

**Intergenerational Identity Shift Among Italian  
Immigrants in the Nottingham Area**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis presents the results of an intergenerational study on families of Italian origin living in the Nottingham area. In particular, it investigates the ways in which intergenerational ethnic identity transmission takes place among immigrants and their offspring, as well as the variables involved in the second and third generations' construction of hyphenated or transnational identities. Among these variables, special attention is devoted to the role of the family, both nuclear and extended.

A comparative analysis of interviews with members of three-generational families suggests that the children and grandchildren of the Italian immigrants who arrived in the UK in the period after the Second World War develop their ethnic identity and cultural affiliation dialectically. This dialectic takes place in a continuous exchange between the self and 'the other(s)', more specifically, one or more of the following: parents, children, Italians in Italy, Italians in Nottingham, the host society, the peer group and other minority groups. Moreover, the 'constructed' relative physical invisibility of the group considered plays an extremely important role in the identity building process. Identity is a situational construct, based on oppositional relationships.

This study has revealed that the family of origin is the main arena for the transmission of cultural features, attitudes, behaviour and practices. These are highly symbolic, but contextually objective and relevant, elements for the self- and hetero-discrimination and categorisation of people of Italian origin.

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## Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction to the thesis

This thesis presents an inter-generational study of ethnic identity transmission in families of Italian origin living in the Nottingham area. The findings build on previous studies of migration and of ethnic identity construction, and the interpretation explores issues related to the ethnic self-perception of the children and grandchildren of immigrants who arrived in England forty or fifty years ago.

In the period after the Second World War labour shortages affected Italy, as well as several other Western European countries. This phenomenon triggered a considerable movement of labour which involved much of the rest of the continent. At the time, these imbalances in the labour market were understood to be a contingent phenomenon, which, due to its temporary character, was not expected to last (Castles 1984: 40-95). However, relatively little rotation of workers was actually taking place and many of the supposed 'temporary' migrants were actually settling in their countries of immigration. As suggested by Castles (1984), these workers were likely to remain in the country forever, even though their new permanent status might sometimes have been the result of something other than a conscious decision. Indeed, Castles' prediction was right. The development of large and growing ethnic minority communities in many European cities is attributable to this phenomenon. The immigrants have, in fact, remained in their countries of residence 'for good' and their families now amount to at least three generations. The Italian community of Nottingham, England, is certainly to be counted amongst these and counts well over 2,000 people of Italian origin.

The existence of these communities shows how strong the desire to continue to exist as a minority group remains, through endogamy, residential clustering and in-group social networks. Nevertheless, whilst analysis of minority group development and allegiance has been on the scholarly agenda for some time, the study of what happens at the individual family level is very recent and still relatively limited. Moreover, it is well known that the immigrant condition is characterised by a process of adjustment to the new environment (Alba 1990, Castles 1984). As a result, at least two opposite forms of ethnicity can occur. Firstly, as a result of contact with one or more cultures, migrants can develop a relativistic way of perceiving their self and 'others': this can be labelled 'interactive ethnicity'. Secondly, they can choose to refer to certain constant cultural points, with a consequent closure to the outside world: this has been labelled 'reactive ethnicity' (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001).

The possibility of such alternatives is certainly the case for first generation migrants. Nevertheless, the reality of today's migrant communities very much hinges on the generations subsequent to the one that took the decision to emigrate from the country of origin. It is, therefore, through the current research that we intend to shed light on these later generations' positions within the migrant community, on how they feel, and how they construct and live their identity/identities.

During the last one and a half decades there has been a particular academic and political interest in topics such as identity, nationality and citizenship. This can be argued to be a consequence of the weakening of the idea of nation state, and / or of the rise of local identities. But it can also be related to the rise of transnational identities and the necessity to understand and define them. The traditional link between identity and nationality has been brought into question by the development of new forms of identification combining the near and the distant, the local and the global, the existent and the 'imagined'. Migrants, and in particular their children, are especially involved in this process, as they experience different environments and are required to re-elaborate their connections and belongings.

The academic contribution of the current research lies in the qualitative investigation of the transmission of ethnic and cultural identity across three generations drawn from within individual families. Indeed, the recruitment of respondents for this study concerned whole families, with a minimum of one interviewee for each generation. The Italians of Nottingham, studied here, represent a very important case due to the substantial potential offered by the availability of three generations for comparative study. More specifically - for a number of reasons that will be analysed in detail in Chapter 3 - the older generation is considered initially as a homogeneous reference point for comparison with subsequent generations, as it is hypothesised to have retained the cultural features of its place of origin. This initial hypothesis is very important since it provides the opportunity for an evaluation of possible shifts in identification that have occurred through following generations.

Furthermore, the process of identity construction is conceptualised here as being dialectic in origin, involving processes of 'negotiation' with others: the context for such negotiation for Italians has changed through time. Italians have grown more 'invisible' since their initial arrival and their relative physical invisibility plays an extremely important role in the process of identity building. Identity is a situational construct, based on oppositional relationships. For Italians in more recent years such constructs can hardly be based on external features characterising the members of this particular

group as different (such as skin colour or somatic features): in this way their initial 'difference' on arrival has been reduced by the successive arrival of more different' migrant groups. For Italian migrants in the UK, differentiation is based on elements other than physical ones. Indeed the main arena for the discrimination and categorisation of people of Italian origin is based on cultural features - on characteristics involving their attitudes, behaviour, and practices which stereotypically identify them as different from both the host population and other minority groups.

The research carried out for the present thesis lies within the inter-disciplinary space between the fields of geography, sociology and anthropology. As a result of this inter-disciplinary nature, and because of the various issues dealt with within the thesis, its results contribute to various research fields. The primary contributions are to the study of ethnic and national identity construction in diaspora populations, and to the current debates on inter-generational ethnic identity transmission and on the development of transnational social phenomena. The thesis also contributes to the understanding of the implications of ethnicity and identity in today's multicultural contexts and of the phenomena of identity negotiation. Moreover, due to the important role attributed by the research to family ties, interactions among kin and parenting, the thesis adds new perspectives to the field of family matters and to current research in social anthropology, in particular in relation to the study of the transmission of core values through the generations in a diasporic setting. The thesis is also a contribution to the field of Italian studies, through the new perspectives it offers in relation to the elements involved in the perception and negotiation of Italian-ness through time and space, across generations and within multicultural contexts.

## **1.2 Research questions**

Two main thematic research questions have guided the investigation.

- a) How do Italian immigrants and their offspring construct their transnational identity and elaborate their feelings of belonging? In particular, what are the variables involved in the processes of identification and what role do they play in these processes?

Various earlier studies have made it clear that the process of assimilation in a new country is not complete within one generation (Alba 1990, Castles 1984, Fortier 2000). The children and grandchildren of initial migrants confront the necessity to define and redefine their identity in relation to various settings: the

country of origin of their parents or grandparents, their country of residence, and the developing European context.

Moreover, in relation to its intrinsic character of negotiation, ethnic identity creation is seen here as depending on individuals' response to a number of agents including parents, children, Italians in Italy, Italians in Nottingham, the host society, the peer group, and other minority groups.

- b) What is the role played by both the nuclear and extended family in the process of cultural transmission through the generations?

Having identified the family of the initial migrants as the site of their childrens' primary socialisation (Parsons & Bales 1955) and their development as members of a defined social group (Cesareo 1998), the research aims at investigating the value of inter-generational transmission in the maintenance and / or transformation of cultural traits in families of Italian origin.

As a result of the complexity of the issues involved, these two main research questions have been divided into several sub-questions.

In order to be able to answer the first research question, the following issues need to be taken into account:

- a1) How do first, second and third generation Italians perceive and represent themselves? What ideas of identity are being accepted, negotiated or contested? The thesis explores issues of self-perception and representation of the members of the three generations, as well as investigating the role of questions related to the possession or acquisition of formal Italian or British citizenship in determining the three generations' feelings concerning their national and cultural belonging.
- a2) How do cultural transnational practices and relations with the country of origin take form, and how so they influence the processes of identity construction? Are new forms of identification created as a consequence?

In relation to the second research question, the inquiry in particular tries to:

- b1) Analyse how - and to what extent - immigrant families of Italian origin have changed over the last fifty years, and in what ways the relationship of the three generations with their country of ancestral origin has been affected through time and space. Conversely, the enquiry also focuses on the manner in which the second and third generations' relationship with the country of residence has been influenced by the cultural heritage from the first generation and the role of the host society's values and practices in the negotiation of identity.

- b2) What values, practices and attitudes are transmitted through the generations? In answering this question, specific attention needs to be paid to the existence of gendered social pressure. What cultural elements are resisted, absorbed or transformed, rearranged and adjusted, if necessary, in order to allow them to fit into the younger generations' worldview?
- b3) What identity strategies are adopted by the second and third generations in relation to their parents and grandparents, with particular attention to the role of endogamy, exogamy and divorce?

### **1.3 Thesis structure**

The thesis has nine chapters, in four sections. This first chapter has presented the main research questions and the contributions of the present three-generational investigation. Chapter 2 presents an outline of the literature on identity, ethnicity and assimilation. The importance of this chapter lies in its specific function, introducing most of the key themes that run through the thesis. Chapter 2 identifies the elements involved in the process of identity construction in a migratory setting. Among these, the family occupies a special position (relating to the second research question). Through the use of several sources, the chapter clarifies why the construction of identity has to be understood as flexible and negotiable (relating to the first research question) and what meanings are to be attributed to the keywords used throughout the thesis.

Chapter 3 represents a historical and social outline of the Italian presence in the United Kingdom since the Second World War. It clarifies why and in what ways various post-war migrant Italian communities have developed and the special characteristics of the Nottingham settlement that make it a suitable subject for research. Among these characteristics are the presence of three generations of people of Italian origin; the cultural and social homogeneity provided by the older generation, useful for comparative reasons; and the fundamental role played by first generation women who were key actors in the process of emigration from Italy. The chapter also introduces certain methodological issues relating to the combined use of primary and secondary sources, prefiguring the following chapter which is entirely concerned with a methodological discussion of the techniques of enquiry and analysis.

Chapter 4 outlines the phases of the whole research process: the identification of the sample, recruitment of the respondents, interviews and participant observation, coding and analysis, and writing up. It is through this chapter that the specificity of the

present three-generational study comes to the fore. The recruitment of families, involving respondents differentiated by their generation and gender, offers great comparative richness and potential. The chapter also uncovers certain realities behind the recruitment process, the expectations and role negotiations that took place between the respondents and researcher.

Chapters 5 to 8 are closely linked to the empirical material and look into the construction of identity through the three generations of Italians in Nottingham in relation to different variables. Religious life, education and the upbringing of the Italians of Nottingham represent the core of Chapter 5. The focus of the chapter is on the role of religion as personal faith and in the cultural identity of the migrants, thus contributing to the first research question. However the chapter also contributes to the second research question as it also investigates the centrality of religion for cultural reproduction, through the Catholic institutions present until recently in the city and through family reunions in relation to the important religious functions – such as weddings and christenings – and religious holidays.

Chapter 6 presents the specificity of the family role in the process of identity construction in a context of immigration. Here, the role of the family *of orientation* (the family we are born into) is taken into account, as the site of cultural transmission and the children's primary socialisation (relating to both research questions). The chapter also shows how identity is constructed among the children of the immigrants, how the patriarchal structure and gendered roles are performed within the Italian families of Nottingham and how the respondents reacted to the hypothesis of mixed marriages in their families.

Chapter 7 examines language transmission across the three generations of respondents, the parental direct involvement in the process of ethnic language learning and the mechanisms of second language acquisition (relating to the second research question). The chapter also analyses the fundamental role of language as a boundary mark for group inclusion / exclusion. The outline of the history of the Italian language presented in the chapter is crucial to the idea that the relationship between language and identity can in certain contexts be more symbolic than real. This concept is reintroduced in Chapter 8, which dedicates some discussion to the development of Italian national identity over the centuries, and then explains how the older generation can identify regionally and define themselves as Italian at the same time. In the chapter the multiple, hyphenated and varied nature of the affiliation of the second and third generation (relating to the first research question) is also studied, as well as the extent to which



their sense of belonging relates to their Italian origin. Chapter 9 provides the conclusion to the research and identifies some of its wider implications.

## Chapter 2: IDENTITY

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the characteristics, role and elements involved in the construction of ethnic identity for people living in a migratory setting. It is a discussion of many facets of identity, its ‘negotiation’<sup>1</sup> character, its systemic nature, and its contextual definition, in relation to three different points of reference: host society, other migrant groups and members of the same immigrant group - family members necessarily included.

As a result of the intrinsic nature of the phenomena studied, the following section is completely dedicated to the definition of some keywords used in this work. It was felt that this was necessary in order to, hopefully, avoid their often vague and volatile meanings causing misunderstanding, which often happens even among people who are using the same concepts in similar fields. Terms and expressions such as socialisation, acculturation, integration, and assimilation are defined and put in juxtaposition to each other as stages of a process that might involve the individual or the group, and that might take one or several lifetimes to complete. The chapter critiques the linear bipolar model and develops the hypothesis that the process of assimilation taking place in the host country might actually follow distinct and unexpected patterns.

The nature of cultural/ethnic identity is here investigated through recent debates and their reference to other ‘time-honoured’ academic contributions. Due to its complex nature, identity is divided into several components and associated to various processes, whose characteristics are presented and explored in relation to the context of immigration: such components include identity as choice, as external attribution, as an ‘invention’, and as a contextualised process of negotiation. Some schematic representations are also provided and explained with reference to the specific context of the present study. These refer to the influences on ethnic identity formation and to the patterns of cultural transmission across the generations. More specifically, in relation to the case of the offspring of immigrants, current studies of hybridity and hyphenation also require attention.

This chapter represents an attempt to provide a coherent reading of a variety of concepts, in spite of the complexity and messiness they present. It also aims to provide

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<sup>1</sup> ‘*Negotiation*’ does not appear in any dictionary. The meaning attached to it here is ‘having an intrinsic character of negotiation’. It cannot, therefore, be substituted by *negotiable*, meaning ‘possible to negotiate or be negotiated’.

the reader with an understanding of the perspective that has informed the chapters that follow.

## 2.2 First, second and third generation: What do they mean?

The following chapters will be characterised by a constant reference to individuals and their generational status within their families. It is, therefore, important to clarify in advance what is intended by first, second and third generation. Referring to a first, second or third generation usually suggests, respectively, the immigrants, their children and grandchildren. These definitions, however, might not always so straightforwardly be applied, due to processes of intermarriage occurred through the generations (Perlmann, 2000: 3). However, as the present research is based on the value of intergenerational transmission and due to the fact that intermarriage was *a priori* considered as one of the variables that might have occurred, the three generations will be defined as follows:

- First generation: foreign-born persons, migrated into the UK in the 1950s or 60s. In the excerpts from the interviews the first generation is referred to as (1);
- Second generation: the native-born children of foreign-born parents, or their foreign-born children who have been brought to the country at an early age and therefore been socialised and educated in the English environment. In the last few years, some sociologists have used for the latter the definition of ‘1.5 generation’ (Perlmann 2000: 5), due to the fact that these children did not take the decision to leave themselves and, at the same time were not born in the place of settlement of their family. Rumbaut (1997) shows a higher meticulousness and defines the children in relation to the age of arrival in the country. He would define all the children born abroad and brought to a foreign country before the age of 6 as belonging to a 1.25 generation. They would be identified as belonging to a 1.5 generation if brought into the country before 12 and as 1.75, after 12. In the thesis, however, they will be defined as belonging to the second generation. The few respondents of the second generation born in Italy were, in fact, brought into the country at a very early age (2-3 years old). Moreover, it is possible to assume that the differences between immigrant children and their younger brothers born a couple of years later in the place of immigration might be minor, in relation to their education, language skills and links to the place of

origin, as both share similar experiences (Price & Zubrzycki 1962: 61). The second generation is represented by the number two in parentheses, i.e.: (2).

- Third generation: the grandchildren of two - or more - foreign-born grandparents. In this particular case, the offspring of at least one second-generation parent, which will be indicated with the following: (3).

### 2.3 Definitions

Anyone going through the literature on migration is almost immediately struck by the oddity of the fact that two or more authors rarely agree *in toto* on the definition of some fundamental keywords, such as ethnicity, assimilation or integration. In the present context, it is important to clarify and redefine some of the cardinal terms, for the following reasons:

- Because nuanced and sometimes overlapping definitions might lead to certain terminological misunderstandings;
- Because of the meanings that some terms might assume in the specific cultural and national contexts in which they are used. Many of these words, in fact, appear not only ‘somewhat flexible within the English language’ but are also only exceptionally transferable from one language to another due to the ‘great difficulties in translation between languages’ (White 1998: 214); and
- Because of their often ideological character that might cause them to be biased (Kilani 1997b: 9).

In this section I provide an explanation of the meanings I attribute to some of these keywords throughout the present work. I refer to established definitions of the terms although, in some cases, I add my own understanding and elaboration of them in relation to the context of Italian immigration into Britain.

Because of its centrality, recurrence in the thesis and for its many facets, the term ‘identity’ is the first to need definition. Identity refers to individuals’ development of an awareness or feeling of who or what they are in relation to the larger social environment (Alba 1990; Gecas 1982; Tajfel 1981). The crucial element in this notion is the relationship with the ‘other’ (Sokefeld 1999; Woodward 1997). In this sense, according to Remotti (1996: 7), the search for identity implies two opposite and complementary operations - separation and assimilation - which classify identity in relation to, respectively, the elements that characterise it as distinct from others and those that assimilate it to others. It would be impossible for individuals to be aware of and perceive themselves as part of a specific group without having experienced a

feeling of resemblance with or difference from other individuals (Taylor 1999) or, in Fortier's words (2000: 3) 'the relationship between identity and difference [...] is at times one of synonymy'. In reality, the contrastive nature of identity has been clearly stated by Fortier (2000: 2), who writes that identity is articulated in opposite but coexisting processes of 'movement and attachment, suture and departure, outside and inside'. This concept applies to both the ideas of ethnic and cultural identity, expressions extensively used in the thesis and defined later in this section. In the thesis reference to identity will, in fact, usually be accompanied by the adjectives 'cultural' or 'ethnic', because of the slight but real implied difference between the two.

In reality, most of the terms described here refer to the engagement between people and their cultures. This research is indeed based on the transmission of cultural phenomena across generations and among groups, therefore involving the individual as a tile within a wider social mosaic.<sup>2</sup> It is therefore important to specify what is meant by the term 'culture'. As observed by Williams (1976: 87), 'culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language'. Hence, its characteristics will be described here through the views of some of the scholars who, through time, have been associated with it.

The complexity of the concept was first confronted by Tylor in 1871: 'Culture or Civilization, taken in its widest ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society' (Tylor 1958). In this early definition several elements characterising today's concept of culture are already evident. Culture firstly belongs to all people, as members of a society. The term refers to groups, and not to the behaviour of specific individuals. Secondly, it defines and differentiates people as belonging to different groups or societies. Thirdly, culture is acquired.

Williams (1976) refines the concept of acquisition/transmission further and introduces the idea of the dynamism of culture, which takes place through processes of negotiation: 'A culture has two aspects: the known meanings and directions, which its members are trained to; the new observations and meanings, which are offered and tested. These are the ordinary processes of human societies and human minds, and we see through them the nature of a culture: that it is always both traditional and creative'. Therefore, far from being characterised by passive reproduction through time and space,

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<sup>2</sup> The psychoanalytic theory according to which identity is located in the unconscious strata of the psyche (Erickson 1980) has been considered by Alba (1990: 23-4) as inadequate to explain individuals' conscious ethnic identification and also, because of its over-formalisation, the fluent nature of identity.

culture is in reality flexible and dynamic (Baumann 1999; Benmayor & Skotnes 1994; Ong 1999).

Geertz (1973: 5) raises the issue of the symbolic level of culture by emphasising the notion that individuals are animals ‘suspended in webs of significance’ – i.e. culture – spun by themselves.<sup>3</sup> This semiotic concept is broadened by Hall’s idea of the ‘shared’ nature of these meanings (1997: 1), which is developed by Parekh’s idea that culture represents a ‘historically created system of meaning and significance’ working as a regulatory framework for individuals and for the collectivity (2000: 143).

To sum up, culture is:

- a complex whole;
- acquired / transmitted / negotiated / flexible;
- linked to tradition but dynamic;
- related to individuals as members of a group / society who share the same meanings;
- created by the individuals themselves;
- a framework regulating behaviour;
- contextualised;
- what defines a group as different from other groups.

Developed from Vermeulen and Slijper’s concept of ethnic identity (2000:4), the expression ‘cultural identity’ will be used here in relation to subjective and social identification within the limits of a specific language, a particular religion, or precise customs and values. It represents an important part of ethnic identity and, as a result, is commonly used in its place. In reality, the expression ‘ethnic identity’ holds a particular connotation that cannot be attached to ‘cultural identity’, that is reference to shared ‘common descent’ (Vermeulen and Slijper 2000: 4). According to the concept of culture as a learnt phenomenon, an individual can claim the particular cultural identity of a group even without any genetic connection to that group. It is in this particular detail that the difference between cultural and ethnic identity lies. Indeed, although this difference might appear too minute to deserve definition, in reality it is the substance of this differentiation that matters: anyone can claim a certain cultural identity, but without a connection to a particular group – real or imaginary, near or distant – no one can claim that group’s ethnic identity.

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<sup>3</sup> This is a view that has had profound consequences on the ways culture is studied and interpreted (see Chapter 4).

The definition of what ‘ethnic’ means here is crucial for the standpoint of the thesis and for the chain effect the term has on the other expressions containing the same adjective. According to the recent Runnymede Trust Report (2000): ‘There is a gulf between specialist and non-specialist usage of the term *ethnic*. For specialists it is an adjective derived from the noun *ethnicity*, similar conceptually to words such as *religious*, *national* or *linguistic*. In popular usage, however, it implies not-Western (as in *ethnic food*), not-classical (*ethnic music*), not-white (*ethnic communities*) or not-British (as in the late 1990s dispute about insignia on British Airways aircraft). [In the report] the term ethnic is [...] never used as a synonym for not-white or not-Western’. In Fabietti’s view, however, the term ethnic does not have an evaluative dimension: indeed it can be used ‘both by people who *want to stigmatise* the different and by the ones who *want to be considered* as different’ (1995: 68). This is possible because, for the scholar, it refers to the idea of an original, natural and indistinct quality.

One of the elements that characterises the nature of the term ethnic is its strong connotation of ‘otherness’, bequeathed to the adjective by its origin: indeed, etymologically *ethnos* refers to a social structure which is different from that of the *polis* (Fabietti 1995: 68; Rivera 1997b: 82). Nevertheless, these days the notion of ethnicity seems to be more comprehensive than before, as the idea of ‘otherness’ is applied to all groups forming the societal structure, including that constituting the ‘host’ (Jenkins 1997). Therefore, drawing from the sources cited in this paragraph, in the present thesis the use of ‘ethnic’ always refers to its specialist use and will be applicable to both the guest and host societies in relation to their culture, their religious or linguistic traditions exclusively when a distinctive origin and reference to an ancestral past are implied.

It follows that, at the individual level, ‘ethnic identity’ concerns identification within a certain national, linguistic or cultural group as distinct from one or more others. It is both a matter of personal choice as well as external attribution (Geary 1983; Jenkins 1996; Sollors 1986; Waters 1990) and both of these aspects are addressed in the thesis. The way individuals perceive themselves and the way they react to the social environment they live in depend on issues related to that environment. Specific responses are, in fact, triggered by consensus or discrimination, by the agreement or disagreement to identify with certain stereotypes, by group membership or marginalisation. Indeed, the simplistic generalisations currently required by the census and equal opportunity forms by-pass the complexity of the concept to assume the function of ‘an ordering device’ (Vertovec 2001: 579). On a group level, ethnic identity

is ‘a social identity that is characterised by a common culture, shared history and common descent’ (Vermeulen and Slijper 2000:4). I would add to Vermeulen and Slijper’s definition the idea that ‘common culture, shared history and common descent’ are affirmed in relation to one or more groups which are supposed to have different culture, history and descent. Indeed, as stated by Fabietti (1995: 43), ‘ethnic identity cannot be conceived but in a *contrastive* and *contextual* way’, an idea that is further reinforced by Peach’s hypothesis of the non-essentialist, but contextual (2000: 621), nature of ‘ethnicity’, a term which is often used as a synonym for ethnic identity. For Rumbaut (2000: 21), ethnic identity responds to the question ‘where do I come from?’, and is usually expressed through a ‘metaphorical language of kinship (e.g., ‘homeland’, ‘fatherland’, ‘mother tongue’, ‘blood ties’) with reference to a ‘birth connection’ to a nation and a family – to an imagined common origin or ancestry’ [my emphasis]. The scholar emphasises that ethnic identities are “experienced and expressed as ‘natural’”. This view is coherent with the idea of the individuals’ reference to a homeland, often symbolic and mythical in nature (B. Anderson 1991; Conzen *et al.* 1990; Gans 1996; Gellner 1994; Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Rivera 1997b; Sollors 1989; Yinger 1985).

In particular, in relation to white minorities, ethnicity ‘consists of overlapping, mutually reinforcing cultural differences’ (Gellner 1994: 37) and ‘is seen to relate to common characteristics and feelings of identity originating in language, religion, culture or history’ (White 1998: 214). Ethnicity is, therefore, ‘a matter of subjective belief in common ancestry [...] although it cannot be created situationally out of nothing’ (Liebkind 1989: 140-1). In fact, the feeling of belonging to a group may also depend on another important element represented by the highly symbolic value of myths historically and culturally accepted and shared. In some cases the term ethnicity<sup>4</sup> can be used in lieu of ethnic identity.

As a consequence, it is possible to define an ‘ethnic group’ as a group of people who identify with a common distinctive culture and heritage - where distinction is defined in terms of (an)other group or groups. Particular traditions, values, norms, language, religion - but not necessarily all of them and all at the same time - define the group as distinct from other groups and, according to Alba (1990: 37), an important element in this might also be ‘ancestry’. In some contexts, genotypical characteristics may sometimes be considered as criteria for the definition of a person’s ethnicity. The expression ‘ethnic group’ appears often to be associated to the status of a minority

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<sup>4</sup> As underlined by Kilani (1997a), ethnicity is a constructed category which can be manipulated in order to build barriers and borders.



group within another culture. Historical reasons have fossilised such uses. However, in the present work, the expressions 'ethnic group' and 'minority group' are not considered as synonyms. The expression 'ethnic community' can, instead, replace that of ethnic group. In reality, the term community is often looked at suspiciously in the field of migration studies due to the fact that it has become part of everyday language and, for this reason, might have lost its original meaning. In fact, in general, it is believed that all people from an immigrant background must necessarily be part of an ethnic / cultural community. In reality, not all the immigrants in a city can be thought of as residing in ethnically-defined enclaves, liaising with people from the same country, and with a sense of belonging to a group sharing language, values and norms, and participating in formal and informal activities organised by institutions of an ethnic character (Fitzpatrick 1966).

In reference to these 'requirements', it can be affirmed that the respondents in the present research do belong to an Italian 'community', as most of them live in a specific neighbourhood, take part in activities organised by ethnically-connoted institutions (the community centre, church, consulate and so on) and identify nationally, culturally and linguistically. It is clear that due to their improved socio-economic status, some of the members of the second generation have moved to other residential locations, as in the model proposed by Massey (1985). Nevertheless, most of them can still be considered as part of the 'community'.

In the context of migration studies, a variety of terms is used to refer to the level of ethnic distinctiveness of migrant groups. The term 'adaptation' is among these. It is a term which has 'been employed by sociologists, geographers and ethnographers in contemporary urban settings as a way of describing how individuals, households and communities respond to and cope with new experiences (migration, poverty, violence) and settings (the city, the prison)' (Watts 2001: 6). The term 'adjustment' can be used as its synonym.

The process of adjustment is often linked to that of 'socialisation'. Through this process, individuals learn to behave according to the norms, values and conduct of a main group, which could be the family (Parsons & Bales: 1956), the school, an ethnic group, society as a whole (or all of them). In this process individuals have to be considered as relatively passive, as they absorb these norms from the various agencies without being able to influence them.

Following long-term contact with the host society, the migrant group borrows or adopts the traits of its culture (Laroche *et al.*, 1998), in a process which is defined as

‘acculturation’. Individuals can continue to retain the cultural features of the society of origin and, at the same time, feel integrated into the host society (Yinger 1985). In our particular case, they would be defined as Italo-British. Although the effects of this process are certainly perceived at the individual level, it is important to underline that the phenomenon is collective and involves both the culture of origin and the host one in a reciprocal exchange. In fact, if the ‘other’ feels integrated this may be due to the fact of being recognised as a member of the host group (Szokolczai 2001: 2). Moreover, the process has to be considered as ‘two-way’, with the host society also affected by the cultural traits of the immigrant group (Szokolczai 2001; Yinger 1985). As suggested by Yinger (1985: 155), ‘dominant ethnic groups, however, are likely to overlook the extent to which they have been influenced by those whom they dominate’.

The process of ‘assimilation’ certainly shows analogies with acculturation as it represents a step forward in the relationship with ‘the other’ (Hirschmann 1983). According to Gordon (1964: 71), the process of assimilation consists of seven different phases, or sectorial forms of assimilation: cultural, structural, marital, identificational, attitude receptional, behavioral receptional and civic. Also in this case, the process takes place at the group level and has its effects on the individual, and is the result of long-term contact with the host culture which, in this case, is perceived as the individual’s only or main source of identification: the offspring of the older Italians of Nottingham would thus talk about themselves as British. Throughout the present work, I will mainly refer to this form of assimilation, otherwise known as behavioural assimilation, consisting in the acquisition and use in everyday life of the attitudes and values of other groups. Any reference to structural assimilation (see Ogden 2001: 41), implying the absorption of the individual in the structure of the host society, will clearly be mentioned as such.

The term assimilation is sometimes used as a synonym of ‘integration’. In reality, there is a difference of degree between the two nouns (see Figure 2.2). In the case of integration, having borrowed or adopted the traits of the host society, the migrant - in our case defined as British-Italian - becomes absorbed ‘into certain aspects of the host society activities. However, there is no view here that assimilation is the inevitable outcome, such that the maintenance of difference is part of the scenario’ (White 2001: 81).

Integration can assume different forms. Niero and Pasqualotto (2000) distinguish between interactional and pluralistic integration. ‘Interactional integration’ is seen as a dynamic process of exchange and reciprocal understanding between the host

and guest groups. In this sense the diversity between cultures would not be felt as hierarchical but as constructive and mutually beneficial. This would create a situation of interculturalism. On the other hand, 'pluralistic integration' is argued to take place when, within a social structure, the various groups are recognised as the legitimate holders of their own values, culture and attitudes. In this sense each ethnic group keeps its independence from the others (multiculturalism). This concept is linked to that of dualism and pluralism. 'Dualism' is, in fact, the co-existence of two cultures that remain autonomous from each other. In a situation of dualism, it is likely that power relations are at work, with the host culture holding a higher status than that of the 'guests'. This definition is a development from White's idea of pluralism (White 2001). 'Pluralism' occurs when three or more different cultures (and possibly three or more ethnic groups) coexist, maintaining their autonomy in a supposed equality (multiculturalism). In reality, power relations are also likely to be at work in society, which undermine the pluralist values - often in favour of host society (see White 2001).

'Hybridity' (or 'Creolisation') is an interesting process which is the result of a group's adaptive strategies to a new environment through the fusion or compromise between elements typical of different cultures. According to Hall (1990: 120), hybridity is a characteristic of any diaspora identity, due to the constant production and reproduction implied in their development in relation to different cultural elements. It can also be the result of attempts among the children of inter-married couples to overcome the cultural differences between their parents (Werbner and Modood 1997). Hybridity is located in what in post-colonial literature is defined as 'third space' (Bhabha 1990; Lefebvre 1991) in which difference is negotiated and articulated and a 'relatively coherent identity' (Friedman 1998: 245) is developed. It is the product of a process of synthesis, mixing and reinterpretation of cultural elements of various origins (Giraud 1995) and represents an expression of defensive identity strategies (Rivera 1997a).

#### **2.4 Identity as a construct**

In Chapter 3, I deal with the concept of identity as applied to individuals and families who live in a migratory setting. Describing the entire range of possible applications of the concept of identity is certainly beyond the scope of this chapter. Therefore, when I write about identity – unless explicitly stated, such as in the case of gender or class identity – I am dealing with cultural or ethnic identity.

‘Identity is an internalised, self-selected concept based on experiences inside the family and outside of the family’ (Adams *et al.* 1992) - see Figure 2.4. Among the innumerable definitions of identity, this seems to be a distillation of many of the components involved in its construction as both the elements involved in it (experiences, family, non-familial world) and the peculiarity of the issue itself (identity as a choice) are taken into account. The individual experiences that Adams *et al.* write about, however, represent just one of the four key factors involved in the formation of identity, as highlighted by Szokolczai (2001), the others being:

- *Reflexive thought*, as people tend to interpret their daily experiences and react accordingly;
- *Recognition*, that is at the basis of the formation of collective identities as our personal experiences might be shared with other people (i.e. identity as a social process);
- *Performance*, which replaces and enlarges Szokolczai’s concept of *verbalisation*, which is the public representation of identities in a discursive form. Through performance, the representation of identity is both a way to display publicly one’s identity acquired through experiences - in order to render it ‘fully operational’ - and a way to reinforce it.

This view is also supported by Hall’s notion that ‘identities are [...] constituted within, not outside representation’ (1996: 4); Butler’s (1990: 25) concept of identity as ‘performatively constituted by the very *expressions* that are said to be its results’, and by Gans’ and Sollors’ idea that ethnicity can assume an expressive function, more than an instrumental one (Gans 1996; Sollors 1989). In particular, in *Beyond Ethnicity* (1986), Sollors moves on from this concept and points out that the category of ethnicity represents a social construct, created by some people in order to classify or identify others as different. This means that people may use some particular criteria or boundary marks for categorising the individual as a member of a given group or community, such as look, origin, affiliation, name, language, religious beliefs but also one’s own identification or interaction with the members of the same group and / or others. Due to the number and the nature of all the elements involved in this process, it is apparent that any claim reducing the essence of identity to a clearly demonstrable biological or hereditary quality has to be discarded. If it is true, as stated by Alba, that identification within a certain ethnic group might depend on ‘ancestry’ (Alba 1990:37), identity and ancestry cannot be the same thing: a person can, in fact, be of mixed origin, but identify with just one group, or none of them (Alba & Chamlin 1983: 240). Indeed, although

very often identities are taken for granted, in reality they cannot be circumscribed within fixed and irremovable boundaries: they have to be interpreted as 'realities in motion', as landscapes in a slow but constant transformation. In particular, it is in the process of adjustment to the host society that ethnic identities are constantly created and re-created (Alba 1990; Waters 1999).

Remotti (1996: 9-11) proposes a useful and appropriate three-level pseudo-Hegelian model for the construction of identity. The model is here both partly summarised and interpreted:

- a) The first level is that of a continuous obscure flux. It is here that the basic elements of individual identity undergo their unavoidable process of alteration and mutation.
- b) The second level is that of the connections. In this level the 'other' is met and the potentialities offered by alternatives are confronted and explored. This is possible through a process of separation from and opposition to alterity.
- c) The third is the highest level of identity construction, and overcomes the two previous processes. Identity as a construction is the result of a 'drastic reduction' of all the possibilities of connection (b) and the product of a decision to yield to the inevitability of flux (a).

For Remotti, the nature of identities lies in processes involving cuts and separations on one side, and construction and assemblage on the other. From the obscurity of the first level, the nature of identity becomes clear through the knowledge of alterity.

The process of identity formation is adaptive, and it is activated by individuals as a response to the influences they are under. Melucci (1997: 64) suggests that 'instead of conceiving of a subject as endowed with an essential nucleus defined metaphysically, we must direct our attention to the processes by which individuals construct their identities'. For this reason, he suggests using the term 'indentitisation' [sic], rather than the substantialist and permanent idea implied by the term 'identity'. Of a similar view are Gallissot and Rivera (1997: 117) who, regarding the dynamic and relational nature of ethnic identities, underline that we should not talk simply about identities *per se* but of processes and 'identity strategies'. This is even truer among white minorities, for whom ethnicity sometimes becomes a question of voluntary identification (Alba 1990: 21; Beale Spencer *et al.* 1991: 368).

Indeed, with regard to the members of the immigrant group under consideration - families of Italian origin living in the Nottingham area - the terms of this negotiation appear to be subtle, elusive and often flexible, due to their relative physical invisibility in the context of immigration. This invisibility is, however, a recent acquisition (Fortier

2000: 22-5): in the nineteenth century, people of Italian origin were easily identified by their looks and sometimes made the object of discrimination and intolerance (Sponza 1998). With the arrival of more visible minorities, Italians have consequentially acquired a relative invisibility. This phenomenon is, again, the result of the contextualised nature of ethnic identity construction: the terms for the comparison have changed, due to the arrival of new and more distinctive-looking immigrants. Italian immigrants have, therefore, become absorbed into a 'different hue of whiteness', making them less 'noticeable'. As Frankenberg (1993: 236) states, 'if whiteness varies spatially and temporally, it is also a relational category, one that is co-constructed with a range of other racial and cultural categories'. It is possible to add to this view that, in some cases, it is by clinging to those cultural categories - which become the most important elements of differentiation between groups - that white minorities wilfully react to absorption into the 'pervasive non-presence' (Keating 1995: 904) of whiteness.

In his book *Whiteness of a Different Color*, Jacobson expresses another interesting view. According to Jacobson, in 19<sup>th</sup> century America white 'races' were not 'invariably *whitened* by the presence of non-white Others in the cultural and political crucible of a given locale' (2000: 57). Jacobson argues – with examples related to the social position of white immigrants, including Italians, Jews and Irish – that 'whiteness' is a constructed and mainly cultural feature. He reports that in the old America, Italian immigrants did indeed look white 'but they did not *act* white. In New Orleans Italian immigrants were stigmatised in the post-Civil War period because they accepted economic niches (farm labor and small tenancy, for instance) marked as *black* by local custom, and because they lived and worked comfortably among blacks' (2000: 57). Therefore, colour, class and behaviour are related and all concur to the perception of the immigrant as belonging to a defined category. The difference is consequently stated through those cultural features which differentiate the minority from the majority group, and the minority groups among themselves.

Having tried to clarify the complex nature of identity, the following section deals with the processes of identification related to individuals who live in a migratory setting.

## 2.5 Migration, assimilation and hyphenated identities

Shifts of identity are possible because of the intrinsic nature of the phenomenon of identity construction: its malleability and negotiable character. Moving across boundaries, by altering individuals' references, can create a shift in their identity

perception. As underlined earlier, identity is a relational phenomenon which is necessarily linked to context. Contact with people who have a different perception of themselves – in terms of their different cultural or ethnic identity performed through use of their own language, customs and traditions – is certainly the most important element in this cultural transition. Nevertheless, in the shifting of identities, physical movement across boundaries does not seem to be essential. This can be exemplified through the hypothesis of the current shift from a national to a European identity in the various countries of the EU: it is not necessary to move to another European country or to visit all the countries of the EU to feel European.

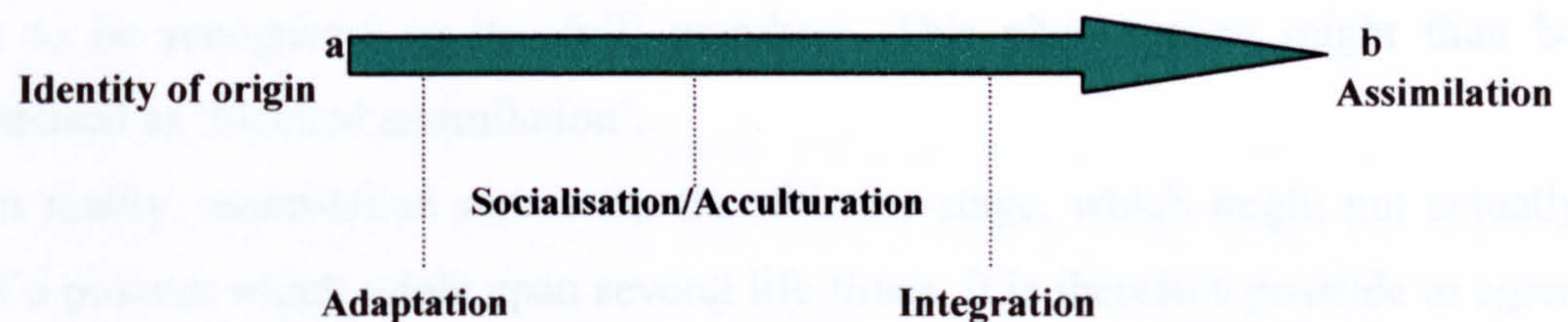
In the case of the older Italians of Nottingham, leaving the country of origin was just the first stage of a complex long-term process that took place at the destination and has involved the individuals for a long time. Spatial mobility implies facing consequences that involve the collectivity of individuals in various aspects of their everyday life: from the way they perceive themselves and the world outside them to the way they deal with change in their lives (such as in terms of food, weather, values and language). However, migration is a process that does not necessarily have to be painful, distressing or traumatic. Nonetheless, it always implies a certain amount of change, as family and friendship networks are broken and rearranged in the country of settlement, day-to-day activities undergo re-adaptation and the individual perception of the self in relation to the outside world is altered.

There are different ways of interpreting this alteration. According to the assimilationist - or melting pot - approach, when immigrants settle in a host country they adapt their values, language and norms and become progressively absorbed into the dominant culture (Gans 1996: 426). On the other hand, according to pluralist or multicultural approaches,<sup>5</sup> individuals' rights for participating in society do not depend on their absolute acceptance of all the cultural elements of the host country and they can therefore remain allegiant to their own ethnic identity.

One of the exponents of the first type of approach is Phinney (1990). According to Phinney's linear bipolar model, following contact with host culture the immigrants acquire the cultural elements of the host country at the expense of the culture of origin. It is possible to represent graphically (Figure 2.1) the process of assimilation as a development, through time, from the culture of origin (a) to that of the host (b), which appear at the extremities of a line - indeed, Gans refers to it as the 'straight-line theory' (1996).

**Figure 2.1. The Linear Bipolar Model.**

In reality, to go through this whole process from the identity of origin to complete assimilation, individuals need to go through several different stages, as shown in Figure 2.2 below.

**Figure 2.2. Development of the Linear Bipolar Model**

If considered in very general and ideal terms, the linear bipolar model could be applied as it is. However, in the real world this is not possible or plausible. In fact, assimilation is dependent on a large number of variables: it does not constitute a straightforward process and, therefore, it would be a mistake to suggest that it occurs necessarily in a linear way, or that it might involve all aspects of life, and all at the same time. In fact, 'assimilation is a multidimensional process, the various aspects of which, although highly interactive, can vary independently at different rates and in different sequences' (Yinger 1985: 154), affecting some spheres (for example, language, clothing or food) more than others.

It is also possible that a process opposite to that of assimilation might take place: some individuals, in fact, might resist it and display strong national or ethnic pride and a more visible 'performed' identity of difference (see Figure 2.3).

<sup>5</sup> See Jackson (2002) for an analysis of models of multiculturalism.



**Figure 2.3. The Non-Assimilatory Process of Self-Preservation.**

The earlier hypothesis can also be interpreted on a generational level. In fact, it is possible that, after the process of assimilation has started, members of the subsequent generations might feel the need to reassert their ‘original’ identity through a return to what they believe renders distinctive their ancestral culture, such as in Hansen’s ‘law of the return of the third generation’ (1958). This might also explain the phenomenon of ‘cultural closure’ of a group, following rejection by the host society of the migrants’ attempts to be recognised as its ‘full’ members. This phenomenon might then be conceptualised as ‘blocked assimilation’.

In reality, assimilation represents the ultimate stage, which might not actually occur, of a process which might span several life-times. It is therefore possible to agree with the idea expressed by Laroche *et al.* (1998: 202) that ‘rather than assimilate, members of ethnic groups have reportedly experienced a more complex and multifaceted form of adaptation. [Moreover, the] acquisition of dominant / host culture traits is not necessarily concomitant with loss of ethnic identity’.

Identifying with a particular ethnic group, therefore, does not mean rejecting the culture and the values of the host society. Equally, a higher degree of acculturation does not necessarily imply a loss of identification with one’s culture of origin. In such a situation, the phenomenon that might result is instead that of *addition* and, in the long term, possibly of *combination* of the values and customs of the two societies, offering the immigrant the possibility to interact appropriately with both the new culture and that of their origins, in a situation of dualism or ‘hybridity’.

In order to clarify this concept, I intend to refer to the notion of cultural capital as developed by Bourdieu (1986). The concept of cultural capital was first applied by Bourdieu in his comparative analysis of the school achievement of middle and working class pupils to explain the reasons lying behind the reproduction of class differences. The results of this study led him to generalise that middle-class students attain better results than working class ones because they share the same ‘language’ – intended in a broader way – and values of the school, the school being an institution belonging to the

dominant system. In short, middle-class families provide their children with a certain number of linguistic, practical and symbolic assets – also called background knowledge – that are *spendable* within the school system.

Borrowing the idea from the concept of cultural capital applied by Bourdieu as a peculiarity of the dominant classes, I hypothesise the existence of a ‘cultural asset’, understood as a combination of a multiplicity of elements – language, activities, competences, attitudes and so on – belonging to all people and to all societies (although differences in the same society do exist). People can easily accumulate assets by learning new rules, new behaviours and new competencies and then spend them in their own society or in societies where they are appropriate. If this hypothesis is applied to a context of immigration, it would require a certain amount of time for the newcomers to develop the ‘assets’ conforming to those of the local population that would allow them actively to take part in the new society (this is the structural integration defined earlier in the chapter). It is as if there were for the immigrants – and their offspring – two different sources to draw from – the original and / or the new – giving origin to a ‘dualistic’ potential, possibly leading to double cultural competence (Bottomley 1992).<sup>6</sup> This metaphor might also explain why some people who have familiarity with two or more countries define themselves as culturally ‘richer’ than those who have never experienced a different environment (see Chapter 8).

The first socialising experiences of the children of immigrants are usually confined to their own families and their culture. It is only at a later stage that the extra-familial world bursts forcefully into their lives, forcing them to negotiate positions and take decisions. This is the epitome of what Bhabha defines as ‘in-between space’, which is the condition of those people who live ‘border lives’ in the modern world: ‘These *in-between* spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. It is in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated’ (Bhabha 1994: 1-2). These spaces are the *loci* in which moments of ‘creativity’ take place and new forms of identity are ‘moulded’: hyphenated identities

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<sup>6</sup> However, this condition is not attained effortlessly. In fact, Blackledge (2002: 84), drawing from Bourdieu, and focussing mainly on the acquisition of the dominant language, underlines that, in Britain, in the continuous shift between English and the minority languages, minority speakers need also to access the *symbolic capital* constituted by the official language in order to be able to gain social and economic mobility.

(Bhabha 1994, Hutnik 1991, Modood *et al.* 1994, Tiwana, 2002).<sup>7</sup> In these circumstances, difference<sup>8</sup> is not just accepted or refused; in contrast, it is confronted, sometimes even challenged, as summarised in Fabietti's concept of a 'contrastive and contextual' nature of ethnic identity (1995: 43).

The term 'hybridity' is certainly open to a myriad of different meanings and individual cultural expressions. Hybridity represents, in fact, all the unusual combinations which occur in any place of migration as a result of the individuals' attempts to adjust to – or come to terms with – the differences between the 'already known' and the new cultural setting. It is important to underline that immigrant families often need to hold on to elements deriving from their culture of origin as these form the bases for their identity. Nevertheless, the development of the culture of the place of origin in the place of migration will soon be influenced by the inputs deriving from the various social spaces they are engaged with. The culture of origin, through time, across generations, and in contact with the host culture, gradually becomes something else: a migrant culture, which is 'neither the One nor the Other but something else besides, which contests the terms and territories of both' (Bhabha 1994: 28). In particular, it is possible to agree with Werbner's view (1997: 12) that cultural hybridity is 'a cultural *thing* in itself', although 'defined in a field of contestation'.

Based on these premises, the immigrants' struggle for recognition might, however, end up in only partial fulfilment or in a complete 'irrecognition' on the side of the 'others'. In fact, acknowledgment<sup>9</sup> is an integral part of the double process of identification and self-identification. Although the process of identification relies on the individual, the social world in which the individual lives has an influence. It is clear that in order to belong to a certain group, individuals need to be recognised as its members by the other components of the group. Thus it is not enough for individuals to identify with a group: this process of identification must be parallel to and concomitant with the other members of the group recognising them as part of it. In fact, as the process of identity formation is a dialogical one, the 'self' and the 'other' are not only necessarily opposed to one another, but they also need to co-exist in order to survive. From this

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<sup>7</sup> At an institutional level, a less positive attitude is expressed by Gabaccia (1997), who suggests that hyphenation might represent a racist dynamic reflected in reluctance to accept the immigrant population as candidates to citizenship.

<sup>8</sup> Difference (or differentiation) is here the keyword. Only individuals confronting different cultures, lifestyles and values can problematise their own views and beliefs. In this sense, it is possible to agree with Roosen's idea that in order to claim a cultural identity individuals need to be acquainted with a certain cultural relativism (Roosens 1989: 150-1). See also Hall, 1997.

<sup>9</sup> This process is defined in the thesis also as hetero-identification.

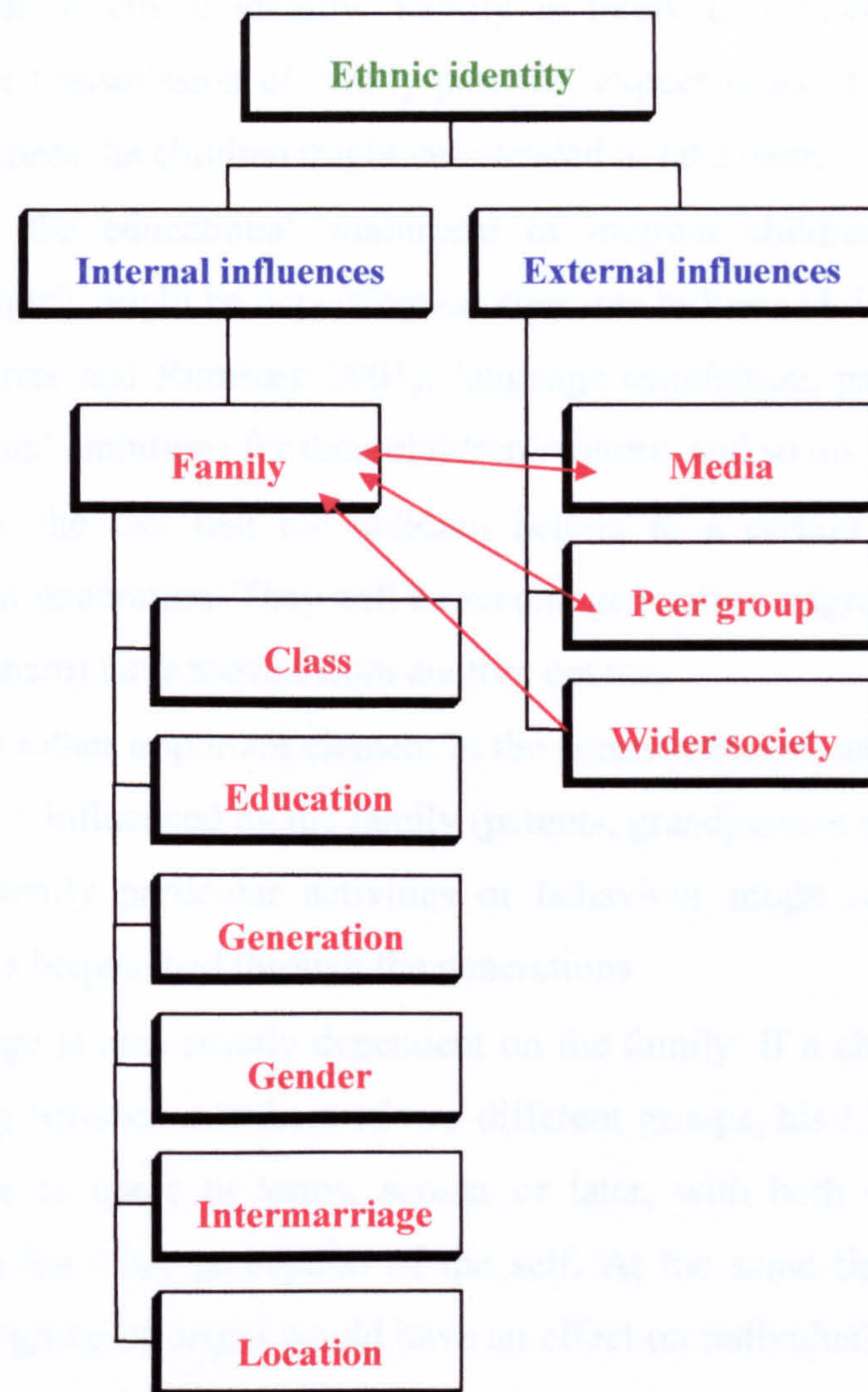
viewpoint, ethnic identification loses its attachment to the individual and becomes the result of part of the complex dialectic between the individual and the outside world (Fabiatti 1995; Jenkins 1996, 1997). The boundary is a necessary part of the process: ‘A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something is presencing [*sic.*]’ (Heidegger 1977: 332). Moreover, due to the movement from a place to another, migration ends up changing the people directly involved in it and their cultural assets. For this reason, as the processes of disruption and rearrangement of networks and belongings take place in a different environment – which is itself not inert – they end up being deeply affected by it. The setting, in fact, works as an active and significant variable in processes of this kind. It is, however, only one among the multitude of elements more or less directly involved. The next section summarises schematically the most significant elements influencing the process of ethnic identity construction.

## **2.6 Major influences in the process of ethnic identity construction**

In research of this kind, the definition of ethnic identity represents, however, only the first step. Feeling part of a group can signify that the individual agrees with one or more of the elements constituting that group’s identity. In fact, this feeling might not be the same for each one of the members of the group. This is one of the reasons why ethnic identity cannot be ‘measured’ according to a precise and formalised scale.

Let us suppose that it would be possible to develop an extremely accurate system of measurement of ethnic identity, and that individuals would respond exactly in the same way to the stimuli from the world they live in: a major problem would still exist in terms of the multiplicity, and variable influence, of those stimuli, all of them with a precise and distinctive nature. Therefore, due to the many variables involved in the process of identification, the approach to identity in this thesis needs to be a holistic one. Spatial mobility, in fact, implies individuals facing consequences that involve them as whole beings in various aspects of their everyday life – for example, in the way they perceive themselves and the world outside them, or the way they deal with change in their lives (in dimensions such as food, weather, culture or language). Consequently this type of research necessarily requires intense exchanges across various disciplines, which makes the field of migration studies and ethnicity a challenging but productive area for investigation.

Figure 2.4 shows graphically the most significant influences on the process of ethnic identity construction.

**Figure 2.4 Influences on Ethnic Identity Formation**

As previously stated in this chapter ‘identity is an internalised, self-selected concept based on experiences inside the family and outside of the family’ (Adams *et al.* 1992). In Figure 2.4 the fundamental role of the family – here intended as both nuclear and extended – stands out, for its weight and control over many other variables. For clarity, all the variables very often defined by the family itself have been put under the common name of ‘internal influences’ on the construction of cultural / ethnic identity. The roles of the external environment – peer group, wider society, and the media – are identified as ‘external influences’.

As will be explained in detail in Chapter 6, the family of origin is the site for children’s primary socialisation (Parsons, 1955). Thanks to cultural transmission from parents, grandparents and siblings, children become members of their social group (Cesareo 1993). The weight of the family on most of the internal influences is obvious.

- Class is one of the elements which might have a possible effect on the construction of ethnic identity. Family is likely to influence class position through the transmission of family patterns, expectations or the existence of a family business the children might be intended to take over.
- Education: the educational attainment of migrant children (or children of migrant origin), might be dependent on elements influenced, in their turn, by the family (Portes and Rumbaut 2001): language acquisition, parents' educational level, parents' ambitions for their children's future, and so on.
- Generation: the fact that the children belong to a certain family inevitably defines their generation. They will be second generation migrants if their parents (or one of them) have moved from another country.
- Gender is another important element in the construction of ethnic identity which is very much influenced by the family (parents, grandparents and so on). Indeed, within a family particular activities or behaviour might refer to traditional gender roles bequeathed through the generations.
- Intermarriage is also strictly dependent on the family. If a child is born from a relationship between members of two different groups, his / her ethnic identity would have to come to terms, sooner or later, with both cultures, therefore influencing his / her perception of the self. At the same time, being married outside the group of origin would have an effect on individuals' cultural choices for themselves and the children born from such unions.
- Location is important since for at least a number of years the children normally live together with their parents, who might or might not live in an ethnically-defined neighbourhood. Thus the family will have an influence on the location of the dwelling.

External influences – the media, peer groups and wider society – through time and not automatically, can influence the family's cultural views. However, the family is not passive in this. Peer group and media consumption are often partly influenced by family decisions and, in their turn, may have an effect on the family. Indeed, parents can actively decide what type of programmes their children should watch, what kind of magazines or newspapers appear in the house, and what friends should or should not be seen. As regards the influence of the wider society, this is normally supposed to be a

‘one way’ relationship with the family. For example, an average family cannot have any effects leading to change in wider society.<sup>10</sup>

Figure 2.4 is intended to illustrate a system where each element is in connection with all the others and where some of the elements can influence each other reciprocally. This is the case especially among the components falling under the heading ‘internal influences’. A more specific and detailed example of this is the mutual influence of the three family generations in cultural transmission, as we will see in the next section.

### 2.6.1 Location and identity

In the field of migration, many studies have focussed on the analysis of residential segregation among ethnic minorities, often through the analysis of census data (Duncan and Lieberman 1959; Lieberman 1963; Taeuber and Taeuber 1965; Massey and Denton 1993). The attention of these studies has been mainly focussed on the concept that the level of assimilation, or ethnic retention, of immigrant groups can be mirrored by the intensity of their residential segregation. If the immigrant group is residentially isolated, its language, culture and norms will be perpetuated through the weight and support of the ethnic enclave (Gans 1962; Suttles 1968) and high levels of intermarriage (Gordon 1964; Peach 2000). Spatial closeness, as argued by Ley (1974) could also be the results of the immigrants’ reaction to assert their homogeneity as a group in the face of the diversity of host society. Sarre *et al.* (1989: 7) specify that these phenomena have to be considered as contextual as, often, not too many options are open to newcomers: settlement in an inexpensive neighbourhood is among these.

In relation to the American context, in particular, Duncan and Lieberman (1959) indicated that the relationship between the spatial segregation of immigrant groups in the Chicago area and their low levels of assimilation was inverse to the time spent in the country of settlement. This concept directly involves the generations following that of the immigrants. For them cultural assimilation and improved socio-economic status, are often translated into a less segregated pattern of settlement (Lieberman 1963). Nevertheless, phenomena of suburbanisation can have as a consequence the development of cultural pluralism, rather than assimilation *tout court*. It has been

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<sup>10</sup> The family is usually seen as the institution which reproduces and transmits the rules on which society is founded. Therefore the average family would not have enough power to change the opinions of all the other members of society.

observed that for some ethnic groups the time spent in the country of immigration does not play any role in their level of assimilation (Massey and Denton 1993).

Within the British context, several studies have emphasised the role of spatial segregation in the lives of resident ethnic groups (Daley 1998; Newman 1985; Peach 1996, 1998, 2000; Phillips 1998; Robinson 1986; Valins 2000; Waterman and Kosmin 1986; White 1998). These studies mainly replicate and confirm the US experience. However, among these, some investigations have highlighted interesting phenomena. In particular, in relation to the residential segregation of the Anglo-Jewish community, it has been noticed that, although the population of Jewish origin has become suburbanised through the time, it is still spatially clustered and not fully assimilated (Newman 1985; Valins 2000; Waterman and Kosmin 1986).

In relation to the present study, an interesting aspect is the level of residential concentration of the older generation of Italians living in Nottingham, the majority of whom live in the Bakersfield and Carlton areas (see Figure 3.2). Their modest level of socio-cultural assimilation seems to be in line with the results of previous investigations (Duncan and Lieberman 1959; Lieberman 1963; Taeuber and Taeuber 1965; Massey and Denton 1993). On the contrary, the second and third generations are spatially more diffused. Nevertheless, this phenomenon is not necessarily followed by the loss of cultural contact with their cultural background. In fact, although they live in other areas, they often visit their parents and grandparents and take part in ethnically-related religious and social activities. This phenomenon confirms further that the level of ethnic retention might be related to the group's level of spatial segregation but it also introduces the idea that ethnic identification refers to symbolic elements which do not necessarily have to be present in the individuals' everyday lives (Gans 1996; Sollors 1986, 1989).

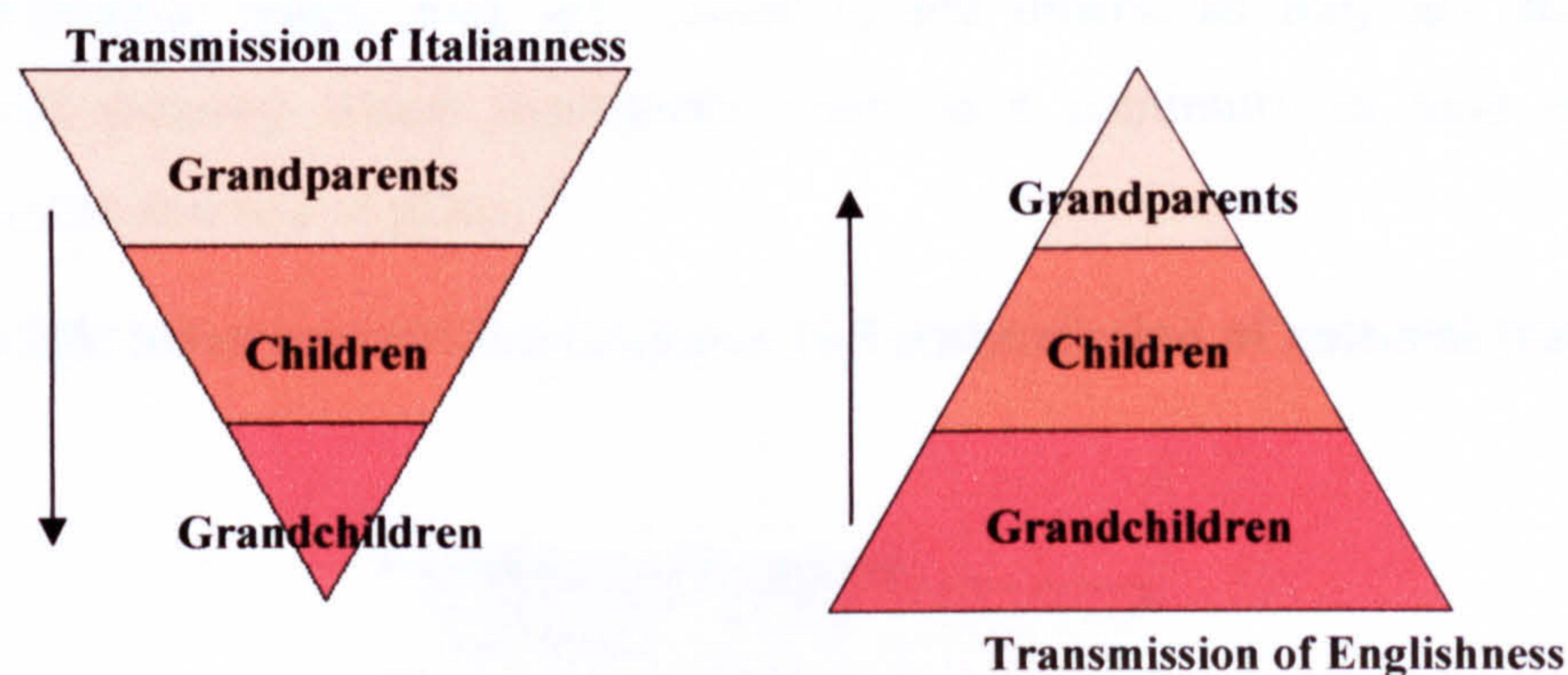
### **2.6.2 Patterns of cultural transmission across the generations**

Figure 2.5 represents a simplified view of the process of cultural transmission across the generations. Although attention has usually been paid to transmission from older to younger generations, Figure 2.5 highlights the active role of the generations subsequent to that of the migrants in the process of negotiation of identities among the members of the family. The simple illustration presented here aims at providing the basis of a very complex process.



In Figure 2.5, the transmission of the cultural traits of the place of origin (Italianness) occurs vertically from parents to children, while the transmission of traits of the place of residence (Englishness) occurs the opposite way – from the children (born and socialized in the country of residence) to their parents and grandparents. In order to give a clearer idea of the magnitude of the influence of each generation in the transmission of cultural features, a triangular shape has been used. It is clear that the stronger the feeling of belonging, the wider area will be covered in the section of the triangle and the bigger the influence exerted on the next generation. The relationships implied in the model have to be considered as dynamic ones, and they can produce a seemingly incoherent situation of balance within a family.

**Figure 2.5: Inter-generational transmission of cultural traits**



The influence of the various generations on each other, however, might not necessarily be of a linear nature. Indeed, contact between first and third generation can certainly represent a powerful way to reinforce the value and significance of what is shared by the two generations. In fact, especially if there is geographical proximity, contact between grandparents and grandchildren might be extended, and it can also create a very meaningful type of relationship. For example, while the second generation might be out at work, children and grandparents might have the opportunity to spend time together and learn about each other. The roles of grandparents can be very versatile and might range from that of baby-sitter, to that of mediator of family disagreements, financial sponsor, moral supporter and family historian.<sup>11</sup>

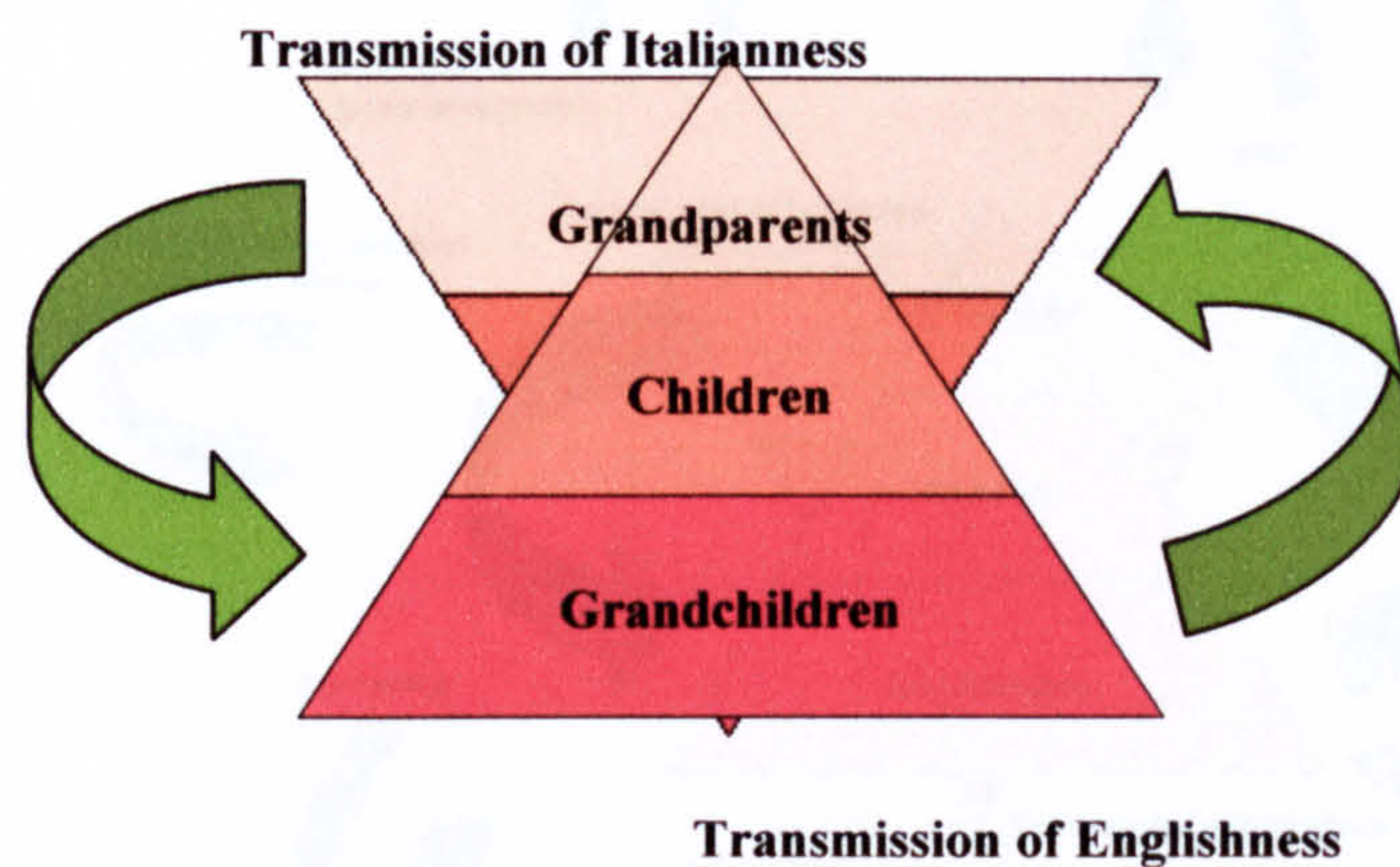
Conversely, grandchildren can be involved in the lives of their grandparents on different levels, also according to their age. It is natural that individuals belonging to

<sup>11</sup> See Finch and Mason (1993) for a study on the negotiation of responsibilities within families.

different generations might have different perspectives on life. This might be even truer in the case of the grandparent-grandchild relationship in families from an immigrant background, where the children and grandchildren grow up in an environment which is very different from that experienced by the first generation. Different attitudes, perceptions and values might reach the older generation through the mediation of the grandchildren and might contribute further towards the life-long process of enculturation of the older generation in the place of settlement. The grandchildren bring to their grandparents' lives the information and skills they have learnt at school and with their peers, as well as their questions regarding the legacy from the migrant past of the family.

The role of living 'memory' for the family is crucial and, as highlighted by Attias-Donfut (1988: 48), it cannot be understood without an intergenerational perspective: 'memories, recollections or testimonials attributed to a generation are not comprehensible unless they are related to the others, as they are sequences of a collective memory which incorporate them in a continuity in time endowed with significance and full of plans.'<sup>12</sup>

**Figure 2.6: Inter-generational contact and transmission of cultural traits**



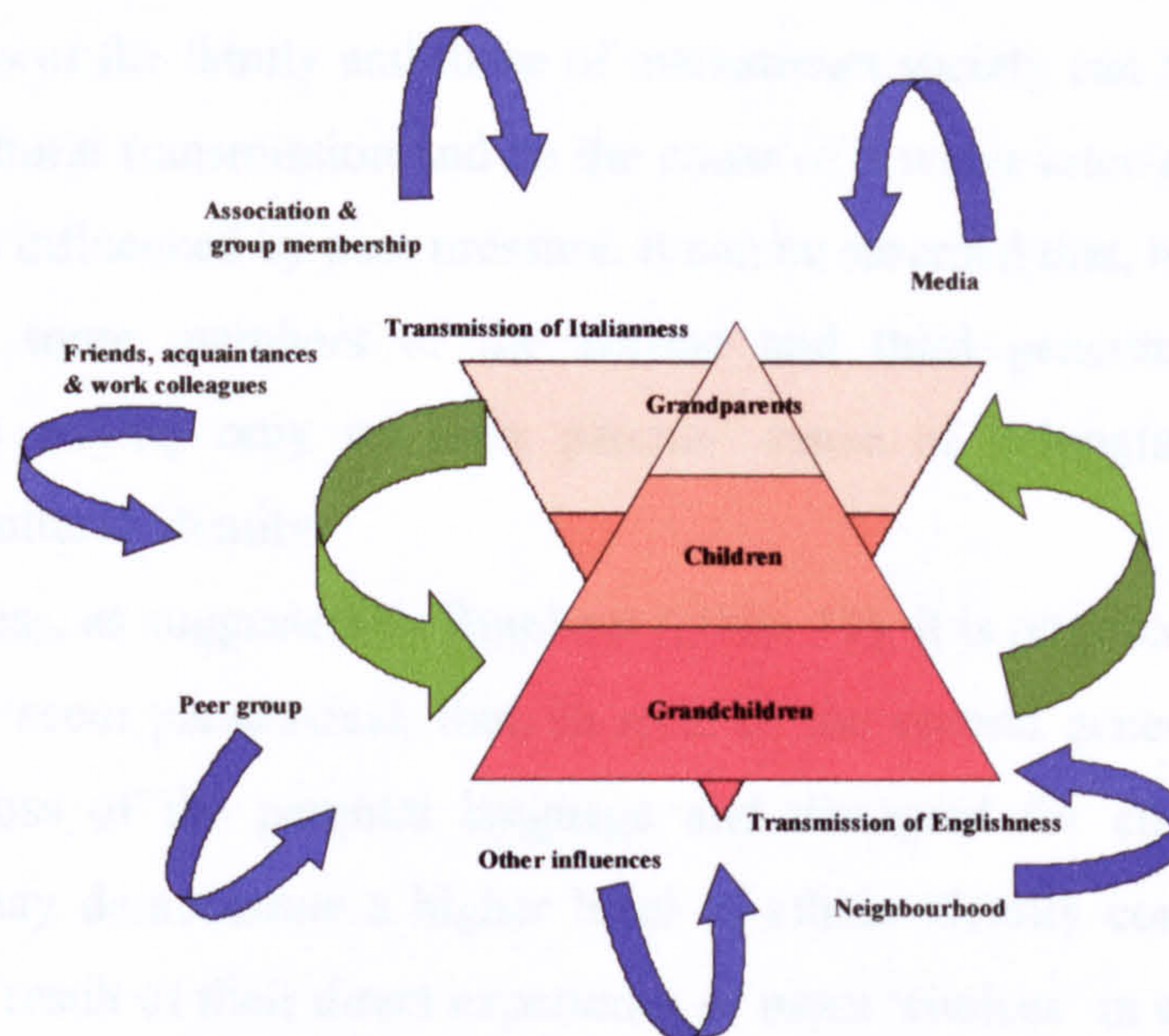
One example of the reciprocal influence of the generations on each other might be represented by the reinforcement of familial (the ideal of the 'Italian family') and cultural ties taking place through any – or all – of the following:

<sup>12</sup> This idea is further reinforced by Bertaux-Wiame's (1988) concept of the long-term influence of the memories transmitted on the paths followed by the thoughts of later generations.

- Performance – within their families individuals take up a role, which often is already chosen for them (Butler 1990). By enacting their roles, they become fully recognised by the other members and derive reinforcement from the process.
- Indoctrination – the voluntary teaching of basic principles and values that might take place mainly from the older members of the family to the younger ones.
- Cultural education – a more informal way of transmitting cultural ideas and beliefs which is linked to performance for the active role of the ‘learner’.

Obviously, the diagrams in this chapter are only very schematic representations of the process of inter-generational transmission. Indeed, as the individuals of each generation are expected to engage with people belonging to several social groups, it is very likely that the process of cultural transmission might be influenced by their relationships outside their family. Contact with the mass media – of both the country of origin and of residence – might also represent a very important element for cultural transmission, outside of the family.

**Figure 2.7: The system of influences on identity building in Italian migrant families**



In particular, as stressed by Rumbaut (2000), in a more or less heightened or blurred ethnic self awareness a special role is assumed by the ‘degree of dissonance or consonance of the social context’. Indeed, ‘people whose ethnic, racial or other social markers place them in a minority status in their group or community are more likely to be self-conscious of those characteristics’ (Rumbaut 2000: 14).

## 2.7 Conclusion

The present chapter has introduced the main themes from studies of identity, migration and the inter-generational transmission of cultural traits in families of migrant origin. The key issues related to a cross-generational study have also been presented through the illustration of the potential influences that the family might exert on the cultural/ethnic identity construction of its members. The fundamental roles of the complex negotiation processes taking place in the country of residence and involving different agents have also been taken into account, and a due excursus on the terminology which will be used in this research has also been provided.

The chapter has also presented an overview of the main contributions related to the concept that the process of identity construction has to be considered as flexible and context-bound. Identity is seen both as a choice and as an external attribution, which changes through time and according to circumstances.

It is clear that the process of migration is not just a physical movement from one place to another, but that it also implies the emotional rearrangement of long-established sets of values, customs and practices with which the immigrants identify and which do not always correspond to local ones in their places of settlement. Discrepancies between the cultural values of the family and those of mainstream society can have bearings on the process of cultural transmission and be the cause of a wider inter-generational gap, which can also be influenced by peer pressure. It can be assumed that, having acquired a certain freedom, some members of the second and third generations might feel claustrophobic in relying only on their parents' sense of belonging and ways of expressing their cultural identity.

Nevertheless, as suggested by Rumbaut (2000: 11), it is possible to hypothesise, although it might seem paradoxical, that, in spite of the second generation's signs of acculturation – loss of the parental language and disregard for ethnic behavioural patterns – they may demonstrate a higher level of ethnic identity consciousness than their parents, as a result of their direct experience of more 'choices' in ethnic affiliation. It is necessary also to take into account that if a distinct ethnic identity is still alive, or is being rediscovered, in later generations this might also be due to the 'symbolic curiosity' (Rumbaut 2000: 12) of such generations for it, resulting from the overcoming of any form of marginality which the immigrants of the first generations might have experienced as a result of their 'difference' (Nahirny and Fishman 1996: 277-8).

The following chapters will evaluate the specific role of the family in relation to cultural transmission across the generations of people of Italian origin living in

Nottingham. They will also investigate the response of the younger generations to the often conflicting influences derived from the familial and the wider social worlds. This enables the testing of the idea, presented in this chapter, of the potential development of cultural hybridity and hyphenated identities in the place of settlement.

## Chapter 3: ITALIANS IN BRITAIN. THE BACKGROUND TO THE NOTTINGHAM STUDY.

### 3.1 Italian immigration into Britain: History in progress

This chapter presents an excursus on the Italian immigration into Great Britain, with a focus on the migration after the Second World War. It develops on two different but parallel levels, particularly in the second part of the chapter, which deals with events of the last half a century. This is due to the nature of the events that are being presented. While until the post-1945 period only published sources referring to ‘historical’ events have been used and quoted, for the years following 1945 both published and original – the respondents’ words – sources are taken into account. The reasons behind this choice are fourfold:

- a) It is possible to have direct access to the protagonists of more recent events; therefore it is not only appropriate but also correct to let them testify for episodes they experienced in person. This also provides a way to avoid, deliberately, one of the main drawbacks deriving from the custom of relying only on ‘official’ published history. According to Chambers (1996: 79), the classical concept of history, in its attempt to generalise and simplify complexities, reduces the observed to a ‘speechless, denuded, biological body. Alterity is swallowed up, the observed is removed from a precise historical and cultural economy and subsequently relocated in the scientific, literary and philosophical typologies employed to describe, fix and explain the other’.
- b) The events recounted in history books are hardly the faithful reconstruction of ‘real’ facts: they are the interpretation of them through first and second-hand materials as seen from the perspective of the historian.
- c) Likewise, the testimony of the interviewees on certain events cannot be considered as their faithful representation: the individual and familial circumstances are, in fact, re-thought, re-ordered and re-counted through memory, flashbacks and forms of auto-censorship. Nevertheless, the individual biography can be interpreted as a fragment of a collective existence, as the personal memory evokes and interprets those of other people who have lived similar experiences (see Chapter 4).
- d) In the perspective of the ‘official’ historian, it is impossible to deny that some events are not so distant in time as to allow that certain objectivity that could authorise us to define them as ‘historical’. Borrowing Baudrillard’s words: ‘a degree of slowness (that is, a certain speed) but not too much, a degree of distance, but not too much,

and a degree of liberation (an energy for rupture and change) but not too much, are needed to bring about the kind of condensation or significant crystallisation of events we call history, the kind of coherent unfolding of causes and effects we call reality (*le réel*)' (Baudrillard 1996: 39).

What follows in this chapter is an attempt to find a way out from this 'blind alley'. For their different ontological and epistemological aspects, the formal and narrative levels are, indeed, irreducible. Nevertheless, they both provide specific perspectives on events that can only be enriched and better defined by the use of both. Therefore, it is necessary to take advantage of the complementary aspects provided by the two levels while trying to safeguard their independence. For this reason, the first part of the chapter, outlining the migratory fluxes into Great Britain from Italy, will be characterised by the use of a 'historical' approach. The second part will be mainly articulated around excerpts from the interviews conducted in Nottingham, complemented and supported by the results of published studies in the field of Italian immigration into Great Britain that have been concluded in recent decades.

### **3.2 Background to the Italian presence in Britain up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century**

From medieval times to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, immigration into Great Britain from Italy mainly concerned people coming from the Northern part of the Italian peninsula. Most of them were merchants, bankers, scholars or artists (Marin 1975; Colpi 1990; Gabaccia 2000a).

For a century beginning in the 1790s, when the first 'economic' migrants from Italy started to arrive in England, the majority still originated from the Northern regions of Lombardy, Emilia Romagna and Tuscany. Some of them stopped in London, but some decided to move north and settled in Scotland. They were highly skilled artisans whose activities in the new country were very much linked to those they had performed in their area of origin. People from Como, who settled mainly in the Edinburgh area, were glass-blowers and makers of thermometers and barometers and among them there were also some clock-makers. In the Glasgow area it was possible to find people from Barga (Lucca), who were specialised in the making of chalk statuettes. In Aberdeen there was a certain immigration of people from Parma, who started working as itinerant artists, later entering the catering industry (Sponza 1980; 1988; 1993). It is, therefore, clear that often there was a very close link between the places of origin and those of destination, such that certain areas of Britain came to accommodate satellite populations from specific Italian towns.

At the beginning of the 1800s Italian immigrants in the Manchester area were mainly glassblowers and clockmakers from Lombardy; however a few decades later most of the immigrants coming into the city were from Lazio and worked as artisans, plasterers and stonemasons but by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries many people from the same area worked as grocers or ice-cream vendors (Di Felice 1997; Rea 1998). People from Lazio also settled in the Irish cities of Dublin and Belfast (Colpi 1991; King and Reynolds 1994). Many of these movements were very distinct and linked specific places of origin to particular destinations via chain migration processes.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was in Italy what was defined as a 'haemorrhage' of workers, a term justified by Holmes (1988) through an analysis of the altered conditions in which the newly formed Italian state found itself. In fact, the political unification of Italy in reality divided - hypothetically - the country into two parts, the southern of which, due to its mainly agricultural economy, found itself unprepared for the pressure of competition with the more industrialised north. At the same time, the industry of the north was only partially able to absorb the workers coming from the south, who therefore turned towards other countries. They emigrated to the U.S.A, to France, and to Germany, but also to Britain, where they found themselves next to other groups of migrants coming from the northern part of the peninsula (Holmes 1988: 30-1).

When they arrived in Britain, they settled in its many cities. Nevertheless, the major attraction was London. The Italian community of London has always been more variegated than that in other cities. Over time, those settling in London and areas around it have come from many different areas (including Lombardy, Piedmont, Tuscany and Lazio) and have worked in very various fields (as craftsmen, artisans, street vendors and street entertainers), but almost all of them have resided in Clerkenwell, Holborn or Saffron Hill (Sponza 1980; 1988; 1993; Colpi 1991; Marin 1975; Holmes 1988). This phenomenon has been explained as the result of both chain migration, which according to Colpi in some cases continued being operative until the 1970s, and the *padrone*<sup>13</sup> system (Colpi 1991: 33-34 and 49). Chain migration also resulted in the development of

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<sup>13</sup> The *padrone* was an unofficial labour broker who used to supply manpower to firms and factories through the work of people mainly from his home town. Usually, the *padrone* was a former factory worker who, over time, had developed contacts with employers and the expertise to perform a wide range of activities: middleman, interpreter, usurer, legal adviser, etc.



an Italian community in Wales, originating mainly from Northern Italy, and from the region of Emilia Romagna in particular (Hughes 1991).<sup>14</sup>

After their immigration into Britain, the large numbers of Italians requiring certain services to be provided specifically for them gave life to a ‘mushrooming’ of shops and stores that developed in the most densely inhabited areas. Little by little, they started to expand from there, with the opening of café and ice-cream parlours, small restaurants and *trattorie* that made Colpi (1990: 57) define it as a ‘catering connection’.

### 3.3 The First World War

During the First World War around 8,500 Italians left England to fight for Italy. These were mainly single men who had arrived in the country between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. When they returned to England after the war they often took with them their wives, who had usually been met and married in their towns of origin (Colpi 1991: 67). The phenomenon of the ‘war brides’ was one of the causes for the increase in the number of members of the Italian community of Britain. Although the number of immigrants coming from the central and southern parts of Italy tended to increase each year, nevertheless until the Second World War Italian immigration into Great Britain originated mainly from Northern Italian regions. Decades after the initial immigration into the country, the Italian community of Great Britain started to settle in specific business sectors. From the first post-war period to the rise of fascism, many of the Italian communities in England grew and established themselves in family businesses – with the exception of Manchester where the number of Italians living in the city dropped due to their scattered movement into areas outside the city centre (Colpi 1991: 75).

### 3.4 Italian immigrants and the Second World War

As a consequence of the declaration of war in 1940, many Italians, even those who were born in Great Britain or had been in the country for decades, became considered as enemies and were interned or deported. It is true that some Italians living in Britain had greeted the advent of fascism in Italy. Nevertheless, Colpi (1991: 101-105) has suggested that this was just a way for them to show their patriotism, as they were mainly unaware or scarcely informed of the political events taking place in their country of origin. In contrast, according to Hughes (1991), some of them appeared to be grateful

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<sup>14</sup> For a more detailed account of the Italian presence in Wales from 1881 to 1945, see Hughes (1991).

to fascism because, for the first time, the needs of Italian emigrants had been taken seriously by the Italian government (Hughes 1991: 89).<sup>15</sup> In any case, both the British government and the general views of the majority of the English population were clearly against the Italian presence in England. Although Italian immigration had always been seen as successful, at the breakout of the war many episodes took place – such as violent anti-Italian riots (Colpi 1991: 105-8) – that have been justified by Portelli as the result of the building-up of hostility towards the Italian communities as a result of strong anti-catholic prejudice and tensions of an economic nature. At the same time, the position of the government was clearly anti-Italian: according to Portelli (2001), Winston Churchill ordered the Security Services to identify and arrest all men who had been in Britain for less than twenty years, between the ages of 16 and 70. It is clear that during World War 2 many Italians had to disguise themselves as non-Italian, also anglicising their names, to avoid the strong hatred for them that developed as a consequence of the conflict, and which would have meant either prison or deportation for them and their relatives (Colpi 1991: 111).

One of the most tragic events that took place during the conflict was the sinking of the *Arandora Star* by a German U-boat. Among the numerous victims, 446 were Italian prisoners of war and internees who were being deported to Canada (Colpi 1991; Fortier 2000; Hughes 1991; Marin 1975). This event is analysed further by both Marin (1975) and Fortier (2000). Marin defines the tragedy of the *Arandora Star* as an ‘everlasting painful scar’ in the body of the Italian community (Marin 1975: 86-87). Fortier goes on to re-analyse this image of the sufferance inflicted to ‘the body’ of the community to underline that ‘this is a suffering that results from the sacrifices of emigration’ and relates to a condition implicit in being an emigrant (Fortier 2000: 58).

Many of the Italians who had been captured during the North African Campaign<sup>16</sup> had been taken to Britain as prisoners of war (POWs). Colpi (1991: 128-9) writes that by the end of the war there were more than 140,000 Italians kept as POWs around Britain, where they were employed mainly as agricultural labourers. At the end of the conflict, while most of them decided to return to their homes, some of them were offered jobs in England, especially in farming, and decided to remain in the country.

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<sup>15</sup> In that period, Italian schools for the children of the migrants were founded in many countries (Hughes 1991: 89).

<sup>16</sup> One of the respondents in the current research was captured by a British contingent during the campaign in North Africa and sent as a POW to South Africa. While in captivity, he worked as a farmer and as an engineer. He said that the detainees were treated fairly in the camp. Therefore, after he returned to Italy at the end of the conflict, he found it reasonable to accept work for a British company.

Former POWs who decided to settle in Britain represent the first segment of the present-day Italian community in the country.

### 3.5 The period after the Second World War

After the conflict, Britain suffered an enormous need of manpower for the reconstruction of the factories bombarded during the war and for their operation (Castles 1984: 41).<sup>17</sup> On the other side, the reasons why many decided to leave Italy were varied:

- 1) an increase in population pressure;
- 2) the scarcely profitable agricultural economy on which most of the South depended (Holmes 1988: 214-6); and
- 3) the introduction to alternative ways of living that some people had experienced either through their travels brought about by their military service or possibly through contact with British or American soldiers allocated in the South of Italy at the end of the conflict.

This scenario takes us back to the classical positive-negative idea of the polar forces involved in the migratory process – on one side a series of contingent factors pushing the potential emigrants to leave their country, and on the other side, the new country's needs pulling them. Nevertheless, Briggs invites us to consider that there might be more than this involved in the decision to emigrate (Briggs 1978: 1-14). In fact, in his study of the Italian immigration to America between 1890 and 1930, Briggs underlines that traditional studies have mainly focused on the push factors, which often provides a vision of the emigrants as victims of circumstances who could do nothing other than emigrate to survive. According to Briggs (1978), even those studies focussing on the pull forces and which appear to provide a more positive image of the immigrants as confident and ambitious individuals, capable of intervening in the world around them, also end up with being partial. Briggs (1978: 2) argues that Italians chose emigration as an alternative to efforts to obtain a better social and economic position in Italy, and therefore '*chose to come to this country*' (Colpi 1991: 134). This is confirmed by the words of some of the people interviewed in the present study.

Rina (1) [Family 2]:<sup>18</sup> *It was not that we were starving in Italy. In my house there was peace, there was everything at home. My father was working at the paper mill,*

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<sup>17</sup> For more detailed information on the British guest work system after WW2, see Castles (1984: 26-27 and 41-47).

<sup>18</sup> The numbers appearing in parentheses after the names of the respondents indicate their generation.

*my brother was at war. But it was 1946, we had lost our father, we had had the war... When the head of the household is lost, everything is gone.*

Baldo (1) [Family 1]: *My father was a contractor and I used to work with him. I also worked in our farm. We produced tomatoes.*

D.G.: *Why did you leave Italy, then?*

Baldo: *I went away from Italy because there was little to do after the war. I applied for a post with the Carabinieri and for one in the railway here in England. I thought 'the first offer I get, I go'. The first one that arrived was the one from England to go and work at the railway. After 3 to 4 months I had been here, the Carabinieri in Italy offered me to work with them. If the offer had arrived earlier...but I was already working here.*

Among the interviewees, Giordano is the only person who attributes the reason for leaving to explanations other than economic factors.

Giordano (1) [Family 2]: *In 1955 I was working in my uncle's wood firm in the province of L'Aquila. Then the emigration adverts arrived. My stepmother told me that in England according to the statistics there were seven women for each man. So me and my brother went to the job centre and applied.*

What Giordano and Baldo refer to when they mention the application forms that they had to fill in is the English formal recruitment of workforce through advertisements displayed in local Italian job centres or published in newspapers. This followed the establishment of an agreement between the Italian and British Ministries of Labour for the recruitment of workers to be sent mainly to textile and iron-and-steel industries during the last years of the 1940s<sup>19</sup> (Castles 1984; Colpi 1991; Fortier 2000; Marin 1985; Sponza and Tosi 1993; Tosi 1984). This intergovernmental document referred to the *Aliens Order* 1920, which allowed immigrants to enter the country only if in possession of a valid work permit issued by the Ministry of Labour at the request of the employers (Colpi 1991: 72-3, 144-5). The workers recruited would have had to sign a contract for four years, the only clauses being the good health of the worker – verified through a health check – and the condition that they stayed with the same employer for the entire duration of the four years' contract (Castles 1984; Colpi 1991).

As a result of their work permits these immigrants went to Bedford, Leicester, Peterborough, Derby, Nottingham and Chesterfield, but also to Bradford, Lancashire and Cheshire (Colpi 1991). After four years the workers, having obtained permission to reside in the country, were allowed either to stay or to move to another company. Some stayed with the same company, others went back to Italy, whilst others, now more

<sup>19</sup> This kind of intergovernmental agreement soon elicited opposition in the UK by both the general public and the trade unions. As a consequence, the recruitment schemes were left in the hands of the employers themselves who always needed to apply to the Ministry of Labour for work permits to be allowed to recruit a certain number of foreign workers (Colpi 1991: 144).

confident, moved to other companies or to other towns in search of an improvement in their lives.<sup>20</sup> Such types of employment were denominated ‘bulk schemes’ for the employment of large groups of workers at the same time.

Such recruitment of large contingents of workers ended up modifying the nature of the existing Italian community living in Britain. In fact, it is possible to state that from this point on, the characteristics of Italian immigration into Britain changed radically. The new immigrants, in fact, were very different from those who had emigrated some decades before in a number of characteristics. Among these were:

- 1) A unified period of arrival and similar geographical and social origins in Italy. These new communities were formed mainly of immigrants from a rural background, coming from the south of Italy, who emigrated between the end of the 1940s and the 1960s.
- 2) Similar destinations in Britain and similar occupational groups, which can be explained as a result of the bulk schemes and of chain migration.

**Figure 3.1: Principal places of origin of the Italians of Nottingham**



<sup>20</sup> Some 1,500 Italians working in England at the time (Colpi 1991: 137), were, however, already in the country. These are the people that had been kept as POWs who, having been offered a job in the UK, accepted to stay in the country and work mainly as farmers.

This phenomenon seems to have elements in common with the localised nature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian settlements. Although the bulk schemes, with their impersonal recruitment of workers, might have represented the end of the old chain migration, this in reality did not happen. In fact, once recruitment was no longer regulated by intergovernmental agreements, and employers had to apply themselves for new workforce members, they did so by relying directly on their employees, by asking them whether they knew any aspiring *émigrés* in their towns or villages of origin.<sup>21</sup> In some cases, friends and relatives already living in the country, not bound to their jobs by a contract, would move to other towns if better opportunities arose: chain migration would, therefore, also be involved in secondary migration within the UK<sup>22</sup>.

These phenomena explain the presence of many *paesani*<sup>23</sup> in each of the Italian communities in Britain. In fact, although each community is formed mainly of people from the Italian Mezzogiorno, within them we can find a higher presence of people from one or two towns, or from neighbouring towns and, at the same time, a strong sense of *campanilismo* – a strong sense of belonging and of shared history.<sup>24</sup>

Baldo (1) [Family 1]: *There were 12-13 people from my village [in the Salerno province] who came to work in Nottingham. There was a firm at Ilkeston producing big tubes [Ilkeston ironworks]. The same people giving work to them required other 4-5 people to work in their firm. As we came here for work, they thought that there might be someone else interested in working in England. And they asked for 4-5 more. We gave them the names and they did everything. They wrote to Italy and let them come here.*

D.G.: *You and other people acted as mediators to let other people arrive here...*

Baldo: *Yes. After those 4-5 arrived, more people arrived.*

D.G.: *So it was a chain!*

Baldo: *Yes, a chain.*

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<sup>21</sup> These circumstances cannot be resolved by relying only on the push-pull model of emigration, as they seem to go beyond the simple needs of employers and perspective employees. According to MacDonald and MacDonald (1964), the rise of the Italian community in the US is, in fact, mainly due to chain migration. In some cases, this can also lead to ‘occupational chaining’, as in the striking example of the *Casalatticesi* of Dublin and the fish-and-chips ‘connection’ (King and Reynolds 1994).

<sup>22</sup> Some of the interviewees of the first generation have moved to Nottingham from other areas as a result of this.

<sup>23</sup> *Paesano* derives from the Italian noun *paese* (town, village). *Paesani* are people originating from the same town or village, who appear to be closely linked to each other by the sharing of values, traditions and common history. *Paesani* and *Campanilismo* – see definition below – are two sides of the same coin.

<sup>24</sup> Colpi makes a distinction between various levels of *campanilismo*: familial, among *paesani*, provincial and regional (Colpi 1991: 177-8; 187-190). *Campanilismo* derives from the Italian word for bell-tower (*campanile*) which, placed in the main *Piazza* of small towns and villages, represents the core of their social life. The evocative and metaphorical value of the ‘campanile’ underlies the study of Italian immigration in the Bristol area by Bottignolo, *Without a Bell Tower* (1985). In a catch-22 situation, it is not easy to establish if it is chain migration that facilitates *campanilismo* within the immigrant community, or vice versa. See also section 8.2.1.

Gioacchino (1) [Family 6]: *First a friend came here to Nottingham to work for Beeston [Beeston Boiler Company]. At the time, in 1953, they were looking for workers. So the governments...or parts of the governments...no one knows how it is... sent the permits. Because, at the time, you could come only with the permit, that means with the work contract. So he came first, then all the others... let's say, she [the wife] is your neighbour, you live in Italy and she writes to you 'Gioacchino is working there'. And you say 'maybe they need more workers from abroad,' and this and that, and you write back. Our little town counts 8-9,000 inhabitants [San Paolo di Civitate] and we came almost one hundred young boys from there... we were all young before. My brother came before me but after 4-5 months, as they were looking for other workers, they sent me the permit...*

D.G.: ... through the firm.

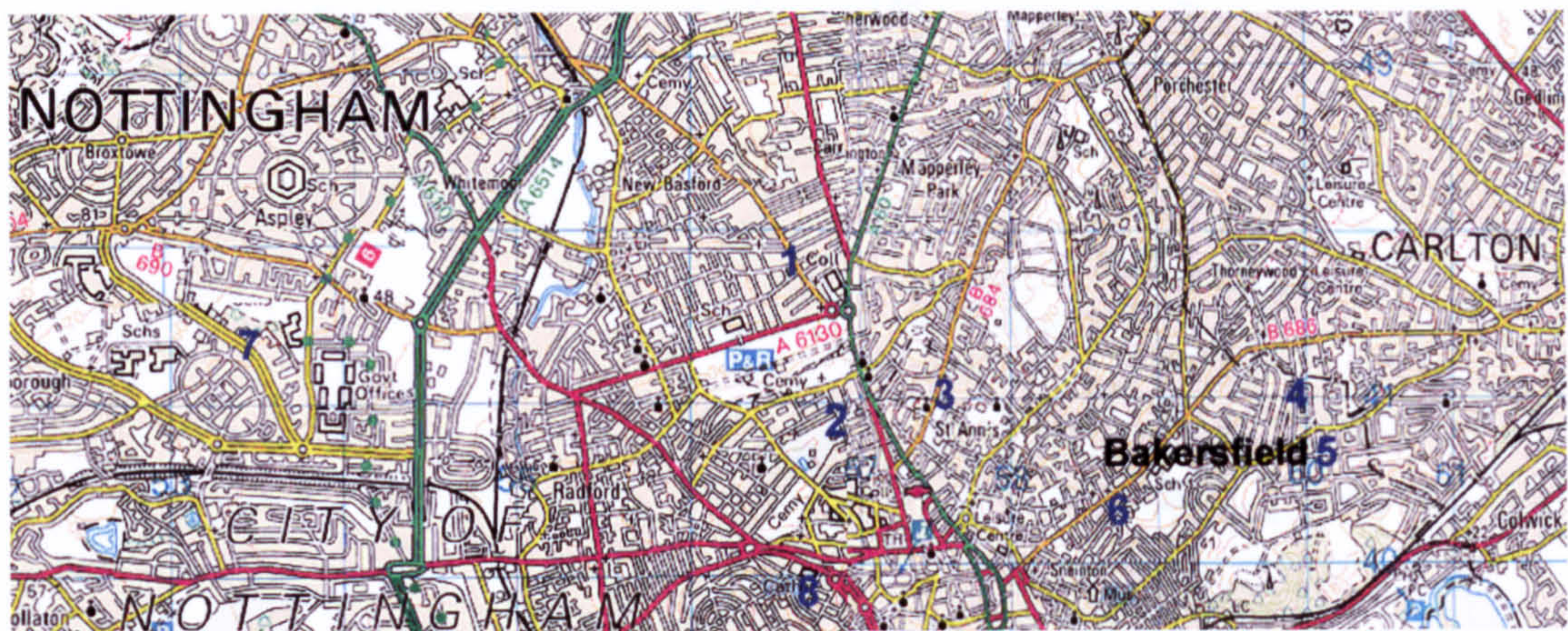
Gioacchino: *Always through the firm!*

The perspective emigrants learned through kin or friends about the opportunities available abroad and relied on them for the arrangement of the preliminary bureaucratic and practical processes, which included finding suitable accommodation. This could have the result of creating ethnically-defined neighbourhoods (MacDonald and MacDonald 1964), such as occurred in the Sneinton area of Nottingham.

Matilde (1) [Family 9]: *We call Bakersfield, that's Sneinton, 'Little Italy'.*

Alberto (1): *Because most of the Italian community lives there, that's why. The Italians live in Bakersfield, where the Italian shop is. But they live off that street.*

**Figure 3.2: Location of the Italian settlement in Nottingham**



**Key:**

1. Former Italian Cultural Centre – 2, Vivian Avenue
2. Italian kindergarten
3. St Augustine Catholic Presbitery
4. *Dorotee di Cemmo* Missionary Nuns
5. *Il Tricolore* delicatessen shop
6. St Bernadette's Hall – Currently hosting the *Associazione Anziani di Nottingham*
7. Trinity Catholic School
8. St Barnabas Catholic Cathedral

Strong *campanilismo* was identified by Colpi in one of the groups of Italians forming the community of Bedford, the biggest of the post-war Italian communities in Britain. In the town, 90 per cent of the Italian population comes from Campania, Molise, Puglia or Sicilia. In particular, among the Sicilians, according to Colpi, in 1983 93% came from Sant'Angelo Muxaro (Agrigento) and form a very close-knit community within the community. The second largest number of immigrants comes from Busso (Campobasso, Molise). Nevertheless, although they are not the biggest Italian group in absolute terms, they seem to be predominant in the town, as they constitute a group with a certain self-awareness that is projected on the outside and that is performed also through the foundation of the association called *I Bussesi di Bedford* (Colpi 1991: 186).

**Figure 3.3 Italian communities in Great Britain (published in 1991)**



Source: Colpi 1991

Other Italian communities that developed (or developed further) after the Second World War were in London, Leicester, Loughborough, Peterborough, Birmingham, Nottingham, Derby, Coventry, Wolverhampton, Chester, Manchester, Swansea, Cardiff, Bristol and Swindon.<sup>25</sup> Figure 3.1 is drawn from *The Italian Factor* by Colpi, published

<sup>25</sup> Bottignolo (1985) provides a thorough investigation of the Italian communities in South-West England. In the book, Bottignolo summarises the results of research conducted in mainly in Bristol and Swindon.



in 1991, representing in graphic form the location and size of the major Italian communities in Great Britain. The map is accepted still to be an appropriate illustration for today's Italian communities.

An interesting element in this type of movement is that, for the first time in the history of migration into Britain, women arrived not only as spouses or daughters, but also as factory workers or maids in private houses or hospitals (Colpi 1991; Fortier 2000; Tosi 1994). According to Colpi (1991: 146) these women, often very young and single, not only have to be considered as the pioneers of the post-war Italian immigration to the UK, but also for a certain time they represented the majority of the Italians living in Britain, as they even outnumbered the male presence in the country (Colpi 1991; Holmes 1984).

The following table of data drawn from the British population censuses of 1951, 1961, 1966 and 1971 shows that in the years following the end of the Second World War the number of Italian women living in Britain was much higher than that of men.

**Table 3.1 Italian residents in Britain between 1951 and 1971 by country of birth**

Census	Men		Women		Male/female ratio
	Total	Annual rate of increase from previous census	Total	Annual rate of increase from previous census	
1951	12.661	-	20.498	-	61.8%
1961	36.017	184	43.310	121	83.2%
1966	46.090	28	50.570	12	91.1%
1971	54.200	18	55.600	10	97.5%

Source: British population censuses

It can be hypothesised that the numerical gap between men and women was later slowly bridged by the arrival of more men migrating into the country, and also through arranged marriages with *paesani* (see below), who then worked in the most diverse sectors of employment, as shown in Table 3.2.

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Interestingly, he underlines the peculiarities of these two populations by showing the role of the migratory systems and of the different places of origin in the construction of the communities. At the same time, due to the fact that the two communities are served by the same Italian institutions, they present some common elements.

**Table 3.2: Professions of Italian men and women in Britain between 1951 and 1966<sup>26</sup>**

Census	1951				1961				1966			
	Men	%	Women	%	Men	%	Women	%	Men	%	Women	%
Total workers	7.590	10	7.214	10	19.500	10	13.910	10	40.800	10	26.470	10
Farmers	1.760	23	42	0.6	2.060	10	100	0.7	2.310	6	290	1
Workers in the steel industry	697	9	186	3	2.200	11	420	3	6.480	16	1.880	7
Factory workers	558	7	1.544	21	1.620	8	2.990	22	4.680	11	6.620	25
Unskilled workers	320	4	210	3	2.520	13	340	2	4.710	12	580	2
Tertiary sector employees	2.870	38	4.723	65	7.300	37	7.830	56	12.440	30	10.310	39
Professionals and technicians	184	2	349	5	710	4	900	6	1.280	3	1.640	6

Source: Marin, 1975

However difficult it might have been for men leaving Italy and their family for the uncertainty of a job abroad, their situation was much easier than that of the women. Although at the time many women left their parental homes to emigrate, in many cases this choice was not easily accepted by their parents who feared the beginning of a more liberal way of life for their daughters.

In some cases, people emigrated after having experienced a different 'lifestyle', for example via military service. It was through the accounts of her brother, who had volunteered in the army and then emigrated to the U.S.A., that Piera acquired second-hand experience of what life in another country might have been like. During the interview, she underlined that going abroad was for her a choice, as she wanted to get away from her small village.

Piera (1) [Family 10]: *I had a brother who had already gone around the world. At 16 he was a volunteer in the army. He went around and saw that the life was better [my emphasis]. So, when I decided to leave, how many quarrels I had with my father! ...And the beating...as he [the brother] had had a very good life and they thought that I...*

D.G.: *In what sense a good life?*

Piera: *A good life, in the sense, that he got some... as he is a man...you know how men are!*

D.G.: *In the sense that he had some girlfriends?*

<sup>26</sup> The table is intended to provide an overview of the commonest sectors of employment. The data provided here are partial as: a) occupations not reaching at least 10% in any of the three censuses are not listed; b) the data for 1951 and 1961 refer only to England and Wales; c) the data for 1966 are for Great Britain and for all the people who were there temporarily on a work permit (see Marin 1975: 183).

Piera: *Yes, that's it! Maybe they were thinking that I... [Pause]. Madonna, how many times I was beaten! My mum didn't want too.*

D.G.: *Why did you want to leave?*

Piera: *I don't know, I don't know. I didn't want to stay in that town and then I was asking my mum 'what am I doing here?' There was nothing! Soon after the war you couldn't learn anything. What could you do? You see? For example, when you grew up you had to marry and...who knows what else! There was nothing, it was a small town, there were just the stones, in Italy it was all bombed.*

As reported by Colpi (1991: 146-7), in the first years after the war the shortage of Italian men in Britain led these women to marriages mainly within other migrant communities (mainly Polish and Ukrainian). Later, many of the young Italian girls who arrived to England independently preferred to marry Italian men. The weddings could take place either in Britain where they married fellow countrymen who had already migrated or in Italy where, through becoming the wives of *paesani*, they automatically became actors of further emigration into Britain and mediators between their husbands, the newcomers, and the external world. Working outside their homes, they retained their economic independence from their partners and often showed a deeper level of integration in the country of immigration.<sup>27</sup>

Adapting to factory work was a big challenge for many of the immigrants. It was a very different kind of work from what they had been used to do. Most of them had been working in farming, in the open air. Their working day started at dawn and ended as soon as the sunset arrived. It was hard work, at the mercy of uncertainties and the elements, both for the farmers and for their crops. For many of them, moving to a factory environment meant trying to adjust to a hostile environment: hard work in a closed environment, night shifts, and potentially dangerous activities.

Dalila (2) [Family8]: *It was very difficult. My father came here to work for the Beeston Boiler, the foundry where they were making metals, and the work was hard. I remember some details, I was small, I remember that my father used to come back home with the hands covered in cuts, sore, bleeding. He used to put a bandage and a cream on every night. You see, now maybe it is different, but at the time there was no machinery, they had to do everything themselves. If they needed to lift some cast iron, they needed to do that by hand. And you couldn't say 'I don't like this job, I go somewhere else'. If you found a job, you needed to stay there, there was no choice. After 4-5 years you could go somewhere else, but at the beginning it was hard.*

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<sup>27</sup> In a study of the Italian communities of Bedford and La Louvière, Belgium, Tonna (1965) reported that women of the Italian community of Bedford appear to have contributed greatly to the social integration of their families in the town. This could be possible thanks to their work outside their homes which resulted in a certain financial stability, better cohesion within their homes and a higher degree of integration. However, all this was more difficult to achieve in the Italian community in Belgium due to the fact that the women's roles were mainly those of wife and mother, with little or no contact with host society.

What was worse for many of them was their awareness that there was no other way to work in the country if they were found to be in breach of the contract that had allowed them to come in the first place. They needed to survive for four years in order to be able to find another, more suitable, job or, hoping to be as lucky as Guido was, to be offered a white collar job in the same factory where he was a worker.

Guido (1) [Family 4]: *For three years I did ...the slave...let's say. I worked, I drudged, so to speak, at the furnace to earn some money to be sent home, to my dad. Then I was offered another job in the same firm and I accepted willingly: I was an interpreter between the directors and the workers.*

Working hard in a factory, however, was at first considered as temporary by the immigrants. Most of them, in fact, can be defined as target workers, who intended to remain in the country only for a few years, build up a small fortune, and return to the village of origin. Many Italian immigrants, as well as using their wages to pay the increased costs of living resulting from having set up their own families while abroad, also used to send remittances to their relatives at 'home' for the most diverse reasons: to support family members who remained in Italy, to build a house, to buy a piece of land, to start a small business or, as in the case of Baldo, to pay for the huge cost of a sister's wedding. After a few years in Britain, some workers returned to Italy, but some remained in the country (see Chapter 6), managed to get into the system and became self-employed, mainly in the ice-cream sector or in the catering industry (see Chapter 8).

### 3.6 The Italian presence in the UK during recent decades

According to a research conducted by *Fondazione Migrantes* and *Caritas* of Rome published in March 2002, the Italian region most represented in Britain is Campania, with around 37,000 immigrants, forming 56.1 per cent of the total Italian immigrant population, with others originating from other regions of South Italy (particularly Puglia, Sicilia and Calabria) and from Lazio (*Caritas/Migrantes* 2002).

In the last few decades two elements have changed in Italian emigration: the migratory trajectories and the immigrants' profile. In fact, whilst Colpi in 1991 could define the Italian settlements developed after the Second World War as 'new communities', as opposed to the pre-existent ones (the 'old communities'), such a distinction is no longer possible. Due to the recent increase in high-skilled immigration from the Italian peninsula, as well as from other parts of the world, this rather useful distinction has become outdated. There is a huge difference between the early post-war

and the more recent Italian immigration. While the migration of the early post-war period was mainly of people from a rural background who moved in search of a job, today most of the people who come into England are here for other reasons. Many of them, who already possess a medium or high level of education, move to England to learn the language or to seek a specialisation, gaining as a consequence virtually little restriction to invest their knowledge somewhere else in the world. This may cause their stay in the country to be more temporary than in the past (White 1993: 50).

At the same, the migratory process appears to be less traumatic than in the past, due to the newcomers' acquired 'anticipatory socialisation' and their high level of shared values within transnational companies and/or the institutions in which they work. Although there are virtually no geographical limits to the possibilities of the new highly-skilled immigrants, in Britain the main point of attraction is London, both as a result of its multicultural nature and for its diversified economic activities.

### 3.7 Nottingham

According to the 2001 census there were 1194 people born in Italy and living in the Nottingham area. Accurate quantification of the Italian presence in the UK, however, has never been easy. Due to the lack of co-ordination between the *Direzione generale degli Italiani all'estero* of the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the British Labour Ministry, the information available for the past fifty years cannot be considered as satisfactory. Moreover, although the British census registers the presence of immigrants according to their country of birth once every decade, other official data that are supposed to complement those of the census appear to be inadequate. Not all the immigrants are present in the AIRE (*Anagrafe degli Italiani Residenti all'Estero*)<sup>28</sup> register, as enrolment is not compulsory and the updating of the information is voluntary: *Caritas* (2002) underlines that more than one million people worldwide are not enrolled.

Moreover, if the 2001 census allows us to quantify the Italy-born population of Nottinghamshire<sup>29</sup>, it is unable to provide a quantification of the Italian population of the same area: i.e. the children and grandchildren of the people born in Italy who now might have a different citizenship and are not enrolled in the AIRE register. Therefore, the size of the Italian group is mainly the result of a process of supposition.

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<sup>28</sup> Register of births, marriages and deaths for Italians resident abroad.

<sup>29</sup> Many of them moved to England in their late twenties or early thirties: therefore they tend to grow faster than the host group, due to their higher birth-rate and lower death-rate (King 1993a: 23-4).

According to the Italian Consulate in Manchester, the number of people living in Nottingham enrolled in the AIRE register in June 2003 was 2107.

The largest group is represented by people originating from Campania, interestingly, followed by people originating from just one village: Accettura<sup>30</sup>, in the province of Matera, Basilicata. The third largest group is formed by people from the province of Foggia, Puglia, and in particular from the town of San Paolo di Civitate. Table 3.3 differentiates among them in relation to their age group. It is clear that among the people enrolled in the AIRE register there are also the children and grandchildren of the Italians who moved to Nottingham some decades ago.

As in much of the rest of Britain, the first post-war Italians who came to Nottingham arrived in batches in the 1950s and 60s, after having signed a contract for four years with companies in the area. Most of them were employed as foundry workers by the Beeston Boiler Company and the Stanton and Staveley Iron Works in Ilkeston. Only a few of them worked in farming, while most of the women found a factory job, mainly as machinists, or worked as maids in hospitals or nursing homes.

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<sup>30</sup> The people from Accettura represent 20% of the Italian population of Nottingham (Colpi 1991: 181). Nevertheless, not one of the interviewees in the present research originates from that village. Some *Accetturesi* attending the meetings of the 'Associazione Anziani di Nottingham' were approached and asked whether they wanted to take part in the research. No positive responses were received. No particular value was attributed to this circumstance until a few Italians from other areas had been interviewed. They all reported, without being asked, that the people from Accettura have always shown a form of auto-ghettoisation even within the same Italian community. This phenomenon was also noticed by Colpi (1991: 182) who writes that the people from Accettura 'live rather on the fringes of the *Community* being excluded from the larger *paesani*-based social, political and often economic networks'. For this reason, many Italians of Nottingham do not appear to liaise strongly with the *Accetturesi*. In reality, this condition could be the outcome of some sort of reinforcement (*I leave you alone, therefore you do not want to deal with me, because you feel ignored, and/or vice versa*). This issue, however, goes beyond the scope of the present investigation. For more details on the dialectical construction of ethnic identity within the Italian community of Nottingham see section 8.2.1.

**Table 3.3: Number of people enrolled in the AIRE register for Nottingham by age group**

Age group	Number
0 – 4	88
5 – 9	108
10 – 14	139
15 – 19	128
20 – 24	152
25 – 29	187
30 – 34	208
35 – 39	200
40 – 44	184
45 – 49	127
50 – 54	131
55 – 59	101
60 – 64	123
65 – 69	159
75 – 79	57
80 – 84	15

Source: AIRE, Manchester Italian Consulate (2003)

Data provided by the Italian consulate in Manchester show that, though time, professional diversification has taken place among the Italians living in Britain as a whole. The figures in the Table 3.4 refer specifically to the city of Nottingham.

**Table 3.4: Professions of the people of Italian origin in Nottingham**

Professions	% of the total
Non-skilled workers	22.39
Skilled workers	12.59
Employees	11.98
Managers	0.61
Self-employed	1.13
Artisans	5.77
Salespersons	0.61
Agriculture	1.04
NHS employees	1.22
Catering/Hospitality	7.69
University Lecturers	0.26
Teachers	1.04
Housewives	0.08
Pensioners	21.78
Unemployed	8.83

Source: AIRE, Manchester Italian Consulate (2003)

Table 3.4 indicates that among the people of Italian origin living in Nottingham today there are a certain number of skilled workers and professionals. These might be

the children or grandchildren of the Italians who arrived through the batch schemes, who might display upward mobility through the generations, or might be members of a more recent, more specialised form of migration. The latter would not be, generally, considered as members of the Italian community, usually being socialised within professionally- rather than ethnically-defined circles.

However, the Italian community (at least in terms of those self-identifying as such for the AIRE records) counts a significant number of members belonging to the second and third generations (see Table 3.3), who appear in the register of the Italians living abroad kept at the Italian consulate in Manchester and in the register of births, marriages and deaths of the town hall of their villages of origin in Italy.

The figures available, however, relate to an official and bureaucratic procedure that might or might not involve all the members of generations subsequent to that of the initial migrants. In relation to the scope of the present research, the significance of these data lies in the issue of whether being registered as members of a wider Italian country - expanding beyond the national boundaries - or not has any consequences for the ways the children and grandchildren of the older Italians of Nottingham negotiate their identities or perceive themselves. These are themes that will be thoroughly investigated later in the thesis in Chapter 8.



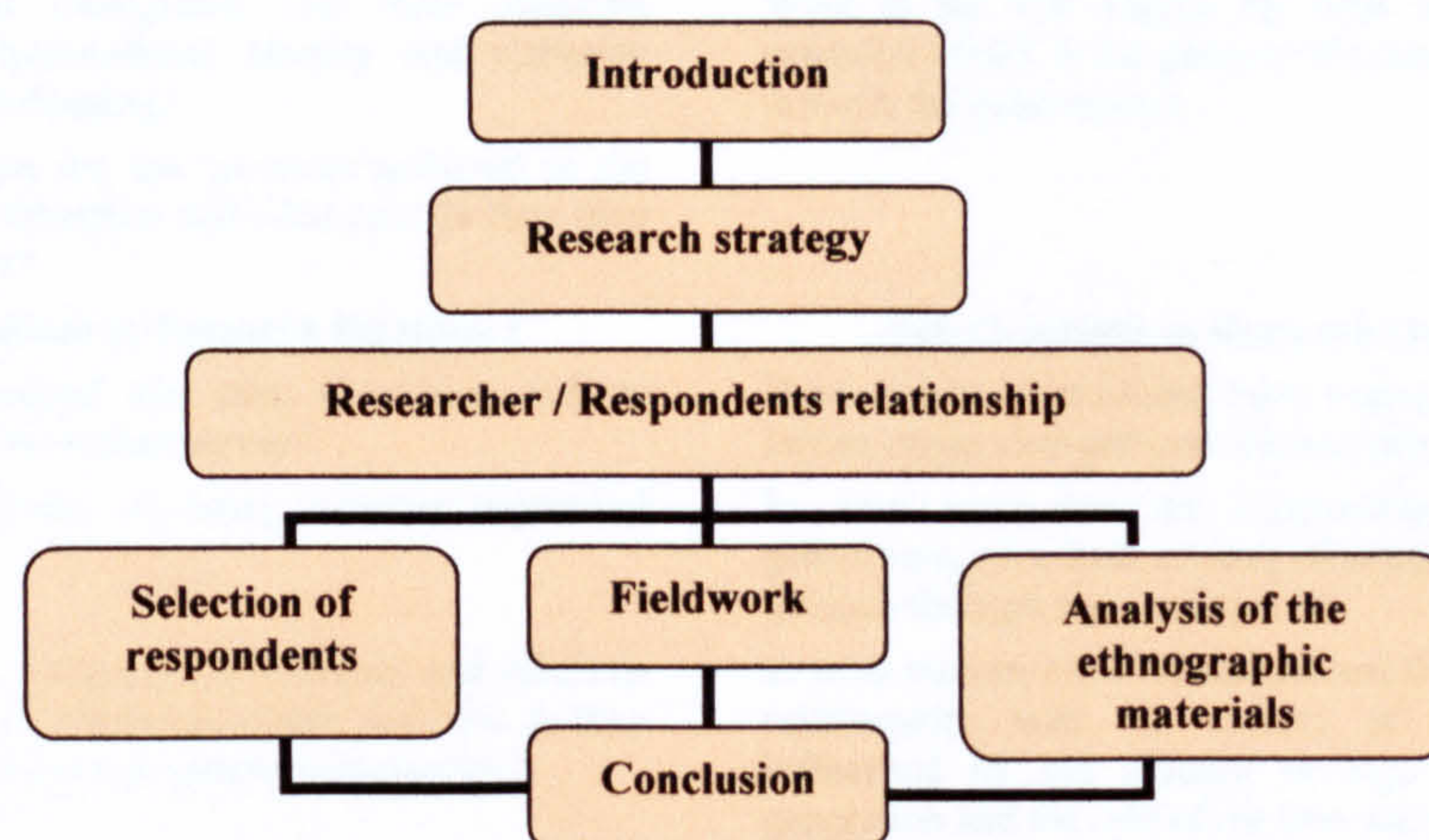
## Chapter 4: METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have presented the research background, with a description of the main aims of the thesis (Chapter 1), a review of the relevant literature in the field and definitions of the core concepts (Chapter 2), and an overview of the presence of people of Italian origin in Great Britain (Chapter 3).

The present chapter, building on these, aims to describe, explain and supply further information on the methodological and epistemological aspects of the investigation: the definition of the characteristics of the sample; the recruitment of interviewees; the collection of data through participant observation and semi-structured interviews; the transcription and codification of the interviews; their analysis; and the writing-up phase. The attempt here is to describe the various phases in a chronological order. Figure 4.1 provides an overview of the structure of the chapter.

**Figure 4.1 Methodology chapter structure**



The design of the study is described in relation to the research questions and the review of the literature in the research field. The chapter then identifies and explains the procedures used in the research. This is followed by the explanation of the process of selection of the respondents and by a section devoted to the operationalisation of the research strategy through fieldwork. This particular phase presented some methodological challenges and choices, mainly linked to the necessity to confront issues related to fluid and immaterial concepts such as values, feelings and beliefs.

The position of the researcher within the study is also taken into account and closely related to the process of respondent selection and ethnographic data collection, which, in their turn, are linked to the way the interviews are transcribed, translated and analysed. The procedure followed in the analysis of the ethnographic material is presented before the concluding section.

## 4.2 Research strategy

The purposes of the present study are to analyse the ways in which the perception of ethnic/cultural identity changes across different generations of people of Italian origin, and to define the specific role of the family in such inter-generational transmission. As stated in Chapter 1, the research consists of a qualitative three-generational study of the transmission of ethnic and cultural identity in individual families of Italian origin.

The main research questions of the present study, subdivided into sub-questions that address some aspects of the wider issues, are as follows:

**Table 4.1 Research questions and sub-questions**

Research Question 1	Research Question 2
<p>How do Italian immigrants and their offspring construct their transnational identity and elaborate their feelings of belonging?</p> <p>In particular, what are the variables involved in the processes of identification and what role do they play in these processes?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sub-Questions to Research Question 1</b></p> <p>How do first, second and third generation Italians perceive and represent themselves?</p> <p>What ideas of identity are being accepted, negotiated or contested?</p> <p>How do cultural transnational practices and relations with the country of origin take form, and how do they influence the processes of identity construction?</p> <p>Are new forms of identification created as a consequence?</p>	<p>What is the role played by both the nuclear and extended family in the process of cultural transmission through the generations?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sub-Questions to Research Question 2</b></p> <p>How, and to what extent, have immigrant families of Italian origin changed over the last fifty years?</p> <p>In what ways has the relationship of the three generations with their country of ancestral origin been affected through time and space?</p> <p>In what manner have the second and third generations' relationships with the country of residence been influenced by the cultural heritage from the first generation and the role of the host society's values and practices in the negotiation of identity?</p> <p>What values, practices and attitudes are transmitted through the generations?</p> <p>What cultural elements are resisted, absorbed or transformed, rearranged and adjusted, if necessary, in order to allow them to fit into the younger generations' worldview?</p> <p>What identity strategies are adopted by the second and third generations in relation to their parents and grandparents, with particular attention to the role of endogamy, exogamy and divorce?</p>

The standpoint of this study is, therefore, cross-generational and comparative. In particular, it is based on the collection and scrutiny of substantial amounts of ethnographic materials in order to develop insights into social and cultural phenomena, issues that by their nature are investigable only through a qualitative approach.

In order to be able to address the questions illustrated in Table 4.1, they have been put in relation to a series of factors considered as crucial in the process of inter-generational transmission in a migratory context. These elements have been identified also in relation to the issues presented in Chapter 2 and, in particular, to the role of the internal and external influences on identity formation (Figure 2.4).

Tables 4.2 and 4.3 show the elements to be investigated in relation to each research sub-question, differentiate between their attitudinal or behavioural character, and highlight the most appropriate method for the collection of the ethnographic data.

**Table 4.2: Elements analysed in order to answer the sub-questions to research question 1**

Sub-questions to research question 1	Elements analysed distinguished according to their attitudinal (A) or behavioural (B) status	Method
How do first, second and third generation Italians perceive and represent themselves?	Perceived identity (A) Performed identity (B) Attitudes towards the use of Italian (A) Language spoken (B) Sport as an attitude (A) Sport as an observable behaviour (B)	Interviews Observation
What ideas of identity are being accepted, negotiated or contested?	Perceived identity (A) Performed identity (B) Attitudes towards the use of Italian (A) Language spoken (B) Rituals and ceremonies (A & B) Contact with Italy (A & B)	Interviews Observation
How do cultural transnational practices and relations with the country of origin take form, and how do they influence the processes of identity construction?	Rituals and ceremonies (A & B) Contact with Italy (A & B) News, current affairs and politics (A & B) Music/popular culture/TV (A & B) Food habits (A & B)	Interviews Observation
Are new forms of identification created as a consequence?	Perceived identity (A) Performed identity (B)	Interviews Observation

**Table 4.3: Elements analysed in order to answer the sub-questions to research question 2**

Sub-questions to research question 2	Elements analysed distinguished according to their attitudinal (A) or behavioural (B) status	Method
How, and to what extent, have immigrant families of Italian origin changed over the last fifty years?	Language spoken (B) Social life: organisations, networks, support, etc. (A & B) Family structure & intermarriage (A & B) Rituals and ceremonies (A & B) Contact with Italy (A & B) Gender roles (A & B) Food habits (A & B) Social life: organisations, networks, support, etc. (A & B) Proximity/location (B)	Interviews Observation
In what ways has the relationship of the three generations with their country of ancestral origin been affected through time and space?	Contact with Italy/ news, current affairs and politics (A) Food habits	Interviews
In what manner have the second and third generations' relationship with the country of residence been influenced by the cultural heritage from the first generation and the role of the host society's values and practices in the negotiation of identity?	Attitudes towards the use of Italian (A) Language spoken (B) Social life: organisations, networks, support, etc. (A & B) Family structure & intermarriage (A & B) Rituals and ceremonies (A & B) Contact with Italy (A & B) Gender roles (A & B) Food habits (A & B) Social life: organisations, networks, support, etc. (A & B) Proximity/location (B)	Interviews Observation
What values, practices and attitudes are transmitted through the generations?	Attitudes towards the use of Italian (A) Language spoken (B) Future aspirations (A) Social life: organisations, networks, support, etc. (A & B) Family structure and intermarriage (A & B) Rituals and ceremonies (A & B) Contact with Italy (A & B) News, current affairs and politics (B) Food habits (B) Proximity/location (B)	Interviews Observation
What cultural elements are resisted, absorbed or transformed, rearranged and adjusted, if necessary, in order to allow them to fit into the younger generations' worldview?	Attitudes towards the use of Italian (A) Language spoken (B) Future aspirations (A) Social life: organisations, networks, support, etc. (A & B) Family structure and intermarriage (A & B) Rituals and ceremonies (A & B) Contact with Italy (A & B) News, current affairs and politics (B) Food habits (B) Proximity/location (B)	Interviews Observation
What identity strategies are adopted by the second and third generations in relation to their parents and grandparents, with particular attention to the role of endogamy, exogamy and divorce?	Family structure and intermarriage (A) Social life: organisations, networks, support, etc. (A & B)	Interviews Observation

The identification of the nature of the phenomena to be investigated has to be considered as fundamental for the design of the interview schedule and the structuring of the observation plan. It is also essential in recognising the most suitable research

methods for the collection of robust empirical materials. As underlined by Berner Gluck and Patai (1991: 222) ‘there is not merely one appropriate methodology, nor one type of research project, that all scholars should rush to duplicate. No blanket prescription will help us; we need, rather, to engage in self critical examinations of our practices and to go on to develop a range of models from which to select our procedures according to the needs of specific, and often unique, research situations’.

#### 4.2.1 Ethnography

The present study is qualitative in nature and can be defined as ethnographic. The empirical materials have, in fact, been collected through extensive involvement in the field, using interviews and observational techniques such as observation<sup>31</sup> and participant observation as main data sources.

The research is also partially informed by grounded theory: the constant analysis of the ethnographic data collected allows the development of general ideas, inductively founded on them. In this sense, the ideas developed are ‘grounded’ on the empirical materials collected, through the researcher’s insights into them (Strauss 1998; Strauss and Corbin 1997).

In the collection of ethnographic materials there are some elements that, by necessity, belong to the subjectivity of the researcher, among these being the ‘pre-comprehension’ of the subject. The researchers’ pre-comprehension is formed by all the things that have been written and that they are aware of – even the stereotypes – although most people might think of themselves as being completely free from prejudice. There is a myth involving ‘the allegation that ethnography is – or should be – a-theoretical. However, no good researcher enters a site knowing nothing about it in advance’ (LeCompte 2002: 286). When researchers start an investigation they always have a certain ‘pre-comprehension’ of the issues they intend to explore. ‘Pre-comprehension’ is what allows us to understand them: it is the first level of knowledge, that of recognition (Fabietti: 1999: 74-6). One of the risks is, however, that the information available on the research subject, before starting the data collection, could be elevated to the role of ‘informing principles’, therefore imposing particular expectations on the research. In contrast, they should be seen as general guidelines.

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<sup>31</sup> Observation is the only way to study non-verbal communication, which is essential for a thorough investigation of the subjects studied: from body language to facial expressions to proxemics. These allow the understanding of meanings that can hardly be conveyed through speech.

### 4.2.2 Participant observation

The social and cultural environment of the field provides the possibility to liaise with individuals as ‘historically and socially situated entities engaged in constructing their own realities through interaction with others’ (LeCompte 2002: 291). Participant observation allows the researcher to become ‘immersed’ in the field and experience events in, approximately, the same way that the group studied experiences them (Lewis 1985: 380), and to gather first-hand empirical materials. By adopting the respondents’ viewpoint, the researcher develops insights on the respondents’ representations of the world. However, as clarified by Geertz, this is a two-way process, involving both the researchers and the subjects of their research. As Geertz (1984: 275) suggests, ‘we see the lives of others through lenses of our own grinding and [...] they look back on ours through ones of their own’. It is, therefore, an interactive technique as the researchers intervene somehow in the social situation with their interviewees, the ‘invisibility’ that they are supposed to assume in the ethnographic process being possible but unconvincingly applicable to all situations.<sup>32</sup>

‘To observe’ is, according to the Chambers dictionary ‘to watch critically and attentively in order to ascertain a fact’. It is, therefore, clear that observation is not a mere watching: indeed, it involves a structured plan. If on one side, participation is ‘immersion’ in the field, not only physically, but also emotionally, on the other, observation implies a structured, objective stance towards the empirical data. This is due to the fact that, as the act of ‘observing’ is very much linked to a certain number of contingent elements – time, place, a specific group of people – that need to be taken into account. This is possible mainly through a defined observation plan.<sup>33</sup>

As the expression ‘participant observation’ is so familiar, it is difficult to recognise that it is, grammatically and practically, a form of oxymoron. If not impossible, it is in reality very demanding for the researcher to be able to perform the two activities simultaneously. In fact, while the act of ‘participating’ implies a complete involvement in the activities of the group considered, that of ‘observing’ the actors, the action and its ‘rules’ – through the observation of the action – requires the researcher’s, even if temporary, detachment – or distance – from the action itself (a ‘detached

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<sup>32</sup> Indeed, it is not always possible to feel like a *cloud* or a *gust of wind*: ‘My wife and I were still very much in the gust of wind stage, a most frustrating, and even, as you soon begin to doubt whether you are really real after all, unnerving one’ (Geertz, 1993: 413).

<sup>33</sup> The same sampling techniques are an integral part of the observation plan, as through them the researcher defines whom to observe, according to the specific objectives of the study.

involvement', as defined by Agar 1996: 100): this therefore restricts any kind of participation. Furthermore, as underlined by Harrington (2002: 50), 'making ethnography credible depends on walking on a fine line between participation and observation: being immersed enough to know what you're talking about while being separate enough to offer a critical analysis'.

Participant observation allows in-depth immersion in the field, so clarifying several 'observable' issues. However, it is the interview that makes it possible to address directly all those topics which, for their nature, cannot be observed by the researcher. The unobtrusive character of the researcher soon makes way for a more obtrusive counterpart: 'often we need to be obtrusive, if only by asking questions to find out what people are thinking, feeling, and taking for granted, since this is how one gets at some of the key parts of human social life' (Schwalbe 2002: 65).

#### 4.2.3 Semi-structured interviews and the interview schedule

Because of the comparative nature of the research, semi-structured interviews were considered as the most suitable method to use. Oral history methods, regarded as a possibility in the first phases of research planning, were soon discarded in view of the fact that collection of biographies might have resulted in the final data being too 'free', too spontaneous, too lengthy and, therefore, difficult to compare. Moreover, the use of biographies appeared to be too open to the risk that some questions – *a priori* considered as crucial to the research – might not have been addressed.

In fact, having already identified a certain number of variables and elements in the intergenerational transmission of cultural identity, and having established their attitudinal or behavioural nature (see Figure 2.4 and Tables 4.2 and 4.3), it was fundamental that these issues could be focussed on during the interviews. The semi-structured interview appeared to be the ideal 'middle-way': structured but not too constricting. Through the interview it is possible 'to understand how individual people experience and make sense of their own lives. The emphasis is on considering the meanings people attribute to their own lives and the processes which operate in particular contexts (Valentine 1997: 126).

The interview schedule (see Appendix 2), therefore, consisted of a list of topics identified in advance, differentiated according to the particular generation of the respondents. Various types of questions were included in it:

- Biographical: for example, date and place of birth, education.

- Behavioural/experience-based: description of activities, description of behaviour in specific circumstances.
- Attitudinal/belief: of the type ‘what do you think about...?’ or ‘what would you do if...?’

The different questions included in the interview schedule were intended to address the variegated nature of the topics identified as crucial for the explanation of issues related to the intergenerational transmission of cultural/ethnic values in families of migrant origin.

In-depth interviews are more than simple requests for information. During the interview it is possible to obtain insights into the respondents’ attitudes, values and behaviour, and on their social and cultural context (Patton 1987). In this sense, interviews and participant observation complement each other by serving in the collection of both observable (material culture such as artefacts, clothing and so on) and unobservable (for example values and beliefs) ethnographic material.

### **4.3 The relationship between the researcher and the respondents**

In qualitative research the relationship between the researcher and the respondents is extremely significant as it influences most aspects of the investigation, from beginning to end. Here we deal with the influences and consequences of this relationship on various phases of the study in order to provide an epistemological foundation to the present work.

It is, in fact, in the dialogue taking place in the interview situation that ‘knowledge’ is created and that roles are negotiated (Clifford 1986; De Ruijter 1995; Ferrarotti 1981, Valentine 1998). The categories of ‘cognisant’ and ‘cognised’ are regularly exchanged in an interpretative discourse. ‘The interview process is itself an interaction of immense complexity, one in which both group and individual characteristics play defining roles. The interpretation of texts, as well, demands a multi-layered approach, comprising an analysis of mythical, political, historical, social and linguistic elements’ (Berner Gluck and Patai 1991: 222).

The relationship between researchers and their respondents has often been defined as asymmetrical (Russell and Kelly 2002: 4). This asymmetry can occur on different levels (age, gender, ethnic and /or geographical origin, educational background, personal circumstances, marital status and so on), but these might not necessarily be hierarchical and not automatically arranged in favour of the interviewer (see section 4.5.5).



This relationship might at times be influenced by the possible acknowledgement of the researcher as an ‘outsider’. Bridging the potential divide between interviewer and interviewees is among the pre-requisites for sharing experiences and building a constructive dialogue. While the status of ‘insider’ favours access to participants and reduces the difficulties implicit in the relationship (Labaree 2002), the condition of outsider brings new perspectives and more critical and objective understanding of everyday practices (Patton 2002). Both statuses are significant: it is important to perceive events in the way the respondents perceive them in order to be able, empathically, to get similar insights to those of the interviewees; at the same time, a certain level of detachment, which is implicit in the role of the researcher, is necessary for objective reflection on the, often, tacit rules informing perceptions and behaviour.

Reflexivity is essential in this case.<sup>34</sup> Researchers need to be reflexive on multiple levels: on the ways their positionality influences the investigation in progress, on the choice of methods adopted, on the theories selected, on the interviews conducted, and on how the ethnographic materials are handled. In this sense, as noted by Boucher (1995), ‘self-reflexivity is the key, not whether she [*sic.*] holds subjectivist, intersubjectivist or objectivist assumptions or what theories and methods she uses. The self-application is neutral concerning her a priori beliefs, values and practices. It simply requires that she applies to herself the same rigour of analysis that she applies to those she researches’.

#### 4.4 Recruitment of families

As already underlined in the previous chapter, Nottingham was chosen as the area of research for several reasons. One of these lies in the fact the Italian community of Nottingham possesses the uniqueness of not having been investigated, unlike several other post-war Italian communities in Britain. At the same time, however, the Italian community of Nottingham appears to have many things in common with such other communities, which makes it attractive on the comparative level.

As already underlined by Colpi (1990), the Italians who moved to Great Britain after the Second World War, have many things in common:

- 1) The same period of arrival, during the 1950s and early 1960s;

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<sup>34</sup> Rose’s attitude on this subject is quite radical. In fact, in her paper *Situating Knowledges*, Rose questions the validity of the reflexivity of the researchers on their positionality: ‘The researched are more central or more marginal, higher or lower, than the researcher, because they have more or less power; perhaps they are insiders while the researcher is an outsider. The researcher may move about this landscape, the landscape contour may change, but the difference is still understood as distance’ (Rose 1997: 312). See also Valentine (1998: 305-306).

- 2) Similar geographical and social origins in Italy: almost all the migrants originated from the Southern regions of Italy and many of them are from a rural background;
- 3) Similar destinations in Britain due to the fact that workers had been recruited through 'bulk schemes' (see Chapter 3) and also due to the chain migration that followed the first settlement. As regards Nottingham, in particular, some people moved to the city as a result of secondary migration;
- 4) Similar occupational groups, also due to the particular character of recruitment through bulk schemes.

All these common elements among the immigrants of the first generation make them a group that is homogeneous enough for comparison with the second and third generation.

The research involved ten individual three-generational families. Within each family a minimum of three individuals – one per generation – were interviewed. Due to the socio-cultural nature of gendered norms, gender-differentiation was considered important to the study in order to ascertain the existence of any distinctiveness in the attitudes and behaviour of the respondents of the three generations.

The individuals interviewed totalled thirty-five, drawn from ten individual families:

- Fifteen belonged to the first generation;
- Ten belonged to the second generation; and
- Ten belonged to the third generation.

Recruiting three-generational families proved to be a difficult task which required a very flexible approach.

The first attempts to obtain an introduction to the Italian community through the owners of Italian businesses in Nottingham proved to be unsuccessful. Therefore, a more 'official' entry into Nottingham-Italian life was attempted, through contact with key characters who could act as gatekeepers, such as the chairpersons of Italian associations.

Contact was made with the chairman of the *Associazione Anziani di Nottingham* (Association of Older People of Nottingham), Mr Azzini, followed by a visit to the premises of the Italian mission on Vivian Avenue where the members of the association used to meet weekly. All members of the association were given a leaflet with information on the research project, written both in Italian and English. Some members of the association immediately agreed to take part and promised that they would inform their children and grandchildren, therefore acting as mediators. Ideally, this would have

represented a strategic move – gaining an entry to the younger members of the family via the first generation.

However, on returning to the Vivian Avenue centre, it was found that the requests made in the previous week – to inform members of the family about the research and verify their availability to take part – had met the following reactions:

- Some people decided that they were not interested in taking part in the research;
- Some were available to be interviewed but had not managed to inform their family of the research;
- Some clearly underlined that their children would not have time to take part in the study, as they never seem to have time to see their own parents;
- Some stated that their children ‘are more English than Italian’ and ‘they cannot speak Italian’;<sup>35</sup>
- Some simply forgot.

It was clear that the rosy situation imagined at first, with the older generation mediating with their children and grandchildren, was to be just a short-term illusion. Indeed, in planning the recruitment of several individuals from the same family, some elements had been misjudged:

- Reliance on the first generation to pass information about the study to other members of the family.
  - Some of the people approached might genuinely forget to inform the members of their family about a study they might not know much about;
  - Some first generation members might take for granted that their offspring are not Italian – according to their standards – and, thinking that they might not be ‘good’ respondents, do not pass the information on to them.
  - Some older Italians might be anxious that, having been trying to inculcate their children with the culture of origin, they might have missed something, and would therefore be judged for this.
  - Or, that children might offer a different view from that of their parents so, implicitly, undermining their authority and questioning the validity of their position.
- The lack of time or interest among members of the second generation.

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<sup>35</sup> The potential interviewees’ deduction was that a research on families of Italian origin would have had as preliminary parameters the display of a strong Italianness and a high fluency in Italian. Instead, higher or lower identification with Italy or fluency in the language were elements to be considered *a posteriori*.

- The second generation falls into the age range forties/fifties, and is therefore very often in a full-time job, with children to be taken care of.
- Having, probably, been invited too many times by their parents to take part in events and meetings organised in the name of their ‘Italian-ness’, some of them might have thought that my interest in interviewing them, expressed through their parents, could have been another way of needing to be involved in activities they might not be interested in.

As the approach through the older generation soon revealed its weaknesses, it was decided to try an opposite but symmetrical approach, involving recruitment from the third generation upwards to the first.

In order to get in touch with potential interviewees from an Italian background living in the Nottingham area, due to the absence of ethnically defined groups or societies of younger people, the following strategies were adopted:

- Adverts were published in the Nottingham University and Nottingham Trent University newsletters and in the Nottingham Evening Post;
- On-air advertisements were made through the radios of the Students Union of both Universities, as well as through Trent FM and BBC Radio Nottingham;
- Posters were displayed in colleges throughout Nottingham, and in post offices, pubs and delicatessen shops situated in the areas most populated by Italians.
- Telephone calls were made to people chosen through the phone directory on the basis of Italian surnames.
- Information about the research was sent by mail to some families selected through the phone book or suggested by certain informants (snowballing), including an agreement form to be returned through a stamped addressed envelope provided.

The process of recruitment was long and, at certain points, bore little fruit. As suggested by the supervisors of this study, the scarcity of data acquired represented data all the same, which needed to be scrutinised. The same idea was further reinforced by Glaser’s *dictum* ‘all is data’ (2001: 145) and Schwalbe (2002: 65): ‘What’s important then is recording and analysing how people react to our behaviour and questions. Everything is data’.

Looking beyond the surface of the ‘newly-found’ data that had come into my possession, trying to describe them more ‘thickly’, several interesting details appeared to emerge:

- The older members of the *Associazione Anziani di Nottingham* were acting as gatekeepers and were making decisions about whether their children and

- grandchildren needed or deserved to be included among the interviewees for the study. Having initially relied on the mediation of the older generation, the recruitment process was getting out of control, due to the specific opinions that they had on what was relevant to the actual research.
- Moreover, the reluctance that some potential first generation interviewees showed towards the involvement of other members of their family in the study seemed to reveal their desire to be seen as leaders, as the only people holding the cultural and linguistic characteristics that a person investigating Italian character might be interested in.
  - Although the attitude of indifference towards the research of some older Italians, their forgetfulness, their idea of the unsuitability of their family members towards the research might be genuine, nevertheless, there were some elements that seemed to reveal different views. Some clues, such as the blunt questions ‘you are not from the Social Security, are you?’, or ‘Why are you interested in us? What are you looking for? Who is *sending* you?’, although understandable and appropriate, in reality reveal the existence of a less visible *stratum*, characterised by a certain distrust of any kind of ‘authority’ and intrusion within ‘family matters’. For some older Italians of Nottingham the idea of somebody belonging to a University institution researching how families of Italian origin have changed in Nottingham through the years sounded scarcely feasible and rather suspicious.
  - Moreover the private nature of family life is extremely significant for many Italians. This might result in reluctance to open private matters to anybody, in particular if:
    - There are any family disputes taking place;
    - Any divorces and remarriages have happened in the family, since these are often perceived by the older generation as involving ‘shame’ and, also, as a personal failure in the transmission of the principle of a close-knit family.

Whatever the reasons for withholding other members of the family from taking part in the research, theirs was a protective stance. In fact, they intended to defend their families against possible embarrassment, apprehension, or threats to their possessions or funds. The family is one of the most private spheres, and therefore every attempt by a stranger to gain access to this private space needs to be carefully investigated.

Although a wide range of techniques had been applied in the attempt to obtain feedback from people of Italian origin living in the Nottingham area, the more effective way to acquire the trust of potential interviewees was through the ‘snowballing’ technique. Moreover, my presence at many of the events of the community had as a consequence the dissipation of the doubts about the possible menacing goals of the research and my recognition as an ‘adopted insider’.

The two following excerpts, in different ways, convey similar meanings. By opening their door to a stranger, who can potentially be a threat, Gioacchino and Rosaria emphasise their trust and expectation that the interview will not be followed by anything ‘dishonest’.

Gioacchino (1) [Family 6]: *My son always says: ‘Before letting anybody in, try to understand what they want to do’. In short, there’s so much dishonesty around that you cannot even imagine.*

Rosaria (1): *I don’t open to anyone. Sometimes English people knock ... religion ... but I don’t open to anyone.*

These short extracts can be understood as both a warning to the stranger not to disappoint the host and as a welcome.

The interview also represents a threat to the privacy of Matilde who, with the rhetorical question ‘you are not going to ask details, are you?’, is not requesting any kind of information but intends to pose limits to the range of questions that can potentially be asked. The assurance that no sensitive questions would be asked, that the respondents had the option to refuse to answer any question, that they could end the interview at any time, and that the confidentiality of their personal data would be preserved – as a deontological and legal matter<sup>36</sup> – managed to achieve the result of soothing most of the respondents’ anxieties. Guaranteeing the privacy of the informants, is also – more pragmatically – a practice to ensure a ‘honest discussion’ with them.

However, as Baez (2002: 54) has noted, interviewees are free to choose not to be completely sincere even after the promise of keeping their anonymity: thus honesty in the interview must largely depend on their trust in the researcher.

#### 4.4.1 Selecting and being selected

Although challenging, during the process of respondent selection the ironic circumstance of having to decline the availability of some individuals of Italian origin was also encountered, exclusively because their family situation did not fall within the

parameters chosen. Indeed, it was impossible to interview members of three generations if their migration to Nottingham was recent or did not follow the pattern of post-war Italian immigration.

On one occasion, a member of the fourth generation was interviewed. The interviewee was very keen to take part to the research. His paternal grandfather had migrated to Glasgow at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century from an unidentified (and unidentifiable) town near Lucca – possibly Barga, due to the long migratory tradition from that town to Scotland. This respondent had little to do with the other interviewees, being of a different generation, different social and cultural background, and with different circles of friends and acquaintances. Nevertheless, the interview provided an insight on two particular factors:

1. Individuals appear to have the need to locate themselves in the world and to be aware of the circumstances that have contributed to what they are, and where they are. This is truer especially when, having lost all the links to that place of origin, there is a surname that clearly indicates that a member of their family – even if in a very distant past – originated from a different place from the one they now live in.
2. Research is not interesting just for the researcher and a number of people in academia. This experience, together with others while on the field – or coming back from the field – demonstrates that it is not only the researchers who ‘use’ their subjects in order to learn something about their lives. Indeed, the subjects, not passive in their role of informants, might ‘use’ the researchers to get information, insights, and clarifications out of them. As clearly stated by Bourdieu (1990) it is through the researcher that ‘all social agents are able to know a little more clearly what they are and what they are doing’. This can be, as in this case, a way to learn something more about a past that is mainly unknown or, as in other cases, a way for some respondents to legitimate, through the researcher, the value of a past that is sometimes considered difficult or embarrassing in the eyes of their offspring, or as an incentive for the young generations to attend Italian classes or events.

These insights were the result of reflexivity and thick description.

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<sup>36</sup> Everybody working for or related to the University of Sheffield is subject to the conditions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

## 4.5 Fieldwork

The first fieldwork phase consisted of a pilot stage. During this period some interviews were carried out in order to ensure that the interview schedule was appropriate in content and to ascertain whether any issues needed to be considered before the commencement of the actual interview phase.

Fieldwork involved audio-recorded interviews with members of three-generational families, informal observations and conversations, participant observation, compiling a field-diary, taking photographs and field-notes.

The semi-structured nature of the interview allowed that, after the preliminary autobiographical requests for information, the wording and the sequence of questions could be fairly flexible, so maintaining, to some extent, the interview's conversational character. This confirmed further the nature of the interview as a social interaction, 'structured by *both* the researcher and the informant' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 113). As an evolving social interaction, a dialogue 'in progress' that implies a negotiation of roles between the interviewer and the interviewee (Ferrarotti 1981: 43; Russell and Kelly 2002: 3-4, Smith 1993: 292),<sup>37</sup> the interview is not a process that can be completely pre-programmed.

### 4.5.1 The tools of the fieldwork

As underlined in the previous section, the various aspects of the fieldwork involved the use of several procedures, including audio-recordings, photographs, field-notes and the production of a field-diary.

The tape-recorder is very valuable for the accuracy it allows and its role in subsidising memory. Although it might initially be seen as an inhibiting instrument, in fact because it was compact in size it was often forgotten during the interview. It represented itself to the conscious level only when the tape needed to be turned to the other side, replaced, or when, while talking of sensitive issues, the interviewees mechanically reminded themselves of the additional 'ear' and asked for it to be switched off before continuing.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> However, 'what's the relationship between the object *picked on* and the object *returned* after cognitive investigation?' (Miceli 1994: 24). The answer is that every kind of knowledge influences the way we understand the object known. Implicitly, this confirms that the knowledge investigated will be returned in a way that has been affected by the way it has been analysed and investigated (Miceli 1994: 25).

<sup>38</sup> According to Hammersley and Atkinson, due to the confidentiality of the data collected through the interview, some respondents might 'be willing to divulge information and express opinions that they would not in front of others'. It was mainly in cases like these that turning the recorder off was seen as a necessity either by the interviewees or by me, with the consequent silent approval of the respondent. Nevertheless 'this does not mean that this information is necessarily true or that the opinions they present



Another important tool for taking back memories of particular circumstances is represented by the field notes, in which observations and descriptions of particular events are recorded as they take place during the fieldwork (Wolfinger 2002). Van Maanen (1988: 223-4) argues that field-notes are not simple descriptions, as they are immersed in the researcher's interpretation, showing 'many levels of textualization set off by experience', which makes them fundamental objects of reflexive ethnography. Field-notes, in fact, 'inevitably reflect the ethnographer's background knowledge, or tacit beliefs' (Wolfinger 2002: 93).

Similarly, and possibly more intensely, the field-diary records the ethnographer's reaction to events, feelings and comments, often at a personal level, that have occurred during the fieldwork. The field-diary sanctions the researchers as having an active role in the process of ethnographic data collection, on being there as individuals during the process, and it also helps them to sort out and deal with their presence in the field. The elements contained in the field-diary do not just work as a *memoir*, as the term diary suggests, they represent 'field data' to be analysed and interpreted too (Patton 2002).

In this context, a similar role is that of photographs taken during the fieldwork. In the context of visual methodologies, photographs can be interpreted as de-contextualised snapshots which do not necessarily render back the authenticity of events (Rose 2001). Nevertheless, during the fieldwork, photographs were used exclusively as an ethnographic tool, closely related to contextual phenomena witnessed, assimilable to 'visual' field-notes.

#### **4.5.2 Interview: choice of venue and language**

Most of the interviews took place in the interviewees' homes, or in those of their parents or grandparents. In two cases the interviews were conducted in the interviewees' place of work, once at the Italian Club and once in a café. The interview environment was chosen by the interviewees themselves in order to render the experience as comfortable and convenient as possible: 'interviewing them [interviewees] on their own territory ... is the best strategy. It allows them to relax much more than they would in less familiar surroundings' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 150).

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are more genuine, more truly reflecting informants' perspectives than what they say on other occasions' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 120).

The time for the interview was also negotiated with the respondents. As many of them were in full-time work or education, the interviews often had to be conducted in the evenings or during the weekends.

The choice of the language to be used during the interview depended entirely on the interviewees', in order to allow them to be as much at ease as possible. They therefore chose the language they preferred (Italian or English), often code-switching.

### 4.5.3 Focus Groups

Interviews were planned to be carried out on a one-to-one basis. Nevertheless, it was occasionally necessary to confront a focus group situation. Having planned to meet just one individual, in a few cases, other members of the family arrived on the scene without having given previous notice. Therefore, what was supposed to be a dialogue between two persons often became a discussion among three or more people (in one case, six).<sup>39</sup> This situation was simultaneously challenging and full of potential. The unexpected 'bounty' of interviewees could not be turned down, both as a thankful gesture for having made themselves available for a meeting and, more self-interestedly, for the concern that they might not have been available to postpone the interview to another moment. Moreover, the focus group permitted the obtaining of information from each one of the interviewees, who reacted to each other's opinions so enriching the conversation and highlighting new points. Moreover, interviewing parents and children in each other's presence can be useful to pinpoint the existence of intergenerational conflict or power relations (Valentine 1997). This kind of group interview, however, presented a few drawbacks:

- The interviewees in some cases influenced each other's answers or, even more directly, answered on behalf of another person who was also present;
- 'superior-subordinate relationships among participants can inhibit discussion' (Krueger 2000: 87);
- In some cases, the interviewees talked at the same time, making it challenging to pinpoint the speaker during the transcription phase;
- It was more demanding to tailor the questions to a two or three-generational group of interviewees.

Interview sessions might, in fact, be distorted due to the combination of men and women, or people of different generations, which might create certain self-consciousness or tension within the group. Krueger is of a different opinion, in

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<sup>39</sup> Krueger considers groups with less than six people as 'mini-focus groups' (Krueger 2000).

suggesting that ‘typically, focus groups have high face validity, which is due in large part to the believability of comments from participants. People open up in focus groups and share insights that may not be available from individual interviews, questionnaires, or other data sources’ (Krueger 2000: 32).

#### 4.5.4 Researcher/respondents relationships: examples from the field.

The presence of an interviewer might, unintentionally, influence deeply the process of interviewing and the results obtained through it, which is a claim to validity<sup>40</sup> (Silverman 2001:233): the Hawthorne effect – or halo – is an evident example of this (Hammersley 1998: 80-2). A way to avoid these potential biases could be that of cross-checking the validity of certain answers or reactions, by asking similar questions but highlighting different elements each time. The following is a successful example of double-checking on the interviewee’s (Dalila) liberalism on the hypothetical intermarriage of her daughter (Elvira). Although this procedure might sound too intrusive or, even, unethical, in reality, as is evident from the following excerpt related to inter-generational aspects, it is not intended as a ‘third degree’ interview, but as a process of ‘ideas’ disentanglement<sup>41</sup>. Through the development of the dialogue and further exploration of the issue, it was possible to highlight several points previously not available through just relying on the interviewee’s quasi-politically-correct ‘well, if they really do ... love each other ... this is it’, when asked about her views on a hypothetical relationship between her daughter and a member of a non-white ethnic group.

D.G.: *This is a hypothesis: if for example, Elvira came home with a boyfriend, ‘the one’ ...*

Dalila (1): *‘The one’ [laughs].*

D.G.: *...who was from another minority group.... Let’s say... he was not British, nor Italian or of Italian origin, but he was Japanese or ... Indian ...*

Elvira (2): [laughs]

Dalila: *... Uhm ... [serious]*

D.G.: *What would you do? What would you say?*

Dalila: *Well ... to me ... I mean, I would look at it in a very ... much more ... err ... positively. I would say, ‘well, if they really do ... love each other ... this is it’. I wouldn’t be discriminating. I wouldn’t be racist and say: ‘No, no, got to be pure English or pure Italian’. I would be a ... you know ... if that’s what they want to ...*

<sup>40</sup> The challenge to validity in qualitative research is always present. The process can be considered as ‘scientific’ as long as the processes are transparent and the instruments, techniques and strategies used are made explicit (Fabiatti 1999). It is also possible, as suggested by Silverman (2002: 238), to overcome the risk of lack of validity, through the researcher’s attempt to test provisional hypotheses by finding other cases, by a constant comparative method.

<sup>41</sup> Getting round the problem of possible incongruities, however, might not always be practicable, especially because it might be difficult to detect those incongruities.

*obviously, I would be much happier if ... English wouldn't bother me! English ... if it was an English boyfriend ...*

*Elvira: You would like me to marry somebody Italian? [Laughs] Sorry, this is new for me ...*

*[We all laugh]*

*Dalila: Someone rich from the North, preferably .... Wouldn't mind English either. As long as he was a decent person, English wouldn't bother me.*

*Elvira: But I think you would have a problem if I brought someone Jamaican or ... Indian ... or...*

*Dalila: Yeah, I would have a problem with that. Not because I am racist ... because of ... the culture. The difficulty ... they would find very difficult to inte ... boh ... I think our family would be ... they wouldn't accept them very easily. They would have a lot of trouble being accepted ...*

*D.G.: Right. Are you religious? Both of you?*

*Dalila: Yeah. Roman Catholic.*

*D.G.: OK ... and if it was a British guy who was Methodist?*

*Elvira: You see, they would have to change religion ...*

*Dalila: Yeah, it's very difficult. Yeah.*

*Elvira: ... because if I had to marry them in church, which is what they want for me, definitely...*

*Dalila: They would have to change their religion ...*

*Elvira: They have to change religion. They would have to go to classes and learn and be, actually, Christ ... erm ... confirmed, don't they?*

*Dalila: Confirmed, yeah.*

As clearly underlined by Agar (1996: 159) 'whether they are called problems of *reliability, error, or lying*, the tone is that differences between reports and behaviour are a normal part of human interaction. Just because one human is an ethnographer and the other is an informant, there is no reason to expect it not to occur. The problem is to understand it, not to pretend that it doesn't happen, and then to include in your methodology some procedures for dealing with it'.

The passage shows that, prior to further questioning, Dalila, a second-generation mother, answered the question of a supposed relationship between her daughter and a member of another group according to the canon of political correctness. Only through further analysis of the issue – and also as a result of the inquiring quality of Elvira's attitude – was it possible to highlight the following issues:<sup>42</sup>

1. Dalila would be pleased if the daughter married an Italian man;
2. An English man would be acceptable for the other members of the family as long as he was Catholic;

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<sup>42</sup> In the study of the materials produced during the fieldwork, a certain amount of discourse analysis was necessary. According to Stubbs (1983: 1), discourse analysis 'refers to attempts to study the organisation of language above the sentence or above the clause, and therefore to study larger linguistic units, such as conversational exchanges or written texts. It follows that discourse analysis is also concerned with language use in social contexts, and in particular with interaction or dialogue between speakers'. Since language can be seen as 'action in context', the way we use it can offer glimpses of a reality beyond it: of our knowledge, values, and frames of mind. The use of language is not only involved in the construction of reality, it is also its representation (Stubbs 1983: 1-3).

3. If not Catholic, the supposed fiancée would have to go through the whole process of embracing that religion: personal faith here is not the issue. The reason for this would be the unquestionable condition of a religious wedding function, according to tradition;
4. Dalila underlines that her reaction would not be dictated by her discrimination towards members of other groups, but by the potential disapproval of other family members. ‘Other members of the family’ can, however, refer either to close relatives (uncles, grandparents, and so on) or to Dalila’s husband (who has been depicted in other passages of the interview as very strict and old-fashioned in his views, ‘because born in Italy’), or to all of them. This highlights here some interesting elements:
  - a. The supposed attitude of the other family members is enough for Dalila to modify her behaviour. She might have witnessed certain episodes in the past that shaped her reaction to such events accordingly. If the rest of the family retains such a central role in determining what a family member needs to do or not, free-will and independence can only be achieved at a high cost: disagreement and coldness might be the more positive of the possible reactions that ‘rebels’ might obtain as a result of their actions.
  - b. The family’s supposed prejudiced stance might be used here by Dalila as a technique to remove responsibility and guilt from herself for having showed discrimination in relation to a hypothetical episode.
  - c. The intentions and actions of the individual need to be ratified by the group s/he belongs to.
  - d. If the phrase ‘other family members’ Dalila and Elvira are referring to actually relates to the father, the question of the predominance of the man in decisions related to family issues assumes considerable significance.
5. Elvira is aware of her mother’s reasons. In fact, during the dialogue, she is the one who is articulating them. Her attitude, defying and mocking at the beginning, is in reality the evidence of her resentfulness. She is aware of the restrictions she is subjected to but also of the unlikelihood of long-term resistance to them.
6. Elvira’s enquiring attitude towards her mother, prompting her and at the same time leading her towards an explicit expression of her thoughts, was probably dictated by the wish to grab the opportunity of the interview for dealing with sensitive issues that might not be part of the everyday agenda.

However, it is important to remember that during an interview ‘how obtrusive we can be, and in what ways, depends on the settings and on our relationship to the people in it. There are no formulas. Every ethnographer has to find the balancing point between being a silent witness and a provocateur’ (Schwalbe 2002: 64). This certainly means that the researcher’s impact on the data still needs to be kept to a minimum: provocation, stimulation, and the creation of possible scenarios are necessary tasks for the ethnographer, who should not ‘give life’ to data, producing them, but should help the respondents in the process of making them explicit. Ethnographic practice, in this sense, would not be too different from the maieutics of socratic memory, from the midwifery art of assisting the ‘birth of ideas’. In reality, we are aware that the ethnographic situation is a social encounter and, as such, subject to the rules of all social exchanges.

#### 4.5.5 Positionality

An interesting circumstance, occurring mainly with interviewees of the first and second generations, was the sporadic use of terms from the dialect of their regions of origin or of terms that are unusual in everyday conversation, on which I was sometimes tested.

Rosaria (1) [Family 6]: *In our village on All Saints day we prepare biscuits called in dialect ‘pupreti’ [laughs]. Those are made with cooked must.*

Gioacchino (1): *Do you know what’s the cooked must?*

D.G.: *Yes.*

Gioacchino: *What is it? Explain that to me.*

D.G.: *The must that has to cook until it becomes half ...?*

Gioacchino: *No no no ... yeah yeah yeah ... she knows that.*

Events like these are undoubtedly the result of my positionality as a younger person from an urban background. This particular language of positionality helped me recognize that during the interview Gioacchino clearly had some ideas and expectations of who I was, therefore locating me in a very precise ‘social’ place. The elements that might have influenced my positionality, however, either in this or in other social situations, might have been of a very different nature, ranging from my – real or supposed – ethnicity, to my class membership, age, social capital and religion, gender, and affiliation with an educational institution. Each of these elements, or all of them simultaneously, might be at work in the construction of the ‘other’ during the research process. For example, among the respondents of Nottingham I was identified as an ‘Italian’ researcher. For the older generation my status was, to some extent, that of an insider, an individual who could potentially share views and values. Conversely, for the

third generation I was an outsider, a person born and bred in another country, who might have had more in common with their grandparents than with themselves. This is, however, just a simplistic representation of a more complex reality. A researcher's positionality depends on a vast array of elements (age, gender, occupation, etc.) which all contribute to some extent to the creation of his/her precise 'position'. It is through the interactions between interviewer and interviewees that certain elements are negotiated and assume precise contextual meanings. Therefore, for the older respondents the Italian researcher might suddenly become an outsider when assimilated to the younger generations. Conversely, the researcher might be identified by the members of the third generation as an insider for example on the basis of the assumed age, life-style, etc. The insider-outsider dialectic is therefore constantly negotiated between interviewer and interviewee.

However, these phenomena are not limited just to academic research. Indeed, according to Clifford and Marcus (1986), every kind of knowledge, including the academic type, is always created by people who situate themselves and the others in a particular scenario. This 'positionality' deeply influences the way the individuals involved in the production of knowledge (in our case, in the research) relate to each other<sup>43</sup>. It is knowledge produced during a type of interaction involving two people with their store of expectations, norms and implied values; it is 'the result of a dual input from two individuals with their own past experiences, biases, interests, needs and motives' (Langness and Frank 1981: 44). What is produced is therefore situated knowledge, constructed through the relation between two or more individuals.

## **4.6 Analysis of the ethnographic material**

The analysis of the ethnographic material has to be understood as an ongoing process consisting of several, often overlapping, layers, involving the following: description of the ethnographic situation and its analysis; transcription, annotation, coding and analysis of the interviews; and writing up – representing a final stage of the analysis.

### **4.6.1 Interview transcription**

After the interviews, all the tapes were copied, with the copies used for the transcription process, while the original ones were stored in a different location as archival and/or emergency records.

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<sup>43</sup> Due to their specific 'position' researchers and respondents may interpret the same events in different ways. See Smith 1993 for an example of this occurrence.

The transcription of interviews is a lengthy and monotonous process: it has been calculated that each hour of interview takes between five and seven hours of transcription, depending on the difficulties that the interview presents (noise, voices overlapping, and so on). Nevertheless, it is a necessary process, not only because through the writing it is possible to highlight some elements of the interview and make connections among them, but also because, during the process of transcription memories come back to mind, words find their place in a newly-formed frame and the events that have been recounted and then transcribed can be seen under a new light. In short, transcribing is a first level of analysis.

Some purists might disagree with certain choices made. For example:

- The use of transcription itself. Scholars like Gallini underline that the process is not free from obstacles, as the transformation of oral text into the written form is not simply a change of code: it represents a ‘translation’ (Gallini 1981: 86). Transcribing is ‘translating’, ‘interpreting’ what has been said. What appears on paper is not what has been pronounced. Even the punctuation is the result of the transcriber’s choice. The researcher should leave the interview in its original oral form, and should not transform the subjects into objects (Thompson 1988: 99) and should allow people interested in it to listen to it and draw their own conclusions. Here the interviews have, in contrast, been transcribed, rather than being left in their original form, in order to make them available.
- The fact that the thesis is not accompanied by a CD Rom with the voices of the respondents. This possibility has been discarded in order to preserve the privacy of the interviewees. Confidentiality was at the basis of the interviewees’ agreement to take part in the research.
- The translation into English of the text of the interviews conducted in Italian. Sixteen interviews were conducted in Italian<sup>44</sup>, fourteen in English and four in both languages. Some of the early interviews conducted in Italian had been translated into English immediately after their transcription. Through the time the research process underwent a refinement: only the quotations to be used in the thesis had been translated into English. This was useful both in terms of time management and to allow a deeper understanding and analysis of the nuances of the original language. The translation of the interviewees’ words took place

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<sup>44</sup> As it will be clarified in chapter 7, the ‘type of Italian’ used by the members of the older generation was characterised by a strong intermixture of terms derived from the dialect of their region of origin, English, neologisms and calques.



verbatim, when possible. Nevertheless, attention was paid to the translation of certain idioms used during the interview in order to maintain the original ‘feeling’. This was another intentional ‘tampering’ of the original, but it was necessary for the clarity of the descriptions.

As Silverman underlines, ‘the production and use of transcripts are essentially *research activities*’ (Silverman 2002: 164).

Transcribing is a necessary process, of course, but is tedious and often approached with a sense of duty. Having been informed during a conference that in other countries the transcription process was simplified by the use of a speech recognition system, which allows a computer to decodify human speech, automatically converting it into written form, it was therefore decided to experiment with this new technological tool.<sup>45</sup> However, the attempt was not completely successful for various technical and practical reasons which required a lot of patient editing work. As a result, it was decided to go back to the old-fashioned transcription method.

#### 4.6.2 Coding and annotation

After transcription, a coding reference grid was produced, taking into account the attitudinal and behavioural categories used in the preparation of the interview schedule (Tables 4.2 and 4.3).

An ‘open coding’ (Tesch 1990: 85-7) was subsequently performed, intended to identify and categorise the elements encountered in the interview transcriptions. This process consists of *breaking up* ‘the data into constituent parts and then plac[ing] them into similar categories or classes’ (Kitchin and Tate 2000: 234). References to both concrete and abstract categories (venues, values, institutions, and so on) were all identified and labelled, through an ongoing iterative process during which new codes and sub-codes were found and added to the grid – up to saturation point – fitting them in a framework of broad relationships, according to the grounded theory approach<sup>46</sup> (Tesch 1990: 84-8). As suggested by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 169), ‘there is typically a shift towards more analytic categories as theory develops’. Special attention was paid towards a compilation of sub-categories that could be *internally consistent, conceptually related* and *analytically useful* (Kitchin and Tate 2000: 245).

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<sup>45</sup> Dragon NaturallySpeaking Preferred 5, installed in an Acer Travelmate Celeron portable computer.

<sup>46</sup> ‘Grounded theory is based on a concept-indicator model, which directs the conceptual coding of a set of empirical indicators’ (Glaser 1978: 62). It is from the data collected (not necessarily just textual) that, inductively, the theory ‘emerges’.

The codification process was performed with both the use of the copy of the interview transcription and a copy of the codes-index. Annotations were made on both copies, often listing data under two or more categories. In particular, on the codes-index the reference to the page and the number of times that code occurred were annotated, as well as the new codes, once they emerged from the text. These were later added to the master-copy of the codes-index, so that it could provide the basis for subsequent coding. This process, although longwinded, proved to be extremely helpful and provided the basis for constant comparison between the interviews. It was also useful as it offered the possibility to check the development of trends and to verify the relationships of subordination or domination of some codes in relation to others.

### 4.6.3 Description, analysis, and writing up

Description, an integral part of any kind of research, assumes particular features in the social sciences. In social research it is not only necessary to describe the scenario in which the research takes place, but it is also important to provide insights on the data themselves – the way they have been collected, the way the respondents reacted – and provide possible reasons for the unfolding of events. The ‘thin’ description of the scenario needs to be complemented by a thick description. The expression was first used by Geertz in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Geertz 1993) as a representation of the role of the researcher, which is that of observing, recording and interpreting events and signs as they develop within a culture.

In reality, the role of the researcher is not merely observing and describing activities and behaviour: instead, it is to try to understand what lies beyond those activities and behaviours and to disclose what the ‘webs of significance’ that the people themselves have spun are made of (Geertz 1993: 5).<sup>47</sup>

Once more, researchers find themselves confronted with a new process of negotiation, between subjectivity and objectivity as, in Pratt’s words (1986: 32), ‘fieldwork produces a kind of authority that is anchored to a large extent in subjective, sensuous experience [...]. But the professional text [describing the results of the fieldwork ...] is supposed to conform to the norms of a scientific discourse whose authority resides in the absolute effacement of the speaking and experiencing subject’.

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<sup>47</sup> In order to explain this, Geertz provides the following example: a blink of an eye is just a rapid contraction of an eyelid, mainly involuntary. If, in contrast, the contraction is intentional it would have certain significance attached to it (‘we are allies’, ‘you are my type’, ‘a signal’ etc.) and would be defined as a wink. It is the role of the researcher to identify and interpret these cultural signs (See Geertz 1993: 7-10).

Researchers, even in this case, cannot disappear: they are key elements also in the analysis and dissemination of the results.

However, other components start to appear on the scene for the first time: the readers. We have to agree with De Ruijter (1985: 116) when he writes that ‘Data do not exist prior to but take form during an interpretative dialogue in which researchers, researched and readers participate: scientific activity is just one social arena where knowledge is constructed’. Nevertheless, although the three agents are closely related to each other, in the process of analysis and subsequent disclosure of the outcomes, researchers assume a special role. As Crapanzano (1986: 51) suggests: ‘they pass themselves off as messengers and, at the same time, tricksters. They are, to some extent, like the god Hermes, as the researcher presents languages, cultures, and societies in all their opacity, their foreignness, their meaninglessness; then like the magician, the hermeneut, Hermes himself, he clarifies the opaque, renders the foreign familiar, and gives meaning to the meaningless. He decodes the message. He interprets’.

This interpretation, however, is not performed in the vacuum: it is a two way process involving the data collected (and, indirectly, also the ‘researched’ as producers of those data, through the researcher’s – hopefully – most objective representation of them) and the researcher. In the analysis of the empirical materials, an interesting image is that suggested by Tesch (1990: 93) of a researcher engaged in a ‘dialogue with the data’. The exchange between the researcher and the text is represented by the endless and tireless going up and down the pages in search of confirmation for ideas. Until the process is over, until a greater awareness on the data is achieved, through reflection and interpretation, the analytical process is not over (Tesch 1990: 69).

Goodwin and Horowitz, underline that the presentation of data and analysis is very diverse in qualitative studies, but they also recognize that in many cases different studies have something in common: the presence of the researcher in the text, the ‘I’. “Sometimes that ‘I’ dominates the analysis too, but, most of the time, the work is not about the researcher but about the topic or group that is being studied. The ‘I’ is important to permit the reader to know where the researcher was at the time the data were collected and to explain the role the researcher played” (2002: 45).

There is great ambiguity: on one side researchers want to disappear from the text, nevertheless, they cannot do otherwise than ‘being there’ (Fabiatti 1999). There is no easy solution to this dilemma, apart from recognising that knowledge is situated, constructed and dialectical. In this sense, the qualitative researchers’ recognition of their professional and/or personal limitations encountered during their studies would

represent, instead, a strong point, *i.e.* the awareness that although it is not possible to gain control over the variables involved in the study, it is possible to identify them and take them into account for analysis.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

From the previous sections it is clear that the techniques for the collection of ethnographic materials used were the most suitable for the present enquiry of social behaviour. As identified in Tables 4.2 and 4.3, the attitudinal and behavioural character of the elements to be investigated in this study of inter-generational transmission in families of immigrant origin required the use of an ethnographic approach.

In this chapter particular emphasis has been placed on the importance of reflexivity in most of the activities linked to the research (respondent selection, language adopted, consequences of positionality) and on the active participation of the ethnographer in the research process. This has to be seen as an appropriate component of the methodological attempt to ensure that the instruments used in the collection of the ethnographic material and the procedures adopted were, as much as possible, impartial and ‘traced’/‘traceable’. This approach should soothe the anxiety lying behind the hypothesis that both the processes of data collection and analysis might be biased by the researcher and the suspicion that various researchers observing the same events might produce different results. The methodology adopted here can be justified on the basis that it is the only one applicable in order to discover and describe ‘what lies behind’ the word said or the activity performed.

## Chapter 5: RELIGION AND IDENTITY

### 5.1 Introduction

As observed in Chapter 2, religion can represent one of the most significant elements involved in the process of identity formation. Therefore the present chapter will investigate the role of religion and of religious institutions in the inter-generational transmission of culture among the members of the families interviewed.

It is worth remembering that the identification process takes place in oppositional terms, in other words in the presence of the ‘other’. As a result, immigrants from Italy – as well as from Poland and Ireland – conceive themselves and are constructed as Catholics mainly because they live in a dominantly Protestant land. In this sense, Catholic religion assumes a particular significance as an element of differentiation and, therefore, identification. Obviously, Italians are not identified and do not identify themselves only through their religious identity, which represents one among other equally significant boundary marks. Interestingly, however, the significance of religion is tied up with many other variables, also involved in the process of ethnic identity construction, such as language, activities, ritual dishes and many other cultural aspects which are specific to Italians and useful to differentiate them from those elements of religious identity, organisations and practices of other immigrant Catholic communities.

In the course of the chapter, the *Italian = Catholic* equation will also be explained. The association of Italians with the Catholic religion assumes a particular interest especially because it is common both among people belonging to the group and those who define them from the outside.

In particular, the chapter focuses on the role of religion as a means for the transmission of values from the place of origin and cultural identity across generations. In this topic, the role of the Italian Catholic Mission<sup>48</sup> of Nottingham and of its particular meaning in the development of the Italian community of the city will be described and examined. The perspective, however, is not historical, in the sense that it

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<sup>48</sup> A mission is a section of a religious organisation having its base in a different country and having as objectives the propagation of its faith and/or the performance of humanitarian work. We usually associate the idea of Catholic missions and missionary priests with remote areas of Africa or South America. In our specific case, the Mission we are dealing with is a Scalabrinian one, which is of a very specific kind. The founder of this Congregation of Missionary priests was the Italian Bishop Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, who lived in the second half of the 19th century (1839-1905). His intention was to create a structure that could meet the needs (pastoral and practical) of migrants both in their country of origin and in their place of destination. Today these Scalabrinian missions can be found everywhere in the world. The main Scalabrinian centre in the UK is in London.

does not follow a chronological order from the foundation of the mission to the present time. The image instead builds up through the accounts of the respondents of various generations who – in different ways and on different levels – have been involved in the religious and cultural life of the Italian community of Nottingham, through the Mission and the activities taking place in its premises.

The recent closure of the Mission and the reactions of the Italian immigrants of Nottingham and their children is also analysed on the basis of the real and symbolic value that has been attached to it, especially by older migrants. The various reasons for the closure of the Mission / Club identified are presented in the chapter through the words of the people who have witnessed the events through the years: a) the feud between two different groups; b) the lack of interest of the older generation towards certain events of a social nature; and c) the level of integration of the younger generations, who do not seem to want to keep certain traditions alive. The possibility that the different views of older and younger generations might have resulted in inter-generational conflicts are also taken into account.

In this particular context, religion and religious identification work on several different levels:

- from the outside to the inside of individuals – in terms of spirituality;
- from the inside to the outside – through the indoctrination of younger generations;
- on the outside – involving performance through religious events and rituals.

The following sections will discuss all these aspects, through an analysis of the interviews with the members of the three generations involved in the research.

## 5.2 Religion and migration

When individuals move to a new country to live and work in a new environment, and when the certainties of the place of origin are abandoned to embrace a new unknown reality, such people can be subjected to a considerable amount of stress and anxiety. If they are believers, religious observance might provide some comfort for them and the church might represent a reassuring known haven. In fact, as underlined by Giddens (1991: 181), ‘adherence to a clear-cut faith – especially one which offers a comprehensive lifestyle – may diminish such anxieties’.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Although Giddens’ idea is linked to the apprehension that modernity could induce, I find that it is possible to apply the concept to the case of the Italians immigrants of Nottingham. Moreover, spirituality is one of the ways for individuals to attempt to find an identity (Jenkins 1996).

In the host country, however, these religious feelings seem to produce a paradox: they make the adjustment to England more ‘comfortable’ and less traumatic, but on the other hand they obstruct the assimilation process by strengthening the individuals’ allegiance to the group of origin. This can occur because religion can be understood as a support to the immigrants’ ethnic identity, through its legitimisation of many aspects of their common culture. The fact that religion is an expression of commonality, cohesion and equality among people who share the same faith, invests it with an important role in the inter-generational transmission of culture and ethnic identity. It is for this reason, in fact, that religion is often used as an instrument for the transmission of culture and the affirmation of ethnic identity (Chong 1998; Dumont 2003; Williams 1988).

As already pointed out, religious practices, family traditions and ritual dishes represent symbols of ethnic identity, as religious ceremonies offer valuable insights into specific cultural aspects which often evolve through time and space. Moreover, along with the cultural aspects of religion, language is also transmitted: symptomatic of this are, for example, religious services in the native language of the community.

The importance of religion in the place of immigration is unquestionable. Consequently, the role of the ethnic church in relation to Italian immigration in Britain has been taken into account by most of the scholars who have studied Italian communities (Bottignolo 1985; Fortier 2000; Marin 1975; Parolin 1998). Nevertheless, studies focussing on religiosity within the Italian diaspora are still quite scarce and refer specifically to contexts other than the British (Paganoni and O’Connor 1999; Varacalli *et al.* 1999). The lack of studies exclusively linked to Italian religiosity in Britain is probably due to the fact that Catholicism has neither been considered as a creed to be understood nor, for many years now, as a threat to the stability of the country.

In contrast, there has been wide interest in the role of religion for the Irish community (Fielding 1993; Hickman 1995; Connolly 1984; Gilley 1984; Swift and Gilley 1999; Samuel 1989): this is due to the importance of the strong connection between religious, political and national identity in the country. Likewise, there have recently been a number of studies which concentrate on the role of Islam for the growing Muslim communities in Britain (Basit 1997; Lewis 1994; Raza 1991; Runnymede Trust 1997), both in terms of the numerical significance of Muslim immigrants and as a result of the visibility of some of their religious practices. The function of religion in the lives of the children of Muslim immigrants has been investigated by various studies (Dosanjh and Ghuman 1997; Halstead, M. 1994;

Hennink *et al.* 1999; Smith 2000) because of the strict relationship that Islam involves with upbringing, gender roles, inter-generational relationships and so on.

The lack of wider interest in the role of the Catholic faith for the children of Italian migrants might be attributable to the idea that religion might not play an important role in the lives of second or third generation Italians, as opposed to the lives of their grandparents or their Muslim peers. In reality, it seems that for the Italians of Nottingham the connection with Catholicism is extremely important in the construction and reinforcement of their ethnic identity. This is certainly the case for the first and second generations and, in different ways, also for the third generation.

### **5.3 Religion and the Italian immigrants in Nottingham**

In order to be able to define themselves as different from the host group and other minority groups, given their general ‘invisibility’, Italian immigrants in the UK need to hold on to ‘immaterial’ boundary-marks. As observed by Smolicz (1992: 117) “it is the core values of culture - be it language, religion, family structure or some other aspect of heritage - that act as the hallmark of a particular ethnic group and confer upon it ‘authentic’ ethnic identity”.

As ascertained from the results of the fieldwork, religion is closely linked to many of the elements contributing to the creation of ethnic identity, among these: the family, peer groups, education.

Particular insights into the three generations’ religious participation could be gained through actively taking part in religious services and processions. Participant observation and interviews allowed the development of an understanding of the interviewees’ religious self-identification in relation to their family background, the expectations of the older generations and the relationship with members of the family with a different creed (or none at all) and with mainstream society. All this is clarified in the following sections. To shed some light on these aspects, it is necessary to refer to the living circumstances of the members of the second and third generations.

Before being able to make their own choices, the vast majority of the interviewees

- a) were born and raised into their family creed;
- b) were expected to attend Sunday School – which was held in Italian and took place in the premises of the Mission;
- c) had to attend Mass on Sundays and during the most important festivities;



- d) had been baptised during their infancy and as children had received their first communion and confirmation;
- e) attended Catholic schools, in line with their parents' wishes;
- f) attended social and recreational events taking place mainly in the mission's premises.

As a result, it is clear that the children and grandchildren of the Italians of Nottingham, having been brought up to respect certain traditions, would necessarily include religiosity – and all that religion involves – among the elements that produced some influence on their upbringing, also considering the amount of time and the effort spent in church or church-related activities.

An additional interesting aspect is represented by the functional role assigned by immigrant parents to some traditional Catholic values. Certain religious principles can provide a ready-made code of practice for the new generations in relation to long-established norms of conduct, such as obligations to parents or male-female relationships, which are often presented as opposed to the laxity of the values of mainstream society. The role of Catholicism as a channel for the circulation of traditional ideas and values cannot be disregarded in the study of inter-generational transmission among families of Italian origin, as the Christian Catholic identity has always been considered as one of the inherent characteristics of 'being Italian'.<sup>50</sup> This is certainly due also to the presence and the influence of the Vatican, which, although holding territorial sovereignty, lies within the geographical boundaries of Rome, the capital of Italy. Therefore the most important centres of Italian temporal and spiritual activity – Rome as the capital and the Vatican as the Holy See – end up being combined in the collective imagination.<sup>51</sup> It is interesting to note that in the self-representation of some interviewees religious and national identity appear to be, if not assimilated to each other, at least put in parallel, as it is possible to realise from Baldo's words:

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<sup>50</sup> This tendency is generally true, although it is now much less justifiable than in the past, due to the variety of faiths professed in the country and the high number of conversions of Italian citizens to other confessions. Moreover, according to Godio (2001), a member of the Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR), in 1999 40% were believers who attended religious functions regularly, while another 40% declared themselves to be believers but had issues with the church as an institution or with its representatives. Only 6% declared themselves to be atheistic, while the rest of the population divides its loyalties among more than six hundred other creeds and sects. Other data provided by Foster (1999: 69) show that regular church attendance has dropped in Italy by 40% in the thirty years between 1950 and 1980, in connection with an increase in secularism. For details on the 'Internal Competition in a National Religious Monopoly', see Diotallevi 2002.

<sup>51</sup> See McNeill (2003: 554) for an interesting investigation of the nature of Rome 'as a node in a globally networked institution [the Catholic Church] ... embedded and regulated materially and politically'.

Baldo (1) [Family 1]: *We have never left the Catholic religion. But I have to say that to get my job I had to give up the Italian citizenship ... and to work for the railway you had to have English nationality. Well, at that time, now it has changed.*

Giving up his original citizenship was a condition for Baldo to get his job. Through his words, however, he was forced to deny only in part what he was (both Italian and Catholic), and he now underlines his allegiance to Catholicism as the only element of himself he could remain faithful to, having been forced to renounce his citizenship through force of circumstances.

In this context, it is important to point out the relationship between personal and institutional religion. Personal faith is a very private aspect of any religious feeling. Nevertheless, it is often combined with social and cultural elements belonging to religion as an institution or as a social moment:<sup>52</sup> attendance at religious services, vigils, pilgrimages and so on. When this combination takes place, the boundary between religion and socio-cultural expressions can become blurred.

As it is the institutions of religion that appear to be mainly related to the cultural aspects linked to devotion, social and community life, the next sections will take into account their specific role in relation to the Italian presence in Nottingham.

#### **5.4 Institutional religion: the Mission.**

Catholic missions were the first institutions to come to the aid of the first post-war Italian communities, with the establishment of the first centre in London in 1951.<sup>53</sup> Several others followed in order to cater for Italians living in other large cities, the Nottingham mission being established in 1958 (Marin 1975: 145). Since the 1960s several associations, clubs and services have developed in Nottingham for the Italian community, many of them meeting in the premises of the Italian mission of Vivian Avenue: the 'patronato' ACLI (*Associazioni Cristiane Lavoratori Italiani*)<sup>54</sup>, social, youth and sports clubs, a nursery school, supervised study after school hours, catechism and so on – all services and activities established exclusively for the immigrants' use.

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<sup>52</sup> The expression of Christianity through religious meetings and common prayer is supported by the Gospel: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name [Jesus], there am I in the midst of them' Matthew 18: 20 (France 1985).

<sup>53</sup> An Italian ethnic church, St Peter, was established in London in 1835, which, as suggested by Colpi (1990: 231), was soon deeply influenced by the religiosity of Irish immigrants. The Italian Catholic mission, founded in London a century later, was created specifically in order to provide services and spiritual comfort for the Italian immigrant community.

<sup>54</sup> The ACLI (Association of Christian Italian Workers) branch of Nottingham was the first one to open in 1966 (Marin 1975: 140).

The mission consequently became the religious and social infrastructural backbone of the Italian community of Nottingham.

As already underlined by Bottignolo (1985) and Colpi (1990), Italian Catholic missions are not territorially but ethnically bound. This means that the Italian missionary priest, although based in Nottingham, was providing his services also to other Italian communities in the surrounding areas, such as in Derby, Chesterfield, and Coventry. In this sense, the priest could act as a link between the various Italian communities of the area whose members would have been in touch a few times every year on the occasion of festivals of a religious or other nature.

The mission of Nottingham and the Italian Club – meeting in the premises of the mission – represented for the Italians both a religious and a social point of reference: through time these various functions became so interconnected that the building in Vivian Avenue ended up being referred to simply as ‘the Club’.<sup>55</sup> The mission and the club soon became very important for those immigrants who were looking for assistance and comfort, a surrogate of the extended family they had left.

Ethnic churches in fact seem to be a *locus* where allegiance to a place of origin is recreated and where it is possible to meet people with similar viewpoints on everyday life (Fortier 2000: 110), as well as a place to express one’s faith. All the people attending the same place, although dissimilar in certain individual characteristics, had many things in common, which often inevitably led to social exchange and reciprocity among them. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that the social organisation within the church operated on two levels: 1) by providing psychological support to the newcomers, and 2) by meeting their most common practical needs upon arrival – finding accommodation, assisting them with paper-work and translations, helping them with the health service, and other functions.

The role of the mission, and of the missionary in charge of it as a consequence, has changed through the time. As underlined by Don Alessandro – the former, and the last, Italian missionary priest in Nottingham – during an informal conversation, the Italians of Nottingham do not seem to ‘need’ an Italian priest anymore. According to Don Alessandro, in the first few decades after immigration, the Italian priest in Nottingham used to represent an extremely important figure of reference. However, due to the level of integration of the Italians of Nottingham and the increasingly more central role of their younger family members in the immigrants’ decision-making

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<sup>55</sup> The expression ‘the Club’ refers, in the common discourse, to both the premises of Vivian Avenue, where the Italians used to meet, and the Italians taking part in the meetings.

processes, the services the mission could offer to the Italian community have gradually become less vital. When Don Alessandro first arrived in Nottingham, he was expecting a community needing some help or guidance. As stressed by Bottignolo (1985: 118), a missionary priest himself, in his study of the Italian presence in the Bristol and Swindon area, ‘the religious function brings a missionary into direct touch with the people, to participate in the totality of the individuals’ and families’ lives, even in the most intimate of situations. The nature of the religious function alone ascribes such a wide-ranging role and authority to the Italian missionary amongst the immigrants that it has no comparison’. Instead, Don Alessandro soon learnt that the people of Nottingham, after almost half a century in the country, were autonomous in their decisions and had assumed a nearly autocratic attitude, delegating decisions on important issues (such as bureaucratic or financial affairs) to their children rather than discussing them with the representatives of the Church of Rome, who in the past had been used to acting as social workers and mediators – as also observed by Colpi (1990: 234). He admitted that ‘they don’t need an Italian priest here, anymore’.

This feeling, apparently, is not just Don Alessandro’s. Fortier (2000: 111) maintains that the missionaries of the Scalabrini Centre in London have been aware of the necessity to redefine their role in relation to the Italian collectivity of the city by ‘creating a community’, that is, consequently, a different form of identification. Therefore, the lack of points of contact between the *missions* and *the people the missions are there for*, in London and in Nottingham, has resulted in two completely different reactions. While the missionary centre in London tries to revise its role for the existing society, re-defining itself in a different way in relation to the changed needs of the Italians, the mission in Nottingham closes down due to the fact that it is not confronting a situation of material and practical ‘need’ anymore.

The Italians of Nottingham meet every Sunday – and on other religious occasions – in the church of St Augustine, located in Woodborough Road, in the Mapperley area. St Augustine’s Church was chosen as the primary site for the religious services because it was the Catholic Church nearest to the area of first settlement of the majority of Italians. Although it is an English Catholic parish,<sup>56</sup> services were also held in Italian every Sunday up to the end of 2002. Although the Italians of Nottingham have always

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<sup>56</sup> The British Catholic authorities, aiming at absorbing Italian believers into already-established parishes, have always been reluctant to allow the Italian communities to establish their own churches (Bottignolo 1985; Marin 1975). Nevertheless, this tendency appears to neglect the specificity of the case of the migrants, as regards their pastoral expectations, as first expressed in 1952 in Pius XII’s Apostolic constitution *Exul Familia*. In this, the Vatican underlined the necessity of specific spiritual assistance for

hoped for the construction of their own church, this has never proved to be possible.<sup>57</sup> Some of the interviewees attribute this to the lack of understanding and confidence between various members of the Italian community, as opposed to other minority groups.

*Dalila (2) [Family 8]: There are many communities: Polish, Indian, Pakistani. They have done everything! That's the difference: they are all united! They have all their churches, the mosques ... the others have done the Hindu temple. We haven't managed, the Italians, to build a church. And now we have lost everything ... everything. We lost the social centre, we have lost everything. Why? Because we lack initiative. That's the difference!*

In Nottingham, the Italian missionary had to refer to and depend on the parish priest of St Augustine for the use of the premises for official religious services. When Don Alessandro resigned as the missionary priest for the Italian community<sup>58</sup> the Sunday service kept on being held in Italian thanks to Father Thomas, an Italian-speaking English priest, until he had to stop due to circumstances beyond his control. Since then, the services have been held in English, with the resentment of many older Italians.

The older Italians' bitterness in relation to religious matters, however, is not just linked to the impossibility of attending services and 'confessing' in their own language, as they have done for decades. In fact, it is also connected to the disagreement between two different groups with reference to matters of a para-religious nature. The next section deals with the details of this, on the surface sudden, crisis.

### **5.5 Hiding behind the saints; or how religious affiliation mirrors a social reality**

If the church transmits and strengthens Italian traditional cultural values, at the same time it helps reinforce the sense of belonging of the various existing groups. In Nottingham, in fact, the church does not seem to increase the sense of community, intended as a collective harmonious whole. In contrast, due to events of a 'para-religious' nature, a schism between two groups of Italians has recently taken place with significant consequences for members of the whole community.

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immigrants by recommending that the parish priest needs to speak the same language as the migrants and, where possible, should belong to the same ethnic group (De Paolis 2002).

<sup>57</sup> During an informal conversation, one of the members of the 'Associazioni Anziani di Nottingham' stated that, up to a few years ago, the Italians of Nottingham every year were asked to 'fill in a form' (not better identified), through which a certain amount of money would have gone to the Church - hence their hope that they were contributing to the construction of a church.

<sup>58</sup> His resignation, with the following closure of the mission, took place during the fieldwork for this study.

If in London religion obliterates regional differences (Fortier 2000: 30), this is partially the opposite in Nottingham, where regional differences appear to be reinforced by a clear allegiance to the group of origin. In fact, the events that have taken place in the last decade demonstrate that the identity of the Italians of Nottingham has relied more on individuals than on the community as a whole. This is particularly clear in the recent creation of 'religious factions': on one side, S. Antonio ('backed' by people originating from San Paolo di Civitate, Foggia), on the other, Padre Pio<sup>59</sup> ('supported' by the people originating from Piedimonte d'Alife, Caserta).

**Figure 5.1: Sant'Antonio procession: Nottingham 9 June 2002**



<sup>59</sup> Padre Pio was canonized on 16 June 2002 by Pope John Paul II with the name Saint Pio of Pietralcina.

**Figure 5.2: Padre Pio, Nottingham 11 June 2002, the day of the canonisation**

Since the statue of Padre Pio was commissioned in order to counterbalance the influence of Sant'Antonio<sup>60</sup> – and of the people belonging to its committee, obviously – among the Italians, disputes within the community have become more frequent. It is clear that it is not that diverse devotions helped to create a divided community.<sup>61</sup> It seems quite the opposite: the community was already in some way divided, and the devotion to the two religious figures is only the most apparent expression of this, possibly triggered by an external interference.

In his 1984 study of the Italian community of Bedford, Tosi (1984: 55-6) reported tensions and antagonisms between groups and associations aiming at leadership within the Bedford community. Similarly, in Nottingham, the reason for the continuous friction between the two factions might be, as suggested by Tosi for the Bedford case, fierce competition between leaders for recognition of their moral power and supremacy both within the community and outside it. This might be the result of a

<sup>60</sup> The cult for saints among Italians originating from the South of the country is well known and has been studied by several authors (Bottignolo 1985; Colpi 1990; Paganoni and O'Connor 1999; Varacalli *et al.* 1999).

process triggered by the local authorities, who “began to recognise the need, in a climate of growing ‘multiculturalism’, to identify an official interlocutor and spokesman” (Tosi 1984: 56).

In the Nottingham case, the epicentres of the feuds within the Italian community are the two existing religious committees, which rather than promoting mutual understanding and forgiveness, use religious symbols as instruments for social conflict. The members of the committees, their families and their followers, are engaged in a continuous competition for the control of activities among the Italians, including attempts at sabotaging other people’s initiatives. This is made clear in the following excerpt from an interview with a member of one of the two religious committees.

Matteo (1) [Family 8]: *As soon as the members of the Padre Pio group learnt that Sant’Antonio committee was organising a carnival party on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February, they started arranging another party.*

D.G.: *So, there are two associations...*

Matteo: *Two associations: the Padre Pio and the Sant’Antonio association. So, they organised a party too, but they failed. I don’t know if they managed to get enough attendance at the party or not. We are too many already, we cannot accept anyone else.*

D.G.: *If I understood that correctly, at first there was just one group and then it split into two parts...?*

Matteo: *Yes, it split, but the majority has remained with us. We get on very well in our group!*

It was only when the recorder was switched off that some interviewees reported – in a more or less clear way, and repeatedly asking that I should not mention their name in relation to this issue<sup>62</sup> – their ideas about the reasons lying behind the recent lack of harmony within the Italian community. In several cases the issue was raised of a past missionary priest who, due to an illness (or to the involvement in too many side activities – two versions coexist)<sup>63</sup>, delegated to supposedly dishonest agents the running of the affairs of the mission and the club. In the long term, this led to financial problems and to suspicions about corrupt finances within the Italian community: many

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<sup>61</sup> The Italian community of Nottingham can be defined as such only as a simplification. In fact, within the Italians of Nottingham there are very strict group boundaries and allegiances.

<sup>62</sup> This recommendation was not uncommon, although it had already been made clear on several occasions that their anonymity would have been preserved anyway: during the phone conversations to arrange the appointments for the interview, on the leaflet all the interviewees received - containing an outline of the research objectives - and at the beginning of each interview. This request was, therefore, a way for the interviewees to stress further their view that they were sharing matters that had been the subject of very private and sensitive discussions. The names used here and throughout the thesis are pseudonyms: the anonymity of the interviewees is therefore preserved.

<sup>63</sup> According to Gans (1962: 109), within the Italian-American community of Boston ‘the moment a priest involves himself in wordly affairs, such as city politics or even church building plans, the halo is removed, wordly motives are imputed, and suspicion reigns’.



seem to be aware of the situation but none has the power, courage or evidence to expose it.

Piera (1) [Family 10]: *The Club was closed not because the second generation was not interested in it. It was the parents. The 'mafia' we had. I call them 'mafiosi', those who destroyed everything. They just thought for themselves. Don Morrone, he died, he was ill, so he gave the responsibility of the mission just to one man that was there and ... since then no money arrived into the account [of the club] ... that's it. We shouldn't say this but ....*

The same ideas are expressed by another interviewee, who also asked not to mention her name in relation to this issue:

Angela (1) [Family 4]: The community is split due to the “saints”! Due to the jealousy of the two factions of S. Antonio and Padre Pio!

Moreover, in relation to the bureaucratic aspect of the church, in the discourse of some older interviewees a certain level of anti-clericalism is apparent.<sup>64</sup> Some of the respondents are, in fact, very resentful of the people in charge of the mission, who are based in London, as a result of the fact that the Italian community has been deprived of a venue where to meet. As one interviewee explained, the ‘mission / club’ and the house were the Italian nuns<sup>65</sup> used to live – in which the kindergarten was hosted – were bought in the 1960s through voluntary contributions from the Italian community in Nottingham. Due to the need of extensive building work necessary for some structural repair, and due to the fact that the Italian mission in Nottingham was going to be closed, the Missionaries decided that the best option was to sell the large house on Vivian Avenue where the Italian mission was based, where the missionary priest lived, and where the Italian Club was hosted up to the beginning of 2002.

The older Italians of Nottingham were expecting to get back the proceeds from the sale, possibly in the form of new premises for their meetings. However, this has never happened due to the mission’s large standing deficit, attributed by some interviewees to the seemingly corrupt way of running the club/mission by the delegates of the former missionary priest.

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<sup>64</sup> In his study of Southern Italian immigration into San Francisco in the early decades of the 20th century, Cinel (1982) reports their very modest interest towards religion, due to the immigrants’ anticlericalism. Similar views are reported by Bottignolo (1985) as regards the Italian presence in South West England.

<sup>65</sup> The nuns, belonging to the Dorotee of Cemmo congregation, used to have a role as protagonists in Nottingham as they were in charge of the kindergarten and of the catechism: they also used to stand beside the missionary priest in many everyday activities. They also visited sick and disabled people and brought them the Eucharist and spiritual comfort. They were also a point of reference for the community and a link among its members. Since 11 February 2002 they have been moved to the London centre.

Some interviewees underlined that after the sale of the premises of the mission and the lease of the nuns' house for private use by the central administration of the mission in London there was a deeply felt necessity for a meeting place. The older Italians now rent the hall of St Bernadette, a Catholic English church on Sneinton Dale Road, where the members of the Club meet once a week.<sup>66</sup>

The lack of a point of reference for the Italian community and the feeling of abandonment following the closure of the mission is summarised by Angela's lamentation for having been left alone.

*Angela (1) [Family 4]: No Mass in Italian ... we have been left on our own. It has been sad. After so many years, all have left. In the past, if anything happened in the community, if anyone died, everyone would have known. Now that the nuns have left, this will not be possible. They were a reference point for everybody.*

The majority of the Italians of Nottingham, and not just the older ones, seem to be to some degree involved with these issues. Indeed, the infrastructural relevance of the mission for the Italian community was clear in the support they gave to the inter-generational transmission of values, language, roles and practices. The closure of the Mission, the reassignment of the nuns to the London convent (with the consequent closing down of the Italian Catholic kindergarten, the end of language classes, the end of preparation classes for first communion), and the termination of several other activities taking place in the two related premises, have created for the whole Italian community of Nottingham a period of disorientation and loss of well-known and easily recognisable social and cultural signposts, directly affecting the members of each of the three generations.

### **5.5.1 Identity and the Feeling of Belonging: The Mission & the Club.**

Because parties, festivals and anniversaries all took place in the premises belonging to the Mission, they contributed to the transformation of the Mission into an 'institutionalised' vehicle for the socialisation of immigrant families and their children. Moreover, the simple fact that all these events took place in that particular venue gave further legitimisation to them. It also provided the opportunity for socially approved

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<sup>66</sup> As underlined by Bottignolo, the frequent use of unsuitable premises, the only ones available, was also common for the Italian missions of Swindon and Bristol. This was probably due to the fact that, according to Bottignolo (1985: 118-9), 'English religious officials show an attitude of benign tolerance in relation to the Italian missions. In any case they do not consider them necessary [...]. From here stems that passive commitment which often makes available to the Italian missionary and community only those things which they do not use'.

cultural reproduction and allowed a certain social recognition within the community itself, as well as providing a source for cultural identity.

The fieldwork for this research, having taken place during a period of transition coinciding with the closing down of the Mission and the consequent ending of all the activities linked to it, was very much affected by the sense of loss of a very specific reference point for the Italians of Nottingham. For the first time in many years they felt the necessity to redefine themselves independently from an official institution. The closure of the mission provided the background for a reflection on their role as parents, grandparents, Italians outside Italy, and foreigners in Britain. If many traditional ideas, values and principles might have been shared and legitimised by the existence of the Mission, representing the official ‘piece of Italy’ within reach, the sudden disappearance of it has especially left the first and the second generations with greater responsibilities for the transmission of such values to the following generations. There is a sense of defeat in the words of many Italians. The older generation underlines the sense of community, of a big family that used to reign up to twenty years ago. There was a feeling of closeness that now appears to be lost.

Piera (1) [Family 10]: *We were all close-knit once. I don't know what's happening to our community but we were all close. If Padre Sebastiano [one of the first missionary priests in Nottingham] needed some help we were all there. We were getting all well together: first communion, catechism, the nuns were doing the catechism ... everything! It went to pieces ... our community. For this reason I am very angry...*

D. G: *What was this due to?*

Piera: *I don't know ... I don't know ... I don't know. We were one, there was everything, there was all that made a community ... rich. We were rich. We enriched it ... because we were working for the club, we did a show ... we were preparing the children for the first communion, my children did the first communion there. The Italian association organised a whole party for everyone. The excuse is that things don't work anymore because there's no Italian priest. It's an excuse. It was us!*

This sense of loss is clearly understandable as the club, the mission and the church have represented for the first generation not only elements of ontological security but also the main form of socialisation in Britain: ever since the first years of their arrival in the new country such socialisation has always taken place within the Italian group. This is, however, both the symptom and the expression of their marginal position within mainstream society. In fact, it has been through their everyday interaction with other members of the community belonging to the same generation and the implicit agreement on certain rules, customs and behaviour that the Italians of Nottingham have managed to reinforce their feeling of belonging – to the detriment of their level of

integration in the new society. There is the idea that a higher level of integration has never been actively sought by them. In fact, it is very common for the first generation to stress their different attitude towards life, in general, and social life in particular, when they compare themselves to their English counterparts. Nevertheless, having been in England for such a long time, and having lived only in that Italian-in-Nottingham cocoon, allows them to keep a detached stance from both Britain and Italy. The older generation appears to be very conservative, sometimes even reactionary, especially when they condemn the supposedly decayed moral standards of both Britain and Italy.

Interestingly, what at first might have been supposed as being a characteristic of the first generation only, as being more strongly attached to the society of origin of half a century ago, in reality seems to be still alive among the second and, in part, the third generations in their everyday life, finding expression in, for example, the long-established gender roles in the interaction between men and women (see Chapter 6). In any case, as it is possible to assume, conservatism is applied more frequently to women than men, as is more clearly explained in the next section.

### **5.5.2 ‘A place for everybody and everybody in their place’: Men and women, the young and the old**

The observance of traditional gender roles is also made clear in the segregation of men and women during attendance at social events. During meetings at the club, the older people divide themselves into two groups: one of men mainly discussing or playing cards, the other of women playing bingo (see figures below). Occasionally, some of them take time for traditional ballroom dances.

**Figure 5.3: Italian women playing Bingo at the weekly meeting in the Hall of St Bernadette, spring 2002**



**Figure 5.4: Italian men playing cards at the weekly meeting in the Hall of St Bernadette, spring 2002**



**Figure 5.5: Christmas Lunch of the *Associazione Anziani di Nottingham* at the Mission on Vivian Avenue, 19<sup>th</sup> December 2001**



Apart from the gender-based distinctions within the group, it seems that there is also a very strong age-based separation between the first and the second generations' sections of the club, as within the community. This age-based gendered hierarchical structure seems also to be reflected in everyday activities and roles. As maintained by some members of the committee of the second generation association, the expectations of the members of the *Associazione Anziani* who regarded the younger ones as subordinate to their authority led to increasingly frequent frictions between the two groups as the older generation were expecting a more submissive attitude from their children.

In these circumstances, the mission – and the Club, having the mission as its physical base – represented one of the crucial settings for the inter-generational transmission of values, but also for a certain degree of inter-generational tension. The strict Catholic rules of behaviour – especially towards the younger generations and women – appear to be well suited to the older generation’s conservative stance towards life. Therefore, reference to religion is a safer way for the older generations to legitimate certain forms of severity towards the moral conduct of younger people. Interestingly, and conveniently, the border between conventional Catholicism and Italianness appears to be blurred as regards the values attributed to the sexual conduct of the younger generations.

As regards the second generation, boys and girls, although not segregated, could meet either at school or during the weekly events taking place at the mission, under the close supervision of the parents or of older brothers and sisters. Those occasions represented up to twenty years ago the only way for girls to meet and get to know their peers. Many of the second generation Italian girls married boys they had known for a long time through the club and the events organised in it.

The boys, unlike the girls, could go out more freely and escape, momentarily, the control of their families. They also used to have less strict codes of behaviour and curfew times. They were allowed to go out and come back home late, as long as they were not drunk ‘like the English’, as drunkenness was – and still is – considered by the first generation as morally reproachable. Some parents attempted to defend the Italian ‘character’ through a direct influence on their children’s marital choices, especially directed towards the encouragement to intra-marry, as in the case of Riccardo and Marina.

Riccardo (2) [Family 1]: *We saw each other on the street, but we met at the Italian Centre ... the place where the Italians met in Nottingham.*

Marina (2): *My parents knew his parents, my friends were his friends. But we never used to go out with them, then [everyone laughs]. No, we used to be just the girls, we didn’t then just go out with the boys, we used to tease them. At that time, we used to be around ten girls, all Italian.*

D.G.: *Was that a segregating thing?*

Marina: *No, no, no, no ... In those days, 200 people used to go there on Friday and Saturday, and may be on Sunday. All the youngsters ...*

Riccardo: *The majority were Italian ... they had the same ... identity.*

Inter-generational tensions appear to come to the surface when ‘the kids’ grow older. This is clear for both the members of the second and the third generations in relation to their respective parents. In fact, according to the members of the second generation, the club and the mission were stuck in the past and ‘stale-tasting’.

Riccardo (2) [Family 1]: *The Italian Centre was sold. The young Italians have integrated into the English structure, so there are many other distractions. So the popularity is now lost. The young ones have distractions ... they have got a wider experience. The older community is still maintaining the Italian ...*

Marina (2): *... tradition*

Riccardo: *The younger generations ... they are actually losing ties.*

What Riccardo identifies with a phenomenon of ‘tie-breaking’ might be true. However, the younger generations’ development of different interests might also be caused by age-related factors.

Luca (3) [Family 10]: *There was a community centre but ... for my mum’s age, it’s OK, because there’s people. For my nonna’s age is OK. For my little brother who’s eight, it’s OK because all his friends get there. For my age there’s ... nothing!*

The organisation of the club has always been in the hands of the older generation – apart from a short period in which it was run by a committee formed by some of the members of the second generation, who were providing entertainment that was seen as not always suitable for the younger generations. The club and the mission have certainly played a very important role, mainly for the immigrants and their children. Nevertheless, some of the activities had no appeal for the teenage members of the community. Normally, they were not willing to attend the club, possibly also because they did not wish to spend their spare time in a supervised environment. Nevertheless, they seemed enthusiastic when non-ordinary events – such as the televising of world cup football matches (see Chapter 8) – took place in the same environment where the three generations could come together and express support towards the same ‘cause’ and make a show of being members of a larger community. In the past, the mission and the club represented a very important social point of reference for both the original immigrants and their children. With those children having grown up, the club developed into the older generation’s territory.

## 5.6 Religion and the first generation

Since the arrival of the Italian immigrants into Nottingham in the 1950s and 1960s, the Italian community has been characterised by strong religious fervour and participation, especially from the time when the Italian mission was founded with religious services being offered in Italian. The mission, in fact, provided strong support to both personal and infrastructural religion. The participation of the older generation in events organised in the religious ambit might also be the result of their association of religious

involvement with a higher level of identification with their Italian background, therefore attributing a very high value to church participation – and church-related events – as a reflection of a person's ethnic belonging.

Through the sharing of Christian Catholic values, the Italians of Nottingham manage to develop a sense of identity which seems to be Italian-Catholic more than Italian-Nottingham(ese). This is especially clear during particularly important religious events attracting Italians from various other English cities, such as Peterborough, Leicester, Bedford, etc. Trips from these cities take the form of a pilgrimage and are usually organised by coach through their own parish churches, who are officially represented by their standards (see Figure 5.7).

**Figure 5.6: St Antonio procession: Nottingham 9 June 2002.**



**Figure 5.7: Standard belonging to the Italians of Peterborough taking part to the procession**





The annual pilgrimage to certain sanctuaries or attendance at particular religious festivals allows many Italians from several different communities to meet up and develop relationships that will further enforce an ethnic group cohesion going beyond the limits of the city of Nottingham, in the name of a common ethnic and religious identity.

### **5.6.1 First generation's views on their children's attendance**

From the older generation's perspective, attending these events is in fact a way to reinforce the existing social networks with other people of Italian origin, to preserve the Italian language and culture, to demonstrate to others that parents have been able to instil their children with an adequate respect for their origin and identity, and a sense of consideration for the older members of the family. Nevertheless, attendance is generally limited to the older generation, some members of the second generation and their youngest children.

The older generation laments the scarce interest demonstrated by some of the members of the second generation and nearly all the younger members of their families for most of the events they organise. Many of them in fact agree that, although their children and grandchildren attend church – especially on particular occasions – they nevertheless tend to desert other kinds of functions which are not exactly religious *per se* but which can be considered as religious-related, such as Christmas and Easter parties and festivals organised by the first generation. The main explanation they give for this behaviour is that, in their opinion, their children and grandchildren have grown so much into the British culture that they feel detached from these functions and what they mean for the older Italians. They complain that the younger members of their families should join them when they attend meetings and religious activities, both for the religious commitment that they require, and, mainly, as an obligation to the older generation's efforts in the improvement of their family's wellbeing through their work.

The lack of respect, consideration and gratitude for the parents' effort to give a better life to their own children is for Matilde what indicates their rejection of their culture of origin. In the following excerpt from her interview, Matilde vividly compares the upbringing of her own children with that of other second-generation people of Italian origin, holding some of them responsible for their lack of sensibility towards their parents. The following passage deals with the reasons attributed by Matilde to the refusal of some members of the second generation to take part in celebrations and festivals involving the Italian community.

Matilde (1) [Family 9]: *I think that the younger ones grew up here, they learnt English, they got the English habits. To be true they are more English than Italian. Then the parents have always spoken with them in dialect, they cannot speak Italian. These youngsters are almost ashamed to be told of being Italian ... it seems. Because they cannot speak Italian well, they cannot socialize. They feel they belong to a higher level because they are educated. Thanks to us who gave it to them! Therefore, this is the impression I get. They don't want to mix with us as if it was a 'smacco' [letdown]: 'No, I don't want to hear about these Italians. What are these Italians? Why do I have to mingle with these Italians?'. You have to know that your father is Italian, was and still is your father, who gave you birth ... whatever person your father is, is always your father ... and you, who are a clever person, who has studied, should say 'thanks, dad, if I am what I am', because he could be like him or worse than him. So I have to understand my father, I don't have to put him on a side. It seems that the children want to enjoy themselves, have their lives, use their parents when it is possible: 'Dad, do this, dad do that! Mum, look after my child, baby-sit, save some money for when I'll need it ... don't go and eat the steak at the restaurant and save the money until you croak!'... Excuse the term ... This is what I think, by looking at it, by studying it, and by thinking about it. And it is sad because it is a too bad thing. If you say: 'let's go, there's a party. You come too, don't you? Take your children with you'. 'No, no I don't want to come, I don't mingle with the Italians, no ... I don't like this, I don't like that'. What kind of thinking is that? Once in a while you can go with your father. 'OK, I'll please you, I am coming too'. If you do that once, then the child would do that too, then my child as well ...*

The religious aspect in these events is only one of a multiplicity of issues coming into play. Indeed, this quotation has a wider significance as it also involves cultural and social aspects linked to the celebrations and festivals.

Through the words of the first generation interviewees, it is obvious that the members of the older generation only appreciate some of the aspects of the assimilation of their children (for example upward mobility and education) while attributing to this process some negative drawbacks (diminished interest in the country of origin, a low level of commitment to their parents, insufficient interest in religion and so on). The next section will provide the possibility to compare these views of the older generation just described with the attitudes towards religion of the members of the second and third generation.

### **5.7 Religion: the second and the third generations**

Although Hansen's (1952) idea that the children of immigrants reject the culture of origin of their parents might in many cases be true, nevertheless the second generation's attitude towards those less visible and more abstract elements of their familial cultural heritage appears to be, in the Nottingham case, less hostile than in Hansen's predictions. In their study of the ethnicity of second generation Jews in the United States, Nahirny and Fishman (1965) clarify that, although members of the second generation seem to

reject some of their parents' cultural endowment, in reality they seem to retain some of their traditional 'abstract values'. Second-generation British-Italians display some degree of religious participation and church attendance, in spite of their achieved social mobility and stronger integration into British society, which are usually interpreted as elements encouraging a certain disregard for religiosity.

The majority are British-born and can speak Italian (or a mixture of Italian and the dialect of their parents' region), but when confronted with the choice, they preferred to speak English during the interview. Nevertheless, the religious services they used to attend with the rest of the Italian community until 2002 were usually carried out in Italian.

### 5.7.1 Second and third generations and their creed.

All the interviewees stated that they are in some way believers. However, an interesting generational difference exists. While the members of the first generation show no doubts and are ready to confirm their belief – also appearing almost upset at being asked the question – many interviewees belonging to the subsequent generations state that they are believers in a God (but not necessarily one that has to coincide with that of Catholic tradition), but that they do not attend church regularly and only go on special occasions and when all the other members of their family are involved.

*Elvira (3) [Family 8]: I don't think I am particularly religious. Yeah, I do believe because I've been brought up to believe and, you know, I have to go to church for Christmas and Easter. Without my parents probably I wouldn't just say on a Sunday 'I have to go to church'. I am not saying I am not religious, because I do believe that there's somebody out there. It could be God it could be anything ... there's something, definitely. There must be.*

Second and third generations believe in the existence of 'something' or 'somebody out there'. Nevertheless, this belief is more indeterminate and potentially open to transformation if compared to the first generation's certainties. Aware of this, they underline that, although they are religiously more active than their British counterparts, their fervour is just a portion of the first generation's. Even if the members of the second and third generation affirm that they attend religious services mainly on the most important festivities or life-cycle events, nevertheless this is sufficient for them to remain in touch with most of the members of the Italian community, both friends and relatives. Furthermore, as suggested by Smith (1978: 1159), religious and communal rituals play a very important role in the regulation of behaviour and give 'social meaning to each stage in the cycle of individual lives'.

Donato (2) [Family 7]: *I don't go to church every Sunday. I go to church at Christmas, Easter, weddings, funerals. I'm not as religious as my mum. She's very religious! But I still believe in God, in Jesus ... and, I think that, deep down, yes, I am religious, although I don't practise it on a regular basis. I think that I get lots of my beliefs on philosophies other than Christianity.*

Having put in doubt the existence of a religious truth 'truer than another one', the consequence is the development of a 'sense of relativism' in their opinion on personal religion. As already emphasised by previous studies (Fortier 2000; Parolin 1998), many Italians do feel part of a larger community of believers which is not circumscribed within 'Italian' boundaries: as a matter of fact they do not need the ethnic church to express their faith, as many of them clearly state: 'there's only one God'.

Dalila (2) [Family 8]: *Now that the priest is gone, we have to go and attend the English mass. I haven't got a problem with that. I haven't got a problem going to an English church ... St Augustine is our parish. But I haven't got a problem going to St James', and they are Church of England. I haven't got a problem going to ... any different ... Italian churches, English churches, any church to me ... I can listen to any mass. To me it's one God<sup>67</sup>, I haven't got a problem with any ... protestants, Church of England, you know ... I think ... it is basically the same. They believe in one God. It is just slightly different but the basic ... the basic learning, the basic religious aspects are the same ...*

Although this personal type of ecumenicalism represents a strong change from the first generations' belief in a single Italian-Catholic religiosity, in reality, it does not appear to endanger any traditional beliefs but seems just to put them into perspective. In fact, Dalila together with other members of the second generation are actively involved in activities within the church, either as singers in the Italian choir or as helpers during religious processions.

With reference to the religious education of their children, the second generation does not show a single trend. In fact, people belonging to the same age group and with similar life experiences (namely divorced and remarried<sup>68</sup>) display completely different attitudes towards religious instruction and parents' involvement in it. As it is clear from the following excerpt, Gabriele is personally involved in the religious upbringing of his children and is keen to reproduce the cultural religious education he received from his parents.

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<sup>67</sup> Dalila believes in the existence of one God but, in other passages of the interview, refuses the possibility of accepting as a son-in-law a person of another religion, unless he abjured it to adopt Catholicism. The apparent incoherence of her statements can be justified in relation to the motivations lying behind the refusal of a person with a different religion as a member of the family: the older generation's wishes that the long-standing tradition of a wedding in church could carry on.

Gabriele (2) [Family 3]: *I have been far more religious than my brothers. I always take my children to mass, every single Sunday. Always. We try to do the right thing. Mum did it to me and I carried it on because I think that it was good that they at least knew their own religion, their religious background. That's why they went to Catholic school.*

D.G.: *So they attended the religious school as you did when you were eight?*

Gabriele: *Yes, they went to Catholic school. My son still goes to Catholic school.*

Donato, in contrast, after having had his children baptised,<sup>69</sup> decided that they should follow their 'free will'.

Donato (2) [Family 7]: *Basically, when they [the children] get older, it's up to them what they think. When they were babies, I had them baptised. Neither of the girls have had the holy communion [coughs]. I said to them 'you know, if you want to, then it's your decision, I don't gonna force you'. By the time they got to that age, I was divorced from their mother anyway. And I wasn't able to guide them, I suppose. But all of them have been baptised.*

D. G.: *So, is your wife Catholic as well?*

Donato: *Present wife? No, she's Christian, Church of England. From what we were told, the baptism is exactly the same for the Christian [sic] or Church of England. She's actually a teacher in a Church of England school. So she goes to church probably more than I do.*

Gabriele and Donato show two opposite possible ways to deal with the religious upbringing of their children: in the first case, the parent is directly involved, in the second one, the children are left with the freedom to choose for themselves. In reality, these decisions might also be linked to the different situation of the two fathers: while Gabriele was granted the custody of his children, in the case of Donato, his daughters live with the mother, making it more difficult for him to intervene directly in matters of a religious nature.

The personal, social and performative sides of religious belief appear to be combined in the first generations' approach to religion. In contrast, for the subsequent generations these aspects seem to be independent from each other and not necessarily combinable. Personal belief and the external proof of it are often considered as a family, not personal, activity.

### **5.7.2 Second and third generations and the social side of religious attendance**

Many members of the second and third generation attend religious services principally on special occasions and as a family group. These special occasions, and the family

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<sup>68</sup> The first generation's reaction to their children's unstable and 'untraditional' family life is perceived as strong disappointment for the sense of having failed as parents for not having been able to transmit strong family values. More details about this can be found in Chapter 6.

<sup>69</sup> See Chapter 6 for more details on the value of christening.

reunions which follow, represent the recurrent symbolic moment reminding and celebrating what the various generations of the many families taking part in the same event have in common. While attending the same event, they recognise themselves as members of the same group, sharing memories, passing them on through rituals and accepting the same rules and conduct. Nevertheless, the multiplicity of the self, as a contextualised construction, opens the way to a more 'creative' way of reacting to certain rules: by accepting them, by refusing them, by bending them. What can appear incongruent is actually the coherent reaction to the environment people live in, in which the core of the self remains intact while adapting to the various different circumstances. This is very relevant as it combines the possibility of a dynamic and contextualised evolution of ethnic belonging and with 'pre-existing communal solidarities, cultural attributes, and historical memories' (Conzen *et al.*, 1990).

In the next two quotations, both from third generation interviewees, the difference between personal and institutional religiosity appears clear in the sometimes conflicting nature of these two concepts.

Alberto (3) [Family 9]: *I believe in God but I don't go to church apart from Christmas and Easter. But I do believe in God. We go to my grandma for Christmas and Easter. She goes to church and she wants us to go as a family. So we have to respect this. I don't like it but I do believe in God, but I don't believe that you have to go to church to be religious. There are people who are religious and don't go to church. I do believe but I just don't go to church but my grandparents do ... For Easter we usually go to our grandparents but ... for Christmas they just came by, we went to church here first and then we opened the presents here.*

While Alberto does not like the fact that every year he needs to go through the same rituals with his family, Luca, who is the same age, appears to be more impatient towards traditions he would easily reject as they prevent him from behaving like his English peers do.

Luca (3) [Family 10]: *Sometimes I feel different from my friends. We celebrate like Easter or new year's day stuff ... with everyone coming around for dinner in my house. And my Italian festivals and stuff like that ... and we have to go on processions and to the Italian church and stuff...*

D. G.: *Do you go to processions?*

Luca: *I used to, I don't anymore [...]. We celebrate that night [on Christmas Eve], we all eat around a big table, have dinner and everything. My English friends don't do that. So when they would say 'are you coming out tonight for a drink' on Christmas Eve, 'No, I can't. My family is gonna kill me'.*

Whilst on one side Luca has dropped the habit of going to religious services and events which he can now refuse, nevertheless he does not seem to be able to rebel

against his family traditions and practices; religious affiliation in his case seems have been reduced to its social sphere.

### 5.7.3 Attendance at a Catholic school and Sunday school

The ‘forced’ and reluctant presence at some events can, however, in the long term, or when the necessity is over, generate a reaction of absolute refusal to attend similar events or functions, as Luca makes clear.

Luca (3) [Family 10]: *I don't go to church anymore.*

D.G.: *Is there a reason for that?*

Luca: *erm .. [long pause]. I don't know, probably from the school ... you were told you couldn't go if you couldn't go to church ... at school, that's probably why.*

D. G.: *So when you were at school you had to attend the church ...?*

Luca: *Yeah.*

D. G.: *... Necessarily?*

Luca: *Necessarily*

D. G.: *Otherwise? Would that have been a problem for you?*

Luca: *Yeah, you know, everyone had to but ... in any religious classes you were told that you had to go to church otherwise you couldn't be accepted ...in school. So I just thought that there was no point in going to church when I left school. So I didn't go.*

Education in a Catholic school was, and still is, seen as essential for many second and third generation children. Parents justify this choice mainly through the fact that according to them Catholic schools appear to impart a certain discipline to their children, as well as providing them with the principles of Catholicism. Religious schools, according to many parents, provide a certain framework useful to regulate the conduct of young people (for example in relation to clothing, lifestyle or sexuality) by condemning or forgiving certain kinds of behaviour.

Donato (2) [Family 7]: *My very first school was Catholic. That was junior school, run by nuns at the time. Very, very strict school ... [coughs]. That's what my parents wanted. And, I guess I learnt a lot from there but I do believe it was too claustrophobic, and so after that I just went to a normal secondary school.*

The severity of some religious schools has a very strong appeal for some parents. In the following case, however, the daughters agree on the fact that the school they attend is better than any other in the area as it is less ‘relaxed’ and the teachers are less ‘laid back’.

Emma (2) [Family 2]: *The school they [my daughters] attend used to be 90% Catholic and 10% non Catholic, but now because less Catholics attend Catholic schools they accept everyone. I sent them there, first, because it was a good school and second because it was Catholic. Now there are 1400 pupils. It is like a little*

*town. They go from Sheffield to try to get into it. It is very strict. Even if you are 19 you have to go in uniform, no fancy hair colour.*

*Lisa (3): It is like an Italian school system. The high school is more like the college ... here, so is more relaxed so ... [the phone rings] the teachers are more laid back. It is different. While our school is more strict. Strict teaching...*

*Emma: They have to study religion. There used to be a nun, then a monk, now it is a normal teacher.*

Lisa approves the strict rules of conduct of the Catholic school she is attending and, interestingly, believes that they are similar to the ones of the Italian school system. As the choice of a Catholic school is very common among the population of Italian origin in Nottingham, the number of children attending the same school and belonging to an Italian immigrant background is quite high.

*Luca (3) [Family 10]: I am quite lucky because the school I went to is a school where all the Italians go [known as] 'Christ the King'. All the Italians are in there, either Christ the King or Trinity. So I went to Christ the King. I was lucky because I grew up with them, I went to primary school with them, and then we met at the Italian Club on Sundays and then ... it just ... totally ... you know what I mean? [...] At school, it was like ... Italians stick together, like ... with people of my age. A lot of people were Italian, yeah.*

*D. G.: So there were no British people at school?*

*Luca: Yeah, there was ... erm ... there was a lot of Irish people, probably everyone was nearly Irish, English and Irish, and then there was ... Italians, we were like, the second, and then the Polish were third.*

With regard to Sunday school, almost all the children of the Italian immigrants have attended it in preparation for their first communion. An interesting aspect is the fact that some of them associate attendance at catechism not with religious instruction but mainly with language learning, as the buildings related to the church were the sites in which the 'official Italian' language was spoken.

*Donato (2) [Family 7]: I went to the Sunday school for a few years up until I was about eleven [years old]. So between, let's say, 6 and 11. It was mainly obviously orientated over, you know, stories of Jesus, and this sort of thing, but it was all in Italian.*

The attendance at catechism therefore had a double function for many children, both of preparing them for the reception of new sacraments and, at the same time, instructing them in the language of the country of ancestral origin, the main language spoken in the buildings of the mission.

## 5.8 Conclusions

This chapter has examined role of the Mission, the club and the ethnic church in the construction and reinforcement of Italian identity for the three generations of people of



Italian origin in Nottingham. In particular, church and club attendance used to have a special role especially through the 1960s, 1970s and the 1980s, as through the several activities organised in the Mission (as a venue and as a point of reference for all the Italians of the area), the second generation members could be socialised within culturally accepted and shared aspects of the cultural identity of their parents.

Socialisation within the Italian group is certainly one of the main reasons why the Mission and the Club have had a special role in the community. The activities taking place around the ethnic church certainly had religious dimensions but social and cultural elements were predominant.

The fact that many people cannot attend services in Italian any longer is seen as a loss not only for the first generation, but also for the subsequent ones through the older Italians' desire to maintain their link with the language and culture of origin, mainly for the sake of their offspring. Interestingly, although the members of the second generation have developed a wider and less strict view of their religiosity, nonetheless belonging to a church provides a sense of group consciousness and a feeling of self-awareness. Whether they define themselves as church-goers or not, second and third generation Italians affirm that they have a certain level of spirituality. Considering the level of social and economic integration within the British society, the members of the second generation show a level of religious participation that is certainly higher than expected. If this element is not in open contrast with theories stating that integration in the host society and upward mobility has an influence on the strength of the ethnic bonds, it certainly requires a revision of these hypotheses in relation to different contexts. However, the youngest generation's decrease in religious participation appears to be in line with the sporadic nature of religious attendance in contemporary Italy.

Inter-generational transmission of religious elements still exists among the Italians of Nottingham but it appears to be more of an attitudinal than of a behavioural nature. Indeed, all the interviewees of the third generation have been going through the same processes that their parents have already experienced in their religious upbringing: all but one of them have been christened and received their first communion within the traditional environment provided by the Italian cultural centre, the mission and the nuns' catechistic preparation. Most of the children and grandchildren of the Italian immigrants had taken advantage of the activities, language courses, and trips organised by the mission and the consulate specifically for them. From now onwards, however, with the closure of the centre, parents will intentionally have to supply their children with occasions for contact with traditional Italian language and culture. The centre

provided both formal and informal routes for this: in future any strategies for such contact may have to be more formal.

Moreover, the disappearance of the mission raises some questions about the future identification of the population of Italian origin in the city and on the strategies of cultural transmission that the younger generations might need to adopt, should they wish to do so. It is clear that the process of assimilation to the language, customs and practices of the place of residence has been in progress since the immigrants arrived in the country for the first time and has increased in the passage through their children and grandchildren. It is impossible to predict when this process will be complete: maybe in one or two generations, maybe more. Nevertheless, whilst attachment to what Smolicz (1992) defines as an ethnic group's 'core values' is still perceived by the members of the group, and is still perceivable from the outside, then the process of cultural assimilation is incomplete.

## Chapter 6: THE FAMILY

### 6.1 Introduction: The family

Within sociology, the family has always been seen as the institution on which the whole of society is grounded, a simple atomic nucleus that – together with others – holds up the social world. The traditional idea of family presupposes the presence of adult partners and their children (as a ‘nuclear’ family). The family assists its members in a series of necessities, including providing food and care for the younger ones, reproducing culture and, often, divisions of gender roles. The inward-looking relationship among its members is often counter-posed to an outward one bonding them to other consanguineous units (as part of an ‘extended’ family).

However, in the last few decades the concept of family has become increasingly elaborate. Far from being the elementary and comfortable notion we used to hold on to, the family confronts us with a whole series of possible structures (Barbagli 1984; Gittins 1993; Tognetti Bordogna 1994). What has been casually defined as the ‘post-modern family’ (Stacey 1996) actually ranges from the nuclear to the extended family, from the single parent to the blended family, from the bi-nuclear family to that constituted by a single sex couple with children, with characteristics and functions that might vary across time and space as a result of economic and / or cultural reasons (Barbagli and Saraceno 2001). For example, nowadays, in the western world<sup>70</sup> the family is more isolated than in the past as relationships with distant kin are very often more ‘diluted’ due to physical distance, different interests, or other reasons. Moreover, the patriarchal system is being increasingly replaced by a more egalitarian one (Stacey 1996; Barbagli and Saraceno 2001), requiring the organisation of more well-balanced duties between partners – but also between parents and children – and the change of the role of women from wives into companions and from mothers into confidants.

Concepts of the family and its roles, due to their social and cultural embeddedness, change through space and time. ‘In the western world there [...] are regions where traditionally the family has had priority over the individual, and others where the individual and individual values have priority over everything else’ (Reher 1998: 203).

The role of the family as the children’s first socialising agent is crucial. It is within the family *of orientation* – the one people are born in and where they are supposed to find security and support – that individuals in their early childhood start their primary

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<sup>70</sup> Here the discourse on changing family patterns has to be considered on a general level. In fact, at a more specific level within the western world there are very strong national (and even regional) differences (see Reher 1998).

socialisation (Parson and Bales 1956: 16), learning the customs, role models, values and norms of the society they live in. At the same time, it is within the family that cultural transmission (Kulik 2002; Saenz *et al.* 1995) and participation take place and where children learn to communicate. Through the family ‘the individual from an exclusively biological being, becomes a member of a certain social group’ (Cesareo 1993: 147). Through the experiences of the world, guided and supervised by the older members of the family (most notably parents and siblings), and through imitation, individuals gradually acquire sets of norms and values and learn how to make decisions for themselves and to liaise with the multiplicity of other agents of socialisation (school, peer group, mass media and so on) that sooner or later will involve them (Dekker 2001: 84-5).

### 6.1.1 Weak and strong family ties

According to Reher (1998), there are some areas in the western world which appear characterised by strong family ties (Portugal, Spain, Italy, Southern France and Greece) and other areas in which weak family ties seem to be more prevalent (Scandinavia, Iceland, the Low Countries, the British Isles, Germany, Austria and North America). Reher identifies an interesting geography of family systems in Western Europe. In his very detailed paper, the differences among these countries are explained through a long series of historical, social and economic events that over the centuries have shaped a particular attitude towards childcare, older members of the family, processes of departure from parental home, marriage, the position of women within the family and the society, religion and so on. Although both strong and weak family systems are in continuous change, Reher does not foresee any radical change between North and South Europe in the near future.

If we take into account Reher’s classification of family ties, the Italians of Nottingham originate from a country socially and historically founded on more pervasive familial bonds, which clashes with the family system of countries such as the UK. Hence, it is important to define the characteristics of the Italian family – in the awareness that strong regional differences might exist – and to take into account the role of the family, gender roles and expectations and phenomena of inter-generational obligation, such as childcare and eldercare among people of Italian origin living in Nottingham.

## 6.2 The Italian family

According to Colpi, Italian immigrants are usually depicted as ‘more family conscious than the population at large’ (1991: 191). However, this kind of comparison between the immigrant family and the typical family of the host society is not particularly illustrative of the Italian ‘condition’ but of any ethnic minority group (Fortier 2000: 59). In a context of migration, in particular, the family represents the main source of practical, moral and emotional support for the migrants and their offspring.

Reher’s idea that families living in Northern and Southern Europe show different types of family ties, is reinforced by Livi Bacci’s (2001) suggestion that some Mediterranean countries – Greece, Spain and Italy – present certain similarities in the children’s tendency to leave their parental house at a later age to form new familial nuclei (the *postponement syndrome*). This seems to imply that members’ attitudes towards the family might not have changed through time, but it is the role of the family that has changed for its members.

On a closer look, the concept of close family is still quite relevant in the Italian case. However, far from being a cultural appanage, this represents in reality an economic need: in fact, in the last few decades, most children tend to obtain higher educational qualifications, enter the professional world at a later stage, therefore marry later and consequently continue to live with and be assisted by their parents. The family has to be seen, in this sense, as a protective niche against a very selective society and job market, and as the main source for financial security. Consequently, the traditional value of the family, which was lost following the crisis of the rural world, is being rediscovered in a post-industrial society where, despite a period of deep transformation, the family continues to retain an important defensive strength (Reher 1998). A different opinion is expressed by Dalla Zuanna (2001) who suggests a familistic reading to ‘Italy’s lowest low fertility’. However, Dalla Zuanna’s idea of the familistic obstruction to the departure of the children from the parental home appears to be too simplistic when the phenomenon is analysed in a European context (Barbagli and Saraceno 2001).<sup>71</sup>

### 6.2.1 [A]moral familism

As most of the first generation respondents in this study originate from small villages in the South of Italy, it might be very useful to apply a ready-made model to their families and verify whether, after the move and through the generations, its conditions are still met.

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<sup>71</sup> For a detailed profile of the ‘stay at home children’ and the ‘nest leavers’, see Menniti, Misiti and Savioli (2001).

However, the only model available is the (in)famous and greatly debated one proposed by Banfield in 1958, along with successive versions by other authors who reject, clarify or develop the concept by amending it (Lopreato 1967; Pizzorno 1971; Miller 1974; Marselli 1976; Putnam 1993; Fukuyama 1995; Carlestål 2000; Lever-Tracy and Holton 2001). In fact, since Banfield published his book *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* and coined the expression ‘amoral familism’ to define the attitude of many of the members of a village in the Italian Mezzogiorno towards their family and society, much has been written about it. Banfield’s much-quoted statement of the principle of such a society as being to ‘maximize the material, short-run advantage of the nuclear family; assume that all others will do likewise’ (1958: 67) and the title of the book itself seem to be enough to summarise the results of the whole study.

Banfield argued that the reason why the Southern village of Montegrano – a fictitious name for the village of Chiaromonte (PZ), where the research was carried out – had to be considered backward was because the *Montegranesi* were only interested in the well-being of their own family members, and were ready to fight strenuously in order to obtain that. However, as underlined by Marselli (1976) and Carlestål (2001), what Banfield considers as a ‘non-moral’ familism is actually a peculiar kind of morality hinged on the family. According to Marselli (1976: 148), Banfield does not take into account that what is defined as amoral familism is a ‘syndrome’ due to the effect of poverty, family structure and uncertainty about the future. For the people of Montegrano what they do and the way they think they are doing it is highly moral. In fact, if they had lived in a different context, in a highly industrialised region, it would have been different and Banfield’s model of behaviour would not have made sense (Marselli 1976: 151-2).

A similar concept was previously expressed by Pizzorno (1971) who considered amoral familism as a situational consequence of poverty and marginalization: it is the condition people live in that forges their particular way of living and thinking. Miller (1974), in testing Banfield’s amoral familism through research conducted in a village of the South of Italy with characteristics similar to those of Montegrano, concludes by stating that ‘Banfield’s rule is both inadequate and inaccurate’ (1974: 523) as ‘familism does not inevitably produce amoralism’ (1974: 533). Saraceno and Barbagli (2001) underline the ambiguity related to the term ‘familism’.

For Saraceno (2001) the concept of ‘familism’ appears to be both *moral* and *amoral*: it seems to be amoral in relation to the dependence of the children on the family until a late age; it appears to be highly moral in the appeal against the delegation of some family duties to the collectivity. Familism refers to a ‘reciprocal sense of commitment,

sharing, cooperation and intimacy that is taken as defining the bonds between family members' (Dizard and Gadlin 1990: 6). According to Bottignolo (1985: 64) 'one can talk of a family ethic in the sense too that the family is basically the only ambit and the maximum social extension of the Italian immigrant's ethical system'. On the other hand, even Barbagli (2001) stresses this uncertainty through another type of observation on the use of the term. In fact, he writes that Banfield contraposed the Northern Italian family to the Southern one by defining the latter's character as 'amoral'. However, amoral familism 'has assumed meanings that are very different through time. What we can say is that for a long time it has been, and still is, a peculiarity of the Central/Northern Italian family, historically in contraposition to the families of France, Germany and certainly of England, that of having solid relationships with kin, and therefore strong solidarities, going beyond the nuclear family' (Barbagli 2001).

However, with regards to families of Italian origin living in a context of immigration, a recent study by Lever-Tracy and Holton demonstrates the 'significant degree of South/North convergence in patterns of social exchange' (2001: 98), findings which appear to be antithetical to the concept of amoral familism as expressed by Banfield and confirmed later by Putnam (1993), but that at the same time do not imply the total absence of geographical variation within Italy.

Considering all this, it might be more useful to adopt Moen and Wethington's (1992) idea of families and households considered as flexible and decision-making wholes responding, through strategies, to the constraints of the outside world. In fact, 'key considerations for scholars employing the concept of family strategies are the structural barriers limiting family options and behaviour. Families are depicted as developing strategies precisely because there exist economic, institutional, and social realities in the larger opportunity structure' (Moen and Wethington 1992: 234).

All this, however, does not imply that these single families do not form a building block of society. In contrast, it seems that 'looking inward' is a strategy to overcome the uncertainties of society. In this sense, far from the idea of familistic behaviour constituting an obstacle to the progress of a whole community, the family through its active choices – but also through being an economic and social unit – serves as a bridge between individuals and the collectivity. Examined in these terms, even the process of migration has to be seen as a strategy, as an active reaction to the limitations of the outside world.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> According to Hareven (1991), family strategies can also be guided by an interaction of economic needs and cultural values coming from family history and ethnic origins.

### 6.3 The family and the process of emigration: Migration and family structures

The family involved in the migratory process can react in different ways, according to its structure. Developing from both Favaro (1993) and Tognetti Bordogna (1994), a whole range of different possible structures have been identified:

- 1) The reunited family (male route): the head of the family – usually the man – emigrates and the rest of the family group arrives only afterwards;
- 2) The reunited family (female route): as before, but the person who leaves first is the woman;
- 3) The family is constituted in the host country by two immigrant individuals;
- 4) The family is formed in the country of origin immediately before leaving;
- 5) Families constituted by immigrant members that arrived in the host country at the same time;
- 6) Mono-parental families: the children follow the parent in the host country, leaving one parent in the country of origin;
- 7) Socially-based families: two individuals decide to stay together to overcome the problems of immigration;
- 8) The mixed family: formed by the bicultural union of two individuals,<sup>73</sup> one of whom may not be a migrant.

It is possible to hypothesize various other possibilities. However, the main point here is to emphasize how all these different models of the immigrant family might affect the way in which each family reacts to the external world and negotiates its role within it. This is particularly significant when we consider the family as the most important agent for the primary socialization of the children born and / or brought up in the host country (Alba 1990).

#### 6.3.1 Migration and kin networks

Even though Italian immigration into Nottingham started with the so-called bulk schemes, it would be erroneous to consider this as completely separate from forms of chain migration. In fact, the first people to arrive in Nottingham appear to have operated as important and essential contacts for their relatives - mainly - and friends still living in Italy. They functioned as an incitement both actively, by encouraging persuasively their relatives to leave Italy, and passively, through the only fact that they were living and

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<sup>73</sup> This type of family does not just juxtapose two different sets of norms, behaviour and values. It produces, instead, a new culture. The constitution of a family of this kind depends, on its turn, on several factors of a diverse nature.



working abroad and through the news that ‘they were doing well’. Frequently, relatives living in England not only supplied the capital necessary for the trip<sup>74</sup> and provided accommodation for the first period after arrival, but also acted as intermediaries with employers and as supporters of the newcomers’ adjustment into the new environment. In so doing, kin networks ended up having an influence on recruitment schemes, on the newcomers’ working and social networks, on their level of assimilation / integration and ultimately on their perception of the self and of the ‘others’. In short, the members of the family already living in the country provided the basis for the socialisation of the newcomers by mediating between the customs and values of the place of origin and those of Nottingham. Members of the extended family frequently encouraged a faster and more effective process of accommodation, helping the immigrants to overcome the difficulties that might take place in the period subsequent to the arrival (Gordon 1964: 244).

On the whole, the fundamental role attributed to family relations in the place of migration seems to support the idea that in the new country migrants adjust and construct relatively vast kin networks of support and friendship, built on models of affiliation created entirely by themselves. Therefore, the migratory movement appears to have destroyed a family on one side and to have created another one somewhere else, by bringing kin together and enlarging the kinship networks through fictive forms of kinship with friends and *paesani*.

#### **6.4 Identity construction during adolescence: the role of the family and society**

It is well known how complex it is for adolescents to cope with the construction of their individual identities (Bosma and Jackson 1990; Kroger 1996). However, according to studies of ethnic identity formation among minority children, this task appears to be even more demanding for the children of immigrants (Adams *et al.* 1992; Phinney 1990 ) and children born of mixed marriages (Beale Spencer and Markstrom-Adams 1990; Feldman and Rosenthal, 1992). As argued by Beale Spencer and Markstrom-Adams (1990), minority children are required to overcome an intense strain in the attempt to come to terms with and unify in themselves different worlds, beliefs and norms. It is particularly difficult for them to find their way through the number of values and beliefs, sometimes discordant, coming from both their family and mainstream society. In some cases, additional complications to this undertaking can be added by the presence of a different skin colour, language and various stereotypes.

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<sup>74</sup> In some cases the transfer expenses were paid by the employer.

As discussed in Chapter 2, according to Adams *et al.* (1992: 2), identity is ‘an internalised, self-selected concept based on experiences inside the family and outside of the family’ (Adams *et al.* 1992: 2). There are a number of elements – the migratory project, the relationship with the country of origin and the level of integration – that might help or interfere with the process of socialisation in the host country (Favaro 1993). This situation is common to both migrant children – who have experienced migration as protagonists – and the children of migrants – born in the new country from immigrant parents. In fact, although it was their parents who migrated from the country of origin to the new one, they will have certainly frequently travelled symbolically from their parents’ world – made up of a different language and daily practices – to that of the host country in which they were born. This causes the necessity for a re-arrangement of day-to-day activities, linguistic and cultural codes used to liaise with other people and a re-organisation of their image of the self and of the group(s) they belong to (Camilletti and Castelnovo 1994).

#### **6.4.1 The ‘law of the return of the third generation’**

According to Hansen (1952), while first generation immigrants are too busy trying to work and support their family in the new country, their children – the second generation – are mainly engaged in adaptation to the new environment, a task that, in general, makes them reject their ethnicity either deliberately or unintentionally. In contrast, Hansen suggests that the members of the third generation, having reached a certain level of socio-economic security and being fully aware of their position in society, often become interested in their ethnic background and try to recover it. This concept, commonly indicated as *the law of the return of the third generation*, represents the starting-point of the phenomenon taking place in the USA in the 1960s and 70s defined as ‘the revival of ethnicity’. Nevertheless, the return hypothesised by Hansen is, as argued by Gans (1979: 8-9), a form of ‘pseudo’ return, as the ethnicity claimed by the grandchildren of the immigrants is of a different kind. In fact it is an ethnicity with a strong symbolic nature which is often voluntarily and intermittently expressed, without becoming part of everyday behaviour.

#### **6.5 Italian families in Nottingham: gender and upbringing**

If a) Reher (1998) is right in his assumptions, b) a particular family system cannot be considered as the product of temporary trends and its existence appears to be deeply rooted in a distant past, and c) Parsons and Bales (1956) were right when they considered

the family as a crucial socialising agent guiding the children towards a more complex environment through various stages,<sup>75</sup> we can assume that it might take more than one generation to shift from one system to another.

Moreover, since the objects of the present research are Italian families living in the Nottingham area and their inter-generational transmission, this assumption might be further reinforced by the results produced by the comparative study of Medaglia, who states that Italian families in Britain show a strong patriarchal structure and seem to have undergone a slower transformation than families in Italy, which appear as more dynamic (Medaglia 2001: 168).

According to the results from the fieldwork and analysis of the interviews, it seems that some immigrants managed to transfer certain ideas on roles and duties from their village of origin to the new country and applied them to their own families. Ironically, although some women who emigrated on their own, left behind the patriarchal structure of their family of origin and found a certain independence from authoritarianism once they arrived in the UK, as soon as they married a person from Italy, they were automatically swallowed up in a world ruled by the same type of norms they had been subjected to before their departure. This can probably be justified by taking a closer look to the traditional role of women within the Italian family: they are usually the ones who keep contact with relatives, who arrange dinners with friends and family, and who remember anniversaries and festivities. In short, women are directly responsible for the rearing of the children and the preservation of family cultural traditions.<sup>76</sup>

The roles of men and women belonging to the first generation appear to be very much gendered. While the women were, and still are, in charge of the housework and childcare (either as mothers or grandmothers), men usually do small jobs in the house or in the garden, which are among the duties both of men who are retired and those who are of working age.

However, the female members of the second generation – and some of their daughters – feel that they have been subjected to the same old norms. This can be partly justified in the view that the women of the second generation are going to be the persons responsible for the maintenance of the Italian heritage in the new country, therefore,

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<sup>75</sup> Although the work is almost half a century old, many of its assumptions are still valid. Some of its limits have been noted and amended through time, such as the ‘unnatural stability’ of family structure (see Blau 1977). It is possible to recognise in Blau’s criticism of this aspect a certain postmodernism in embryo.

<sup>76</sup> The women presented here are mainly portrayed as mothers and wives. However, Fortier (2000) and Gabaccia (2000a) correctly state that women are also active constructors of their ethnicity outside their family ambit.

particular attention is given to their upbringing which appears to take place along the traditional patterns of a patriarchal system and is often defined as very strict, especially if compared to their British peers'. According to Romanucci-Ross (1995: 85) 'children are reared to become what they must be for their immediate and future family roles'.

All the second-generation female respondents underlined their role of acting-mothers from a very early age: in the absence of their mothers, they had to do the cleaning, the ironing, and preparing dinner for other members of the family. In the presence of their mothers they had to help her in these tasks. In contrast, no routine tasks seem to have been assigned to the male counterpart in the family, whose activities were mainly limited to occasional jobs around the house. As observed by Bowes *et al.* (1997) household work represents a significant area for the transmission of cultural values, which differ according to the country (and often within a single country) in relation to expectations, gender and remuneration. Moreover, as family control over girls was stronger, most second generation girls were not allowed to spend too much time unsupervised: therefore many of them ended up spending their time at their home or at the homes of family friends or relatives, so reinforcing the links with the culture of origin.

The children of the immigrants were, however, attending school. Through it and through classmates, they got acquainted with other patterns of behaviour and other rules. From this moment onwards they started to acquire that 'hyphen' in their identity, which they will never be able to get rid of. Since that moment, for many members of the second and third generation, everyday life has been like living between two cultures. A hyphenated identity, in fact, requires the individual to come to terms with some inexplicable or incoherent sides of their, or their close ones', attitudes or behaviour when they confront the 'others', in other words the members of mainstream society.

The amount of social control is especially painful and frustrating during adolescence, when individuals struggle to adjust their own personalities to the outside world. The children and grandchildren of the Italian migrants have found themselves confronted with the double burden of growing up and following rules which were fundamentally different and more rigorous than those of their peers.

It is not possible to deny, however, that upbringing is a process that engages both parents and children and that during this process both the parents' and the children's identities are involved. 'Identities [...] are at the same time both individual and collective. It is extremely rare that an aspect of personal identity is formed which is not also forming the identity of other human beings' (Szokolczai 2001: 5). On one side, the children express their dissatisfaction towards their treatment by rebelling towards their parents,

pointing at their peers' different rules. On the other, parents are forced to think about the reasons behind the clash of what they thought were traditional and widely-accepted values, resulting from different practices in their own country and the local reality. In some cases, clinging to their old values can represent a form of protection from a culture that they might consider as alien. It is clear that the rigidity of the immigrants' positions can create an extra difficulty in bridging the inter-generational gap, although some interviewees - such as Giacomo - state that now that they are parents themselves they can understand their parents' perspective. There was certainly a difference between Giacomo's upbringing and that of his friends, due to Giacomo's parents' authoritarianism.

*Giacomo (2) [Family 5]: My upbringing was ... [pause] strict. Mainly because my dad didn't want sort of ... any problems. Because, you know, as they were foreigners and things like that, so they wanted to make sure that you would keep your hands clean and don't get into trouble.*

On many occasions second generation interviewees declared that there was a clash between their attitudes and the traditional values of their parents and that the girls appeared to be more affected by the parents' views than the boys who were granted more freedom, particularly during adolescence.

Thus, it was especially the girls who complained about the rigid rules they had been subjected to. These rules, although still applied in their case, had not been in use in Italy, nor in Britain, for a long time. For example, Giacomo's sister's life was much worse than his. Being a girl, she was not allowed to have much freedom. She could not rebel at that time but she chose a different way to get out of their parents' home: she chose to go to university.

*Giacomo (2) [Family 5]: I have a sister. It was mad, I thought, because she was a girl. She wasn't allowed to go out. She wasn't allowed to have boyfriends because with the old Italian culture 'you got to marry him'. That was their fashion and way of thinking, you know. And that's why also my sister she absolutely hated ... that's why she basically went to college and university and she get out of that ... and she still is not married.*

While boys at the age of 16-17 years could go out, with the condition that they did not come back home drunk, the daughters of the first generation Italian immigrants were not allowed to go out. They found themselves torn between a very authoritarian patriarchal family tradition at home and life as it could be for many of their peers in the 1960s and 1970s.

Luca C. (2) [Family 9]: *My sister was limited: she couldn't go out. And she found herself with some difficulties because she was living in a society that was like that in England, and not being able to do anything. She could have rebelled but ... she didn't. But when she had a moment of freedom, she was always in trouble, because only in that moment she could do something, as there was no possibility to do those things ... gradually.*

The rules used for second-generation girls appear to be applied also to the third one. Dalila (2) and her daughter Elvira (3) have experienced the same type of upbringing. Indeed, the situation of Elvira, 24 years old, does not seem to be very much improved from that of Italian girls of the previous generation. The interesting aspect is that here, as in other interviews, the power of the father, considered as authoritarian, in reality, is not openly and drastically objected to. The man's strict attitude towards his daughters' upbringing is attributed by both his wife and daughter to his stronger 'original' cultural links. Indeed, while Dalila arrived in England with her family at the age of two, in the late 1950s, her husband emigrated from his village in Campania in the 1970s, in his twenties and, therefore, he has to be considered as a 'younger', atypical, representative of the first generation. Dalila's husband is clearly one generation younger than the older Italian immigrants of Nottingham, but he is assimilated to them for his views and values. Elvira laments her father's strict attitude towards her. Due to her upbringing, she feels different from her English friends. She feels under continuous control and unable to behave like most of the people she knows.

Elvira (3) [Family 8]: *My mum experienced with her father what I am experiencing with mine. You see, her [the mother's] father he wouldn't let her out, controlled what she was doing...[...] I feel I can't be entirely British. I can't, because of my upbringing and that stops me to do quite a lot of things sometimes. And I feel different from the others for the fact that they have relationships, they can bring their boyfriend home, he'd come for lunch, they go out ... You know, it's just completely different. Then he comes for Christmas and spends Christmas with them or he sleeps the night at their house, it is not a problem. Whereas my father, if I bring my boyfriend, you know, it's not that I've got one, but if I had one, and I said 'dad, my boyfriend is staying at night' he'd go crazy. And also, you know, I am not allowed to go out till 5 o'clock in the morning and come back when I feel like it.*

Although twenty-four years old and in a full-time job, Elvira feels that she will never manage to achieve the independence of her English peers. She also underlines the double standard still existing in the evaluation of the behaviour of men and women.

Elvira (3) [Family 8]: *But men are always allowed to do that! It is just the women I think that have got problems. If a man is seen to be going out with lots of women, they are fantastic, they are doing, you know, he's the man ... you know ... fantastic ... brilliant. But when it's a woman. Then it's: 'Oh she's got a few boyfriends, oh' or 'She's 30 something why hasn't she got married ...?'*

Giacomo explains the reason why the upbringing of his own children differs from his own or his sister's. It is interesting, however, that while he is talking of the 'kids' [daughter and son], he slips into saying 'I like to know where she is and what she's doing'. It is possible to hypothesise that either the parents' supervision is stronger with the girl rather than the boy, or that since the son is still too young he might not go out on his own yet.

*D. G.: Has the way you were brought up affected you in some ways? Are you strict as well with your children?*

*Giacomo (2) [Family 5]: I am not as strict as my parents, no. I am a bit more ... I like to make sure ... that the kids are safe. I like to know where she is, when and what she's doing, where the kids are but they don't always tell you where they are and what they do all the time ... I am not as strict as my parents were. Also you have to understand the situation. They came over here to a strange country... they don't really know what's going on. So I am not as strict. Rules... I do set certain rules that constantly get broken [laughs] [my emphasis] .*

Fortier (2000: 61) writes that 'the family becomes a cradle of original, pristine forms of culture which remain uncontaminated by the *host* society's degenerate ways of life', a sort of 'body buffer zone' for Cavallaro (1981: 102). Nevertheless, there could be other explanations for the perseverance in keeping to 'original family values'. The strong adherence of some immigrants to old norms and beliefs can be seen as the first step towards the acceptance of different norms: it might be considered as their acknowledgement that there are different values outside and that it might be necessary to cling to their own if they do not want to be swamped by anarchical disorder. In short, immigrants are fighting on two fronts. On the internal front, members of the first generation struggle with the need to transmit their views and values – the only ones they believe in – to the next generation. On the external front, they have to fight vigorously against the models that their children might derive from mainstream society through the media and their peers. By maintaining their traditions, the Italians in Nottingham assure a certain cultural continuity in the awareness of the existence of different attitudes towards life.

As acculturation is a process that requires more than one generation to complete (Fortier 2001), an interesting role in its development is performed by the second generation. As underlined by Fortier (2000: 167), 'gender is the central vehicle for the mobilisation of family and generations in the collective re-enactment and display of cultural continuity. It is the modality through which young Italian boys and girls participate in the communal expression of local particularity'. The children of the migrants find themselves cast in a special role: the need to mediate between their parents'

culture and that of the place they now live in. In this sense, being caught in the middle, they end up with themselves being the link between their parents' cultural legacy and their new cultural milieu.

However, the roles of men and women within the family appear to be clearly defined. The difference between her treatment and her brother's is here clarified by Natalia – third generation – who also makes explicit the different relationship that she has with her mother, compared to her relationship with her father.

Natalia (3) [Family 4]: *I can tell everything to my mum but not to my dad. It's all right for my brother to have girlfriends but I'm too young for anything. My dad thinks that I shouldn't kiss anyone ...*

Marcella (2): *He's not that strict.*

Natalia: *I have got a lot of boy- and girl-friends ... my father doesn't know what's going on while my mother knows: I feel really guilty and cannot lie to my mum ...*

This stronger social control over girls seems to be more evident during their adolescence. As boys and girls are still treated differently, it is clear that if certain gender roles stand firm this is due to the persistence of certain traditions. Undeniably, one of the reasons why several parents appear to be very strict with their daughters is because, not being familiar with the ways of the new environment, they were inclined to confuse dating with promiscuous activities. The case of Marina, second generation, reminds us of the tradition that boys and girls of Italian origin could not go out without being chaperoned.

Marina (2) [Family 1]: *I was ... eighteen? Somebody from work wanted to go out with me and...[long pause]. He was English: I couldn't go out with him. I had accepted because I was eighteen, I said 'that's fine'. You know, we were only going to the cinema. But papà said 'no'. At eighteen! The solution was: I could go out but I had to take my sister!*

Riccardo: *Chaperoned.*

Marina (2): *She was eight! I had to be with my sister!*

Marina also underlines the role of mediation that she assumed between her parents and her younger sister on many occasions, which in reality is a role of mediation between her parents' culture and that of their place of settlement.

Marina (2) [Family 1]: *With my sister it was totally different, she could do what she wanted and ... she was encouraged because she got me. I'd say: 'yeah', you know, 'send her!'. Yeah 'everybody else is going why can't she go?'*

In this sense, through Marina's mediation, her parents' cultural models of themselves as parents, of their daughters as children, and of the family (parental ethnotheories), ended up being modified. As suggested by Harkness *et al.* (2001: 12),



‘although parental ethnotheories are rooted in shared ideas and practices, they function for individual parents as flexible systems, always in the process of construction and adaptation in relation to the demands of the moment’.

The opposition and the severity of the parents was such that the girls sometimes went out without their parents’ knowledge. In some cases they managed to deceive the strict surveillance of their parents and enjoy what their English peers were habitually doing.

*Marina (2) [Family 1]: Well we used to get together ... the girls ... we used to go to the Italian club and then we used to say that we were going into town ... we used to go to night clubs [laughs]. Then we used to get home, we used to make sure that we left for about midnight ... no later than midnight! Otherwise our parents used to get worried ...well, not worried but ...*

Marcella, second generation, explains what the difference between herself and her friends was. When she was younger she had to lie to her parents. As in Dalila’s case, Marcella does not seem keen to stand up for what she believes is right, probably to avoid tensions within her family. However, she does allow her children to bend some rules; in fact she authorizes her children to go out (she also covers for them with her husband, if necessary) but she wants to know where they are and what they do. Wives and daughters, although they might attempt to get a certain equal treatment, cannot communicate this appropriately due to their subordinate position. Nevertheless, in some cases they manage to find a get out.

*Marcella (2) [Family 4]: I don’t think I had a horrible upbringing but, looking back, I feel cheated, because my friends were out, English and Italian, and I couldn’t go out. I couldn’t go to the clubs, dancing ...Which I do now anyway. If I wanted to go out, I had to lie. I am not blaming my father because he was strict but it’s partly my fault because I felt timid and frightened to ask: the idea to receive a ‘no’ stopped me from asking. I now want the truth from my kids. I tell them ‘please, don’t lie to me ... I won’t stop you ... unless there are drugs ...’. I want to know where to find them. Natalia can go out, but she’s always my responsibility....*

Therefore Marcella allows her children to do things she could not do when she was their age and that her husband would probably oppose. From a passage of the interview it is clear that opposition could also come from the grandfather, who, it seems, is in the habit of intervening in his children’s and grandchildren’s lives.

In the following passage from her interview Natalia raises several points:

- the consciousness of being subject to unequal treatment, due to the deep differences between her upbringing and that of her brother and the awareness of the difference between the duties she has at home those of her English friends;

- her confrontational attitude towards her father's views of her role and tasks at home. Here father and daughter in the family appear as diametrically opposed in their attitudes;
- the assimilation of the father's attitude towards women to the grandfather's, which is clear from the sentence 'For them women should stay in the kitchen'. It is worth noting that Natalia's mother does not intervene or try to mediate between her daughter's position and those of her father and husband. This seems to suggest that she does not disagree with the daughter's portrait of their family.

Natalia (3) [Family 4]: *My mum is my best friend. She lets me do many things and she always knows where I am...*

[Marcella, Natalia's mother, clears her throat as a signal to her daughter to pay attention to what she's saying, as Guido, the grandfather is in the room. Both Marcella and Natalia are not at ease. Natalia is speaking in a very uneasy way. She is saying what she thinks but not explicitly, she pauses frequently, and she is looking at her mum who is looking back smiling: they clearly are accomplices. Guido, the grandfather, after a while, is asked to leave the room].

Natalia (3): *Nonno, I don't wanna offend you but ...can I ask you to leave?'*

Guido: *I am going, then.*

[Natalia and Marcella laugh loudly after the grandfather has left the room].

Natalia: *I am scared of saying things because of the different generation. Certain things cannot be disclosed to my granddad. My brother has a tattoo of the Italian boot on his arm and nonno was shocked when he saw it, because he cannot understand. The same with my piercing in my belly button. They get mad at that! My nonno and my father have a double standard. For them women should stay in the kitchen ... for example, me and my brother have not been brought up in the same way: I have to do the ironing and he has to have the room cleaned for him ... he doesn't iron! If I have a day off my father would say 'don't you have to do any ironing today?' 'I am 16 and I should be out and I am just in all the time doing coursework or doing ironing!'. My friends have just to tidy their rooms ... they don't have to do anything, but my dad wants me to do the ironing. But I don't complain because when I'll leave the house I'll know what to do ... but when my friends ask me to go out sometimes I cannot as I have to do the ironing... At the same time, I want to help my mum and there's a lot to do with five in the house.*

From what Natalia is saying here, it is clear that her parents have managed to transmit their views to their children as, on some occasions, they seem to agree on certain issues.

This appears to be a battleground for the daughters, not only because they realise that there are inequalities between their own upbringing and that of their peers, but there are inequalities even within their own house. The traditional role of men as *breadwinner* and of women as *homemakers* has not died out (Stier and Lewin-Epstein 2000). Due to the fact that most women work outside their homes in full-time jobs, their double burden of employment and domestic work and childcare in their own house is still very common. For these reasons, some tasks and duties are delegated to the other members of the family,

mainly to the daughters. What follow are the testimonies of Marcella and Marina, now in their early forties.

Marcella (2) [Family 4]: *When I was my daughter's age, I was running the house: I was cleaning, ironing...*

Marina (2) [Family 1]: *When I was younger my mum used to work. Dad used to work shift and mum used to come in at six ... five or six ... and I used to have the dinner ready...I used to help my mother*

D.G.: *How old were you?*

Marina: *Nine.*

D.G.: *Nine?*

Marina: *Nine, ten ... I used to prepare dinner: pasta, rice, ...all sorts.*

Within the older generation group the rules of patriarchy and the social construction of gender roles are deep-rooted. Conservative values, obedience, prescribed behaviour are the natural elements of the traditional Italian working-class upbringing. These apply to both daughters and sons, nevertheless girls are usually protected and more closely watched. Through contact with their native classmates and peers the children of the immigrants realise how deep is the difference between their upbringing and that of youngsters who are raised in a less authoritarian environment and resent the restrictions imposed on them.

As soon as they set up their own families, the members of the second generation tend to draw on their own parents' strict traditional values and norms and adapt them to their own familial situation. They therefore seem to show a certain continuity with the past, as their children still seem to rebel against an unusually severe and protective upbringing, if compared to that of their native friends.

### **6.5.1 Living at home children: too close to the family, or too close family?**

As already underlined in section 6.2, some young South European children are forced by circumstances to stay at home with their parents until they marry. In the case of some of the third generation respondents, remaining in the parental home can however be the result of a voluntary choice. This is the case for Lisa, who has chosen to attend The University of Sheffield and commute every day for her lectures. Both Lisa and Fiammetta believe that people who go away from their family to attend the university, do so because they want to 'get away'.

Lisa (3) [Family 2]: *I think that those who choose to study away from their parents don't have such a close relationship with them. I don't mind living at home, if there was a good university somewhere else, I would move away, but because Sheffield is so good anyway.*

Fiammetta (3): *There are people at school who say 'I live there so I am going there'. Just to get away.*

Emma (2): *We are easygoing parents, so there's no pressure. We are open-minded.*

Lisa's is an example of how important it is for some people to remain close to their family, which implies family proximity, which can affect the children's life plans (Wolcott 1997: 23).

Elvira, twenty-four, lives at home with her parents. She works full time and complains that even if she lived independently, her parents would interfere in what she is doing. Given her own choice she would probably live on her own; however through her sister's experience it seems that there would still be a certain impossibility for her to obtain independence from her parents.

Elvira (3) [Family 8]: *If I have to do something after work, I have to ring my parents and say, you know, 'I'm not being back'. And then they ask where I am going, you know. But the British mums don't do that! They don't ask. They just say 'all right' and you come back whenever you feel like it, you know, it's not ...*

Dalila (2): *It is because otherwise your parents worry whatever age you are...*

Elvira: *Yeah, but even if I get my own house, you and dad would always interfere in what I am doing.*

Dalila: *I don't think so.*

Elvira: *Yeah, I think so...*

Dalila: *No, I don't think so...*

Elvira: *He [her father] wouldn't let me just get on with it. I mean it is like that with my sister, my sister has got her own house and still he says 'you've done it this way, why didn't you do it that way', you know.*

Dalila: *No, she does what she likes.*

Elvira: *Yeah, but he's still always saying 'Why have you spent money on this' and 'what are you doing about that?' and 'why have you done this other thing?'*

Dalila: *Yeah, he'll always do because, you know, that's how he lives.*

The interview seems have been taken as an opportunity for Elvira to express her disappointment and frustration towards the situation she lives in at home with her parents. The extended verbal exchange between mother and daughter [*I don't think so. Yeah, I think so... No, I don't think so...*] seems to take them nowhere and reflects their rock-steady non-negotiable positions. What Elvira appears to do here is to take advantage of the nature of the issues tackled through the interview in order to be able to express her views and to force her mother to articulate further about her standpoints. At the end of the dialogue, Elvira manages to obtain a partial victory over her parents, through her mother's admission that things will probably never change due to the nature of her father.

Natalia, who is still attending school, does not plan to move away from Nottingham. She justifies this with the fact that she is too close to her parents and to her grandparents. According to what she says, she 'belongs' to Nottingham, but, at the same time, her

family also belongs to Nottingham. In her view, Nottingham, her family and her are assimilated into one 'being'.

Natalia (3) [Family 4]: *That's the thing. I want to be with the people I have been brought up here and I feel as if I belong here, even if this may sound really crazy because I want to be Italian. If nonna and nonno don't want to stay here and just want to go over there [to Italy], I just [would say] 'Where's my family?' because I always come to see my grandmum ... all the time. And my aunt lives not far away. [...] When they are around, I really feel safe.*

For Natalia, Nottingham, the people she has been brought up with, her family and their physical proximity are elements which cannot be disassociated from one another. All these elements provide her with a sense of security. This is the reason why she affirms that she would not leave Nottingham, the place where she was born and brought up, although, in her opinion, *'this may sound really crazy because'* she wants *'to be Italian'*.

Although parents and children might quarrel between themselves and although differences of opinion would suggest a certain friction between them, it is possible to observe substantially good inter-generational relations. In fact, immigrants' offspring appear to have retained much of their predecessors' views of the world.

## 6.6 Endogamy and intermarriage

Intermarriage has usually been considered as an indicator of the level of cultural integration of immigrants in the host society (Alba 1990; Gordon 1964; Saenz *et al.* 1995; Zanfrini 1998). Conversely, endogamy is an essential characteristic of ethnic behaviour which has been considered an indicator for ethnicity (De Vos 1975; Van Den Berghe, 1981). The choice of a partner belonging to another group implies a higher level of social interaction outside the in-group. This, however, does not mean that the ethnic identification of the intermarried persons will automatically decline: it means, instead, that the level of identification of their offspring with the in-group might become more problematic (Saenz *et al.* 1995: 176) (see also Chapter 8). According to Zanfrini (1998: 176-7), mixed marriages are still limited in number due to the difficulties that they can create as well as to the negative reaction of the family and society the individual belongs to.

As intermarriage is an important index for assimilation (Gordon 1964: 71) – in particular if it takes place between a person from an immigrant background and someone with 'native' roots – and since acculturation is a process that operates across the

generations, the value of intermarriage appears to have a particular significance in a three-generational study.

Following research on patterns of ethnic marriage in the USA, Alba and Golden (1986) concluded that there are three main influences on intermarriage: the size of the group, the kind of ancestry (mixed or unmixed), and the level of ethnic affinity. These three influences can be overlapping. Ethnicity has a very high influence on marital choice, because even when people marry members of other ethnic groups, their choice appears to be based on ‘elective affinities’ (Alba and Golden 1986: 203-4). Group size appears to be an important element also in interfaith marriage among Catholics, as shown by Blau (1977) and Davidson and Widman (2002).<sup>77</sup>

It is interesting to note that, when confronted with the idea of mixed marriages, the Italians of the three generations react in different ways, but appear to be in some ways consistent to a pattern. While first generation Italians dismiss the possibility of a mixed marriage in their family on the basis of merely pseudo-biological differences, second generation Italians state that they would ‘look further into the matter’ but they would not encourage their children for their concern that too deep cultural differences might endanger the unity and steadiness of the family. Members of the third generation do not reject the idea of a mixed marriage – apart from one respondent – but they appear to be aware of the potential difficulties that a union of this kind might encounter when set in the larger family context through the highly probable opposition of fathers or grandparents.

The interviewees’ use of the adjective *racist* is quite interesting. When some subjects are talking about their own views on the theme, before stating something that might sound as discriminatory, they defend themselves in advance by saying ‘I am not racist, but...’. However, on a few occasions, the term *racist* appears in their discourse as referring to other people of the same family – usually the father or the grandfather – as will be shown in the following sections.

### **6.6.1 First generation group members confront the idea of mixed marriages in their family**

First generation immigrants strongly disagree with the idea of mixed marriages in their family. However, they do not appear to provide a clear justification for a discrimination that seems to be founded merely on the grounds of physical differences. Giordano and

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<sup>77</sup> Davidson and Wildman in their study of interfaith marriage among Catholics, building on Blau’s ideas of intergroup relations (Blau 1977), underline this character by offering the following explanation ‘interfaith marriage is inversely related to a religious group’s size relative to the same religious groups in the same geographic area’ (2002: 397).

Gioacchino are radical in their views. While Giordano states clearly the necessity of keeping black and white people separated – ‘white and white, black and black’ – Gioacchino, rather than providing a general rule, emphasises that in the event of a possible mixed marriage in his family, he would actively intervene to obstruct it.

Giordano (1) [Family 2]: *No Indians, no black, no. White and white, black and black. Sorry, I am not racist but the white has to go with the white and the black has to go with the black ... because they've got another tradition [my emphasis].*

Rita (1): *Another culture ...*

Gioacchino (1) [Family 6]: *Let's consider the issue seriously. If my daughter, my blood, comes and says 'I intend to marry...' or goes out with a black guy or Indian. What can the parents do? The first thing you can say is 'why did you choose an Indian ...?' or '... a black guy?'. If you like that pencil and for you that pencil is ... I don't know what ... it's your life ... I cannot tell you 'give me that pencil' or 'throw it away!' or 'leave the yellow pencil and take the green instead'. I cannot force you. But I will do my best to put you on the track and ... you will have to leave that person that I don't like.*

Certain issues that in the past could not even be discussed as they represented rules of tradition, are not taken for granted anymore and parents' authority seems to be jeopardised by the children's level of integration. It is possible to feel a certain disappointment and bitterness in the words of the first generation, due probably to the realisation that they are not completely in charge of the major decisions regarding their families anymore ('what can the parents do?').

Donato, second generation, imagines what his father's reaction would be if he took a black girl home. Again, the possibility of a union with a black person is dismissed. Nevertheless, Donato tries to justify his father's possible reaction by referring to his irritation about the reception of refugees in Italy who, according to him, have no interest in the country but enjoy the benefits offered to them. If this is the case, it is not dissimilar to the position of other first generation immigrants who on this subject are in strong disagreement with the politics of the Italian government.

Donato (2) [Family 7]: *I know what would be a problem with my dad, if I brought in a black girl, that would be a problem. Oh, yes! My dad has calmed down because he's ill but he ... has got strong views about ... black people. I think he is actually quite racist. His reasons, whether they make sense or not - they don't particularly make sense to me - they totally seem to tar everybody with one same brush, if you like. For instance, although he's not in Italy himself now, he's always moaning about Italy's refugees from another country, people from ... from Africa going over to Italy, and having benefits, having houses. It happens over here as well, and he's complaining 'they never work for the country', he has these sort of beliefs, you know.*

Members of the older generation refuse the idea of mixed marriages within their families. To understand the reasons why marrying a person from a different ethnic

background is unconceivable for many older Italians, it is important to have an idea of their own marital experiences. The next subsection deals in particular with this issue.

### 6.6.2 The first generation and marriage between *paesani* or cousins: *Mogli e buoi dei paesi tuoi*<sup>78</sup> or a pass for emigration?

All the people belonging to the first generation interviewed are (or had been) married to an Italian spouse. Only two of them were already married to a person from the same town before migration, while the others married after having migrated to England: two with a person from the same area met in Italy, another one with a person from a different province met in Italy, four of them with a person from another province met in England, and one of them with a cousin. Of these, four weddings were performed in Italy, the others in England.

Episodes of marriage and subsequent emigration were not infrequent at the time. The incentive to marry someone – often barely known – was the opportunity to leave Italy and to move to a place that could offer better opportunities. In the 1950s and 60s, Italian men and women accepted marriages with migrant spouses mainly because of the lack of prospects in post-war Italy and their strong desire to emigrate. In summary, marrying a person who had already migrated to England allowed them to leave even if they otherwise had a lack of family or friends living abroad who could make their emigration possible.

As indicated earlier in this thesis, a distinctive feature of the post-war Italian migration experience was that in some cases it was the woman who emigrated first, consequently constituting the link of the chain to create the emigration of a man. The cases of Gemma and Linda are paradigmatic. Gemma met her future husband in Italy, very briefly, a few days before leaving the country. Eighteen months after that encounter she received a letter with a wedding proposal. She went back to Italy to meet her husband-to-be. In one month they met, made the wedding announcement, and got married, and she then returned to the UK on her own, while her husband waited for the completion of the bureaucratic process of family reunification to be completed.

However, in Linda and Paolo's case it is clear that when two people from the same area married it was likely that the marriage had been encouraged by the friends of family members living in Italy. She went to Italy in May 1955 and married in June of the same year.

D. G.: *Did you know your husband?*

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<sup>78</sup> A famous Italian proverb: You should choose women and oxen from your area.



Linda (1) [Family 7]: *He is a cousin of mine. First cousin. He asked my brother where I was, my brother gave him the address and he started writing to me.*

D. G.: *And what were you thinking?*

Linda: *Nothing.*

Paolo (1): *I worked in the fields ...and it was hard, yes, for this reason we came here. Otherwise we would have been there.*

D. G.: *And how did you have the idea to write letters to this lady?*

Paolo: *The idea came because I wanted to go away from Italy... and go somewhere.*

Women who migrated from their town of origin managed to acquire a certain independence and self-confidence. Both Gemma and Linda were aware that they represented a 'good catch' for their prospective husbands and agreed to the marriage proposal on their own conditions. On one side we have Gemma who, in replying to the proposal underlined that if they didn't like each other, they should not consider the previous exchange of letters as a binding commitment. On the other, Linda was thinking that even if married, if she disagreed with her husband, she could have left Italy on her own, leaving him in the village as he would have been dependent on her.

The preference for an Italian spouse might be the result of the parochial attitude of the immigrants in the UK – *campanilismo* (see Chapter 3) – that made them choose partners from their village or area of origin. Moreover, the selection of a potential partner from the same town might have allowed the family to check on the respectability of the bride or groom to be.

Rosaria (1) [Family 6]: *When he decided to get married we had been engaged for three years, he came to Italy to marry me and then we came here.*

Gioacchino (1): *Before I went to Italy to get married, I bought a house [in Nottingham], I prepared everything through the consulate, I prepared the documents, I sent them to Italy, I went to Italy and after one week I got married. I went to Foggia, the provincial capital, I did the passport for her [the wife] and we left.*

Four of the first generation interviewees married people from another province whom they had met in England. This can be explained through the fact that it was probably more unlikely for them to meet in the country of residence a potential spouse from the same village of origin.

In any case, all of them justify their choice by emphasising that they considered an Italian spouse as more suitable. Some men stressed that marrying an Italian woman would have created a more family-oriented household, due to the gender-specific stereotype portraying Italian women as more faithful and committed to their family than English women. These ethnic stereotypes were clearly at the root of ideas about intermarriage in the 1950s and 60s, as clarified by Alberto. Matilde and Alberto met in Avellino while he

was doing his military service. They got engaged. When he finished, he went to the UK. After one year, he went back to Italy and they got married.

Alberto (1) [Family 9]: *I said 'we have to get married, otherwise I might end up with some English girl' [all laugh]. Seriously, there have been so many young men who married an English, then separated, you know ...*

Matilde (1): *Well, it doesn't mean anything, today, even between Italians they separate...*

Alberto: *Yes, but in 1955 the Italians separated less than now.*

Matilde: *The fact is that the couples of our generation that married an English, didn't find what they wanted because they had the habits of their homes, of their towns, the traditions, parents, the whole community ... they had to stop that ... If they asked, maybe, for some *pastasciutta* [spaghetti and tomato sauce], at the time, the English didn't even know what it was! At the time, if they wanted some spaghetti, they had to cook them themselves, because the English didn't care at all, they said 'you can cook that yourself, because at my place I do roasted potatoes, you eat these, if you want ...' so, there was little to choose, so, they felt bad at first.*

Alberto and Matilde share the traditional view attributing specific roles to men and women. Some of the members of the older generation chose their partners in accordance to these traditional roles and customs. These criteria are still at the basis of their idea of partner suitability when they consider the case of their children and grandchildren.

### 6.6.3 The second generation and patterns of partner selection

Among the members of the first generation a culturally-mixed relationship was certainly an uncommon experience. In contrast their children, having grown up in a multicultural society, soon learnt that they were part of just one of the many groups living in Britain. The presence of immigrants from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds was, in fact, for many the possibility of contemplating marriage outside their own group.

Higher rates of intermarriage may probably be attributed to increased social relations taking place between people belonging to different cultural groups, higher levels of integration or of education.<sup>79</sup>

Among the second generation respondents, the ones who have intermarried are those born in the UK from Italian parents. In contrast, many of the Italy-born children of Italian immigrants married within the Italian community. The common reason for this marital choice might be the sense of security that a marriage of this type would offer,

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<sup>79</sup> People with higher educational levels appear to be more keen to find a partner outside their own group than people with lower qualifications. This can be explained either through a higher degree of independence from family or community limitations or through the attainment of a more open-minded attitude towards 'others'. See O'Leary and Finnaes (2002) for a comparative study of intermarriage patterns in Ireland and Finland.

together with very strong family pressure towards this kind of union. This could also be justified through the traditional pattern of children living with their parents until they form their own family, which implies prolonged parental social control which could discourage intermarriage.

Among the interviewees of the second generation, four (Giacomo, Luca C., Donato and Gabriele) – interestingly, all men – married an English spouse. Donato and Gabriele, after their divorces, remarried, respectively, an English woman and a woman born in England from a Ukrainian father and an Italian mother. Their family is what is commonly identified as ‘reconstituted’, and contains step-generations (see Appendix 1). Marcella and Emma married a partner from Italian parents. Riccardo and Marina, both second generation Italian, are husband and wife. Dalila married a first generation Italian man. Carolina’s first husband was first generation Italian, while the present one was born from an Italian mother and a Ukrainian father. In the cases of Carolina and Gabriele there is a partial overlap of the partners’ ancestral backgrounds (half Italian and half Ukrainian). As underlined by Alba (1990), this represents an intriguing phenomenon. In some cases, in fact, the partners might define themselves as ‘endogamously married, thereby highlighting the ethnicity they share and pushing other aspects of their ancestries into the background, and they could emphasize this common element in their children, thus imparting a particular ethnic tone to the latter’s emerging sense of ethnic identity’ (Alba 1990: 168-9).

Parental influence appears to be quite strong in the second generation’s criteria of partner selection. Whether clearly stated or not, Italian-born parents expect their children to marry within the Italian group. In some cases they even tried to oppose the union of their children with members of an out-group and mediated between their own offspring and the children of other Italian immigrants in the hope of creating the basis for a relationship, by creating occasions for them to meet.

Luca C. (2) [Family 9]: *During the first years my mother used to say ‘What are you doing? With an English girl?’ and so on. She tried in every single way to introduce me to Italian women among their group of friends, children of Italians: ‘Come here, this is a good girl ... why don’t you marry her?’. Typical discourse Italian way, that’s the old mentality.*

This practice appeared to be quite common until two decades ago. The involvement of parents in their children’s affairs was considered as one of their standard duties. Behind that, however, we can envisage the parents’ desire to secure their children a good future by encouraging unions within the community (see Chapter 5). In so doing, the respectability of the future in-laws might have been assessed before any type of

commitment. Marcella had to follow her father's request and interrupt her relationship with a boy from Sicily, because her father did not know anything of his family of origin and was unable to check on their respectability.

Marcella (2) [Family 4]: *My father took at dislike one of my boyfriends, because he was Sicilian, because he was here from Italy with no family and my dad didn't know the family and ... he didn't seem to like him.*

D. G.: *And you had to choose ... between your family and your love-life?*

Marcella: *...I had to choose...*

Later Marcella met her future husband through the family, as his parents were friends of her family: 'he had girlfriends and I had boyfriends. We were just friends first and then one thing led to another'. Moreover, due to the family-oriented image of the Italians, the encouragement to marry within the Italian community was mainly aimed at guaranteeing the children from any future disappointment.

D. G.: *Did your parents try to influence you?*

Gabriele (2) [Family 3]: *Yeah! Yeah!*

D. G.: *What did they want for you?*

Gabriele: *To marry an Italian.*

[Everyone laughs]

Gabriele: *Yes. But then, again, like, they didn't say 'you ought to ...' they always said 'it would be better if you married within your own community. It could be better in the long run ...'.*

Although opposition to intermarriage is stronger for women, it can also take place in the case of men of Italian origin. In some circumstances, this is probably due to the parents' concern for the implications that intermarriage might have on them if they will need to be cared for. As, traditionally, the person who takes care of the older people at home are the women, this task is inevitably attributed to them, independently of their role in the family: wives, daughters, daughters in law (Climo 2000; Cylwick 2002; Finch & Mason 1993). For this reason, the opposition to intermarriage appears sometimes to be fierce: this is due to the fear that the daughter-in-law would not accept taking care of the older parents-in-law if she does not share the same idea of family and relations within it.<sup>80</sup> The following example clarifies the concept.

Marcella (2) [Family 4]: *My friend Rachel is English, but she is married to an Italian. The in-laws didn't want to accept her because she was English. So the father-in-law on her wedding day said 'when I get old, will you wash me, if I need washing? Would you be prepared to wash me?' she said 'yes I would' and she's doing that now because her father-in-law is ill, she shaves him, she takes him to the bathroom. English people wouldn't do that. She says 'I am proud to be British, but I also*

<sup>80</sup> Climo's (2000) analysis of elder-care is interesting in this regard, as also Finch and Mason's (1993) work in which the authors study British kin groups and their expectations of assistance.

*sometimes feel Italian'. I think that she has absorbed ... through the committee at the Italian club, meeting us...*

Another major concern for parents is the prospect of a relationship with a partner subject to a drinking habit. Therefore, in order to avoid the drawbacks of a relationship of this kind, Angela felt that she had to advise her daughter on how to behave in her everyday life, and she also offered her practical help to facilitate this.

Angela (1) [Family 4]: *To tell the truth I would have been happier if they took an Italian, let's say... but I didn't object when my third child decided to marry the English one, as long as they are good boys. What I recommended my daughter, as it's important for me, was that 'if you have to go out, go out together, don't do that one goes out first and then the other'. As we have seen many broken marriages in this way. You see, here, English girls when they go out, they drink, and when one is drunk the brain doesn't work properly. Do you agree? And you might find the boy that has drunk as well and it ends up that rather than going home you go God's knows where and you find yourself in bed with another person. I am not talking of my children but ... many many English, these things ... they say so! They say so ...*

Guido (1): *In Italy, Angela, what we see on TV now... [whistles], has overtaken this.*  
 Angela: *So I say, if you want to go out, go out together. If you need me as a baby-sitter, I take care of the children ... go out, go together. And another thing that was important for me when my daughter married an English man, I said 'check whether he's the habit to go drinking'. As if one has got this habit, money at home ... you cannot progress. And, actually, he's very good, he gave her the administration of the finances.*

Guido: *Not only that, but they also beat their wives.*

Family stability is always at the centre of the discourse regarding unions outside the Italian community. One of the main worries of Italian parents is in fact the possibility of a divorce, which still appears to be lower in the Italian community than in the British society as a whole (Medaglia 2001: 101). This is confirmed by various studies which have shown that one of the major risks of intermarriage is a higher rate of divorce (Sander 1993, Becker 1991, Becker *et al.* 1977).

Paolo and Linda appear to be very disappointed by the events that occurred after their two children, daughter and son, both married to English people, both divorced. They are now both in new relationships. Paolo and Linda feel that by divorcing their partners, their children have not shown gratitude to their parents. In contrast, as Paolo says, they 'destroy everything'. They do feel part of their children's family life as they say that they 'did sacrifices to have them married', which means that they had been financially involved in the *sistemazione* [literally, 'putting into place'] of the children: for example the purchase of the children's new house in which they could settle with their newly formed families.

Paolo (1) [Family 7]: *We don't like England, because here there's no family stability. If we knew that we would have had this familial situation, we wouldn't have come,*

*because we came here to put our family in a better place than Italy. But here it is worse than in Italy, in the sense that the parents do so much for their children, to send them to school, to marry them ... and then they start destroying everything...*

D. G.: *So the difference is ...*

Paolo: *The difference is that you cannot help the children because if you help them they destroy it ... they destroy...*

Linda (1): *What he wants to say is that we did sacrifices, to help them start their family ...*

Paolo: *Without anything ... without a thing we married<sup>81</sup> the children ...*

Linda: *We married these children, and then, In contrast, all the money spent for all the expenses to help these children settle down has been lost because they separated, the fact that they are not united ... he doesn't like this. He likes that the family stays united, as we did.*

The following excerpt, which builds up through the words of the three generations (Giordano, first, Emma, second, and Fiammetta, third), and ends with Emma's definition of the Italian family, seems to be the implementation of Emma's words 'each generation has its own meaning, and all together, as a group, is strong'.

Emma (2) [Family 2]: *I knew they would have preferred me to choose [a partner from an Italian background]...*

D. G.: *How did you know that?*

Emma: *From the minute I was born I could understand ... that's what they planned me to do. But ...*

Fiammetta (3): *They didn't plan ...*

Emma: *Yeah, didn't plan, I should do, but I ... through going to school here and having English friends, I knew there was a difference between the English and the Italians anyway. I would have preferred ... and I, myself, really really wanted to marry an Italian, not an English...*

D. G.: *Can you explain this a tiny bit further? Why? Where's the difference?*

Emma: *The difference is ...*

Giordano (1): *... In the behaviour...in everything...because we are different from the English, as you might have noticed...*

Emma: *Yeah, but it is different.*

Fiammetta: *Family is more important*

Emma: *Yeah...*

Giordano: *More respect...*

Emma: *Family is the main ... is everything, the family is the ... leader, in the Italian family, the family is everything. Each generation has its own meaning, and all together, as a group, is strong. The English, they tend to look after number one. And think about themselves, and it doesn't carry on generation after generation. They seem ... cold-hearted ... sometimes.*

The importance of the choice of a partner from an Italian background is justified by the three generations in relation to their idea of family closeness and reciprocity. This choice would, therefore, imply a higher possibility of sharing customs, beliefs and values (including the value of the family).

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<sup>81</sup> The expression 'we married the children' implies the parents' serious financial involvement in helping their children set up their own houses.

Becker (1991), combining sociology and economics, argues that family well-being appears to improve when the partners share the same religion. This result might be at the root of a higher tendency to intermarry. This appears to be directly related to several factors: level of education, social and economic background and ethnicity (Sander 1993: 1038).

For people of Italian origin living in Nottingham, religion is as important as national or ethnic identity. In the case of Dalila and Elvira, a wedding in church is considered as necessary. They make it clear that the prospective groom, if not Catholic, would need to embrace Catholicism – whether he believes in it or not. He would have to go to classes and be confirmed as required by the other members of the family. Religion, can in fact represent an important element in the choice of a partner. As stated by Alba and Golden (1986: 209), in their study of ethnic intermarriage in the USA, it is not unusual for people of Italian, French or Irish origin to accept ‘ethnic inter- but religious in-marriage’.

For Gabriele, religion is more important than nationality in the definition of the ideal husband for his daughter. Gabriele considers Catholicism as the key to the certainty that his daughter would be treated with respect, which he believes would be more difficult if the husband was a Muslim.

*Gabriele (2) [Family 3]: Yes! If you put in ... on nationality and religion, yes, I would be far happier if she [his daughter] married an Italian Catholic or an English Catholic or even an Indian Catholic ... you know, I don't think ... because of the Muslims, how they treat women in general, I don't think it would be right for her.*

However, any religion is better than no religion, as Donato explicitly states.

*Donato (2) [Family 7]: When I was first married, my first wife was ... erm ... atheist and that was a problem because, you see, my first wife had no religion whatsoever, she was not Church of England, not Christian, whatever, and that used to upset my mum as she thought that she was ... [chuckles], she said she was almost like an animal, as she had no religion. But, you know, it's a bit harsh, but she does respect Alison, my present wife, a lot more because she has a religion, she is Christian, she's Christian religion, basically...*

Religion can, therefore, still play an important role in the choice of a partner. Donato's case is the result of the slow but real ‘convergence among white ethnic groups – such as the evidence showing the closing of the former gap between Catholics and Protestants in socio-economic achievement and that suggesting the erosion of traditional ethnic subcultures’ (Alba & Golden 1986: 203).

According to most members of the second and some of the third generation, the potential problems implicit in a mixed marriage are varied but can be summarised in just

one concept: they would require a cultural adjustment of the two parts involved between themselves and in relation to the specific social setting. These ideas are further explained in the following section.

#### 6.6.4 The idea of mixed marriages: second and third generation

All parents, regardless of their generation, considered the idea of their children's marriage with a member of another minority group as a challenge. For many members of the first generation the mere fact that the children could even contemplate the possibility of marrying outside the Italian group would have been a problem, due to the many uncertainties they think are implied in this type of relationship. Members of the second generation also expressed a certain concern when confronted with the idea that their children might marry a member of another group. Like their parents, their reaction is protective in nature and based on their prediction of what life could be for their children and the grandchildren born from such a hypothesised relationship.

When confronted with the idea that his children could be involved in a mixed marriage, Donato says that he would not oppose them, although he has clear views on the subject. What he would be worried about could be people's reactions to a mixed couple and to their offspring.

Donato (2) [Family 7]: [if my son comes home with a black girl] *I need to get to know the girl and, depending on that, I would make my judgement. Erm ... I wouldn't ... like my dad would go actually through the roof. I'd see what person she's like, I would explain to Nicholas, I would say 'fine, you met this girl, if you love her then that's ok, as long as you are happy' and I would also say 'think about the possible consequences'. Because you cannot hide that there's a lot of ... prejudice. For instance, Sonia, went out with a black boy, maybe a couple of years ago, and I had the same discussion with her saying 'ok, if ... if you love him, than that's fine, but the consequences if you decide to have children in the future, the children are going to be mixed race, people don't look at you ...' and they did, she had many abusive people saying things to her... not only whites attacking her ... verbally and say 'why are you with him ...?' but also black people saying to him that he ought to be with his own kind.*

D. G.: *Oh, really?*

Donato: *Oh, yes ... Sonia had that, she told me. I mean, she's not seeing him now, but I feel that I dealt with it right ... I didn't particularly like the guy, and I knew that it wouldn't last, but I was supportive through that.*

The idea that Donato is conveying is that, in his opinion, it would be difficult for children born from a mixed marriage to fit into society, in particular when the 'mixing' is with people of a black or Asian background. He underlines that he was, however, sympathetic with his daughter's choices. Interestingly, Donato's daughter, Sonia, does not report her father's support to her relationship, possibly because she assimilates his



doubts to a masked disagreement towards it. Instead, she maintains that her paternal grandparents and father had issues towards the mixed offspring of people from a different origin. This reinforces the idea that children born from mixed marriages might be difficult to deal with, possibly because they it might be more complex to categorise them. From the interview it is also clear that race is a socially constructed category.

Sonia (3) [Family 7]: *My ex boyfriend was ... his father was Jamaican and his mother was English and ... [pause]*

D. G.: *... and it didn't work?*

Sonia: [laughs] *No.*

D. G.: *Who was against it?*

Sonia: [serious] *My granddad, grandma... dad. [...] I was with him for about two years, so they met him ... I think that the fact that his mother was white and his father's black ... because he was of mixed ...erm...race. And they don't agree with mixing anything...*

D. G.: *In some ways, apart from the colour, you are mixed as well [her mum is English].*

Sonia: *Yeah, I know.*

The idea of 'mixing' is dominant in Donato's discourse and also in that of his daughter Sonia, who had been interviewed separately on two different occasions. Donato, however, does not appear to be extremely worried by the 'race mixing', although he underlines that certain 'mixes', unacceptable in the past, today seem to be 'more acceptable'. Through the idea of *mixing* he also manages to relativise his position towards the others.

Donato (2) [Family 7]: *We are all mixed races to an extent. If you go back far away, you know there's no ... and maybe my great-grandfather would have said: 'Are you marrying an English girl?'. You know ... it's just ... for the same reasons. But some people are more acceptable nowadays.*

It seems that women belonging to the second generation show a more liberal attitude towards the idea that their children might be involved in mixed marriages than their husbands, who seem more conservative. When confronted with the idea of mixed marriages, although they would not be against them themselves, second generation women do imply that a certain resistance could be found in their husband's attitude. In the following exchange between Marcella and Natalia, it is clear that there is a strong bond between the mother and the daughter. The father, part of their family, is here referred to as an all-judging short-sighted man, and they seem to distance him from themselves. However, in this particular context it is impossible to state whether they have ever tried to confront him on this issue. From the tone of the discussion, the implication that follows is that he might be an authoritarian patriarchal man who seems to refuse any hypotheses that could clash with his long-established and rigid view of the world.

Natalia (3) [Family 4]: *My mum wouldn't mind as long as he was a good person, even if he was ... black, say. Even if he was an Italian man and was a bad person, she won't agree. I think my dad ... he would mind, definitely. I think he wants me to marry somebody Italian.*

Marcella (2): *No, I don't think he's bothered by Italian. He's a bit racist.*

Natalia: *Yeah.*

Marcella: *I am not.*

Natalia: *Because [in the area where he works] he sees the type of people, black people, Asian people ... and he thinks ... and is horrible, in a way, because he's not seeing the good sides of people, like...*

Marcella: *I think you can't tar everybody with the same brush. They are not all the same. I have worked with Asians and blacks, and they are not all the same. It is like the Italians: you get good and bad Italians. It happens with the English ...*

The mother-daughter bond is reinforced by the inflexible attitude of the husband / father. Rather than negotiating roles, positions and views among the members of the family, mothers and daughters form a silent coalition among themselves in order to reduce the consequences of the too-authoritative attitudes of fathers.

The members of the older generations appear to retain conservative views about their offspring's unions. In the following exchange five people belonging to the first (Giordano and Rina), second (Emma) and third generation (Lisa and Fiammetta), argue on interethnic unions. The way the dialogue develops is very interesting. On one side, there are the grandparents with their 'black and white' view of life, on the other the daughter and the granddaughters, who try to persuade Giordano and Rina of their opinion. The dialogue is quick and runs very naturally. It is interesting how every remark by Giordano is followed by a stronger reply in the hope that he would withdraw from keeping on arguing, until the daughter and the granddaughter, foreseeing what Giordano is going to say, interrupt him very abruptly.

Emma (2) [Family 2]: *No, I have never said to these 'I don't want you to marry black, Chinese, Indian, Pakistani ...', whatever. I've said to these 'you go, you marry who you want, as long as you are happy, I don't mind, it's your life'.*

Giordano (1): *If they take a black man ...*

Emma: [Interrupts her father] *Whatever. As long as they are happy. There's nothing to do with me.*

Giordano: *Have you seen Bianchi [a family friend]? The daughter married a black guy and, when she married, he went away from home.*

Emma: *Dad, that's lack of intelligence!*

Fiammetta (3): *That's generalising, you cannot say that.*

Rina (1): *This is what you believe, we are still old fashioned!*

Emma: *Yes, but if the children, when they are ready to get married, if that's who they want to marry ... if that makes them happy...*

Giordano: *If you just wake up at night, open your eyes and ...*

Lisa: *Oh, nonno!*

Emma: *Shut up!*

[Everyone laughs embarrassed]

In Emma's discourse ethnic stereotypes seem to have been erased and she considers the possibility that her daughters might marry within another group as a realistic option. In contrast, her parents' comments clearly point out that for them there are still existing and apparently irremovable limits dividing people from black or Asian origin from the members of the in-group and other white groups.

Among the interviewees, the only two people who do not refer to the rest of their family to comment on a hypothetical interethnic relationship among their children are, symptomatically, two men, Luca C. and Gabriele, both belonging to the second generation and married to a non-Italian spouse. Both affirm that they would leave the children independent in their decision, but that they would investigate the question further: Luca C., in order to be sure that the decision to start a relationship with a member of another minority group is sound and well-thought through; and Gabriele, in order to be assured that the children would not have been forced into any relationships. Luca C. explains that in the hypothesis of a multicultural union in his family, his English side would come into play. By saying this, he refers to this side belonging to the pluralist multicultural society of which he is part, which is supposed to be more open to and less apprehensive about cultural diversity.

When compared to the reaction of closure of older Italians to the possibility that the second generation could contemplate union with a member of another group, the comments of most members of the second generation reveal their slowly changing attitudes towards the idea of exogamy. However, the perspective of members of the second generation towards inter-marriage is a sign of the acquisition of attitudes and values originating from their familial background. Although more objective and less prejudiced than their parents, they show a certain concern towards the practical and cultural implications that mixed marriages could involve.

Similarly, some members of the third generation agree with their parents on a number of issues related to relationships with individuals from a similar background. It is probably an aspiration of every Italian grandparent living in Nottingham that the third generation might marry within the Italian group. They are aware that their children and grandchildren have been born and grown up in England and they affirm that 'they are more English than Italian'. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that marrying outside the Italian group would, for many older Italians, be a sign that their efforts to transmit the cultural traits of the country of origin to the succeeding generations is not going to continue to take place indefinitely.

In the following section, the testimony of Natalia is a remarkable example of Gans' theory of the symbolic nature of ethnicity for the third generation (1979). Natalia, sixteen years old, explains the reasons why she would like to marry an Italian boy. She also explains what 'type' of Italian she would be interested in.

Natalia (3) [Family 4]: *I think I want to marry an Italian boy. I really do. Yeah ... yeah. That's why I really like being Italian because what a lot of people see of the Italian men is that they've got this, like, sort of look about ... people view the Italian men as being romantic and lovely and stuff like that, and probably they are not ...*

D. G.: *Why do you want to marry an Italian man?*

Natalia: *Why? I don't know, I just want to keep it in me. Not just because of that. I just think I'd be happy with somebody who understands where I've come from. If I married an English person, they wouldn't understand. I just don't think I'll be able to get along because of that. I did have an Italian boyfriend [giggles] and I liked that because he was Italian and because we could talk over using Italian words. I like that and I don't want it ever leave it from me. I wouldn't ever marry somebody I'd met in Italy because speaks Italian, sort of thing, because, I won't ... because I wouldn't get along either. I just want a nice Italian boy who was brought up right and ... I don't know...*

D.G.: *So a third generation Italian like you.*

Natalia: *Yeah. And I do go to Italian weddings! I just like the whole thing of the having an Italian wedding<sup>82</sup>. I like having the *tarantella* and ... not just the money [laughs]. I like it because ... it's me, I want that because I love Italian weddings and I [wonder] 'am I having one'?*

D. G.: *Have you been to Italian weddings here in England or in Italy?*

Natalia: *I have been to Italian weddings here. I have never been to one in Italy.*

Natalia does not seem to be attracted by the stereotypical image of the Italian: 'people view the Italian men as being romantic and lovely and stuff like that, and probably they are not'. Although we might think that hers is an idealised view of a relationship, it is not. Natalia's condition is 'amphibious': she is completely immersed in a reality but her head is somewhere else. However, her desire to marry an 'Italian' could not be more realistic. In fact, it is more likely for her to meet someone with the same background, than from a different one. However, probably without having an awareness of this, in a non-reflexive way, she appears to have a sense of fidelity to her ancestral past: she shows a sentiment of attachment to something that takes her back to the origin. She seems to be keen to cling to a reality that is not lived, but represented. The reality she lives in is that of the Italian community in Nottingham. That is her idea of Italy. An Italian wedding without a *tarantella* would not be acceptable for her, as that would be contrary to what she is ('I like it because...it's me'): and she is a creation of the world she has been brought up in.

<sup>82</sup> Several younger members of the Italian community of Nottingham have referred to Italian weddings as pleasant occasions for meeting other members of the community.

## 6.7 Naming traditions

Naming traditions are culturally embedded and might be based on religious, ethnic or local customs. The reason behind many people's choice of keeping names in the family is inarguably due to tradition. It is a way to retain a sense of continuity through the generations. Choosing a child's name is one of the most important things that parents need to do. In fact, a name represents more than just a way to be called, as names end up with portraying the character of their individuals and their identity, and individuals can feel proud or ashamed of them. A foreign name can represent an additional source of identification both for the individual and for others, as it represents a clear statement of a different heritage.

The custom that prevails among Italians is naming the child after a relative. According to naming conventions, the pattern usually used follows birth order and it appears to work as follows:

- the first son will be named after the father's father;
- the second will be named son after the mother's father;
- the first daughter will be named after the father's mother;
- the second daughter will be named after the mother's mother.

When she named her children, Piera, first generation, followed tradition, but not strictly. Instead of naming her second son after her own father, she decided to name him child after her country of origin, following a trip to Italy.

Piera (1) [Family 10]: *I chose Gioacchino for my first son, after the father-in-law. Carolina was named after my mother-in-law. And when I went to Italy, I decided to call the third son Italo.*<sup>83</sup>

Naming a child according to a geographical place, especially if closely related to the place of origin, denotes a strong affection and dedication that pushes Piera to break the tradition of naming the child according to her father, with all the consequences that could derive from this choice. In fact, it is considered a great honour for grandparents to have grandchildren named after them. From the testimony of Linda and Paolo it is possible to realise that in some Italian towns this was a sign of respect for the older people of the family. Therefore, refusing to name children after their grandparents was regarded as deeply disrespectful. In fact, a child might not be named after a grandparent if, for example, there has been a quarrel between the grandparents and the parents.

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<sup>83</sup> All the names appearing in the thesis, and in particular in this section, are pseudonyms carefully selected in order to preserve the anonymity of the interviewees and of the members of their family and to convey ideas and relationships implied by the use of certain names.

Paolo (1) [Family 7]: *I gave my son my father's name.*

D.G.: *And the daughter?*

Paolo: It was *a piacere* [not following the tradition].

D. G.: *What's her name?*

Linda (1): *Beatrice Maria. But his [the husband's] mum, was not really happy with this name.*

Paolo: *She wanted her name.*

Linda: *Franca. When we came from England she didn't buy any presents for her [the granddaughter]. She bought presents only for the male grandchild.*

D.G.: *So she told you clearly...*

Linda: *Eh, we realised that ... she was angry.*

Nowadays, although many things have changed, some older Italians are still very attached to this tradition. There can be people, like Matteo, who rejoice for having a grandchild named after themselves, and who specify that this happened 'without any pressure'. This is a sign of greater respect, and therefore of greater pride.

Matteo (1) [Family 8]: *My son named his son after me when he was born. But without pressure. No. No. Neither me or my wife said anything. And when the baby was born, he phoned and said 'a baby boy was born, a male, and we have called him Matteo'. They gave him two names, it is more an English tradition, that sounds nice as well 'Matteo Alexander'. Her father was Alexander. But he's called Matthew, in English. For the second then they choose on their own and they gave him the name Davide.*

On the other hand, there are people like Linda and Paolo, who appear to be disappointed by not having had grandchildren named after themselves and who try to look more closely at the names chosen for their grandchildren trying to find a sign of recognition.

Linda (1) [Family 7]: *For example, no one gave my name or Paolo's to the children. We would have liked that, too. You see, nothing. So, my daughter called her son Bruno<sup>84</sup>, well she gave the surname rather the name. The other children are Peter, Lydia and Teresa.*

In some cases parents choose, or are believed to have chosen, a name sounding like that of the grandparent. In other cases, people transform their own names into English equivalents or easier-to-pronounce versions. This practice is common to all three generations.

Still today some grandchildren who have their grandparent's name appear to be, in turn, more respected, or treated differently, from those who do not. At the entrance of his house Matteo has a plate with a name: Elvira. This is his late wife's name but also his niece's, who, as suggested by Matteo, for this reason appears in his will as the heir to the property.

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<sup>84</sup> Fictional: Bruno in Italy can be found both as a first name or surname.

In some cases, people decide to name their children after the saint of the day on which the child was born. Although the custom of naming a child after the grandparents is well spread, there might be some exceptions that allow the suspension of this naming tradition. Another example is naming a child after his or her brother or sister who had prematurely died, such as in the case of Gemma's daughter.

The choice of a name for a newborn child is a cultural expression following very precise unwritten rules and traditions. In some cases a person's cultural tradition intervenes in his/her decision. Second-generation Italians, however, although not extremely strict, appear to follow these long-established naming traditions. The idea that once they have been born and bred in an English environment they might have felt that they could reject the old Italian rules does not always apply. Giacomo, Marina and Riccardo decided not to follow tradition. Nevertheless, a certain link with their Italian background can still be found in their choice of names.

Giacomo (2) [Family 5]: *When myself and my wife decided to have children, we didn't go the traditional way, sort of the Italians, and name the kids after the family. We didn't do that. Just Claudia was a name that we both liked.*

D.G.: *The name Dalia can be both Italian and English. Or not?*

Marina (2) [Family 1]: *No, in English would be Dahlia, with the 'h'.*

Riccardo (2): *Yes, in reality we chose Italian names, not English. We just thought of Italian names.*

D. G.: *The other child is called Guglielmo, therefore another Italian name.*

Riccardo: *At school, he's called Guglielmo, not William. He prefers being called Guglielmo.*

Riccardo and Marina chose Italian names for their children. In Dalia's case, the spelling of the name is not English since, as Marina underlines, the 'h' is missing. In the case of his son, Riccardo clarifies through his statement that the boy seems to identify with his Italian name and has never used the English equivalent. Indeed, Guglielmo is the name he is known by at school, the place in which identity is more likely to become an object of negotiation.

Among members of the second generation there is no pattern in the choice of names for their children. In fact, while some of them clearly break with tradition but appear to follow certain self-produced rules, others are very faithful to it. It is commonly – but superstitiously – believed that a person bearing the name of another one will as a consequence of this inherit his or her character, but also that a name might influence a person's behaviour.

Carolina (2) [Family 10]: *Adriano was named after my father in law, that was a tradition. Luca, I was gonna call him Andrea, but it is a girl's name, feminine, so I*

*named him after my father. And I like the name Luca. And Pierfrancesco, when I went to Rome, with my mum and dad I decided to call him Pierfrancesco<sup>85</sup>, because I'd like him to be a priest ... I don't think so [laughs].*

D. G.: *Really?*

Carolina: *Oh, yeah! I like religion and ... I don't know, I am quite holy. Although I don't go to church ...*

Luca C., second generation, married to an English woman, analyses the attitudes of a grandfather towards the naming tradition, by comparing his situation to that which his son will probably face in the future. Luca C. decided to follow the naming tradition but with the intention of adapting it to the context his family was living in.

D. G.: *Was that a choice or a duty naming the first-born male according to the tradition?*

Luca C. (2) [Family 9]: *Yes. Both: a choice and a duty. A duty because it was important for my father, because that is a gift you give to your father. In simple terms: I name my child after you. A choice as well, because, really, if I wanted to stick to the tradition, I should have had to name my first daughter after my mum. My mum's name is Matilde. Being a girl, living in England, well, even in Italy, and being named Matilde ... So, we didn't follow that path. But for the male, we did. It was the first grandchild, and the only boy, as the other grandchildren are all female..*

D. G.: *So I suppose that your name is the one of your grandfather.*

Luca C.: *Yes, my grandfather's.*

D.G: *Do you expect that your son will follow the tradition, too?*

Luca C.: *No, I don't. Maybe to a less extent than my father expected it. I mean, I don't expect that. And I haven't even thought that much about that. If one day he had a male child and was named Luca, I would be pleased, maybe. I don't know. But not as much as the thing would be appreciated in Italy. And again you see here a dilution of the old Italian tradition, maybe in this I am more English than Italian.*

In some cases great importance is given to the children's middle name, which allows the parents to give the child the name they like, to follow tradition and keep a connection with their family history – so reducing some grandparents' resentment – without bestowing on to a child an old-fashioned name that s/he would probably be ashamed of.

Donato (2) [Family 7]: *We didn't follow a tradition. I have always liked the name Sonia, and my wife and I thought that Sonia would be OK. When Julie was born, my wife liked Julie and so I said 'Fine, that's a nice name, whatever'. You know, I didn't particularly want to name her after anybody, so we decided for Julie. But it is Sonia Anna. The Anna bit is from my mum, it is my mum's first name, although people call her Linda, it's Anna Linda, but the English shortened it so she was always named Anna, wherever she was working.*

Baldo decided not to name his son after his own father.

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<sup>85</sup> *Pierfrancesco* derives from the name *Pietro*, i.e. Peter (the founder of the Christian Church), and *Francesco*.



Baldo (1) [Family 1]: *In my town they usually give the name of the grandfather but, as there are too many people called Luca, I gave him Riccardo Luca. The name is a piacere* [not following the tradition].

As this tradition is still quite common, it is possible to find many people in the same family sharing the same name. These are usually cousins, belonging to the same generation and often living in the same area.

D. G.: *Have your children been named after your father and your mother?*

Matteo (1) [Family 8]: *Yes, yes, yes. In fact, we are four brothers and we have four Lucas* [their sons] *in our family* [laughs].

Due to chain migration, many Italians living in Nottingham originate from the same area and / or are related to each other. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that some first names are recurrent among members of the second generation (Luca, for example). Interestingly, although some of the children of the immigrants state that they have broken the ties with these traditions, in reality many of them are still faithful to them but express their feelings in different ways. I define this as tradition, but *innovative* at times. In fact often the tradition can take place but might be too subtle to be noticed at a first glance:

- Some name children after their own parents as a form of respect for them, as in the case of Dalila's daughter (Elvira), Emma's daughters (Fiammetta and Lisa, named respectively after their grandmother and great-grandmother) or Luca C.'s son (Alberto). Nevertheless, if the name is too old-fashioned for a little girl, as in the case of his mother's (Matilde), he would drop the possibility of following the tradition or pleasing his mother;
- In Carolina's case, there has been space for both tradition (Adriano and Luca have been named after their grandparents) and creativity (the younger child was dedicated through his name to St Peter in the hope that he might sooner or later become a priest);
- Some decide on Italian names, without choosing those of the grandparents. This is the case of Marina and Riccardo's children (Dalia and Guglielmo);
- People like Donato might state that they have not followed the tradition *strictly* as they used the name of one of the grandparents as a child's middle name.

Moreover, in the case of the second generation it does not seem that being intermarried or married within the Italian community has a particular influence on the choice of a name. Indeed, among intermarried couples, either Italian or neutral names have mainly been chosen, which would suit both the Italian and the English contexts, such as Claudia and Sonia.

This might or might not be the case for the third generation. It might depend on the level of association, even just symbolic, to the country and, possibly, to the level of intermarriage and to the gender of the individual of Italian origin in the couple. The cases of Donato and Luca C., both married outside the Italian community seem to justify this view. This might be due to the fact that the surname is usually transmitted in the patrilineal line, and first names might follow the same destiny. As suggested by Saenz *et al.* (1995: 179), the surname of the father represents a ‘verbal and visible cue reflecting the ethnic background’.

The first and second generations display a strong attachment to their cultural background which is reflected in their naming patterns. A certain level of adaptation can, however, be identified mainly among members of the younger generation. The reference to the naming tradition depends on several variables, among which: the level of intermarriage, the surname of the children, level of attachment, self-interest. Therefore, due to this, foreseeing what development the phenomenon might have in relation to the third or fourth generations would be very difficult.

### **6.8 Christening and confirmation: fictive kinship**

Baptism is the first of the seven sacraments of the Catholic religion. It has always been considered as a necessity by Catholic families to be performed in the shortest time after the birth of the baby. In fact, in the past, probably due to the high mortality of infants, baptism was the only way to assure the baby a good afterlife. According to the Catholic tradition, those who die without having received this sacrament have never been washed from original sin and have never become part of ‘God’s family’ and are destined for the whole duration of their afterlife to Limbo, a place of confinement. For this reason the Church provides certain ‘emergency’ prayers that allow any person – not necessarily a priest – to administer a christening.

The only person who has not been baptised among the interviewees is Claudia. Her father explains the reasons why he decided not to go along with his mother’s wishes.

*Giacomo (2) [Family 5]: The thing is, baptising someone is a dedication. It is their own dedication. So, they got to decide whether they want to be baptised or not. You can’t expect a six weeks old baby to have a, you know ... when she grows up, if she wants to be dedicated in any way, she’s got the choice. And that’s what I say is slightly different from my parents; I want her to have a choice.*

Apart from this unique case, all the other Italians of Nottingham still attribute great value to baptism: it is something that has to be done for the family’s peace of mind. Baptism is taken for granted by some of the members of the third generation. It is like a

process that people have necessarily to undergo, like a vaccination. While for the previous generation asking who is the godparent means actually recognising a certain role for them, and the parents use of certain criteria in the choice, for children it seems as a superfluous question, like asking who the nurse who performed the injection was. The following exchange between mother and daughter is particularly suggestive.

Elvira (3) [Family 8]: *I've not been confirmed ... have I?*

Dalila (2): *Not yet, no.*

Elvira: *No. I have been baptised.*

Dalila: *But no confirmation, yet. You have to do that.*

Elvira: *If I want to get married. You just never go round to it?*

Dalila: *Not really, it is just something that you ...*

D. G.: *Do you know your godparents? Are they family? Friends?*

Elvira: *No ... they are ... they are family, aren't they? Yeah.*

Dalila: *Your ... your ... Yeah your godparents ... yes. It is my...*

Elvira: *It is your uncle, isn't it?*

Dalila: *Yeah, my uncle. My dad's brother and his wife.*

Traditionally, and for the older generations, the *compari*<sup>86</sup> assume a special role and a special kind of relationship is developed before or after they take part in the ceremony. In some cases, they are not relatives, but friends, and often *paesani*, therefore, a special kind of friend, because chosen and hence 'elected' as a family member. 'Godparenthood is a superimposition of the fictive family, a further affirmation of the parental concept with an overlay of the notion that substitution *is* possible should it become necessary' (Romanucci-Ross 1995: 85). In this sense, the children are not 'left alone' as the godparents would have to provide not only for their spiritual but also for their material well-being in the absence of the parents.

In particular, in San Paolo di Civitate there is a tradition according to which the person baptising the first child is automatically appointed for those that follow, therefore becoming part of the family through this form of fictive kinship. This phenomenon is of great importance in places like Nottingham, as it explains the reason why members of various families know and meet each other on several occasions throughout the year. The network constituted by the *comparato* represents, in fact, a surrogate of the extended family left in Italy and a way to cultivate relationships within and / or outside the closest circle of family relations.

Nevertheless, the role of *compare* was and still is relevant for the first and second generations. Indeed the younger members of the Italian community often seem to be

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<sup>86</sup> *Comparato* is the relationship of the godparents of either baptism or confirmation to the children's parents: the four of them assume the title of *compare* if male, *comare* if female. In the respondents' area of origin they are also called *San Giovanni* (St John, the Baptist) independently from their gender.

unaware of the deeper or special meanings that their parents and grandparents attribute to certain relationships with other members of the Italian community.

### **6.9 Family businesses and ethnic identity promotion**

For Andall (2003: 391), the social mobility of the second generation is not necessarily linked to their refusal of the values of the society of origin and the acknowledgment of the morals and standards of the host society. Indeed, for many second-generation immigrants, being part of an immigrant sub-culture can be an important element for success in their work activities. Some second-generation Italians interviewed are employed – or, better, self-employed – in catering and ice-cream businesses, which represents an occupational shift from their parents' employment as factory workers. In the case of the family business both men and women are directly involved in its development. The families of Guido<sup>87</sup>, Gabriele and Emma involve at least two of the three generations in their activities. Moreover, due to the ethnically connoted nature of the businesses (companies importing typically Italian products for the British market in the case of Guido; an ice-cream business in the case of Emma; and an Italian restaurant in Gabriele's case), the owner's identification with the country of origin represents a further element of quality and authenticity. As underlined by Fabietti (1995: 86), in a multicultural context, the 'marketing of ethnicity' is certainly active: the various groups by claiming their right to be different, in reality, are competing for access to economic resources and privileges.

The condition for access to these is, of course, their authenticity (Waters 1990). Their own ethnicity is their resource (Kloosterman and Rath 2001). Therefore, the nature of the business these ethnic entrepreneurs are involved in presents the condition for showing ethnic distinctiveness, which can work out as a condition for success in their business. Moreover, 'food serves as a locus for collective memory, social organisation and ethnic identity building' (Poe 2001: 131).

Nevertheless, the only case in which the father-patriarch expects the older son to take over the family business seems to be that of Guido. This can be explained by the fact that Guido is a first generation man, and therefore might act in relation to more traditional, patrilineal, schemes of transmission of wealth: alternatively, in both Emma and Gabriele's cases, both of the second generation, the oldest children are girls, therefore diluting any problems deriving from traditional ideas on inheritance and decision making processes.

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<sup>87</sup> Guido, first generation, arrived in the UK with a contract as a factory worker. After a few years, he was offered to work as a secretary and interpreter for the same factory until he decided to resign from the job and become self-employed.

## 6.10 The role of the family in the migratory project

As ascertained from the interviews conducted among the first generation Italians living in Nottingham, going back to Italy at the end of their four years contract was originally part of the migration project. Indeed, going back ‘home’ is not an episode, but has to be interpreted as a process, a development, implicit in every migratory project, even in the case of the migrants who will never go back (Bolognari 1985: 398). ‘Returning home or to the home-country is a *tópos* common to the collective unconscious and nourished by real needs of self-esteem and historical and geographical self-placement (*the roots*)’ (Di Sparti 1993: 38).

For personal, social, cultural, economic and, above all (as clarified in the following sub-sections) familial circumstances, these birds-of-passage (Piore 1979) can change targets (for example, they could decide to postpone the return until they retire) and become settled.

### 6.10.1 Motives for non-return

The reasons the first generation interviewees attributed to the decision of remaining in England can be summarised in the following points, which have been divided into two sections: a) during working age, and b) after retirement:

#### a) *During working age*

- Slow accumulation of sufficient capital
- Impossibility of taking the children to Italy
- Undesirability of a *false* return: i.e. migration to Italian industrial areas of the North of Italy
- Considerations for the children’s future

#### b) *After retirement*

- Concern about the possible need of care
- Feeling of being better socialised in Britain

The next subsections will analyse the motivations for the failed return in detail.

### 6.10.2 Non-return during working age

Literature suggests that the plan of target earners can be summarised in the following stages: emigrate, accumulate some capital and return to the place of origin where it will

be invested (Cerase 1971; Castles 1984; Constant and Massey 2002; Morokvasic 1984; Piore 1979; Portes and Bach 1985; Signorelli *et al.* 1977).

The slow accumulation of sufficient capital has been identified as one of the reasons for delaying the return of the older Italians of Nottingham to their towns of origin. Some 'target earners', for various reasons, probably failed to reach their objectives within the time limits set: it took them longer than expected to be able to earn enough money and leave the country (see also Castles 1984: 13; Rogers 1985:14). Saving, in this particular context, has a very high cultural value as both a defence against the uncertainties of life. Furthermore, it is the most important factor that the migrants perceive as essential in changing their destiny and in changing the original conditions that produced emigration in the first place (Signorelli *et al.* 1977: 107-8).

For some of the migrants who were forced to postpone the moment of return to their home country, when an appropriate time did arise they realised that it was by then too late (Bolzman *et al.* 1997b: 99; Castles 1984: 13; Rogers 1985: 14). The few years they had anticipated had been extended, with a series of consequences involving the whole family group.

Marianna (1) [Family 3]: *My husband came here to work, but just for two to three years ... two to three years, but then ... the children grew up ...*

D.G.: *Was the intention to go back?*

Marianna: *Yes, yes*

In particular, while their parents were planning their return, the children of the immigrants, either born in the UK or brought up there from early childhood onwards, were growing up. They were socialised within the English environment, attending school or were already, in some cases, in a stable relationship. All this made their parents realise that a return to Italy would have been, at that time, impossible, if they wanted to avoid splitting up their family. For many of the interviewees the unity of their family group means spatial as well as emotional closeness<sup>88</sup>.

The presence of children, moreover, forces the parents to take into account the necessity of liaising, for the first time or in new ways, with services and institutions at the place of residence. Examples include nursery and other schools, and the health services. Because of their expectations of only a short stay in Nottingham, up to the time when they set up their own families, the Italian migrants had not felt any necessity to socialise with the host society. It was thus mainly because of their children that the immigrants became

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<sup>88</sup> See Bolzman *et al.* 1999 and Warnes 1986 for studies on local proximity between parents and children.

gradually more integrated into English social life, with the development of new social networks.

The interviewees also justified their decision to remain in the country of immigration through their concern for the future of their children. In fact, remaining in Britain would have certainly implied better opportunities for the children, who had been raised, educated and socialised in the British environment. One of the interviewees, Baldo, clearly summarises all the elements that immigrant parents who consider returning have to take into account once their children grow up.

Baldo (1) [Family 1]: *After Riccardo was born, grew up, got engaged and all the rest...where could you take him anymore? He had studied here, his language was here, his job was here.*

An added obstacle to return to Italy was the interviewees' awareness that going back to Italy would not have meant going back to the town of origin, where the economy was still at an impasse. Returning to Italy would have forced them to find employment in the industrial areas of Turin or Milan. They perceived this as a 'false return'. Indeed the whole idea of 'return' does not, for the interviewees, refer to the whole Italian peninsula: 'return' is a 'going back' to the specific place of origin. Moreover, moving to Italy would not have resulted in any improvement in life-style and work conditions. As Marianna asserts, 'It would have been the same factory work...'

### 6.10.3 Non-return after retirement

Retiring and moving back to Italy is not considered as an option by the older Italians who are still in Nottingham because of their concern for their own possible need for care. This fear originates from the cultural practice that it is mainly the children who take care of the older parents, with little reliance on more formal support. The proximity of the children is perceived as fundamental for the assistance that they can provide for older parents on several levels: moral, emotional, practical, bureaucratic, etc. (Bolzman *et al.* 1997a, 1997b).

Gioacchino (1) [Family 6]: *Today, one thing that we can't live without, because we have worked and we reached this age, are the children. What do you do if you've got a family? Leave a child here and go to Italy? And when you are in Italy ... I am not as I was yesterday, if anything happens to you, where do you go? Who comes to take care of you?*

Familial solidarity is at the basis of everyday behaviour and spans throughout the life-course: parents make sacrifices for their children's security and comfort, but expect certain reciprocity later in life. As indicated by Bolzman *et al.* (1999: 87), these patterns

are typical of the sub-culture of immigrant families and relate both an urban popular culture and the migrant condition. It is apparent that at the basis of the plurality of reasons for remaining in England there is a deep anxiety for the material security and physical comfort for the younger and the older members of the family. On the other hand, equally significant is the process of socialisation undertaken through the years of residence in the country, which makes the older Italians experience an unexpected sense of 'foreignness' while in Italy. For some the decision to remain in England partly depends on the fact that the individuals have become so deeply rooted in the new country - through socialization, customs developed through time, and habits - that as a consequence they feel more a part of the UK than of the country of origin.

Matilde (1) [Family 9]: *For me this is my home. Here I've got the children, here I have the grandchildren, here I've got the people I love, here I have got my friends, here I have everything. In Italy I find myself a bit out of place, because, of course, we have got cousins, relatives, we've got some friends, a neighbour, but you haven't got a circle of friends of yours that you go out with, you go here, there, and enjoy yourself. We haven't got that..*

In Italy Matilde feels out of place. Her home is where the people she loves are - her children, grandchildren and friends. Therefore her home is in Nottingham. In another passage of the interview, Matilde and her husband clarify this concept further, referring to cultural features she appreciates in the place she chose to live in. The borders between remaining in the country of immigration as a necessity or as a choice become therefore blurred.

Matilde (1) [Family 9]: *I have been here for a long time ...*

Alberto (1): *I've been here for... it will be 45 years in July.*

Matilde: *I have to tell the truth, the English haven't done anything wrong to me. They might be false, as many say, but there are many false people in Italy too. So if I stay here, I got everything I got. I let the children do what they wanted. I like many things of the English. I like the order. I like the privacy here, the freedom ... All things that in Italy are not that much at hand.*

Giordano and Rina also emphasise the importance of family, and the feeling of inadequacy they would suffer if they went back to Italy. However, this feeling is different from that expressed by Matilde.

Giordano (1) [Family 2]: *I don't like this nation that much, but I am forced to stay because I have got the children here, now married. If we go to Italy now we are emigrants, me and my wife. Yes, because ... many of my friends are deceased. We haven't got a house there. Even if you rent a house but you are a foreigner.*

Rina (1): *Even if I have got a brother and a sister, we are always in the family, but if you...*

Giordano: *Here, wherever I go, it seems normal. If I go to Italy ... in Italy you are afraid that they steal from you, that they rip you off, and this and that.*



D.G.: *Consider that you have spent almost all your life here...*

Rina: *Yeah ... yeah.*

Giordano: *Yes, we have spent a life here. You are accustomed...*

This interchange is particularly relevant as it is interlaced with several significant themes, all of them contributing to the concept that a return to Italy is not possible. Giordano's phrase 'if we go to Italy now, we are emigrants', is very interesting. Emigrants generally do not consider return to their own country as a form of migration. Nevertheless, many studies demonstrate that going back home hardly ever means that the individuals will manage to re-occupy their original position (Bolognari 1985; Castorina and Mendorla 1989; Cerase 1974; Emmenegger 1988; King 1978; 2000; Isogay, Hayashi and Uno 1999; Marselli 1981; Merico 1978; Signorelli *et al.* 1977; Di Sparti 1993). Such studies suggest that returning migrants are generally unaware of the circumstances that might make them feel uncomfortable on return. Giordano, however, appears to be conscious that for him and his wife going to Italy would be like migrating one more time.

Another interesting point is represented by the role of the family. For Giordano and Rina family means their children and their grandchildren. Rina has a brother and a sister in Italy, but she introduces them starting the sentence with 'Even if...', suggesting that in the family network the bond with one's own children is stronger than that with siblings. This is the most likely interpretation as, having been interrupted by her husband, Rina did not manage to complete the sentence.

A thought-provoking phrase is 'in Italy you are afraid that they steal from you, that they rip you off'. This unanticipated sentence is a key one. Such a remark would be more expected from a person who has no familiarity with Italy at all and who has been warned by others on how 'tricky' Italians might be. This is a phrase that could easily be used by an individual who would feel out of place and vulnerable in Italy because unaware of the language or the way of life. Nevertheless, assuming that Giordano is using a stereotype in order to justify his decision to remain in England would be misleading. Giordano does feel vulnerable: he has been away from Italy for such a long time that he now feels that he does not belong there anymore. On the contrary, in England everything seems 'normal'. However, if we want to go further and provide another possible reading for this, it could also be that Giordano is providing the others and himself with an explanation of the reason why he decided to stay in England, and this is because 'Italy is not good as England because people try to rip you off'. Nevertheless, we know through other passages of the interview that this is just an excuse. Giordano did want to go back to Italy, and indeed he even tried to, as will be illustrated in the next section of this paper.

Of the six justifications for non-return given earlier, three appear to have a very close link with children or their role. Indeed, all the older Italians interviewed attribute a very high value to their own children and grandchildren, on several occasions defining them as ‘their own life’, their only reason for existing. Interestingly, the slow accumulation of capital and their feeling of being better socialised in Britain could also, partly, be related to the migrants’ children. A single worker may be able to save capital within expected time limits, but the interviewees in this study had to provide for their children’s housing, education, clothing, leisure activities and so on and thus lived under greater financial stress. Although the spouse might be working full time as well, the possibility of saving money became slimmer, with a further explanation lying in the adoption of new patterns of consumption and new life-styles. It is also through the children’s activities outside home and the Italian circle of acquaintances, that many parents got in touch with the English world, something that had initially been impossible in the neighbourhood or the workplace because of the very high number of people of Italian origin.

#### 6.10.4 Examples of attempted return

The idea of the family also seems to be present in the attempts of two of the respondents to return definitively to Italy during their working age. In one case the stay lasted one week, in the two other, a few years. The motivations behind the failed return are, however, very different.

When Giordano attempted a return to Italy, he found employment in a factory in Tuscany where he started working while waiting for his family to sell the house in Nottingham and join him. During his time in Tuscany, Giordano had to face the strong discriminatory frame of mind of his ‘northern’ co-workers. Feeling rejected, he ended up re-evaluating England and its people.

*Giordano (1) [Family 2]: I returned to Italy, near Florence. I worked there one week. They treated me like a foreigner, a complete foreigner. I said ‘how come? I am in England, a foreigner, an immigrant, and wherever I go, doors open, they treat me with white glove.’ [Perhaps if] we left all together, I would have suffered ... and my wife and my daughter. That’s the mistake I made, I went on my own. I said ‘I am going to try [on my own] to see what it’s like.*

Giordano feels that in Italy he is treated like a foreigner while in England, where he was expecting such a treatment, he is not. His words summarise the difference between expectations and reality: he expected to be considered as an outsider in England and as an insider in Italy - he probably was in both cases, but not as much as he thought - and he

ended up with being disproved by the facts. However, he thinks that he would probably have been stronger - and therefore, would have succeeded - if he had received the support of his family, still in England. Here the family appears to be perceived as a source for the strength necessary to face the problem of adaptation to a new environment. This is a clear example of what has previously been defined as a 'false return': a return to Italy, but not to the village of origin, therefore not fulfilling the desire of re-obtaining a position or of finding roots.

After fifteen years spent in Nottingham (three times the initial five-year period planned), Matilde and her husband bought 'a nice little house, all furnished', as Matilde defines it, in San Paolo di Civitate (Foggia), the husband's village of origin. The desire to go back to Italy was such that they moved back as if it was the most natural thing to do, taking with them their teenage children. They also bought a lorry, to be used by the husband who started working in transportation. As the economy of S. Paolo was mainly based on farming, Alberto used to transport agricultural products but it was just a seasonal job and they ended up needing to economise. Only later, when they found out for themselves what it was like to live in a small village, did they start to think about what the future could bring for their children in such an environment.

Matilde (1) [Family 9]: *Other people did tell us 'you are maybe frightened, but you have to suffer a little bit here, too, at first. You went to England and you suffered. Now, it's logical, you cannot find all the things that you left there.' For example, I was seeing so many things: the communities, what I was giving to the children, the whims, the small things. But my husband started thinking about some things 'these children when they'll be older, in a small town, they have to go out, take the train, the car, the university, the school...how can we give these children ... some interests? an education?'. And he became obsessed with this, nothing else. We spent there 3 or 4 years. 'That's it' he said 'let's go back!'*

Alberto (1): *I was thinking about the children ...*

Matilde: *... and we came back. We left again with ...*

Alberto: *...with just the suitcase... because we had sold the house here. It can be that we maybe made a mistake. Because, after 3-4 years things changed in Italy too. The boom, uhhh, money...*

In this interview extract there are three particular elements of considerable interest. The first is Matilde's refusal of further 'suffering'. Her reaction seems to be that of a person who can accept to suffer once but not twice, or who can agree with a certain amount of hardship while living in a foreign country – and with the prospect of leaving it, sooner or later - but not in her own. The second element consists of Alberto's words 'It could be that we maybe made a mistake'. This phrase seems to be a window on Alberto's development as an individual. Indeed, it seems that, through his experiences, Alberto has become very 'relativistic', as with hindsight he does not appear completely sure that

leaving Italy for the second time was the best option. Alberto's circumstances, however, summarise the condition of many of the immigrants interviewed in this study. The older Italians of Nottingham know two realities, the English and the Italian, but it seems that neither of them, considered individually, is totally satisfactory. This dissatisfaction is what causes a certain hint of bitterness, disappointment or resignation in their words. The third element is the concern for the children's future as a further motivating force – or justification – for their decision to go back to England.

In these interview extracts, family circumstances, often characterised by the concept of family closeness, once more seem to play a significant role in preventing the immigrants' definitive return. Moreover, the village of origin, having lost its original appeal, appears as a small place whose economy would not enable the immigrants to keep up the standards of living acquired while in England and, furthermore, would possibly not provide a bright future for the children. The old village lacks both the economic basis for the returnees to prosper and the services and facilities of a big city. What is more, these quotations underline that the possibility that the 'myth of return' might lose its fascination as soon as it ceases to be a myth and becomes reality – a reality which is different from the one imagined while abroad or during the short visits to family and friends.

#### **6.10.5 Circulation as an evolution of the 'myth of return'**

On the one hand the Italians interviewed did not succeed in moving back to Italy for good, but on the other most of them tend to spend a few months every year in England and a few in Italy, sometimes even six months in each country. These are people who constantly commute between the two countries. They move freely in spaces they feel belong to them. In fact, whether they feel fully integrated or not, they oscillate between the two societies, being members of both. If we want to borrow Vertovec's words, it is the 'portability of national identity' (Sassen 1998) which 'among migrants has combined with a tendency towards claiming membership in more than one place' (Vertovec 2001: 575) and might turn them into 'transmigrants' (Bailey 2001: 414). What has changed for them is just the point of reference, that now being England. The choice of commuting seems to correspond to a wish to provide both spatial and temporal continuity between the two countries: spatially, through the continuity provided by the frequent trips between the two countries, bringing them nearer, and, temporally, through the postponement of the decision to settle in one place 'for good' (Bolzman *et al.* 1999: 107).

These kinds of movement are a sign that the global dimension has changed and that migrations are not to be seen within a mono-linear system of permanence in a certain

place for a certain time. The ‘myth of return’, therefore, still exists but seems to have assumed a certain cyclic nature in which the return visit of the migrants - and often also that of their children - represents an ‘integral experience of their life’ (Baldassar 2001). If this ‘integrality’ is, on one side, expressed by Baldo’s feeling of being ‘at home’ both in Italy and in England, on the other, in Matilde’s case, it is more evident how Italy and England in her life have assumed a certain complementarity: the two places become one ‘lived experience’.

Baldo (1) [Family 1]: *I always say that my home is England and Italy because I have a house in Italy and one in England. I have two places. My real home is this [Nottingham] because I live here. There, yes, it’s mine, it was left to me by my parents and I spent so much money on it to renew it. So I have got two of them, one in Italy and one in England..*

The concept of ‘home’ is, therefore, ‘plural and evolving’ (Wong 2002: 169).

Matilde (1) [Family 9]: *There’s never been one year that we haven’t gone to Italy. But as soon as it starts being colder, there’s not so much life ... I start being bored and I think that I want to go home [Nottingham]. Because I feel free here. You might ask ‘don’t you feel free there?’ No. I feel limited ... in that small town, you cannot do much. There are not these big shops, where you watch for a while, you buy something, you take a cup of coffee, meet a friend, chat for a while. You cannot do this. In brief, there comes a moment when I am tired and want to go home ...*

Going to Italy during the summer is a necessity for Matilde, as is spending the winter period in Nottingham. Contrary to what one would expect, the older Italian migrants of Nottingham do not tend to spend the summer in England and the winter in Italy, in order to take advantage of the milder winter weather there. Indeed, within the sphere of international retirement migration, the case of the older Italians of Nottingham adds new perspectives. Unlike other transnational migrants (Jurdao & Sánchez 1990; King, Warnes & Williams 2000; Myklebost 1989; O’Reilly 1995; Williams, King & Warnes 1997), the older Italians tend to spend the winter months in Nottingham, a period in which their children and grandchildren are actively involved in their activities. They would never consider mentally labelling their ‘home’ as being away from their close family members. Other possible reasons for spending the summer and part of the autumn in Italy also relate to a variety of other circumstances:

- It is during the summer that other migrants might return to the village. Going during the summer provides the occasion to meet long-term friends and acquaintances. In this sense, ‘the return visit may not be explicitly causal, but may instead be the means by which social relationships are maintained’ (Duval 2004:52).

- During the holiday season, it is easier to meet and entertain friends and family members. In fact, *'as soon as it starts being colder, there's not so much life'* (Matilde).
- The end of the summer and the early autumn is the period of the grape and olive harvest. Many of the older Italians of Nottingham still possess, with their brothers and sisters, plots of land inherited from their parents. Staying in Italy during the harvest period is both a way to justify their presence in their village as not just mere holiday-makers and to gather and bring home the wine and the oil for family use. They go back to England not empty-handed but with goods from their 'other' land, which might also be considered as symbols of wealth achieved through hard work.

Marianna provides another interesting example of circulation. Marianna feels equally part of two societies – that in her Italian village and the immigrant one of Nottingham.

D.G.: *You are going to your town soon, aren't you?*

Marianna (1) [Family 3]: *Oh, I am thrilled at the moment. I need to go to my town. Last year I went twice, two years ago too, three years ago ... I think ... too. Because I have the houses that I rent to the students [in Nottingham], I have got properties. I worked really hard...and we are all the same. I have just one house in my town ... I don't disturb anyone: I have got my house. And even if I don't disturb anyone, my uncles and aunts, my cousins, all the friends that I have got there say 'have you arrived? Come, come and see us'. In short, for me ... even here when I go out and find either paesani or people from the province of Matera ... they are all my friends ....*

Although Marianna is the owner of just one house in her original town, she owns several properties in Nottingham, rented to students. This is an element that further supports the specific behaviour of people like her who end up by basing themselves in the place of immigration. Indeed, rather than spend her savings in the village of origin, quite common among migrants who intend to return, Marianna prefers to invest her money in Nottingham, the place where her close family lives.

If, on one side, the older Italians of Nottingham consider both England and Italy as being within their range of action, the steady point of reference is undeniably for all of them Nottingham, often identified as the real 'home'.

The older Italians interviewed appear to follow trends which are specific to their condition of being migrants who once emigrated from their village of origin and settled in the country of residence with their families. Indeed, when they go to Italy, they cannot be defined as returnees, tourists, residents or expatriates, categories identified by O'Reilly (1995). The older Italians of Nottingham seem to belong to a sub-category of 'seasonal migrants' identified by O'Reilly (1995) and King, Warnes and Williams (2000). These

‘seasonal migrants’ tend to ‘spend variable amounts of time at different times of the year in their countries of origin and *abroad*’ (King, Warnes & Williams 2000: 110). Nevertheless, they cannot be defined as ‘snowbirds’, as their main reasons for moving from one country to another are never strictly weather-related.

### 6.11 Conclusions

The role of the family, both nuclear and extended, is – in different ways – fundamental for all the Italians living in Nottingham. The Italian family in the context of migration may represent for the newly-arrived the point of reference *par excellence*. Thanks to the solidarity of members who have previously arrived it is possible for the newcomers to obtain emotional, moral and practical support, for a faster and hopefully painless accommodation process.

Moreover, it is undeniable that it is within the family of origin that the process of primary socialisation takes place. Within their family, the children and grandchildren of the Italian immigrants of the post-Second-World-War period have learnt the ethnic language, explicit and unspoken rules of behaviour and their specific tasks, roles and responsibilities as members of that particular family and group. Nevertheless, this is rarely a smooth process. Through time and through contact with the culture of the place of residence, the children of the immigrants face their ‘difference’. Exposed to two different cultural codes and patterns of behaviour – the familial and the societal ones – the children of the immigrants may be subjected to complex experiences of self-identification, usually in addition to the inevitable ones of adolescence. In contact with ‘the other’ – the culturally different – the children and, later, the grandchildren of the migrants experience the necessity to re-define themselves, their roles and behaviour. In practical terms, often they characterise themselves through ‘hyphenated’ codes of behaviour and norms, unequally split between family and peer group. This process involves simultaneously children and parents, as both sides try to come to terms with often conflicting views, values and models.

In these circumstances, the children find themselves cast in a very special role: they are both the receivers of their parents’ cultural legacy and, often, at the same time, they are the ones who introduce their parents to new aspects of the cultural *milieu* of the place of residence, being active members of it through school attendance and contact with peers. As already underlined in Chapter 2, inter-generational transmission runs vertically across the generations following a two-way path (see Figure 2.6).

Due to the gender-specific rules of the authoritarian patriarchal family tradition still taking place among the Italians of Nottingham, boys and girls contribute to the parents' change in their attitudes on two different fronts. As a result of the stronger social control on them, girls tend to play a role in the parents' change of views acting from within the family, while boys, being allowed to more freedom, operate more openly from without.

Most second and third generation respondents lament the authoritarian approach of their own fathers in their own upbringing. However, this often over-protective system seems to be outdated and destined to leave the place to a more egalitarian one. The interviews with second and third generation women show that, in the meantime, if diplomatic negotiations for the children's equal opportunities in and outside their homes fail when confronted with the excessive inflexibility of a father or grandfather, they unite in a secret coalition in order to overcome, even if partially, the problem. Therefore, the patriarchal structure of the Italian family still exists but it seems that it is fading away.

The Italian family often considered as a reliable and unchanging point of reference is undergoing deep transformations both in its structure and functions, both in Italy and within the diaspora community of Nottingham. Through the interviews it is clear that while the first generation would have hardly contemplated the idea of intermarry or divorcing their partner, some of their children have often experienced both.

Interestingly, although the second generation shows a more liberal stance than their parents, and although in just two generations their patterns of marriage, intermarriage, divorce and remarriage have deeply changed, they seem to have retained some of their parents' views on the ideas of home, family and marriage.

Some of the children of the immigrants, having been brought up in a multicultural society, have set up families with native partners or with members of other minority groups. Nevertheless, among the children of the Italian immigrants culturally-mixed relationships are less frequent than those within the Italian community, probably because of the prolonged parental social control over unmarried children, which might discourage tendencies to exogamy. Indeed, older Italians appear to be very conservative with regard to relationships and all of them expected the children to marry within the Italian group, for their preoccupation of potential marital instability, as well as for other cultural reasons. The melancholic reaction of the older Italians to the idea of their offspring marrying outside the Italian group might also reflect their concern over a future possible interruption of all the material and, above all, cultural links with Italy. This phenomenon



would decree the failure of all their attempts to transmit the culture of the place of origin through the generation.

The second generation, unlike their parents, does not consider people from a British background as potentially unsuitable partners for their children but, like their parents, has strong views in relation to members of black minority groups. They explain this attitude by referring to their fear for possible, in the long term insurmountable, cultural differences. They also justify their views through their concern that children born from mixed marriages might encounter difficulties in their lives. One of the elements that could play a part in the acceptance in the family of a member from another minority group could be represented by his/her religious affiliation. This is a belief also shared by some of the members of the third generation.

The children of the immigrants, whether they are members of a blended family or not, of a bi-nuclear family or not, whether they have divorced or not, they still consider family closeness as one of the most resourceful characteristics of the Italian family, to be valued and encouraged. In particular, the strong ties with which Italian families are often associated appear to be reproduced among the members of this specific group who often specify that it is a peculiarity more of the families of the South than of the ones of the North of Italy.

This chapter has also taken into account the familistic view of Italian relations and argued that families might be interested in their own well-being but not necessarily to the detriment of other families. In reality, it seems quite the opposite. This is demonstrated by the existence of:

- a) chain migration of people from the same town, not necessarily family related, in the 1960s and 70s;
- b) phenomena of fictive kinship taking place through the *comparato*, in the place of migration kinship networks can be enlarged to *paesani*, friends and in-laws; and
- c) the encouragement to the younger generations to marry within the community. Intermarriage within ethnic communities suggests that such ‘communities’ do have significance, and the society does not just consist of amoral and competing families.

The level of integration of the children of the immigrants within the British society would lead to suppose that the choice of a baptismal name for the newborn children according to the tradition – or the practice of the christening itself – would disappear through the time. In reality, the children of the immigrants, although not following the rules too strictly, have followed the naming tradition like their parents.

Likewise, baptism is still considered as an essential sacrament for the children. Both practices do not appear to be affected by processes of intermarriage.

Another interesting element characterising quite a few families of Italian origin living in Nottingham is their connection to the catering business. Also in this case, the suspicion that the longer the members of the family have been in the country, the higher the possibility is that they would show signs of assimilation, needs to be looked at more closely. Indeed, while these individuals might be fully integrated and active part of the society where they live, in reality, it is possible that, due to their ethnically specific activities, showing signs of belonging to an ethnic group might be vital for the success of their professional activities. Ethnicity is therefore considered as an ancestral resource which should be promoted for material well-being.

The family and family relationships have also to be considered, directly and indirectly, among the explanatory factors for the older Italians decision to settle in the UK. Indeed, although many of them clearly stated that in their migratory project the return to the country of origin was, although loosely, planned, several events involving the members of their families have forced them to review those plans cyclically. Having failed to return 'home' permanently, the older Italians of Nottingham return there periodically, thus reconciling their wish to remain close to their children and to satisfy their need of a recurring 'pilgrimage' to their place of origin. This phenomenon, far from wiping out the myth of return, transforms it into a novel, up-to-date and more assertive version. Through this innovative adaptation of the myth, the Italian immigrants manage to live in two worlds or, in other words, in their own transnational space, characterised by specific and often original networks, values and allegiances.

The existence of today's Italian community in Nottingham can be justified also through the existence of family and kin relationships that have developed through the time of permanence in the country.

## Chapter 7: LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

### 7.1 Introduction

The present chapter explores the role of language transmission in the construction of 'Italian' identities in the different social contexts of home, school, peer groups, intergenerational contact and kin networks.

The main idea around which this chapter revolves is that language is, indeed, a natural predisposition of all human beings, but it is above all a cultural feature - linked to other cultural attributes - that needs to be acquired. Especially in the first stages of language acquisition, the family plays a fundamental role for young learners, being a model for imitation and providing occasion for the reinforcement of their linguistic abilities.

In this context, it is important to consider the intricate connections between language, mind and culture, which represent a triad of intertwined and mutually influencing components. Several sections of this chapter examine the role of language in defining the individual's belonging or distance from a group, as well as the contingent nature of ethnic identification in relation to language use.

The second part of the chapter is dedicated to a brief history of the centuries-long development of the Italian language. Among its various developmental phases, the most significant is that of Italian national unification: Italian became a national language only at the end of the 19th century. Until recently, there has been in Italy a myriad of both official and vernacular languages with a consequent effect on the permanence of, often strong, local identities. For this reason, providing an outline of this particular issue was considered necessary for this chapter due to the specific link between language and identity, as well as to clarify the social and linguistic background of the interviewees. Part of the chapter is dedicated to the older Italians' linguistic resources. It is followed by a long examination of parental involvement in the transmission of the native linguistic capital to the subsequent generations.

Due to the many elements shared by the first and second generations, as parents, and the second and third generations, as children, the experiences of all three generations will be compared mainly by themes. This strategy was chosen in order to avoid unnecessary repetitions and, above all, to underline the strong cross-generational correspondences in relation to particular issues.

The latter part of the chapter deals with the role of parents and grandparents in the intergenerational transmission of language. It also introduces a brief reflexive note on the way the interview was, partly, turned by some respondents into an opportunity for

Italian language practice, also in the hope of providing motivation for language learning among the younger members of the their family.

## 7.2 Language, culture and identity

‘We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way - an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. The agreement is, of course, an implicit and unstated one, but its terms are absolutely obligatory; we cannot talk at all except by subscribing to the organization and classification of data which the agreement decrees’ (Whorf 1956: 213-4).

This hypothesis, conceived by Sapir and his disciple Whorf, can be summarised in the following statement: each language determines a very specific worldview for its speakers who, by sharing the same code, attribute similar meanings to the world around them. The idea that language forges a particular way of conceiving the world also appeared in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* and is summed up here: ‘the limits of my language are the limits of my world’ (1981: 5.6). What appears to be particularly interesting in the scholars’ theories is the idea of the existence and value of linguistic determinism - language as governing thoughts - and relativity - the peculiarities of one language cannot be found in any other.

Studies on language origin and acquisition are extremely extensive, ranging from Darwinian hypotheses of language development (Pinker 2000), to assumptions of Lamarckian evolution (the *Baldwin effect*) and its related contemporary computational models of language acquisition (Cangelosi & Parisi 2001, Munroe & Cangelosi 2002; Turney 1996) to continuity (Hyams 1986; Penner & Weissenborn 1996) and maturationist theories (Felix 1992, Radford 1994). Without entering, for obvious reasons, in the long and multi-disciplinary debate on the origin and evolution of language, this section provides instead a more relevant brief outline of the major contributions to the idea that language, being unique to human beings (Oliphant 2002; Pinker 2000), must be acquired, like any other cultural feature.

There are several hypotheses attempting an explanation of the complexity of first language acquisition. The innate capability of children to learn a language was at the basis of Chomsky’s (1986) elaboration on the idea of the existence of a Language

Acquisition Device (LAD), an innate mechanism grounded on the existence of a *Universal Grammar*. The peripheral nature attached by this idea to the role of parents and teachers, persuaded Bruner (1983) of the necessity of adding to the concept another element: the role of the social situation in which language is acquired, *i.e.* the role of the mother and the father and of the ritualised opportunities they constantly provide for language acquisition (meal-time, bath-time, etc.). A similar view is shared by McNamara (1999). This scholar further develops Bruner's idea of the importance of the role of parents by adding to the concept their significant contribution to the childrens' acquisition of non-linguistic information (mimics, intonation, etc.), which allows them to develop the capability of taking an active part in social activities (Jackendoff and Bloom 1999).

According to this 'constructivist' theory, ascribing input to language learning to an external cause, language is therefore developed in a specific environment and thanks to the continuous interaction between speakers. This theory follows closely the behaviouristic approach of Piaget<sup>89</sup> (2002) and Skinner (1957). Skinner's criticism of the idea of a pre-existent language structure is clear from the following quotation: 'A child acquires verbal behavior [*sic*] when relatively unattended vocalizations, selectively reinforced, gradually assume forms which produce appropriate consequences in a given verbal community [...]. It is difficult, if not impossible, to discover stimuli which evoke specific vocal responses in the young child. There is no stimulus which makes a child say *b* or *a* or *e* [...]. The raw responses from which verbal behavior is constructed are not 'elicited'. In order to reinforce a given response we simply wait until it occurs' (Skinner 1957: 31). It follows that it is true, as stated by Chomsky, that speaking has a biological innate nature, hence the sounds emitted naturally by all babies. However, the cultural aspect of language learning lies in the encouragement through selective reinforcement of the emission of certain sounds that parents' believe are similar to adult speech. As suggested by Shanker (2001: 51), "rather than looking at language development – or any aspect of a child's development – in terms of a genetically determined 'neural module' which needs the appropriate 'input' during a 'critical period' in order to function properly, we need to look instead at how all the

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<sup>89</sup> Piaget (2002) suggests that language development follows the various stages of cognitive growth. Children thus learn to communicate linguistically only after a certain amount of years, as a reflection of their level of development and as a form of interaction with the world around them. In this respect, the position of Piaget and Vygotsky (1986) has in common the idea that language is a cultural creation originating from the need for social interaction.

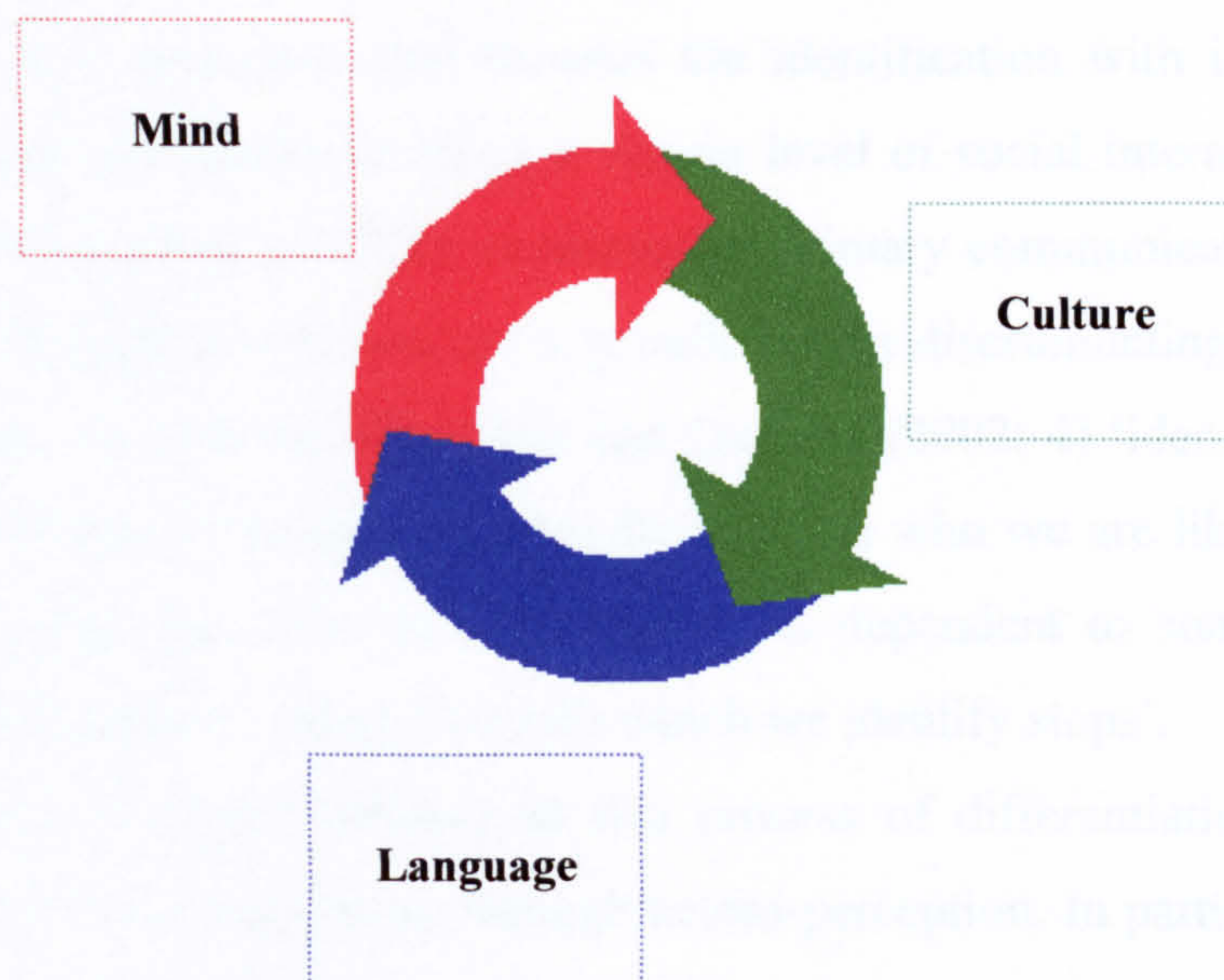
levels involved in the care of the child interact in the emergence of complex skills and abilities”.

Another aspect of the cultural nature of language learning is what Skinner (1957) defines as ‘operant conditioning’, which is the role of rewards and punishment associated with the emission of certain sounds, the pronunciation of certain words or particular facial expressions: rewards for saying ‘hello’ or waving ‘goodbye’ to a friend, and punishment for sticking out the tongue.

The role of imitation is another significant element in the development of language, which once more stresses the idea of the cultural aspect of language learning.

In this context, it is important to underline another characteristic of language: its heuristic nature. This quality is not necessarily linked to the materiality of reality but is much more wide-ranging: language can transcend tangibility without losing its validity. Language is, in fact, the instrument used by people to create order among thoughts, feelings, emotions and symbols. Through language it is possible to analyse and reflect on experiences and share them with other people: this represents the common ground of culture. As the following figure clarifies, experiences, ideas and values (culture) are described through the use of language: words (language) achieve the effect of reinforcing them (mind), being therefore important tools in the shaping of our attitudes and behaviour (culture).

**Figure 7.1: Interconnections between language, culture and mind**



The use of language can shape ideas, new ideas can change culture, and new elements in the culture require the development of a new language, or in Papapavlou

and Pavlou's words (2001: 95): 'language is the product of culture and at the same time it moulds culture. That is, language shapes our cultural orientation to a large extent, since culture is transmitted through language and language is the main tool for the internalisation of culture by the individual'. This perspective would represent a way to come to terms with the clash between mould theories – according to which language 'moulds' mental categories (Bruner 1974) – and cloak theories – for which language covers and conforms the mental habits of the speakers (Abrams, 1953: 290). From Figure 7.1 it is possible to understand how even a slight change in the language used within a group might result in a shift in the culture of that group or, more likely, can itself be a consequence of the shift in the values and practices of that group. In this case, even a minor change of perspective can have as an outcome a variation in the ethnic identification among the members of the group. As clearly stated by Ricento and Wiley (2002: 3), 'identity, like culture, is not a static concept, it is complex, contingent, and sensitive to social context. The language/identity nexus is constituted and mediated by multiple factors, including the ideologies encumbered by a language or variety, its social status and functions, and its historical legacies'.

According to several studies, language represents one of the most significant elements in the construction of individual identity (Clement 1980; Duszak 2002; Edwards 1985; Eckert 2003; Fishman 1977, 1989, 1999; Fortman 2002; Gubbins & Holt 2002; Liebkind, 1984). Fishman (1977: 25) defines language as the 'quintessential symbol' of ethnicity. In Clement's view (1980), competence in the language of the group of origin is a necessary step towards the identification with its members. As group membership necessarily involves a certain level of social interaction within the group, the ethnic language certainly maintains its primary communicative function, as well as defining through its use/non-use a specific border discriminating between who is in and who is not. As underlined by Holt and Gubbins (2002: 4) 'identity involves not only *sameness* but by extension *otherness*. In knowing who we are like we also know who we are not like, and this sense of identity is dependent to some extent on an understanding of boundary, where that with which we identify stops'.

Interestingly, a crucial function in this process of differentiation is performed from the outside of the ethnic group through hetero-perception. In particular, one of the several elements in the definition of identity through language is the existence of an ethnic accent. This should be interpreted beyond its role of phonological variation as a factor contributing to the creation of stereotypical personality and qualities of character (Urciuoli 1995: 531-2). Often it is interpreted by the listeners as a status cue, therefore

influencing performance expectations and behavioural influence (Riches & Foddy 1989; Woolard & Schieffelin 1994). These paralinguistic signs are intrinsically 'border-making language elements'. They are also 'locational markers': they assign people a place, often opposing places between those who 'have' the language and those who do not' (Urciuoli 1995: 539).

The presence of an ethnic accent is just one of the various elements that need to be taken into account in a situation of intergenerational transmission. Members of the different generations show, in fact, deep differences in relation to other variables, equally significant in the hetero-construction of identity. Among these, a special role is that of the level of education of the three generations and their fluency in the native language (Avenas 1998).

Therefore, there are a number of elements involved in the construction of identity through the use of language which need to be taken into account. Among these, in relation to intergenerational transmission in particular, it is especially important the context of immigration and its influences on the various members of immigrant families. According to the standard intergenerational model of language transmission (Alba 1990; Fishman 1966, 1989; Nahirny & Fishman 1965; Papapavlou & Pavlou 2001; Veltman 1983), while immigrants of the first generation tend to promote the use of their own language in every possible occasion, their children tend to speak the language of the country of residence outside their own house and their parents' language in specific social situations (at home, with family friends, ...). The members of the second generation usually develop a certain level of bilingualism, which does not necessarily imply the same fluency in both languages. Interestingly, according to the scholars, by the third generation the attachment to the grandparents' language becomes relatively weak and the language of the country of residence tends to be spoken both at home and outside (see Section 7.7).

In this particular case, most of the variables involved in language transmission will be considered in relation to the role and language of the older Italian immigrants. This is due to the fact that the process of ethnic language transmission was, until not long ago, a prerogative of the older generation.

The next two sections provide an examination of the reasons behind the fact that the language used in day-to-day conversations within immigrant homes in Nottingham often is not standard Italian, and will also present the linguistic, historical and political reasons for this phenomenon and what effects these factors might have/have had in the interviewees' processes of identification.



### 7.3 Italian language(s)

The following section presents a rather brief excursus – considering the complexity of the topic – of the development of the Italian language in the Italian peninsula. This is felt as necessary as it provides an idea of the long-term and intricate events that have had an influence on its evolution and use by all social strata. Moreover, it is only through this overview that it is possible to grasp the long-term effects of the political, cultural and linguistic background on the language, affiliation and identity of the members of the older generation of Italians living in Nottingham. Moreover, as they represent for their offspring the ‘original’ link to Italy, the following section is particularly important to illustrate:

- a) what particular type of ‘Italian’ they represent for their children and grandchildren;
- b) how the socio-linguistic and cultural situation has changed in Italy since the older Italians’ emigration; and
- c) how the younger generations come to terms with a deeply modified – compared to the model offered by their parents and grandparents – Italian reality.

The so-called *questione della lingua* (language controversy) started in Italy at the beginning of the 14th century, went through the Italian Unification in 1861, and is still an issue discussed today by linguists (De Mauro 1963, 1998; Devoto 1978, 2002; Giacomelli 2002; Lepschy & Lepschy 1977; Stajano 1996; Vedovelli 1998) and politicians<sup>90</sup>.

For centuries, the language of the Roman Empire was Latin, both in its official, refined and standardised, and mainly literary, form and in its locally spoken, or *vulgar* (*vulgus*: people), versions (Stubbs 1985: 58). After the fall of the Roman Empire, the Italian peninsula, divided into states often at war with each other, became quite attractive for foreign conquerors (Arabs, Austrians, Byzantines, Franks, Lombards, Normans, Spanish, ...). As a result of 1300 years of divisions and conflicts it was impossible to create a unique spoken language for the whole peninsula due to the political fragmentation, but also due to the different development of the languages of

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<sup>90</sup> On 27th March 2002, the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian parliament voted for modification to article 12 of the constitution. The amendment intends to add the following sentence to the article: ‘Italian is the official language of the state’. Discussion of this issue was felt as necessary as in the Constitution there is no direct mention to the official language of the country but only to the rights of linguistic minorities (art. 6) and of all the people living in the country, independently from their ‘sex, race, language’ (art. 3). Previously, the following laws had been approved by the Italian Parliament: law n. 881, 25 October 1977, according to which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities have the right to their cultural life, religious creed and language use, and law n. 482, 15 December 1999, promoting the protection of historical linguistic minorities and their culture.

each state, often heavily influenced by the idioms of their conquerors (Tosi 1984: 75). In the middle Ages, Latin was still written and spoken by the religious class, while common people spoke a large variety of local vernaculars<sup>91</sup>.

At the same time, in connection to the development of economically and culturally strong city-states, a new class of intellectuals emerged, which appeared to be linked neither to the ecclesiastical nor the aristocratic classes. The most important characteristic of this group of intellectuals was the use of the vulgar language, the language that could be understood by common people, as opposed to that of the scholars. However, in order to avoid the creation of a language inferior to Latin, they worked towards the creation of a spoken and written language that could be noble enough to stand at the same level of Latin. These experiments in the creation of a ‘noble vulgar’ were started by the *Scuola Siciliana* in Palermo in 1200 AD at the court of court of Frederick II, King of Sicily and Holy Roman Emperor, and continued in the second half of the century with the Tuscan School, as many poets and scholars from Tuscany had lived for some time at the court of Frederick II. Dante was the first intellectual who officially dealt with a question that has been in the linguists’ and politicians’ agenda for centuries (see *Accademia della Crusca*)<sup>92</sup>.

Nevertheless, the urgency for a national language arose as soon as the political unification of the peninsula took place, during the Italian ‘Risorgimento’. The result of centuries of statements, treatises, essays and diatribes among intellectuals naturally flew into the identification of the language spoken in Tuscany as the basis for the language to be used in the peninsula, which had already been the main expressive tool for many writers<sup>93</sup>. The role of intellectuals in the control of language for the development of a nationalist conscience has been argued by various scholars (Gellner 1983, Hobsbawm 1990, Fishman 1999) and is not limited to the Italian case only. ‘In medieval Europe the nation-state did not exist. Indeed national sentiment had little meaning in most

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<sup>91</sup> The difference between language and dialect is still questioned (Fishman 1999: 444). A famous remark that Chomsky attributes to Weinreich clarifies that ‘a language is a dialect with its own army and navy’ (Chomsky 1986: 15). Therefore, as illustrated by De Mauro, ‘a language is an idiom that, for historical reasons, at least one nation has decided to use as its official language, in its laws and in the school system, in the administration, the army and the mass media’ (De Mauro 2001: 35, my translation). In the case of Italian and its regional languages and dialects, it is sometimes not easy to make a distinction between them, as often they derive from the same Latin matrix.

<sup>92</sup> The *Accademia della Crusca* (Chaff Academy), was founded in Florence in 1583 with the purpose of maintaining the purity of the Italian language, through ‘sifting’ it, *i.e.* removing what prevented it to be pure. It is still the most significant authority in the study of the development of the Italian language ([www.accademiadellacrusca.it](http://www.accademiadellacrusca.it)).

<sup>93</sup> The Tuscan language had already been used by several writers previous to the political unification of Italy, as a ‘lingua franca’ of cultural elites (Tosi 1984: 75). Famous among these is Alessandro Manzoni, who wrote copiously on the subject (Moss 2000: 101-2).

European countries before 1900, and European borders were not constructed according to linguistic differences. Language was just one way, and not necessarily the major way, of distinguishing between groups (Blackledge 2002: 71). In the meantime, the process defined by Anderson (1991) as ‘print capitalism’ had already been operating for a few centuries, nevertheless it involved only well-educated individuals.

As in other countries like France and Germany, in Italy the identification of an official language had as a consequence the fact that very few people could speak it (Safran 1999). In fact, both aristocrats and the popular classes used to speak the dialect/language of their area.

Figure 7.2 shows the current geographical distribution of languages and dialects in Italy, which are the result of the above-mentioned long-term political and historical processes that have involved the country.

**Figure 7.2: Current geographical distribution of languages and dialects spoken in the Italian peninsula**



Source: developed from [www.smpe.it](http://www.smpe.it)

It was virtually impossible for the people of one end of the country to be able to communicate with people of the other end, unless they used a common language. After the unification of the peninsula (1861-71), however, the introduction of compulsory military conscription gave some men the possibility to meet other fellow countrymen and, due to the need to communicate with each other, to practice speaking Italian. At the same time, in municipal offices, employees were forced to speak Italian when in contact with the public (Tosi, 2001: 4). In order to beat illiteracy and promote the diffusion of the national language, in 1876 the attendance of the elementary school was made compulsory. Nonetheless, according to De Mauro (1963), in 1861, the year of the first Italian census, the Italophones - including Romans and Tuscans - were only 2.5% of the population, which means that for the 97.5% Italian was not their first language. Tosi, however, states that 10% of the population might have been able to use and understand Italian as a second language.

It took a long time before Italian could become a common patrimony of all the social strata. It has been underlined that it was especially the more isolated rural communities, which, due to the lack of external contacts, remained linguistically conservative. 'After unification multilingualism was consolidated, while Italian became the national language and the regional languages, officially demoted to the status of *dialects*, survived in compartmentalized situations, especially in areas and domains which were little affected by the recent national integration' (Tosi 2001: 23, 79-80).

Italian became gradually standardized in all official fields. Yet a similar standardization was impossible to be obtained in common speech due to the development of numerous alternatives for the same term in different areas of the country (polymorphism or synonymic hypertrophy) (Tosi 2001: 4). It is clear that it has been a long process, which is still in progress<sup>94</sup>.

In the 1930s, with the revolution brought by sound through cinema and more frequent access to radio programmes, the standard language managed to reach even the most small and isolated communities. Nevertheless, it was only when television was introduced in the 1950s that Italian spread considerably in the country. As maintained by Balboni (1994: 7), neither centuries of literature, nor decades of political unity, nor twenty years of fascist dictatorship, particularly keen on the development of language

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<sup>94</sup> As in most countries, in Italy, as emphasised by De Mauro (1996), there is a multiplicity of linguistic varieties, among which: idelect, local dialect, regional dialect, popular Italian, standard Italian, scientific Italian. It is also possible to add to this list the youth jargon (a mixture of regional dialect, popular Italian and borrowings from foreign languages).

homogeneity in the country, managed to create such a linguistic unity as television did. In the second post-war period television became a linguistic model (De Mauro, 1963). It is worth noticing that this phenomenon coincides with the period of emigration of the first generation Italians to Nottingham, who might thus have been scarcely affected by it. This is confirmed by Stubbs' study on England's linguistic minorities (1985).

Standard Italian, *i.e.* the written form of the language, is not the most spoken variety in Italy. In fact, the most common forms are its regional varieties. However, through the influence of mass media, and in particular of national television (RAI), the lexicon of everyday communication has become widely interregional (Diadori 1994: 18, 23) and the standard pronunciation of RAI is in general widely accepted in the whole country. As noted by Moss, 'the language of newspapers, television, electronic communication, bureaucracy and common (if not necessarily domestic) parlance is virtually the same for everyone and understood by virtually everyone' (2000: 110). It also unites Italians by constantly changing and moulding itself to the needs of a living usage which reflects the collective experience of the nation'. Moreover, the development of a unique language able to transcend the limits of a geographically limited idiom can be understood as the consequence of the 'breaking down of older pattern of community isolation and the general operation of economic, social and political modernisation processes' (White 1990: 51). Compulsory education and the significant role of mass media have therefore been the tools for the creation of a standard and national state scientific idiom: in Safran's words (1999: 83), 'national languages, like modern or *civic* nations are artefacts of a politicized community' [...which construct] unified fields of exchange and communication' (B. Anderson 1991: 44).

Italian is now spoken in the whole country. Although the use of dialects is still alive in some areas, it is limited as it is mainly relegated to exclusively local and familiar use (Tosi 1984: 77). The dialects being the evidence of the varied and polymorphic cultural and historical background of the Italian regions, their recent gradual and relentless disappearance - death of the dialects - has been causing the concern of many socio-linguists (Grassi *et al.* 1997) and the establishment of several initiatives directed towards its preservation.

Having presented the way Italian language has developed through the centuries, the post-war rise of a more uniform national language spoken by all social strata and the peripheral position, or even isolation, of many of the villages of origin of the older

Italians of Nottingham, the following chapter deals with their linguistic resources as the basis for their identification.

#### 7.4 First generation and their linguistic resources

As we illustrated in the previous section, several circumstances caused the first generation respondents' often passive knowledge of standard Italian. For clarity, the following is an outline of the main points of the argument which specifically refer to the older Italians of Nottingham interviewed:

- a) Their background is mainly rural: most of the men and some of the women belonging to the first generation were involved in farming. Other women used to work within their homes as housewives and/or tailors. Two of them spent a few years in a convent as novices, before leaving it, in one case, by choice, and in the other, forced to do so due to specific circumstances. Little movement outside the village and scarce contact with people from other areas did not encourage the use of standard Italian. The usefulness of a language being solely based on its power of allowing two or more people to communicate with each other, the main *medium* of communication was, for the majority of the first generation Italians, their local dialect.
- b) School attendance was for some of the first generation interviewees limited to a few years: after having learnt to read and write, there was no obvious benefit for their parents to encourage them to continue attending school, considering that they were needed to work in the fields. Only one of the interviewees attended and completed secondary school education and the only one who originates from a self-employed urban background. As the school was one of the few places where the official language might have been spoken, the majority of the interviewees found themselves detached from it, with the only exception of the few years' attendance which provided a limited and sectorial fluency in the standard variety.
- c) The dialects/languages learnt and used by the respondents during their infancy and youth represent for most of the older Italians of Nottingham their first language.
- d) The majority of the interviewees originate from the South of Italy – there is only one person from the North, originating from Veneto. An interesting aspect of the Central-Meridional and extreme Meridional dialects is their relative intelligibility for the speakers of this rather vast area, as they belong to related

linguistic groups (see Figure 7.2). This allows the first generation immigrants of Nottingham to communicate with each other, regardless of their specific area of origin.

- e) All the interviewees - except one, see b) - left their rural villages of origin in the 1950s or early '60s. As Italian national television appeared for the first time in 1954, it is possible to consider its influence on the linguistic proficiency of the majority of the older Italians interviewed, at the time they went abroad, as negligible. Since their social life is mainly limited to contact with members of their extended family, neighbours, work colleagues and friends, of the same background, ties become reinforced as well as the language used.
- f) Most of the first generation Italians of Nottingham left Italy before, or immediately after, the Second Vatican Council in 1962, after which Latin disappeared from liturgical use - although still the official language of the Catholic church - and was replaced with the national languages of the countries in which the religion was professed. As a consequence, the Italian immigrants of Nottingham did not manage to get properly acquainted with religious services in their national language.
- g) As e) and f) clarify, the social and linguistic behaviour of the people who left Italy in the second post-war period followed a completely different route from the one undertaken by those who stayed in Italy. As maintained by Tosi (1984) in his study of the community and language of the Italians of Bedford: 'whilst co-villagers at home gained confidence and benefited from the social changes affecting the original community, and consequently sought access to higher repertoires of urban language and behaviour, those peasants who developed their new urban experiences in the foreign country expanded the corresponding linguistic repertoires in contact with a foreign idiom rather than their national language' (Tosi 1984: 83). Indeed, as a consequence of their visits to their villages of origin, many first and second generation Italians of Nottingham realised, and reported during the interviews, their amazement at the deep changes which had occurred to the language and behaviour of their *paesani*.

As already pointed out in d), first generation Italians in Nottingham have continued to use the dialect of their respective regions of origin, without losing the possibility to communicate with each other. This corresponds to what Tosi (1984: 108) concludes on the linguistic performance of the Italians of Bedford: 'inter-dialectal

differences exist but [...] concern phenomena which do not preclude mutual intelligibility’.

Interestingly, one member of the second generation, while reflecting on the language spoken by the older Italians in Nottingham, identifies it in the linguistic *koiné* developed as a consequence of the mixture of dialects from many Italian regions<sup>95</sup>.

Giacomo (2) [Family 5]: *You know, the dialect is... plain. But when they [the older Italians of Nottingham] get together, the dialect mixes. So, what happens is, the people that learn Italian here learn like... a dialect of their own. So when you go to Italy, obviously you can speak Italian, you can make yourself understood. I had an example where when I went to see relatives in Italy and some of their friends...and they asked ‘where do you come from? Do you come from the mountains’? Because the accent is so different! So that’s another thing. They’ve got their own accent. And lot of times the English word comes in. And you hear that when they go up to Italy. Talk in Italian, then in English, and go back into Italian (interview in English).*

This particular kind of language, often referred to by linguists as *ethnolect*, represents a form of adaptation to the new environment through the borrowing of words from English, the creation of new terms developed from English<sup>96</sup>, frequent use of ‘false friends’<sup>97</sup>, etc.

Another interesting element is also represented by the constant shift or mix between mother tongue and English. This mixture of words and expressions from and into the two languages in everyday verbal exchanges is, in fact, more common than one-language-only speech (Alba 1990: 99-100). As noted by Tosi (1984: 101) in the case of the Italians of Bedford the linguistic interferences between their mother tongue and English can be attributed to the lack of similarities between their experiences in the place of origin and the ones in the place of settlement<sup>98</sup>. More than a phenomenon of linguistic concern, it is one of cultural relevance. The new country has meant for the

<sup>95</sup> For the sake of simplicity, this linguistic *koiné* will be referred to as ‘mother tongue’ or ‘Italian’, unless specified. See later in this section for more details.

<sup>96</sup> This process is referred to as *nativisation*, through which loanwords from English assuming a vocalic ending, conform to the grammar and the particular features of language articulation of the group, for example: *crema* derives from the English *cream* (Italian: *panna*) or *farma*, deriving from the English *farm* (Italian: *fattoria*). As in the case of the African-American Youths in Labov’s study (1972) the older Italians of Nottingham, while speaking either English or Italian, refer to a set of grammar rules of their own, heavily influenced by both language systems. What can, in fact, appear as grammar mistakes, in reality often refer to ‘different’ rules, developed in the place of immigration and shared by most older members of the immigrant community.

<sup>97</sup> False friends are terms that are similar between the two languages but assume different meanings in each cultural context. For example: *Factory* (English) - *fattoria* - *fabbrica* (Italian). The Italian term *fattoria* means ‘farm’.

<sup>98</sup> There are also cases of English transfers (*paronyms*) that have become part of specialistic standard Italian. This phenomenon can be attributed to the fact that English has become the language of international communication in the scientific and technological fields, rather than for the shortage of appropriate terms in Italian (Scarpa 2002: 826-827; Tosi 1993: 83).



immigrants the adoption of new roles and the use of language within new cultural, social and linguistic contexts (*i.e.* domains). As Fishman (1972) pointed out, these diverse contexts the individuals are involved in require the use of a particular linguistic behaviour. In particular, the Italians of Nottingham, as immigrants, had to develop a new set of terms related to their new professions and activities implied by the factory work, new bureaucratic terms linked to their status as immigrants, as employees, etc., next to the mother tongue usually adopted in other domains: their home, their circle of friends and activities within the Italian community centre.

Phenomena of interference, diglossia, semilingualism and code-switching have been analysed by most linguists who have contributed to the theory of domain separation (Eckert 1980; Fishman & Lovas 1970; Fishman 1972; Gumperz 1982; Martin-Jones 1989; Romaine 1995). In summary, it is virtually impossible to develop a 'fully balanced bilingual speech' (Fishman & Lovas 1970). On the contrary, it is more likely that individuals develop two different languages, each one in relation to specific domains, so that the two languages would become 'complementary, rather than competitive' (Harris 1990: 80). It is, however, also true that there are some topics that might be discussed with the same interlocutor in either languages, therefore implying a partial overlap between the two languages (McConvell 1991: 19-20). In particular, 'in conversation with the standard Italian speaker, those who feel that the vernacular is inadequate for the status of that interlocutor would resort to what is preferable to call transfers rather than interferences from English' (Tosi 1993: 83). Among these, common expressions might be *prendere la cecca* (English: to get a cheque; Italian: prendere l'assegno), or *parlare alla menaggera* (English: talk to the manager; Italian: parlare con la direttrice).

From the many elements in common between the Italian communities of Bedford and Nottingham in relation to the socio-cultural characteristics of its first generation members, it is possible to extend many of Tosi's observations on the language use of the Italians of Bedford to the ones of Nottingham<sup>99</sup>.

According to Rampton (1999: 300), 'code-switching research has often provided a rather restricted notion of ethnic processes, tending to focus only on variation in the salience and cultural contents of ethnic categories, not on ethnic *recategorisation*, on the exploration or adoption of alternative or competing ethnicities'. The language used

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<sup>99</sup> See Tosi (1984, 1993) for strictly linguistic details on the phenomena of interference, morphosemantic/semantic and morphological transfer. For information on the process of code-switching, see Heredia & Altarriba (2001), Nicol (2001), Auer (1998); on code-switching and border making, see Urcioli (1995).

by the Italians of Nottingham is neither Italian, nor English: it is Italian and English at the same time. 'Empirical results on word recognition and language production support the notion that the activity of each language is not determined by task demand alone; both languages appear to be active even when the task requires attention to one language alone' (Kroll & Tokowicz, 2001: 65).

D. G.: *What about your grandmother and grandfather, do they speak Italian with you?*

Sonia (3) [Family 7]: *Yes. Not with me as such. They ... they speak [laughs] half English, half Italian. They start off in English and then they go into Italian, but I still understand what they say... [Interview in English].*

Through this novel form of communication, language 'crossers' establish a peculiar form of relationship with their interlocutors, in relation to the participants, the situation, the form and the content of the message (Grosjean 2001: 5).

Language becomes an interesting form 'of serious self-contextualisation' (Rampton 1999: 304), as it defines the speakers, the relationship between them and the type of involvement they have with the culture of the group they belong to.

The choice of the language to be used within the in-group is also a reflection of the complexity of the relationship linking ethnic language and ethnic identification (Avenas 1998), which is based on the reciprocity of the relationship between speakers. 'The factors affecting language maintenance can never be reduced to the mechanics of situational and contextual variables. Even an apparently simple speech act is also a holistic experience which incorporates the personality of the individual as well as the interpersonal relationships between speakers' (Chiro & Smolicz 1998: 20). This confirms further Rampton's idea that 'the bilingual whole might be more than the sum of two monolingual parts' (1995: 338).

As noted by Avenas (1998) in his study of ethnic identity in language maintenance and change among the Italian population in the South-East of France, it is the degree of identification with the community of origin or the host one (Italo-French or French-Italian, in Avenas' case; Italo-British or British-Italian in this particular one) which affects the use of one language or the other<sup>100</sup>.

Independently from their real proficiency in the national language, many of the first-generation Italian immigrants in Nottingham have through the years encouraged

<sup>100</sup> According to Avenas (1998), French-Italians can speak Italian, but they do so only occasionally. These individuals tend to identify themselves primarily as French.

their children - and later their grandchildren - to speak 'Italian'<sup>101</sup>. Only a few among them stressed the importance that their children learnt to speak English, due to their concern that they could not integrate in the British society without a proper grasp of the official language of the country of residence. For the majority of Italians, however, the encouragement to speak Italian at home possessed a double nature: 1) the impossibility of the parents to provide a coherent and accurate model of an English speaker, and 2) the concern that their children might miss out much of their heritage if they could not speak their parents' language. For this reason, in order to obtain a consistent and organised knowledge of the Italian language, most members of the second - and later of the third - generation have attended Italian language classes, taking place in the premises of the Catholic mission (see Chapter 5), organised by the Italian consulate of Manchester<sup>102</sup>. The purpose of these courses has been that of promoting the learning of Italian among children from an immigrant background so that they could develop their fluency in the language of their parents' or grandparents' country of origin<sup>103</sup>.

The Italian Catholic mission of Nottingham proposed itself as the symbolic centre and 'model' for the Italian community, for representing the official site where Italian was spoken, during its several activities: kindergarten, weekly meetings, Sunday school and, through the missionary priest, the religious services in the language of the Italian community.

As soon as the older Italians arrived in the UK, they had to learn the language of their place of residence in order to be able to communicate within their work environments. Nevertheless, unless the workplace required a deeper knowledge of English, the language acquisition of most employees coming from Italy was limited to some exchanges with the work managers.

Gemma (1) [Family 5]: *I am so 'behind' in speaking English. First of all, I didn't have time to attend evening classes because, you see, a mum doesn't leave the children on their own and also because you never knew the time your husband was coming back, if there were extra hours to do. It was not like today that you take your mobile, you call. And so you had to wait for your husband to arrive to have*

<sup>101</sup> The reference in the text to Italian in relation to the language spoken by the first generation does not indicate the standard variety of the language, but its regional one or the dialect of their area of origin. As already underlined, this language can be strongly influenced by the contact with the one of the country of residence and the occurrence of various linguistic phenomena. If the term 'Italian' is used in this context is because it is the one used by the respondents during the interviews. Some interviewees specified that the language they spoke was 'dialect-Italian', therefore referring to its regional variety or dialect.

<sup>102</sup> Courses of Italian have been launched in the UK through the Italian law 157/71, in order to provide for migrant workers and their families teaching in the language of their country of origin with the purpose of maintaining their 'cultural and linguistic origin' (Fortier 2000: 81-85, 100)

<sup>103</sup> Tosi expresses his concern on the way education for bilingual children has been organised and their skills supported. For details on the implementation of the language curricula, see Tosi (1993: 78-95).

*the dinner ready. [...] I always spoke Italian both at home and at work. I used to speak English with the managers and supervisors. I could understand, and also the others. I used to say to the managers: 'if you don't understand me, tell me. I do understand what you say'. But no one has ever said: 'I don't understand'. I learnt English by practising it. Sometimes I asked people about the pronunciation [Interview in Italian].*

Only a few of the Italians who arrived in the post-war period felt the necessity to attend language courses, the others being unable or unwilling to develop their language skills in English or feeling that their language knowledge was enough for them to go by. It is also important to remember that most Italians used to work overtime: they might have been keener to employ their time 'more productively'. Moreover, the migratory project of the majority of the Italian immigrants was to return to Italy after a few years' residence in the country: attending evening classes to learn English might have been perceived as a waste of time.

Guido (1) [Family 4]: *I had studied a bit of English, I studied English for four years at evening classes, one hour a week, you see? [Interview in Italian].*

Riccardo (2) [Family 1]: *My mum integrated more into the English culture, because where my mother worked, the majority was English. To communicate, to work well, you had to speak English. Even my mum had to attend some private tuition for a while [Interview in English and Italian].*

In some cases, workers were invited to attend English classes by their employers, like in Piera's case. She attended English classes for foreign people, but only for a very limited period of time. Piera's analogy between the English language and standard Italian is here particularly interesting. In the following excerpt from the interview, she suggests that her limited achievements following the attendance of English classes were, for her, an expected consequence. She suggests that her restricted knowledge of the standard variety of Italian, the language of her country of origin, studied at school, justified her scarce success with the foreign language.

Piera (1) [Family 10] *When I arrived in England the landlady sent me to the English school. But I attended just for 3 months. I almost didn't understand Italian, could I ever learn English? But it was interesting [Interview in Italian].*

In the case of Matilde, what triggered her necessity to learn English was her feeling of embarrassment and powerlessness in depending on other people when engaged in day-to-day - or specific - social situations.

Alberto (1) [Family 9]: *When people needed to go to the doctor, there was a man who arrived during the First World War...and all the Italians used to give him a glass of beer...One pound...something... and he used to take people to the doctor.*

Matilde (1): *So, you see, the most private things of a woman...you had to tell them to that man and he had to translate. It was really humiliating. It was not a pleasant thing to do. Then, I started saying: 'No, no, I am going with the dictionary, I am going on my own'. And I started to 'embark' on things on my own. I wanted to learn, really. I had studied French for eight years and I didn't know anything of English. You feel as if you are stupid, you feel ignorant, when you arrive in a foreign country and you cannot express your thoughts, you cannot speak. And then, little by little, working in a factory, speak today, speak tomorrow ... If you want to learn something, by all means, you can! [Interview in Italian].*

Apart from a few cases, like the previous one, the general tendency of the older Italians was that of learning the rudiments of the English language in order to solve their immediate and more common communicative needs. As most of their children spoke English proficiently through school attendance, these Italian migrants soon realised that they could be relied on as interpreters.

The following sub-section introduces a brief analysis of the role of the children of the immigrants as linguistic and cultural intermediaries.

### **7.5 Intermediaries by birth: the second generation**

The role of mediation between the immigrants and the outside world has been naturally attributed to the younger members of the family. The members of the second generation often too soon became involved in bureaucratic processes.

Emma (2) [Family 2]: *I had a hard time because, growing up with parents that couldn't speak English or knew very little English, couldn't read and write in English, we were the only ones, being taught English, to read and write. From an early age, we had to deal with a lot of ...the problems that my parents had with forms, filling in forms, departments, they didn't know where to go, they didn't understand everything. We had to grow up pretty quick... [Interview in English].*

The role of the members of the second generation as mediators between their parents and the outside world, during their teenage years and early youth, burdened them with duties and responsibilities unknown to their English peers. At a later stage, having become parents, they still find themselves cast in the role of mediators. Again, they are caught in the middle: this time between their children's expectations and their parents' 'experienced suggestions' and involvement. They appear to be in constant need of making both linguistic and cultural choices, both as parents and as children. They try to reconcile in themselves the cultural differences between their parents' old world and their children's new one. They have to be strict in order to please their own parents but, at the same time, they wish to earn their children's trust by displaying a less severe stance. They want to transmit the family language to their children but they do not want

them to suffer from the lack of proficiency in English that they themselves experienced when they first started attending school. They are in-between generations, languages, cultures, physical and social places. Borrowing the idea of children as ‘boundaries’ from M. Anderson’s study on language transmission in bicultural families (2002), it is possible to enlarge the concept also to this particular context and apply it to the case of multigenerational immigrant families.

The virtual biculturalism of the second generation, for the contact with the often conservative grandparents and with the different cultural reality and values offered by mainstream society, is a basis of a strong need for negotiation that is often focussed around the issues of instruction and upbringing of the youngest members of the family. Indeed, ‘the child is a zone for – and of – reflection and a tangible symbol of parental (and grandparental) cultural claims from the perspective of those adults who are responsible for its care’ (M. Anderson 2002: 114). The second generation, in their double role of parents-and-children, will need to work out solutions, in relation to their specific circumstances, as elucidated in the following section. Section 7.6 is entirely dedicated to the role of parents - belonging to both first and second generations - in their children’s ethnic language acquisition.

## **7.6 Parental involvement in the language learning process: the children of the immigrants learn Italian.**

A regional form of Italian or a dialect has been the primary or exclusive means for everyday domestic conversation for most of the immigrants and their children.

Gabriele, second generation, learnt to speak the dialect of Puglia from his parents as his mother-tongue. It was necessary for him to be face to face with Italians in Italy to realise that the ‘Italian’ he was fluently speaking was not recognised as such by the mainstream Italian society. The experience left him disappointed, embarrassed and deeply scarred.

Gabriele (2) [Family 3]: *Throughout my formative years and into my teens, I could understand anything that was going on in the household, where they were speaking Italian or dialect or whatever, but I couldn’t converse because mum and dad were talking to me in our dialect and I would answer in English... But what brought \_\_\_\_\_ [inaudible] for me about the need to learn to speak Italian ... properly ... was when my parents sent me to Italy on my own...*

*D. G.: How old were you?*

*Gabriele: I was seventeen. And everything was fine until I got to Milan. And even so, I had to buy tickets to go from Milan to San Biagio<sup>104</sup>, which is the nearest train*

<sup>104</sup> Fictional name.

*station to where we come from. And, eventually, after having been pushed out of the way and people walking in front of me, I got the tickets. And when I got to the ticket office, in front, I thought, I made myself perfectly clear. I thought I'd said to the guy: 'I'd like a second class ticket to San Biagio' and 'where does the train leave from'. And he looked at me open mouth and he said: 'Sorry but there's people behind you, what do you want?'. It really got me...I was nearly in tears with this because I thought I had made myself clear. But then, afterwards, after I finally managed to get the tickets and go away, I sat and thought of everything. And what I have done was I'd spoken ... a mixture of ... of dialect, English and a few words in... correct Italian that I knew. And between the three I had made no sense. And that's what really got me... [Interview in English].*

Attendance at Italian classes followed Gabriele's wish to be able to speak a correct form of Italian, in order to be able to state his Italian-ness without embarrassment. This case is a clear example of the 'symbolic and affective' implications of language choice, as underlined by Holt and Gubbins (2002). Indeed, 'the language identity chosen by the children of migrants is not a simple attachment to the language of their parents but involves choice and change (Holt & Gubbins 2002: 3). For these reasons, several years after his life-changing experience at Milan Central station, Gabriele takes advantage of his daughter's attendance of Italian classes at the college and decides to join. There is a double reason for doing that: his willingness to learn the language and his wish to motivate his daughter if she saw it as a joint venture.

*Gabriele (2) [Family 3]: I actually did GCSE Italian two years ago at the school she [the daughter] was at... evening classes...or afternoon. Because it was Wednesday afternoon. It was an hour and a half. And I had that time spare. So I did it to prove to my daughter and myself that if I could do it, as an old man... but she stopped going. I took it because I wanted to learn well... [Interview in English]*

However eager Gabriele might have been in his desire to learn the language of the country he states he is allegiant to, he did not manage to involve his daughter, who affirms that she only occasionally feels the need to speak Italian. Her limited interest in the language course is not, however, an isolated phenomenon. Other people, like her and before her, attended Italian classes just to please their parents. Although many interviewees of the second and third generations state that they resented the forced attendance of Italian classes during their childhood and early teens, they seem now aware of the benefits of having been raised bilingual.

*Dalila (2) [Family 8]: I encouraged my daughters to attend...I used to take them there [to the mission, where the classes were held], with many sacrifices, after work. Sometimes they didn't want to go: 'Ohhhh, another school', because as soon as they finished their school, the English one, I dragged them to the Italian school. But now my daughter says: 'Thanks mum, because now it is an advantage for me to know another language'...as she goes to Italy, they [the company she works for] send her to Italy to do conferences [Interview in English and Italian].*

It is clear that in this circumstance the knowledge of a second language possesses an undeniable instrumental nature. Nevertheless, the majority of the individuals who attend Italian classes are motivated by their genuine attachment as well as curiosity towards the past of the older members of their family.

There is, however, an interesting feature in this particular response to their willingness to know more about their origin. The classes available provide the attendees with a very specific kind of language: standard Italian, the language taught in schools throughout Italy. Regional dialects or non-standard varieties of Italian, as expected, are excluded from formal teaching, being part only of the informal experience of the speakers within their family network. Fortier (2000: 83) criticises this particular aspect of language teaching by stating that it induces a shift ‘from oral transmission to literate’. The significant aspect of this particular type of transmission lies in the fact that ‘the relationship to Italy is not only created, it is formalised and inscribed. In other words, supplementary classes not only inscribe a link with Italy, even if symbolic, but they also create a unified version of Italian culture that, according to some critiques, obscures regional differences’ (Fortier 2000: 83). In this sense, the gap between the language spoken at home and the one learnt during the Italian classes organised by the consulate might imply a discontinuity between the language and culture of the parents and those of the children. In fact, as underlined by B. Anderson (1991: 44), the use of a certain language within a group offers the speakers ‘unified fields of exchange and communication’, as well as providing them with reference to a symbolic, imagined, common identity. Language, together with common values and norms, is what creates what B. Anderson defines as ‘imagined community’ (B. Anderson 1991), through the sharing of a ‘symbolic ethnicity’ (Gans 1979).

Scientists and language teachers agree on the idea that for children under the age of six growing up bilingual is a smooth process as the ‘sound map’ typical of the language of the family they are born in can still be supplemented by new and different sounds. Successful second language teaching should, therefore, take place during the individuals’ middle childhood, when they become aware of the language learning process and able to manipulate it. This period coincides with advancement in their cognitive development (Garcia 1986; McLaughlin 1978, 1987; Harley 1986; Portes &



Hao 1998; Twyford 1987/8)<sup>105</sup>. However, for most of the second generation Italians interviewed, having been born in a non-English speaking family and having attended the kindergarten in the premises of the Italian mission, where Italian was the official language, the first, and often traumatic, contact with the 'other' was school attendance.

Almost all the children of the Italians living in Nottingham attended the *asilo italiano*, the Italian kindergarten at the mission, run by Italian nuns. For them, this event implied for them a few more years spent within their parents' culture of origin and a delayed approach to the culture and language of the place in which many of them had been born. For quite a few of them school attendance was a frustrating experience, probably more disorienting than the one lived by their parents through the process of migration, as they faced it with unawareness. They entered their classroom without being able to utter a word in English due to their lack of English-speaking models. The school environment is, therefore, the first experience that makes the children of immigrants bi-cultural agents mediating between their parents' world and the outside one<sup>106</sup>. Although some of them could learn some English from older brothers and sisters, the first approach to a more complex form of English could have been possible only at school and only for a certain amount of hours a week. After school, these children become part of their social clusters again. School attendance is to be seen as a rite of passage, a very painful one, that causes the children of the Italian immigrants 'not to belong' for good. In fact, from this moment on, they will not be part of their parents' world, nor of their peers' one. They are condemned to be 'different'. Since the age of five, any 'unorthodox' behaviour will be identified by their parents as English and by their school-friends as Italian. As soon as a certain self-awareness appears, no matter how much they strive to obtain recognition, they will never be acknowledged as full members of the two different cultural environments of the family and the school (as a segment of the wider social system).

Among the first generation Italians of Nottingham, there were striking differences in parental involvement in their children's education. Indeed, some older Italians were unable to report the type of studies or qualifications their own children had achieved. This can partly be explained by their socio-cultural different approach to education or their forgetfulness in relation to events of long ago they were unfamiliar

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<sup>105</sup> According to clinical neurolinguistic studies on multilingualism, language competence is affected by the functional organisation of the Broca area of the brain, which depends on the acquisition age (Fabbro 2001: 217).

<sup>106</sup> In some cases the children of the immigrants were even required to act as interpreters between their parents and their teachers.

with. The lack of involvement of some parents in their children's education was a function of their self-conscious approach to British institutions, mainly due to their approximate knowledge of the language and the customs. At the same time, the long hours spent in the factories did not allow them to deal with any other business. For many of them, the school was an educational setting, as well as a providential one, as it allowed them to work without being worried for their children's well-being and whereabouts. For this reason, many Italian immigrants had very rarely been in contact with teachers and had never helped their children with their homework. In some cases, an older brother, sister, or cousin provided the link between the pupil, the family and the school, and also help at home for the activities of reading and writing.

School attendance, a natural development of events for all the members of the host group, is for the migrants and their children the beginning of a novel, difficult stage. The children of the immigrants often struggled to learn a second language and proved unaware of the specific cultural elements linked to it. Often pupils from a minority background show an approximate knowledge of their first language, which has some bearing on second-language learning. Nevertheless, the problem might not only be of a linguistic nature, but also social (the children belong to a lower socioeconomic group, with an inadequate educational level to be able to support them in their education after school) and cultural (the minority culture might clash with the majority one in relation to certain values and views on life) (Skutnabb-Kangas 1999: 45).

*Emma (2) [Family 2]: I started school when I was nearly 6. I went to school and I couldn't speak a word of English...I had to learn every single word, from day one, I didn't know that that was called chair, I didn't know that that was a table, the toilet, water, drink...nothing! I didn't know anything! I only knew Italian. So, I was already pushed to one side. There were no special teachers to teach you another language: you had to join in with everybody else. But obviously the other children, age six, knew that that was a table ... and a chair, and a toilet, and how to ask for whatever they needed. I didn't know that! So for about a year or two, it sort brought me back before I caught with everybody else. I was quiet, reserved. I had to learn to...not to mix with everybody else because nobody wanted to mix with me. I wore earrings. The English didn't use to wear earrings. And I remember one teacher... she tried to pull them out, for a long long time she tried to take them out, my earrings [Interview in English].*

A remarkable characteristic of the educational process of some members of the second generation is that part of their upbringing took place in Italy, mainly under the responsibility of close relatives and, in one case, in a religious institution. At the time, this was a forced choice for the older Italians as, working full time, they were unable to take care of the younger members of the family, therefore delegating aunts and

grandmothers to work as ‘substitute’ mothers. Due to these specific necessities, these families went through an unnatural process of separation, which was often a very traumatic experience for all members of the family.

Gemma (1) [Family 5]: *At the time I had only those £10 a week, I had 2 children, I had the mortgage, and the other normal expenses, so I thought ‘if I have to give my son and my daughter to a woman and I have to pay her, if my mum keeps them, I would willingly send them to my mum. [...] So I made this decision: I put my son in a college where I was paying a fee, and my daughter was kept by my mum [Interview in Italian].*

These experiences left a mark in the memory of the interviewees: the physical distance from their close family, their experiences in a different environment, the relationships developed with members of their extended family. Some of the children of the immigrants, the ones who spent prolonged periods in their parents’ area of origin, in closer contact with their grandparents, had been certainly affected by their relatives’ systems of ‘parenting’. The process of cultural transmission took place in the ideal location for ‘authenticity’ and, maybe, for conservatism: their parents’ village of origin through their parents’ educators: their grandparents.

As a consequence, some of these children grew up in a rural area, thousands of miles away from their parents. Moreover, their parents’ parents had the possibility to influence their upbringing with significant consequences on language and cultural transmission.

These children’s full immersion in this particular cultural and linguistic environment (probably speaking standard Italian in colleges and mostly dialect with their own grandparents), forced them to adjust themselves, on their return, to life in Britain and to English, in some cases, for a second time.

Giacomo (2) [Family 5]: *I spent two years in Italy...from 1968 to 1970 in a college. I was nine. I spent two years obviously with my auntie and uncles and everybody... During the holidays and the festivities I always came out and most relatives came to see me. And there I learnt to write and speak and everything. [...] The first day I couldn’t speak the language completely. When I first went it was ... weird. But at that age I very quickly adjusted and when I came back it was very strange because I couldn’t speak English now. I could think it and it took me about six weeks to learn to speak English properly [Interview in English]*

Luca C. (2) [Family 9]: *When I came back from Italy, I immediately went into the British school system...and...I remember that, at the age of nine, I think, there were some difficulties settling in at first. Fortunately I had a cousin in the same school, who had always lived here and she was helping me a bit. Between my ‘Pugliese’ dialect and my English a bit... broken... I could manage to go on. But at that age you assimilate a language immediately. And then foreign languages have never been a real problem with me, I got the gift to learn them quite quickly [Interview in Italian].*

One of the elements that might have had some bearing on the development of a second language might be the young speakers' possible use of a restricted, rather than an extended (or elaborated) code. The socio-cultural background of the children of immigrant parents is likely to rely heavily on a 'gestures, intonations and verbal metaphor' rather than on the verbalisation of attitudes and ideas (Bernstein 1972: 467). In a school setting, this particular situation might be the base of a certain difficulty in developing ideas in an 'elaborated code', as expected in an educational environment. This task might require a bigger effort if it has to be performed in a foreign language. Common reference to the sense of frustration that the children of the immigrants perceived in relation to their experiences in the first few years of school attendance - *i.e.* the inadequacy of their reading skills and scholastic achievement, lack of confidence in general, and, as a consequence, lack of confidence in their social skills - might also be attributed to a didactic gap. As underlined by Skutnabb-Kangas (1999: 43), experiences of this kind are a consequence of the fact that the education of minorities in Western Countries is not organised according to scientific evidence. Indeed, the children of migrants are still taught at school as if they were majority children fluent in the majority language.

It is clear that the language learnt in the classroom will sooner or later be used outside the school environment, among peers or in conversation with family members. The older members of the family will therefore expand their vocabulary through the younger ones in relation to new fields, and English will increasingly be used at home alongside their mother tongue.

Many first generation respondents did not appear to be particularly concerned by the fact that their children could not speak English when they started attending school, showing confidence in the fact that their children would have learnt English at school.

Conversely, the possibility that their children would not speak Italian represented for many members of the first generation a cause for anxiety, as it was considered one of the most significant elements in the preservation of the cultural identity and for the level of socialisation. This particular viewpoint originates from two coexistent, but spatially distant, necessities:

- a) The necessity for the younger generations to be able to communicate with the older members of their family and with their parents' *paesani*. Although Italian immigration into Nottingham in the 1950s and 1960s started through the Bulk Recruitment Schemes, it soon became chain migration (see Chapter 3). This meant

that sections of certain Italian villages moved to the UK and started building up a socially and culturally homogeneous community, intertwined with kinship or friendship connections.

b) The importance for the younger generations to be able to communicate with family members during visits to the village of origin, especially in the prospect of a return and a settlement in Italy<sup>107</sup> (see Chapter 6).

This pattern seems to be consistent with the results of Nauck's recent study (2001) on the language of work migrants and repatriates in Germany. According to Nauck (2001: 166), family language retention is, in fact, considered as 'strategic' for its effects on the increase in the proportion of intraethnic network members and on the acculturation processes (2001: 166).

Still today, many older Italians speak broken English, and prefer to speak their mother tongue in most social situations, and even more in their own home:

Alberto (1) [Family 9]: *Luca married an English girl. [...] She speaks Italian.*

Matilde (1): *During the first period, when she used to arrive at home, for example, the thing that I couldn't bear was that 'hello'... 'Hello. Hello'. I was saying to her, 'what's this hello?' It made me so angry. 'Just say: Buonasera, ciao, buonanotte, buongiorno...but I cannot tolerate this hello!' [...]. And my son was always translating to her. I was always speaking Italian. I used to say: 'Listen, if you have to stay in this house you have to learn Italian, because I don't speak English with you'. I said that...*

D. G.: *Like that?*

Matilde: *Yes yes yes... 'If you want to come into this house, it is better for you to learn...start with taking some books from here...learn Italian because I don't want to say a word in English'*

D. G.: *Why? Why did you insist on her to speak Italian?*

Matilde: *Me...it was me! I didn't want to speak English. As I didn't know it well, so... during the first years I 'stumbled', you see? And I was saying 'I speak Italian, I am in my home and I speak Italian' [Interview in Italian].*

As already pointed out, the existence of specific domains such as home, school, religion and friendship assigns precise roles to the first and second language according to the context. In particular, members of the second generation will tend to use their parents' language mainly in the informal domain - communication within the circle of friends and relatives - and English in formal ones - education, contacts with mainstream society, bureaucracy, etc.

The continuous verbal input taking place in the familial environment is at the basis of language transmission across the generations<sup>108</sup>. At the same time, in order to

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<sup>107</sup> For details on the psychosociology of the Italian migrants, the myth of return and their children's plurilinguism, see Di Sparti 1993.

be able to communicate in a socially acceptable way, children need to learn the basic rules of communication. This process also takes place through everyday contact with people of different age groups and statuses (family, friends) and will lead to their socialisation within the in-group. The use of the mother tongue in these social contexts 'implies active participation in those aspects of an ethnic culture that depend on language and in the forging of ethnic social boundaries through language' (Alba 1990: 98). Many second generation Italians have grown up within a family conversing in their mother tongue, the dialect of their region of origin, and therefore speak with their parents in their parents' way.

Linda (1) [Family 7]: *To be true we spoke Italian at home because we were not very good with the English. But the children when they were small they spoke Italian at home with us...dialect, not Italian, dialect. There's my daughter that didn't learn Italian at all, because I didn't teach Italian to her, and so she speaks the dialect of my area. And sometimes, I regret that I didn't teach her Italian [Interview in Italian].*

The only exception to this pattern (*i.e.* using just Italian, or dialect, in conversation with the children) is represented by Guido's family. During the interview he underlined his wish to raise his children bilingual and, at the same time, to provide more or less reliable models. In the excerpt from the interview that will follow, several different elements come to the surface, such as:

- The importance of transmitting to the children the knowledge of standard Italian, as opposed to a regional variety or dialect.
- Guido and his wife's desire to provide their children with a model of standard Italian and with a basic knowledge of the language of the country of settlement. This task required the couple to strategically divide the tasks of language transmission between them according to their linguistic skills.
- Guido's dissociation from the majority of the older Italians of Nottingham, speakers of Meridional dialects, who have not been able to provide their children with appropriate linguistic skills. The use of vernacular still is seen as a degraded form of Italian and being associated with a working class background.
- Guido's further division of the South of Italy into a Northern South and a Southern South through the use of the expression 'the Italians that come from *più*

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<sup>108</sup> The first words that children learn are, usually, 'mama' and 'papa'. Through an interesting study, now more than half a century old, Jakobson (1960) was found that, by comparing almost 500 languages - also belonging to different families - the terms for mother and father could be grouped according to specific sound patterns. This can be justified through the fact that parents, in the development of their children's language, have always tended to use sounds that the babies can easily reproduce.

*giù di me* [i.e. more southern regions than I do]'. This expression appears to have not only a geographical value but also a social one. The people of Nottingham who originate from the extreme South of Italy, according to Guido, do not teach Italian to their children because they are uncultured.

- Guido being from Puglia and his wife from Veneto, Italian was probably considered as a 'neutral language'.

Guido (1) [Family 4]: *All my children speak Italian. We used a system that I think very few Italians might have used. We decided: 'You [the wife] speak Italian and I speak English'. I had studied English for four years at evening classes. One hour a week, you see? Then I could speak English a bit better than my wife, in the sense that I was familiar with the verbs. [...] So my children had to speak English with me and Italian with their mum. They were confused sometimes, but they stopped immediately and changed the side of the record. I also had the parents-in-law here for 16 years. All right, they have got the Veneto dialect, but it was my father-in-law who used more the Veneto dialect. My mother-in-law was keener on Italian, like my wife. So the children listened to me and my mother-in-law speaking Italian, Angela with the mum, or vice versa, and so they learnt much better than the 80% of the Italians who come from *più giù di me* [i.e. more southern regions than I do], like: Sicilia, Campania, these from Accettura, for example, that are in the province of Matera. Their children they speak either the dialect or English. Very very few speak Italian [Interview in Italian].*

Having been successful with their children, Guido and Angela have tried to represent a linguistic model also for their grandchildren. This, however, has proved to be more demanding for them due to the fact that they do not see their grandchildren too often.

Another interesting experience in the deliberate participation in the children's Italian language learning process is Dalila's, second generation. During her infancy, there was not only her parents' direct involvement in providing the opportunity to be in contact with the official language of the country of origin, but also her relatives', who by living in Italy had direct access to publications in the 'target' language.

Dalila (2) [Family 8]: *When we arrived here, I was three. There were no schools in Italian, there was no kindergarten, there was nothing for the children of the immigrants. So my mum used to buy books in Bari, or have them sent from her sisters in Italy: books for the kindergarten, then for the primary school. Well, little by little I learnt. There were the comic books of Paperino [Donald Duck], Paperone [Scrooge McDuck], and things like that. And little by little I learnt...on my own. My mum of course helped me a bit with the reading, and then we started with the magazines.*

D. G.: *Did they arrive from Italy too?*

Dalila: *They arrived from Italy but there was a shop on the main street that used to sell Italian newspapers and once a month we used to make a request and went to buy them. There were several magazines: La Domenica del Corriere, Gente, Oggi. This shop has now disappeared [Interview in English].*

The lack of institutions (language courses, kindergarten, etc.) that could support the children of the first immigrants arriving in Nottingham immediately after the second world conflict meant that language transmission was just limited to family initiative. Moreover, as it is clear from Dalila's words, the growing specific necessities of the Italians living in Nottingham gave life through the years to the spreading of business activities providing for the basic needs of the newcomers.

It is evident that the Italian immigrant community of Nottingham has responded in different ways to the language necessities of their children, in the attempt to involve them in communication within the familial sphere.

In the family domain, however, it was and still is quite frequent that while the parents speak their mother tongue, the children reply in English, or in a mixture of both. Interestingly, Chiro and Smolicz (1998), in their study of tertiary students of Italian ancestry in Australia, have reported similar experiences. The combination of the first language and English is quite common in the friendship domain, when people belong to the same ethnic background. It is possible that for some children speaking the language of their parents can be a source of shame. Indeed, some tend to reject the language spoken by their parents as they might associate it with a negative identity and therefore might be afraid of discriminatory outcomes. Furthermore, some of the children of the immigrants might have linked their parents' insistence on speaking Italian with their wish to return to their village of origin together with their family nucleus. As already underlined in Chapter 6, by the time the parents managed to seriously consider a return, most of the children were already attending school and integrated among their peers. If for their parents moving to Italy might have been a return, for the children it might have been a move with a consequential possible feeling of dislocation. For this reason, they might have refused this hypothesis through a total negation of the language, traditions of Italy and everything that was linked to it.

Matilde vividly explains this idea by referring to some members of the Nottingham younger generation. The interviewee is here identifying herself with the members of the first generation, being one of them, however, she is not talking about her own children. In other passages of the interview, she has in fact underlined that they have been raised with a proper knowledge of Italian and required to show respect for the members of their extended family.

*Matilde (1) [Family 9]: I think that the young ones grew up here, learnt English, got the English habits. To be true, they are more English than Italian. Then, their parents have always spoken with them using dialect. They cannot speak Italian! And these youngsters are almost ashamed to be told of being Italian...it seems. It*



*seems to me that these Italians don't want to mix at all. They are stupid anyway...because I define stupid people like that...they feel a bit 'handicapped'. Do you understand? That's what I think. Because they cannot speak Italian well, they cannot speak English well, they cannot socialise, they feel they belong to a higher level because they are educated...thanks to us who provided it for them!* [Interview in Italian].

These members of the second generation appear to be 'cross-overs', people who have willingly decided to leave an ethnicity to embrace a new one. Discarding the language and cultural traits of their parents could be a way for them to:

a) achieve social mobility (Bourdieu 1991);

b) remove themselves from the misery suffered by members of their close family because of their inadequate knowledge of the language of the mainstream society, or

c) avoid the possibility of a return to Italy, which some of them might not consider acceptable due to their level of integration (Avenas 1998).

For Fishman (1977: 31), however, the phenomenon of 'crossover is rarely a single brutal act of betrayal. It is normally the result of countless instances of inter-ethnic behaviour and of other behaviour interpretation acceptable within the ethnicity system'. Nevertheless, some parents feel that they are becoming detached from their children, who cannot or do not want to speak their language, because they are embarrassed by it, and as a consequence by their parents, who use that language as the main tool of communication.

Often parents are aware of the bittersweet taste of their children's acquired fluency in English. On one side, they are proud of their children's capabilities, as they can now aspire to better jobs and better social positions. On the other, they perceive the painfulness of the process, for the declining importance of their role for the children and the fading of the language and culture of the place of origin with the arrival of the new generations on the scene. Their feelings are not imagined. Indeed, for the second generation, the attitude towards the use of English in communication has two main dimensions: an affective and an instrumental one, both confirming their parents' fears and beliefs. The affective dimension is related to the fact that the speakers identify themselves, even if partly, with the British culture. On the other hand, being able to speak English is regarded as an asset, especially in the work environment. For these reasons, among the older generations' objectives there is the necessity to provide their children with the possibility of mastering both English and Italian, in their standard forms. Most of the older people interviewed declared that they enrolled their children on the Italian course held at the mission.

As suggested by Bankston and Henry (1998), if the members of the family associate the possible existence of material disadvantages with their ethnic group status, they might be discouraged in the transmission of the ethnic language. Nevertheless, only one of the interviewees felt that the child needed to attend English classes in order to remove any potential linguistic obstacles during school attendance.

Baldo (1) [Family 1]: *I tell you the truth: me and my wife have spent so much time with my son. I sent him to a private school to get a good job and I am very happy that he managed to get where he wanted. But when he was small ... 3-4-5 years old and started to go to school, we didn't know the language very well to help him. So we took a private tutor. Once the English language was learnt properly, then he got the courage to speak Italian as well. I sent him to Italian classes too, you know. But, at first, I was concerned with giving him some confidence with English...then I chose to send him to Italian classes [Interview in Italian].*

The language(s) spoken by the young members of the Italian ethnic group is the result of the specific choices made by their parents (Stevens & Swicegood 1987: 74). Even so, the level of bilingualism that the children of immigrants manage to acquire appears to be a function of the time spent with English and Italian speakers and the actual use of those languages, rather than formal training in them. Alba, referring to a study of Veltman on language shift in the United States argues that 'the children of parents who maintain a minority language household are typically bilingual, with the minority language often relegated to a secondary role. And the children of bilingual parents are often monolingual in English' (Alba 1990: 94). This particular aspect will be taken into account in the following section, which analyses the patterns of language transmission in relation to the grandchildren of the Italian immigrants.

### **7.7 Third generation and patterns of language transmission**

The fears of all the first generation Italians of Nottingham and, for the most part, of the second, that the use of Italian might be completely lost in a few generations appear to be grounded. The American example shows that a more easily perceivable shift towards English will be part of the experience of each new generation, especially among individuals of mixed ancestry (Alba 1990: 94-5). Indeed, the increasing levels of intermarriage have a significant effect on the mother tongue use among people of immigrant origin. Its reduced use is naturally due to the necessity to be able to communicate within the family in the presence of members for which the minority language is not their first one. However, as noted by Alba (1990), the weakening in the use of a minority language can also be the direct result of gradual weakening in the importance of ethnic background. 'Language knowledge and language use are largely

concentrated among persons of a single ancestry. As the proportion with mixed ancestral backgrounds increases, because of the high rates of intermarriage of the past few decades, knowledge of mother tongues will dwindle. So, too, will the opportunity to use a mother tongue, even for those who have felt the knowledge' (Alba 1990: 101). Issues of intermarriage, and consequent linguistic heterogamy, among second generation interviewees has proved to have been a strong element in the inadequate use of Italian in the private domain of the home. What follows is likely to be a weaker level of attachment to the salience of ethnicity in subsequent generations, which often is considered as a step necessary to the acculturation and then the complete assimilation of the individual in the mainstream society (Stevens 1985, Stevens & Swicegood 1987).

D. G.: *What language do you speak at home?*

Gabriele (2) [Family 3]: *English.*

D. G.: *Is your wife English?*

Gabriele: *Not wife, not wife...partner.. And that only happened recently, in the last five years. No. Half Italian, half Ukrainian*

D. G.: *Does your partner speak Italian?*

Gabriele: *She understands a little Italian but she doesn't speak a lot because in her household her father made them speak Ukrainian...even his wife...who is Italian, had to speak Ukrainian [Interview in Italian].*

The choice of speaking English at home can certainly be attributable to the two different ethnic origins of Gabriele's family. Indeed, studies in the American context (Portes & Hao 1998; Stevens 1985, 1992; Stevens & Swicegood 1987) have shown that a single ethnic ancestry is more likely to produce an 'intergenerational transmission of unique cultural attributes and the re-creation and solidification of bonds of ethnic group identification and affiliation' (Stevens & Swicegood 1987: 73). Likewise, in the Nottingham case, families with single ethnic affiliation seem to confirm this pattern, as they appear to produce a stronger feeling of ethnic affiliation in their offspring.

Equally, when children are raised in single-parent homes or step-families they appear to obtain poorer results in the minority language learning (Rumbaut 1999: 16), like in the case of Liliana and Sonia.

Sonia (3) [Family 7]: [I can speak Italian] *a little bit.*

D. G.: *Where did you learn?*

Sonia: *With my friends and my grandma ... and...my dad. But because I don't live with my dad, it is difficult to speak at home (Interview in English).*

The role of grandparents in providing the stimulus for starting a conversation in their mother tongue is undeniable. Grandparents often appear to be the keenest supporters in the transmission of the language of their place of origin.

Liliana (3) [Family 3]: *Most of the time my dad and grand-mum speak to me in Italian all the time but I don't understand. I always reply in English* [Interview in English].

Liliana's negative response to her grandmother's language can be explained through a pattern identified by Chiro and Smolicz (1998). It is quite common that when Italian-dominant relatives speak Italian with an individual who is English-dominant, the latter would reply in English (see Chiro & Smolicz 1998: 24). However, Liliana's standpoint is often counterbalanced by different attitudes towards the language. Conversations in Italian frequently triggered by the older members of the family manage to have a positive effect even on the youngest of the grandchildren, providing them, however passively, with some knowledge of the language used in conversation.

Luca C. (2) [Family 9]: [At home we speak] *mostly, English. With my son, yes, I do speak Italian with him, to let him only understand some things, if we are in the company of friends, or so. And when we are at the grandparents'...at their grandparents', well, they speak Italian but they do understand. Yes, my mum and dad have to speak English with my two youngest daughters. But if they speak Italian, the other two manage to understand almost everything* [Interview in Italian].

In some cases, grandparents are seriously concerned by the methods adopted by their children in the process of language transmission across the generations. Guido appears to be directly involved in his grandchildren's linguistic development. In the following excerpt from his interview, Guido seems to attribute an important role to the linguistic function of Italian TV programmes.

Guido (1) [Family 4]: *We have been watching Italian programmes for 14 years already. My children have satellite TV too but they watch English programmes. I insisted for them to buy the satellite system but the children don't seem to be interested. Because they attend the English school, have got English friends, at home they just speak English and then the third generation will forget the language* [Interview in Italian].

The appearance of satellite television among the Italian families in the UK is quite recent. As noted by Burrell (2003), in the case of the Polish community of Leicester, the access to news, documentaries and talk shows represents for the older population an interesting tool for expressing their transnational identity. In the same fashion, for the older Italians of Nottingham TV programmes are a means of keeping in touch with what is happening in Italy, and one of the favourite topics of conversation both with the other members of the immigrant community and with friends and family living in Italy, either over the phone, or in person during their visits. Nevertheless, as

television is a means of passive transmission of a nationally accepted code, its influence on the older Italians communicative skills may be considered as marginal.

Likewise, the influence of satellite television on younger members of the family has to be regarded as negligible, apart from the slight enlargement of vocabulary. Even when the children and grandchildren of the older Italians have access to international programmes through satellite reception, the interests of the various generations are so diverse and the potentialities of such a system are so wide that watching the programmes broadcasted by the RAI is not a priority.

Luca C. (2) [Family 9]: *We have satellite TV and we receive RAI UNO, DUE and TRE. But we don't watch it that much, with all the programmes available, because, apart from those, we have 100 other channels! And the kids prefer watching the English ones...but once in a while I do watch it...to see what's happening in Italy* [Interview in Italian].

In many cases, interestingly, the centre of Italian language and culture is the grandparents' home: it is the place where the language from the country of origin is spoken; where all the children and grandchildren gather for important family events or festivities; where programmes from Italian national television are watched; where Italian newspapers and magazines find their natural habitat. As Natalia, Guido's granddaughter, says: 'the centre is my *nonna*'s house'.

Natalia (2) [Family 4]: *I understand what people say on TV when my nonna watches something with the satellite TV... and then she explains what has been happening. One of my Italian friends took Italian at school by watching RAI UNO and RAI DUE at my nonna's. [...] We don't have magazines or Italian TV at home. The centre for that is my nonna's house* [Interview in English].

This confirms further the notion according to which proximity to relatives increases the exposure to language (Alba 1990: 114).

Second generation parents are often involved in their children's language training as much as their own parents. In some cases they appear to be even more passionate than the first generation. They are aware that mother tongue knowledge is related to the relevance attributed to their ethnic past (Alba 1990: 98). Having been raised bilingual themselves, they manage to pinpoint all the positive aspects of this particular kind of competence and mediate when difficulties occur. Again, the role of the grandparents is here especially important as it provides the acceptability of the effort to communicate in a foreign language, being felt as a natural culturally Italian environment.

Luca C. (2) [Family 9]: *The language issue is for me a pleasure and a sorrow at the same time because, with my oldest son I tried, since he was born to speak to him always in Italian. And I have to say that it worked, in the sense that my son understands almost everything, speaks quite correctly, again, a mixture of Italian, 'Pugliese' dialect, but also the one that he learnt from the grandmother. And from time to time some 'Avellinese' words do slip out. With my son I managed to do that, it's quite all right. My daughter Sabrina, 14 years old, can understand quite a lot, she doesn't speak very much but she manages to make her understood also with the cousins who are in Italy. Eva, who's 10, a bit less, she understands, as well, but speaks even less, and Alison, the smallest...unfortunately, just some words and nothing else. Exactly, my sorrow is for these children that unfortunately I didn't manage to continue...this for me was an effort, because finding yourself surrounded by the English television, English friends, the school, the mother, the other people, and so on. Being on my own, it was very difficult [Interview in Italian].*

The sense of achievement for having been able to teach Italian to his son is hardly counterbalanced by the feeling of disappointment for the failure of transmitting the language of ancestral origin to his three younger daughters. The English environment is too overwhelming for a single individual to succeed in passing on a minority language. Moreover, the geographical distance from the grandparents might imply for the second generation a stronger determination in the transmission of the language to their children.

Nevertheless, the older of Luca C's children is aware of his language skills, which he attributes mainly to his father's effort.

Alberto Jr. (3) [Family 9]: *My dad taught me [Italian]. It is my first language. I won't speak it at home now, but if I go to my grandparents, I don't speak English, there, usually. He taught me Italian just before I went to nursery. So probably when I was younger I started having an Italian-English accent...but, because obviously, living in England, I was speaking English all the time, you go to English schools...[...] and I can't remember learning English. I can't remember, I was too young at the time to be able to remember. When I went to school, I was OK...I could speak English [Interview in English].*

Although Alberto Jr. underlines that his first language was Italian, in reality the fact that as soon as he started attending school he could speak English demonstrates that he was already bilingual. In this sense, bilingualism does not imply an equal mastery of the two languages but the possibility to draw from a repertoire constituted by the vocabulary of two languages.

It is important to keep in mind that learning the language of the grandparents' place of origin is only occasionally based on issues of usefulness. As the influence of the English environment is so predominant in most domains, speaking Italian would not possess any relevant concrete application in day-to-day use. Learning Italian for most

members of the third generation possesses a highly symbolic value as an element of cultural link with the country of the former generations of their family (see Section 7.8).

How linguistic maintenance or change affects the perception of ethnic identity will be analysed in the following section.

### **7.8 What language? What identity?**

In order to integrate in the country of residence, individuals from a minority background tend to gradually abandon the minority language in order to adopt that of the country of residence in an increasingly higher number of occasions. Through the generations this phenomenon progresses so that the presence of the minority language becomes too weak to be useful in any communicative situations (see below).

As already underlined in several occasions, there is a strong link between language use and ethnic identity perception. In relation to the link between language and identity perception among the respondents of the third generation, interesting insights can be obtained from the results of the recent study by Papapavlou and Pavlou (2001) on language use and identity maintenance among young Greek Cypriots in Britain. Similar to the young Greek Cypriots of their sample, independently from the mastery level of the language of their family, the younger members of the Italian community of Nottingham do not appear to face an identity crisis. Indeed, they are aware of their background, 'are capable of making judgements on ethnicity and are not torn between two cultures' (Papapavlou & Pavlou 2001: 105).

The issue here is not whether an individual, when in contact with other members of the community, manages to speak standard Italian or the ethnolect of Nottingham. As argued by several scholars (Fishman 1966, 1989; Nahirny and Fishman 1965; Papapavlou & Pavlou 2001; Veltman 1983), there has been the recurrence of a three-generational pattern in the language shift from a minority language to English. This pattern goes from a first immigrant generation who tries to learn English but uses the mother tongue in most occasions, to a second generation who appears to be bilingual, to a third one using mainly English with the virtual disappearance of the family language. Stevens (1992: 172-3) supports this hypothesis and argues that in language use there are three main socio-demographic elements involved: length of residence, educational attainment and generational status. Nevertheless, if language shift occurs, this might not be directly linked to an identification shift at either an individual or group level: 'in many instances, language and group identity are not isomorphic, and people do not always see language shift vitiating their cultural identity (Urciuoli 1995: 533). The

stress on the maintenance of the language of the country of origin through the generations is in Kelly-Holmes' (1997) view a fetishisation of a language that, having lost its utilitarian functions, assumes a mere symbolic one as an element of self-identity. In the case of the second generation and, in perspective, possibly the third one, migrants' aspiration to keep alive the language of ancestral origin possesses mainly a sentimental nature: 'The second and third generations wish their children to learn Italian more to remain connected with the native country than to qualify it as their mother tongue. Sentimental use is substituted for functional use of the native language' (Avenas 1998: 8).

An interesting example is provided by Natalia's reference to the habit of her circle of friends from an Italian background of sending messages in Italian to each other's cellphones.

Natalia (3) [Family 4]: *When we text, we text in Italian. Things like ciao, amore. And stuff like that. We are just messing around* [Interview in English].

Having a full command of the ethnic language does not affect the individuals perception of belonging to an ethnic group. Indeed, Edwards (1985) argues that it is possible for a group ethnic identity to continue to exist even when the language has disappeared, due to language shift. Edwards' opinion is partly shared by many academics: Alba (1990), Fishman (1994), Urciuoli (1995) and Hurtado and Vega (2004)

Alba (1990) states that language, as well as ethnic foods and festivals, represents an important ethnic indicator. Nevertheless, an individual's particular regard for language does not imply their fluency in it. Its function is, in fact, that of providing recognisable 'ethnic signals' for people belonging to the same group through the mere use of certain words and expressions. In Fishman's view (1994: 89) however, if language shift does not imply the end of the ethnic identity, it certainly involves a change in its continuity from the past, for the instability provided by the modification of the language in the ethno-culture of the group. This concept is particularly interesting in this context as it implies that the change in the use of the ethnic language, its modification and adaptation to the new environment - which is what is likely to happen among people belonging to diaspora communities - can influence the perception of the self in people from an ethnic background. However, as long as some 'signals' are shared and maintained among members of the group, the claim for an ethnic identity can be preserved as well.



Conversely, in Riccardo's case, second generation, having been appointed as a member of an official Italian institution, it was essential for him to be able to communicate with members of the Italian community in a suitable and professional manner. The mastery of Italian represented for him the key to mutual recognition as individuals sharing the same ancestral origin, when in contact with other members of the institution. It was clear that the interview was considered as an opportunity to practice Italian in the presence of a native speaker. In this case, like in several other occasions, the presence of an Italian native speaker was considered as an encouragement, mainly for the younger generations, to keep up attending language courses or in justifying the intrinsic 'worth' of having been involved in a research for 'being Italian'. The interview was conducted both in English and Italian for contextual the presence and involvement of Riccardo and Marina's children.

D. G.: [to Riccardo] *You can speak English if you wish.*

Marina (2) [Family 1]: *No, it's better for him to speak Italian* [Interview in English and Italian].

Marina is here implicitly reminding her husband of his new role as a representative of an Italian a charitable institution. The official status of being a member of an organisation having branches around the world but being associated with Italy, is a motive for Riccardo to improve his language skills.

Riccardo (2) [Family 1]: *I see that when I speak Italian, for example, it is an effort for me and I want to improve my Italian to do this job better, is it clear?*

D. G.: *Is that the stimulus for you to improve your Italian?*

Riccardo: *Yes, in this moment it is...*

D. G.: *Otherwise there wouldn't be one?*

Riccardo: *Not so strong, no. Because I was already speaking fairly well to let understand others about what I was saying, but now I want to go a bit further* [Interview in English and Italian].

The role filled by Riccardo is in this case the element requiring him to demonstrate his mastery of the Italian language. This particular circumstance underlines how contextualised the construction of identity might be, and, as a consequence, the role of language in the definition of belonging. Riccardo's role as a representative of a national institution encourages his effort to better represent it, through an adequate knowledge of the language usually involved in the everyday running of its activities. Therefore, as noted by Avenas (1998), the helpfulness of a language in maintaining a link with the country of ancestral origin, can work as a strong reason to learn it.

These examples seem to confirm the phenomenon according to which the correctness and appropriateness of a language will be sought by the generations

following the immigrant one, only if the language proves to be helpful in the individuals' everyday life and/or work. If the vehicular language in most communicative contexts is English and the language of the ancestral country of origin is not functional to practical use, the attachment to it might be of an exclusively sentimental nature. As a consequence, the ethnic language 'surviving' will be limited to a few words and expression, relegating them to a mere symbolic function.

## 7.9 Conclusions

Language is a salient characteristic of ethnic identity. Moreover, attachment to the language of the country of origin often has, for people from an immigrant background, an affective and sentimental nature.

Nevertheless, the use of the immigrants' mother tongue in linguistic exchanges among immigrants and between the first and second generation are the result of the parents' inadequate knowledge of any other expressive tool. However, it would be a mistake to consider this language as a faithful reproduction of the idiom spoken in the country of origin. Through the years spent in England, the language of the first generation has evolved. Its original features have, in fact, been modified in relation to input from their various experiences. The older Italians' language reveals the social environment of the speakers. It reflects and synthesises the most important experiences of their lives that have taken place in the village of origin, within the immigrant community, through the attendance of church and the club, through the influence of Italian programmes watched through satellite television and within their workplace, in contact with local colleagues. Furthermore, intergenerational language transmission can take place also in the opposite way: from children to parents. In fact, the children are exposed to the language of the country of origin through their parents and often parents learn words and expressions of the country or residence, also belonging to new domains, through their children.

The migrants' language is, therefore, much more than the 'dialect-Italian' language they claim to speak, due to the strong mixture of elements of different origin. The language of the older Italians is characterised by a strong triglossia, through the use of Italian, dialect and English during their conversations, interspersed with a series of neologisms and calques.

The specificities of their linguistic resources can be explained through their long absence from Italy which has atrophied the use of Italian outside the domain of 'home' and interactions with people originating from the same area. It can also be justified

through the introduction of terms from English belonging to their new activities and roles in the new country for which they could not find a corresponding term in their native language, which are copiously borrowed from English or Italianised.

The influence of standard Italian has always been quite limited for most of the members of the first generation, being for them, for socio-linguistic and historical reasons, a second language.

As the language spoken by the older Italians is their main communication tool, in many cases, this is also the language of intergenerational transmission. The three generations are all aware that the language used at home and among other members of the Italian community is deeply different from the language spoken in Italy. All of them have had first-hand experience of this, through images and words coming into their own homes from Italy through their satellite dishes, the language spoken by representatives of the Italian consulate organising Italian classes for the Italian community and their visits to Italy. Nevertheless, speaking a dialect or a regional variant of the national language does not seem to create any difference to their feeling of belonging for the older generation. They are Italian as they have always been Italian: the higher or lower degree of fluency in the standard language of the country has no part in the feeling of belonging to this group. It is for this reason that speaking a language slightly different from the one of their friends and family in Italy, who share the same background, might for them be at times uncomfortable, but it is tolerable.

In contrast, being unable to express their ideas adequately is for the younger generations a completely different and unpleasant experience. During their visits to Italy, they feel that the language learnt from their parents or grandparents is often inaccurate and unsuitable.

Due to the close relationship between language and identity, when a language becomes hybridised, mixed and mobile, the speakers' identities follow the same destiny. In this sense, the second generation's constant alternate use of Italian, dialect and English offers a glimpse into their mixed linguistic and cultural identity.

For most of the children of the immigrants, 'diversity' was first experienced with school attendance. It was at school that they started to develop awareness of their linguistic and cultural differences, and of their character as members of a minority group. On one side, the children of the immigrants need to develop a certain competence in the language spoken by the group of origin in order to be able to identify/be identified as its members. On the other, it is also vital for them to be competent in the language of mainstream society for assimilation purposes.

They also feel that the language learnt through Italian classes is insufficient in most social situations. In these circumstances they, once again, feel different: the language they speak sets them aside as Italians, and makes them feel as belonging to a special group. Their 'in-between-ness' and 'innate diversity' seems to be part of every single aspect of their lives. Through the attendance of Italian classes they realise that their feeling of displacement is an integral part of their lives. These classes, in fact, take the second generation away from their parents' linguistic and cultural repertoire by the shift from the oral to the literate transmission and from the regional variety of Italian to the standard one. These classes, which should enlarge the second generation's knowledge of the language and culture of their parents' country of origin, ironically, often are not exactly related to their parents' ones. Following this experience, along with the language the second generation's feeling of belonging shifts, as a more 'national' identification supersedes their parents' local one.

Whatever the case, the second generation insists that their children attend Italian classes, as most of them themselves did in the past. In particular, it seems that the second generation, having experienced a certain level of bilingualism, a certain amount of displacement both in Britain and in Italy for the type of language spoken, approaches the question of language transmission in a more structured way. They pay attention to its potential long-term effects, such as the usefulness of a second language in their children's lives and future careers. For the second generation these classes had a functional role as they allowed them to improve their communication skills with members of the Italian community in England and with their family in Italy. For some of the youngest interviewees, the reasons for attendance are also partially instrumental, *i.e.*: being able to communicate with their grandparents and with family during holidays in Italy. There is, however, one element shared by the second and third generations: the idea that through attendance at Italian classes they might be able to retrace their 'roots', a recurrent biological image in the interviewees' discourse, with a very strong sentimental value and symbolic role.

The use of language in order to create social boundaries among peers is also symbolic: it is, in fact, one of the most striking elements characterising group identity among adolescents. Nevertheless, in the self-definition of a person's identity as a member of an ethnic group the level of fluency in the target language is just 'a matter of opinion'. Indeed, among the members of the third generation, attachment to their ethnic language is hardly explainable through the need for immediate communication. In fact, more often, this type of language is mainly employed when they want to activate their

auto-identification as Italians, through a ‘strategic’ use of Italian words or patterns of communication among peers. English, as a dominant language, is employed in most domains as the main communicative tool. Italian or Italian keywords, on the contrary, assume the essential role of vehicle for cultural/ethnic identification. This phenomenon confirms further:

- The correlation between language and identity;
- The symbolic role of ethnic language;
- The idea that the ethnic one is a voluntary form of identification.

For the three generations, ‘Italian’ is the language spoken at home, with members of the family or close friends. Although its use might be mainly passive or limited, especially among the youngest members of the family, the expressions in the ethnic language adopted would maintain their character of intimacy and relation to a specific cultural heritage. In particular, endogamy seems to be closely associated to a more significant use of the ethnic language. Ethnic language knowledge and use are, in fact, more common among people of single ancestry. Among the third generation interviewees, it was the children of intermarried couples, which in two cases were also divorced, who underlined their scarce fluency in Italian due to inconsistent input from their ‘Italian’ parent.

In this sense, it is possible to hypothesise that with the prospective of increasing levels of intermarriage across generations, the degree of retention of the new generations’ ethnic language will decrease proportionally. The weakening in the use of the mother tongue might also influence the way individuals from a white immigrant ancestry perceive themselves and construct their ethnicity. Agreeing with Alba (1990), the decline in the use of an ethnically identifiable language might be related to the decrease in the relevance of identification in relation to an ethnic background.

However, it is also possible to hypothesise in relation to the next generation or two that if a particular portion of the individuals’ ethnic heritage is still considered relevant to their identity, the fluency in the ethnic language would not be essential. For identification purposes it would be ideally possible for the individual to hold on to particular words and expressions in the ethnic language as a statement of belonging to/differentiation from a specific group. Therefore, even in the hypothesis of the individuals’ assimilation into mainstream society, it is necessary to take into account the several levels of integration possible, as well as different possibilities open to the individuals in their self- or hetero- definition of identity.

## Chapter 8: ITALIAN IDENTITY

### 8.1 Italian identity

The question of the construction of Italian identity among the three generations of Italians living in Nottingham cannot be considered without having first analysed the nature of Italian identity and how it has developed through the centuries. This historical excursus is necessary in order to clarify the reasons behind the first generation respondents' strong regional, sometimes even local, allegiances. Moreover, as already underlined in the previous chapter, they state their Italianness through a language which is not standard Italian, but its regional variant or local dialect.

These phenomena, however, do not contradict each other. For this reason, this chapter will examine the development of Italian national identity, following it through its phases from a very fragmented country, through its political unification at the end of the 19th century, to today's issues of resurgence - or novel creation - of ethnic identities.

National identity is just one of several possible identities available to the people living in any country, others being, regional, local, religious, etc. Regional and local levels of identification have a particular relevance in this study, for the value that they possess in the self-identification of the older members of the Italian community of Nottingham. Indeed, the idea of *campanilismo* (parochialism, see section 3.5) will be taken into account and compared with the older Italians' children and grandchildren's modes of identification, which will be analysed in the section entitled 'regional, national and diaspora identities'. The section dealing with the identification strategies used by members of the first generation is followed by one on the identification forms of subsequent generations. This, in particular, deals with their self-identification, the role of the passport and other official records in the determination of an individual's identity, and on the function of the peer group in this process. Another element that is analysed in the chapter is the role of hetero-perception (as opposed to self-perception) on the individuals' development of self-awareness regarding their hyphenated-identity, which will be further analysed in the section dealing with the second and third generations' claims of a double cultural awareness. Some details are also provided here on the burden provided by the 'hyphen' in the upbringing of second and third generation girls of Italian origin.

As already underlined several times, identity is indeed a multi-faceted issue. Among the elements concurring to its construction, the use of ethnic food within immigrant households is particularly relevant for its strong link with traditions, religious

festivities, gender roles, ethnically specific culinary habits, etc. The same respondents attached a particular significance to the consumption of traditional food in their own homes. In this chapter the role of food habits and traditions revolving around food will be analysed in relation to the role they play in the intergenerational transmission of identity. This section is closely linked to the one following which strongly relates to ethnic identity promotion in entrepreneurial families, mainly working in the catering business.

The complex nature of identity also involves issues of creation of group identity and cohesion, which is presented in the last section, providing some insights on the role of sporting events.

### **8.1.1 The political unification of the Italian peninsula**

As stated by Gabaccia ‘there was no Italian nation or Italian people before 1861. An infinitesimally small group of nationalists first imagined a national community of Italians and then created an Italian national state in 1861’ (Gabaccia, 2000a: 1). Among these nationalists, Massimo D’Azeglio was the one who clearly summarised the scale of such an enterprise and its demand for further intervention with the following words ‘Italy has been made, now we need to make the Italians’ (Bedani & Haddock, 2000: 3; Gabaccia 2000a: 10).

Italians therefore needed to be ‘made’ in order to feel as such. Indeed, until the unification of the peninsula, its inhabitants had been and felt Florentine, Neapolitan or Sicilian. Italy, however, was not an invention. In reality, when political unity arrived, a certain affinity and bond among the various groups living in the peninsula were already in existence, even though probably unacknowledged.

Because of this, the fact that the ‘Italianness’ here investigated was not consciously felt by the majority of the inhabitants of the peninsula, ‘Italy’s national state quickly took on the task of nation-building’.<sup>109</sup> The efforts for a nation-building process have taken place for almost one century and a half and covered several significant events such as: the declaration of Italian unity at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the expansion and subsequent narrowing of its borders after two world conflicts, the fascist period, the Resistance, the suppression of the monarchy and the creation of the

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<sup>109</sup> The process went through the creation of Italian national political unity in the awareness of the cultural specificities of some of its areas. Nevertheless, it was only in the period following WWII that special powers were granted to five regions (Sicily, 1946; Sardinia, 1948; Trentino-Alto Adige, 1948; Valle d’Aosta, 1948; Friuli-Venezia Giulia, 1963). These regions and the two autonomous provinces of Trento and Bolzano (1972) have since benefited from a special status and legislative power (art 116 of the

Italian Republic in 1946, the crisis of the traditional political parties in the 1990s, localised autonomist trends and entrance to EU. In the following sections, there is a provision of a very brief outline of these events focussing, in particular, on their influence on the creation of identity and/or nationalism<sup>110</sup> among the population. Having already clarified that identity is a ‘construction’ both for the individual and the collective (see Chapter 2, but also Ferguson 2002, Bedani & Haddock 2002), what follows certainly further clarifies this point. Nevertheless, due to the different backgrounds and the diverse influences that the Italian population has been subjected to over many decades, ‘even today some scholars firmly maintain there is no such a thing as *an Italian*’ (Gabaccia, 2000a: 1). At the same time Italy cannot be considered as ‘an invention’: the late political unity only confirmed its pre-existent ethnic conscience, going back to the Italian Renaissance which is based, in its turn, on its Roman legacy (Ferguson 2002; Bedani & Haddock 2000; Forgacs 2000; Gabaccia 2000a).

### 8.1.2 The development of the Italian national identity.

After the unification period (1861-70), the economic and social disparities of the different areas of the Italian peninsula came to the fore. Moreover, the Savoyard short-sighted political and economical administration of the newly formed state, rather than harmonising those differences, applied the same rules to the whole country thus creating an even more striking gap between the area formerly known as the ‘Kingdom of Sardinia’ (Piedmont, Savoy, Nice, Liguria and Sardinia) and the newly annexed territories (the Kingdom of the two Sicilies<sup>111</sup>, Veneto, and so on).

For these reasons, after the unification of the country, many inhabitants from the newly annexed, mainly rural, areas of Southern Italy and Veneto<sup>112</sup>, due to the critical economic situation and ‘unable to vote or to find effective political solution to economic problems at home, *Italians-in-the-making* voted with their feet’ (Gabaccia 2000a: 57). Many, in fact, left their towns to migrate to Switzerland, France or the Americas. This led to a ‘human haemorrhage’ that, at the time, the government even tried to encourage. Indeed migration was considered not only as an important safety valve, especially in

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constitution of the Italian republic, [www.quirinale.it/costituzione/costituzione.htm](http://www.quirinale.it/costituzione/costituzione.htm)). See Deas & Giordano (2003) and Gomez-Reino (1998) for more information on the decentralisation in the Italian state.

<sup>110</sup> The term nationalism is here intended as allegiance and loyalty to a nation, not the exaltation of one nation as superior to others.

<sup>111</sup> This Kingdom consisted of the territories of the whole of southern Italy, *i.e.* Campania, Abruzzi, Molise, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria and Sicily.

<sup>112</sup> Although both Veneto and South Italy experienced similar economic difficulties until the second post-war period, public opinion tends to identify only the latter as mainly rural. Crystallisation of the idea of the North-South as a differentiation between industrialised and rural areas has been attributed by Broers to Gramsci (2003:2). On the North-South divide, see also Huysseune (2002).



over-populated areas, but also as a necessary source of income for the state, for the economic benefits deriving from the migrants' remittances.

Both the people who migrated and those who remained did not refrain from showing their discontent for the newly achieved unity. 'The insensitive imposition, on such deep disparities within the peninsula, of the constitution of Piedmont - in preference of the federalist solution proposed, notably, by Carlo Cattaneo, (1801-69) - prepared the ground for a unity that would be painful to achieve' (Ferguson 2002: 122). Riots and revolts bloodily suppressed by government forces<sup>113</sup> demonstrated the deep misrepresentations that both the central state and the popular strata held of each other and are, among other things, at the basis of the persistent mistrust of the state (Gabaccia 2000a: 53-4). Although distant both in time and philosophy, both Gramsci (1974) - founder of the Italian communist party - and Miglio (1990) - ideologue of the right-wing *Leghismo*<sup>114</sup> - agree on the fact that the *Meridione* (South of Italy) was conquered by the House of Savoy and since then treated like a colony. Moreover, for Gramsci, having been from 'above', the unification of the country lacked completely the involvement of the popular classes.

As underlined by many (Ferguson 2002; Bedani & Haddock 2000; Forgacs 2000), Italianness might have existed as a literary, linguistic or, with a certain abstraction, even as a cultural entity but only among the intelligentsia of the peninsula (Gabaccia 2000a: 8; Cavalli 1998: 4). Indeed, it took half a century, from its unification to Fascism, for Italy (and most of the Italians) to develop an uneasy and sometimes ambiguous sense of belonging to a 'wider community' (Ferguson 2002: 123).

On the other hand, the process can be considered as even more complex and extensive. This is clarified by Barański's idea (2001: 2) that modern Italy is the outcome of institutions, traditions and crucial events covering a period 'from the Risorgimento to Fascism and from Resistance to *Tangentopoli* (Kickback City); from *Verismo* to Futurism and from Neorealism to the Neo-avant-garde; from the Catholic church to the Italian Communist party; and from Alessandro Manzoni to Benedetto Croce and from Antonio Gramsci to Pier Paolo Pasolini'.

Although slightly cynical, Van Amersfoort's suggestion (1991: 14-5) that wars fought by common citizens, as opposed to professional soldiers, tend to create a deeper sense of unity and belonging, has to be taken into account as it grants a believable and

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<sup>113</sup> Among these the massacre of Bronte on the 9th August 1960 is one of the saddest chapters in the history of the country.

<sup>114</sup> *Leghismo* is an Italian political movement with a strong inclination towards federalism (see at the end of this section for more information).

influential authority for the ‘myth of the nation’. A nation ‘is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings’ (B. Anderson 1991: 7). All the older people interviewed had been involved in the second world war directly, as soldiers, or indirectly, as daughters, sisters or relatives of soldiers. Moreover, all of them had been in contact with the nationalistic propaganda of the fascist regime through their – compulsory – membership to a youth organisation<sup>115</sup>.

The act of fighting side by side with people originating from other areas of the same country, the sense of camaraderie developed in the act of being directly and utterly involved in the defence of a territory<sup>116</sup> or an ideal are certainly among the most convincing and powerful experiences in the construction of a unique common history.

Yet again, that particular element, fundamental to the affirmation of any identity, is here present and vigorous in its violent assertiveness: the dissociation and taking of distance from the ‘other’. More specifically, it is the presence of a real or imaginary enemy threatening one’s borders that fuels the feeling of national identity (Cavalli 1998).<sup>117</sup>

The idea of border is in this context of particular interest as often this important element of demarcation, defining who is in and who is out, might be a complex cultural construction. As stated by Schlesinger (1987: 235), ‘identity is as much about exclusion as it is about inclusion, and the critical factor for defining the ethnic group therefore becomes the social boundary which defines the group with respect to other groups ... not the cultural reality within those borders’.

However, it is also possible to agree on the very influential role of much less traumatic experiences on the formation of a national identity, such as the construction of communication infrastructure, the establishment of a national curriculum, the advent of the newsreel and, later, of national television (Forgacs 2000: 143-8; Van Amersfoort 1991: 15; see also Chapter 7). As argued by Gellner (1983), the formation of a nation entails the development of a shared culture which is made easier by a standardised form of education in a common language. The language issue is also particularly relevant in

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<sup>115</sup> From school age, children were open to nationalistic political indoctrination through being members of the ‘Children of the She-wolf’ (*Figli della Lupa*) organisation. The she-wolf that nursed Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome, represents the capital city of Italy.

<sup>116</sup> State, territory and nation are the three elements that either separately or jointly can contribute to the creation of different levels of ‘belonging’, allegiance and attachment to a country - *i.e.* citizenship, ethnicity, nationality (Van Amersfoort 1991)

<sup>117</sup> The relatively recent arrival of mass migrants to Italy might, therefore, have a long-term effect on Italians’ feelings of identity.

Anderson's discourse (1991) as the arrival of mass media ideally linked individuals living in different parts of the country, through exposure to the same language and the dissemination of ideas. This created an 'imagined community' of people who had never met but were aware of each other's existence and shared values.

Conversely, in Bedani and Haddock's view, it would be a mistake to think that Italy was formed out of disparate and incongruent parts having absolutely nothing in common. Indeed 'since the ancient Roman period, political order in Italy has been inextricably linked to the wider institutional configuration of Europe'<sup>118</sup> (Bedani and Haddock 2000: 278; see also Donovan 2002: 4; Gabaccia 2000a: 14-34).

Two different and, on the surface, opposite traits - the heritage of the pre-Roman, Roman and Renaissance past and concurrent cosmopolitan and local attitudes - appear to have represented the Italian character until recently. Passion for foreign cultures and practices - encouraged by specific historical events - which has caused many Italians to be not completely aware of their identity, found its place next to a local sentiment attaching people more to a region or a town than to the country as a whole. As interestingly suggested by Gabaccia, the two elements cannot be easily dissociated, as for centuries they have represented a level of identification. It is in fact undeniable that 'the noun *Italian* (originally from the Latin *Italicus*) had been a label outsiders applied to many peoples of the Roman empire centuries before (these same peoples, even under Rome, called themselves something else - Etruschi, Sanniti, Liguri, Veneti, Galli, etc.)' (Gabaccia 2000a: 14).

This particular phenomenon sheds some light on the type of identity of the Italians of Nottingham, who, coherently, state their Italianness while being culturally and linguistically embedded on a local level. Significant events have substantiated the existence of an identity at a national level, despite its varied nature. 'Today's Italians are neither many *ethnic groups*, nor one *ethnic group*, even if they *cannot disconfirm that they are Italians*' (Fabietti 1995: 65).

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<sup>118</sup> The direct involvement of Italy in the wider European context has taken place through several political and economic processes encompassing the last six centuries (Bedani and Haddock 2000: 278-285). Moreover, as underlined by Bedani and Haddock (2000: 278), two of the foremost institutions in shaping European identity, Roman law and the Catholic Church, have Italian roots. To further reinforce the idea of an Italian identity developing within a context larger than the national one, embracing differences rather than obliterating or even homogenising them, it is necessary to refer to Forgacs' depiction (2000) of external exchange of ideas next to an internal lack of communication. Forgacs refers to the Gramscian idea of an absence of a national-popular culture due 'on the one hand to the *cosmopolitan* tradition of Italian intellectuals whose imagined communities, as we might put it, were trans-national (Catholic Christendom, Humanist Latinity, Enlightenment rationalism), and on the other to the influx of non-Italian popular culture: French and English detective fiction, for example. In other words, both the intellectual élites and the masses were involved in a traffic of information and ideas in and out of Italy; they communicated with others but not with each other' (Forgacs 2000: 149).

Nevertheless, still today, a minority of Italians in the North does not identify in relation to the Italians of Naples, Taranto or Lampedusa. As noted by Bedani and Haddock in the context of Italian literature, the appearance on the political scene of the Northern League in 1989 has forced some writers of the South 'to re-examine their place in the Italian state' (Bedani & Haddock 2000: 4). In reality, since the rise of the Northern League, the issue of Italian identity and of the unity of country has made its entrance once more in the national agenda (Giordano 2000: 446). As Giordano argues, the claims of the Northern League have analogies with the political project of other regionalist parties<sup>119</sup>. Nevertheless, its main and most distinctive feature is the fact that the specific area the Northern League defined as *patria* (homeland), Padania<sup>120</sup>, has never existed as a geographically or historically justified reality (Deas & Giordano 2003; Giordano 2000, 2002; Gomez-Reino 1998; Huysseune 2002; Levy 2002; Pace 1999). The attempt to create a Padanian ethnic identity is a direct consequence of the effort of some political movements to raise collective action. This has been sought through the exploitation of a language referring to precise and recognisable symbols, *i.e.*: the Celtic roots of the Padanian 'people'; Alberto da Giussano - the knight appearing in the Northern League's logo<sup>121</sup>; the sun of the Alps, a Celtic symbol representing the sun, etc. The distinct Padanian identity, legitimising the Northern League's desire of independence from the rest of the country, appears to be a hardly successful attempt to create a homogeneous identity and a common history for the North of Italy, without solving the problem of its many regional sub-identities (Giordano 2002, Gomez-Reino 1998, Huysseune 2002). 'However, the invention of a *Padanian* identity does not mean that all other identities are being replaced or superseded in Northern Italy' (Giordano 2000: 446). In this statement there is the implicit further confirmation, if needed, that identity can be multiple, flexible, multi-layered, and above all, can be created.

Italian national identity has been and still is a powerful, dynamic and contextual concept. Italianness simultaneously includes similarity and distinctiveness. These features, far from being in conflict, in reality merge into very coherent multidimensional

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<sup>119</sup> See Deas and Giordano (2003), for an interesting analysis of the weakening of the role of the nation-state due to the concurrent processes of globalisation and regionalisation, and Roessingh (1991).

<sup>120</sup> Two different areas have been identified as Padania: a *small Padania*, consisting of Lombardy, Piedmont, Emilia-Romagna and Veneto, and a *large Padania*, including all the regions north of Lazio (Huysseune 2002:213).

<sup>121</sup> Alberto da Giussano is the hero of the battle of Legnano (1176) during which the emperor Frederick I was defeated by the League of the northern Communes. Since then, Alberto da Giussano has been considered as the symbol of the freedom obtained by the people fighting against a foreign domination (<http://www.lapadania.it/pages/legnano.htm>).

wholes, in which some elements might be more or less emphasised. It is, therefore, important to underline that Italianness, like any other form of identification, has a constructive and multi-layered nature and can relate to several elements and be interpreted in different ways.

In order to be able to analyse the way Italian identity is expressed abroad, it is necessary to consider all the factors involved and relate them to the specificity of the context in which they are articulated.

## 8.2 Catholicism and identity

It has been noted that Catholicism is ‘the only *Italian* characteristic’ providing ‘the peninsula with a strong element of continuity in its historical identity’ (Bedani 2000: 215). Indeed, Catholic religion is diffused through the whole country and considered both in Italy and abroad as one of the most important elements of auto- and hetero-identification (see Chapter 5). This is in part due to both the presence of the Vatican City as an independent state lying at the heart of the Italian territory, and the constant, direct and indirect, influence of the church on political and social matters. In reality, from 1 January 1948, when the republican constitution was proclaimed, Catholicism stopped being the official religion of the Italian state. However, it was only in 1984, following the agreement between the Holy See and the Italian government that the last formality - the unconstitutional reference to Catholicism as ‘the only religion of the state’ - was removed from all formal documents. Nevertheless, unofficially, Catholicism has continued to represent and be considered as the Italian official religion.

Recent events - such as the heated debate on the removal of the crucifix from the classrooms of the Italian State Schools following the appeal of the president of the Muslim Union of Italy and the reactionary parliamentary vote on assisted fertility - further confirm the persistent, but undeclared, influence of the church of Rome on everyday matters both of religious and secular nature (see *La Repubblica* 25-28 Oct 2003, 29 Nov 2003, and 9-13 Dec 2003).

### 8.2.1 Regional, national and diaspora identities: the older generation.

As stated by Pace (1999: 64), the path to national identity has been for Italy quite tortuous and, at the same time, very much related to its polycentric structure. In particular, Pace, together with Bottignolo (1985), Colpi (1993), Fortier (2000)<sup>122</sup> and

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<sup>122</sup> Fortier (2000: 43-4) also refers to the wide-spread practice of *comparato* (godparenthood, see section 6.8) among the elements characterising the Italian parochialism. Nevertheless, the author underlines that

others, refers to the Italians' strong feeling of *campanilismo* (parochialism). *Campanilismo* derives from the word *campanile*, bell tower, usually located at the heart of the village and its main point of reference. As already explained in section 3.4, *campanilismo* is described by scholars as the attitude of Italians, either in Italy or abroad, to consider their area of origin as the most important element in their relationship with people with the same, or similar, origin. These intense feelings of closeness to other people are, however, related to the context and would not exclude individuals originating from other areas, or sharing some characteristic.

Although the older respondents in the present study identify themselves as Italians, they display a strong *campanilismo*, which can appear both in relation to the people belonging to the whole immigrant community, or in relation to immigrants originating from the same village.

One of the most surprising elements is that parochialism can reach such high levels that entire groups of immigrants from the same village end up with becoming a 'group within the group', a clearly identifiable sub-group, such as the older people from the village of Accettura (Matera, see section 3.7)<sup>123</sup>. Regionalised identification is therefore still a significant element in the Italian immigrant community in Nottingham, although several decades have passed since their arrival.

In Gioacchino's words these strong regional allegiances and specific cultural backgrounds represent the reasons for the collapse of the Italian community of Nottingham (see Chapter 5).

D. G.: *Why do you say that the Italian community is now over?*

Gioacchino (1) [Family 6]: *Do you know why? Because in Nottingham there are two regions: there's the region, let's say 'Sampaolese' that from the area of Foggia, and then there's Accettura, Matera. There are two communities, different for mentality.*

The clash between different Italian immigrant groups is not just in Nottingham. Indeed, in his study of the Italian community of Bedford, Tosi observes that the Italian immigrants were divided, among other things, by a strong 'competition for moral supremacy between people of different villages or regions' (Tosi 1984: 55). This

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this form of social relation should not be ethnicised as it is not just a feature specific to the Italian culture. In this particular context, however, *campanilismo* refers to the specificity and conventions of the Italian practices.

<sup>123</sup> As already underlined in Chapter 3, at the time of recruitment, although several people from Accettura had been approached, none of them agreed to take part to the research. Due to the snowballing character of the recruitment and to the *Accetturesis*' scarce contact with members of the Italian immigrant community other than the ones originating from the same village, contact with them was very occasional even at a later stage.

competition appears to be also at the basis of the rivalry for the religious support of San Antonio and San Pio between two factions in Nottingham (see Chapter 5).

In general, the older respondents depict the people from Accettura as isolated and backward. The auto-exclusion/exclusion of the people from Accettura from the rest of the Italian immigrant society is, in general, attributed to the *Accetturesis*' supposed excessive parsimony and atavistic social autarchy. The *Accetturesi* are depicted in antithesis with the people originating from other regions. Piera states that the people from Accettura 'have never been sociable. They have always been on their own'. According to her, only the men from Accettura used to attend the Club: 'They were working and working and working ... I was working too, but...'. Matilde, on the contrary, underlines that their isolation is mainly due to their supposed 'stinginess'. She underlines the big difference between people originating from different regions: while those from Campania are 'much more ... *scialacquoni* (squandering), much more generous, much ...happier', the ones from Accettura seem often to display signs of miserliness. The people from Accettura are not just socially distant from the other members of the Italian community of Nottingham, they are kept at a distance, as the use of the demonstrative - *these* - in reference to the *Accetturesi* clearly suggests, which ends up with acquiring a pejorative undertone.

Guido (1) [Family 4]: [My children learnt Italian] *much better than the 80% of the Italians that come from 'piu' giù di me' [i.e. 'more southern regions than I do'], like Sicilia, Campania, these from Accettura, for example, that are in the province of Matera: their children either speak the dialect or English. Very, very few speak Italian.*<sup>124</sup>

In the affirmation of their identity as Italians the older interviewees are aware of the different regional characteristics, nevertheless they distinguish between the ones they would like and the ones they refuse to be assimilated to.

### **8.2.2 Regional, national and diaspora identities: the children and grandchildren of the immigrants.**

The outlook of the children and grandchildren on the characteristics of the members of the Italian community, and in particular of the older generation, still was very much founded on antithetical terms.

Nevertheless, the elements that need to be taken into account have now increased. The younger generations, in fact, differentiate between:

<sup>124</sup> The quotation has already been used in chapter 7 in relation to the intergenerational transmission of language among the Italians of Nottingham.

- a) the older Italians of Nottingham and the older English;
  - b) the older members of the community and the older *Accetturesi* of Nottingham;
- and
- c) the older Italians of Nottingham - including the older *Accetturesi* - and the Italians in Italy.

Luca compares his grandparents to his friends' and underlines that the older Italian people have not managed to 'move on' from their youth experiences. For this reason, they do not seem to 'enjoy life'.

Luca (3) [Family 10]: *My grandparents are...erm...boring? [laughs]...erm ... no. It's like, the English older people and the Italian older people are completely different. [...] When my grandma lived in Italy it was like the war times, so the times were difficult in Italy, and I think the older Italian generation haven't moved on from that. My grandmother still talks about: 'When I was your age, we didn't have this we didn't have that'. But then my English friends' grandparents have moved on from that and seem to enjoy life a little bit more.*

A similar concept is underlined by Carolina. In her view, all the older Italians living in Nottingham appear to be stuck in what she defines as a time-warp, a hypothetical suspension of time allowing most older people to live today's experiences without an awareness of its progression. She is aware of their 'sacrifices' and she respects them for this, however, she thinks that many of them, having worked very hard all their lives 'don't know how to enjoy themselves'.

Carolina (2) [Family 10]: *They came over from Italy, and they are in a time-warp ... nineteen...forty or whatever. They came here, they are still in that time-warp.*

While in Italy people 'have moved on' with the times, the Italian immigrants of Nottingham, who have physically 'moved on' to another country, for Carolina, seem to have remained temporally bound to the precise moment they left the country. In particular she refers to the people of Accettura.

Carolina (2) [Family 10]: *The Italians in Italy moved on: they go out and have a nice glass of wine, go to the theatre... But I think a lot of ... a lot of 'Accetturesi', they still don't know how to enjoy themselves, they are saving for their children. So when they die, the children got a massive amount of money<sup>125</sup>. But I think that's wrong! You know, they don't have a coffee, or go for a dinner in the evening or...*

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<sup>125</sup> Note the similarities with Matilde's ideas (section 5.7.1).



Even in this case, the *Accetturesi* were represented as the most conservative element of the Italian immigrant community. Nevertheless, they are not the only ones who deny themselves little everyday pleasures to secure a wealthier future for their children. For the younger generation, older people appear to be quite careful in the way they spend their money, possibly due to their lack of economic security in their early experiences. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the experiences of their children appear to be more homogeneous, regardless of their parents origin. It is possible to suppose that what can be considered as elements of differentiation for the first generation, have now disappeared among the members the second one.

Carolina (2) [Family 10]: *Oh, they are different [the children of the people from Accettura]. They just go out, enjoy themselves, like any other. It is just the older generation [Accetturesi], I think.*

Therefore, according to the interviewee, within a generation, the differences between the people originating from Accettura and the ones coming from other areas of the South of Italy have disappeared. Likewise, through the generations, important elements of identification have evolved.

Indeed, while the older generation's cultural identity mainly refers to the village or region of origin, members of the second and third generations have a wider sense of identity and consider the broader Italian reality as a point of reference, rather than the small village community. *Campanilismo*, in fact, has largely disappeared in the words of the second and, above all, the third generation Italians. They rarely identify with their parents' or grandparents' village or area of origin. On the contrary they, especially the youngest ones, dislike those places and never consider visiting for more than a few days.

Luca (3) [Family 10]: *I am from Alife, and Avellino, which is near Naples. And it is just so boring! Alife is quite small: has got farms, a few houses, a market, a square, two bars...and that's it.*

The much praised intrinsic worth of these small places is not attractive for people who are socialised in a different environment and who have particular needs and expectations. All this, however, has little affect on their attitude. Indeed, the idea of Italy that the youngest interviewees have developed through images obtained through their acquaintances, or captured during their holidays or from the media, rarely coincides with the one offered by their grandparents.

Lisa (3) [Family 2]: *When we go to Italy, we expect it to be like old fashioned. Because things have changed in England but they have changed in Italy too, but we don't see those changes, so we still go there and expect grandparents, everybody cooking pasta...and it is not like that anymore.*

Although life has changed, even in the little villages, few members of the second and third generation consider living in a village. The image of Italy that the youngest ones have developed does not include their place of ancestral origin. If they partially identify with Italy, it is with its more colourful, artistic and fashionable side. They feel a connection with the country and most want to learn more about it. They would take into account the possibility of living in a big Italian city, like Milan (Elvira), or spend some time in the country during their gap year or after university (Sonia).

The situation of the people belonging to the second generation is, as expected, in-between. They know what the life in the village of origin would be like and do not dream of moving to a big city. Although they do not reject the possibility of moving to Italy in the future, in the justifications for their impossibility to go, they show striking similarities with their parents. The idea of living in Italy has, apparently, been on their agenda for some time. However, like their parents, they recognise the impossibility of what they define as 'return'; among these, a vast array of motivations, not least of which is their family relationships in Britain, their responsibilities to their parents and the presumed impossibility to fit into the village life.

Elvira, Dalila's daughter, clarifies the reasons why her mother would never feel the need to live in her village.

Elvira (2) [Family 8]: *You could go now, easily, mum. I mean, I've set my own life up here. You could easily retire. But the reason why you don't want to also is the fact that you've got the Italian culture here. They've built everything...over here. Because...most of your village live here...don't they? So you've still got the Italian...*

The existence of an 'Italian' environment in Britain is seen as a reason for not needing to go to Italy. This is, however, one element of a more complex question. The existence of a network of acquaintances within the group of people of Italian origin, institutions, organisations, businesses, services and clubs, all create a new social structure: a transnational community with a very specific character. This world is not in Italy though it is fundamentally Italian, it is in England, but not English. Their microcosm is deeply in touch with the two countries, sharing elements from both and developing them in an original way. It is a unique social universe characterised by a 'triadic relationship': community, homeland and place of residence (Vertovec 1999:

24). There are certainly several Italian transnational communities on the planet, which might resemble each other but are different, because they have developed in a specific place and a specific time.

Luca would not consider living in Italy but would rather go to Boston. He is attracted by what Nottingham lacks, which he defines as ‘continentality’, in the safety of a recognisable cultural setting.

Luca (3) [Family 10]: *I don't want to live in Italy. I want to live in America, because I've got family over there. I just like it. It is more continental and there are a lot of Italians as well in Boston. I'd like to go somewhere where there's some Italian roots* [laughs].

If the type of Italy the individuals are looking for or are familiar with, is not in Italy, there is no reason to move there. The Italians of Nottingham find that much of the Italy they need is found in Nottingham (or in other transnational Italian communities): they feel at ‘home away from home’ (Vertovec 1999: 27). The ‘Italian’ world of Nottingham is the result of a process of cultural adaptation to the place of residence. This process necessarily implies phenomena of hybridity and métissage, which Hall (1990) considers as inherent in the nature of any diaspora identity. Being part of a diaspora community forces the immigrants and the following generations to interrogate themselves on where home is and, consequently, to negotiate and renegotiate their identities, according to the context, which emphasises further the relationship between place and identity. Indeed, the Italian immigrants’ and their offspring’s culture is a ‘culture of diaspora’. It is a third culture located in a ‘third space’ (Bhabha 1990, Lefebvre 1991) and characterised by interesting syncretisms, mixing and cross-interpretations of cultural forms of different origin (Giraud 1995: 97).

### 8.3 First generation: identification strategies

Matteo identifies with Italy. Nevertheless, the identification is specifically made with ‘Italianness’, *i.e.* the idea of Italy. The identification with an abstract concept, however, does not stop Matteo from being very grateful to the country of residence for the opportunities to prosper given to him and his family.

Matteo (1) [Family 8]: *My son got a degree in biochemistry and as soon as he finished at university he got a job, without them knowing him, at the ACME<sup>126</sup>, the international firm. And today he's the vice-president of ACME. In Italy he would have starved, I keep on telling him. I am Italian and I respect Italianness. I am still Italian, non mi sono fatto inglese [I haven't become English], but the English for me are ... my life [my emphasis].*

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<sup>126</sup> Fictional name.

Matteo's words reveal a sense of having been betrayed, the feeling that he and his family would not have achieved their full potential if he had not left Italy. At the same time, he is faithful to Italy, which, as he often underlines, he respects. In order to stress this feeling further, he states that he has chosen to maintain his Italian nationality. Interestingly, Matteo uses the words '*non mi sono fatto inglese*', which literally mean 'I have not made myself English' and emphasise the voluntary character of the process. He forcefully states his strong disagreement with the events following the creation of the Italian republic and the corruption of those in power.

Matteo (1) [Family 8]: *From my point of view, I feel more English than Italian. Italy...I respect Italy, but not those who guide it. I feel attached to Italy because I am Italian and I was born in Italy, but, on the other side, as I said, I don't agree with those who are in power. Since the first ones who in order to make Italy ... they created an uproar, so to say...They chased the king away in order to create the republic, in order to devour Italy.*

During the interview Matteo passionately condemned the state of affairs in Italy. His disappointment was so strong that he admitted feeling more English than Italian, certainly meaning more committed to England than to his country of origin.

The mixed feelings Matteo harbours for Italy were shared by other respondents, as well as his monarchic views. All the older respondents were born, spent their youth, fought in the war or had been imprisoned as subjects of the Italian king. They left Italy in the Second Post War Period immediately after the establishment of the Italian Republic. Marianna, in particular, is proud of being Italian but had not accepted its republican order, which was constituted in the period preceding her emigration. She defines herself as a monarchist and feels clearly reassured by the character of heredity of the crown as well as by the familiar aspect of the monarchy in Britain.

Marianna (1) [Family 3]: *I am proud of being Italian because I was born there and I am proud of being Italian. Or better still, I have always stated that if I was a man I would have been a revolutionary... [chuckles] because for me Italy is such a thing... and I am monarchist! Eh...I like the monarchy.*

D. G.: *Do you? Why?*

Marianna: *Because there was just one in charge [...]. And I like the Queen. Yes. I like the Queen, I like the fact that there's a Queen Mother.*<sup>127</sup>

Both Matteo and Marianna refer to monarchy as the best political system as through it corruption can be prevented (*They chased the king away in order to create the republic, in order to devour Italy*) and it is clear who is *in charge* (i.e. one king, not a succession of governments). Allegiance to the monarchy is maybe stronger among the

older Italians who emigrated after the Second World War, than the ones who have always stayed in Italy. The events that followed the conflict have, for their most part, been lived by the Italians of Nottingham indirectly, through their friends and family in Italy and visits to their village.

The echo of events in Italy in the last half a century has certainly reached the Italians in Nottingham, but with a muffled sound. Only through their relatively recent access to satellite television has Italy become a ‘tangible reality’. As suggested by one of the younger interviewees (see section 8.2.2) and confirmed by their own words, members of the first generation do appear to be caught in a time-warp. In the seemingly a-temporal bubble they live in, there is the feeling that little has changed in their place of origin and that when some changes have occurred, there are accepted with a certain difficulty.

Although most of the older respondents display a strong regional identity, only occasionally do they realise that the values and culture they cling to refer to a reality smaller than the national Italian one. Nevertheless, they are ready to state their Italianness and their love and respect for Italy. If this is possible it is because the term Italian denotes a category of their identity of a more general class, of which the regional one would be a subcategory. The intrinsically multi-layered nature of identity does not exclude the existence and reference to one or all its strata at the same time. Moreover, it is important to underline that identity has also a contextual character: people identify themselves nationally if they refer to an international context, regionally, in relation to a national one.

Moreover, the older respondents were born in Italy and have always been Italian nationals. The use of the adjective Italian is perceived by them as appropriate for the definition of themselves. The next section investigates the role that the nationality appearing on official documents plays in the construction of the ethnic identity of the immigrants’ offspring.

#### **8.4 Self-perception, passports and official records.**

During interviews with the members of the three generations, the concepts of identity and nationality, which should refer respectively to the private and the official sphere of an individual’s life, often appeared as synonyms or as combinable elements. Indeed, the passport was considered as the official and authentic certification of a person’s ‘identity’.

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<sup>127</sup> At the time of the interview the Queen Mother was alive.

As highlighted in several occasions, an individual's identity is certainly perceived but also externally 'attached'. According to Torpey (2000), the passport has the precise role of discriminating between citizens and foreigners. Even in the official sphere, the term identity is used to classify a person according to certain specific criteria, such as: date of birth, place of birth, acquired citizenship and, soon, biometric features. The passport is 'the regulatory instrument of residence, travel and belonging' (Ong 1999: 120). According to the Home Office (11 Nov 2003), the data that the much contested identity card would contain would certainly go beyond the mere identification purposes and would relate directly to a person's entitlement to reside and work in the country. Formal citizenship, in fact, is what 'demarcates the state's power to include or exclude' (Andall 2002: 393). The instinctive reaction of most of the interviewees to protect their 'identity' through the preservation of the data on their passports is, therefore, more than understandable.

Interestingly, the self-perception and the official documentation of a person's nationality appear to be linked in the discourse of both the younger and the older respondents. Gabriele, second generation, born in Italy and taken to Nottingham at the age of five, feels Italian, maintains that he is Italian and, to confirm this further, he underlines that he would never give up his Italian passport, not even in order to obtain the right to vote in the country in which he has spent almost all his life. Giving up his passport would certainly be for Gabriele an act of betrayal against himself and Italy.

*Gabriele (2) [Family 3]: I am Italian! [...] I would never ever turn around and go against my nationality. Even now I still have got an Italian passport. The only thing that differs me from my brother who was born here is the fact that I can vote in local elections but I cannot vote in national elections. That is the only thing I don't have. And I don't think it is worth paying...to become a British subject and losing my identity! I do not feel the need to be a British subject. I have every...every right to be in this country through the years of being here: I have worked in this country, paid the taxes, I kept the laws, if I have done anything wrong I have had a \_\_\_\_\_ [hardly audible: slap?] for it, or whatever. But I do not feel the need, even at my age, to have a British passport. I can go anywhere in the world with an Italian passport. In some countries I may have to apply for a visa, but I have never been stopped entry into anything I have been in.*

Becoming a British subject would have as a consequence for Gabriele the loss of his 'national', official identity, even at the price of not being entitled to vote, to being actively involved in the political decisions of the country he and his family live in.

On the other hand, Baldo, first generation, having been forced to give up his nationality in order to get an office job on the British Railway in the early 1960s, as soon as it was possible got it back.

Baldo (1) [Family 1]: *I have to say that to get my job I had to give up the Italian citizenship ...and to work for the railway you had to have English nationality. Well, at that time, now it has changed. but later I took it back [...]. There was a law that you could have two passports, two places of residence: one in Italy and one here.*

It is implied that, although it is possible to take away an individual's citizenship - *i.e.* the official belonging to a specific country - it is not possible to remove one person's attachment, allegiance and identification with it. Baldo, although aware that having accepted being stripped of his Italian citizenship for the sake of a more or less stable job would have had nothing to do with his personal feelings of belonging, when possible, he decides to pursue the possibility of regaining his right to be 'officially' Italian again.

Another example of the use of the passport as an instrument for the authentication of a person's ethnic identity appears through the words of Emma, second generation, when asked about her - and her daughter's - perceived identity.

D. G.: *Do you feel Italian, then?*

Emma (2) [Family 2]: *Yes...oh yes.*

D. G.: *What about you? [To Emma's daughters].*

Emma: *We all have Italian passports!*

Emma has no doubts that she feels Italian but also, showing confidence in her two daughters' identity, she answers for them and produces as a 'compelling' evidence for their loyalty and fondness for Italy their possession of Italian passports.

Even in the case of Luca, eighteen years old, the possession of an Italian passport is for him the legitimation of his Italianness. Moreover, he introduces the idea that his Italian surname is a very important element for being identified as Italian.

Luca (3) [Family 10]: *When they [English people] see my surname they always say: 'You are from Italy' and I say 'Yeah'.*

D.G.: *Are you from Italy?*

Luca: *My parents are, but I've got an Italian passport.*

While declaring the nationality of the individual, the passport also holds another important role. Following Solinas, the name of the group (might be Italian, British, Swedish or else) is not just a linguistic convention recording an objective circumstance, as the same name represents 'a cohesive strength, an element of social awareness' (1991: 55). Even if the identity based on spatial proximity or familial bonds might be weakening, as for Solinas, the recognition of the ethnic name could represent for the individual an equally strong and persuasive substitute (1991: 55-6).

On one occasion, reference to the passport was made not as a confirmation of an individual's link to one country, but just as a document allowing entry to Italy as well as other countries. Elvira, third generation, feels different from British people. She refers to the possibility offered to her by her Italian passport of going to Italy any time she wants. However, she does not declare herself as having an 'Italian' identity bestowed on her just by possessing an Italian passport.

Elvira (3) [Family 8]: *I feel I am different, definitely. I am different from British people. I am British: I was born here, I lived all my life here. But I have got the right, I can go to Italy when I want to: I have got an Italian passport, you know. I can do whatever...*

Dalila (2): *Really, you have got the best of both worlds. You can enjoy both countries.*

D. G.: *Do you have two passports?*

Elvira: *No, I haven't got the British one. Only the Italian. But it's European now anyway.*

By underlining that the passport is 'European now', Elvira not only tries to eliminate any direct reference to Italy, but also, unlike the other interviewees, attributes the passport a mere role of document. Reference to the European status of the passport could also be read as her supra-national identification as a solution to her difficulty to identify in relation to one country only, or to two different ones simultaneously. Indeed, this possibility is also allowed by the character of European citizenship, 'passive', which has been established 'from above' (Martiniello 1995) and covers various national specificities. Another interesting example of the use of European identity comes from the interview with Lisa. Her European citizenship does not appear as a 'third way', useful to solve potential problems that identification with Italy or England might create. On the contrary, her hyphenated identity seems to allow her and her family to see beyond national boundaries and to accept, flexibly, another - super-ordinate - descriptor for herself.

Lisa (3) [Family 2]: *You know when you have to write down forms? I write white British. But if I'm asked 'where do you come from?', I'd say Italy, even if I was not born there. [...] Our situation is better [than the one of the British], because we can fit in with two countries. Like now there's the Euro and English people say 'I am English'. While, because I am Italian, and then I am European as well, so it's like...I don't know...English people seem more ...they want to be ...English, while I don't...mind. Whatever.*

Luca C. offers another perspective on the relationship between 'official' and personal identification. Luca C. was born in Nottingham but he is now 'officially Italian': due to his job as a staff member of an Italian governmental institution, he had to renounce his double nationality and embrace only the Italian one. However, when



asked about the ethnic group chosen in the 2001 census, he showed some uncertainty. He, apparently, perceives that he has a hyphenated identity and, in the answers, he holds on to the double nationality he once had.

Luca C. (2) [Family 10]: *I don't know if I wrote Italian on the English census form. I've got double nationality...well I had, I had to renounce the English one to work here.*

The census question on ethnic origin requires the individuals to try to fit into specific categories, in particular when they are asked to highlight their ethnic background. This is the case in which their personal attachment to the country of origin or residence might clash with the reality of the official procedures. Although hyphenated allegiances sometimes are not compatible with this kind of formal survey, in certain circumstances they can allow a degree of flexibility unavailable in other contexts. Indeed, checking 'how much' British or Italian an individual is cannot be easy. This would be even more difficult in the case of an individual of mixed ancestry. As Luca C. cannot remember if he wrote 'Italian' on the census form, this can only mean that he might have defined himself as British, hence the reference to his former double citizenship. He had to renounce his British citizenship in order to work for the Italian government, nevertheless, Luca C.'s attachment to and identification with the country in which he was born and lives with his family might indeed show in an unusual way and through one of the most rigid, yet flexible<sup>128</sup>, forms: the census.

As underlined by Laroche *et al.* (1999), ethnic identity and ethnic origin need to be differentiated. Indeed, while the expression ethnic origin 'implies nominal, often dichotomous, and rather vague categories' used to classify individuals, ethnic identity is a 'subjective and multidimensional construct' (1999: 202). According to the authors, the process of acculturation and adaptation to the culture of the place of residence is not necessarily coincident with a loss of ethnic identification (Laroche *et al.* 1999). Lisa, third generation, simplifies this by saying that if anyone asked her nationality, she would reply by saying that she is Italian, although Italy was not her place of birth; but on any form, she would write that she is 'white British' (see earlier in the section).

### 8.5 Generational status and identity perception

Among the elements identified as crucial in the construction of ethnic identity, there is certainly the individual's generational status, *i.e.*: the nearer to the experience of

<sup>128</sup> The flexibility of the British census form relies on the self-described nature of ethnicity, which would also have allowed the respondents to use a hyphenated description of their ethnic background.

immigration, the stronger. While the second generation, the children of the immigrants, often identify strongly with their parents' ethnic background, this appears to be more 'diluted' with the third generation (and even more with the fourth, as noted by Alba 1990: 55).

Ageing has also been highlighted as one of the elements which might produce a change of perspective on the individual self-perception. It seems that it is in the long term that the differences between values transmitted within the family and those of the country or residence become more evident.

Emma (2) [Family 2]: *Sometimes the difference is only a small...thing, but then as you get older, it becomes a bigger issue. It is hard to explain, but there's a big difference, I found. Even when my two daughters' friends come to our house, they say: 'Oh, you really are Italian'.*

It is possible that, over the years, the individual's priorities, values and views might change. Therefore, the children of the migrants, being now parents themselves, might reconsider the legacies of their background. Interestingly, here, Donato notes how the rebellion of his teenage years against 'distinctiveness' developed into awareness of the resourcefulness of a different background.

Donato (2) [Family 7]: *But the older you get, I think, the more you appreciate...what you are, your parents' past. Maybe if you asked me these questions when I was 16/17, I might be speaking differently, I might want...especially in a school situation you want to be accepted by your peers and, you know, your mates, and you want to be English as they are. But as you mature a bit, you ... you think: 'Oh yeah, I am something different and I think is something special!'*

After the refusal of parental culture during adolescence, once the individuals become adults they start to view their familial cultural background in a different light. Ethnicity might, in fact, become for them a personal, material or cultural resource (see sections 6.9 and 8.9).

Donato shows a pattern which is very common among the children of the migrants, *i.e.* their major concern is that of assimilating within the host society and show as little as possible any signs of difference. In some cases, this can also have as a consequence the complete rejection of the culture of origin as they seem to be 'too diffident about their place in the new society to assert their identity with any vigor' (Alba 1990: 29). However, members of the third generation, once integrated in the place of migration of their grandparents and aware of their background and its potentialities, seem to claim their ancestral identity back. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as the 'law of the return of the third generation', is summarised in the notorious

expression: 'what the son wishes to forget, the grandson wishes to remember' (Hansen 1938: 9).

On the surface, this theory seems to clash with Alba's idea (1990) of a dilution of the ethnic identity across the generations. However, it is possible to argue that both return and distance can take place at the same time. It is true in fact that individuals of the third generation might be more detached from the culture of origin due to the generational and spatial distance. Nevertheless, it is also true that due to this distance, certain elements of shame, inadequacy or difference - that might have affected their parents' perception of their culture of origin in relation to that of the new country - are more likely to have disappeared.

The two hypotheses might also be combined through the suggestion that it is true that the practical abilities to function as members of an ethnic group might be poorer through the generations, but attachment to the ancestral country of origin might have a strong symbolic relevance.

### **8.6 The third generation and ethnic identity statement: the role of the peer group**

The symbolic value of the attachment of some members of the third generation to their ancestral past can also be found in the following quotation. From the excerpt from the interview with a third generation respondent it is possible to highlight the strong role played by the peer group, or social group of belonging, in the identification process.

Luca (3) [Family 10]: *All my friends at school thought they were Italian: Fabrizio and Massimo. Gabriella thought she was half and half because her mum is actually English, the dad's Italian. So we just thought we were Italians. We were proud to be different as well.*

D. G.: *Really? Why?*

Luca: *Don't know, it was just...because everyone was the same and we were different, we were Italian. The best at football...Italy [laughs]. Sometimes we used just speak Italian so...if there was like another group sitting in the field, we would speak Italian to each other, 'cause no one would understand, and it was just ...so good...[laughs]. It was just like being proud to be Italian: and people actually wanted to come with us to the Italian Club to see what it was like. And I know one boy, Sean, that was Fabrizio's friend, who wanted to actually be Italian. He was saying: 'Oh, I wish I was Italian!'*

D. G.: *Why?*

Luca: *Because we made it sound so good [laughs].*

D. G.: *Was it really good?*

Luca: *Yeah, I adored it! I am glad I wasn't English at all, 'cause they are just the same [Interview in English]*

At school the children would form a coalition based on their similar background and on the fact that they all could express themselves, in some measure, in a foreign

language. Moreover, sharing a language code has always been perceived by children as an interesting and useful game, which allows them to communicate with the members of the in-group without being understood by outsiders.

This and other forms of ethnic ‘signalling’ are effective also outside the circle of people who share the same linguistic and cultural background. From the next quotation it is clear that the use of language as a boundary mark serves both the in- and the out-group in their processes of definition of allegiances and identities. In this particular case, the dialogical yet intrinsically antagonistic nature of group identity construction is, interestingly, combined with other elements:

- a) the awareness that Luca and his friends are different from the children belonging to the host group;
- b) their consequent willingness not to assimilate into it, nor to oppose it, but of creating different rules for identification.

Among these rules, being Italian, even through partial ancestry, and the ability to use Italian in occasional conversation are regarded as among the prerequisites. Considering the mixed proficiency levels declared by the third generation Italians interviewed, it is possible to suppose that the Italian spoken on the playground might have been limited to the use of set expressions or to the insertion of Italian words in the context of a sentence in English<sup>129</sup>.

The extra appeal of their situation of minority children was certainly the reference to the prominence of the Italian football on the sports’ scene. Luca and his friends identify as Italians also for the positive image that Italian football implies. As stated by Liebkind (1999: 143) ‘Members of ethnolinguistic groups, like those of other social categories, strive for positive social identities to enhance their self-esteem. Thus members of such groups who value highly their own language may, in communicating with members from other groups, adopt various strategies of so-called psycholinguistic distinctiveness, such as accentuating their speech styles, switching to their in-group language, and so forth’.

The role of the peer group is here certainly the most interesting element. Both Luca and his friends, at school and at college, are from a minority background. Identification within their own group might therefore be reinforced by the fact that they are in contact with each other and with each other’s identifications and loyalty to their own respective groups. In Luca’s school, as he frequently underlines, the number of students from an Irish or Italian background is high, for it is one of the two Roman

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<sup>129</sup> See Rampton (1995), for specific information on the interaction with peers in a Punjabi context.

Catholic colleges in Nottingham and it is therefore chosen by all the parents who want a catholic education for their children.

Luca (3) [Family 10]: *I think myself as Italian, not English. [...] All my friends at college are Irish. All my friends' parents are Irish and they say Irish instead of English. It is just ... I don't know.*

Luca's school-friends identify themselves as 'Irish instead of English', so clearly differentiating themselves from the mainstream society. Luca, half-aware of this, behaves in the same way, identifying himself in oppositional terms:

Luca (3) [Family 10]: *I am glad I wasn't English at all.. 'cause they are just the same.*

'Sameness' is refused by Luca: he affirms that he wants to be different from the English boys of his class. Nevertheless, at the same time, Luca and his friends of Irish origin, identify themselves as a different 'group' characterised by similar features: all the same in their difference. Luca affirms the difference between his culture and that of the mainstream society; nevertheless, he safely conforms to the canon of a minority. Being able to affirm freely a difference requires, in fact, 'social resources', as stated by Eckert (2003: 59). These for Luca and his friends are the other school-friends of Italian - or mixed Italian - origin, and the English peers willing to be part of such a specific social order.

In her ethnographic sociolinguistic study of the organisation among Detroit adolescents, Eckert (2003) provides an explanation for difference construction. According to the scholar, 'being part of a crowd guarantees protection and wards off anonymity as the cohort moves into the wide open environment of secondary school'. Luca and his friends managed to differentiate themselves from the 'anonymous crowd' by speaking and acting in a 'different' way. Speech styles or languages are, in fact, among the most salient characters of social identity for many social groups, with which they can easily define themselves and be defined from the outside (Bourhis & Giles 1977: 119).

### **8.7 Self-definitions of ethnic identity**

In the definition of their ethnic belonging, most of the second and third generation respondents refer to themselves through the use of a language that characterises them in opposition to the dominant culture. The concept of 'difference' is recurrent in their words, as well as their enjoyment of that difference.

Natalia, sixteen years old, feels Italian because her family is Italian, and her surname is Italian and everybody around her is Italian. She enjoys and is proud of her different ethnic belonging.

Natalia (3) [Family 4]: *I just love being seen as Italian, I don't know...when people ask me if I'm English I just say: 'No. Actually, I am fully Italian'. I don't like just being English.*

In her words there is the affirmation that an individual can be fully, 100 per cent, Italian as well as being English: in brief, a person can actually be a '150% (wo)man', meaning that it is possible to develop an identification and attachment with both the culture of origin and the new one (McFee 1968). From some of the quotations presented it is clear that being Italian does not exclude any other form of identification, and new cultural traits can indeed complement those already possessed (Laroche *et al.* 1999: 207). One of the interviewees appears to be aware of this.

Luca C. (2) [Family 9]: *It's a bit difficult. Well, I feel ... very Italian, that is, I live among Italians with my job, in my family, my relatives, friends ... but, on the other hand, my wife is English, the children are part of the English social network, therefore, if I have to give a percentage, I would say that I feel 70% Italian and 30% English. But that's variable, it depends on the situation, and the particular needs, the people I am with. With the Italians, I feel 'Italianissimo' [very Italian]. With the English, I can be part of them and I feel English, I have no difficulties. Even if ... not from my accent, because when I speak English, you wouldn't perceive that I am Italian, that I've got an Italian accent, but among English friends, when I am with other people, they notice in me ...maybe also a bit for my features...that I am not 100% English. But I would say, yes, my tendencies are more towards my Italianity than the English side.*

In his rationalisation of his personal affiliations, Luca C. highlights his double attachment with Italy and Britain. Nevertheless, he affirms, along with the many scholars who have studied the phenomenon (Alba 1990; Blackledge 2002; Fabietti 1995; Gans 1979; Jenkins 1997; Sollors 1989; Waters 1990), that this feeling of belonging to one group or another is both variable and contextual.

When they try to define themselves ethnically, the younger interviewees happen to use a whole series of expressions - such as: 'I'm Italian', 'I'm of Italian origin', 'I am Italian but I live in England', 'I am half-Italian'- that, although they might differ in intensity or salience, nevertheless represent acknowledgement of their ethnic milieu (Alba, 1990: 25).

Dalia (3) [Family 1]: [if anyone asked me] *I would say Italian. But then I would say.. 'Oh.. I am British as well' [chuckles].*

Lisa (3) [Family 2]: *I like the way the English are respectful and polite and ... the way Italians are passionate and ...traditional with the family. I think is good, I belong to both worlds, really.*

Sonia (3) [Family 7]: *I feel I'm of Italian origin because my dad is of Italian origin, so I have part of ...that. I'm English, but I've got some Italian ...connections.*

Claudia (3) [Family 5]: *I think that I am partly English and partly Italian ... 'cause I am. I am not fully English and I am not fully Italian.*

Alberto Jr (3) [Family 9]: *I call myself half English/half Italian usually, because my mum is English and my dad's Italian. Some people say I am more English because I was born in England. I just say half English-half Italian usually... I am not fussy about it, not at all... If I go to Italy I am fine with the Italians. I am fine with the English...so. I am not bothered if other people call me English or Italian, so...it's the same with me either way.*

The last three quotations are from interviews with third generation respondents born from a mixed (English-Italian origin) marriage. Intermarriage unquestionably has a certain influence on the individual's perception of the self. Moreover, intermarriage is indeed a sign that the process of assimilation has already started. As underlined by Alba (1990), however, the type of marriage has almost no effect on the individual's ethnic identification or affiliation. If this is possible, it is because of the 'symbolic nature of many contemporary ethnic commitments - they are not intrusive enough in terms of everyday life to interfere with such a marriage [*i.e.* intermarriage]' (Alba 1990: 204). Nevertheless, parents' intermarriage appears to have some bearings on the ethnic identification of the children. Parents are often concerned with their children's ethnic identification, which appears to be a more complex task due to the ethnic elements deriving from the two different backgrounds. Yet, often, a mixed rather than a single identity is chosen for them (Alba 1990: 187-9). In brief, among the Italians of Nottingham, the interviewees of the third generation born from an intermarried couple, tended to identify as half Italian, *i.e.* mixed.

### 8.8 'Hetero-perception' and identity construction

For many second and third generation respondents, the possibility of adopting, voluntarily, an ethnic identity sometimes cannot be an option. In this sense, the external attribution of specific ethnic characteristics or values can affect the individual's response to the environment they live in. Indeed, what has in this chapter been defined as 'hetero-perception' (*i.e.* how the others see the respondents) can be either opposed to or supportive of their self-perception. The comments that the respondents receive from other people, which are reported here, appear to have a certain influence on the subjects. These effects on the interviewees can be either positive or negative, and can either

reinforce or undermine the level of ethnic self-awareness. Knowing what other people think of them makes the interviewees reflect on themselves and their position in the world. They learn something through other people's comments, they might accept or reject expressions used for their description, might identify with stereotypes, refuse them or accept them only in part, by changing them. Hetero-perception, indeed, might coincide with our view of ourselves or might not. In any case, the act of defining individuals, attributing names, descriptions or labels, is never neutral and might have 'a transformative impact on their own selves' (Szokolczai 2001:6).

Claudia (3) [Family 5]: *My mum says that I've got the Italian 'fiery temper'.*

Alberto Jr (3) [Family 8]: *People at the college [see me differently] maybe sometimes from the way I act or things that I wear or things that I...might say. I don't know. It's quite tricky. I mean, people sometimes they know that I am Italian from my mates or sometimes know that I am Italian because I may look a bit Italian rather than English: my skin is slightly darker than ...most people's skins. Italian, English, Spanish, whatever...I don't care.*

Hetero-perception (other people's perception) refers, first, to differences in the individuals' physical appearance. Only a more subtle differentiation would refer to differences in cultural or behavioural characteristics.

Natalia, apart from perceiving this feeling of belonging to Italy in an emotional, abstract way, seems also quite happy to appear as Italian. In the following passage from the interview, she affirms that her 'foreign tan' makes her feel foreign. Moreover, it is very much appreciated by one of her friends, who attempts to emulate her through tanning her skin.

Natalia (3) [Family 4]: *My friend used to say: 'Look at you, you've got such a foreign tan, I am so white!'. And now she uses 'sunshine aid' ... like a tanning, and she's darker than me. She says: 'Oh, I love being tanned, I feel foreign, I feel like an Italian... it's so nice when you get a nice tan. Italian people, they are all tanned... my English friends are so white and we are so tanned'. And she always wants to come to Italy with me. I just feel that I have got a tan all the way round the year. Because we are from Italy, and even when I am light skin, when my tan has gone I am still darker than them. Probably it's stupid but I feel that...sort of healthy look.*

Nevertheless, while in Italy, she seems to enjoy the fact that she is 'different', there, too.

Natalia (3) [Family 5]: *I got annoyed by the boys in Italy because you get chatted up by anybody, just like that ...and by the end of the night...you just say: 'Look I am English, really, you know' in English. And they do like: 'What? What?'. And you just say: 'Leave me alone, I am English'. And we mess around in Italy. We go to an Italian group and say, in English, 'Excuse me, do you know where...?' and*



*I'll take the mick out of them. 'What she's going on about?'. This probably is irritating for them. [...] When I am in Italy, they don't believe I am Italian because I've got blond hair and blue eyes. And you have to say 'ciao, mi chiamo...' [hi, my name is...] or whatever, and make them realise that I am Italian...'*

Natalia has something in common with Luca (Section 8.6), but it is here expressed in a very different way: they both want to appear as 'different'. Her wish to be different is such that she undoubtedly wants to be seen as 'different', as a 'foreigner' in both England and Italy. Young adolescents are certainly keen on changing views of themselves. Natalia, in particular, can be Italian or English, depending on the circumstances. However, she does not present a case of hyphenated identity, but of 'convertible' identity: an identity which takes place at will. Natalia probably wishes to experiment with new forms of identification. In this sense, the act of role-playing gives her the possibility to explore the various options offered by her particular cultural background. Moving between two identities is not felt as uncomfortable. Moreover, it does not seem to create any identity crisis. On the contrary, the Italian and the English cultures are turned into self-advantage through the possibility of drawing from both of them, with an exponential increase of alternatives and opportunities.

*Claudia (3) [Family 5]: I think I am both Italian and English. I'm both... but it changes. When I go to Italy, I feel more Italian, but when I'm in England, with the English lads, going out, having a drink... then...I feel more English. [...] It's not the way I look, because I don't look like a proper Italian [laughs]. [...] I mean, there're blond people in England. I remember when I was at school and did history lessons that my teacher said 'Oh, Hitler used to like the blond hair, blue eyes...'. I've got blond hair and green eyes actually, and my teacher said that I could pass...*

Claudia, whose father is of Italian origin and whose mother is English, feels both Italian and English. Ethnic identification is, yet again, fluid and situational: the expression 'When I go to Italy, I feel more Italian, but when I'm in England, [...] I feel more English' is a clear exemplification of this. Moreover, she underlines that her feelings of Italianness are not due to other people's attributions: in fact, Claudia does not 'look like a proper Italian'. Her partial identification with Italy is a matter of personal choice. In order to reinforce the concept, she refers to the history class during which the teacher was referring to her aspect as helpful to hide her origin. Also in this case, like in that of Natalia - but less voluntary and experimental in character - there is an element of enjoyment in the potential possibility to 'pass' for a 'different' person.

If for the third generation, being 'different' or playing the 'different', deciding 'who' they want to be in relation to the different contexts can be amusing, for many of their parents often it is a humourless matter. Indeed, their hybridity, their double

belonging seems to cause an unwanted, unrelenting, lack of connection mainly to both social worlds, the Italian and the English.

Giacomo (2) [Family 5]: *I feel Italian but I feel English. Sometimes it's the best of both worlds and sometimes it's the worst of both worlds. Because no matter where you go, you go as a foreigner, you go as stranger wherever you are going...*

D. G.: *Do you feel like a foreigner while you are here?*

Giacomo: *No, I don't. But a lot of people look at me as a foreigner, you see. When I go to Italy, obviously, they call me English, I come here and they call me Italian. Of course they do! Here they say 'oh, you are Italian?'. I go to Italy, and I am not Italian, I am English, and they look at me as a stranger. I am a foreigner: the way I dress, the way I speak...see? When you speak here in Italian, I don't even notice: you have got Italians from all different towns and they all congregate together and they all have their own accents. But in a matter of a year, all the accents combine.*

As underlined by Fortier (2000), the migration process does not stop with the first generation. The second generation, in fact, often feels the weight of an unsolvable displacement. Being the son or daughter of a migrant forces the second generation Italians of Nottingham to re-elaborate their experiences in relation to two contexts. It seems that there is little choice for the children of the migrants. The questions of inclusion and exclusion both from Britain and Italy, both home and the host country - wherever home and host country might be - will always recur. Their displacement is psychological and social more than spatial.

Emma (2) [Family 2]: *Oh, when I go to Italy, I feel like a foreigner. I don't feel Italian. I don't feel as I'll fit into their lives.*

At the same time, a completely different input is given to her by her acquaintances, while she is in England. Emma had some guests from Italy who stayed at her place for some time who were expecting to find a more 'Anglicised' family.

Emma (2) [Family 2]: *We have had people from Italy come to stay with us, friends, that stayed and they have said to us 'you really are Italian, aren't you? They thought we had been more English, and I said 'No'. And they were shocked.*

Emma and Giacomo reveal an interesting aspect of their Italianness: they appear to be more Italian when they are in England and more English when they are in Italy. Both feel, or are induced to feel, as foreigners when they are in Italy: Emma does not seem to 'fit' into the lives of the people in Italy, while Giacomo speaks a language different from the one commonly used in Italy. Conversely, while they are in England,

they can express their feelings of belonging, show their Italianness and no one would ever question their identity.

The cultural and linguistic resources they use are, in fact, drawn from a particular type of Italianness: the ‘Italianness of the diaspora’, inevitably hybrid (Bhabha 1990, Hall 1990, Giraud 1995, Lefebvre 1991, see Section 8.2.2). These resources and those of their friends and relatives living in Italy stem from the same ones, but have developed differently through space and time. They have both changed in the last fifty years, but the Italianness of diaspora, in particular, has undergone a series of adjustments, adaptations and negotiations with the culture of the place of residence.

### 8.9 Double cultural awareness

The previous section has shown that some members of the second generation perceive a feeling of displacement both in Italy and in England. There are some cases, however, that demonstrate that their condition as people who have familiarity with two different cultural worlds can, indeed, be useful and positive.

If working-class minority children seem to be lacking the ‘cultural capital’ in the Bourdiean sense (Bourdieu 1991), they also appear to have plenty of a different kind of ‘cultural currency’ (see Chapter 2). The difference lies in the definition of culture, which, in this context does not coincide with ‘high culture’, *i.e.* education, erudition, access to the instruments of knowledge. These allow members of the majority group to hold advantageous positions for a long time before the children of the immigrants will be able to catch up. In this particular context, ‘cultural’ refers to something different as it deals with the idea of culture as ‘the *way of life* of an entire society, and this will include codes of manners, dress, language, rituals, norms of behaviour and systems of belief’ (Jary & Jary 1995).

In this sense, the children of the immigrants would possess a particular kind of capital that most people of their age, in both England and in Italy lack. Their background knowledge is not non-existent, it is just different: it is like a foreign currency, full of potential, but hardly usable except in very specific contexts.

Luca C. (2) [Family 9]: [Being Italian and English] *for me is very positive. I consider it almost as a gift, really, because I can manage to balance in myself. I don't want to appear as selfish, but... I can use two different cultures, two different societies: the Mediterranean culture and the English one, that's more Anglo-Saxon, more...you know, cold, a bit more... detached. I can use in myself what I learnt what I managed to assimilate during my life here...in every particular situation. I have always considered this as an advantage. Maybe because I manage to nurture both of them and to draw out*

*the positive thing of both. Again, this is a discourse that can show me as selfish 'who does this person think to be?'. But I think that in myself I try to do my best both as Italian and as English, to create in me a character that's quite positive: that is, I am a person who's quite open, I have no problems, I don't mince my words. I am like that but, on the other side, I am quite reserved, I can keep a secret. And I see in this aspect... Italian and English...Italian and English... it is a continuous thing!*

Luca C. manages to lead a more balanced life through his various experiences, which he maintains make him a better person, who tries to get the best from the two worlds.

On the other hand, Giacomo, Emma and her daughter, thanks to their background, manage to understand people who are 'different', in culture or language.

Giacomo, second generation, affirms that being of Italian origin has helped him a lot in his job as a recruitment consultant. Most of the people he works with are from diverse ethnic backgrounds. His experience as the son of immigrant people, according to him, allows him to find 'a way with them, where somebody would be rather abrupt. When I speak to them, I see their position: they are in a strange land, trying to get ahead. I have been in the same situation myself'.

Emma and Fiammetta have acquired the ability of understanding people from different backgrounds. Through contact with *nonno*, *nonna* and their world, they have developed a form of relativism applicable to many aspects of their everyday life, in particular when in contact with people from other minority groups. This is clear from the fact that Fiammetta underlines that it is necessary to consider the other point of view as it is impossible to be right 'automatically'. According to Fiammetta, because she has 'got the best of both worlds, Italian and English', she can see things in different ways as she is able to consider particular situations from other perspectives, without any prejudices.

Both Emma and Fiammetta underline that their contact with people from Italy - *i.e.* from a non-British background - has helped them to understand non-British people's speech because of their familiarity with different tones and pronunciations. In their opinion, this is both a question of training but also of mental 'flexibility'.

Emma (2) [Family 2]: *As 'nonno' and 'nonna' speak half and half English-Italian, so these [the daughters] are used with their ear to listen to different tones, and to ... trying to...*

Fiammetta (3): *... Pick up.*

Emma: *... pick up, yeah. Whereas the English, if you haven't said the word properly, the way they want to hear it, they won't understand, or they don't even try to.*

According to Romaine (1999: 272), this is due to the cognitive advantage of being bilingual. Indeed, bilingualism develops metalinguistic abilities, which ‘allow an individual to step back, so to speak, from the comprehension or production of language and to analyse its form’.

### **8.10 Food, identity and intergenerational transmission: eating together as a cultural sign**

The link between Italy and food is certainly part of a stereotype: adverts on TV showing Italians cooking with tomatoes and olive oil and eating pasta or pizza with their family and friends are very frequent<sup>130</sup>. Interestingly, however, as also noted by Alba in his study (1990: 141), some of these stereotypes appear to be embodied by some of the respondents who seem to identify themselves with that message. ‘Consumption is ethnically bound’ (Laroche *et al.* 1999: 223) due to the fact that the food eaten can work as a mark of identity (James 1996).

The tradition of family mealtimes has not been lost among the Italians of Nottingham. Indeed, according to most interviewees, eating together is seen as a sign of tradition. The respondents who underlined this particular aspect of family institution were those belonging to the second and the third generations, the ones who were supposed to be more open to the acquisition of new customs. On the contrary, they are still submitted to this code, the transgression of which provokes the reaction of the parents. The children, now used to this, do seem to accept and understand the value of the rule.

Eating at the same time, all around the same table, is a rule that Luca C. learnt from his parents and still uses for the value that this custom has for him. He states that he is not as rigid as his parents used to be. Nevertheless, he believes that this is an important rule learnt during his childhood that it is worth keeping on applying.

Luca C. (2) [Family 9]: *Let's take the classical example. People talk of the close-knit family, when they talk of the Italians. If compared to the English, the thing is a bit different. A very simple example is the fact that at night we sit all together at the table and all together we eat. While, on the contrary, for the English, they sit in front of the TV: there's one who eats earlier, another one later. There's not this kind of thing. This for me is very important. It's a thing that I grew up with and I carry on now with my children. For me, it is an integral part of what a familiar nucleus should be, that's the life together of a family. For this reason, from this point of view, yes, let's say, I am ... not rigid, but I follow those rules learnt from my parents. On the other hand, I consider myself, a bit more...elastic, with the independence I can give my children.*

<sup>130</sup> Recently, pasta sauces and olive-oil based spreads, with an Italian-like name, have been produced in several European countries for exportation.

The transmission of values imparted from parents to children seems to take place in oppositional terms. Certain values typical of the Italian family, in fact, are affirmed in open contraposition to the ones of the host society. Eating together is seen as an important element of family life: it is associated with unity, closeness and sharing – food as well as thoughts.

Lisa (3) [Family 2]: *We always eat together. I know that the English people whenever they get the family together is either at Christmas or ... because of their birthday. Our grandparents always eat at our house and my other grandmother lives next door...*

Fiammetta (3): *We always eat at the same time, together. Whereas my friends, they eat when they come home from school, their parents eat later, they always eat separately. When they come to our house they say 'oh, lovely. Are you eating all together because I am here?'. And I say 'No, we always eat together, we always eat in the kitchen on the table'. They eat in front of the TV with a tray. We never do that.*

Lisa: *We are close as a family.*

Emma (2): *I mean, they are away from me in the day because they are either at school or doing whatever they've got to do, but at night-time when we come back from work... I need a more ... we need to be round at the table together ... as a family.*

Eating together is considered by most respondents as a sign that theirs is a close-knit family. Moreover, family meals attribute a particular role to food. Indeed, eating is not just performing a necessary function. 'Food thus entwines intimately with much that makes a culture unique, binding taste and satiety to group loyalties' (Gabaccia 2000b: 8). It is also a way to informally link social dynamics and food culture. Eating together as a family allows mealtime conversations, to share personal circumstances with the other members, with a focus on each other, rather than the television. For Emma, other meals can be consumed outside the house, but the evening meals need to be the occasion for the family to meet.

Sonia, eighteen years old, remembers that one of the elements that characterised her life at home before their parents' divorce was the typical Italian feeling conveyed by their meal around the table.

Sonia (3) [Family 7]: *Because I was brought up with my mother, I was brought up quite...English. But my dad, my grandparents, they are more Italian... But, still, when I was younger, I remember it was a lot more... I think, an Italian style upbringing, like... sitting around the table and eating dinner, very family oriented, and then, when I lived with my mum ... in front of the TV with the tray, make your own dinner when you get home.*

Eating together at the table is juxtaposed by the stereotype of the English habit of eating separately and, in front of the TV. It is a rule learnt from their parents but Emma

and Luca C. keep on considering it as a useful one. Emma clarifies that after a day spent in their activities, eating together and exchanging views is the only way to be involved in each other's lives.

As underlined by Gabaccia (2000b: 8), it is through culinary conservatism that it is possible to see how the eater's food choices and identities are related.

### 8.10.1 Food and identity: what is on the table as a cultural sign

In a study on ethnic identity choice among white Americans in the 1980s, Waters (1990) found out that, in relation to association with family closeness and food culture, Italians were perceived as the strongest among the ethnic groups.

Indeed, food traditions and eating habits do have a close relationship with ethnic identification as 'food serves as a locus for collective memory, social organisation and ethnic identity building' (Poe 2001: 131). The migrants from Italy who arrived in Nottingham in the second post-war period did, indeed, take with them the food traditions of their rural areas. Nevertheless, at first, it was hardly possible to stick to the diet they were used at home. All the older people of Nottingham remember how difficult it was forty or fifty years ago to find certain ingredients: pasta had to be bought in bulk from a street vendor once a month and the only way to get olive oil, an essential ingredient in Italian cooking, was from the chemists' shop. The first migrants had to adapt to new types of food and new tastes, with possible changes in the food culture as an adaptation to structural changes (James 1996, 1997). Later, the first shops appeared that catered specifically for the Italian community.

One of the first shops in Nottingham was the one set up by Guido and his wife, Angela.

*Angela (1) [Family 4]: The Italian community in Nottingham was quite big and there was just one Italian shop. Our shop was in the St Anne's area. There were 35,000 inhabitants in that area, and most of the Italians were there, at the time.*

The conditions for this entrepreneurial opportunity were available and Angela and Guido could, therefore, set up their own business in that area. This confirms further Kloosterman and Rath's (2001: 196) hypothesis that 'spatial patterns of the distribution of the population over a city also impinge upon intra-urban spatial structure of the consumer markets'. Guido decided to leave his job as a clerk in the factory in which he had started as a manual worker and embark in this job as a small entrepreneur.

Such was the request for Italian food in the Nottingham area that he used to travel six days a week to neighbouring towns with his lorry while his wife was in charge of the shop.

The use of typical food from Italy certainly might have had a very specific role especially for the older members of the family, who through particular kinds of food, might have found familiar tastes and smells. Guido's shop later became a company importing food from Italy and the monopoly of the Italian clientele passed to the current 'official' Italian delicatessen shop of Mr Romano, the only place where, I was told, it is possible to find 'pastina' (small pasta for soups).

For the older people the types of food used at home are mainly related to tradition<sup>131</sup>, for the younger generations, the use of certain kinds of food might be mainly a sign of family habits, although Guido prefers to consider this as a sign of an identity that wants to affirm itself:

Angela (1) [Family 4]: *We have always tried to bring up our children and grandchildren in the Italian way. Even in the food.*

Guido (1): *Our grandchildren eat more pasta than we do!*

Maintaining culinary traditions at home, however, is quite common because it is with family and friends that people share particular foods (Gabaccia 2000b: 8). Lisa believes that it is thanks to her grandparents that she and her sister feel Italian, and also through the preparation of Italian food at home, as well as through many other activities.

Lisa (3) [Family 2]: *Some grandparents don't teach their grandchildren to speak Italian, they don't even eat Italian food. Whereas all our grandparents made it easier for us to feel Italian, because they always spoke Italian, they eat Italian food, brought us to the Italian Mass. Things like that...*

Food preparation is still, in general, perceived as gendered. Although some second generation men affirm that they can and enjoy cooking, women appear still to be the ones who hold the supremacy in the kitchen, where they perform their routine activities. It is during childhood and the teenage years that girls learn from their mothers and grandmothers the principles of Italian cooking, thus providing continuity with the past. It is interesting to note how Marina, when she was only nine, was already contributing to the running of her family, through preparing the dinner, in the temporary absence of her mother, who used to come home late from work.

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<sup>131</sup> Most of the first generation respondents cultivate vegetable gardens and make their own preserves, salami, cheese and wine with raw ingredients usually bought in bulk.



Marina (2) [Family 1]: *When I was younger my mum used to work and to come home at five or six. My dad used to work shift. And I used to have the dinner ready...I used to help my mother.*

D. G.: *How old were you?*

Marina: *9, 10...I used to prepare dinner. Pasta, rice, ...all sorts.*

D. G.: *Did your mum teach you how to cook?*

Marina: *She's a good cook.*

Gendered roles in the family continue to be supported by the older generation who still have a lot of influence on the younger ones' daily lives. The children and grandchildren of the Italian immigrants would probably explore the possibility of preparing some food by themselves, but they are often discouraged by the easy option of having it made for them. Riccardo's mother, in fact, would never allow the son and the grandson to cook for themselves in the absence of both Marina and Dalia.

Dalia (3) [Family 1]: *My mum told me how to cook*

Marina (2): *She knows how to make the sauce. If she wants to, she can do it.*

Riccardo (2): *But if we are not around, my mother, without notice, she'd come here and do it.*

Marina: *If I'm not here, or Dalia is not here*

Riccardo (2): *It's just the male sort of thing. she wouldn't expect us [son and grandson] to cook.*

Giancarlo (3): *She [the grandmother] wouldn't let us.*

It is through food that significant 'rites of passage' and 'religious beliefs' are celebrated (Gabaccia 2000b). Many interviewees reported the regular customs for various festivities. Particular dishes were and still are served by the Italians of Nottingham to celebrate specific holidays. Often distinctive dishes have the role of keeping a certain continuity with tradition. Indeed, everybody knows what to expect on the table on those particular occasions.

Gemma (1) [Family 5]: *My tradition is that for Easter and Christmas, we meet always here in the family and I prepare Italian food, not English. Very rarely I prepare English things. I usually prepare 'antipasto all'Italiana', 'lasagne', 'cannelloni', 'ravioli', chicken, not turkey as it is too big, with potatoes. Then, tiramisù, trifle, and fruit in syrup with ice cream. And on the table there's always a bottle of brandy, 'millefiori', 'anice', you know, and the 'limoncello', that there's never lack of in this house.*

While the cuisine of the older people remains in some way faithful to the tradition, with the subsequent generations the development of different 'tastes' is more evident. The second generation complements their repertoire of Italian dishes with recipes from other traditions, mainly English, Indian or Chinese, learnt through friends or cooking books. As regards eating out, all the children of the Italian immigrants show an interest for foreign cuisine.

Donato (2) [Family 7]: *I prefer Chinese, Cantonese, occasionally Indian, very occasionally Italian. I don't normally, unless it's a special occasion, eat in an Italian restaurant. Mainly because I prefer doing it myself or eating at my mum's. But I love food. I've been to a Japanese restaurant. Fantastic! A bit expensive but....I like experimenting. We have been to an Egyptian restaurant in Nottingham, French...*

Identification is also linked to the type of food eaten. Italian food is at the basis of everyday diet and for this reason many second generation Italians would avoid going to Italian restaurants. They would eat in Italian restaurant only if it is a place they know and can trust. At home, they have adopted dishes mainly from the Indian and English cuisine, in a process of culinary syncretism.

Carolina (2) [Family 10]: *[In Italian restaurants] if you want 'pasta carbonara' that's not bad, but if I want to have 'lasagna' or 'cannelloni', that's very English... the way they cook. I'll have a steak. But I've Italian friends who have restaurants, my cousin has got a restaurant...friends and family ... you know... I do like Indian ... Indian food... it is lovely.*

Elvira (3) [Family 8]: *I wouldn't go to an Italian restaurant for the fact that we cook at home, you know. We like something different... I mean, I think in a restaurant, unless it is actually Italian owners, then they tend to make it English... although they think it's Italian, but it's not...*

Dalila (2): *They do Italian food but they do it to cater for the English...so it's slightly different.*

Elvira: *We would have Chinese, yeah!*

In comparison, younger people show different culinary interests. Both Luca and Natalia go out for a meal with their friends at least every fortnight. They usually go to an Italian restaurant in Nottingham city centre. While Luca underlines that the only reason for going to that specific restaurant is their special offers, which he and his friends, as students, appreciate, Natalia seems to be encouraged also by other factors.

Natalia (3) [Family 4]: *I go there [to a particular Italian restaurant] with all my friends. That's when I feel ...so special ...because they like the Italian food and ...*

Marcella (2): *But they are not Italian, they are Iranians! They do Italian food!*

Natalia: *Yeah, that's what I mean!*

Marcella: *...And you think that food is nice? It's...urggg. The atmosphere is nice but the food is ...atrocious.*

Natalia: *Yeah, OK. It's not one of the best places to go for food, but we all use to go there because we don't have a lot of money and it's two for one.*

Marcella: *Yeah.*

Natalia: *And I met there my granddad at the time and offered us a drink. I told everyone: 'You know, my granddad wants to buy us a drink'. 'Yeah, Natalia, well done'.*

Marcella: *We supply them, you see? [They are proprietors of a warehouse of products imported from Italy].*

Natalia: *They like my culture, which I like so much.*

The authenticity of the restaurant and the taste of the food might be the criteria used by Marcella for her choice, but not Natalia's. Natalia acknowledged the possible inauthenticity of the restaurant only when her mother suggested it. In reality, Natalia and her friends are not interested in the authenticity of the food. Instead, they are looking for an overall cultural experience, which implies a particular atmosphere, recognisable dishes and décor. Some of the so-called 'ethnic restaurants' frequently provide their customers with an essentialised presentation of identifiable features, which might end up being stereotypical. The point is not whether or not the Roman columns and busts of Michelangelo's David in the restaurant are made of fibreglass or if the pizza is topped with cheddar cheese.

An attempt to research the faithfulness of certain dishes to the original recipe, once they have become part of the conventional diet of the mainstream society, is pointless. Some dishes (pasta, pizza, etc.) have become so commonplace that they can be also found in restaurants non-ethnically defined and they adequately respond to the tastes of local palates. Therefore, as suggested by Gabaccia (2000), these dishes can be considered as absorbed into the local cuisine.

What Natalia and her friends are looking for is the feeling of sharing food – a highly socialising process – in that specific environment. It is possible to argue that the hybrid nature of the cuisine and cultural features offered by the restaurant is perceived by Natalia as coherent. In that particular context the food is as hybrid and, at the same time, as genuine as Natalia's identity: fundamentally, explicitly and symbolically Italian but adjusted and re-interpreted in relation to the new English context. The type of food and the friendly environment of the restaurant are fundamental elements to establish the fact that Natalia's culture is appreciated by everybody. Moreover, her grandfather's presence in the venue added further 'authenticity' to the scene and her grandfather's generosity towards her friends reflected directly on the granddaughter in the form of acquired popularity.

Therefore, more than the food consumed, it is the values and meanings attached to it that can produce a strong symbolic resonance in the process of identity construction.

### **8.11 Sport and Identity**

It has been underlined that, in spite of the crowds of fans who go to the stadiums and the extremely high number of people who watch football games on television, there are not enough studies that appropriately analyse the forms, meanings and symbolisms involved in sport supporting (Bromberger 1991).

In particular, in relation to team sports, through being supporters of a team, individuals can potentially show a vast array of identifications: with a player, a team, a club, a city, or a whole nation. Identification with a club represents, for the fans, an important sign of common belonging and, on the other hand, the team-players express the fans' collective identity both on and off the pitch (Bromberger 1991: 164-6).

In this specific context, the main sporting events followed are mainly football and, in some cases, Formula 1. Football seems, in fact, the favourite sport of the members of the Italian community of Nottingham as well as providing the opportunity for a ritual with a strong cohesive function.

In the past, most of the men now belonging to the second generation used to be actively involved in football as amateur players. Up to a few years ago, there was in Nottingham a relatively strong Italian football team.

A telephone conversation with the former coach, Mr M., provided interesting insights into the role of this pastime for the children and youngsters of Italian origin who used to train with him. For them football was an important element in their cultural self-awareness and self-confidence. Moreover, sports played in teams are among the most aggregating activities because of their strong socialising power. This might have had some repercussions on their feelings of belonging. In particular, the fact that they were members of an ethnic and linguistic group, in some cases, represented an additional element towards their victories. While on the pitch, they used to take the language learnt at home and shout commands to each other in Italian in order not to be understood by the members of the other team. The use of Italian was therefore the weapon used to defeat their adversaries.

Most of the interviewees of the three generations, with only the exclusion of the older women, follow the development of sporting events and championships through satellite television. In particular, some among the older respondents feel the need to be constantly updated on the latest sport events.

Another interesting element is the association of football to Italy. Interviewees belonging to both the second and third generations report that often people have implied that they must be good at football due to the mere fact of being Italian.

*Giacomo (2) [Family 5]: Oh, here in England, because of my name...I am simply Italian. So I make me noticed, when I play football [laughs]*

The following excerpt is from an interview with Natalia and her mother, who was a member of the committee of the association of younger Italians which took over the

management of the Italian Club on Vivian Avenue in the year 2000. During Euro 2000 they bought a big screen in order to show the football matches when Italy was playing. As it was just ‘word of mouth’, only around twenty people attended for the first match. The number, little by little, escalated. Marcella reports of the excitement, suddenly followed by a deep disillusionment when Italy did not manage to win the match, as expected.

Natalia (3) [Family 4]: *We had the tables all the way round and everyone was standing. The children on the back with the Italian flag painted on the face and everyone wearing Italian...and it felt like...*

Marcella (2): *Amazing. For the final we had...I don't know how many...I am guessing ...4/500! We were just standing everywhere. I made a cake because I was really confident Italy was going to win. It was like that [mimics the size of the cake]. Green, white and red...I had to ask one of my neighbours to help me putting it in the car and then I got to the club. That was mad. Anyway at the last...two minutes... everyone was crying. Oh my God! 'People don't go... I've got a cake!'*

Disillusionment with the results was so high and the dream of a victory so suddenly shattered that ‘everyone was crying’, having invested very potent emotions in that episode. It is mainly the younger ones who show off the T-shirts, flags and scarves of their favourite team during the games. It has been underlined how the symbols and rhetoric used by fans to incite the players of their team closely resemble those of a symbolic war (Bromberger 1991): two teams competing for victory, constant invasion of each others ‘territories’, use of drums, standards, painted faces, slogans and chants. The idea of a war-like atmosphere is also conveyed by the words of Emma’s family. Open support for the Italian team was prohibited to all the family members by Emma’s husband for fear that they might become a target of violence.

Emma (2) [Family 2]: *When Lisa was little she had the Italian flag and I pinned it to the front of her jumper when there was the World Cup. And my husband made me take it off. He said 'you don't do that, because you are causing them ... trouble'.*

Lisa (3): *We had an Italian flag in the garden...*

Emma (2): *...and he made us take it down...because he's thinking about the way other people think about us. I always think about Italy: Italy is strong, Italy is number one. He's the sensible one; he always says to me 'you have to think about how they think about you. Doing that, you are sort of insulting them'. He's always advising us or to make it sure that we do not overstep the mark. He always brings us to reality. [...] Because you never know, you cannot put everybody into a category. Sometimes English with English can't stand each other. They can't stand the Irish, they don't like the Scottish, they don't like the Welsh ... So obviously, you being Italian, you are automatically different. You come from a different country, different culture, different background. So you can't make too much of a statement. These are just like foreign people. Full stop. Foreign people shouldn't be in this country, end of the story. [...] Yeah, because we look different, for a start, before we even say anything, we automatically look different. So you get the odd person,*

*national front or whatever other, so you have always to be careful...what you say or where you say it.*

Emma's comment goes beyond the issue of football and involves directly the sphere of self-expression in a foreign country. On other occasions during the interview, she underlined their attempts to 'blend in', to keep a low profile and not to stand out from the crowd. Football is clearly not just sport. It involves a person's allegiances to a country so strongly that the manifestation of a different interest might be irritating for the 'odd person' with unpleasant consequences.

The interviewees' divided loyalties between Italy and England are clearly identified by asking them to name the team they would support in the hypothesis of a match between Italy and England. The answer to the question produced the most diverse and answers.

Alberto (1) [Family 9]: *We support Italy.*

Matilde (1): *Yes, but if England is playing against a country other than Italy, I would support England.*

Alberto: *I wouldn't because English people boast that they always win.*

Riccardo (2) [Family 1]: *Sport is an interesting example: when there is England versus Italy we want Italy to win. I don't know if this tells you anything'.*

Giacomo (2) [Family 5]: *If England is playing against Italy. Oh, it's gonna be Italy [laughs]. Oh, yes yes. Oh, yes.*

Emma (2) [Family 2]: *'We are in England so I want England to win. But if it is playing against Italy, it is gonna be Italy, obviously. But Italy has got to win all the time. And mum made me Italian flags. We've got Italian shirts...'*

Lisa (3) [Family 2]: *'I would like if they drew'.*

Luca C.'s answer, however, provides an interesting insight on the interviewee's reasoning for supporting Italy or England. Which team will be supported will depend on the circumstances. In any case, it seems that Luca C. would always support the least favourite team. Moreover, by doing this it is as if he was always trying to defy the majority of the other football fans. It seems that it is hard for him to give up to his condition of being part of a minority group, and not necessarily culturally.

Luca C. (2) [Family 9]: *I was in Italy, among friends. I was asked 'how come? Do you support England? You are here in Italy, you are Italian...why?'. I couldn't even explain why. There was this thought in me: 'Well, England is my country as well, I was born there, I grew up there. I have sentiments, affection towards that country'. If I find myself in England, it is the same thing for Italy. Italy is the country of my father and my mother, I've got Italian blood in me... I feel Italian. And that's strange! Going back to the question of my identity... I am not confused, as I can manage...[pause] I am not looking for my identity, that is, I don't need to*

*look for it, I am happy in the situation I am. As I told you, it has never been a negative thing for me having two nationalities.*

Luca C. is reflecting on his flexible allegiances and is aware that his identity would have some bearings on those. Nevertheless, he believes that he can deal with his hyphenated identity.

According to Pons *et al.* (2001), the level of acculturation or, in other words, the existence of hyphenation, allows the individual to perform choices according to the context. 'The high-acculturated individual presents a profile close to the host individual for a sport with host cultural connotation and close to the pure immigrant for a sport with original cultural connotation. This individual maintains his ethnic identity with its emblems (sports or else) and at the same time acquires emblems (sports or else) of the host culture' (Pons *et al.* 2001: 5).

It is clear that hyphenated identities seldom consist of two equal halves: more often, individuals might show a bigger or smaller recognition or personal loyalty to one country or another, a higher or lower level of identification with one culture or another, a bigger or smaller appreciation for culturally specific values and principles. Hyphenation implies that the individuals might identify with one country or another, or with both of them, depending of the context.

## 8.12 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the processes of construction and negotiation of Italian identity in different contexts and in relation to different protagonists. It has also clarified that 'being Italian' might refer to various levels of identification with Italy: scale-related (national or regional) or sectorial (political, sporting, or value-related).

The initial section of this chapter was also devoted to clarification of the historical and political motivations behind the mainly regional affiliation of most of the members of the older generation. This cultural bond with their area of origin is of a particular nature. The immigrants, in fact, would not perceive their affection for their place of origin and their feeling of Italianness as mutually exclusive. They might indeed be identified from the outside as having very distinctive regional features but they are Italians and they strongly proclaim their identity.

Nevertheless, there are cultural and linguistic elements acquired through their stay in England which have become part of themselves. The adoption of these elements would indicate their acquired British side, which would not compromise their identification.

The second generation's affiliations, however, appear to be more complex because of the varied nature of the elements taking part to their identity construction. Their identities seem to be at a crossroads of several forms of identification with their in-group, their community, the country they live in, the country of origin of their parents, with a European supra-national form of citizenship – which at times is a resourceful form of identification useful to sedate any conflicts. These are multiple identities offering them to approach the world and events in different ways through various combinations, which not always are free from contradictions and ambiguities. Their identities, which can be defined as multiple, flexible, hyphenated, are certainly the sites of cultural conflicts but they are also the sites in which creativity can take place. The members of the second generation are often the first people who perceive how peculiar is their situation, if confronted with their Italian or English friends or acquaintances.

At a certain point, the children of the immigrants feel that this hyphen is a heavy burden to carry. They would probably prefer to neglect or, better, forget part of what makes them who they are, and become absorbed in the country of residence. However, this is just a temporary stage, as through the years and different experiences they realise that their attempts to discard their culture of origin have been both difficult, for objective reasons, and extreme. Having realised that their condition is permanent, mainly when they reach maturity, they manage to come to terms with it. Depending on the circumstances, the second generation might or might not be invisible. They might be labelled according to certain characteristics, which they might or might not accept, but that will definitely alter their perception of the self and of 'the others'. Aware of their hyphenated identity, they are not struggling with it anymore and accept that they are different from both the Italians of Italy and the members of the host community. It is the awareness of a permanent, non-changeable, sad, 'chronic' condition.

These BBI (British-born Italians), through a number of experiences, appreciate their difference as they managed to achieve a more constructive view of themselves as the product of both their family upbringing and values as well as of the British culture and education system. Most of them are conscious that their feeling of belonging to two cultures, while it can be disorienting, can also be an asset, as they underline how even in their everyday life they can put into practice what they have learnt. Through their experiences they have acquired a knowledge of the way to build a bridge over the distance between the two cultures in almost every circumstance of their lives. These bridges can be reassuring or unstable, temporary or permanent, nevertheless they are necessary in order to reduce the gap between two cultures and two worlds.



The second generation's role seems to be the most difficult and demanding within the three generational family. Parents and children are both hinged on that generation which has, since their birth, had the role of mediators. In the past, still very young, they were mediating between their parents and the outside world. They are still their parents' main referents in many everyday matters. At the same time, acting as intermediaries between their children's and their own parents' worlds, they mitigate any striking differences between their cultures. Although the children of the immigrants might present hyphenated, hybrid - and in some cases even torn - forms of identification, they are for their own children role models and embodiment of what makes them culturally different from their peers.

Most of the second generation women interviewed were born and grew up into very traditional families. They married mainly with men belonging to the Italian community. Therefore, they have always been the ones who have been most affected by traditional models of gendered roles. Through the interviews they sounded critical of some of the rules applied specifically to women. They do not seem to fight against this: again, they fit into their traditional role, which is that of soothing conflicts, not of creating new ones. They continue to live according to conventional practices while modifying their families' gender roles and balances from within, never manifestly and almost imperceptibly. Their role is most interesting in relation mainly to their daughters, as they appear to be mediating between them, the outside world, and their often too traditional fathers and grandparents.

An interesting element characterises the interviewees belonging to the third generation. In general, they are less likely to emphasise inner struggles in a definition of who they are. In a generalising spirit, it is possible to affirm that if born to Italian origin parents, they would define themselves as mainly Italian. However, if they were born from a mixed marriage, they would affirm that they have a mixed identity. The interesting element here is that the younger members seem to be less inclined to employ a great effort in order to define who they are. Often they would refer to the nationality appearing on their passport in order to validate their identity claims. Nevertheless, the identity they feel and offer the others is indeed their own construction, made by their ideas and beliefs of what Italian means and should be. Theirs is mainly a reference to a 'symbolic' belonging, which is made of ready-made phrases, codes and group membership. Their Italianness is that of the Italian community of Nottingham. In fact, they do not seem to identify with the 'Italian' Italians nor with the English, as they would not share the same background with any of them. Being Italian is behaving in the

Italian way, it is showing others and ourselves that we do what Italians are supposed to do, like eating together, preparing Italian food, supporting the national team during the matches. The enactment of ethnicity is seems to be the key to a convincing intergenerational transmission of cultural practices and allegiances. It is an affirmation and continuous reinforcement by putting in practice what the previous generation has done. It is a case of 'learning by doing'.

## Chapter 9: CONCLUSION

### 9.1 Preamble

As pointed out at the outset of the present thesis, the objective of the study has been to investigate ethnic identity transmission in families of Italian origin living in the Nottingham area. This qualitative intergenerational study has been focussed on the analysis of the influence of several variables, identified in figure 2.4, on the processes of identity construction of the offspring of the Italian immigrants who migrated to the UK in the 1950s and 60s.

The lack of rotation and return migration of these Italian workers has been the foundation of large ethnic minority communities, now expanding through the birth of new generations. This demonstrates that the relation between the immigrants' adaptation processes to and levels of identification with the country of residence cannot be interpreted as functions of the time spent in the country nor of the generational distance from the culture of origin nor as a straightforward process, as suggested by the linear bipolar model (Phinney 1990; see also Section 2.4).

The literature on the field seems to produce inconsistent results. On one side, this implies that the immigrant condition should be characterised by a process of adjustment to the new environment, with a possible consequent decline of the significance attached to ethnic identity across the generations (Alba 1990; Castles 1984; Gans 1996). On the other, it indicates that, despite assimilation, certain immigrant groups experience a persistence of ethnic identification through the time and generations. The present research is, therefore, a contribution to bridging this theoretical gap through the results of an ethnographic study focussed on three-generational Italian families in a migratory setting.

In particular, as explained in Chapter 1, the aims of this investigation have been:

- a) To analyse the way Italian immigrants and their offspring construct their transnational identity and elaborate their feelings of belonging, and identifying the variables involved in the processes of identity construction;
- b) To determine the function of both the nuclear and extended family in the process of cultural transmission through the generations.

These main aims were divided into smaller, more manageable, sub-questions (a1, a2, b1, b2 and b3). This final chapter, therefore, will refer to them and provide answers by drawing from the empirical results of the study presented in chapters 5-8, with cross-references to the relevant literature.

A section of the present chapter will be dedicated to discussion of the research findings in relation to their broad theoretical and practical implications, while the last section will be a critical analysis of the distinctive qualities of the thesis and suggest potential future research avenues.

## 9.2 Summary of main findings

This study has illustrated the strong influence of the family of origin, both nuclear and extended, on many of the many variables involved in the construction of the ethnic/cultural identity among people from an immigrant background (see Figure 2.4). These numerous variables and agencies, however, as suggested in Chapter 2, have different degrees of influence in this process. Hence, the self-representation and construction of the identities of individuals of migrant origin belonging to different generations can be very diverse.

This phenomenon, however, also strongly depends on the character of negotiation of these processes and on their contextual nature.

### 9.2.1 First generation

The older members of the Italian community in Nottingham were born in Italy, retain Italian citizenship and identify themselves as Italian. The strong *campanilismo* (parochialism) they might display and regional culture they might refer to do not exclude their identification as Italians. As explained in Chapter 8, there are historical and political reasons dating back to the Italian pre-unitary period for the cultural differences among people originating from different regions. Being from Puglia or Umbria does not exclude feeling Italian, as being from Surrey or Cornwall does not exclude identifying as English and/or British. The contextual nature of identity is, however, again, extremely significant. Individuals might refer to one or the other of the different strata constituting their identity without negating the validity of those temporarily not considered as relevant to the specific circumstances (a1).

When the members of the older generation arrived in the UK they were aged in their twenties and thirties. They were adults with an awareness of who they were, bringing to the country a long-established set of values, customs and practices in which they identified and which often did not correspond to the local ones. With migration many things in their lives needed to be modified: their daily activities, their life rhythms, patterns of behaviour and relationships. Nevertheless, many of the first generation reacted to these dramatic changes through a re-creation in the host country of

the traditional practices of the place of origin, through a reproduction of religious festivals and other official and unofficial occasions (Chapters 5 and 6). This still allows the older generation to revive aspects of their youth spent in their villages of origin.

The ‘myth of return’, an intrinsic element of many forms of voluntary migration, for most of the older respondents meant that they had little interest in socialising outside their ethnic enclave and, as a consequence, had limited fluency in the language of the place of residence. Due to failure in accomplishing a definitive return to their place of origin, the older generation’s connection with it develops into a life-long programme of recurrent returns and transnational practices of attendance at harvests and local festivals (a2, b1).

The first generation is a relatively small group compared to the numbers in subsequent generations. Nevertheless they have taken upon themselves a titanic task: that of providing their offspring with an archetype of ‘Italianness’ (a1). The generational status of the older immigrants necessarily identifies them as the most ‘ethnic’ elements of their family. They feel that they are the ‘original’ link with Italy, that their own task is that of being responsible for the intergenerational transmission of their cultural/ethnic/national identity and that the task of their offspring should be to conform to the model they offer them. Although their alleged ‘faithfulness to the model’, their preservation of an original character through the years of permanence in Britain is arguable. A certain hybridisation is clearly perceivable in the process of reproduction of some of the rituals and performances of their cultural identity (Chapter 8). This is a phenomenon often ignored by the protagonists. In reality, this is the field of a *symbolic identity* which ‘is characterized by a nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of the old country; a love for and a pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behavior [*sic*’ (Gans 1979: 9). Their presumed faithfulness to the ‘original’ character is of a unique type. It consists of a very complex combination of ideas, values and cultural elements, drawn from their experiences in the place of origin and that of residence, past and present, including an unmistakable religious affiliation.

Religion has a powerful cultural significance (Chapter 5). For individuals with a religious background, religion comes into play in most of their various life stages (births, weddings, funerals, etc.) with a precise set of practices (b2). In addition, religious institutions might play a strong social as well as a religious role, which adds a new important dimension to the correlation between religion and the immigrants’ everyday life experiences.

The Italian missionary centre of Nottingham and the Italian Club, meeting in its premises, had been for several decades a very important cultural point of reference for the Italian immigrants and their families (Chapter 5). The various activities taking place within the ethnic church had a religious, social and cultural character. They were attended by the majority of the Italians of Nottingham who could through them encouraged the socialisation of their children - and, later, grandchildren - within shared values and culturally relevant traditions.

However, in the intergenerational transmission of identity the active involvement of the older generation would not be enough. If there are people who identify ethnically among the children and grandchildren of the migrants, this is also due to their 'symbolic curiosity' about their ancestral past (Rumbaut 2000: 12).

### 9.2.2 Second generation

Among the three generations, the children of the immigrants present the most tormented process of identity construction. Since their birth, they have been confronted with many different, often incoherent, events.

The family is the primary site for the socialisation of children. It is in fact within the family that the offspring of the migrants become members of their group of origin, by learning a specific language, and internalising particular rules of behaviour, values, tasks, roles and responsibilities (b2). Moreover, through their participation in the activities within the Mission (religious services, parties, meetings) and attendance of the Italian kindergarten, these family upbringing and cultural codes would have been further reinforced through the contact with the Italian missionary nuns and children with a similar background (Chapter 5). The community and its institutions legitimise parents' exhortations for the children to acquire Italianness.

Only through time and exposure to different agencies and independent experiences, do the children of the immigrants develop a wider idea of Italianness. This includes the consciousness that Italy is much more than their parents' village and includes different attitudes to life and customs than those learnt from their family (a1).

The family is the main point of reference until they learn about the existence of mainstream society and of its different cultural codes. Their lives are characterised by a very prominent 'in-betweenness' (Chapters 7 and 8). They stand between the culture of their parents and that of their children, the values of the place of origin and those of the place of residence, the language spoken at home and the one spoken at school and among peers, but also the language of their parents and the one learnt during the Italian

classes (b3).

The process of identity construction through differentiation is for the children of the immigrants a very complex one involving oppositions on several different levels, in relation to a system of binary oppositions (Hall 1997): native/ethnic, child/parent, parent/child, Italian/British. Their dualistic allegiance is the result of their belonging to two different cultures. Confronting the 'other' is seldom for them an unproblematic process. The 'different' person is in fact often a peer, a school-friend, who shares many elements with the child of the immigrant. The discrepancies originating from the awkward situation of being different but alike are at the basis of what will develop into hyphenated forms of self-identification.

Individuals' familiarity with both ethnic culture and that of the place of residence result in the creation of two independent sources of cultural know-how from which it is possible to draw from in most occasions (a2). The special position of the second generation is revealed in its exceptional role of *trait d'union* between two worlds: their parents' and the one of the country of residence. Due to their special role, they also introduce this world to their parents, mediating and interpreting for them what appears to be incoherent. At the same time, they liaise with their children's demand for an equal treatment with their peers by translating and adapting to the context the rules learnt from their parents. These two cultural and linguistic worlds are the sources for hyphenated forms of identification, characterised by an unstable, temporary and often uncomfortable equilibrium between the two allegiances (a1, b2). This condition has often forced the children of the immigrants to face various uncertainties in their lives and relationships. Although the majority of the members of the second generation had been born in England - and, if not, they arrived in the country at a very young age - they live the 'foreigner' syndrome, which at times makes it difficult for them to 'make capital' out of their potentially resourceful cultural situation (Chapters 2 and 8). Likewise, the hyphenation prevents them from feeling at 'home' also during their visits to Italy. The hyphenation turns out to be for the children of the immigrants both a resource and an obstruction: sometimes it makes them feel as if they belong to two worlds, sometimes to none, sometimes to the supranational European one (Chapter 8).

The term identity refers to the private sphere while nationality relates to the official one. Nevertheless, in the immigrants' discourse they are often correlated (Chapter 8). A stamped and validated passport is in fact considered as an official endorsement of the individual's perceived identity (a1). This, however, goes beyond the mere bureaucratic aspect.

The majority of the children of the Italian immigrants, either born in the UK or arriving in the country during their infancy, has retained Italian nationality. This represents a formal statement of their loyalty to the country of origin of their parents. This becomes even more significant in the light that, according to Solinas (1991: 55), the nationality of the individual printed on the document is evocative of belonging to a wider group and represents 'an element of social awareness'.

Being European, however, can at times be useful. European citizenship, a supra-national form of identification, can be a useful expedient to overcome possible situations of hybridity or hyphenation by covering all the differences through its all-inclusive nature.

The Italianness the second generation refers to is, therefore, derived from a variety of sources (see Figure 9.1), among which:

- a) their parents' regional/national/diaspora identity;
- b) their contact with relatives living in Italy;
- c) an abstract form of Italianness which consists of a complex whole of images, stereotypes and representations<sup>132</sup> (see Hall 1997).

The triadic relationship suggested by Vertovec (1999) between the place of origin, the host society and the ethnic group is complemented by the invisible, symbolic and shared nature of the representation of 'the Identity'<sup>133</sup>. This results in a coherent 'third space' (a2).

In the process of intergenerational transmission some of the elements belonging to the culture of the older generation are often rejected (b2). The children of the immigrants do not recognise themselves in some of their parents' ways of expressing their cultural identity, which are considered as realities both spatially and temporally far away, frozen in a distant past. For these reasons, most of the children of the immigrants shun some ethnically identified events, causing their parents' concern about their Italianness. The ones who take part in these events do so 'because they enjoy them, to give the family an excuse to meet, to please older relatives, to preserve the family as a source of emotional support, or because it is necessary for economic survival' (Gans 1992: 50). Despite the rejection of certain cultural expressions, it is possible to agree with Rumbaut's idea (2000) that the children of the immigrants possess a very strong consciousness of their ethnic heritage, often stronger than their parents'.

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<sup>132</sup> Likewise, the Englishness or Britishness which takes part in the creation of the respondents' hyphenated identity also has an abstract and referential nature.

<sup>133</sup> The capital letter refers to its abstract referential nature.



The process of intergenerational transmission does not take place smoothly: in reality, it is the site of contrasts, negotiations and adaptations. Within the family of Italian origin the gender-specific rules of a patriarchal family are enduring (see Figure 2.4). Social control has been particularly strong for the women of the second generation and the girls born from couples of Italian origin only (b2). This cultural phenomenon, which was unavoidably and unwillingly accepted by the female members of the second generation, has however undergone deep transformations in its transmission to their daughters. The consequence of this is that on the surface tradition is maintained by the appearance of a compliant acceptance of long-dated views. In reality, second generation mothers tend to back up their daughters' wishes of independence or freedom from these rules. This can take place in two different ways: either through their acting as intermediaries with the most conservative members of their family (namely, fathers, fathers-in-law and husbands) or by assuming full responsibility for the consequences of their daughters' actions. Hence, as suggested by Fortier (2000: 167), the long-established gender-related roles and rules are indeed fundamental to the 'collective re-enactment and display of cultural continuity'. Nevertheless, as an enactment, a performance, it is not necessarily bound to be entirely truthful. As long as a façade of obligation and acceptance is preserved, the symbolic continuation of tradition is also temporarily safeguarded.

The influential role of the family of origin finds its unmistakable expression also in the strong parental insistence on the value of intermarriage (Figure 2.4), which is believed to be fundamental to the survival of a close-knit family (Chapter 6). This firmness is also in this case more evident in relation to the daughters.

Phenomena of endogamy and exogamy have an undeniable impact on the self-perception of the individuals and their offspring (b3). Marrying outside the group of origin is an indubitable indication of openness to the 'other', of acceptance of the 'different', hence of a higher degree of socialisation (Alba 1990).

The idea of family closeness is still considered the element which characterises most of the people of Italian origin (b2). In the intergenerational transmission of values, support and loyalty among family members, reciprocity and respect for the older generations are still considered crucial to the Italian character. Nevertheless, immigrant families of Italian origin have certainly changed through the years of permanence in Britain. Although the younger members perceive their family as very conservative and although they are still subjected to traditional models of gendered roles, their upbringing is in reality often more lenient than their parents' (b1). Also in this case, the members of

the second generation perform their duty of mediation between the world of their parents and that of their children, by bending, reinterpreting and adapting the rules of tradition to the new environment.

Family stability is still considered a major issue, although the younger generations' hold progressively more liberal attitudes towards divorce and remarriage (b3). Older parents attribute this phenomenon to the corruptive influence of the 'foreign' moral standards, lower religious participation and respect, as well as to their own failure to act as a defensive barrier to all this. The preservation of the marriage bond is considered as fundamental to the safeguarding of tradition and family life.

Values are internalised 'states of mind': however, attitude formation takes place through a learning process, which relies on imitation, information and conditioning. Although aware of the impact of a divorce on their own children, the children of the immigrants still maintain the importance of family centeredness and identify this element as a typical Italian character learnt from their parents (b2). This confirms further the significance of the family of origin in intergenerational transmission of culturally embedded values and attitudes. This closeness, however, takes place in a new different way. The laic morality of both second generation men and women while modifying their attitudes towards divorce and remarriage, preserves their stance towards family stability and children's well-being.

### 9.2.3 Third generation

For members of the third generation, identifying with one or the other culture represents a much easier process, largely favoured, mediated or encouraged by the parents' previous experience (a1). Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish between 1) those born from parents who both identify as 'of Italian origin' and 2) the ones born from intermarriage between a person of Italian origin and another from a different cultural background.

- 1) The children of people who have married within the ethnic community tend to refer solely to their ethnic ancestry in their self-representation and often passionately affirm their identification with Italy.
- 2) The interviewees born from mixed marriages are inclined to represent themselves in relation to a mixed cultural background, and therefore in terms of a hyphenated identity (a1, b1, b3). What differentiates them from their peers born from parents of Italian origin is the contextual character of their identification: when the Italian side of their identity is contextually relevant,

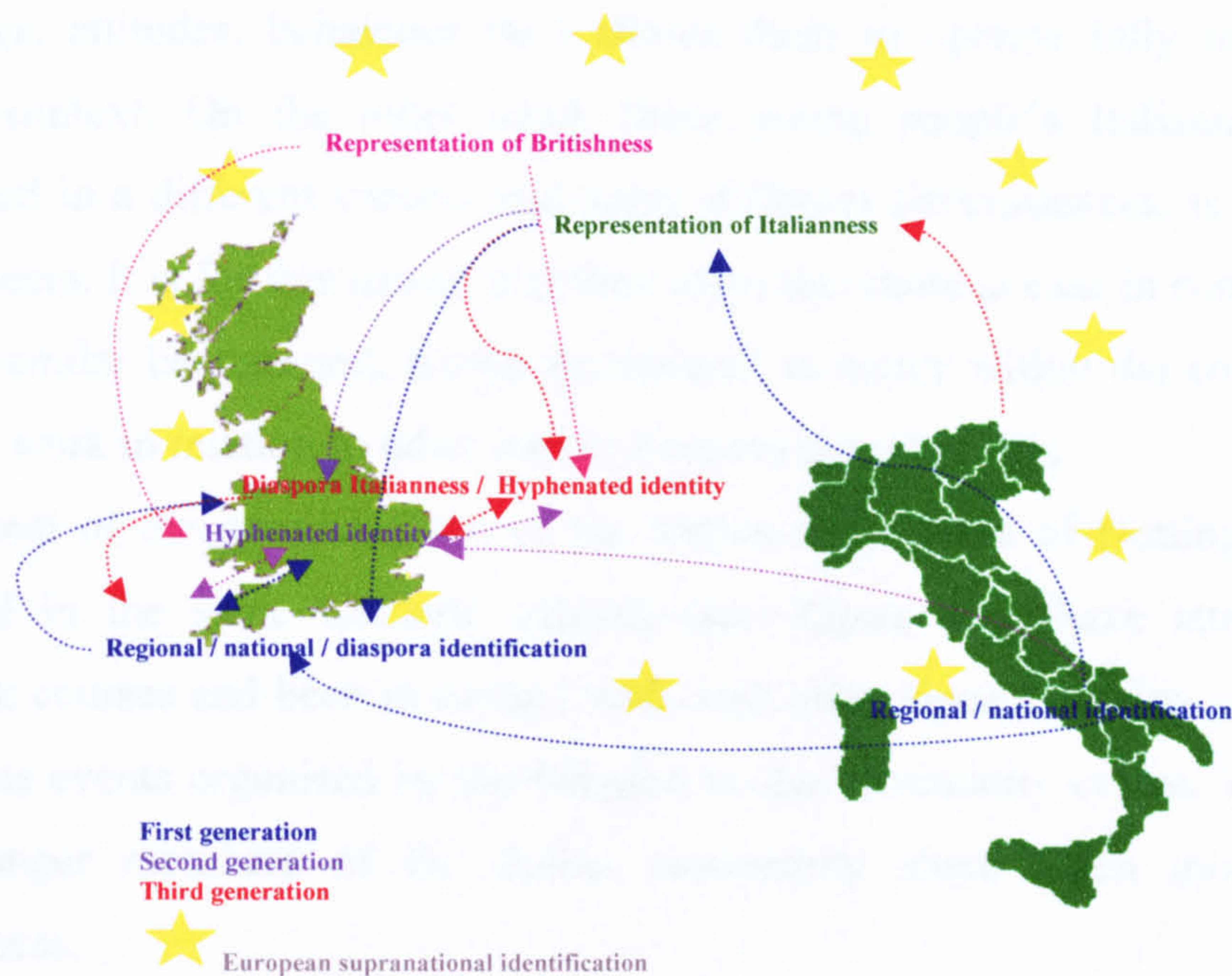
then they would refer to it. The relevance attached to their ethnic background seems to depend closely on the amount of time spent in contact with the parent of Italian origin and his/her family, as well as with friends who identify ethnically.

However, this identification is of a symbolic, as well as objective, nature (b1). It is mainly based on the use of what can be defined as 'ethnic signalling', which can take several forms: from the use of Italian words and expressions among peers, to the fanatical use of Italian designer clothes, to the apparent flaunt of a tanned 'Italian-looking' skin. This verbal and non-verbal communication needs to take place in a particular environment in order to produce the desired effect – within a group which is able to interpret these signals. Hence, in the process of self-identification of the members of the third generation a very significant role is played by the peer-group. This concept reinforces the idea that fluency in the native language is not fundamental to the promotion of the individuals' cultural identity. It is therefore possible to maintain that if language shift occurs across the generations, this is not necessarily related to a shift in identity. As suggested in Chapter 7, language might lose its functional purpose but still act as a fundamental symbolic element of voluntary identification.

Membership in a group identifying ethnically reinforces the individuals' feelings of belonging. This feeling is further strengthened by the out-group's (the non-members') perception of their difference (Chapter 8). This substantiates the idea that identity construction is based on a dialogical, although at times oppositional, process of differentiation, as suggested by Schlesinger's suggestion (1987: 235) of the inclusive/exclusive nature of identity (a1).

If the third generation's ethnic identification alludes to their sense of loyalty to their ancestral past, then Gans' hypothesis of their reference to a symbolic ethnicity (Gans 1979) finds further confirmation. However, it is also necessary to take into account that the symbolic character of the ethnic identification of the third generation might only be partially found in the 'Idea of Italianness', a quasi-platonic abstract general character which finds expression in a myriad of different objective forms (see Figure 9.1).

**Figure 9.1: Graphic representation of the levels and nature of the identification of the three generations**



In the country of residence, the members of the older generation retain the regional/national form of identification. Nevertheless, through time and permanence in the host country, they elaborate and negotiate it with the several agencies they are in contact with: work colleagues, immigrants from other areas, family members, media, and neighbours. They nominally identify as Italian, nevertheless, their identity has assumed the individual character of an Italian diaspora form of identification, although also refers to an abstract idea of Italianness.

The children of the immigrants' hyphenated forms of identification result from the elaboration of a variety of inputs. Among these: their parents' diaspora identification, their native and ethnically identified peers' forms of identification, membership to groups or societies, their assumed 'ethnic' status for their children and 'native' status for their parents, the reference to a symbolic represented form of Italianness, their contact with relatives in Italy, the agreed supra-national European identification.

Like the abstract form of Italianness which is involved in the construction of their hyphenated identities, also the other counterpart, Britishness, is consists of a set of ideas, stereotypes and representations.

In the figure, the stars symbolising the encompassing nature of the European identification involve only the second and third generations, the only ones who convincingly relate to it as an additional layer of their identity.

The elements taking part to the formation of the youngest respondents' identity are multiple and referring to the following: the immaterial and constructed representation of Italianness and Britishness, their grandparents' diaspora identification, their parents' hyphenated identity, the ethnically identified peer group, the European form of identification. They tend to identify in relation to a hyphenated identity if born from a mixed marriage or an 'Italian' identity if born of parents from an Italian background.

It is, indeed, possible to argue that the Italianness the younger generation refers to is deeply rooted in the Italian world of the diaspora community of Nottingham, while holding on to what can be considered an immaterial abstract representation of Italy.

The symbolic, abstract nature of the Italianness of the grandchildren of the Italian immigrants has, however, a very strong contextual relevance. Their diaspora Italianness (language, attitudes, behaviour etc.) allows them to operate fully in their everyday British context. On the other hand, these young people's Italianness, for having developed in a different context and under different circumstances, is not that of their Italian peers. It is for this reason that they often feel more at ease in contact with people from a similar background, would be inclined to marry within the community and to live and work in relation to other Italian diaspora communities.

Most of the grandchildren of the Italian immigrants of Nottingham have been educated in the same Catholic schools (see Figure 2.4), have attended the same language courses and been in contact with each other since their first years through the numerous events organised by the Mission or the community centre. This implies that the younger members of the Italian community share much more than similar experiences.

Family and peer pressure assume a very important function in the third generation's processes of identification. Their family traditions, background and culture are perceived as the major elements of differentiation from their native peers and the other members of mainstream society. Simultaneously, some of them underline further their perceived difference due to peer pressure to retain or display their Italianness.

### **9.3 This study and suggestions for further research**

This study has been focussed on the analysis of the intergenerational transmission of ethnic/cultural identity in families of Italian origin. The role of both the nuclear and extended family, peer group pressure, the network of acquaintances and the type of education and upbringing – which can directly and indirectly be related to the family – all assume an important function in the process of identity building. As underlined in Chapter 6, generational status, intermarriage and gender roles deeply influence the way individuals construct their identities, relate to the other members of their family and to the outside world. For this reason, interesting results could be obtained from the analysis of the variation of intergenerational relations and identity strategies of the present third generation and its offspring. The prolongation of the current longitudinal investigation to new generations would also allow the monitoring of the dynamic relationship between acculturation and identity building processes.

Comparative intergenerational studies on other minority groups might throw

further light on the nature and function of family links in the creation and stabilisation of migrant communities. This study has raised certain issues that require further consideration, evaluation and discussion within the field of international migration in terms of the development of a phenomenon of circulation among migrants that steadily increasing transnationalism can only amplify.

New perspectives on the issues taken into account in this work might also be developed through collaborative and comparative research across national boundaries also in relation to other communities, in order to verify possible trends and influential variables in questions related to identification processes and cultural transmission. This could also help the understanding of the most influential variables in the cultural exchanges and negotiations between immigrant and local communities through contact and time. This would require a long-term, iterative, approach.

As underlined in most of the Chapters of the present thesis, identity construction is a relational phenomenon, highly dependent on the context and influenced by a several variables. Therefore, although similar aspects might be shared by other Italian groups in the UK, the outcomes of the present study should not be seen as applicable to all Italian communities in the country. As clarified in Chapters 3, 7 and 8, this is due to the fact that Italians are not homogeneous because of their regional or local customs and cultural peculiarities. Besides, the results of this study have to be considered also as the consequence of the specific site for the research. The Italian community of Nottingham in fact developed in close contact with other minority groups migrated in similar periods. On this particular multicultural urban background, relationships are mediated and identities negotiated. Due to the contextual nature of these processes further research could be focussed on the value and extent of interethnic mutual influences and interferences on the cultural identity of people living in other geographical and social contexts. The diagram of Figure 2.4., although developed in relation to the specific context of the present study, could be useful to this purpose and be flexibly applicable to the study of the identity construction within other migrant communities.

Through the present study it has also been possible to ascertain the existence of very specific forms of hybrid/hyphenated forms of identity among individuals from an immigrant background. The development of these varieties of identity is only possible when people enter in contact with individuals from a different background and start questioning the nature of the differences in attitude and behaviour. This phenomenon is not limited to the case of the migrants' offspring. There is a growing movement of people across borders and it is expected an intensified cultural contact among them. For

this reason, the number of people who might develop hyphenated or complex identities will certainly intensify through the time. Focussing the academic attention on the development of identity strategies in an era of globalisation would be the natural response to increased movement of population and contact among people.

To promote advancement and better understanding in the field of ethnic identity, the academic world should also pay additional attention to other phenomena of identity construction, not necessarily related to immigrant communities but to geo-political border changes through the generations. The intergenerational study of identity construction of former East and West Germans would certainly produce interesting results. Likewise, it would be of high academic and political interest to investigate the legacies of a unified past on the cultural perception of several generations of people belonging to independent countries previously part of larger political, economic and geographical expressions, such as the former Soviet Union or Yugoslavia.

#### **9.4 Broader theoretical and practical implications**

The main accomplishment of the present work is the collection of original detailed empirical data on intergenerational identity transmission in families of Italian origin living in a diaspora setting. Fieldwork activities and the analysis of the ethnographic material answered the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. Besides the contribution to empirical research on migration and identity in Britain, the present thesis also invests broader theoretical and methodological issues which can be applied to other relevant research contexts. A significant strength of the thesis lies in the development and substantiation of a considerable number of theories related to identity construction and intergenerational transmission in diaspora communities. As it focuses in particular on the Italian community, the research assumes even a higher relevance, due to the distinctive private character of the Italian family which makes it challenging for the researcher gaining access and gather empirical data.

This study also complements the existing literature on the Italian presence in Britain and in the EU by adding a new intergenerational perspective.

The cross-generational character of the present work represents an additional potential scholarly contribution of the present research as it further validates the idea that the process of assimilation of people of immigrant origin does not stop with the migrant generation and involves directly their offspring. Interesting studies focussing on ethnic/cultural identity have often been penalised by a one-generation-only perspective. This, in reality, overshadows the fact that individuals rarely react to the outside world as

units unaffected by their family environment. This can take place either directly, through everyday choices, or indirectly, through the individuals' internalised attitudes and values.

Another interesting element emphasized through the present study is that intergenerational transmission does indeed proceed vertically through the generations, but is also a two way learning process, actively involving both ascendants and descendants (see Figure 2.6). If, in fact, attitudes and forms of behaviour borrowed from the place of origin can be transmitted to the younger generations, likewise, the older generations can be acquainted with the customs of the place of residence through the mediation of their children and grandchildren.

Methodologically, the research is characterised by a strong multi-level comparative character, including: the place of origin and that of residence; the ethnic community and the host society; the various members of the ethnic community; the offspring of intra- and inter-married respondents. In this sense, the already complex combination of influences involved in the analysis of the phenomena of socialisation and identity construction, due to the intergenerational nature of the present study, have been 'cubed' for the implication of a variety of intermediate/transitional levels. On these was founded a broader intergenerational comparison.

Another notable point of this work is its interdisciplinarity. Migration is a 'total social fact' (Mauss 1990) which, for its character, needs to be interpreted in relation to a system of interconnected phenomena associated with the social, economic and symbolic spheres. The study is also based on the assumption that the integration of perspectives through a grounded comprehension of complex cultural phenomena advances knowledge and encourages a more truthful and less sectorial perception of reality. The social world is not divided into distinctive disciplines (geography, history, linguistics, etc.). Therefore, the best way to achieve valuable insights on social phenomena is to recognise their multi-faceted nature. Social researchers have become ever more aware of this, which explains the current increasing erosion of the disciplinary boundaries between various branches of social sciences and humanities. Interdisciplinarity is the answer to the multidimensional research of all those phenomena standing at the conjunction of a multiplicity of interrelated fields, like migration and identity. The recognition of this allows flexibility, dynamicity and the investigation of unexplored research terrains.

The interdisciplinary and comparative nature of the study represents its major strength but also its limitation. Potentially, several other research venues might have



been possible. For this reason, it was necessary to clarify beforehand what and how to study particular phenomena in order to overcome the over-abundance of data, operationalise the nonmaterial concepts involved and make them usable for intergenerational comparison.

The modest body of prior studies of a similar nature and the peculiarities of a work absorbing innovatively several disciplinary conventions might be puzzling for the more discipline-bound reader who is looking for recurrent patterns or long-established interpretive forms. The approach used asks for a higher flexibility from the reader's side who is required to consider the study in relation to its effectiveness in the progress of the investigation and understanding, in the awareness of the perfectible character of the process of knowledge (Elgin 1996: 12).

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Figure A1: Key

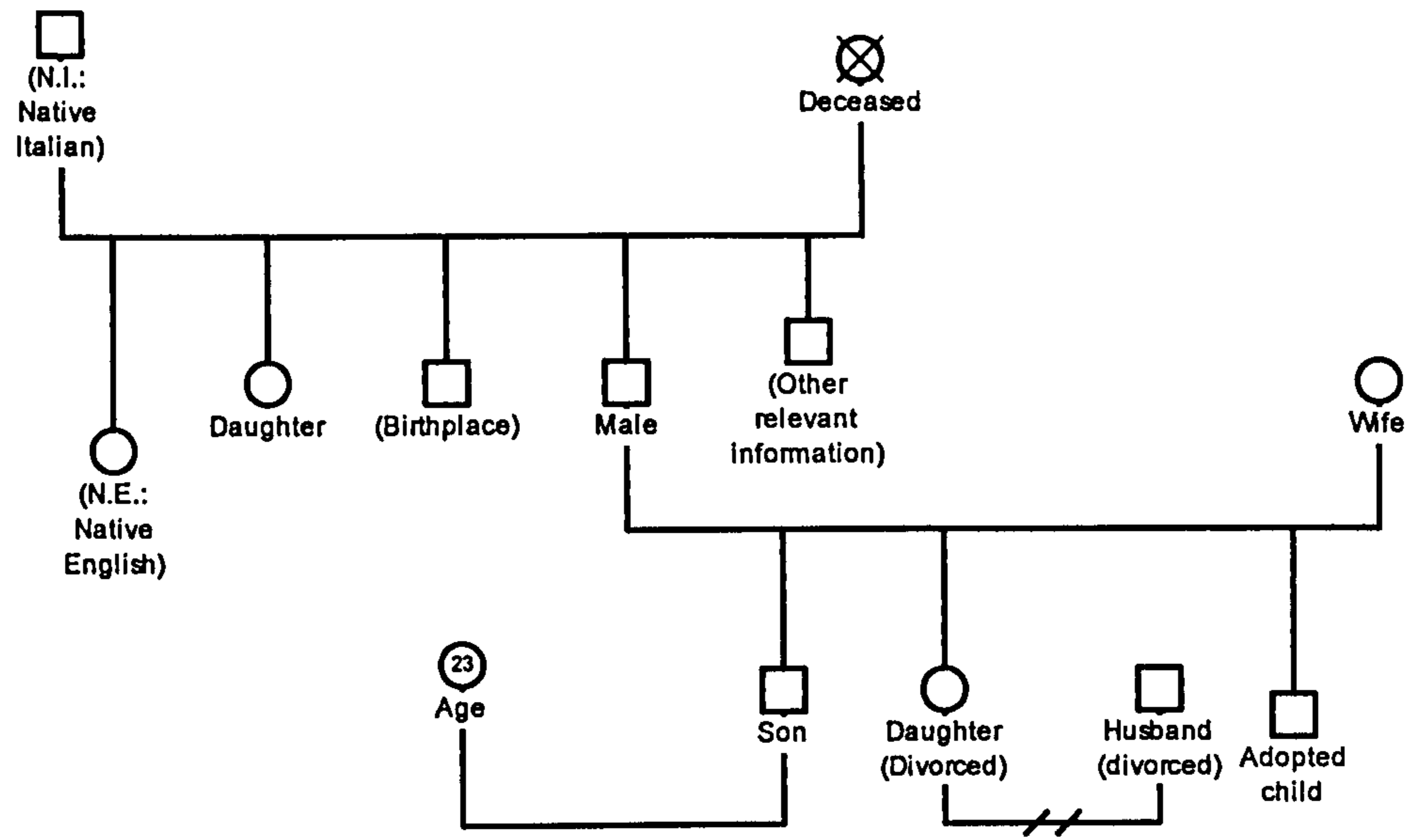


Figure A2: Family 1

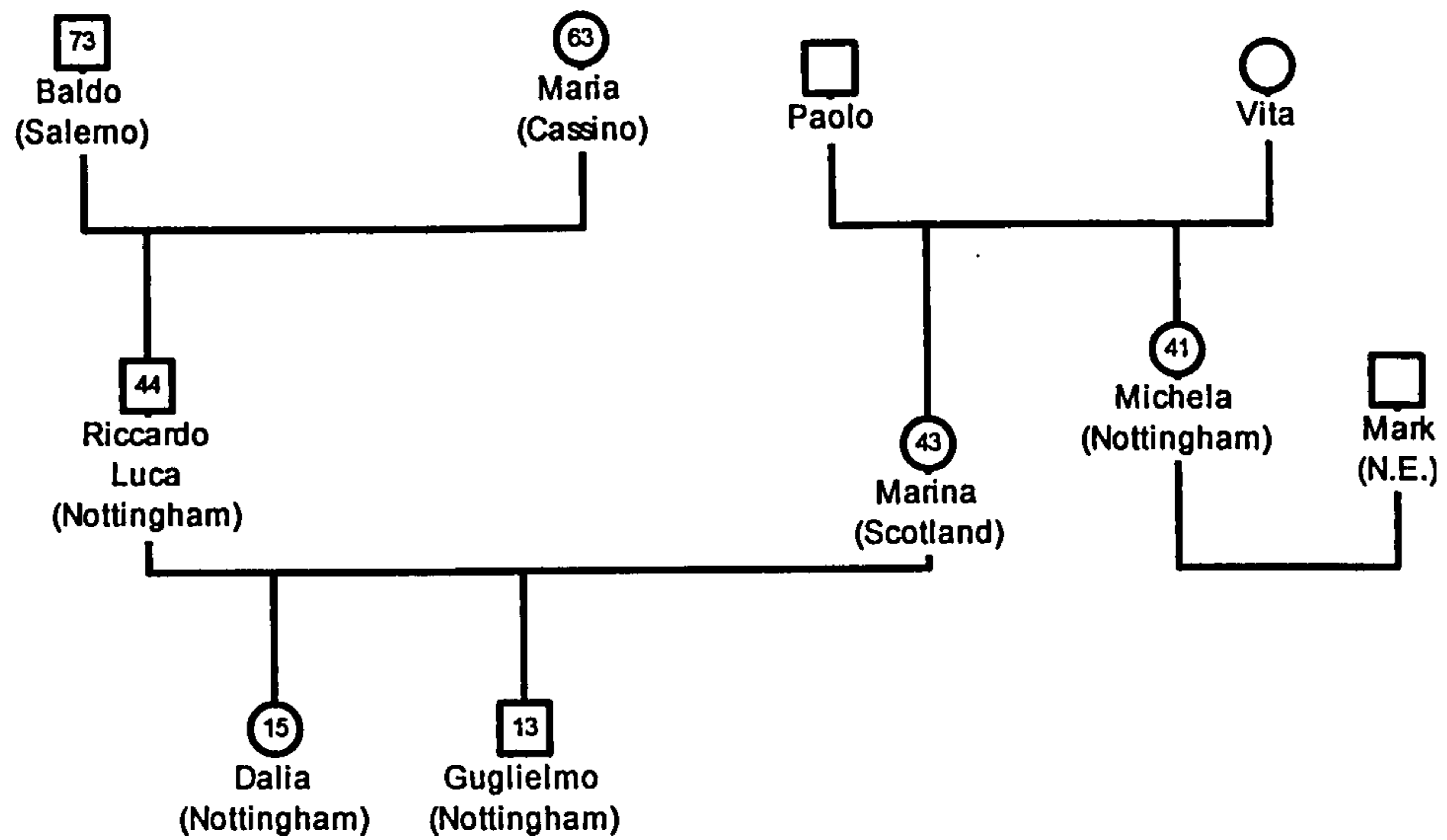


Figure A3: Family 2

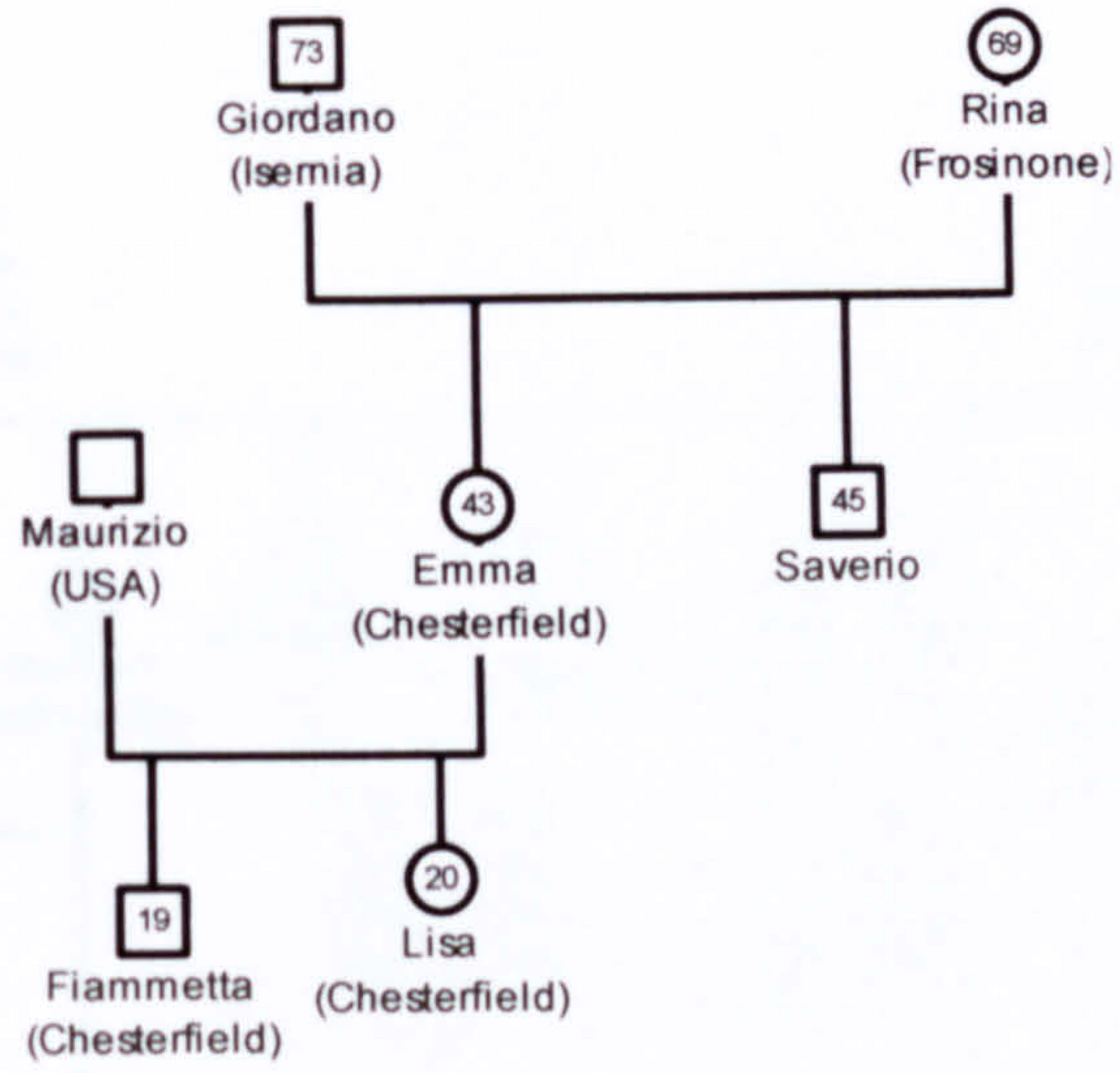
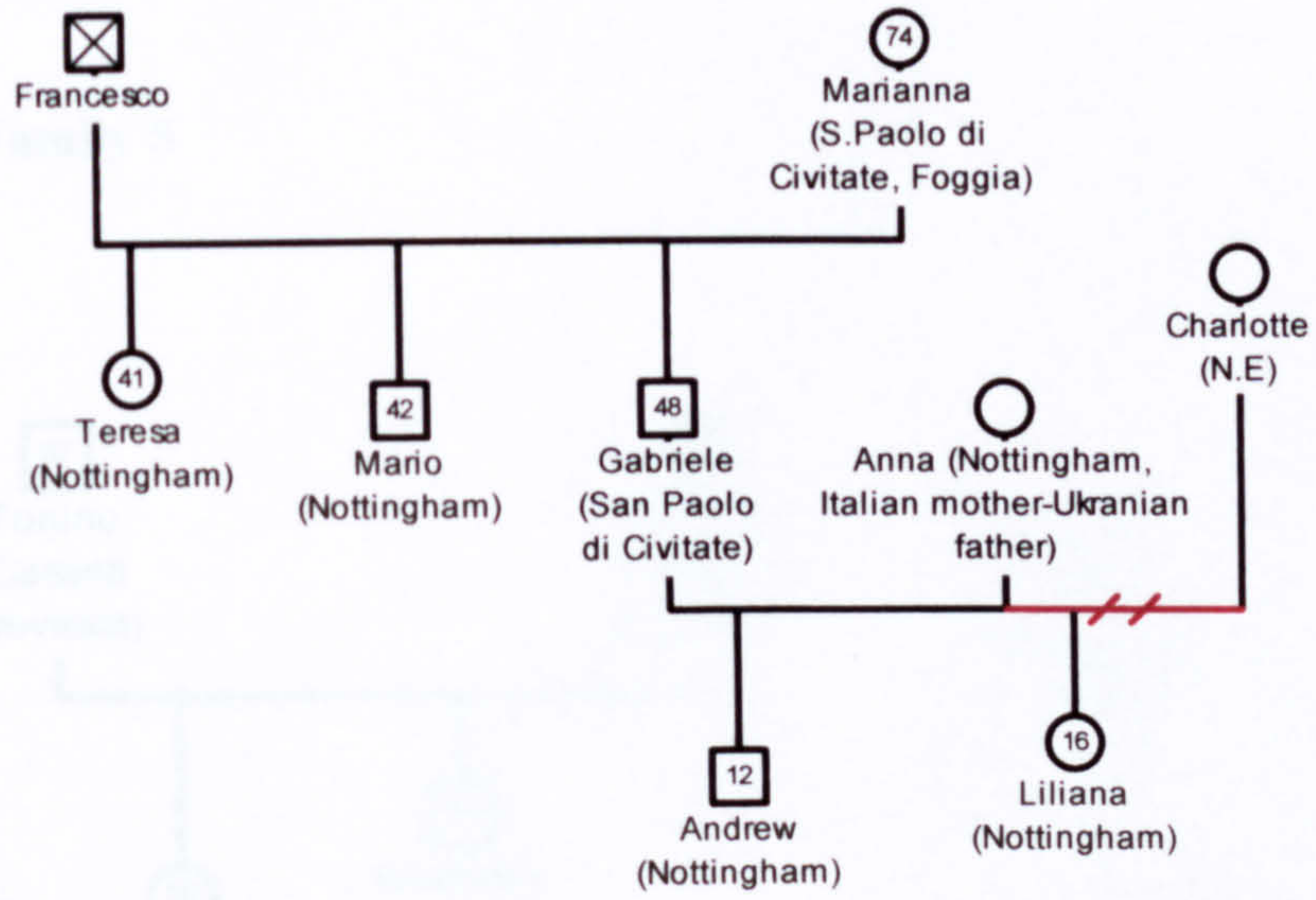
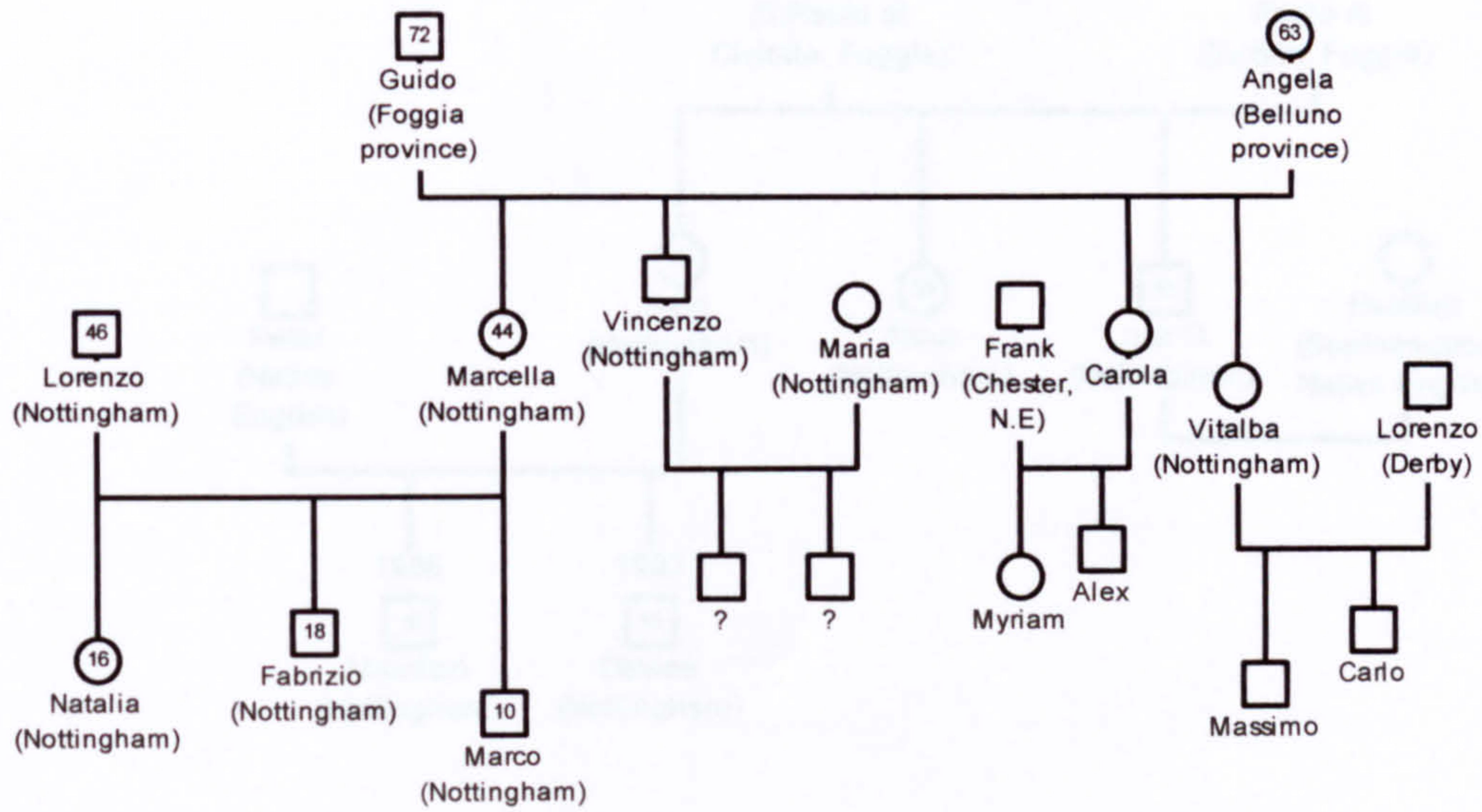


Figure A4: Family 3



**Figure A5: Family 4**



**Figure A6: Family 5**

**Figure A6: Family 5**

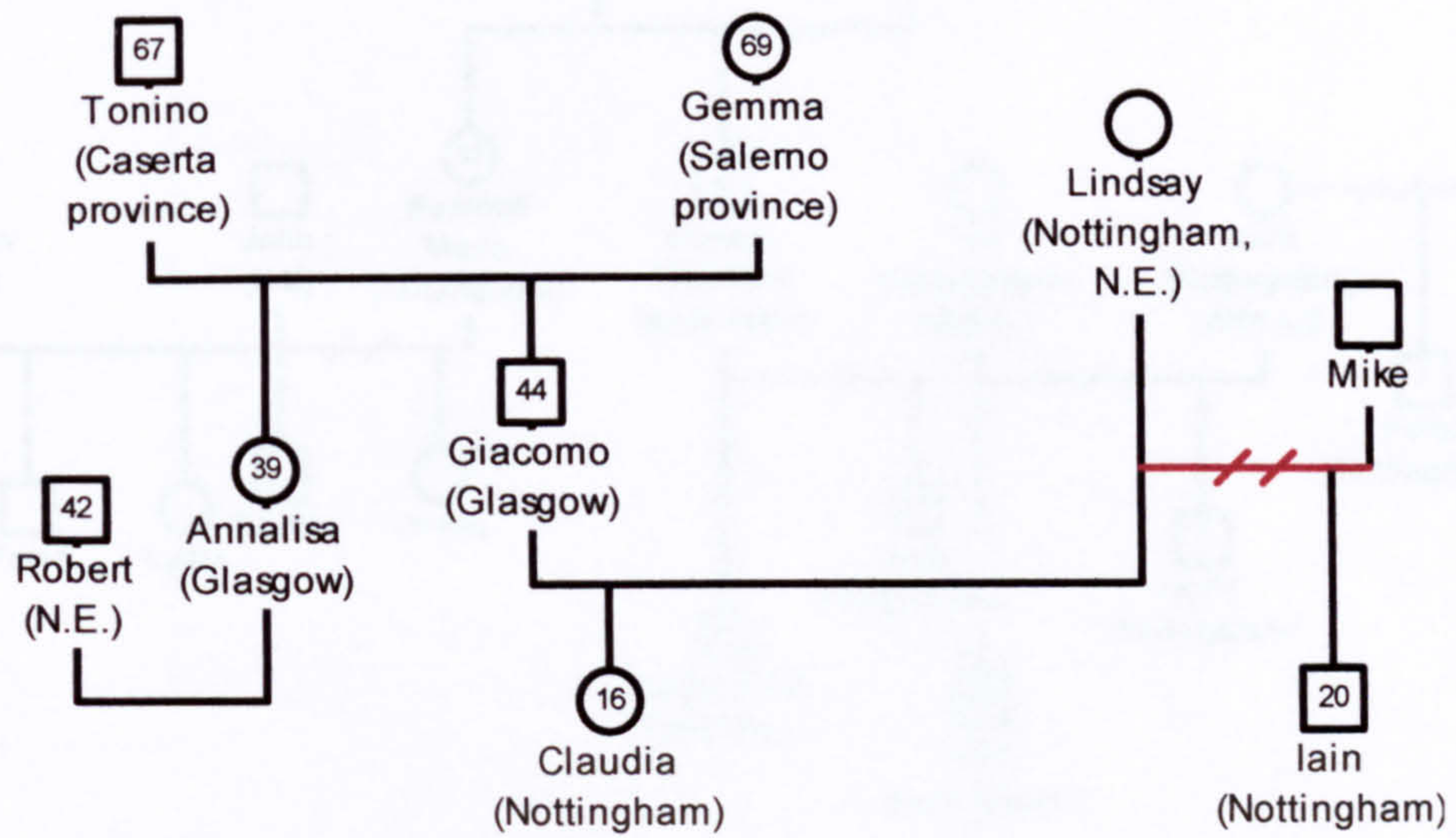


Figure A7: Family 6

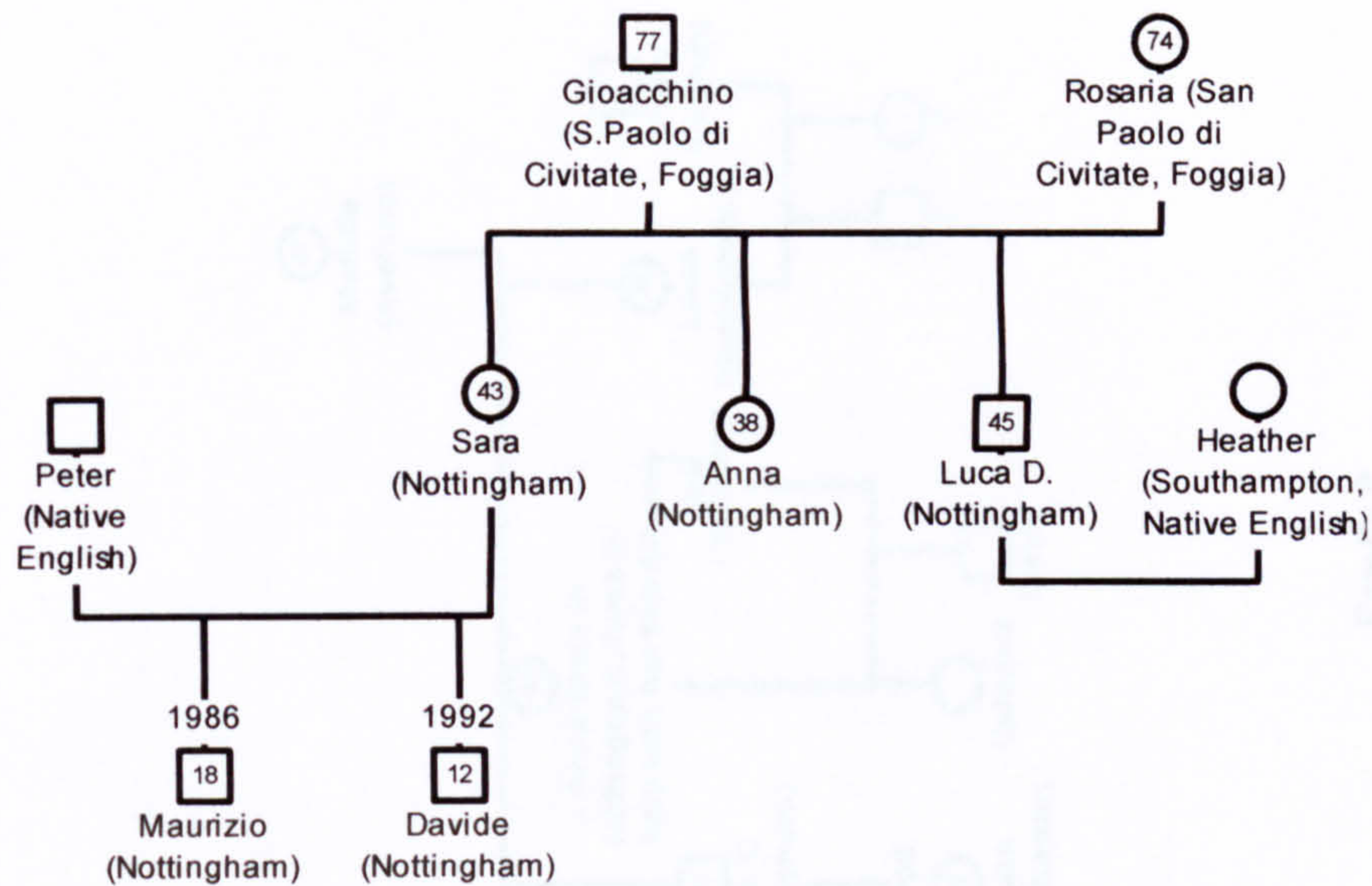


Figure A8: Family 7

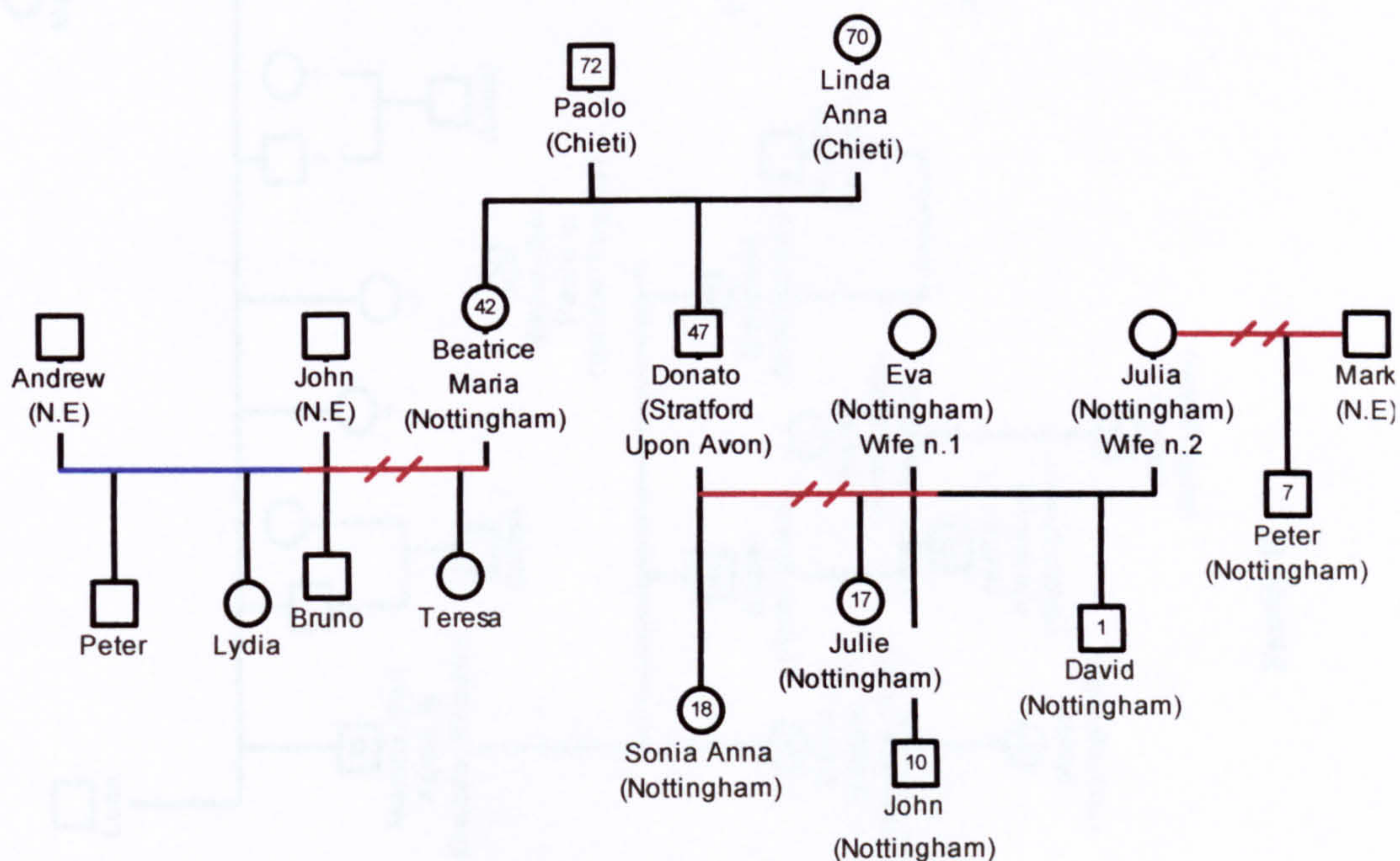
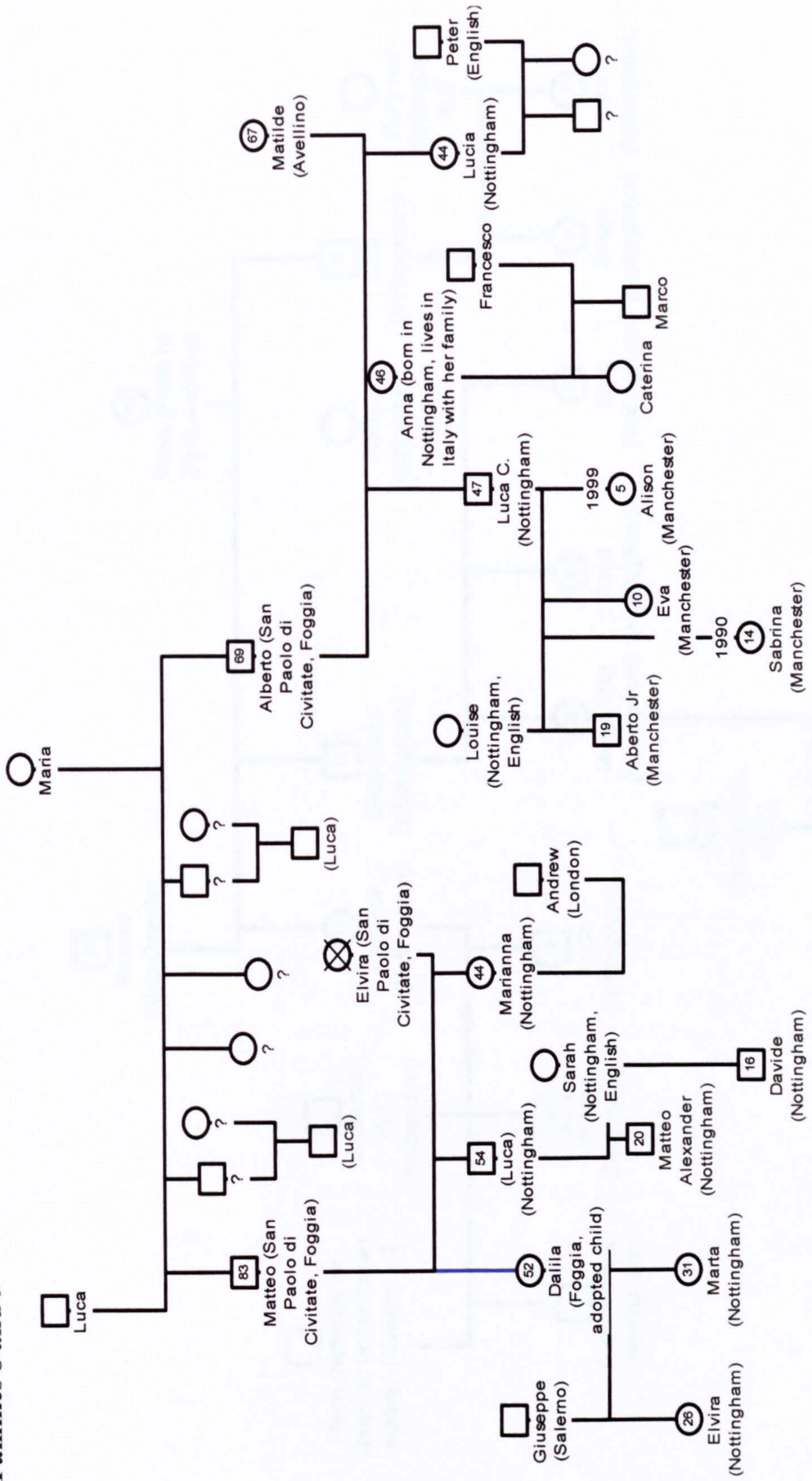


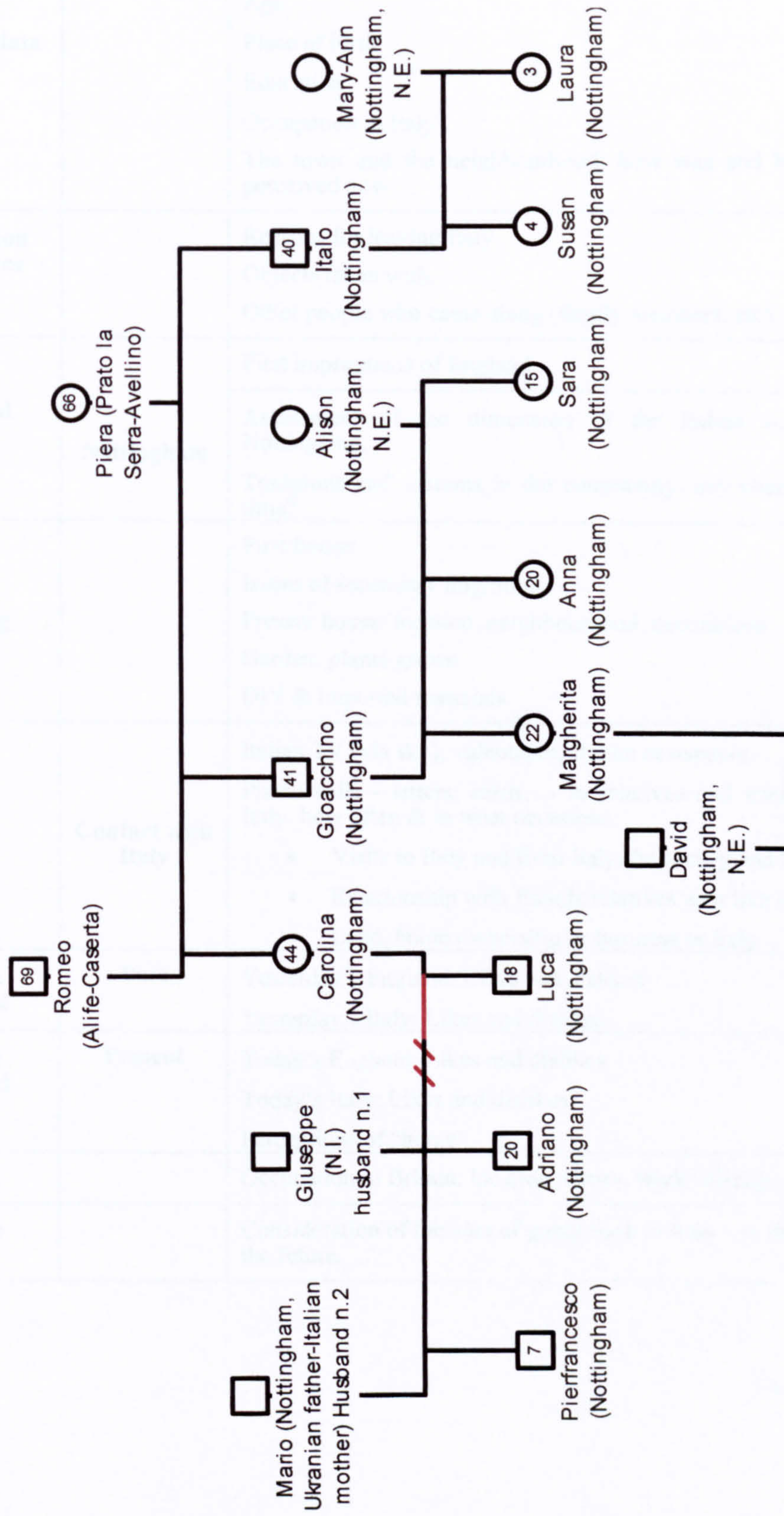
Table A9: Families 8 and 9



Family 8

Family 9

**Table A10: Family 10**



**Interview schedule: First generation**

<b>Personal data</b>		Name Age Place of birth Education Occupation in Italy The town and the neighbourhood: how was and how they are perceived now
<b>Emigration experience</b>		Reasons for leaving Italy Objects taken with. Other people who came along (family members, etc). Why?
<b>England</b>	<b>Nottingham</b>	First impressions of England
		Assessment of the dimension of the Italian community in Nottingham. Traditions and customs in the community: any changes over the time?
<b>Housing</b>		First house Issues of secondary migration Present house: location, neighbourhood, decorations Garden: plants grown DIY & imported materials
<b>Italy</b>	<b>Contact with Italy</b>	Italian TV (via sky), videotapes, Italian newspapers Phone calls - letters, cards...- to relatives and friends living in Italy: how often & in what occasions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visits to Italy and from Italy: frequency and type</li> <li>• Relationship with friends/relatives who live in Italy</li> <li>• Land, home ownership or business in Italy...</li> </ul>
<b>Italy &amp; England</b>	<b>Past</b>	Yesterday's England: Likes and dislikes Yesterday's Italy: Likes and dislikes
<b>Italy &amp; England</b>	<b>Present</b>	Today's England: Likes and dislikes Today's Italy: Likes and dislikes Perceptions of "home"
<b>Work</b>		Occupation in Britain: location, duties, work colleagues.
<b>Return</b>		Consideration of the idea of going back to Italy – in the past and in the future.

Continues overleaf.



	<b>Weddings</b>	Partner's choice. Inside or outside the Italian minority group? Children's partner's choice. Attitudes towards the hypothesis of intra-marriage and ethnic or religious intermarriage. Speculation on other generations' attitude
<b>Family</b>	<b>Children</b>	Type of upbringing
		Choice of children's name Activities of men and women at home Support to family and/or friends: small loans, moving place, decorating house. Help offered to relatives in their migration to the UK
	<b>Fictive kinship</b>	Choice of Godparents and their role
<b>Friends</b>		Number of friends of British, Italian or other country's background Help offered to friends in their migration to the UK
<b>Language</b>		Language use at home/at work
	<b>Dialect</b>	Knowledge or use of a dialect
	<b>English</b>	English language learning: Where? How?
	<b>English &amp; Italian</b>	Self-assessment of competence Expressions or jokes often used in either languages
Use of nicknames to identify or refer to member of the family or the community		
<b>School</b>		Schools attended by children
<b>Food habits</b>		Type of restaurants frequented Type of food shops regularly visited Type of food used daily Ingredients not found in British supermarkets taken from Italy (or asked to be sent) Ingredients or types of food taken to Italy Foods traditionally prepared for holidays and celebrations
<b>Religion</b>		Faith professed, if any. Attendance of religious services, personal religious devoutness
<b>Holidays</b>		Traditions and activities related to holidays: Christmas, Easter, Bank holidays, summer. Family traditions? Family reunions? When? Where? Activities taking place.
<b>Associations</b>		Membership (religious, political, ethnic, etc.). Attendance of events organised by these associations.
<b>Perception of identity</b>		Italian, English (or both).
<b>Sport</b>		Sporting events considered important Team supported: t-shirts - scarves - flags or posters Attitudes towards the hypothesis of a match between England and Italy.

### Interview schedule: Second and third generations

<b>Personal data</b>		Name Age Place of birth Education
<b>Emigration experience</b>		What is known of the (grand)parent(s)' place of origin How the family's migration history is perceived and what influences has had on the individual
<b>England</b>	<b>Nottingham</b>	Assessment of the dimension of the Italian community in Nottingham. Existence and type of links with the community
<b>Housing</b>		Issues of family secondary migration Present house: location, neighbourhood, decorations
<b>Italy</b>	<b>Contact with Italy</b>	Italian TV (via sky), videotapes, Italian newspapers Phone calls, letters, cards or emails to relatives and friends living in Italy: how often & in what occasions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visits to Italy and from Italy: frequency and type</li> <li>• Relationship with friends/relatives who live in Italy</li> <li>• Land, home ownership or business in Italy...</li> </ul>
<b>Italy &amp; England</b>		England: Likes and dislikes Italy: Likes and dislikes Perceptions of "home"
<b>Work / School</b>		Location, duties, work-colleagues / classmates Existence of a family business: parents' expectations Issues of parental gratification in the <i>choice of a profession</i>
<b>Moving to Italy</b>		Consideration of the idea of moving to Italy
<b>Family</b>	<b>Weddings</b>	Partner's choice. Inside or outside the Italian minority group? Children's partner's choice. Attitudes towards the hypothesis of intra-marriage and ethnic or religious intermarriage. Speculation on other generations' attitudes towards intra- and inter-marriage
	<b>Children</b>	Type of upbringing Choice of children's name (second generation only)
		Activities of men and women at home
	<b>Fictive kinship</b>	Choice of Godparents and their role
<b>Friends</b>		Number of friends of British, Italian or other country's background

Continues overleaf.

<b>Language</b>		Language use at home/at work
	<b>Dialect</b>	Knowledge or use of a dialect
	<b>English</b>	English language learning: Where? How?
	<b>Italian</b>	Italian language learning: Where? How?
	<b>English &amp; Italian</b>	Self-assessment of competence Expressions or jokes often used in either languages
Use of nicknames to identify or refer to member of the family or the community		
<b>School</b>		Schools attended. Feelings attached to school attendance. Schools attended by children: differences in their experience.
<b>Food habits</b>		Type of restaurants frequented Type of food shops regularly visited Type of food used daily Ingredients not found in British supermarkets taken from Italy (or asked to be sent) Ingredients or types of food taken to Italy Foods traditionally prepared for holidays and celebrations
<b>Religion</b>		Faith professed, if any. Attendance of religious services, personal religious devoutness
<b>Holidays</b>		Traditions and activities related to holidays: Christmas, Easter, Bank holidays, summer. Family traditions? Family reunions? When? Where? Activities taking place.
<b>Clubs, organisations and societies</b>		Membership (religious, political, ethnic, etc.). Attendance of events organised by these associations.
<b>Perception of identity</b>		Italian, English (or both).
<b>Sport</b>		Sporting events considered important Team supported: t-shirts - scarves - flags or posters Attitudes towards the hypothesis of a match between England and Italy.

**Invitation to S. Antonio Procession****ASSOCIAZIONE S. ANTONIO  
DOMENICA 9 GIUGNO 02**

alle ore 11 a.m.  
Festa di S. Antonio

**LA PROCESSIONE**

partirà dalla chiesa di S. Agostino con un percorso di circa 2 km. presieduta da *Father C. Thomas*. La processione sarà accompagnata dalla banda di *Long Eaton Silver Band* che suonerà inni religiosi. Siete gentilmente pregati di arrivare alla chiesa non più tardi delle 10.45.

Verso la fine del percorso è prevista una sosta per i tradizionali

**FUOCHI PIROTECNICI**

La processione riprenderà il suo cammino verso la chiesa di S. Agostino dove sarà celebrata

**LA SANTA MESSA**

accompagnata dal CORO S. ANTONIO. Durante la messa sarà distribuito il pane di S. Antonio.

Per motivi di sicurezza è prevista la presenza della polizia lungo tutto il percorso della processione.

Al termine della messa l'Associazione S. Antonio

**INVITA TUTTI**

al piccolo rinfresco servito nella Hall della chiesa di S. Agostino. *(gratis)*

S. Antonio Society, Sunday 9 June 02, at 11 am, *S. Antonio* Festival.

The procession, lead by Father C. Thomas, will leave from St. Augustine Church and follow a route of approximately 2km. The procession will be accompanied by the long Eaton Silver band that will play religious hymns. You are kindly requested to arrive to the church by 10.45. Towards the end of the route a stop is planned for the traditional fireworks. After the fireworks, the procession will continue the journey towards St. Augustine church where the holy Mass will be celebrated, accompanied by the *S. Antonio* Choir. Saint Antony's bread will be distributed during the Mass. For security reasons the police will be present along the whole length of the route. At the end of the service the S. Antonio Society invites everyone to a small reception served in the Hall of St Augustine church (free).

Copy of a 1950s work permit<sup>1</sup>.

FM

Please quote the following number in any further correspondence  
A.R. 120 / 55

MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND NATIONAL SERVICE,

Foreign Labour Division,

**PERMIT**  
under Article 4(1)(b) of  
**THE ALIENS ORDER, 1953**

EBURY BRIDGE HOUSE,  
EBURY BRIDGE ROAD,  
LONDON, S.W.1.

No. of Permit <b>291</b>	Date of Issue 2 MAY 1955	Period covered by Permit..... <b>Twelve</b> months from the date of landing in the United Kingdom.
Employer's Name and Address J. C. .... ESQ. .... ..... Wirral, Cheshire.		Alien's Name, etc. Surname ..... Other Names ..... Date of Birth..... 18th ..... 1934 Sex <b>Female</b> Nationality <b>Italian</b> Employment ..... Domestic (Resident) ..... @ £3 per week

This permit is issued to the above-named employer subject to the conditions shown below :— X.5.

**CONDITIONS GOVERNING THE ISSUE OF THIS PERMIT**

(Voir Dessous. Siehe Rueckseite.)

1. This permit does not relieve the employer of his obligations under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944, as regards engagement of staff.

2. This permit does not constitute any obligation upon the Immigration Officer to give the above-named alien leave to land in the United Kingdom. The alien will be required to satisfy the Immigration Officer on arrival that he (or she) can comply with the provisions of the Aliens Order, 1953, which may include a medical inspection.

3. This permit must be produced to the Immigration Officer at the port of arrival in the United Kingdom. Thereafter it should be carefully preserved by the alien for production at any time to the competent authorities.

4. This permit may be used only by the alien named thereon. If an unauthorised person amends the particulars upon the permit it will thereby be rendered invalid.

5. This permit is valid only for the particular employment for which it is issued and not for employment of another kind or with another employer.

6. The alien during the period of stay in the United Kingdom is subject to the restrictions, and must conform to the requirements, of the Aliens Order, 1953. If the permit is for a period of more than three months, the alien will be required to register with the Police and to produce two photographs for this purpose. He/she is, therefore, advised to obtain two extra copies of any photograph taken for passport purposes.

7. This permit ceases to be valid if not produced to the Immigration Officer at the port of arrival in the United Kingdom within **two months** after the date of issue.

8. If it is desired to employ the alien beyond the terminal date of the period for which the alien has been granted leave to land by the Immigration Officer application should be made by the employer about one month before such date to the Under-Secretary of State, Home Office, Aliens Department, 271.7, High Holborn, London, W.C.1, marking the envelope in the bottom left-hand corner "M.L. Permit." The alien's passport should be forwarded with the application.

Signed on behalf of the Minister of Labour and National Service,



After its number and date of issue have been noted this permit of four pages should be sent intact to the alien, who will be required to produce it, together with a valid passport, to the Immigration Officer at the port of arrival.

A.R.2A.

Wt. 42426/13442 20m 8/54—McC &amp; Co Ltd—K 887 (860)

<sup>1</sup> Photo and personal details are not shown to protect the respondent's identity.

**REGLEMENTS RELATIFS A L'EMISSION DE  
CE PERMIS.**

1. Ce permis ne dispense pas l'employeur des obligations que lui impose le Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944, en ce qui concerne le recrutement de son personnel.

2. Ce permis n'oblige pas le fonctionnaire d'immigration d'accorder à l'étranger la permission de débarquer dans le Royaume Uni. Il incombera à l'étranger d'établir à la satisfaction du préposé à l'immigration, lors de son débarquement, qu'il (ou elle) peut remplir les prescriptions de l' "Aliens Order" de 1953, qui peuvent comporter une inspection médicale.

3. Ce permis doit être produit devant le fonctionnaire d'immigration au port d'arrivée dans le Royaume Uni. Ensuite, le permis doit être tenu en bonne garde par l'étranger, pour qu'il puisse le produire à tout moment devant les autorités compétentes.

4. L'étranger dont le nom est écrit sur le permis a seul le droit de s'en servir. Si une personne non-autorisée change les indications sur le permis, ce dernier perdra par conséquent sa validité.

5. Ce permis est valable uniquement pour l'emploi particulier pour lequel il est délivré, et ne peut être utilisé pour un autre emploi ni par un autre employeur.

6. L'étranger, pendant son séjour dans le Royaume Uni, est assujéti aux restrictions et doit se conformer aux exigences de l' "Aliens Order" de 1953. Au cas où le permis est valable pour une période de plus de trois mois, l'étranger sera tenu à se faire inscrire à la police et à fournir deux photographies dans ce but. On est recommandé par conséquent de ce se mettre en possession de deux tirages additionels de la photographie requise pour son passeport.

7. Ce permis cesse d'être valable si, dans les deux mois suivant la date de sa délivrance, il n'est pas présenté au fonctionnaire d'immigration au port de débarquement au Royaume Uni.

8. Si l'employeur désire employer l'étranger au delà de la date de terminaison de la période pour laquelle l'étranger a reçu du fonctionnaire d'immigration l'autorisation de débarquer, une demande doit être présentée par l'employeur, environ un mois avant cette date, à l' Under-Secretary of State, Home Office, Aliens Department, 271-7 High Holborn, London, W.C.1. Marquer l'enveloppe "M.L. Permit" au coin gauche en bas. Le passeport de l'étranger devrait être transmis avec la demande.

**BESTIMMUNGEN FÜR DIE AUSSTELLUNG  
DIESES ERLAUBNISSCHEINS.**

1. Diese Genehmigung befreit den Arbeitgeber nicht von seiner Verpflichtung zur Einstellung von Arbeitskräften nach dem Kriegsbeschädigten-Gesetz vom Jahre 1944.

2. Durch diesen Erlaubnisschein ist der Einwanderungsbeamte im Ankunftshafen in keiner Weise verpflichtet dem umseitig benannten Ausländer die Einreiseerlaubnis in das Vereinigte Königreich zu erteilen. Bei seiner Einreise im Vereinigten Königreich ist der Ausländer verpflichtet, dem Einwanderungsbeamten im Ankunftshafen zu beweisen, dass er die Bestimmungen der "Ausländerverordnung" (Aliens Order) 1953, erfüllt. Nach diesen Bestimmungen muss sich der Ausländer gegebenenfalls einer ärztlichen Untersuchung unterziehen.

3. Der Erlaubnisschein ist dem Einwanderungsbeamten im Ankunftshafen des Vereinigten Königreiches vorzuweisen. Hernach ist er sorgfältig von dem Ausländer aufzubewahren, damit er jederzeit den zuständigen Behörden vorgelegt werden kann.

4. Dieser Erlaubnisschein darf nur von dem Ausländer benutzt werden, auf dessen Namen er ausgestellt ist. Wenn ein Unbefugter die Angaben die der Erlaubnisschein enthält, verändert, verliert der Erlaubnisschein seine Gültigkeit.

5. Dieser Erlaubnisschein ist ~~ist nur für die~~ ~~bezeichnete~~ bezeichnete Beschäftigung, auf die er ausgestellt ist, gültig und nicht für irgendeine andere Tätigkeit oder für die Beschäftigung bei einem anderen Arbeitgeber.

6. Während seines Aufenthaltes in dem Vereinigten Königreich unterliegt der Ausländer allen Einschränkungen und Bestimmungen der "Ausländerverordnung" (Aliens Order) 1953. Ist der Erlaubnisschein für einen Zeitraum von mehr als drei Monaten gültig, so ist der Ausländer verpflichtet, sich bei der Polizei anzumelden, und zu diesem Zwecke zwei weitere Passbilder bei der Polizei abzugeben.

7. Dieser Erlaubnisschein verliert seine Gültigkeit, wenn er nicht spätestens innerhalb von zwei Monaten nach seiner Ausstellung dem Einwanderungsbeamten im Ankunftshafen des Vereinigten Königreiches vorgelegt wird.

8. Wenn die Beschäftigung des Ausländers über den Zeitpunkt hinaus, für welchen ihm Aufenthaltserlaubnis durch den Einwanderungsbeamten gewährt wurde, angestrebt wird, so ist, ungefähr einen Monat vor Ablauf dieses Termins, ein Antrag durch den Arbeitgeber an den Under-Secretary of State, Home Office, Aliens Department, 271-7 High Holborn, London, W.C.1, zu richten. Der Briefumschlag ist in der unteren linken Ecke mit "M.L. Permit" zu versehen. Der Pass des Ausländers soll dem Antrag beigelegt werden.

**FOR CONDITIONS OF LANDING see holder's passport or Travel Document.**

Registration Certificate No. A626759  
 Issued at Cheshire Constabulary  
 on July, 1955  
 Name (Surname first in Roman Capitals)

Alias

Left Thumb Print  
 (if unable to sign name  
 in English Characters)

PHOTOGRAPH

Signature  
 of Holder

Nationality Italian  
 Born on 8.34 in Italy  
 Previous Nationality (if any) ---  
 Profession or Occupation Domestic Servant  
 Single or Married Single ~~MARRIED~~  
 Address of Residence Wirral, Cheshire  
 Arrival in United Kingdom on 7.55  
 Address of last Residence outside U.K. Italy  
 Government Service Nil  
 Passport or other papers as to Nationality and Identity.  
Italian passport No. 53206 issued at  
on th. June, 1955

2

ENDORSEMENTS AND REMARKS

Permitted to land on condition that the holder registers at once with the Police, does not take employment other than that specified in Ministry of Labour permit No. 291204 without the consent of the Ministry of Labour and National Service and does not remain in the United Kingdom longer than 12 months.  
 I.O. Folkestone, 1st. July, 1955.

CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY  
 CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE  
 5 JUL 1955  
 PC 972  
 WIRRAL DIVISION  
 BEBINGTON STATION

handling conditions transferred to -4.57. (H.O. letter P. 65627 dated 19.7.56)

3

ENDORSEMENTS AND REMARKS

Permission granted for employment as resident general with Mrs. E. R. of House subject to review as necessary  
 J. E. Gilmore

EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGE  
 BEBINGTON  
 16 NOV 1955  
 BEBINGTON  
 16 NOV 1955  
 EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGE

4  
ENDORSEMENTS AND REMARKS

Permission granted for  
employment as resident  
domestic with Hospital  
Chester. Cheekline  
subject to review as  
necessary. *J. J. Mason Mgr.*

**NESTON**  
25 SEP 1956  
Employment Exchange

5  
ENDORSEMENTS AND REMARKS

Reports arrival at Hospital,  
, Chester.



Reports change of address  
to 17, *London,*  
Street,  
Station, on 9.2.57.



6  
ENDORSEMENTS AND REMARKS

*Reports C/A. to 10, *ten.* *St.* *Nottingham**

PERMISSION GRANTED FOR EMPLOYMENT  
AS RESIDENT WITH  
*Hospital of *Grove.**  
*Nottingham* SUBJECT TO REVIEW  
AS NECESSARY.

**NOTTINGHAM** *B. Bower*  
26 FEB 1957  
Employment Exchange

7  
ENDORSEMENTS AND REMARKS

*C/A to *Hospital.* *Grove**

*Permitted stay extended to 15th July, 1959*

*married at the Nottingham Church of St. Barnabas on 5th to *Italian**



39

ENDORSEMENTS AND REMARKS

B

ENDORSEMENTS AND REMARKS

NOTTINGHAM CITY POLICE  
26 MAR 1958

ALIENS OFFICE  
15 JAN 1960

*c/A to 1*  
*111*  
*ROAD*  
*Nottingham*

*c/A*  
*158*

*A.S.*  
*SA*

*H.O. REF. 2,200*

CONDITIONS  
CANCELLED

*Ref. 3-5-60*

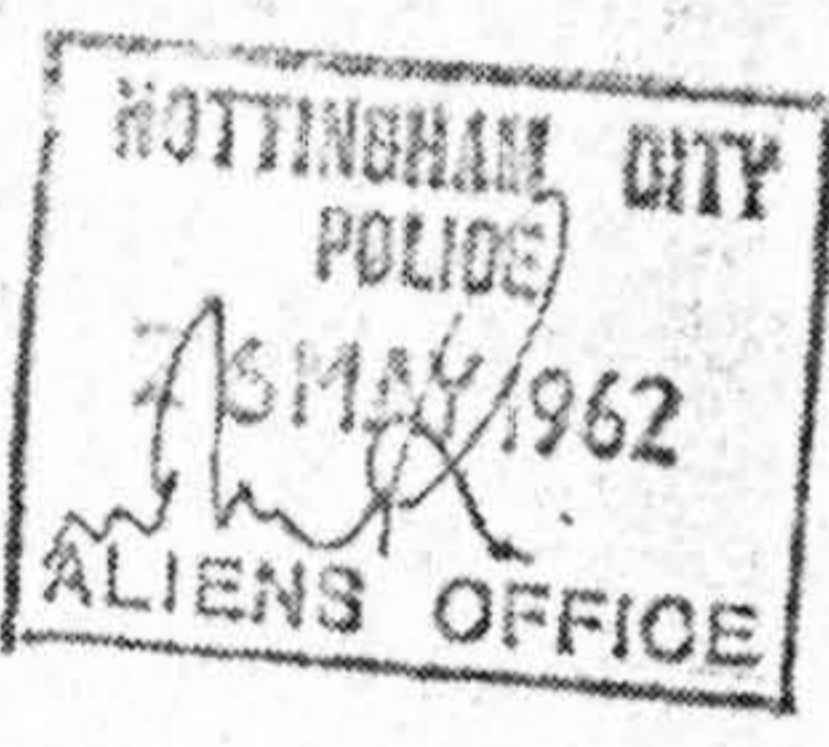

28/12.

ENDORSEMENTS AND REMARKS

ALIENS ORDER 1800

The holder is exempt from registration with the police, but should retain this certificate

Received the sum of 5/- for this certificate.

*Shall*  
Registration Officer

Date \_\_\_\_\_

NOTICE  
(NOT TO BE DETACHED FROM PERMIT)

This permit is not valid

- (1) for a worker who has a child or children
- (2) for a worker who is either under eighteen or is fifty-five years of age or over.

This permit is granted in respect of employment as a domestic worker only with the employer named therein. Should this particular employment be terminated by either side or by mutual consent, the permit holder will not be allowed to take other employment, except as a resident domestic worker in a vacancy offered or approved by the Ministry of Labour and National Service.

If, therefore, the holder of this permit leaves the employment specified and wishes to enter other domestic employment, she must apply to a Local Office of the Ministry, when she will be offered a choice of registered vacancies. There can be no guarantee that she will be allowed to take employment that she has found for herself.

L.R. 32 (Revised)  
H.Q.W.R. 1950 3/55GH