 389) who states, after having conducted a study in Milan on second-generation African-Italians in Milan, that 'being black and being Italian are still seen as mutually exclusive categories in Italy'. Of course, the ethnicity element is fundamental in Andall's (2002) study, however the general finding on the exclusivity of Italian identity seems to be relevant also in the context of this study research<sup>39</sup>.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter investigated the experiences of cultural adaptations among return migrants from Argentina and Europe to Italy. It firstly explored the familiarity with Italian culture that interviewees had prior to moving to Italy. It showed that while the majority of interviewees from Argentina were not aware of the extent to which Argentinian culture had been influenced historically by Italian culture, and discovered that many Argentinian cultural habits come from Italy, returnees from Europe found themselves in a different position. In fact, they find it difficult to adapt to Italian culture which they often considered to be backward. Therefore while the returnees from Argentina seem to go through a process of cultural identification towards Italy, which makes them feel

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<sup>39</sup> The concept of Italian identity is quite complex. As a result of the history of the country (Italy was re-unified in 1861) local and regional identities are often stronger than the national identity. According to Gabaccia, because of this lack of national cohesion, it is more accurate to talk of 'Italies inside Italy' and 'Italies outside Italy' (Gabaccia 2000), than to refer to a single unitary 'Italy'.

more integrated into the country and culture, returnees from Europe seem to go through the opposite process.

It emerges from the narratives that the unexpected language similarities, culinary and eating habits and role of the family have facilitated the Argentinian returnees who were interviewed to feel more comfortable in Italy. This is quite the opposite for returnees from Europe. The chapter argues that generational distance and retaining loose contacts with their 'homeland' is an advantage for returnees from Argentina. Frequent transnational practices and generational closeness instead represent an obstacle (disadvantage) for the returnees from Europe.

The chapter argues that different experiences of discrimination and racism, and different politics on migration in different countries impact on the process of returnees' identity formation prior to moving to Italy. Exhibiting the differing ways that interviewees have acted in response to racism, the chapter explores a broad range of reactions, from 'reactive ethnicity' or 'in-group reaction' – forming stronger links with the ethnicity of origin – to 'rebel reaction' - denial of belonging to an ethnic minority group. This session also showed that while returnees from Argentina do not report any incidents of racism either in Argentina or in Italy, the majority of returnees from Europe experience racism in the country they grew up in. In the case of returnees from Europe with southern Italian origins, they also face direct or indirect racism in Italy.

Alba's (2005) concept of bright versus blurred boundaries was discussed in this chapter in order to understand the ethnic construction of the returnees from Europe and from Argentina in the country they grew up in. It was argued that bright boundaries characterised the experience of the second generation in the European country they grew up in. In fact the majority of the returnees from Europe never managed to cross the boundary and fully assimilate in the culture of the country they grew up in. However, blurred boundaries characterised the experience of the third-, fourth- and fifth-generation return migrants from Argentina, who in the vast majority of cases fully identify with Argentinian culture. The chapter argues that while for returnees from Argentina, Italian identity is an abstraction prior to moving to Italy, for the returnees

from Europe it is built into family relationships and their experiences in the 'host' countries.

## **Chapter VII: Conclusion**

This thesis has explored the processes of socio-economic and cultural integration of second-generation return migrants from Europe and third-, fourth- and fifth-generation returnees from Argentina in Italy. This conclusion is divided into four parts. It firstly provides an assessment of the principal findings of the dissertation; secondly, it underlines the contribution that this study has made to the field of migration studies and return migration more specifically; thirdly, it provides an assessment of the effectiveness of the theoretical framework and research design chosen to study Italian return migration. Finally, it highlights the limitations of the study, as well as exploring the possibilities for future research in this area.

### **Assessment of Main Findings**

The major finding that emerges from the research is that returnees from Europe, despite their familiarity with Italy prior to their moving to the country, experience more difficulties in the process of integration in comparison with the returnees from Argentina counterparts. The major economic, social, and cultural aspects that characterise the integration process of both groups of interviewees respectively are outlined below. It is important to point out that the findings in Chapters IV, V, VI often overlap and interrelate with one another.

Even though returnees from Europe are employed in more desirable non-manual positions compared to the returnees from Argentina, they find it more difficult to adapt to the labour market in Italy. This was explained by several factors. The first factor is that both groups of returnees tend to evaluate by comparing working conditions in Italy and in the country they grew up in. Returnees from Argentina therefore value their experience in Italy more favourably than the returnees from Europe, based on their past experiences. Secondly, it was argued that returnees from Argentina can draw on similar social and cultural practices around employment between Italy and Argentina which facilitate their integration to the labour market in Italy. It was argued that returnees from Argentina are familiar with Italian working conditions because they resemble Argentinian working conditions and therefore they know how to deal with them.

Returnees from Europe instead face, often for the first time, loosely regulated working conditions and different dynamics between employers and employees than what they were used to and they find it very difficult to understand and adjust to them. Something that vividly emerged from the analysis of the data is that the majority of the interviewees, in both groups, are employed in sectors specific to their ethnic background. This therefore suggests that employment mobility can be problematic for both groups. However, while European returnees are employed in more desirable non-manual jobs compared to the returnees from Argentina, because of their maladjustment to the Italian labour market, they can be considered as less 'integrated' compared to their Argentinian counterparts.

Both groups of returnees demonstrated high levels of social integration. Even though returnees from Europe do objectively interact more with Italians than their Argentinian counterparts, on a subjective level they are less integrated because their interaction is undermined by questions related to identity and belonging that returnees from Argentina do not seem to face in the same way. Both groups of interviewees believe that fluency in the Italian language plays a central role in their social integration process. However, it was argued that the meaning of fluency for the two groups of returnees is different. While returnees from Europe feel ashamed if they do not speak the language perfectly because it is their parents' language, returnees from Argentina set a lower standard and do not expect to learn the language perfectly but rather well enough to communicate successfully, since the vast majority of them only learnt the language upon their 'return'. It was also explained that while some leisure activities such as football and travelling create grounds for positive social interactions between the returnees from Argentina and Italy, they also serve to provoke questions around identity and belonging in the second generation returnees from Europe. The chapter also argued that issues related to the historical north/south divide in Italy impacted on some of the second generation returnees' process of integration. It was argued that while returnees from Argentina with southern Italian origins do not feel discriminated against because of their origins and because they are perceived to be Argentinians by Italians, some returnees from Europe with southern Italian origins do. Through the narratives of interviewees with southern Italian origin from France it clearly emerged that they not

only faced issues of racism in France as Italians but also in Piedmont where they are often perceived to be southern Italian, because of their southern Italian accent.

Remarkable commonalities in language, food consumption, and the role of the family in society have enabled returnees from Argentina to feel 'at home' in Italy. This was not the case for returnees from Europe who were already familiar with many aspects of Italian culture, some of which they did not share. While returnees from Argentina experience a process of cultural identification and belonging towards Italy, the opposite is true for European returnees. The concept of bright and blurred boundaries elaborated by Alba (2005) was useful to understand the context in which the experience of the returnees from Europe and Argentina took place and how it shaped their identity formation prior to their moving to Italy. It argued that identity and ethnic affiliation are influenced by migration policies. It was argued that bright boundaries in France have created sharp division between who is and who is not 'French'. Returnees from France felt that Italian culture and the Italian way of life was not complementary to French culture and therefore they never felt as if they fully belonged to that country prior moving to Italy. This is very different from the experience of the returnees from Argentina who instead were very well integrated in Argentina and identify predominantly with an 'Argentinian identity'. It was argued that this was the case because the Argentinian state, by adopting a blurred boundaries politics towards European migrants, not only facilitated migration flows from Europe to Argentina but actively encouraged them to shape the Argentinian state. Immigrants therefore were not perceived as a threat to the nation-state as in the French case but were seen as fundamental founders of the Argentinian state.

Finally the findings also suggest that that there is a link between racism, discrimination and identity formation. The findings reveal that while returnees from Argentina do not report any incidents of racism either in Argentina or in Italy, the majority of returnees from Europe experienced racism in the country they grew up in and this impact on their identity prior to moving and upon their experiences once in Italy. In the case of returnees from Europe with southern Italian origins, they also face direct or indirect racism in Italy.

Even though identity was not one of the aspects of integration that I had explicitly included when investigating the experiences of integration with my interviewees, identity came up constantly, permeating every aspect of return migrants' economic, social and cultural experience in Italy. Identity plays a fundamental role in the overall process of integration because apart from facilitating the integration of some returnees, in certain cases it poses a barrier to it. From the findings it became evident that identity is dynamic, multiple, and can shift over time. Returnees from Argentina fit much more into the traditional transnational view of identity. In fact, despite their almost non-existent transnational life prior to moving to Italy, the majority of them go through a process of 'identification' with Italian culture once they 'return' to Italy. As argued in Chapters IV, V, and VI, the majority of the returnees from Argentina in this study discover their origins in Italy and realise that 'Argentinianess' includes many aspects of 'Italianness' as a result of the influence that Italian migrants have had on Argentina society. The majority of Argentinian returnees interviewed classify themselves as 'Argentinian' and a 'bit' Italian. It is obvious that they acquire this additional layer of identity while living in Italy as transnational migrants and that now they belong to two nations. It is also clear from interviewees' narratives that when they state that they are Argentinian they automatically imply that they are also somewhat Italian.

In contrast, the identity of some of these returnees from Europe is problematic. The experience of this cohort of returnees reveals that transnational activities are not always accompanied by the development of transnational identities and a sense of belonging to two or more nations. It is interesting that instead of extending their transnational belonging to both Italy and the country they grew up in, these returnees often feel distant from their country of origin and identify more explicitly with the nation they grew up in, appreciating socio-cultural and economic aspects of the host society. Therefore, as Tsuda (2003: 217) notes 'their dormant nationalist sentiments are revived in a deterritorialised context abroad'. Another consistent number of interviewees did not identify either with Italy or with the country they grew up in. This sense of non-belonging was explained in several ways, however one of the explanations given was that this group of returnees experienced episodes of racism while growing up in the

'host' country and that once in Italy they feel 'racialised' either as French or as southern Italians living in the north.

Generational and geographical distances impact greatly on the process of integration of the two groups of interviewees who were taken into consideration in this study. Counter-intuitively this study proves that the distance between Argentina and Italy and the gap between the returnees interviewed and their Italian ancestors played a positive role in the overall process of integration for this cohort. Even though returnees from Argentina are aware that Argentinian society and culture is largely influenced by Italian migrants in Argentina, prior to their 'return' to Italy, this awareness remains general and indefinite. Upon their 'return' their perception of Italian culture consolidates with the actual experiences of returnees in Italy. In this sense, their initial sense of connection with the country develops into a strong identification, based on shared socio-cultural traits, which in turn facilitates integration. The surprise, especially among the youngest returnees, that many socio-cultural aspects that they considered to be exclusively 'Argentinian' are actually 'Italian', helps them not only to integrate relatively smoothly in Italy but to understand better the society where they come from. Thus, the 'return' for them means an important discovery and an understanding of their own 'Argentinian' identity. Therefore, returnees from Argentina who arrive in Italy pushed not by an ethnic motivation but mainly as a result of economic factors due to the most recent financial crisis that hit Argentina in 2001, upon their return in Italy, 're-discover' the 'Italianness' in their 'Argentinianess'. This identification with the country is the key in their process of integration in Italy.

Geographical and generational proximity instead seem to be problematic aspects for the overall integration of returnees from Europe. It emerges that this cohort, based on their transnational upbringing experience, tends to underestimate the difficulties related to moving to a country where they are ethnically from, but where they have only spent holiday periods. It is common among this cohort of interviewees that they often encountered economic and socio-cultural difficulties that they did not expect. Thus the difficulties presented upon their 'return' often provoke a crisis of identity which leads



either to a process of identification to the country they grew up in or to a process of non-identification with any of the countries.

Identification and group belonging seem to be central to a successful process of integration. While returnees from Argentina before and after their return to Italy kept identifying strongly with Argentina and then also with Italy, this does not always seem to be the case for returnees from Europe.

### **Study Contribution**

This study is located within the wider backdrop of Italian migration studies and of return migration literature more specifically, which it aims to make a contribution to. It adds to the return migration literature not only by attempting to understand the experience of second generation return migrants but also by contributing to the knowledge of third-, fourth- and fifth-generation returnees and therefore pushing the boundaries of return migration literature further out.

This dissertation was designed to carry out a comparative study on the experiences of returning migrants from Argentina and from a selection of European countries, back to their ancestral homeland: Italy. France was by the far the most important of these European countries, with the remaining interviewees having lived in Switzerland and Belgium prior to their return in Italy. All the interviewees lived in francophone areas prior to moving to Italy. The study focused especially on the experience of second generation returnees from Europe and third-, fourth- and fifth-generation returnees from Argentina. In order to analyse the data, it was acknowledged that the context in which return migration took place changed drastically among these two groups of interviewees. In this study, the majority of returnees from Argentina arrived in Italy as either a direct or indirect consequence of the financial crisis in Argentina that reached its zenith in 2001. Their return was primarily motivated by economic reasons while for those returnees coming from nearby European countries, even if not always explicitly stated, 'the motivation of ethnic affinity is in the foreground' of their choice to return home (Hedberg 2009: 160). Moreover, once returnees from Europe relocated to Italy,

they faced a less stable economic situation in comparison to the country they grew up in, while returnees from Argentina to Italy entered a more stable economic situation to what they were used to.

This comparative case study, employed qualitative semi-structured interviews as its principal methodology and was designed to understand how geographical and generational distance impacted on the process of returnees' integration. It attempted to understand how the process of integration of returnees was influenced by the level of familiarity with the Italian context. The integration process was analysed from a cultural, social, and economic prospective. Identity issues were also brought up to understand the overall process of these interviewees. As previously mentioned in this thesis, return migration has been for long a neglected topic within the migration literature; however in recent decades it has begun to receive more attention. Return migration of the first generation is usually the most common subject of research, while second generation return migration has also received some attention (albeit to a lesser extent). However, studies on return migration on third, fourth and so on generation are still a rare topic of research. The lack of studies seems to imply that only first and second generation subjects are deemed relevant subjects of study, because they are more likely to identify with the country of origin and thus be relevant subjects of research for the study of return migration. This research examined how multi-generational migration history influenced the processes of integration and return migration.

This study shows that return migrants experience very specific issues concerning their identity that other migrants do not face. This is because they have an ethnic link, consolidated through the right to Italian citizenship that other migrants do not have. This study showed how the resources that returning migrants bring with them have helped to contribute towards their socio-cultural and economic integration.

### **Theoretical Framework Applied**

This study draws upon a combination of theoretical approaches including transnationalism, migration systems and push-pull theories. While transnationalism is

helpful to theorise return migration from Europe, migration systems and push-pull theories are relevant to conceptualise return migration from Argentina to Italy. Other theories such as bright versus blurred boundaries, among others, are instead employed to explain the experiences of integration of both groups of returnees in Italy.

Transnationalism was very useful to theoretically understand return migration from Europe to Italy. In fact, the cohort of returnees from Europe interviewed for this study already lived transnational lives before moving to Italy. As a result of these transnational activities, returnees from Europe are highly familiar with Italian culture and language, and in certain cases the desire to return home seems to be influenced by time spent in Italy, typically during holiday periods. According to transnationalists, returnees prepare their return by recurrent and frequent visits to their 'home' country. In contrast, the cohort of returnees from Argentina, did not maintain transnational relationships and did not have any direct experience of Italy prior to their moving to the country. However, the same cohort developed a transnational lifestyle upon their return. The fact that returnees from Europe were familiar with Italy would have suggested that the process of integration for this cohort would have happened smoothly. However as demonstrated throughout this dissertation, their integration to their 'home' country was not simple and straightforward, and did not automatically generate multiple or hybrid identities as expected. Instead, contrary to expectations, the process of integration of the returnees from Argentina went more smoothly than their European counterparts. Transnationalism was therefore extremely useful in understanding the decision behind return for returnees from Europe but was slightly limited in understanding the experience of this cohort upon their arrival in Italy.

Migration systems theory was an essential starting point in locating return migration from Argentina to Italy. It helps in understanding how Italian return migration from Argentina is a direct consequence of the history of Italian labour migration between these countries. This theory shows how macro-structures determine the role of international political relations among states concerning migrant movements. The Italian legislation on citizenship, based on *ius sanguinis*, as well as the regional policies which incentivise return migration, are fundamental in understanding why third-

fourth- and fifth-generation returnees from Argentina are entitled to Italian citizenship and able to return to their ancestral homeland. This theory also shed light on the importance of micro-structures which refer to the informal social networks that migrants rely on when they move to a 'new' country. As argued in previous chapters, the majority of returnees from Argentina seemed to have a wider social network to rely on, which was mainly constituted of friends and/or family members who lived there when they moved to Italy. Again, this was different for the returnees from Europe who did not rely on social networks to integrate in Italy and often, apart from their partner, could not rely on any other type of network. Since many Argentinians left the country as a consequence of the financial crisis at the end of the 1980s and 1990s, and even before during the time of military dictatorships, they have established socio-cultural and institutional networks – meso-structures – between Italy and Argentina that allow for the exchange of information and people across national borders. A few of the returnees from Argentina stated that they had been in contact with Argentinian organisations; there were others who had not but were aware of them. Again returnees from within Europe did not tend to rely on any associations for their integration into the country and, other than diplomatic bodies, there are no organisations that can support them in a more informal way. Some of the return migrants from France, however, mentioned that they felt like going 'home' when they attended events in cultural institutes and met people with similar backgrounds to themselves. Examining the role of these meso-structures was helpful to understanding the processes of integration experienced by some of the returnees in both groups of interviewees.

Finally the 'push-pull' theory, often criticised for overly emphasising economic factors, was also helpful in highlighting the reasons why returnees from Argentina migrated to Italy. In Chapter II, it was argued, that the explanation of the push factors can be found in the political and economic history of Argentina, characterised by an alternation of dictatorships and financial crisis. The main pull factor instead was the loose criteria of qualification for Italian citizenship. Specific regional laws, and similarity in language and culture also seem to have incentivised the return of this cohort of interviewees.

In terms of methodology, the comparative case study proved to be an appropriate research design that offered me the framework in which to carry out this study by shedding light on the experiences of integration of return migrants. Semi-structured interviews were an excellent method of collecting in depth data. It is probable that triangulating this method with participant observation would have helped to further enrich my data. However, this would have not been possible since I could have only conducted participant observation among returnees from Argentina who collectively meet up in certain locations but not among returnees from Europe because there are no comparable places where they gather as a group.

### **Limitations to this Study and Suggestions for Future Research**

The identification of limitations in my dissertation is useful to suggest directions for further research in return migration studies.

The first limitation that becomes apparent when examining this study is to do with access issues which concerned the second generation interviewees from Europe. As explained in the methodology chapter (III), it was extremely challenging to identify suitable interviewees from Europe. This is because there are no places where this cohort gathers based on being second generation Italian. As a consequence of this, access to interviewees was extremely difficult and my access to male interviewees was very restricted: out of 16 interviews carried out with returnees from Europe, only two were male returnees. It would be important in future research to try to fill this gap and improve on the gender balance in the study.

The other issue was to do with numbers. It was impossible to achieve a significant number of interviewees who grew up in the same country. This is why in 16 interviews conducted, there were 14 interviews with returnees from France and two interviews with returnees from Belgium and Switzerland. Although it can be argued that European policies on migration are not very dissimilar in Western Europe (particularly when compared to policies on migration in countries such as Argentina) these countries still present some idiosyncrasies worth exploring further. In the context of this study, there

was a time limitation in that it was not possible to underline specific migration policies for each of the countries involved; therefore the French context was selected and analysed since the majority of return migrants in this study grew up in France. Further comparative research in this area would continue to add to the existing body of return migration and integration literature.

Another limitation to this study is that almost half of the interviewees from Argentina are students who are single. They are mainly employed in the catering industry and they are usually satisfied with their working conditions. However, their experience of return migration might be different in a few years when they are completely immersed in the labour market in Italy and they have more pressures to cope with. Therefore other research could investigate their working careers and how this compares with Italians who have never migrated.

Since the cohort of returnees from Argentina in this study come from a predominantly white European background, it would be interesting to explore and compare their experiences with the experiences of Italian returnees from a non-white background. It would be of interest to see what role race plays in the context of return migration and integration. It would also be interesting to compare the experiences of Italian returnees from other South American countries to see how their backgrounds impact on their return experiences. Studies along these lines could also be compared with the experience of migrants in Italy who do not have an ancestral link with Italy, the so called *extra-comunitari*.

Further research could also consider conducting an equivalent to this study in one of the regions in the south of Italy, in order to further investigate how socio-economic and cultural factors influence the experiences of return migrants from Argentina and Europe. It would also be of interest to conduct a study on the identity of Argentinians with Italian passports who live in other European countries, or in other countries beyond Europe's borders, to see if and how their identity mutates abroad and over time, and how they would relate to other Italians abroad. Finally, future studies could use

quantitative data collection tools aiming to gather information on the size of the return migration phenomenon.

This study contributes towards addressing a gap in the return migration literature, in particular in relation to third-, fourth- and fifth-generation returnees. Exploring the marked differences between the experiences of migrants of different generations, returning from different places to their ancestral country (Italy), this research has broadened our knowledge and understandings of different return migration trajectories and integration issues. In the context of the Italian legislation on Italian descendants these trajectories are fascinating in and of themselves, but also raise further questions about the impacts of current and future migration waves.

In recent times, Italian return migration has increasingly become a phenomenon of interest, in particular since the 1992 legislation on citizenship was enacted. This legislation further facilitates access to Italian citizenship for ethnic Italians abroad (with no generational restriction), while at the same time tightening the residency requirements of naturalisation for immigrants of non-Italian descent. It is estimated that 60 million people of Italian descent in the world are potentially entitled to claim Italian citizenship (Zincone 2009). The impact of this legislation only became evident in the past few years particularly in conjunction of the most recent economic crisis in Argentina when thousands of Italian descendants requested Italian citizenship. The newly realised mobility of this enormous cohort of people who are entitled to Italian citizenship (and through that, access to the entire EU and easier access to countries such as the US) could potentially have huge future societal impacts on both the countries of departure and those of arrival. There is a very real need for further quantitative and qualitative study to enable us to better understand current migration trends and their possible future implications.

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### Appendix 1: Profile of Returnees from Europe

Pseudonym	Gender	Age at Interview	Number of years spent in Italy at interview	Occupation	Countries interviewee grew up in
Adeline	Female	43	>10	French Teacher	France
Agathe	Female	58	>10	Secretary	France
Alice	Female	54	>10	Housewife	France
Anne	Female	49	>10	Health Professional	France
Arielle	Female	>60	>10	Retired (ex-French teacher)	France
Chaterine	Female	49	>10	French Teacher	France
Celine	Female	36	>10	Restoration	France
Claire	Female	46	>10	French Teacher	France
Yolenne	Female	>60	>10	French Teacher	France
Camille	Female	35	>10	Secretary	France
Caroline	Female	>60	>10	Retired (ex-clerical worker)	France
Brigitte	Female	40	7	French Teacher	France
Blanche	Female	45	>10	Student	France
Aurore	Female	>60	>10	Retired (ex-French teacher)	Switzerland
Sebastien	Male	60	>10	Translator / French Teacher	France
Daniel	Male	47	1	Multinational	Belgium



## Appendix 2: Profile of Returnees from Argentina

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age at Interview</b>	<b>Number of years spent in Italy at interview</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Countries interviewee grew up in</b>
Miguel	Male	38	10	Engineer	Argentina
Pablo	Male	43	10	Engineer	Argentina
Carlos	Male	29	8	Catering	Argentina
Javier	Male	29	5	Artist	Argentina
Pedro	Male	27	2	Technician	Argentina
Alejandro	Male	37	6	Artist	Argentina
Luis	Male	21	2	Catering	Argentina
Paulo	Male	26	1	Catering/ Student	Argentina
Alfonso	Male	25	2	Catering/ Student	Argentina
Antonio	Male	27	2	Catering/ Student	Argentina
Nuria	Female	36	9	Tango Teacher	Argentina
Beatriz	Female	35	14	Unemployed	Argentina
Pilar	Female	34	12	Spanish and Music Teacher	Argentina
Estella	Female	38	9	Catering	Argentina
Paula	Female	25	5	Accountant	Argentina
Carmen	Female	42	10	Multinational	Argentina
Paloma	Female	27	9	Catering	Argentina
Leticia	Female	25	2	Catering/ Student	Argentina
Luz	Female	26	1	Catering / Student	Argentina
Rosalía	Female	62	32	Housewife	Argentina
Estefanía	Female	22	1	Catering	Argentina

### **Appendix 3: Interview guide**

#### **Background Information**

1. Can you please tell me your name, place and date of birth?
2. When did you move to Italy?
3. Could you tell me about your family?
4. Could you describe your childhood neighbourhoods to me?
5. What are your qualifications?
6. Were you working prior to come to Italy?
7. Can you tell me about the process of getting an Italian passport?

#### **Economic Integration in Italy**

8. Can you tell me about your employment situation in Italy?
9. How did you find the job?
10. How do you get on with the other people in work?
11. And with your employer?
12. Are you satisfied with you employment?

#### **Socio Integration in Italy**

13. When did you move to Italy?
14. Did you know anyone when you came to Italy?
15. Who do you live with?
16. What do you do in your spare time?
17. Are you in contact with family/ friends in Argentina?

#### **Cultural Integration in Italy**

18. When you first arrived in Italy, how fluent were you in Italian?
19. What language do you use the most in your daily life?
20. How do you find Italian culture?
21. How do you find everyday interaction with Italians?

#### **Political Integration in Italy**

22. What role does politics play in your life in Italy?
23. Do you belong to a political party?
24. Are you interested in Italian daily current affairs?
25. Do you usually vote in local elections?
26. Do you feel that someone represents you at the political level?

#### **Closing Questions**

27. Do you have any plans for the future?
28. Would you like to add anything to this interview?

## Appendix 4: Map

### Córdoba Province, Lorraine and Piedmont Regions

