ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*"I believe in recognizing every human being
as a human being –neither white, black, brown, or red;
and when you are dealing with humanity as a family
there's no question of integration or intermarriage.
It's just one human being marrying another
human being or one human being living around
and with another human being".*

Malcolm X

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INTRODUCTION

At present, it seems impossible to formulate a prognosis on the future of this chaos of human relations in the global age. However, we do not number ourselves among the pessimists of distance love, who state that it may be the end of love because its deficit in many human dimensions would substantially be unavoidable. We believe, however, on posing the next question: it couldn't be that the operation failed on a world scale, i.e. the art of living with and beyond borders, sometimes succeed in the new forms of love and family?
Ulrich Beck R.I.P & Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim

This PhD project aims at exploring the complex reality of a social phenomenon that has rapidly characterized modern pluralistic societies, thus, the one of international mixed couples and cross-border intermarriages. Traditionally, intermarriage has been conceived and analyzed as the output of migrants' process of assimilation and intermingling with local populations. Nowadays, nevertheless, it is presumed that a good portion of contemporary international mixed couples and cross-border marriages are not necessarily the result of an assimilation process, not even of a migratory experience. Today many more different and complex motivations merge together around the conformation of a mixed union. Some of them may comprehend the output of more complexes processes of marriage's and family life's transformations such as the internationalization of modern and postmodern marriage/family forms; the opening of new (voluntary and/or forced) heterogamy and exogamy channels; the formation of transnational communities; and the consolidation of multiethnic highly mobile societies.

Particular attention is paid to the couple's formation process and partners' adjustments through internal/external negotiation processes and adaptation practices, mainly but not exclusively, of gender and cultural differences. The study examined the instrumental and symbolic meaning of the marriage institution within an international context; the social dimensions of marriage migration; and the instrumental role of partners'

human capital in relation to the couple's settlement and the foreign spouse' integration process in the host country.

Nowadays in Western countries, the terms of Mixed Couples, Intermarriage or Cross-border Marriage -which have been used interchangeably although the different legal implications of the marriage itself- refer to the social institution by which two people (traditionally identified as heterosexual but lately not only) from a different race, ethnicity, religion, cultural background, nationality, etc., unite to each other by an affective bond (although not necessarily) that is socially and ritually recognized and that it usually involves (according to the conditions of the union itself) legal effects (Tognetti Borgogna, 1996).

From a constructivist perspective more specifically, mixed couple, intermarriage or cross-border marriage, refer to the (informal and formal) union of two people (or more, depending on the cultural context and the local marriage traditions) who are perceived "relevantly" different in terms of one or more single social category (ies). Such terms don't indicate, nevertheless, the specific social category by which a couple is noticeable mixed, neither the content of such mixité. *"The term mixed couple, in this way, refers to a form of heterogamy: an alliance of people socially different where the specific content of the relevant diversity can vary"* (Saraceno, 2007: 1).

For expressively specifying the relevant difference among the partners within a mixed couple, nevertheless, an adjective such as interfaith, interracial, interethnic, international, etc., needs to be attached. In this sense, by mixed couples we may understand those whose partners (at least putatively) belong to different religious affiliations, skin color ("race"), ethnicity or national origin.

The relevance of this topic goes far beyond its conceptual relative novelty, especially because relational encounters with different "others" have been observed all along human history; but it lies on the analysis of contemporary overall diversity and the way in which this is perceived and managed in a particular national context, which is internally very much heterogeneous, and furthermore it is currently experiencing both labor market and migration pressures, such as Italy.

Also relevant are the multiple individual and social causes that may encourage intermarriage, as well as the multiple direct and indirect consequences that its incidence

may individually and collectively have on the partners, family groups, and societies that experience it (Kalmijn, 1998; Charsley, 2012).

In this way, mixed couples, intermarriage, and the so called mixed families that increasingly result from this particular type of human relationship[3], represent not only some of the multiple outcomes that have been observed from the modernization process of a fundamental social institution such as **Family** (Charsley, 2012; Ruspini, 2013); but also one of the multiple outcomes of a much more complex process of **Globalization** that has favored increasing migration flows and human mobility, as well as transportation technologies, ICT development, and thus ethnic and cultural hybridization (Appadurai, 1996).

If the institution of family, with marriage as its main legitimating ritual, has experienced deep transformations during the last century through increasing marital instability to favor instead a biographic de-standardization process (systemic individualization), and thus an acknowledgment of an increasing amount of family typologies such as unions outside of the marital bond, second-marriage unions, gay unions, mono-parental families, etc. (Santoro: 2012); such biographic de-standardization gets much more diversified and complex if we also consider the increasing possibilities and/or constraints in terms of spatial and virtual mobility that certain individuals have experienced especially during the last decades; and the consolidation of several human migration flows that have encouraged the encounter of individuals from different groups, mainly but not only, in pluralistic industrialized societies.

In this way, it becomes possible to contemplate a series of many more combined family typologies made out of immigrant spouses who move together from the same country to a different one; of both spouses emigrating separately –one after the other- and later reunifying in the destination country; of mixed couples from a different ethnic group and/or nationality living in a third destination country; of mixed couples between one *native* and one *foreigner*; etc.

Nevertheless, contrary to social trends in industrialized countries, for these couples marriage has become a very important institutional anchorage, one able to legitimize the

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[3] An extensive semantic and historical clarification of the concepts of *couple*, *marriage* and *family*, is developed in **Chapter 1**.

union and even to justify the presence of one or both the spouses in a certain geographical territory.

The recognition and analysis of such extensive but not exhaustive family(ies) typologies is fundamental not only for the bond's stability and the particular kind of socio-psychological processes experienced by the spouses, their offspring and further relatives; but also for the correspondent authorities that aim to regulate their religious and/or civil/legal existence in one or more national and transnational contexts (Charsley, 2012).

At this respect, i.e. several countries (in different historical periods and through different arrangements) such as the United States, Germany, Israel, South Africa, and more recently Denmark, U.K. and South Korea for example, have imposed several restrictions on interfaith, interracial and/or international mixed marriages arguing that such unions may endangered local community's social cohesion as well as threaten vulnerable individuals through the instrumentalization of marriage for other exploitation purposes.

In such context of continuous human mobility, intercultural encounters and increasing family's individualization; the legitimating role of marriage needs, nevertheless, to be reformulated and further analyzed according to its renewed and strengthened anchorage functions. The regulatory and institutional stabilizing effects of such anchorage might be experimented in different ways though, specially by the ones who voluntarily choose to marry outside of their ethnic/national group according to their own preferences and possibilities, or by the ones who marry outside specifically as an strategy to regulate their migratory status or to improve his/her own (or his/her family's) economic conditions.

In this way, and contrary to most industrialized countries' tendencies, the institutional function of marriage becomes once again strategically and symbolically salient; but the constitutive elements of such human type of bond and its multiple nuances (by marriage regulated) become much more diversified (culturally but not only), and thus potentially (but not strictly necessarily) more fragile.

On the one hand, from an academic perspective, the topic of International Mixed Couples and Intermarriages has become one of the several interesting intersection points between two enormous study areas of Sociology (and not only, Family Economics, Social Psychology and International Private Legislative Studies for example have also focused on it), i.e. Sociology of Migration and Sociology of Family. Nevertheless, these two areas

have mostly developed separately, and in doing so have often missed the opportunity to further enrich and complement each other.

Thus, in the particular case of the Italian context, family transformations were extensively analyzed from a local/national perspective (Barbagli 1990, 2003; Saraceno & Naldini, 2011; Santoro 2013); whereas migration studies neglected for long time the family and most intimate dimension of the relatively recent immigration phenomenon that has been observed during the last decades (Ambrosini, 2008; Cooke, 2008).

On the other hand, from a practical and functional perspective such reality, that directly involves approximately 10% of the world population and continues to rise in some industrialized societies (14.6% of all new marriages in US were "mixed" in 2008, whereas in Italy 9.5% in 2009), has become a very relevant object of analysis and implementation of public policies with the most varied scopes (prominently relationships' counseling, migrant children's intercultural education, access to health services, occupational attainment, among many others).

In this way, and independently of the discipline that mainly during the last decades has focused on analyzing mixed couples and intermarriages, it is important to corroborate that this is not a new phenomenon (not even in Italy where this research is located); and that many societies around the world, and along different historical periods, have observed the incidence of unions/marriages between people who belong to a different ethnicity, religion, culture, socio-economic status, etc. *Miscegenation or the interbreeding of ethnic and racial groups is a universal phenomenon. The resulting process of amalgamation represents the fusion of ethnic and racial groups by interbreeding and intermarriage* (Marcson, 1950: 75).

However, and most importantly, a constructivist analysis of the intermarriage concept makes evident that what it has continuously changed is the kind of social category at stake for a couple to be socially and legally considered "mixed"; the rules and instruments by which the host society, and the State in particular, have dealt with and regulated mixed relationships; and the many different grades of "mixity" that are usually drawn within a very complex and dynamic power relation system that varies from one society to another, from one historical period to another, and from one group to another. Furthermore, parallel changes have been observed in relation to the available resources that individuals have in

order to cope with the internal and external potential difficulties that may be faced within a context of "mixedness".

In the U.S., for example, mixed couples have mainly been by definition interracial mixed couples, and in particular those made up of a 'white' and a 'black' partner. In Italy, differently, at least until the eighties, mixed couples were a rare phenomenon that usually lacked of academic and political attention; when they were observed, they were usually made out of an Italian person (mostly a woman) and a national of another neighboring European country such as UK, Belgium, Germany and Greece (Biondi & Perrotti, 1991; Nottmeyer, 2009). Intermarriages in this period were usually the extraordinary result of tourism and recreational encounters between Italians and foreigners, or of long processes of integration/assimilation of Italian immigrants in other European and non European countries, just as it may be the case nowadays of still later industrialized and underdeveloped countries.

It was only after the explosion of immigration flows during the late 80s and first 90s, that the meaning of "mixed couple" did partially change and the number of registered mixed marriages significantly and steadily increased. It was at this point that the attention moved toward interethnic and international marriages, in which one partner usually is an immigrant, especially if coming from an underdeveloped country with ethnic and cultural characteristics that are socially perceived as to be "very much different". Such description of "relevant otherness" has been applied, nevertheless, not only to members of the most salient immigrant groups that reside in the country, but also to individuals from other smaller and less known groups of foreign origin who did not even live in the country before becoming part of a mixed union, diminishing thus the enormous diversity that it does actually exist also within the erroneously homogenized world of mixed couples and international intermarriages.

Understanding the particularities of these "types" of mixed family's outcomes becomes particularly important in countries in which its incidence has rapidly increased and there is not, at the same time, such a long and structured immigration and intercultural modern experience such as it is in the case of Italy (Ambrosini, 2001; Sciortino, 2004).

Thus, the first step will be to conceptually clarify what does a mixed couple, intermarriage and/or cross-border marriage actually is, and which are the main social

categories for a couple to be considered mixed nowadays in a particular social and territorial context such as Italy.

In order to deeply understand the complex processes underlying the incidence of this social phenomenon, further analysis will be developed through the lens of economic and social theories related to the transformation of the institutions of marriage and family within a larger and crescent globalization process. Such analysis will move from the functional perspective of extended and nuclear family's transformations, to the notions of "companionate, romantic and confluent love" (Gidden's reflexive nature of modern love and intimacy), and "world families" (Beck's reflection of individualistic values in the conception of world-family). And will include an analysis of the main economic and social theories that have been formulated and applied in order to explain the increasing incidence of intermarriage in different cultural contexts.

Afterwards, a closer analysis of the mixed couple's formation process; its social (relations between the partners, their enlarged families and friends, and the host society) and cultural dimensions (social and cultural capital transferences); will be performed according to the insights offered by previous empirical research and the contribution of theoretical and analytical frames on integration and transnationalism within the family context. In particular, Berry's quadric-modal acculturation frame outlining acculturation/adaptation strategies will be used as an analytical model in order to further understand mixed partners' internal and external negotiation processes (Berry, 1980; Kalmijn, 1998; Schiller et. al. 2006).

In order to guide such analysis, some exploratory hypothetical questions were raised. The first group of questions relates to the couple's formation process and the partners' main characteristics, whereas the second group relates to the actual negotiation processes within and without the couple:

Group 1: The formation process(es) of an international mixed couple and cross-border marriage

➢ Which are the different patterns/channels by which international mixed couples and cross-border marriages get to know each other and formalize the relationship?

➢ Which is the institutional and symbolic role of marriage for mixed couples and their enlarged family (ies)?

Group 2: International mixed couples' internal and external negotiations processes

➤ Which are the main institutional and social difficulties encountered during the couple's formation and stabilization processes?

➤ Which are the main differences between mixed partners, and how are these differences usually experienced and negotiated?

➤ How do mixed partners contest, negotiate or reproduce traditional gender roles divisions?

➤ How do mixed partners relate to positive/negative national and cultural stereotypes; and how does their symbolic meaning is renegotiated between partners, and between partners and their enlarged families?

➤ Which is the role of human and cultural capital within the spouses' negotiation processes and within the foreign spouse's integration path in the local society?

This PhD project was born mainly as a proposal from my supervisor, Dr. Prof. Maurizio Ambrosini, who holds substantive knowledge and sound research experience in international migration and migrant families' studies. According to his main research findings, and taking into consideration the relative novelty of the international immigration phenomenon in Italy, our first academic encounters were mainly focused on discussing how immigration and cultural diversity issues in Italy have been mostly developed by academic research under an economic and political framework.

Thus, first attempts to analyze international immigration flows in Italy during the decade of 1990 onwards dealt mainly with labor migration, migrants' occupational attainment and poorly skilled task specialization, legal status (undocumented or "clandestini", irregularity and regularization processes), immigration related bureaucratic procedures, perceived discrimination, migrants labor associationism, and just later citizenship acquisition (Ambrosini 2001, 2005, 2008).

Just lately, several other topics of immigrants' multidimensional daily and private life have been developed such as immigrant families, second generation children, educational attainment, integration oriented regional public policies and social programs, gendered

immigration (mainly related to women specialization tasks in domestic poorly paid and irregular sectors), etc. Whereas several more immigrant groups started to be separately studied, e.g. Moroccans, Egyptians, Rumanians, Moldavians, Senegalese, Chinese, Filipinos, Peruvians, Ecuadorians, Brazilians, etc.

Nevertheless, the incidence of international mixed couples and cross-border marriages in Italy has been a topic much less studied (Allievi, 1997; Tognetti Borgogna, 1996, 2001; Saraceno, 2007; Peruzzi, 2008; Ghiringhelli, 2011; Isaakyan & Triandafyllidou, 2014) than in other countries, especially those with a larger immigration experience and a high degree of cultural diversity and hibridization, such as the United States, Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, The Netherlands, where a more extensive literature on the topic has been developed (Kalmijn 1993, 1998; Kalmijn & Van Tubergen, 2006, 2010; Quian & Lichter, 2007; Liang & Ito,1999; VanTubergen & Maas, 2006; etc.).

According to that, it was decided to focus on a particular kind of phenomenon and analyzing it moving from a contextual macro sociological perspective to a micro socio-psychological one. Thus, trying to understand what has been studied so far, which are the main individual characteristics and cultural/social structures that may have influenced the incidence of mixed couples' formation; and how do these couples experience daily private life, in particularly gender and cultural exchange(s), something that has been harder to analyze particularly because of the level of intimacy and because of the difficulty to speak about certain personal issues within and without the couple (Ambrosini, 2008).

The Mexican/Italian couples that participated in this project were selected because of the observed significantly gendered incidence of intermarriages from these two nationalities; because being a Mexican myself, the access to this group could be particularly privileged, especially when dealing with intimate family/couple issues; because of the almost inexistent academic or political attention that has received this small immigrant community in Italy (Parrello, Osorio Guzman & Buonanno, 2010; Istat, 2013); and because, as an emerging country in developmental transition, Mexico does offer a good example of a country that is not anymore perceived as a so called "Third world country", but that it does continue to struggle to be actually perceived as a fully developed and democratic one.

It was decided to focus in one particular Italian region, Lombardy, because it hosts the second larger number of Mexicans in the country (just after Lazio); and because it is one of the regions that hosts one of the largest number of overall immigrants (11.3% of the immigrant population). Moreover, it showed to be a good regional context where it was possible to focus on the differences between a larger city such as Milan and the smaller surrounding cities and towns. In this way, it was possible to highlight some of the contextual differences that directly or indirectly influence intermarriages' stability and foreigners' integration processes.

In this way, the research project was divided mainly in three stages and was developed according to a qualitative research methodology approach. The first part was based on bibliographical analysis to further understand relevant interrelated concepts such as mixed couples, mixed marriages, cross-national marriages, interethnic/interreligious/international marriages, etc., that will be early clarified and differentiated in Chapter 1 so readers can move onto the contextual dynamicity and theoretical approaches of the general topic already with a clearly delimited conceptual framework.

In Chapter 2 a social and historical review of marriage formation patterns and family transformations within a crescent process of globalization is performed. Main family transformation' theories, in particular to analyze endogamous and exogamous marriage patterns, are reviewed.

In Chapter 3 it is developed an analysis of the main economic and social theories that have been formulated to specifically study the individual, collective and structural elements that have decisively influenced the incidence of mixed couples' and the increasing registered rates of cross-border marriages. Furthermore, a description of the theoretical frame that will be applied to analyze mixed partners internal and external adaptation and negotiation processes will be presented.

Immediately after in Chapter 4 an analysis of these main marriage/family transformations but in the countries of origin of the analyzed partners, i.e. Italy and Mexico, is contextually developed. Furthermore, descriptive statistical and national context analysis is performed in order to identify which are the main patterns of mixed couples, marriage formation, and spouses combinations of (registered) international mixed marriages in Italy.

Along the chapter, an identification of previous studies on intermarriage among different ethnic/national groups in different contexts is made.

The project's second stage was based on the empirical qualitative research developed with participants of the two chosen nationalities. To this purpose, respondents were contacted through available online and offline communication channels such as ethnic associations, Facebook groups, related personal blogs, and just later snowball sampling methods initiated by the first respondents. Biographical narrative and semi-structured interviews with 30 couples were applied in order of getting to know better the Mexican community in Lombardy, the couples, and the individual members of each selected couple. Qualitative research methods were mainly employed with the aim of understanding the couple's formation and negotiation's processes, the "mixed" conditions and the experience of "mixity" of each particular couple; its enlarged social, cultural and economic dimensions; the multiple characteristics of the foreign partner's integration process in the host society; and the main practices that the partners do implement in order to deal with the cultural shock potentially experienced both inside or outside the couple. The development of the empirical research and the interpretation of the results are described in Chapter 5.

Finally, in Chapter 6 general conclusions and specific comments regarding both gender/national groups are drawn, and research shortcomings on international mixed couples and cross-border marriages are stressed as a contribution for further research on the topic.

CHAPTER 1

<u>The social construction of mixed couples and intermarriages</u>

Main concepts surrounding mixed couples, intermarriages and cross-border marriages are defined and further clarified in this first chapter. A social constructivist approach is used to understand how such concepts may be elaborated, change over time, and be differently constructed, perceived and regulated, among different societies. Examples of this social phenomenon in different historical periods are described, and the legal instruments through which the State have regulated them, and occasionally banned, are analyzed. The institutional and social notion of "mixed", as well as the content of such categorization are discussed, and specifically defined according to the national context in which the present study takes place. The institutional and symbolic role of marriage, specially within a context of "mixedness", are underlined, and the social character of the institution and its potential implications in local and transnational culture are stressed.

1.1. What is a Mixed Couple/Marriage (here and now)?

The term of Mixed Couple has been continuously used interchangeably with the one of Mixed Marriage, Cross-border marriage, Intermarriage, Interethnic Marriage and others (Santelli & Collet, 2012; Therrien, 2011), nevertheless, such concept –at least used in this ambiguous way- presents some semantic problems. First, it gives for granted the almost exclusive identification between the concepts of couple and marriage, which specifically corresponds to Western tradition. Second, it doesn't address the multiple implications that civil and/or religious marriage may have for a couple, its individual members and other surrounding people (e.g. enlarged family). Third, it doesn't specify according to which variables does a couple is nowadays considered to be mixed.

In this way, it is extremely important to start by clarifying and defining what do we understand by the mentioned concept; and thus which is the specific subset (or subsets) of the population that we are interested on analyzing, as well as from which disciplinary perspective it will be actually analyzed.

1.1.1. Unmarried Couple Vs Married Couple

Specifically the term Mixed Marriage or Intermarriage is first of all related to the definition of Marriage itself. According to the most basic and traditional definition of Marriage (also referred as matrimony or wedlock) this *is a socially or ritually recognized union or legal contract between spouses that establishes rights and obligations between them, between them and their children, and between them and their in-laws* (Haviland et. all., 2011: 61).

Such union or legal contract is what Lévi-Strauss (1974) referred as "a social alliance", thus, a socially recognized alliance between the spouses. The spouses, however, may not necessarily be identified only with a couple of individuals, monogamous heterosexual (between one man and one woman, as it has been traditionally practiced in most Western cultures since Ancient times) or monogamous homosexual (between two individuals from the same sex, as it has been lately officially recognized in few Western countries). But they may also be identified with a collective of more than two people like in bigamous or polygamous marriage arrangements such as polyandry (between one woman and two or more males, as it may be found in some regions of Nepal and Northern India) and more diffused polygyny (between one male and two or more females, as it is observed in Western Africa, particularly in Kenya, and other Asian predominantly Muslim countries).

In this way, first of all, when we state that we will analyze couples (married or unmarried) we are already inferring that we will work with a specific subset of the population that is strongly conditioned, socially and culturally, by Western norms.

The social alliance derived from marriage is also to be considered of intergenerational scope because it usually comprises the spouses' immediate ancestors and future offspring; and of further enlarged social scope because it is also an alliance between the groups (tribes, families, ethnic groups, etc.) to which the partners originally belong to (Coltrane & Collins, 2001). In this way, marriage immediately makes of a social institution that involves more than one single individual in order to be legitimized. And it is within this social institution that the social and legal status of the involved partners is actually defined, regulated and further legitimized, together with the type of relationship reproduced among them.

The form of the marriage contract or arrangement and the number of partners involved; the degree of voluntariness and the motives by which the partners decide to participate in such arrangement; the type of ritual ceremony used to celebrate it, as well as the type of civil or religious authorities by which such ceremony is conducted and legitimized; and, not less important, the rights and obligations regulated by such arrangement, may importantly vary within and between different societies (Saraceno & Naldini, 2001; Ruspini, 2013).

English civil law, for example, recognizes that marriage is an institution made of a (civil) contract or relationship that is deeply embedded (nevertheless) in the religious and social culture of the country; and it did specify until very recent times (according to its primary definition by Lord Penzance in Hyde v Hyde, 1866. LR 1 P&D 130) that *"marriage, as understood in Christendom, may for this purpose be defined as the voluntary union for life of one man and one woman, to the exclusion of all others".* Nevertheless, such statement did not properly portray current British society (in terms of sexual orientation); at least not as it currently does the extremely recent Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act that it was just assented by the Parliament in July 2013 (Poulter, 2011; BBC News, 07/17/13) .

Indian civil law, differently, does recognize –at least partially- the existence of different religions, cultures and castes, within the country and it has legislate accordingly, although still not sufficiently to include and regulate the enormous diversity that coexist within the territory. Thus, marriage in India has been so far regulated by the Hindu Marriage Act, no matter whether the spouses were of Hindu, Buddhist, Jaina, Sikh, Muslim or Christian background. However, just recently on May 2012, for example, the Indian Parliament passed a law allowing the Sikh community to register their marriages under the Anand Marriage Act instead of the Hindu Marriage Act (Press Trust of India, 05/23/12).

Although these and other cultural context dependent differences, the communalities that most marriage arrangements share are two i.e. the function of publicly recognizing and regulating a certain kind of **human relationship**; and the accomplishment of the official final step for a couple, or group of people, to be "officially" considered as a **family**.

Both communalities, furthermore, were traditionally conditioned (at least until very recent times) by a fundamental principle, i.e. that since its conception such union was

always considered to happen among people (two or more individuals depending on the traditional culture) within a clearly *gendered social structure* that also differs in its forms among different societies. The reason behind this was the recognition, and even the strengthening, of a series of differences among the genders in terms of status, attached characteristics, social functions, etc.; but, in particular, in terms of one salient biological function attributed to women, thus, the capacity of reproduction and in particular of giving birth.

This importance of "ruling" reproduction and gender roles' relationships has been observed in most societies, even in those with the most "peculiar and non-Western" marriage practices and arrangements. For the women Nuer -an ethnic group mainly observed in South Sudan-, for example, marriage between two women is actually consented. Nevertheless, such same sex-marriage is consented only under particular circumstances and still recognizing different male and female gender roles (even not corresponding to the individuals' sex). Thus, an infertile (usually rich) woman is allowed to marry another fertile woman who will help her to become a mother, together with the help of a man considered as a servant. But even in this case, the infertile woman will adopt the status –and therefore the functions- of the man-husband, whereas the biological mother will be socially recognized as the woman-wife of the arrangement, and therefore will be also expected to satisfy certain gendered functions.

Thus, the ***human relationship*** that marriage arrangements usually regulate, and that was previously referred, was not conceived to be equal or equivalent but *complementary and asymmetric*. Whereas the ***family outcome***, that was also previously expressed, was one conceived -at least from a traditional perspective- to include the product of a sexual reproduction process, i.e. a family with children.

1.1.2. The human relationship by marriage instituted

Regarding the type of relationship by marriage instituted, this is first of all a ***property one*** that is made to regulate different life dimensions such as the sexual one, the reproductive one, the emotional one, the economic or material one, and the intergenerational succession one. On one hand, the rights of sexual possession include the rights of sexual intercourse and its exclusivity, i.e. the prohibition of sexual intercourse

with other arrangement's outsiders. The reproductive one derives from the biological certainty (at least in pre-reproductive technologies societies) that maternity or motherhood –unlike paternity- is always certain, and therefore it is the definition of paternity what is actually produced by the legal and social control of women's fecundity through marriage. The emotional dimension of the property relationship refers to those exclusivity claims over individuals' emotions or affections within the arrangement, nevertheless, this dimension is not necessarily contemplated and actually it has been particularly considered only until recent times in Western societies where the concept of *"romantic love"* has notoriously flourished (Giddens, 1992).

On the other hand, the economic property rights include the material household itself and other spouses' material belongings specified in the marriage contract; in such arrangement it is also included the amount of domestic and public labor that each partner puts into building the living concern within the household. The intergenerational property rights refer to the rights that children have to inherit their parents' economic and material properties, as well as the rights that parents have over their own children's belongings (Coltrane & Collins, 2001).

1.1.3. The family (ies) outcome resulting from marriage

Regarding the notion of marriage as the previous official step to become a ***family***, it depends on the way in which family -or families- is actually defined. If marriage has been traditionally considered mainly as the final step for a (sexual) relationship to be socially legitimized, having children has been traditionally considered as the final step for a couple or group of people to become a family.

In the Western world e.g. it has been Christianity -and the Roman Catholic Church as its mayor representative institution- the main religious culture that has traditionally ruled the institution of marriage and, according to its principles, procreation is the final end for a couple –of a woman and a man- to sustain sexual intercourses. Such relationship was originally not conceived for the wellbeing of the partners but for the wellbeing of societies that would be reproduced through the arrival of legitimized newborns. Actually, it was not until the 1960s during the Second Vatican Council that the Roman Catholic Church

reconsidered -together and of the same value than having marriage itself- the wellbeing and the mutual reciprocity within the couple –once again- for the purpose of procreation:

> *48. For, God Himself is the author of matrimony, endowed as it is with various benefits and purposes. All of these have a very decisive bearing on the continuation of the human race, on the personal development and eternal destiny of the individual members of a family, and on the dignity, stability, peace and prosperity of the family itself and of human society as a whole. **By their very nature, the institution of matrimony itself and conjugal love are ordained for the procreation and education of children, and find in them their ultimate crown.** Thus a man and a woman… render mutual help and service to each other through an intimate union of their persons and of their actions… **As a mutual gift of two persons, this intimate union and the good of the children impose total fidelity on the spouses and argue for an unbreakable oneness between them**.(2)* (Encyclical Gaudium et Spes, 1965).

In most Western countries, marriage has been considered as the previous step for becoming what may be called *a complete legitimate family* not only by religious institutions and their representative authorities, but also by the State and the civil authorities that represent it. In Italy for example, *the Constitution expressively recognizes family rights according to the notion of a natural society based on marriage* (Art. 29). This affirmation does have several implications, but maybe the most important one is the prevalence and favoritism given by the State to those married couples in comparison to those who are not married (unmarried couples or "coppie di fatto" in Italian language*)* (Saraceno & Naldini, 1998; Santoro, 2012).

Structuring gender relations according to men's and women's particular reproductive capacities leads thus to the notion of marriage as the main social institution by which newborns have been socially legitimized so far. Thus, when parenting becomes so important such as to be considered the final end of a two –or more- people's union, it's necessary to reconsider not only the importance of the rights and obligations acquired between the spouses, but also between them and their children (Haviland et. all., 2011).

However, societies have also experimented demographic and social changes such as the increasing number of people who cannot or voluntary decide not to have so many

children, or nor to have them at all; and who still take part of a marriage arrangement, forming therefore a different smaller without children kind of family. Such mentioned demographic change is very much related to complex and non-exhaustive historical, economic and cultural, transformations that have been mainly experienced during the last centuries (and that will be further discussed in another chapter of this document) e.g. the move from a feudal society to an industrialized one in which family became less relevant as a production unit, as well as an increasing secularization process that has undermined the leading role of certain religious principles, values and institutions (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995).

Moreover, families have changed not only regarding the differential variable of having/not having children (biological or adopted); but also regarding the one of sharing/or not sharing the same household (living apart together); having sex/or not having sex (asexual partnerships); and even new sex and gender arrangements have been observed and still considered as a family in practical terms, although not always recognized nor by the civil nor by the religious institutions, i.e. single parents, unmarried cohabitating, same-sex/same-gender/trans arrangements, etc. (Ruspini, 2013; Santoro, 2013). Families have also changed regarding the origin, the ethnicity and the cultural background of the spouses, so within the general family model of mixed couples and/or intermarriages it is possible to find the most diverse combinations of spouses who, nevertheless and contrary to the crescent process of family's de-institutionalization, usually aim to socially and legally legitimize and regulate their status through marriage (whether civil or religious depending on the spouses' cultural background and the local legislation and tradition of the place of residence).

In this way, it is precisely in the main communalities shared by all or most marriage arrangements that the main two differences between a couple and a married couple usually lie (*property kind of relationship and family outcome*). Thus, in the first one even when the multidimensional relationship among the individuals do exist without being married (and it may be actually very similar to the one of a married couple), such relationship is not equally regulated by a specific civil or religious authority but only by the members of the

couple (still not related as spouses)[4]. In this way, in an unmarried couple formal property rights among the partners, and among the partners and their relatives, don't actually exist (at least not from a legal civil or religious point of view). And it may be that exactly because of the inexistence of such expressed property rights, the relationship has the possibility to be less traditionally gendered.

Furthermore, an unmarried couple, even if living together sharing the same household –especially one without children-, is not formally considered as a family, at least not from the more traditional definition which is still applied in most Western countries. But it is, however, considered as one of the many diversified outcomes of modern family (ies) as it was previously mentioned (Santoro, 2012). Hence, it is understood that the confusing way in which concepts such as couple, marriage and family, are usually used, corresponds to a misunderstanding of what is actually considered to be a traditional continuum of stages within Western culture, i.e. *"couple who marry to have children and become a family"*.

This conceptual clarification is made in order to understand that both social institutions, i.e. marriage and family, cannot be defined in a simplistic way, because they are very much dependent on the religious and cultural **context** as well as on the local legislation, and because they are continuously **evolving** together with the social reality that they are related to.

Furthermore, from all these specifications, and even without describing more culturally differentiated examples (in different historical periods), what has been possible to observe from a space and time perspective is that marriage's patterns, and in particular family arrangements, have tended to a crescent plurality not only of the forms but also of the constitutive elements. Thus, nowadays it is possible to observe some family arrangements that may be classified as "traditionalist" but that are conformed for example by people from the same sex or by people from different cultural backgrounds who, although their evident differences with respect to "traditional" families, search to legitimatize their union by "traditional" institutions such as marriage in particular (Therrien, 2011; Ruspini, 2013).

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[4] Especially in countries that do not recognize exactly the same rights and obligations to married and unmarried couples (coppie di fatto or conviventi) as it does happen in Italy.

According to these conceptual difficulties, some authors have tackled the topic from a philosophical position considering that words are always shadowy and elusive at their borders (Wittgenstein, 1953 in Coltrane & Randall, 2001); and that, since any word covers a variety of instances that are connected together like a net (but do not actually have any single characteristic in common), we should follow the "gut-level" feeling (or intuition) for what we mean to be a "marriage" and/or a "family". That means that even after such prolonged conceptualization work, instead of trying to arrive at a precise definition that covers all instances, it is suggested to take our *"commonsense"* understanding as a basis for further exploration (Coltrane & Randall, Ibid). Some other authors, moreover, have even hypothesized a future society in which marriage will be increasingly less relevant as a civic and religious social institution to regulate life and love mutual arrangements, and in which family will disappear as such as many more forms of diversified human relationships will become more and more diluted.

However, such assumptions are mostly hypothetical, and whereas the number of both civic and religious marriages have decreased specially after the 1960s in several European industrialized societies[5] (Santoro, 2013); and the number of different family forms have increasingly been identified (according to several discriminant variables such as spouses' number and sexual orientation; number of –biological or adopted- children or absence of children; shared nor not-shared household; first, second or more, marriage; etc.); marriage and family are two institutions (still) far from disappearing, and that –maybe most importantly- offer a *key lecture* to analyze further complex changes experimented within and between different societies.

One of these multiple changes is precisely the one of cross border mixed marriages that in several industrialized countries, and contrary to marriage rate's noticeable decreasing tendencies, have increased amounting to more than 10% of all new marriages. In Italy for example, during 2012 were registered 30.724 new mixed marriages that amounted to 15% of the total new registered marriages (Istat, 2013); whereas in the U.K. the last census showed that during the last 10 years there was a 35% increase of people in England and Wales living with or married to someone from another ethnic group; during

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[5] Since the last years of the 1960s it was observed a slow and inexorable drop of the marriage rate in Europe. Such rate in the EU-27 countries decreased from 7.9 marriages every 1.000 inhabitants in 1970, to 4.5 in 2009, and 4.4 in 2010. Such change represents a decrease of 34% (Eurostat, 2012).

that same period the number of people described on census forms as "mixed" or "multiple" ethnicity almost doubled from just 660,000 in 2001 to 1.2 million in 2011, making it by far the fastest growing category.

Such evidence shows that if mixed couples or intermarriages may be considered one of the multiple new family typologies, the importance of marriage to legitimize this kind of unions is renewed and from an institutional point of view maybe even strengthened. To further assess such changes, marriage and family's evolution in Western Europe, and in particular in the national context in which this research was performed, i.e. Italy, will be developed in another chapter. Nevertheless, a first conceptual clarification between the concepts of marriage, family, mixed couples and intermarriages, is needed in order to understand better the groups that will be analyzed.

In the very particular case of this research project, we will focus on analyzing heterosexual, (who are actually the only ones who are allowed to get married according to the local national legislation and the predominant Christian religious tradition) married couples and unmarried couples who are in a long term relationship. Needed to clarify that, although the civil status of being married or unmarried is not the main focus of this research project, married couples will be questioned about the particular legal, social and cultural, conditions in which they got married; whereas unmarried couples will be questioned about the reasons for not getting married and the potentiality of doing so in the near future. In this way, further information on the symbolic and genuine role of the institution of marriage within a mixed context will be collected and critically analyzed.

1.2. Non-mixed couple Vs Mixed Couple. What does it mean to be 'mixed'?

As it was previously elaborated, defining and differentiating two concepts such as "marriage" and "family" is not immediate nor an easy task as it may seem because of their physical, relational and symbolic quotidianity and spread diffusion. Both marriage and family may take different "forms" and be constituted by different elements, according to a different series of variables that will be strongly conditioned by the local legislation and the cultural tradition of the particular context. Nevertheless, both terms refer to a very

particular kind of human relationship, one ideally based on biological, affective, spontaneous and close ties.

In her recent book, Elisabetta Ruspini (2013) elaborates from a sociological comparative perspective an extensive but even not exhaustive analytical description of some of these new forms of marriage contracts and non-traditional models of family and parenthood observed in Western countries. According to the author, one of the most important factors to be considered when analyzing the particularities of all these diverse marriage arrangements and family outcomes is the generation to which the spouses belong. This is because younger people have grown up in a globalized, changing and reflexive world that has overturned many commonplaces and stereotypes. Thus, Millenials (people born in the 80s) in particular and the still younger generations are more used to, and do accept more, than older generations all that variety of non-traditional family arrangements and wedlocks such as single parents, divorced couples and second marriages, adults living together without being married, and many others more.

One contemporary marriage arrangement and family model that has been particularly observed in Western societies –and not only- is the one of **mixed marriages or intermarriages**. Contrary to the decreasing rates and de-institutionalization trends of other marriage arrangements, nevertheless, marriage registered records have shown the consistent increase of international or cross-border intermarriages in several countries; as well as the fundamental legitimizing role that the marriage institution seems to have for these couples. However, this marriage contract has also shown to have a very high divorce rate among the involved spouses (but there too, divorce patterns vary mostly by the racial, gender and socioeconomic characteristics of the couples) (PRC Wang, 2012); so its institutionalization apparently is not necessarily correlated to its stability and continuity. In several cases, this relationship form may importantly resemble other traditional marriage contracts and family arrangements; however, even in those cases there is an important change of the constitutive elements that made up the relationship, i.e. considering in this case that such elements are relevantly differentiated among themselves (also) in cultural and/or national terms.

Such term specifically refers to those personal relations in which the spouses are differentiated among themselves, and among themselves and other surrounding traditional marriage forms, by one or more particular characteristics that are usually identified with the

spouses' personal ethnic and/or cultural background. Important to say that, although all spouses are usually mixed (said different) in terms of several socio demographic and economic characteristics such as sex, age, gender roles attachments, character and personality features -among many others-, the notion of been considered ***"mixed"*** indicates a very much noticeable feature or putative characteristic that importantly differs from the traditional social and cultural norms of what is considered to be contemporary and contextually **"normal or granted"**.

One of the main problems observed during the process of operationalizing research on mixed couples, mixed marriages, mixed families, etc., it is precisely the definition of what it is actually to be "mixed".

The first ontological problem is observed when, due to its complexity, "mixity" is often defined precisely by what it is NOT to be mixed, thus what it is "normal and homogeneous". The second historical concern is the assumption that "mixing", or mixed identities, has tended to refer exclusively or at least prominently to inter-ethnic relationships between white and black people or their children.

Furthermore, there is a third purpose and evaluative judgment distress, related to the political and welfare-oriented policy agenda that this area of research has given to the concept of "mixity". In this way, the adjective of mixed has been continuously used to tackle disadvantage, racism and other social problems that are experienced by some groups or individuals considered to be mixed, with a particular focus -as it was already mentioned- on white/black mixing.

"Mixed heritage" or "mixed race", thus, it is usually understood as a unifying category that refers to a "singular ethnic minority group" (Haynes & Dermott, 2011). Traditional conceptualizations of mixedness were not only shaped by the black/white racial binary but also by fear and disapprobation and, as such, were therefore problematized identifying out mixed individuals from the "normal" outset by attaching them a further "almost for free" adjective of "marginal men" (Stonequist, 1935).

In this way, to be mixed seemed still limitedly related to a vague recognition of difference between people in terms of skin color, a difference that was further portrayed as a continuum in which white people were placed at the top whereas black people were immediately stigmatized at the lower end.

Such concerns have thus revealed the need of a reassessment of the field and a reconfiguration of how to approach mixed individuals, mixed human relationships and mixed families; specially without over focusing on a nominal categorization for analytical purposes, and at the same time overlooking the everyday experience and (maybe divergent) self-identification process of people within mixed families and other type of relationships.

1.2.1. Mixed, Mixing and Mixedness

One useful conceptual exercise to differentiate between the nominal categorization of what it is mixed on the one hand, and the practical-relational experience of mixity on the other, is what Caballero et. al. (2008) does by identifying three different terms, i.e. **"mixed"**, **"mixing"** and **"mixedness"**. "Mixed" refers to the nominal adjective attached to specific categorical references (such as skin color or race, ethnicity, nationality, and -further added- language or religion) as a descriptor of families, relationships, and individual and collective identities. "Mixing", on the other hand, puts an emphasis on the phenomenon as a relational and dynamic process that serves to understand how people experience "mixity" and how do they "do" mixed family life. "Mixedness" is usually used as a synonymous of "mixity or mixité" and it is used to refer to the abstract broader universe of mixed individuals, mixed relationships and mixed parentage.

The nominal adjective function of "being mixed" can be as wide as the social categories to which an individual may –simultaneously- belong and further identify with (which are not necessarily correspondent). Thus, a person can't be defined only in terms of white or black, but also in terms of Asian, American, Hispanic, Indian, etc., making reference in this way not only to the color of the skin or to the territorial place of origin, but also to a particular ethnicity. And he/she can also be further identified as belonging to a particular linguistic group such as English (which doesn't distinguish between Irish, British or Scottish for example), Spanish (without distinguishing different ways to speak the language as in Spain, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, etc.), Chinese (Mandarin, Cantonese, Wu, Min, Xiang, etc.); or to a particular religious culture such as Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, etc. (with all the enormous amount of internal divisions and subdivisions).

A very recent study by Aspinal (2008) in Britain, for example, found that young mixed people that were interviewed do actually drew on a wide range of nominal categories, including combining racial and pan-ethnic terms (for example black), ethnic terms (such as Wolof) and identity/national group terms (for example Senegalese/British), all of them within the same description.

In this way, nominal mixity can be as varied as many social categories may exist in a particular context, nevertheless, it's important to say that such nominal categories are often uninterrogated and especially the particular differences exiting within each category are rarely discussed.

In countries that are very much "mixed" because of their long experience as immigrants' receptors, e.g. United States of America, Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, etc., there is an enormous list of ethnic and other social categories that are officially recognized by the National Census. According to the U.S.A Census Bureau e.g, the national institution that every ten years conducts a complete census of the population and another monthly statistical surveys, the American population is organized not only in terms of race and ethnicity, but also in terms of ancestry and language spoken at home. In terms of race it does officially recognize the presence of at least 7 races, independently of how much does the notion of race has been strongly discussed and contested (Marable, 1992; Lorde, 1992), such as White, Black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, plus Hispanics who may be both White or Black but who are still independently recognized. From this already very much varied group, it does categorize people according to more than eighty ancestry groups and nationalities, without still taking into consideration those simultaneously belonging to more than one of these many groups, the so called "two or more races" people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009).

In the case of the United Kingdom, for example, the "mixed ethnic" category was included into the U.K. Census in 1991. In that same year more than half million people reported to have a mixed ethnic identity, whereas it was predicted that such number would have risen by 35-40% percent by 2010, and that it would continue to increase so that in 2020 it would become the largest minority group – putting together all the existing mixed

categories- after British Indian. In 2011, this number has already surpassed one million and it is thought to be still underestimated.

Numbers in the United Kingdom are a clear indicator of how ethnically intermingled the British society actually is. Just in 2011 the so called Black Minority Ethnic (BME) had reached nearly 8 million, roughly the population of Scotland and Wales combined. There are other kind of minorities that are also of important significance but still distinguished by their skin color such as the "White Other" population that mostly include Eastern European people living in the U.K., White French, White Australian and White Argentinean, among others; in London, for example, this "White Other" category, together with the whole Black Minority Ethnic (BME), does already conform a bigger group than the "White British" that represents 46% of people resident in the London area. One of the striking findings of the census is the reduction in the overall number of 'White British' people by over half a million people. So one reason the BME proportion of the population is rising is because the White British population is shrinking at least within the city of London.

One of the particularities of the 2001 U.K. Census is the way in which it did start to categorize those people with a mixed background such as Mixed White/Black Caribbean, Mixed White/African, Mixed White/Asian and Mixed/Other (Haynes & Dermott, 2011). The particularity is the overall weight given to the White categorization that is always taken as a reference point, whereas people who may belong to two or more Non-White categories are pretty much unclearly defined. Such approach is strongly related to what was previously described as an erroneous evaluative judgment usually given to the 'mixed' adjective and to the general condition of 'mixedness', previously conceptualize by Caballero (2008), which is very often related to a status not only of diverse from the local and homogeneous native, but also of inferiorly diverse.

Such evaluation judgment is usually behind the notion of "culture clash", which is frequently used to explain the supposed transient and problematic nature of mixed relationships (e.g. Crippen and Brew, 2007). In this perspective, there is an 'automatic presumption of underlying pathology in interracial relationships' (Reddy, 1994, p. 10), warning that attempts to cross the barrier of cultural difference lead to emotionally difficult relationships and lifestyles.

Such contextual and relational definition of "mixed" highlights the importance of whom decides what is to be "normal", and moreover which are the social labels at stake to define in which way people are "noticeable -and mainly problematically- mixed", and why does such condition is actually socially or politically relevant.

In this way, the nominal categorization of people can be very much extensive according to the different groups to which and individual may simultaneously belong. Nevertheless, on the other hand, that doesn't mean that such an individual does – completely- identify himself/herself with such groups and its attached characteristics; and, furthermore, it doesn't mean either that the experience of "mixing" is lived according to the adjectives given to the "mixed" label. It is especially at this point, where the different conceptualizations, i.e. mixed, mixing and mixedness, by Caballero (2008) become very much relevant.

For example, the same respondents that drew on a wide range of simultaneous nominal categories in the previously mentioned study by Aspinal (2008: 25) in Britain, indicated *"not to experience their mixedness as being that central to their day to day lives and instead, for most respondents, what mattered more were their families, their studies, and their wider interests"*. The same Caballero (2008), when analyzing parenting and child rearing practices within mixed families in Britain (focusing mainly on exploring parents' approaches to difference and the creation of a sense of belonging for their children), found out that mixed parents actually see their family lives as ordinary, subject to the same everyday sorts of concerns as other families, rather than being constantly preoccupied with culture clashes at it may be usually thought. Such findings offer an important challenge to long-standing stereotypes about mixed families and people. Notably, these assumptions pose relationships across the boundaries of race, ethnicity and faith, as inherently subject to dichotomous culture clashes, leading to difficult relationships between parent couples and identity confusion on the part of their mixed children.

Also in Italy, where immigration flows and cultural mixedness are more recent phenomena than in other Western European countries, Colombo et. al. found out through a qualitative research that second generation migrants apply -at least- three different non-traditional hyphenated identification and belonging modes, i.e. transnational identifications, hyphenation and cosmopolitanism (Colombo, Leonini, Rebughini, 2009).

For the registry office (municipality), politicians or other surrounding people, these interviewed youngsters may be immediately classified as migrants, foreigners, "extracomunitari", or any other label that identifies them as non-Italians; however, the way in which they identify themselves and experience their "mixity" may be much more different, varied and multidimensional, integrating in this way elements of the national local culture as well as of other cultures in a non-rigid bi-dimensional way.

In this way, it becomes important to understand the difference between the nominal adjective of "mixed" (which can be related not only to one but to several social categories to which an individual may –also simultaneously- belong) and the content of such nominal adjective. Such nominal adjective is usually studied as a synonymous of "different" according to a particular evaluative judgment and sociopolitical connotation strongly conditioned by the cultural context. The concrete experiences and practices created and reproduced by such person/couple in relation to his/her condition of "mixed" are usually related to the degree of identification with such mixed label, to the importance attributed to it (that may be not even the case), and to the individuals' amount of social, cultural and intellectual resources (among others). Such distinctions highlight the *socially constructed* and *dynamic nature* of a term such as "mixed" that it has continuously changed over time and among different societies.

1.3. How do the terms "Mixed Couples" and "Intermarriage" have changed over time?

Marital unions or sexual intercourses between people from a different race, ethnicity, cultural and religious background, etc., are not a new phenomenon. Nevertheless, either by choice or by necessity, human mobility from one national territory to another has intensified particularly since the mid 20th century; people nowadays travel to a different country for the most diverse reasons: for work, to take part in seminars or to follow different types of courses, to go on holiday, to look for better job opportunities, to escape from armed conflicts or natural disasters, etc., and some of them eventually will establish and will put down roots in another national territory different to the one in which they were born.

The fluidity of these movements, with all their particularities, have promoted a series of increasing social contacts (not only face to face but also virtual) between groups and individuals from different racial, religious, ethnic and national backgrounds, and some of these contacts may eventually evolve until becoming more intimate and long lasting.

What is has usually changed is not only the number nor the intensity of such exchanges, but also the emphasis given to a particular social category for a couple to be perceived as mixed depending on the historical cultural and political context; the degree of social tolerance and acceptance towards this kind of unions; and the way in which mixity is experienced, depending on the particular context in which the couple is embedded as well as on the personal features of the individuals that conform it (human capital), together with the collective features of the groups to which these individuals may belong (ethnic capital).

Notable cases of intermarriages in literature and history have been, for example, those between Othello and Desdemona, King Salomon and his foreign wives, Cleopatra and Julius Caesar; Louis XVI of France and Marie Antoinette d'Habsburg-Lorraine, and several other members of the ancient and contemporary royalties; the Spanish explorer Hernan Cortes and the indigenous woman known as "La Malinche" during the conquest of Mesoamerica; Grace Patricia Kelly and Prince Rainier III; etc.

Archaeological and historical studies have shown the incidence of mixed marriages also at the popular levels (therefore, not only among aristocrats or members of the upper classes of society); some examples are those among Romans and Barbarians. A very interesting study on these last ones shows the role of mixed marriages in the processes of acculturation between Romans and Barbarians by Guidetti (2007), and dedicates one complete chapter to the topic of intermarriage describing how mixed unions were initially allowed only for strategic purposes between upper class members from both groups. Whereas, lower class people were expressively and strongly restricted to participate in such mixed unions:

> *"No provincial, of whatever order or place, is to marry a barbarian woman nor a provincial woman joins to any barbarian. But if these unions through wedlock may take place between provincial and barbarians, something suspicious or criminal will be found and the subject will be punished with*

death". Valentiniano, "De nuptiis gentilium", Codice Teodosiano III 14, 1. (Guidetti, 2007:165).

Such unions were continuously prohibited also afterwards (535 A.C.), especially in those geographic bordering areas such as Osroene and Mesopotamia (modern southeastern Turkey, Irak, Siria and Iran), that represented the last frontier with the Persian Empire. *"Mixed Marriage –in some cases- may create a dangerous situation for the –Roman-empire's security"* (Guidetti, Ibid).

If those unions between Romans and Barbarians were considered "mixed", before them unions between ancient Eubeans (the second largest Greek island) or inhabitants from the southern Italic territories that were colonized by Ancient Greece, and southern Etruscans (living in what is nowadays known as Central Italy) were also considered to be "mixed". Especially because marriage was considered a matter of public interest in ancient Greece, since it was the main institution to regulate reproduction and ensure the birth of healthy and strong progeny of legitimate children to the state, the couples formed by this type of social alliance were usually arranged according to the interests of the families and social groups to which the partners belonged. In such context, marriages with foreigners were not allowed whereas marriages with people from the same family, even between brothers and sisters, were allowed and in many cases strongly encouraged.

However, anthropologists and archeologists have argued that unions mainly between Greek man and Italic women were widespread, and that the bilingual offspring of such marriages would have played a leading role in the spread of alphabetic literacy, and in the sharing of other ideas between the first Western Greeks and the Italic mainland (Coldstream, 1993).

Something that may be noticed, at least from these examples, is that marrying outside the own group used to (and still does) represent a certain way of uncontentaiment, of breaking the rules, something that during the cited periods was particularly forbidden for the lower classes, at least at the beginning when out-marrying was really something very new. In these cases, it was just after a certain period of time that marrying outside the group became popular and therefore allowed also for the most popular classes. This pattern has also been observed in more contemporary examples.

In simple terms, the concept of mixed marriage or intermarriage refers to a particular form of "heterogamy", i.e. an alliance of socially different people where the specific content of the relevant diversity can vary and it has actually very much varied along history (Saraceno, 2007). Tognetti Bordogna (1996), who has largely conducted theoretical and empirical research on mixed marriages, also writes that mixed unions, both formal and informal, are not a new social phenomenon considering that when there wasn't the system of nation-states yet, when travelling was much more difficult because of transport and technology systems' narrowness, and when knowledge and communication with other geographic regions were scarce, a mixed marriage could also be considered one between two people from different family groups (marriage outside the circle of cousins and other relatives), different cities (even if these were not geographically nor culturally that much distant), or different doctrines even within the same religious tradition; particularly evident age differences among the spouses could be also a reason to consider a couple to be mixed especially when the marriage was not previously approved by the youngest spouse's parents.

Endogamy (marrying within own social group) and homogamy (marrying with someone close in status), just as marriage itself, had –and still have, although perhaps to a lesser extent- a very strong and effective instrumental role for controlling people's preferences and reproduction patterns of the population. As it was previously mentioned, in some societies intermarriage was allowed only to certain members of upper classes, especially if such unions were having an instrumental role, either economic or political, for the benefit of the family groups and/or, more recently, of the national states to which the spouses primarily belonged, the best examples are those observed among different members of the monarchies.

1.3.1. Mixed marriages' historical restrictions

Unions that were considered "dangerously" mixed were particularly prohibited among the lower classes such that its incidence could not be dispersed to the extent of representing an economic, political or social threat for the local or national authorities. Examples such as the one between Roman average citizens and Germanics, Persians or

other groups considered as Barbarians, is noticeable; however, there are several other much more contemporary examples.

In the United States of America, which is considered the melting pot country by excellence, interracial mixed marriages (between white and black people) became fully legal in the whole territory just until 1967, after the Supreme Court's decision of deeming anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional. Just before, the innate racial difference between the partners alone constituted a crime with severe punishments. Under such circumstances, a very much complex science of drawing the color line and of "reading race" emerged and developed in an heterogeneous way. Such "science" contemplated statements such as the so called one-drop rule, according to which any African ancestry -one drop blood- no matter how far removed, made an American to be "black". Contrary to many assertions, such one-drop rule was never widely applied, and many contradictory racial definitions actually coexisted. Pseudo-scientific statements such as this one (one-fourth or one-eight black ancestry e.g.) were part of a series of instrumental arguments that were used to legalize the actual incidence of interracial intercourses and were divergently accepted in some northern states such as Nebraska, North Dakota, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Maryland more than in other Southern states such as Arizona, Texas, Georgia and Alabama, and further changed over time (Sollors, 2000).

Also during last century, there is the emblematic case of the Nazi regime in Germany that banned miscegenation by interracial marriage and interracial sex through the Nuremberg Laws that were enacted in 1935, only few years before the beginning of the Second World War. According to such legislation, Jews and people of Jewish origin were classified as a race (although their whiteness and several other similar ethnic and cultural characteristics) and intermarriage and further sexual intercourse with Germans or Germans related blood people were fully prohibited, hardly punished, and categorized as *Rassenschande*, i.e. race-disgrace. Almost immediately, other groups such as Gypsies and Black skin people were also included in the forbidden categories to intercourse with. In this way, people who were part of mixed marriages in Nazi Germany were one of the groups that most suffered both state-sponsored discrimination and enormous social pressure. Whereas in earlier times, mixed marriages were considered those between people of different religions, the Nazi government transformed the meaning of such institution into a

definition of different "races". No matter whether these "races" were not concisely defined, after this ordinance also the non-Jewish spouses who were part of a mixed marriage were attached a social status of social-outsiders, despised by the regime and in many cases also by other people who previously knew them (Gellately & Stoltzfus, 2001). Forbidden laws like Nuremberg Acts were also created in other countries that were part of Germany's influence by that time, such as Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary, among others.

The end of the Second World War and the abolishment of the Nuremberg Acts signified also the end of the expressed prohibition on mixed marriages with Jews and other ethnic groups who at the time were classified as another race; however, the phenomenon of mixed marriages does still exist but the meaning of the concept was, once again, changed. Nowadays, the content of the mixity and the way in which the German State approaches mixed marriages have very much changed too (Nottmeyer, 2009); mixed marriages in contemporary Germany are considered those between German citizens and immigrants or second generation immigrants[6].

Another clear example of intermarriages that were expressively and strongly prohibited along the skin color line was the one of South Africa during the Apartheid regime. First of all, the Population Registration Act, Act 30 of 1950, provided that the entire South African population should be classified according to racial groups named whites, blacks and coloured. The first test by which the population was categorized was one of visual appearance, thus, a white person according to the Act was *"someone who in appearance obviously is a white person and who is not generally accepted as a coloured person"*; and this was specified relatively more precisely in another section of the Act to include as well individual's habits, education, native language, etc. Such straightforward division was the prelude for the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, Act No. 55 of 1949, that prohibited marriages between white people (regardless sex) and people of other "races"; by this Act white South Africans were not allowed to marry blacks or any other ethnic group in South Africa. Just few years later, in 1950 the ban on mixed marriages was followed by an amendment to the Immorality Act, previously passed to ban extra marital

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[6] In the case of Germany, intermarriage is classified mainly according to two main variables, thus, citizenship and immigrant background; and just as in other Western European countries, the number of new intermarriages per year has steadily increased during the last years (peaking 12.5% of all new marriages in 2006 according to the Federal Statistical Office).

sexual relations between white and black South Africans. By this amendment sex between white and other ethnic groups became directly a criminal offence, in effect all sexual activity between people considered to be from different races was strictly forbidden (Ratele & Duncan, 2003). The prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act and Section 16 of the Immorality Act were finally repealed in 1985 and replaced by Act No. 72 of the same year, such Act aimed to legitimize interracial marriage, nevertheless, social disapproval and rooted suspicion towards those unions by a significant portion of South African society were not easy to abolish, at least during the immediate next years (Mojapelo-Batka, 2008).

In this way, the rules of correspondence between the partners in the process of composition of the "mixed" couple -although identified with a certain relative precision in a particular period of time- have kept historically changing among different societies, in relation to the renewal of collective and individual preferences and habits, and together with the evolution of the relationships between social groups. Along time, there have been a series of distinction criteria for distinguishing differences and relevant boundaries between different matrimonial groups, e.g. cultural background, religion, occupational attainment or professional background, education level, parents' first language or socioeconomic class (class of origin), neighborhood, political orientation, rural/urban living environment, nationality, etc., and some of them have been much more ruled and socially/legally contested and punished than others.

1.4. Different types of mixed unions (content and context wise)

Many characteristics play a role in the choice of a spouse, however, sociologists have most often focused on examining endogamy (marrying within own group) and homogamy (marrying with someone close in status) with respect to socio/economic status, religion and race/ethnicity/nationality (Kalmijn, 1998). The importance that has been given to each of these ascribed and acquired characteristics, as well as their context conditioned-content, has changed and continues to change along history and among different societies.

Although intermarriage is not a new phenomenon, as it was already said and exemplified, its systematic analysis initiated just during the last century. The research literature that has been product of these research attempts, was divided into three main traditions, and each of them have focused on one of the previously cited characteristics:

socio/economic status, religion, and race/ethnicity/nationality (nevertheless, these last three have also been treated separately).

Research on socioeconomic homogamy was developed by stratification researchers who used marriage patterns in conjunction with mobility patterns to describe how open stratification systems are (Glass 1954). Research on religious intermarriages has been concerned with the extent to which churches control the life choices of their members and the degree to which religious involvement translates into the membership of "communal groups" (Kennedy 1944). And, research on ethnic and racial intermarriage originated in much more diversified immigrant countries such as the United States, that it is motivated by the question of whether the various nationality groups would integrate with one another and with the "native" population (Wirth & Goldhamer 1944).

The importance given to one or more individual/collective characteristics depends very much on the relevance that such characteristic has for the local context, its salience, and the degree of danger that crossing a certain kind of boundary may represent for the group or community's self reproduction.

In this way, socio-economic boundaries may be particularly important in religiously and ethnically homogeneous societies but highly stratified in socio-economic terms; religious boundaries, on the other hand, may be particularly salient in highly religious societies or where religious differences are also identified with other important socio-economic boundaries; whereas the degree of tolerated religious distance (inter faith or intra faith) may depend on the degree of religious diversity and the degree of religious "compatibility" (a measure of the similarity between two people in their religious beliefs and practices) that may be observed; "…*although the correspondence needs not to be perfect, the spouses in a same-faith marriage would presumably have a higher probability of marital stability for this religious compatibility than would spouses in intra-faith or even more in inter-faith marriages*" (Chiswick & Lehrer, 1991: 386)[7].

Racial/ethnical/national boundaries become particularly relevant in those societies that are far from being homogeneous, where people from different origins and cultural

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[7] Intra-faith marriages are those between partners who belong to different streams within the same religious tradition, i.e. Christians Catholics and Christian Protestants; whereas inter-faith marriages are those between partners who belong to different religious traditions, i.e. Christians (of any denomination) and Muslims (of any denomination) (Marranci in Waldis & Byron; 2006: 40-60).

backgrounds meet each other so that differences are actually perceived and therefore discussed (although in different degrees and for different motives). This is one of the reasons because this kind of "mixed content" has been particularly evident, and therefore largely analyzed with respect to very different domains, in societies with a high immigration rate and very much culturally heterogeneous, *"...in ethno-racially mixed settings, norms about academic achievement, for example, are usually explicitly defined and discussed in ethno-racial terms"* (Jimenez & Horowitz, 2013). In that sense when speaking about exogamy (marrying outside of the own group, which can start just by marrying outside the very own family group) are these ethno-racial variables the ones to be usually taken into consideration to classify a marriage such as mixed, and to understand the kind of ethnic/cultural mixedness.

From a general sociological perspective, intermarriage patterns (across different social boundaries such as the ones previously described) have been analyzed mainly in order to attempt to explain social interactions between different groups; and such interactions have been interpreted in order to better understand the more complex power stratification system in which such groups are embedded and the social changes that by those interactions may be produced. Nevertheless, such stratification system is not the same in different societies and it is not actually static along time, being this one of the main reasons because the literature on intermarriage, integrated by the multidisciplinary theoretical models that have been so far constructed and the empirical research, lacks precisely of standardization.

1.4.1. Socioeconomic status: in the particular case of socioeconomic status.

Research has focused on analyzing ascribed status and achieved status. Intermarriage patterns have evolved just as the socioeconomic stratification of different societies has become much more complex and diversified. For ascribed status it is usually measured the occupation class of the parents of the spouses and therefore the *class of origin*. Whereas for achieved status it is measured the *occupation* (occupational status and salary) and *education level* (formal and informal) of the spouses themselves (Kalmijn, 1998).

Another socioeconomic indicator that has become very much relevant, especially after an accelerated process of urbanization, is the one that takes into consideration spouses from urban and rural backgrounds. The relevance of these unions is particularly noticeable specially when considering that rural communities have historically showed an exceptional high degree of endogamy, which has usually been explained in terms of social and geographical isolation, cultural capital and resistance attitudes towards "outsiders", especially during periods of precariousness. Urbanism, on the other hand, it is thought to install in its inhabitants a desire to "live and let live", allowing in that way a higher degree of acceptance towards "others" and to the particular "otherness" on stake, fostering the possibility to observe cases of exogamy and allowing people to experience such mixity at least in a more open way (on tolerance Stouffer, 1955).

An important amount of research has focused on the importance of educational attainment as an indicator to measure endogamy or homogamy patterns, and it has been found that in most countries educational homogamy is particularly high in comparison with other ascribed characteristics (Furtado, 2006; Furtado & Theodoropoulos, 2008). For example, a large quantitative analysis in the United States by Kalmijn (1991) showed educational attainment homogamy to be particularly strong (0.55 in a scale from 0 to 1) in comparison with occupational homogamy (0.40), and spouses' class of origin (0.30). Such results were confirmed also by Hou & Myles (2007) who analyzed a larger sample of Americans and Canadians citizens marrying within a range of 30 years from 1970 to 2000.

The analysis of marriages among young adults shows that the overall levels of educational homogamy rates have unambiguously increased in both countries. In Canada, 54% of couples had the same level of education un 2001, up from 42% in 1971; whereas in the United States 55% of marriages consisted of couples with the same level of education in 2000, up from 49% in 1970. Furthermore, in both countries, intermarriage across education levels showed to occur primarily between adjacent education levels (e.g. College and Bachelor degree, or Bachelor degree and Master degree), whereas intermarriage across more than one education level is relatively rare. These last results confirm what it was observed also by Kalmijn (ibid), who specified that there is a tendency to marry outside the own group (in this case educational) the closer away the two status positions are, and that in education terms this is particularly important for people holding at least a bachelor and

college degree with someone far more less educated. The preference for education homogeneity among spouses is reinforced by the closer analysis of occupational attainment, that shows the spouses' still higher preference for the cultural status of their counterpart's occupation than the economic status of such occupation.

Such results particularly show two tendencies, the first one is to give more importance to achieved than to ascribed socio-economic characteristics (spouses' rather than parents' education level and occupational attainment); and the second is the less importance given to exclusively economic factors and instead the always higher importance given to social and educational factors strongly related to a common acquired cultural background.

1.4.2. Religion

Religion as a complex system of beliefs, values, practices and world views, is highly interrelated to several other life domains such as purpose of life, family formation, gender roles, sexuality, social and cultural rituals, children's education, etc.

Specially for its relevance and scope, interreligious encounters within intimate relationships may potentially constitute a battleground field between partners who grew up with different faiths, beliefs and moral values (Peruzzi, 2008).

Religion itself may not be an object of confrontation, specially because most probably partners whose religious attachment degree is very high would not even contemplate to participate in intermarriage (Saraceno, 2007); however, ever for not highly religious partners, when the content of the religious beliefs and practices involved is substantial, several problematic situations may surge not only between the partners themselves, but between them, their offspring and their enlarged families. Furthermore, there are other social practices, celebrations and rituals that may be (at least partially) influenced by a religious approach, and around which the spouses may differ, even if none of them is particularly religious, e.g. how to celebrate Christmas Eve or how to decide the name of a newborn.

Attitudes toward interreligious marriages were ambivalent since old times in texts such as the Bible and the Qur'an; in the case of the first one, there are several Passages in both the Old and the New Testament that express a disapproval regarding unions with unbelievers or people who used to practice other -specially polytheistic- religions:

>   **3**_You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons,_ **4**_for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly (Deuteronomy 7:3-4)._
>
>   **4**_Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?(2 Corinthians 6:14)._

But at the same time, there are other Passages in which (interethnic) mixed couples are positively regarded when both spouses, although from a different origin, do believe me in the same God, the one of the Hebrews.

In the case of Islam, for Muslim women who wish to marry outside of their faith the rules are more restrictive than the rules governing Muslim men wishing to marry a non Muslim woman. For men, interreligious marriage with "chaste" Christian or Hebrew women is allowed under specific circumstances, and under the premise to raise the children of such union in the faith of Islam:

>   "_This day are all things good and pure made lawful to you.... Lawful to you in marriage are not only chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the People of the Book, revealed before your time, when you give them their due dowers, and desire chastity not lewdness…"_
>   _(Qur'an 5:5)._

Nevertheless, marriage with unbelievers women is severely disapproved: _"Do not marry unbelieving women until they believe. A slave woman who believes is better than an unbelieving woman, even though she allures you. Unbelievers beckon you to the Fire…"_ _(Qur'an 2:221)._ Such severe restriction is also valid and openly expressed for women: _"Nor marry your girls to unbelievers until they believe. A man slave who believes is better than an unbeliever...."_ _(Qur'an 2:221);_ nevertheless, there are not exceptions for women when it is about marrying a Christian man, not because such man is Christian but because of the higher possibilities that this woman, following her husband's desire and adopting his cultural and religious traditions according to a gendered stratification, will abandon Islam and will not pass her religious tradition into the next generation (Leeman, 2009).

Religious intermarriage may be considered as either a problem or an opportunity, specially by religious denominations who are concerned with the size of their membership in the current and future generations. However, several studies have mainly shown the problematic face of the phenomenon, thus, its association with substantial higher rates of marital instability and with lower levels of fertility (Becker et. al., 1977). In the cases of significant and relevant religious differences, the probabilities of interreligious dialogue or conversion are particularly low together with the possibility to actually attract new disciples; nevertheless, it is necessary to say that possibilities of intermarriage are also very much rare for individuals who are highly attached and constant practitioners of their own religious values (McCutcheon, 1988; Saraceno, 2007).

An interreligious union might be either inter-faith or intra-faith for a given definition of religious groups; such definition depends precisely of the boundaries between the groups. Most empirical studies on (religious) intermarriage have used these broader religious categories: Protestant, Catholic, Jew, Muslim, Other, or Non Religion (Chiswick & Lehrer, 1993). Nevertheless, such categories are not enough to cover the enormous amount of officially recognized and non-recognized religious traditions, as well as the multiple religious sub-groups that exist within each of them. Considering that religious affiliation, and even to a lesser extent religious practice, is scarcely assessed in official records, trends in religious homogamy have been particularly assessed through surveys. An example is the study by Kamlijn (1991) that shows that intermarriages between Catholic and Protestant in the United States have increased in a linear fashion between 1920 and 1980. Laserwitz (1995) has also shown that such trend is similar for Jewish and Gentile intermarriage. Other studies in Europe -such as the one of Schoen & Thomas (1990) in Switzerland or the ones of Hendrickx et al. (1991 and 1994) in The Netherlands and Germany- show that endogamy of Catholics and Protestants have significantly decreased.

Such trends are in line with one far more complex process that has rapidly developed during the last centuries, thus secularization, that has overall resulted in the decreasing importance given to religious values, rituals and institutions (Kalmijn, 1998); and with the diversification of religious attainments and the increasing differentiation between religious and spiritual exercises (Warner, 1993). However, among immigrant communities living in secularized industrialized countries, religious affiliations and religious local and

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transnational practices remain important topics to be considered mainly when it´s a matter of analyzing their integration and identity formation processes in the host country (Ambrosini, 2008).

In the particular case of Italy, processes of secularization and laicization have also been observed just as in other European countries, although at a different time period and mostly in a fragmented, ambiguous and imperfect way. As an indicator civil marriages, in comparison to religious marriages, have been spreading much faster (although their declining rate among native Italians); during the early 1970s, the incidence of non religious marriages increased from 2 to 10%. Such trend rapidly and steadily increased during the next decades such that by 2010 more than one in three marriages were celebrated only with a civil ceremony, and such frequency was even higher in the big urban centers. Other several family formation practices, strongly related with the process of secularization (understood as an overall reduction in religious practice), have been disseminated during the last decades, i.e. premarital cohabitation, second (civil) marriages, extramarital childbearing, and divorce (Santoro, 2012).

Nevertheless, the influence of the Roman Catholic Church is still dominant and has a strong influence both on political decisions and on (some) actual individual and group behaviors. Such cultural influence differs among rural/urban centers; geographical regions; and it usually differs among generational cohorts (Impicciatore & Billari, 2012).

If religious self-identification and religious traditional practices have become partially weaker among younger generations, the social concern about religious issues hasn't became less important, especially with the arrival of an important number of immigrants from not Christian but Muslim countries. On the one hand, the vicissitudes of global politics in recent years, bringing back images and feelings related to clashes of civilizations, have recovered a renewed visibility to some symbolic and religious factors, especially regarding tensions between Muslims and Christians.

Such threaten perceptions have particularly affected social tolerance and acceptance of interfaith couples, such as those made of Italian women and north African men from Muslim tradition countries such as Senegal, Egypt and Tunisia e.g. (independently of whether individuals publicly recognize themselves as active practitioners or not). This significant social pressure increases the difficulties that some couples may actually face and

that –according to some previous empirical research- usually increase after the spouses become parents (Peruzzi, 2008). The question of the baby´s name, the celebration of religious holidays, the attendance (and frequency) of worship places, the religious/non religious school choice, the attitude towards tradition, the relationships with grandparents and the community of origin, are some of the practical problems that religion differences may pose to the couple, particularly when a newborn arrives.

1.4.3. Race/ethnicity/nationality

Defining any of these conceptual terms is not an easy task. It does become even more complicated when the three of them have been used all together when it is a matter of mixed couples or intermarriages. Real and perceived differences between individuals regarding these abstract concepts (that constitute ascribed and acquired human characteristics) have become maybe the most salient content of the "mixed" category, especially during the last century. As a consequence of the intensification of human mobility and mass migration around the world during the 1900s, several populations were able, voluntarily or forcibly, to encounter at least some members of other communities with several different physical and cultural traits such as skin color, somatic attributes, gestures, language, history, traditions, etc.

The recognition and emphasis given to these differences, particularly by local authorities and public media, contributed to create a net gap separation constituted by "us" on one extreme and "them" on the other; and also contributed in this way to strengthen the concept of homogenously uncontested local communities (Anderson, 1983).

One first step is to define these concepts clarifying that this is not an exhaustive analysis of the terms, nor of the conceptual evolution that have experienced, according to different disciplines, especially during the last century.

1.4.3.1. Race

The concept of race is probably the one that has provoked more controversy according to several attempts to define it not only from a biological but also from a social perspective. On the one hand, race as a biological concept has a variety of meanings, but it

usually refers to any "distinguishable" type within a species, such as dark-bellied and light-bellied variants of small mammals for example (Feldman, Lewontin & King, 2003).

In the human species, according to Casas (1984) the concept of race refers to a subgroup of people possessing a definite combination of physical characteristics of genetic origin, the combination of which to a varying degree distinguishes the sub-group from other sub-groups of mankind. Nevertheless, Casas's definition doesn't have behavioral, psychological or social implications, and precisely for that reason it has been contested by other authors who depart from the assumption that the humankind is actually social by nature.

In this way, Helms (1990) later incorporated into the definition psychological implications based on thoughts, feelings and beliefs about different racial groups, that eventually affect the individual's intra-personal and inter-personal functioning. Several years before, W.E.B Du Bois (1940) said that racial differences are impossible to correlate with intelligence, personality, etc. Nevertheless, he assessed that the concept of racial and its social implications do persist, and actually argued that skin color is important as a badge of the social heritage and slavery's sustaining elements.

More than in the psychological implications, several authors focused in the social implications of the concept and in the influence that the cultural and political context may have in its changing definition. Sullivan et. al. (1980) didn't found intellectual or behavioral differences resulting from physical differences (such as skin color), but considered race to be a social construction that is usually used to describe and categorize people.

Race showed to be not only a social but also a political construction when it was differently defined by different governments according to different human characteristics. The first and more visible one was color skin that was used by the government of the United States to distinguish some of the groups residing within its territory, nevertheless, the concept of race was also used by the Nazi government in Germany to distinguish people according to some other physical and cultural characteristics that were far more reaching than the skin color.

These categorizations have continue to change, and nowadays in the U.S. e.g. there are four official U.S. Census categories for race such as White, Black, Asian/Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native, but this scheme was not developed until

1977. Such categorizations and its prevalence go in the opposite direction of the modern genetics studies that have revealed how all humans belong to one human race, and that physical differences obey to multiple genotype combinations (gens' frequency) and environmental adaptations that can be only tested by laboratory tests but that don't constitute a race in itself (Boyd, 1963).

Besanceney (1965) stresses in this way the social significance of the concept of race, arguing that it is an abstract concept that serves to categorize individuals on the base of certain physical characteristics. According to the same constructivist approach, Gist & Dworkin (1972), state that the so called racial purity is a myth, but that such a myth is widely accepted by many individuals despite the evidences that have been released regarding the hereditary genetic mixture by which all people are actually made of.

More recently, Stuart Hall performed an enormous dissertation work on what it is known as the critical questions of race and the politics of race. Hall does recognize the existence of difference, however, he overcomes differences and focuses in the systems of thought and language that different societies use to make sense of such differences, in particular those of skin color. According to Hall, differences get meaning when they are organized into categories, and those categories are generally embedded within a certain historical period, cultural context, and especially within a very well structured power relation system that it usually justifies, implicitly or explicitly, the dominance of certain groups and the exclusion of others (Hall in McRobbie, 2005). For Hall, the specific and particular difference of a group or community cannot be asserted absolutely without regard to the wider context provided by all the others to whom particularly acquires a relative value.

Stuart Hall's contributions were closely related to the so called black redemption cultural and political movement in Britain, that proposed a much more critical analysis of what historical and social struggles of black people are and have been, and a new redefinition of "blackness" individual and collective representations (Hall in McRobbie, Ibid). Such contributions were inspiration for opening out the discussion regarding other heterogeneous categorizations of our contemporary world such as gender, ethnicity, and national identity.

1.4.3.2. Ethnicity

Ethnicity, on the other hand, is another concept that has been strongly interrelated to the one of race. Nevertheless, if race has been particularly used to categorize individuals according to certain physical characteristics -in particular the more visible physical ones such as skin color-; ethnicity mainly relates to the classification of individuals according to their shared social and cultural heritage, thus, customs, language, traditions, religion, etc. In this way, whereas race is related to the biological and physical aspects of a person, ethnicity deals with the learned or acquired behavioral patterns.

In Weberian terms, *"we shall call ethnic groups those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists. The sense of ethnic honor is a specific honor of the masses, for it is accessible to anybody who belongs to the subjectively believed community of descent"* (Weber in Wittich ed., 1978:389). In this sense, it is possible for people from different races to belong to the same ethnic group.

Ethnicity is a complex social concept which sees that the ascription of certain qualities to oneself or others is a matter of construction, but at the same time suggests that the groups which usually recognize themselves as an ethnic group do instrumentalize these ascriptions by claiming that they are "natural groups". The social element of ethnicity is also very much related to their relativity. Groups are very much defined not only by the common characteristics shared by their members, but also by the characteristics that they do not share or they do not want to share with other groups. In this way, ethnic groups are constructed based not only on what they are, but also on what they are not in relation to something else (another group).

When Weber travelled to the United States and got to know the work that Blacks were doing, he arrived to the conviction that the explicit prohibition of marriage between blacks and whites in the southern states of the country was a direct consequence of the emancipation of the slaves and the struggles for civil rights. As it was said before, apart from the laws against biracial marriages in the Southern states, sexual relations between the two races were abhorred by both sides, but this development began only with the

emancipation and resulted from the Negroes' demand for equal civil rights. Hence, this abhorrence on the part of the Whites was socially determined by the tendency toward the monopolization of social power and honor, a tendency which in this case happened to be linked to race as the main "differential characteristic" at stake. *"The poor white trash were the actual bearers of racial antipathy, which was quiet foreign to the planters. This was so because of the social honor of the poor whites was dependent upon the social dèclassement of the Negroes"* (Weber, Ibid.:391).

Still when slavery was abolished, the gradual decline in formal inequality of blacks and whites went hand-in-hand with a growing anxiety about the social boundary between the races, and this anxiety was stronger hen contacts were more intimate. Precisely because of this main reason, interracial dating and marriage were condemned with great vigor, and strong social norms emerged against interracial contacts with possible sexual undertones, such as interracial dancing and swimming. The emerging doctrine of no social equality was formalized in legislation that segregated the races in public facilities and controlled their sexual and marital contacts (anti-miscegenation laws).

Stuart Hall, for example, argued that the concept of ethnicity (Black ethnicity in particular) should be consciously appropriated in a positive way in order to pay tribute to the historical positioning and achievement of marginalized groups. The category is appropriate, Hall argued, precisely because the black subject and the black experience are not defined by nature. The concept of ethnicity can be –also- used to –positively- construct that subject historically, culturally, and politically, and this can be done by the subject itself (Hall, 1994: 21).

Hence, race and ethnicity are far from being fixed and stable meanings of certain human physical and cultural characteristics. Their definition is socially constructed and very much embedded in particular social, cultural and historical contexts that are structured according to specific power relations interplay among groups. Nevertheless, people usually tend to accept these concepts as if they were something fixed, unchangeable, and furthermore innate. The problematic side of this is not precisely characterizing people according to certain personal or group's attributes whether these are physical or cultural, but attaching to these categories an evaluative judgment that usually disfavor the weaker and more historically marginalized or oppressed groups.

1.4.3.3. Nationality

The concept of nationality, differently to the ones of race and/or ethnicity that are related to physical or socio-cultural characteristics of groups and individuals, is related not only to a common history, traditions and language e.g., but also to a legal status that recognizes someone as a member of a particular nation (a large ethnic group).

National status or nationality refer in this way to both, the membership to a particular national group that share a recognized common history, a cultural tradition, a certain language or dialect, etc.; but also to the legal relationship between the individual who is recognized as a member of a particular nation, and the State by which that nation, and therefore its members, is regulated and also protected.

In this way, nationality is often identified with the concept of citizenship, which may be defined as *"that set of practices (juridical, political, economic and cultural) which define a person as a competent member –able to participate in public domains- of society, and which as a consequence shape the flow of resources to persons and social groups"*. (Turner, 1993: 2). The idea of a set of practices avoids a static and exclusively juridical definition of citizenship as merely a collection of rights and obligations, and emphasizes the dynamic social construction of the term that has changed as a consequence of historical and political struggles Nowadays, the way to define citizenship may contemplate several different elements (both ascribed and acquired), and these elements usually change from one country to another.

The identification of the term citizenship with the one of nationality was particularly due to the characteristics of the modern system of Nation-States, that originally recognized a member of a certain national group to be also a citizenship of the State to which this nation was historically, territorially and politically recognized to be part of. In this way, people from different nations or ethnic groups could be citizens of a unique State; or people from the same nation or ethnic group that were located in different territories according to human migration flows, national or international conflicts or several other political changes, could be identified as citizens of two or more different States. Needed to say that it is very difficult to find at least one State made of only one national group, or one complete national group located within the borders of only one single State, thus, making

very difficult to have a perfect synchrony between the two concepts that, nevertheless, are often matched in official records.

If nationality recognizes the belonging of an individual to a certain national group (which is differentiated from others and characterized by their collective common traits, history and cultural background); citizenship recognizes the ability of such individual to participate in a particular State's public life and its multiple manifestations, to participate in the decision-making process of public concerns that influence the community's several life domains, and the possibility to be assisted and protected by that State.

In this way, differences may be found not only on the ways to define who is a national or citizen from a certain State, but on the ways that such State relates to the non-nationals or citizens from another State. Thus, individuals who are not nationals nor citizens from a certain Nation-State but who (legally) reside in such State (i.e. regular migrants) may be warranted a series of rights and asked to fulfill a series of obligations that may be comparable, to a certain extent and for a certain number of issues, to the ones of the State's ordinary citizens; but, at the same time, may be banned to participate in certain activities or to have certain warranties that are only reserved for citizens, and these particularities may change from one State to the other.

The notions of nationality and citizenship are very much related to one of the most important attributes of the modern Nation-State, i.e. the one of sovereignty (Joppke, 1998). In this way, it is the State –in representation of its own citizens, at least in liberal democratic regimes- the one who retains the right to decide who is a citizen and who may be granted certain rights and obligations, and their multiple practical manifestations.

Nevertheless, the nature of citizenship has also been challenged by the transformation of the autonomy of the Nation-State in the context of global economic forces associated with a world-economic system. Thus, there are enormous problems of state membership for aboriginal communities, stateless people, refugees, increasing numbers of migrants (irregular and also regular in some cases) and their offspring, etc.

And these social changes in the role of the Nation-State, the globalization of political issues (international territorial borders constant redefinition for example), and the relation between dominant and subordinate groups (within a power relation system that is increasingly globalized), have also major implications for the definition of personal

identities and individuals' agency (Turner, 1993). The break-up of the Soviet Union e.g. presents a dramatic case study of the dilemmas of social and political membership and cohesion in societies that are very much different in terms of ethnic, cultural and religious issues (Brubaker, 1996).

In such context of constant economic and political changes and crescent globalization processes, nationality and more specifically citizenship have become a very much precious instrument for the State to control which individuals can freely access to its territory, to participate in its public life, to enjoy from its welfare benefits, and to further collaborate to strengthen (or to weaken) its social and cultural cohesion.

At the same time, in a historical period characterized by voluntary and/or forced massive human mobility, citizenship -particularly if granted by the more powerful and wealthier States within the Nation-State system- has become a privilege that is tried to be accessed thought different processes and legal instruments, e.g. blood heritage, long term legal residence, marriage, among others.

It has been this last kind of (inter)marriage, the so called international or cross-border marriage, a particular modern phenomenon that has steadily increased during the last century, reflecting a dramatic increase in international mobility (Cottrell, 1990).

One of the particularities of this type of international intermarriage is that, potentially, it may simultaneously involve all the social categories that have been previously enlisted to consider an union to be a "mixed union". Thus, depending on the spouses' national and ethnic background, one union could be simultaneously cross-national, interracial, interfaith and mixed in terms of socio-economic class. This is the case of several couples between white middle class Christian Italian women and black low class Muslim Senegalese men e.g (Peruzzi, 2008).

Another particularity of this type of intermarriage is that, relatively, is easier to assess and verify its incidence according to the information collected by the correspondent marriage registration offices, municipalities or immigration offices, where the blank space for nationality/citizenship usually has to be compulsory fulfilled. Official records in this way may offer a lot of interpretable macro data on human movements from one national territory to another; however, these records are usually not able to offer sufficient micro data about the categories by which the spouses are actually different among themselves and

the people that surround them; about the way in which such differences are negotiated; about the couple's formation process; and about the previous migratory path that one or both partners have previously (or not) undergone, among others.

According to this matchless information, the often simplistic state and legislative conceptualization of marriage migration movements and cross-national marriage has not been sufficient to understand and regulate the complexity of this crescent social phenomenon and its multiple implications. International marriage migration, thus, may result from the consequences of private relationships and intimate contacts between individuals from the most diverse backgrounds, but it may also offer the possibility to understand international migration movements in a world in which migration routes are increasingly narrowing.

1.5. Modern patterns of exogamy/heterogamy and ethnic/national (inter) marriage

As it has been said, it is the intermarriage along the racial/ethnic/national divide the one that has particularly increased its incidence during the last century in several countries around the world (specially in those that have previously been colonizing and colonized countries and/or immigrant receptors). Such phenomenon has attracted a lot of attention not only from social scientists but also from politicians and public media. The main reasons are, on the one side, because it reflects a dramatic increase in international human mobility and cultural diversity in all its nuances; and, on the other side, because it is a salient element of the migration and social/cultural cohesion pressures that several States are currently experiencing.

The relations between racial, ethnic and cultural differentiated individuals, and the groups to which these individuals belong, have been extensively studied by several social disciplines such as Cultural Studies, Social Psychology and Political Sociology e.g. (Breger & Hills eds., 1998). The reasons to do it are mainly focused on the key lectures regarding cultural transformations, social change and political structural shifts, that these intercourses may offer.

The particular attention received by intermarriage along the racial/ethnic/national divide doesn't mean, nevertheless, that intermarriages along the socioeconomic status or

the religious divide e.g. have disappeared or have become less important; but that differences among people in terms of racial or cultural background have become, at least visibly and probably numerically, more salient for societies. It was also said that within a couple some differences may be very much salient and therefore socially contested (for example the skin color or the spoken language e.g.); even when there may be also some other differences less visible (for example the class of origin, the emotionality of the partners, or even the citizenship status) and thus less socially noticeable, that may still play a more relevant role for the relational dynamic inside and outside the couple.

The kind of mixity that has been particularly observed during the last decades involves not only a cultural and social dimension; but also a very relevant legal one that is related to the multidimensional relation that an individual may have with the State and to the obligations that this State may adopt towards an individual through the status of regular/irregular foreign resident, national or citizen.

In this way, if racial and cultural endogamy and homogeneity may be an important challenge for cultural and social cohesion; nationality differences (intended as citizenship) may also challenge the State's sovereign capacity to define who can enter and stay within its territory and under which conditions, who can participate in public life, who can benefit from welfare benefits, etc.

 On the one hand, the relational relevance of studying intermarriage patterns lies on the intimate nature of such bond and thus in its possibility to indicate links between different social strata; marriage creates intimate and strong ties between individuals and between families, and in this way is fundamental for understanding barriers in the social structure (Kalmijn, 1991, 1998). In most of the social distance scales which aim at representing the distance between persons, *"the marital relationship stands for the most intimate relationship"* (Haller, 1981: 776). Intermarriage between people from different races or ethnic backgrounds in particular may provide useful information to understand different patterns of interbreeding and socio-cultural evolution.

On the other hand, the institutional relevance of studying cross-national or international marriage patterns lies on the instrumental and legitimizing role that marriage can have to understand certain modern international migration patterns, as well as the

potential formation of new globalized marriage markets, new family typologies and transnational communities, and the consolidation of multiethnic societies.

1.5.1. Cross-cultural marriages Vs Cross-national marriages Vs Cross-border or transnational marriages

In this way it is necessary to clearly differentiate between three relevant and still more specific concepts, thus, *cross-cultural marriages*, *cross-national marriages, the cross-border marriages, and transnational marriages*. The first one refers to marriage between members of two different cultural groups that, nevertheless, may hold the same citizenship e.g. two American citizens from Polish and Puerto Rican origin. The second one refers to marriage between two members of a different national group who hold different citizenship, e.g. an Italian man with a Brazilian woman (Mukhina, 2010).

To make this picture more complex it could be hypothesized that the first couple corresponds to second or third generation migrants in the United States, and that both of them have grown up according to more generalized American values and cultural representations, so culturally speaking at least it is very much probable that their differences wouldn't even be that much noticeable, at least for the partners themselves. As for the second couple, changes are high that the Brazilian woman could be a descendant of Italian former immigrants in Brazil so she could hold both Brazilian and Italian citizenships, and in this case the couple could be considered still cross-cultural but not cross-national (different cultural background, same nationality).

The main difference between these two kinds of intermarriage is that in the first one cultural differences (which could be simultaneously accompanied by gender, race and ethnic differences, etc.) are emphasized inside and specially outside the couple; however, the bureaucratic, legal, economic and possibly political, burden that usually signifies a process of international migration is not present. Whereas, in the second couple cultural differences are accompanied by a difference in juridical status, that may particularly influence the overall life of the foreign partner (or the partners if both of them are in a third country).

The second pair of concepts, cross-border and transnational marriages, also refer to couples in which the partners are usually different in terms of ethnic/cultural background

and nationality; however, these concepts mostly refer to the national/international physical and political space that is transgressed through the specific kind of human relationship. In terms of the couple's categorization (specially in official records) these concepts may not add that much ulterior information; however, when it is a matter of understanding the particular way in which the couple (and the individual partners) experiences their mixity and/or a migration process, these concepts may be particularly informative.

Thus, on the one hand, cross border marriages refer to those marriages that specifically cross the borders of the nation-state, in which at least one of the partners moves to another country specifically for marriage purposes (i.e. migration because of marriage Vs marriage because of migration) (Constable, 2005). The difference is not banal since it may completely change the reasons to move from one country to the other, the specific bureaucratic procedures to go through, the conditions in which mixity will be experienced within and without the couple, and the way in which the foreign person is inserted within the host society.

The term cross-border marriage emphasizes geographical, national, racial, class and gender and cultural borders constructed in the hosting societies. These borders are mainly mediated by the states as well as by other social actors in order to differentiate the 'we' and 'the others'. This stream of scholarship concerns the impact of marriage migration on the host societies in terms of population pressure and social security, the political and social citizenship of marriage migrants and their integration and acculturation processes. Current research on the topic pays particular attention to studying how to empower migrant wives in exploitative situations, such as domestic violence and commoditized marriage brokerage (Lu, 2007).

The definition of transnational marriages, on the other hand, is very much related to the definition of transnationalism that has been widely discussed and contested (Portes et. al. 2003; Guarnizio et. al. 2003; Ambrosini, 2012). Transnationalism refers to the particular connections that migrants establish between countries; it is a condition that creates a greater degree of connections between individuals, communities and societies across borders, bringing about changes in the social, cultural, economic and political landscapes of societies of origin and destination. Such changes may refer to the transferences of financial, social and cultural capital, from one country to the other; or to the creations of transnational

diasporas and information networks e.g. The term transnational marriage emphasizes a transnational network and space created by the actors themselves; as well as the transactions of economic resources, symbols and political and cultural practices between the sending and receiving communities; and how these transactions influence local development, social practices and cultural norms in both sending and receiving societies.

Needless to say that not all cross-cultural nor international marriages are strictly considered cross-border and/or transnational marriages; in the same way that not all cross-border marriages are necessarily transnational (specially in the case of mail order brides); or that all transnational marriages are necessarily cross-cultural or international (e.g. two Italian people with the same nationality and the same cultural background but currently living in two different countries).

The kind of differences that may characterize the partners of a mixed couple have importantly increased during the last decades, and the possible simultaneous combinations of such differences may importantly influence the way in which these couples are perceived, socially and legally classified, as well as the way in which the couples actually experience and negotiate their particular mixed condition and mixity practices.

The increasing of this diversity between individuals, and thus between couples, obeys to the intensity of human mobility that has been lately experienced for the most diverse reasons (recreational, academic, economic, political, environmental, etc.). Such condition of crescent diversity is distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified migrant communities who have arrived mainly to industrialized Western countries (and not only) over the last decades; and to the increasing cultural exchanges, both real and virtual, that have rapidly increased after the improvement of long distance transportation means and the spread of ICT technologies (Appadurai, 1996; Vertovec, 2006).

However, and as it was remarked before, this general phenomenon of global families and its multiple specificities it is not a free-for-all or an equal-for-all phenomenon (Beck, & Beck-Gernsheim, 2013). It is demarked by the specific particularities of the embedded partners, the specificities of their countries of origin, of the conditions under which the couples was formed, and more generally it embedded within very specific "geographies of

power" (Cerrutti & Massey 2001). Thus, it is not a casualty that a majority of international marriage migrants are women, and most of these women move from poorer countries to wealthier ones, from the less developed global "south" to the more industrialized "north"— from parts of Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union, to Western Europe, North America, Australia, and wealthier regions of East Asia—echoing some of the common patterns of women's labor migration (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002, Piper and Roces 2004).

Within this context, most research attempts have focused on cultural differences and intercultural communication, usually involving several racial/ethnic/cultural groups but within the same national territory (Breger & Hills, 1998). Contrary, less efforts have been focalized on analyzing the effects and multiple dimensions of international marriage migration; and particularly the specificities related to cross-border marriages, globalized marriage markets, international intermarriage's social dimensions, etc. (Mukhina, 2010).

This project focuses on analyzing international mixed (married and unmarried) couples who might be also cross border and transnational but not necessarily, in a very specific regional and cultural context; in this way, both elements are taken into consideration, thus the internal and external negotiations of cultural differences (and other relevant social categories' contents) and the multidimensional implications of nationality/citizenship differences among the partners (when it is the case). In this sense, apart from analyzing what does it mean for a couple to be identified as a mixed union and the relevance for the local society in terms of exogamy rates; the multifaceted dimensions resulting from the experience of intermarriage and international migration for marriage motives, of at least one of the partners, are stressed.

After have illustrated how the concepts of mixed couples, intermarriages and cross-border marriages are socially constructed, the next step will be to explain the particular temporal and spatial contexts in which the social phenomenon will be studied in this research. Hence, the next Chapter will firstly focus on two main aspects: the transformations that marriage contracts and family life have experienced until the present days, particularly stressing exogamy and endogamy patterns (so it can be understood the way in which the couple' formation process has evolved and the way in which to do and to be family has changed); and the process by which the world has parallel become more

interconnected so that people nowadays have more probabilities to meet and to engage with other people from a different ethnic, cultural and national background, for the more diverse reasons.

CHAPTER 2

Marriage and family's historical transformations within an increasingly globalized context

In pre-modern societies, just as today but to a very different extent, a fundamental rule for choosing a spouse it was precisely the one of homogamy and endogamy. In this way, people looked for marrying a socially similar person within the most immediate social circle in order to avoid mésaillances or mixtures and ensure the balance and the stability considered to be necessary for the effectiveness of the relationship (Saraceno & Naldini, 2001).

It was especially during the past two centuries that the social institutions of marriage and family have experimented profound changes not only in terms of their forms but also in terms of their content and their components. Some of these changes are related to the degree of liberty that a person may have when choosing for a spouse, to the religious and civil rituals that are selected for legitimizing an union, to the increasingly different social national and international contexts in which a person may find a potential mate, and to the way in which marriage and family life are not only conceived but also experienced.

Such transformations have been heavily interrelated with other very much complex economic and social changes experimented by Western societies (and not only), although at a different timing in a relatively different way. Thus, from the model of nuclear family to the model of companionate marriage and confluent love based on an individual free choice, it has been a long way down.

In the next pages, a non exhaustive review of the more salient marriage and family transformations, mainly but not exclusively in terms of homogamy and endogamy patterns, that have been observed during the last decades within an increasing process of globalization will be developed. This review will be developed going from a broader Western context to the particular national context(s) of the partners' countries origin that will be discussed in Chapter 3.

2.1. Homogamy Vs heterogamy and endogamous Vs exogamous (marriage) mating patterns

Rates of endogamy and homogamy reflect the degree to which similar individuals, in terms of individual and collective characteristics such as age, education, socioeconomic class, occupation, religion, ethnicity, cultural background, etc., marry each other within tight social circles. Together with exogamy and heterogamy rates, they indicate the degree of closeness/openness and inclusion/exclusion that exist through a specific social structure and the extent to which social networks are restricted to outsiders.

In ancient societies individuals were much more restricted to their primarily belonging groups; the satisfaction of their collective, and just later individual, needs was very much related to the resources possessed by such primary groups and the capacity to negotiate such resources within a more restricted and simplified social structure.

In this way, there were little or no channels of social mobility outside of the restricted family social environment; and it was, within this context, that marriage used to represent a necessary strategy of social alliances for maintaining or transforming society's structure (Lévi-Strauss, 1974).

Marriage was considered, and still is considered but to a different extent, one of the more important stages within an individual's lifetime[8]. These stages may be interpreted as transitions, biographical paths as trajectories (family, education, work), professional careers, family histories; concepts all together that describe the multiple temporal dimensions along which the different biographical paths of an individual are unfold. It is possible to speak of the life course (individual, but even more familiar) as a bundle of trajectories, which sometimes run parallel, sometimes intersecting, but in any case always run interdependently (Saraceno, 1996).

In this sense, marriage is strongly related to other life domains such as family stories (class of origin, cultural background, etc.), education (literacy and formal/informal education level, language(s) proficiency, etc.), work (occupational attainment, salary, professional skills, etc.); and all these variables in an interdependent way do influence different elements related to the action of marrying someone, i.e. the age for getting

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[8] Olagnero (2004: 85) defines the concept of lifetime as "the set of life models or stages (available for all individuals belonging to a given historical and social context), labeled by age parameters, embedded in social institutions and subject to continuous change.

married, the social circles in which an individual interacts and can meet potential mates, the kind of religious or civil ritual by which the marriage is celebrated, etc.

However, all these factors as well as many others were not involved (at least not in the same way) in ancient, pre-industrial, lethargic and predominantly rural societies; what makes us think that marriage patterns are dynamic and strongly dependent on the context's particularities.

Specially in the rural classes the corollary of homogamy often has been endogamy, precisely because the patrimonial unity is the land itself, so the potential spouse was to be found in the same locality, possibly in the close neighboring land. The endogamy of the farmers' marriages, additionally facilitated by the difficulty of communication between villages, could often carry up to consanguineous marriages. Marriages between close relatives constituted a choose of need in which available non-relatives were scarce, and therefore the marriage market was considered to be tight.

The sociology of consanguineous marriages is typical from the "deadlocks", i.e. the small towns of the valleys and the lakes, bearing in mind that this area is particularly socially closed as much as those of higher altitude. Height and water drastically separate men from their similar: the percentage of matrimonial dispensations requests (for consanguineous marriages) that depart from these communities accounts for 90.97% of the total (Saraceno & Maldini, 2001).

However, a big amount of empirical research on marriage patterns, and intermarriages in particular, has shown that these are far from dead; and that, although institutional marriage rates have decreased in several of the most industrialized countries, marriage does continue to be an important life stage in most cultures (Spickard, 1989; Johnson & Warren, 1993; Kalmijn, 1998). What has probably changed is the constitutive elements of diverse marriage arrangements, and the different outcomes from a couple human relationship that has steadily become more diversified, according to a series of complexes economic, social and cultural transformations that have been experienced, although at a different timing, in different countries.

2.2. The historical development of mating marriage patterns and family life

In order to understand how does marriage markets have increasingly become globalized (i.e. how the pool of possible marriage candidates has grown and transgressed national borders) and have increasingly involved together people from the most diverse racial, ethnic and national origins (additionally to other innate and/or acquired characteristics such as religion and economic background), it is necessary to understand certain social and historical transformations that have coinvolved "ordinary" couples and people in general. Thus, how does local mating patterns (competitive mating pools), marriage (formal and informal) rules and family life's expectations, have actually changed; especially within other very much complex processes of industrialization, urbanization and further globalization.

2.2.1. From ancient rural societies to industrial urban ones

Endogamy and homogamy with respect to limited socioeconomic characteristics, contrary to exogamy and heterogamy, were ordinary characteristics from small, rural, unsophisticated and isolated places (Rosenfeld., 2008). And nowadays, they continue to be the dominant trend of environments that share such characteristics (closeness and relative high homogeneity); although maybe not with the same intensity considering that possibilities of regular and extraordinary exchanges in terms of communication (real and virtual) and transport modes have increased, especially with regard to the immediate surroundings.

Nevertheless, endogamous and homogamous matrimonial choices (or constraints) were not only related to the lack of mating opportunities, but also to the express decision of keeping properties and belongings (and therefore future inheritances) within a very narrow circle of people, mostly relatives and well known acquaintances.

In ancient societies consanguineous marriages were a normal practice, however, it was the Catholic Church to impose strict prohibitions on marriage between blood relatives, discouraging in this way endogamous marriages and favoring exogamous ones (in terms of consanguinity but not in terms of religious tradition).

Those restrictions made it difficult to forge alliances to preserve the family heritage by facilitating the dispersion, especially in the absence of direct heirs. Starting at the end of the IV century A.D., the Church had gradually extended the impediment for marriage between blood relatives, and also related spiritual kin (godparents). In the XI century the Church had set such impediment until the seventh grade level of consanguinity and affinity; and then gradually reduced it until the third grade in the XX century.

The stratification of the mating markets and the marriage rules was not exclusive of European societies, several patterns of stratification and endogamy/exogamy patterns were observed from ancient times in different societies during different historical periods.

Coltrane & Collins (2001) make a brief review of marriage markets and family's transformations in different parts of the world since the existence of hunting-gathering societies. According to the authors, in these prehistoric forms of organization, families tended to be very simple units that were grouped together into larger bands of people who could actually intermarry, but whose connections were mostly loose. Just later, with the development of primitive and still later advanced horticultural societies of few thousands or up to a few million inhabitants correspondently, there were observed complex marriage rules.

Societies started to be connected by marriage exchanges, and smaller and larger kinships networks started to be nested inside each other like concentric rings. With increase options to choose from, horticultural societies already had a tremendous variety in their forms of kinship.

Special attention give the authors to the highest stratified societies that were observed during the Agrarian period, when plow culture used animal power rather than exclusively human labor and enormous surplus were created that enabled other aspects of civilizations' building up processes. In these category we may include the great historic civilizations of Egypt, Middle East, China, India, ancient Rome and later medieval Europe, among others. These states already included thousands and even millions of people established within the same territory, organized into a centralized empire or feudal system.

In Agrarian societies stratification was already very much complex in economic, military, political and religious terms, such as it was the marriage market and correspondent (written and non written) rules. Stratification was extreme, with more wealth concentrated

in the hands of small aristocrats (around 2%) than in other kind of previous society. In the case of these societies, homogamy was very high in terms of class position and (local) religion hierarchy, and it was maintained specially through marital social alliances between the richer and more powerful families.

Specially during the XIX century there were a series of revolutionary processes that strongly influenced the composition of local marriage markets, and radically changed diverse elements of the marriage life stage; e.g. entry age, entry channels, family composition, geographic dating locations, formal/informal matchmaking pools, etc.

To start with, during different times in different European countries the civil marriage was introduced during the late XVIII and early XIX century, as an antecedent of the ideology of companionate marriage, based on wellness and affinity between the spouses (but still almost exclusively for the benefit of the offspring), in spite of arranged indissoluble marriages to create alliances between families.

With the introduction of civil law, marriage became a contract and as such it also became possible to dissolve it (although rules for dissolve it varied –and still do- among countries). The different regulations of both forms of union, the religious and the civilian ones, were in this way mainly characterized by the opposition towards indissolubility by the Catholic church and the possibility of dissolution of civil marriage.

This change importantly contributed to erode the predominance of the Catholic church as the main institution to regulate marriage in Western Europe that, nevertheless, had already been seriously contested by historical encounters between Catholics and Protestants since the XVI century onwards. In this way, the fundamental role of religious values on marriage and family formation continued to decrease along a very complex process of secularization, whereas civil marriages in contraposition steadily increased (Santoro, 2013).

In terms of endogamy and homogamy, certain categories such as family group, birthplace and religious tradition, started thus to be substituted by other kind of social and economic characteristics such as class and education, that were particularly favored during the period of crescent industrialization.

The greater geographical and social mobility resulting from the phenomena of industrialization and urbanization in the second half of the XIX century onwards, not only

contributed to an increase in the chances of marrying, but also modified the ways in which homogamy was safeguarded, sometimes even through exogamy (same class but different family group e.g.).

First of all, the geographical mobility that was induced by salient economic transformations allowed to open the geographical boundaries, and therefore induced people to enter into geographically diverse marriage markets. Internal migration flows from rural to urban areas (but predominantly still within the same regional/national context) were strongly correlated to the process of European city capitals' growth and urban areas' industrialization, and thus of mating pools' diversification.

Second, the social mobility induced by the development of new professional careers and the spread of education, did modify the criteria for marriage matching and opened the social boundaries of the marital markets themselves. In simplified words, people continued to marry "similar", but the criteria of similarity were at least partially modified and the similarity became a matter not only of adscription but also of acquisition (Saraceno & - Naldini, 2001).

Geographical mobility, urban grow, social and economic mobility, implied that in the cities (more noticeably than in the rural areas) marriage rates not only between people different from relatives, but also from different parishes, from other educational and professional backgrounds (education, formal instruction and specialization, experienced an enormous development process during this historical period), and from other socioeconomic classes[9] became rather more elevated; thus, exogamy rates and diversified patterns did increase, but still maintaining social homogamy. Industrial societies' high rates

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[9] One of the most salient outcomes of the Industrial Revolution is considered to be the configuration of a new and more stratified social class system. Especially the development of a relatively large middle class, also called "bourgeoisie", importantly influenced the way in which property and production were organized. This class already existed during the Feudal period, however, it was mostly conformed by small traders and peasants who were owning lands but still serving feudal lords. And it was, during the emergence of dynamic trade, the spread of monetary relations and market exchanges (fundamental keys for the rise of capitalism), that they could profit from the growing commercial life (particularly in towns) in which they could commercialize their products, improve their economic status, and accumulate some profits in order to reinvest. Under such improving conditions, the bourgeoisie was concerned on differentiating themselves from the proletariat and other lower segments of the population who didn't have possessions and who arrived to the cities in order to work as fabric employees for productions means' owners. The economic and social distance existing among classes, as well as the exploitation to which some less favored groups were subjected didn't disappear, but were modified and became increasingly complex (Mooers, 1991).

of social mobility usually became determined by the occupational structure instead of by other traditional and religious values.

Industrialization was a big promoter of urbanization, the cities' growing process and the flow of migrants from rural to urban areas did exponentially grow. Throughout Europe, only 17% of the population lived in cities in 1801, by 1851 the percentage increased to 35% and by 1891 it was of 54%. The XIX century, and particularly the period between 1820-30 and 1914, showed to be a turning point between a mostly rural society and a developed and urbanized society in which, by the end of the XX century the 90% of the population was not longer involved in agricultural productive activities (Bairoch & Goertz, 1986).

During this historical period several technological innovations contributed to the realization of important transformations on the production modes and several other elements of daily life, the diversification of the economy and the crescent stratification of the social class system, together with the growth of cities and also the creation of new urban centers. An exhaustive analysis of such watershed and complex event is not aimed in this research, however, it is desirable to understand how this process had several geographical economic and social effects that have directly or indirectly influenced marriage patterns and family life since several centuries ago.

At this respect, it is needed to say that both industrialization and urbanization are not only economic and territorial processes, but also very important social ones. Their direct and indirect effects on the sophistication of urban marriage markets and family life could be observed through a series of social transformations that comprised rural-urban migration, demographic changes, family unit's organization, gender roles' transformations, working class enclaves formation, and several others.

Max Weber e.g. spoke of the rise of a nuclear family as a result of the industrial revolution (1927), whereas Ogburn (1964) also found that, under the impact of rapid technological and social changes, the family underwent a process of defunctionalization, i.e. from its previous multifunctional form with economic, educational, recreational, religious and protective functions, into its more recent dual-functional form with only (or at least predominantly) affective and reproductive functions.

Industrial expansion entailed a demand for trained workers with attendant educational skills. At the same time, increased education and employment opportunities attracted

migrations of people from rural to urban centers within societies and migration across geographical regions. These migrations uprooted people from their local settings and initiated cultural exchanges that deeply affected every aspect of family life. One main change resulting from urbanization and increased education was greater contact with other groups. This contact, in turn, often leaded to intermarriage.

In this way, marriage markets became geographically and content wise more open, diversified and complex; and the variables to be considered when choosing for a partner decisively changed and became more acquired and less innate (e.g. socioeconomic class and education Vs family name and place of origin). In this way, exogamy rates did increase; nevertheless, homogamy patterns kept being salient but its content did actually change.

Family changed not only in its form but also in its role within society. In the pre-industrial model, the family as a fundamental unit of economic production played a central role in individual´s life by adjusting the different biographical phases and the assumption of specific social roles and responsibilities. Very different was the prevalent model during the industrial or Fordist era, a period in which the life courses tended to be more institutionalized due to a series of favorable economic and social conditions. The spread of education, full employment guaranteed by a labor market dominated by the industry, the expansion of welfare, based on a wide coverage of the employee's life (sickness, unemployment, disability and old age were recognized) and on the model of the nuclear family, mono-wage, characterized by a clear division of roles between the genders, are among the main components of the Fordist system.

The organization of working activities became thus fundamental for the individuals' life course, much more than what it was in previous societies. In this way, the scan of the temporal life course began to be focused on the three phases of preparation for work, working activities and retirement, instead of on the family itself.

The process occurred at a different timing in Europe and the consecution of stages was also very much different; in Southern European countries like Portugal e.g. such process started as later as the second half of the XX century. From marriage records of Northern Portuguese parish for 1900-80, endogamy and exogamy rates were calculated for birthplace and residence in order to analyze the effect of industrialization on the population

structure after 1940. Marriages that were endogamous relative to birthplace decreased between 1940-49 (58.9%) and 1988 (20.5%), while exogamy increased. Exogamous marriages in which people came from outside the municipality (51.92%), were greater than those of the surrounding region (42.04%). After industrialization, the pattern of marriage changed for residence, with an increase in the number of individuals who came from the district to work in the factories and married (Padez & Abade, 1995).

2.2.1.1. Demographic changes and gender labor stratification

Moreover, there were other important structural changes that influenced both marriage patterns and family life, and that established the bases of more profound changes that would arrive during the XX century: demographic changes and restructuration of gender relations due to the increasing participation of women (at least from certain socioeconomic classes) in the paid labor force.

It is well known that the move from rural to urban environments does influence population growth rates. According to Smith (1996) at a first stage, urbanization reduces death rates because of the improvement of sanitary conditions and access to medical services (despite the often questionable living conditions in many cities, as in XIX century Europe); however, it is just later when urbanization reduces fertility rates. One of the several reasons for this demographic transformation is the decreasing importance of the family as a production unit; children are clearly less useful in urban settlements, as units of labor and producers, and are more expensive to house and feed.

The monetary, time and spatial demands imposed by the urban centers influenced people's capacity to sustain large families, so eventually they did become smaller; whereas extended families, typical of rural settings, became much less common although they didn't disappear.

Usually, the time lag between death and birth rates initially means rapid urban population growth, however, it doesn't take long until fertility rates sharply drop, and the growth rate of urban populations declines until the point of requiring to be enforced by the arrival of newcomers, who usually are economic immigrants (at least at a first stage). This era saw a basic but profound change in the population structures of industrialized countries.

The demographic transition that occurred parallel and as a consequence of the process of industrialization, nevertheless, was not linear nor homogeneous for all social groups.

During the early period, there was observed a reduction of the mortality rates and an increase in fertility ones, mainly due to an increase in the rates of marriages, which also occurred at a younger age. The new possibilities that certain people had to earn an income, irrespective of the ownership of the means of production, gave the possibility to more people to marry (Saraceno & Naldini, 2001).

The improving economic conditions of people was accompanied by a decrease in terms of family control in marriage and mating choices; thus, younger people were able to work and to gain a certain degree of independence at an early age from their families, just as people who emigrated from rural to urban areas became less subjects to family control. However, these conditions also promoted the diffusion of non married free unions and illegitimate children' births for people with less possibilities to face the difficulties and the costs resulting from marriage legal procedures.

Industrialization also transformed social and gender structures, although it is not entirely clear whether the gender gap was narrowed or widened (most probably it was both depending on the people's social class). On the one hand, industrialization do widened the gap between rich and poor by creating opportunities for businessmen to be far richer than the upper classes in an agricultural society ever could be. Although workers were free, not forced laborers, the wages specially for factory workers were very low, and usually not sufficient to support the whole members of the family. Mainly because of this reason, women from the lower classes did enter the labor force, it is controversial whether by choice or by need but for sure not as men did.

In the early days of industrialization, the main occupation of working women was domestic servitude. If they had small children, they usually tried to find a kind of work they could perform at home, such as laundry, sewing, or taking in lodgers. However, even with both parents working, wages were so low that most families found it difficult to live a prosperous life; such conditions contributed to the rapidly decrease of the birth rates after a short period of growth after the initial phase of industrialization.

Furthermore, because machinery had to be placed in a large, centrally located place, workers had to go to factories to perform their work, a major change in lifestyles from those of agricultural societies. In previous days all family members did most of their work in the farm so they stayed together most of the time. Labor division meant that people did

different types of work, mostly split by gender and age, but the endeavor was a collective one. Differently, during the process of industrialization people left their homes for hours, often leaving very early and not returning till very late. Usually both husband and wife worked away from home, especially if from lower classes, and for most of this period, so did children. The family unit in this way was not only reduced but also dismembered.

This type of working division, however, was not the same for all the people belonging to different socioeconomic backgrounds. On the one hand, women from middle and lower classes joined the labor force for contributing to the household income. In cases of widowhood or orphanhood at an early age they also became breadwinners working for factories, in domestic activities or as concubines or prostitutes (Tilly & Scott, 1978). They were predominantly adult males and young people of both sexes to become factory workers in the urban centers; whereas children, women with family, old people, rather stayed in farms or in the city but at home, performing informal services that supported urban life and factory work, from laundry to the preparation and distribution of food, to the care of the most vulnerable members of the family, etc. This resulted in an even clearer division of tasks and working areas for men and women within and without the family. Motherhood definitely placed women out of the modern working places, whereas adult men spent more and more time outside of the family life.

For women from the upper classes things also changed but not in such a different way; although these women didn't have the need to work (specially for the bourgeoisie class the stay at home-wife became a status symbol) they stayed confined to the domestic space in which they were supposed to performed the most "typical" upper class female activities and to rule the labor of poorer women who used to work for them (Saraceno & Saldini, 2001).

These conditions created several instabilities, divisions and difficulties in family lives; these were more visible in the lower classes but still present in the upper ones. The gender labor division became a fundamental element of the capitalist production mode with several effects in the integrity of the families and the increasing precariousness of some groups.

The importance of these indicators lied not only on the practical (requested services, working time organization, earning minimal wages, etc.) but also ideological changes (the

notion of family itself and elements to take into consideration when marrying or mating someone, etc.) that were observed. Having children was still a very important element of "being" and "doing" family; however, not in the same way as it used to be during pre-industrial societies. Children were not seen anymore as "working arms" but as a fundamental element of the nuclear family' and its individual members' self realization. It was in this period when the bases for the so called "companionate marriage" were instituted (firstly among the aristocratic groups around the end of the XVIII century, and later at the end of the XIX century among the upper bourgeoisie); a double model based on intimacy and different levels of emotional involvement of the spouses and attachment to their children that was, nevertheless, mostly reserved for families from a certain upper class (Burgess in Cottrell, 1967).

If the diffusion of large families decreased, it also decreased the social control instruments employed by large families with respect to their children' marriage and mating choices, at least until a certain extent and with regard to certain social categories. During this period, just as the marriage market became more complex, relatively more open and diversified, the variables at stake to perceive an union between a man and a woman as mixed did actually change too. The emphasis to define "normality/abnormality" was not anymore on the family group, the parish, the religious group, etc., but mostly in economic elements (not that it wasn't before at all) such as socioeconomic class, occupational attainment and to a lesser extent birthplace.

Apart of new exogamy/endogamy rates and homogamy/heterogamy patterns, more diversified family typologies started to be diffused; this included not only the prevalence of nuclear families in contrast to extended families, but also with regards to free unions, illegitimate offspring, divorced couples and second marriages. The transformations suffered by family life during this period were the antechamber for what would become the companionate marriage first and the individualist family later; and would set importance, at a very first stage, to the attention of not only economic but also emotive necessities.

2.2.1.2. Early massive (national and international) migrations

The XIX century was an effervescent historical period in Western Europe (and not only) from several different but interconnected domains; conjectural and very much

complexes processes departed during this period that would plant the seeds of what was later known as "modernity" (Giddens, 1994) or late "modernity" (Berman, 1982).

These processes didn't occur only in England and the early industrialized countries, but they expanded to other parts of the world and led to several political and social changes within the expanded Nation-State system, to the decolonization processes of several territories in other continents, and to the initiation of a new massive migration(s) period not only among countries but also among continents.

This was known as the second period of emigration, the *industrial* one, that began early in the XIX century and stemmed from economic development of Europe and the spread of industrialization to former colonies in the New World[10]. The transatlantic migrations to the Americas are the best known of these migrations. From 1800 to 1925, more than 84 million people left the industrializing countries of Europe in search of new lives in the American continent and also in Oceania. Over 65% of these migrants went to a relatively young independent country in North America, the United States; with the bulk of the remainder divided between Canada, Argentina, (which had the largest proportion of foreign born residents), Australia, New Zealand and later to a lesser extent Brazil, Mexico and Peru. Over half of the emigration before the 1870s was from the British Isles, with much of the reminder from northwestern Europe. Key sending nations were Britain, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. Although international migrants were not only European, the overwhelming majority came from that continent. Of all U.S. immigrants between 1820 and 1920, e.g. 88% were from Europe, 3% were from Asia and 8% from other places within the American continent (Massey & Zenteno, 1999).

As migration increased along with new transportation technologies in the 1880s, regions of intensive emigration spread up south and east as far as Portugal, Russia and Syria. Up to 2.5 million migrants from South and East Asia also travelled to the Americas, mostly to the frontiers of Western North America and the plantations of the Caribbean. Movement from Europe to other parts of the world is recognized as a critical aspect of

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[10] The first migration period is considered to be *the mercantile one*, from 1500 to 1800, when world immigration flows were dominated by Europe and stemmed from processes of colonization and economic growth under the so called mercantile capitalism. Over approximately 300 years, Europeans inhabited large portions of the Americas, Africa, Asia and Oceania. The total numbers of colonizing emigrants is unknown but the outflow was sufficient to grant Europe's domination over very large parts of the world (Massey & Zenteno, 1999).

industrialization but migrations that were part of similar demographic and economic transformations in the Asian and African continents e.g. are largely ignored.

One may ask which is the relation of these macro events with the internal transformations that couples and family life could have experienced within a small, medium or enlarged, group of people that lived in a given context? However, these events showed to be highly interconnected and just as local migration from rural to urban areas, during the early industrialization period, influenced the way in which people used to live; international migration proportionally intensified these changes, and severely influenced not only family life but also the whole spectrum of migrants' family life and the people they left behind.

To recognize these concomitant events is important because they also had important effects on the private life of local groups and individuals not only in Western Europe but also in several other parts of the world, and such changes influenced, and would influence even more during the next decades, the way of being and doing family/couple. In this sense human mobility and the encounter with people not only from other towns, neighborhoods, cities, but also from other countries and even continents, started to be a constant characteristic that would be destined to intensify and to involve more people even though from different and remote areas changing exogamy/endogamy patterns and influencing homogamy/heterogamy ones.

2.2.2. From late industrialized societies to contemporary ones, modern marriages and family life

During the late industrialization period and the beginning of the XX century, there were several transformations that influenced the social functions by family developed: on the one hand, families became smaller and further stratified in terms of the functions assigned to each member (particularly those middle class families residing in urban centers); on the other hand, there was an increasing institutionalization process of other family spheres such as caring and instruction, and in this way certain functions, previously realized by family members, were ceded to the State.

Family members gradually became less subjects of control by their relatives and enlarged family, and increasingly had the chance to take their own family's formation

decisions mostly based in their own individual circumstances, preferences and priorities. The opportunity to have an income without being the owner of the production means, i.e. as an employee, allowed more people to get married and to establish a new rule of *"new residence after marriage"* (Santoro, 2013:13), i.e. living by their own without the parents and/or other relatives after marriage.

Marriage markets became much more complex and diversified, particularly in the growing urban centers; and more people had the need and/or opportunity to relate with other people from other hometowns, regions, socioeconomic classes, education levels, cultural backgrounds, etc. That doesn't mean that people became open to marry any kind of spouse, but it means that meeting people from a different background was facilitated by the increasing diversity(ies) that was observed in certain contexts. Moreover, mating choices were increasingly guided by other kind of acquired preferential parameters such as education, occupational attainment, etc., more than previously considered innate ones such as family name or hometown.

The spread of the nuclear family was marked by the transformation of its functions and its constituent elements, changes that triggered the birth of the so called modern family, based on affection and mutual support between family members, rather than on the authority of an unquestioned householder. The affirmation of this type of family was crucial to promote the changes observed in the average family's behavior that occurred in the XX century.

Nevertheless, marriage and family's transformations didn't involve in the same way all family groups from all socioeconomic -increasingly diversified- classes, and in this way differences between urban and rural contexts, between rich and poor, between formally instructed people and analphabets e.g. became more evident and demarked. Nuclear and smaller families were the main trend for middle and upper class families, but economically more vulnerable poorer families still opted for larger families in both rural and urban contexts in order to collectively satisfy all the challenges that had to face.

During the XX century the whole family life spectrum was stroked by profound changes that can be summarized in the next points: The first concerns to the diffusion and affirmation of the modern nuclear family as a result of the industrial revolution; the second refers to the consequent decline of this type of family as a result of increased marital

instability, and the reduction of still other of its functions; the third one refers to the clear-cut decrease, control and stabilization of the birth and death rates; the fourth to the disintegration of the traditional family and the crescent pluralization of family forms; the fifth partially refers also to the decadence of the traditional highly gendered family, and it is related to the increasing participation of women (of more socioeconomic backgrounds) in the formal instruction system and the regular labor market; and sixth to the increasing encounters with people from other parts of the world and from the more diversified cultural backgrounds, due to the intensification of immigration flows (mainly but not only) from less developed countries and former colonies to the most industrialized and economically attractive countries; and just later due to the intensification of economic and cultural exchanges as one of the several outcomes of a multidimensional process of globalization.

The reduction of the age difference between the spouses, the change in reproductive behavior toward a greater birth control, the chance to choose a spouse without the inference of the partners' correspondent families, were decisive factors for the success and establishment of the modern family. These factors of change expressed greater attention to the care and education of children and the search of a more symmetrical relationship between the partners. The American sociologist Ernest W. Burguess (1948) defined this type of family as "companionship", a term that was previously used by other sociologists following the historian Lawrence Stone (1977) who named a new type of marriage (companionate marriage) that was established for the first time among the English upper classes at the end of the XVII century. This model was primarily based on intimacy and emotional involvement of the spouses and their closeness to the offspring. Burgess attributed to increasing urbanization, secularization, and the progressive specialization of family functions, the assertion of the companionate family model, as opposed to the more traditional institutional family.

Before 1900s the key concepts in traditional marriage were duty and responsibility. Duty implied a set of role functions that one accepted upon marriage; in this sense marriage was considered binary, i.e. once married, each partner was responsible for his or her role functions and those functions included what other people expected from the spouses. According to Glick et. al. (2000), if love occurred in a traditional marriage, it grew after marriage and actually it was not the essential requirement in the decision of marrying;

rather, one appraised a potential partner in terms of his or her ability to perform certain role functions and in the potential stability of the union.

Marital failure, according to this concept of traditional marriage, was a synonymous of role failure, which was easy to determine because there was a good cultural agreement on about what wives and husbands were supposed to do. These marital functions were closely associated with gender: men were reluctant to perform women' activities and vice versa. In contrast with the traditional style, roles in the companionate marriage are created by the partners, at least theoretically speaking, and marital failure is synonymous of a poor relationship rather than of role incompetency. If the key concepts of traditional marriage were duty and responsibility, it may be considered that the key concepts of companionate marriage were choice and love.

Marital choice implies not only choice within the marriage but also of the marriage, i.e. religious or civil ceremony, religious tradition, marriage age, partner's characteristics, new residence after marriage's rule, etc. The concept of choice within marriage is also related to the institution of divorce, i.e. both the partners can leave the contract when they want and with the same "easiness", but if they stay is because they actually want to. The freedom of both partners is a very recent phenomenon (specially for women) and it usually has promoted very high expectations on the partners and their relationship, as well as on the children and their relationship with the parents. Through companionate marriage, people had the expectation to remain in love and happy "until death do us apart", nevertheless, this hasn't been always the case.

The development of the companionate marriage is very much related to the concept of love, and particularly of romantic love within marriage, whose deep analysis is performed by Giddens (1992). According to Giddens (1992: 39), romantic love is a product of modernity or, at least, was accompanied by the process of modernization; romantic love began to make its presence felt even from the late XVIII century onwards, and it was associated with the notion of "romance", not only as a literature genre of novel but also as a form of storytelling in which the self is narrated.

When the concept of romantic love is applied to the institutional frame of marriage, it is presumed that people marry because they want to be together, because they love each other and they expect to obtain satisfaction and fulfillment from their relationship.

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Nevertheless, it doesn't have to be forgotten that such ideal is a very recent phenomenon and it is strongly correlated to a level of economic prosperity sufficient enough to release people from a survival orientation, and a degree of equality between partners that in earlier ages was not possible mainly because of inadequate birth control (that defined very much the –almost exclusively caring and reproductive- role of women within families) and lack of economic labor opportunities and education mainly for women.

The concept of love is everything but new, it did exist in ancient societies and it was deeply analyzed from different perspectives. Love was related to beauty and sexual desire in mythology and literature, love was also related to spirituality and intimacy, but never to marriage; love was never depicted as the normal path to marriage. On the contrary, marriage was something quite separate. This change came about gradually in the 1700s and 1800s and became the dominant trend during the 1900s, such transformation may be referred to as the love revolution whose basic principle was precisely to connect love with marriage. By the mid XX century marrying because of love motives became the dominant ideal, so much so that one may be even embarrassed to admit to have married someone for another different reason (Coltrane & Collins, 2001: 104).

The role model change from a traditional family to a companionate one, and from a convenience oriented kind of marriage to a loving romantic one, took several decades. And during this time several other economic, political and demographic changes also occurred and influenced both marriage patterns and family life. On the one hand, the first half of the XX century was demarked by very conflictive economic circumstances and political events that strongly hindered family life and that contributed to an increasing diversification of role models.

In Europe there were two global scope wars in less than 30 years, whereas the first exhaustion signals of the systematic capitalism were observed through the economic deceleration of the more industrialized economies, comprised the United States and England. Hence, during this first period of the XX century, marriage and family life were mostly experienced under a climate of insecurity and poverty, where people –although the previously mentioned ideals- was mostly anchored to materialistic values, based on the economic wellbeing, physical safety and survival. Independently of all the numerous families and/or family members that died during these 50 years, there was a net decline on

the birth rates of Western Europe that has started during the end of the XIX century with the establishment of the nuclear family, and that consolidated by the second half of the XX century together with the advent of post-materialistic values. The net declining of birth rates took place in the second half of the last century and had its roots in a new conception of life centered mostly on the adult individual and on the quality of the couple relationship (inherited to the idea of the *companionate marriage*).

It was during this period that the experts recognized the presence of a second demographical transition that, different to the first one that was based on the bourgeoisie family, was based on the individualistic family (Van de Kaa, 2002). These changes were based on a complete change of the dominant materialistic value system, and the affirmation of post-materialistic values focused on secularism, self-expression, self-assertion and sexual freedom. The affirmation of these values have provoked a profound cultural change respecting sexual behavior, gender relations and the way not only to do but to be family.

By the 1950s it was obvious that the notion of companionate marriage was not actually as real as the idealistic conception. However, the satisfaction of the individual needs and desires of the spouses stayed to be a fundamental element for marriage life. In this way, divorce rates increased in a particularly noticeable way. The end of love and the incompatibility of the individuals' character became grounds for claiming a more satisfactory relationship and to end a marriage. The expectations of "forever happy and in love" that were offered by companionate marriages leaded often to disappointment when romance settled into routine and the relationship was not longer exciting.

Women, on the other hand, got increasingly empowered by the obtainment of political rights in several countries through a very large and complex feminist movement that would be impossible to describe in few paragraphs; they increasingly accessed to formal education and instruction paths (although mostly gendered ones), and to the regular labor force.

The concept of the increasing status and freedom of women is not meant as a vague or philosophical term but rather a description of demographic trends, supported by increasing employment rates and educational achievement of women, fewer children per woman, delayed childbearing, and curtailed childbearing years. With this increased status has come also and increased freedom of choice regarding intimate relationships and still

other new conceptualizations of love and of marriage itself that will be developed more in detail during the next subtitle.

Such human bond became increasingly more based on individual free choice, since it depended less from society and more from the directly involved partners; however, it also became more risky and uncertain precisely because of the lack of social dampers and regulators.

In this way, particularly the last generations were used to grow up with single parents, divorced parents, re-married parents, never married parents, etc., so the notion of family became very much pluri-form and the institutional role of marriage steadily changed and decreased at least for some of these family forms; whereas the couple type of relationship, among others, became more instable and insecure. Although this freedom most probably have allowed more "love marriages" and more equality between men and women within an intimate relationship, it has also contributed to higher divorce rates, whereas one particular concrete consequence of these changes is that the kinship structure is increasingly becoming more complicated.

These multiple social and demographic changes -and their consequent recognition and regulation- that influenced marriage and family life didn't occur in all countries simultaneously. With several differences and nuances, they first occurred in northern European countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden), then those in Western Europe (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Holland, Great Britain and Ireland) and other highly industrialized countries such as the United States; and more than a decade later, in Southern European countries of the Mediterranean area (Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain) (Santoro, 2013).

2.2.2.1. Modern (couple) relationships and the development of confluent love

Regarding the concept of "love marriage", it may be necessary to make a stop and analyze it from a deeper perspective, especially when considering that it has become a marriage's fundamental motive for potential partners and current spouses in Western Europe and in other parts of the world.

As it was previously said, the marriage relationship and the way it is generally perceived and interpreted by local (Western) societies have changed very much during the

last centuries. Departing from the traditional concept of marriage that didn't consider love as one of its fundamental elements, and that was predominantly based on the fulfillment of strict role models focused on the satisfactory completion of partners' duties and responsibilities (mainly but not only toward their offspring, their parents, their enlarged families and other belonging groups); and passing through the adoption of the companionate concept of marriage, based on more relative free choice and often idealistic conceptualizations of love, already signified an enormous change in terms of human relationships' development.

Anthony Giddens is one of the more influential sociologists that has written about intimate relationships within a larger historical and social modern context. Giddens, as it was previously mentioned, developed the analysis regarding the emergence of 'romantic love', an ideal that was widely diffused in the late XIX century, especially among upper social classes, when marriage began to lose the economic and kinship ties which were so crucial in pre-modern arrangements.

Pre-industrial marriage was designed to ensure family's survival as an economic unit and as such was rarely motivated by love. Marriage was the result of an agreement between families, particularly aiming at protecting and increasing the existing heritage.

With the ensuing separation of the private and public spheres of life, love became celebrated as the main reason for marriage. Paradoxically, the highly celebrated notion of romantic love was an essentially kind of *"feminized love"* (Giddens, 1992: 43), although it ensured female subordination by tying women to the house and to the private domain. The extent to which marriage for love came about as a result of industrialization and capitalism, nevertheless, has been contested and questioned according to the real feasibility of marriage partners' free choices and extended genders' equality.

Especially during the second half of the XX century these changes experienced a further radicalization that may be identified as a salient element of the current stage of modernity (for some authors late modernity or reflexive modernity); *"the extent of this evolution is in line with the intensity of the changes related to modernity itself, more profound, significant and rapid than what it has been observed in previous eras… and it does refer to the transformation of intimacy, to the affirmation of expert systems, to the*

emergence of confluent love"... and the predominance of reflexive individualism (Giddens, 1994: 37; Beck, 2002).

The importance of this radical change lies on its influence regarding collective imagination of what love, a loving couple and a loving marriage, must –at least theoretically- be. *"The reshaping of personal relationships since the 1960s has led to claims that our intimate lives are the premier site of de-traditionalization within late modern couples"* (Gross, 2005: 286).

One of the radical differences at this respect between what may be considered pre-modern and modern human relationships is that the first ones were localized, i.e. they occurred within a limited physical space, usually for the purpose of the immediate community's interests, and within a system of institutional personal ties strictly organized for example through kinship bonds. Modern human relationships, on the other hand, take place also at a (long) distance and within significantly less institutionalized environments, specially thanks to the technology provided by expert systems. The family becomes the place where the historical situations of conflict between men and women become visible. *"The agreements and bonds on which the institution is based can be canceled at any time, revised and rearranged"* (Santoro; 2012: 35).

The affirmation of expert systems, that may be defined as *"systems of technical implementation or professional expertise that organize large areas in the physical and social environments in which we live today"* (Giddens, 1994: 37) has promoted the progressive separation of time and space in terms of human relationships. This aspect of the expert systems has contributed to the development of another fundamental dimension of modernity: trust. For Giddens "trust" is not just an important mechanism in the development of personality, but a necessary element of everyday life; without trust people wouldn't be able to act and to rely on abstract expert systems. The possibility to trust on expert systems, that furthermore overstep community confined areas and institutional constraints for the realization of several human activities, has also offered the possibility to develop a higher level of reflexivity, thus, a higher possibility not only to be imprinted by the surrounding social environment but to actively imprint it and redefine it.

In this way, the separation of time and space, the trust deposited on the functioning of expert systems, the development of social reflexivity and constant introspection within

human actions, as elements of modern human life have also given place to a further transformation in terms of intimate human relationships, thus, the emergence of *"confluent love"*. Confluent love is often confused with its predecessor, romantic love; although they differ in important aspects. While elements of romantic love ensured the creation of the "pure relationship" (as the maximum expression of confluent love), many of its influences have been destroyed by the emergence of confluent love. First of all, the observed consequences of romantic love for women were incompatible with the egalitarian partnership at the heart of the pure relationship. Confluent love, contrary, is an *"active, contingent love"* (Giddens, 1992: 61), which *"presumes equality in emotional give and take"* (Giddens, 1991: 62). Confluent love, furthermore, does not value the *"forever"* and *"one and only"* (Giddens, 1992: 61) and it does give more importance to the finding of a *"special relationship"* instead of a *"special person"*. At this respect, Bauman (2003: 3) also considers that the romantic definition of love as *"till death us do apart"* is decidedly out of fashion –having passed its use-by date because of the radical overhaul of the kinship structures it used to serve and from which it drew its vigor and self-importance. Nevertheless, according to him the result is not only that the concept of love has changed but that the standards of love have been lowered; and the set of experiences referred to by the love word has expanded enormously.

Giddens's confluent love is not exclusive to heterosexual relationships, as it is not based on gender differences in the way that romantic love is and it is also not necessarily monogamous. Mutual disclosure is central to confluent love and represents the antithesis of the ideal of mystery and romanticism, which were so crucial for romantic love.

Confluent love in this way is not so anchored to the external conditions of social or economic life, but is free floating, coming to an end whenever it is no longer satisfactory to one or both partners. Trust can no longer be based on exterior factors such as kinship, social duty, or traditional obligation, but in the context of a pure relationship, *"trust can only be mobilized by a process of mutual disclosure"* (Giddens, 1992: 6).

As the more important consequence, a pure relationship is sought only for what it can offer to the partners involved. Furthermore, within modern systems of sexual intimacy, partners are freely chosen from a bigger plurality of options. In this sense, late modern intimacy appears to be proactive and is dependent on both partners opening out to the other.

The development of this human relationship depends very much on a constant process of self reflexivity, not only of the individuals that compose the couple but of the couple itself.

Hence, a constant monitoring of the material and predominantly emotional rewards that the relationship may provide to all the involved partners is constantly performed. The authenticity and the emotional reward offered by this kind of human relationship may be higher in comparison to previous traditionalist role-based relationships. However, its continuation over time is not granted as it is always put under scrutiny; nor it is its stability since it does attach an enormous responsibility almost exclusively to the involved partners[11].

According to these reflections, confluent love should therefore bring to an end the differential power relationships that exist in social life as individuals (not only within couples but also regarding other types of human bonds) voluntarily agree to reflexively examine and justify their own conduct. In this way, it is thought that the egalitarian nature of confluent love would have consequences not only for personal relationships, but also for the wider society (Giddens, 1992: 193).

These developments are thought to have a profound influence of the different types of human relationships that individuals seek out and actually form with others. In terms of couple relationships, individuals are thus supposed to have a wider (potentially long distance) marriage market that comprehend new and less institutionalized exogamy channels, in which it is possible to find a fitting mate according to their own characteristics, preferences and priorities. Such partner may be considered as a social equal, and therefore as someone with whom it is possible to enter into an equal exchange based on mutual (particularly emotional) satisfaction.

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[11] Such considerations are not exclusive of Giddens but they may be previously encountered on the dyad's analysis developed by Simmel; according to whom *"the dyad is constitutionally fragile, for its continuity and its very survival depend totally on the ability and disposition of each party to remain within the relation. If the dyad is to persist, a balance must be found between each party's acknowledgment of the other's interest in maintaining some degree of autonomy, limitating its own costs, and determining to a self-satisfactory extent what activities to carry out together"* (Simmel in Poggi & Sciortino, Great Minds; 2011: 73).
Whereas Bauman (2003: 33) also referred later to the intrinsic insecurity of the dyad marriage relationship in function of individuals' actions, needs and desires: *"Marriages, contrary to priestly insistence, are not made in heaven –and what has been tied together by humans, humans may, and can, and given a chance will untie. Choice, unlike the fate of kinship, is a two-way street. One can always turn back. Unless the choice is restated daily and ever few new actions are taken to confirm it, affinity will wilt, fade and decay until it falls or crawls apart. When there are two, there is no certainty. Being two some means consent to undetermined future"*.

Equality, equity, free choice, correspondence, communication, understanding, love and self-realization, become in this way some of the main elements that modern individuals are thought to look for in a couple kind of relationship, that it is thought to be reflexive, active, dynamic, fluid and free of rigid social and institutional restrictions.

At this respect, marriage (specially as an institution and not as a relationship) seem unlikely to qualify as a pure, dyadic and de-traditionalized relationship, because it usually comprises the search of an external approval, whether social, religious or legal. However, Giddens at this respect is insistent that *"marriage becomes more and more a relationship initiated for…*the previously cited elements*, and that keeps going as long as it delivers emotional satisfaction from close contact with one another"* (Giddens, 1992: 89).

Giddens' assumptions presuppose one very important necessary precondition for the pure relationship to exist, i.e. work female equality in particular and equity in general; and according to that he retains that male claims to power on the basis of their gender are now obsolete; however, he does concede that humanity's equality and gender's equity are not yet fully established in all areas of life.

For Giddens, the emergence of this concept of pure relationship is of key importance for the transformation of intimate human relationships, as it does become the new prototypical that people try to set up when searching for a mate and for a particular kind of relationship. In this way, the related processes of de-traditionalization, self-reflexivity and individualization are generally accepted as the context that has enabled the posited developments in contemporary relationships.

2.2.2.2. The individualization of modern (couple) relationships

While the individualization thesis was not at first primarily concerned with intimacy[12], it has become a core metaphor through which sociological analysis of family life is pursued. In terms of individualization, Georg Simmel at the beginning of the XX century already showed great interest for the modern phenomenon of progressive individualization as *"the individual's ability to escape the hold of pre-established, often*

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[12] Intimacy was previously defined by G. Simmel as *"the site or vehicle of emotions, interests, and purposes with which parties normally do not endow any other relations…"* and it focused on the analysis of the dyad kind of relationship (a couple of lovers for example) as the representation of intimate human relationships (Simmel in Poggi & Sciortino, Ibid).

pressing, and suffocating affiliations, and to confront critically prevailing beliefs, preferences, and norms" (Simmel in Poggi & Sciortino; 2011: 85).

Other important modern author such as Ulrich Beck argue for the end to the fixed meanings of words such as "love", "sexuality", and "marriage", which nowadays mean something different to each individual (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995: 4). And consider that as industrial society collapses along with its fixed gender and occupational roles, individuals are forced to search for other personal satisfactions, from which love has become *"the new centre around which de-traditionalized lives revolve"* (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995: 5).

The individualization presents an ambivalent character. On the one hand, it does free the individual from the constraints, directives and norms of the traditional industrial society, transforming the personal biography in what may be called *"reflexive biography"* (Beck, 2000: 6). The individual is therefore asked to make decisions about the kind of education that will follow, the occupational attainment that wants to achieve, the place of residence, the chosen partner, etc. However, on the other hand, he/she is asked to act under conditions not completely understood, and in any case under conditions that strongly depend on certain social regulations, availability of offered services, and the labor market structure. Just the incongruity between the demands of the labor market and the needs of the family, forces thus the individual and the couple to engage in a continuous negotiation process of professional and family roles, and such negotiations is usually directly or directly highly influenced by the surrounding social environment.

Not only Giddens and Beck referred to contemporary intimate love relationships as a reflection of the individual's aims of self realization, but also Cancian (1987) stands up for the process of individualization reflected on family life. Cancian argues that the modern image of intimacy *"combines enduring love with self-development"* (Cancian, 1987: 3). For this author, in modern relationships love has became predominantly androgynous, rather than particularly feminine; thus, it is concerned with the quality of the relationship, rather than with fulfilling traditional marital duties. This shift towards a more androgynous definitions of love is mirrored by androgynous conceptions of the ideal self, someone who combines feminine intimacy and emotional expression with masculine independence and competence (Cancian, 1987: 8). Unlike Giddens and Beck, nevertheless, Cancian argues

that interdependent love cannot be achieved solely through mutual disclosure, but also through physical activity, care and productive work, which she regards as some of the most important human capacities. This approach has showed to be particularly suitable to explain women's circumstances within modern human relationships, who may have been liberated from the exclusive task of caring for the children, but who have been forced to deal with the conflict between family needs and their professional roles.

In this way, while the XIX century was the century of "either/or' (e.g. man or woman's satisfaction; love or marriage; professional development or family life, love or self-development, etc.), reflecting a suspicion of ambiguity; the late XX century is characterized by 'and', which suggests the possibility of alternative explanations or methods (Beck, 1997). For Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) what is revolutionary is the mass character of individualization, which nevertheless they posit almost as exclusive to modern Western societies.

The preconditions that the development of a pure relationship presuppose are actually far from being generally achieved in contemporary modern world. On the one hand, gender inequality (in both private and public life) does still pervade societies to a larger or shorter extent. On the other hand, economic inequalities prevail and even have increased within and between countries, banning many individuals to irrespectively and voluntarily participate in open marriage markets where choosing for a mate could be exclusively a matter of mutual emotional satisfaction.

In this way, the prevalence of stratified power relation systems doesn't allow the development of "pure relationships" between people (men and women in this case) as social equals, free to search for their mutual partners. Needed to say that such condition applies not only to international mixed couples but also to couples made out of individuals who belong to the same nationality; such that rational and emotional motives for choosing a potential partner are both always at stake, maybe to a different extent, for both types of couples.

However, modern authors' accurate observations and analyses are very much useful to understand certain contemporary general understandings of love and of love marriage; and of what people may generally look for –at least in terms of idealistic prototypes- when choosing for a partner and establishing a long term couple relationship.

In this way, it is possible to identify certain elements that characterize –at least idealistically speaking, which does not mean that hybrid models does not exist- modern relationships in contrast with traditional ones, i.e. the role of the parents and enlarged families in the choice process of a spouse has been very much diminished; the places where people do look for potential mates have at the same time diversified and contemplated longer distance spaces; the importance given to potential partners' not only innate but achieved characteristics is lately complemented by inner emotive ones; the couple relationship aims to be one between equals who aim to personally and mutually satisfy their needs and desires; marriage is mostly conceived in terms of the couple relationship and less in terms of the institution's social and legal legitimizing role; social groups' expectations and traditional institutions' are located after individuals' prospects of self realization.

2.2.2.3. Contemporary global changes, increasing migration flows and crescent internationalization

During the second half of the XX century, another fundamental transformation has strongly conditioned the spread of the previously mentioned cultural forms and social trends, and has promoted the instauration of new very complex value systems in terms of human relationships in geographically distant regional areas. Such multidimensional transformation refers to the increasing flow transferences of information, ideas, products, and specially of people.

As it was said before, migration flows were intensified since the XIX century when millions of people, mainly from Western and Southern Europe decided to leave from other continent in search of new jobs, new markets and new life opportunities. In this sense, the consequences of industrialization were quiet contradictory since the very beginning of the process, attracting some people into the labor market but expulsing others. The increasing wealth of certain areas started to attract economic migrants from several bordering and far away countries. The more attractive countries were particularly those that pioneered the industrialization process and the development of the capitalist mode.

In this way, the United States in America and the more advanced economies of Northern and Western Europe became immigrant receptors from the most diverse source countries. The flows of people were not continuous during the whole XIX century but they didn't ever completely stopped anymore; on the contrary, they increasingly intensified and

became more complex; both the receptor and the sending countries changed, some countries became transit countries and other re-entry ones, and the laws and norms applied by the States to regulate such flows also changed and actually they continue to change until current days.

In particular during the period of *postindustrial migration* after the WWII and still later there were important changes and instead of emigration flows from Europe to former colonies, immigration became truly a global phenomenon as the number and variety of both sending and receiving countries increased and the global supply of immigrants shifted from Europe to other late industrialized or developing countries. During the late 1970s even some countries that largely were migrants' sending countries became immigrants' receptors such as Italy, Spain and Portugal. By the 1980 several other global economic changes provoked the spread of regional and international migration flows in the Middle East, Asia and Africa (Massey & Zenteno, 1999).

In this way, all the changes that local marriage markets, family life and marriage/love conceptualizations, experienced during the last two centuries were accompanied by increasing flows of human mobility, cultural encounters between people from different geographical areas, and by several other effects resulting from the complex process of globalization.

People thus have increasingly entered in contact with members of other racial, ethnic and cultural groups since many decades ago and for many different reasons, and in some countries more than in others; and such contacts have often developed until becoming more intimate and enduring, such as the case of intermarriages between members of socially perceived different groups.

The diversity of people from other cultural traditions; the different family role models existing in different societies; the hybridization between these role models and the ones already existing in local societies; the several other particular characteristics of members from other racial, ethnic, national groups, etc., have contributed to increase and intensify the enormous diversity that it does actually coexist in local communities (particularly in highly urbanized environments), and that certain authors have even called "super

diversity"[13]. Such super diversity has been promoted not only by physical but also by virtual contacts between the most diverse individuals and social groups, as well as by huge amounts of information transferences from the most diverse sources. This condition has been particularly evident after 1970 with the arrival of Internet and its consequent overcrowding.

Internet has made communications within existing social networks more efficient (as the telephone also previously did); however, Internet has also dramatically improved the efficiency of searching for and finding new people outside of one's pre-existing social networks, something that other communication means such as the telephone never did (Rosenfeld & Thomas, 2012). While some studies have argued that face-to-face relationships have important advantages over those new virtual relationships (Putnam, 2000: 170), there are others that argue that (real) relationships can at least start in the virtual world and be transplanted next to the face-to-face world (Kendall 2002).

The transference of information has allowed more people to get to know, at least partially, how others live in different parts of the world. Inter-group contacts have increased after the intensification of human migration flows; however, the rise of intercultural awareness has also been dependent of other types of inter-group contacts that may result from participating in virtual social networks, international academic of cultural exchanges, touristic expeditions, working abroad experiences, etc. In this sense, information and human capital's transferences have become a rule more than an exception, specially for younger generations who regularly access Internet, travel, and develop a broader linguistic and cultural capital.

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[13] "Super-diversity" was intended to address the changing nature of global migration that, over the past thirty years or so, has brought with it a transformative "diversification of diversity". This has not just been in terms of movements of people reflecting more ethnicities, languages and countries of origin, but also with respect to a multiplication of significant variables that affect where, how and with whom people live. In the last decade the proliferation and mutually conditioning effects of a range of new and changing migration variables shows that it is not enough to see "diversity" only in terms of ethnicity, as is regularly the case both in social science and the wider public sphere. In order to understand and more fully address the complex nature of contemporary societies additional variables need to be better recognized by social scientists, policy-makers, practitioners and the public. These include: differential legal statuses and their concomitant conditions, divergent labor market experiences, discrete configurations of gender and age, patterns of spatial distribution, and mixed local area responses by service providers and residents. The dynamic interaction of these variables is what is meant by "super-diversity" (Vertovec 2007: 1025).

One of the main contributions that immigrant flows and inter-groups contacts have had in the local marriage markets is to increase the possibilities for a person of meeting someone outside of his/her own group; whether the emphasis can be given to race, mother tongue, ethnicity or nationality, it depends on the particular characteristics of the contacting groups and on the social category at stake according to the local context.

Marriage markets refer to the characteristics, composition, and geographic location of dating or formal matchmaking pools within which people search for intimate partners; (Western) individuals in this way make (usually voluntary and individualists) decisions regarding the formation of intimate relationships according to the availability of desirable partners who reside in their marriage market; and in this way the availability of people with different ethnic, cultural and national backgrounds have importantly increased during the last decades. Rosenfeld & Thomas (2012) for example, have analyzed the mediating role that Internet may have on processes of mate selection, and they found that the rise of individual search and choice in Internet dating has significantly increased; however, that does not imply that all forms of segregation (previously promoted by family and by neighborhood geography) in the mating markets have disappeared. People do have more chances to get to know different others and to establish long distance different types of relationships, however, the literature on online dating in particular has shown that preferences exist for mates and partners that share the respondent's certain similar characteristics, especially when it is a matter of race, religion and education (Hitch, Hortaçsu & Ariely 2010; Robnett & Feliciano 2011).

Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2013) have particularly focused on analyzing the increasing diversified family outcomes that have resulted from the intensified encounters of people from different parts of the world, and have coined the term *"world families"* to describe those couples/families brought together by partners selected as a consequence of *"distant love"* via migration, travel or the increased contacts between disparate cultural and national groups. However, the same authors specify that such phenomenon is not an unalloyed boon or unitary trend; and that in this process there are winners yes, but there are some losers and many victims too.

This is because, as it was mentioned in the previous subtitle, completely equalitarian –couple- relationships are far from being the common practice (although they may be the

Western' scattered prototypical ideal). And actually, because if there is one particular characteristic of the globalization process is precisely the inequity that results from much of the dynamic within this system. In this way, different individual from different cultural groups may participate to the phenomenon of world families but in many different ways, depending on their personal and collective characteristics and possibilities. Distant love thus has very different implications according to each individual's marketable assets and cultural capital.

In this way, the exchange of information and cultural models may favor the spreading of open, confluent and equalitarian roles of marriage and couple's formation; however, the embedded ideals may be interpreted and practiced differently by different cultures that may encounter each other and potentially collide. For example, many of the desires and expectations of affluent Westerners may make little or no sense for people in other parts of the world. Love may be an absolute in Western's values structures, but it may not always have a place in other cultures – and have little or nothing to do with marriage or family relations (as it used to be in the Western pre-modern societies). Whereas in the more affluent West the institution of the traditional family dissolves, and morphs in the face of increasing individualism and the transformation of the intimate concepts of love, parenthood, family, marriage, etc., those transformation may have occurred in other places but at a different timing, in a different way, or maybe they have not occurred or won't even occur.

In the same realm, while Western couple relationships are (at least idealistic) thought to occur among social equals, it may happened that people who hypothetically could access the international marriage markets and the so called "distance loves" don't even have nothing to exchange but their own bodies to trade, and in this way the idea of pure love remains reserved (even for analytical purposes) as a privilege for few people not only in local Western marriage markets but also – and specially- in the rest of the world.

The encounter of people from the more different religious traditions, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, as well as the spread of several ICT technologies, offer the possibility of imagining new forms of family and relationship, rather than falling into pre-existing conventions. World families allow their members to "make comparisons" and to choose

from other cultural pools that retain more attractive rather than simply accepting the sovereignty of their own nation state's cultural trends.

However, the aspiration regarding other cultural models of family and intimate relationships may involve predominantly fantasy and virtual rather than physical experiences; so for many people family and marriage life within an international context may ultimately signify idealization and outright delusion. This is, according to the authors, particularly appropriated for long distance relationships that develop through internet and that involve only a partial knowledge of other places' cultural assets (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim; 2013).

These affirmations have been confirmed in certain empirical researches such as the recent one by Irina Isaakyan & Anna Triandafyllidou (2014), who analyze intermarriage patterns between British women and Italian or Greek men living respectively in Italy and Greece; and who found that in cross-border marriages there is high potential to elaborate high illusory expectations towards the foreign partner and his/her background culture, and that the mismatch between expectations and reality can cause a series of conflicts that may become difficult to manage among the spouses, and among them and their belonging groups. Furthermore, according to the author, *"in the specific case of couples of different nationalities, marriage can become an arena for banal nationalisms, especially when people face disagreements and the conflict gets supplanted onto cultural differences, with the antagonists transformed into the embodiment of their nationalities"*.

The mating encounters of members of local populations with members of other ethnic and cultural groups have been particularly studied in terms of exogamy and endogamy patterns not only with respect to family group, religious tradition, socioeconomic class, or education level, but also in terms of race, ethnicity, cultural background and nationality. However, these encounters are usually interpreted through a biased power relation perspective that usually favors locals in detriment of newcomers. Furthermore, and although the complexity of these encounters, their analysis is usually performed in a rigid comparative way, i.e. taking as a reference point the (supposedly homogenous) local population.

Such intimate relations have thus been approached with an often-simplistic state, legislative and social conceptualizations related to migrants' stereotypes; thus, seeking out

marriages between natives and "foreigners" as an opportunistic result of a simple cost-benefit analysis, a chance to exit undesirable situations, to get away from poverty or sex work in countries of origin, or through the stigma of divorce and second marriages (Constable, 2005). Such phenomenon may be identified with the one of marriages of convenience or mail-order brides that are both primarily or exclusively based on a materialistic profit oriented relationship, however, it would be a mistake to classify all mixed couples/marriages within such closed categories.

In the same way, it would be a mistake to actually classify all (international) mixed couples/marriages as a result of an immigrant's integration/assimilation process; this is because more frequently cross-border (international) mixed couples/marriages are also the result of the encounter of two people who have not even previously experienced a migratory process, who were not residing in the country where they did meet or where they do reside (i.e. marriage as a result of migration Vs migration as a result of marriage). The acknowledgement of such dynamics seems particularly important in order to understand that current human mobility is much more complex than the classical south-north or east-west migration process; and that current modern marriage/family forms (Beck's global families) are much more complex than the classical image of the poor immigrant marrying the well off native person as a result of a cost-benefit purely rational analysis for economic and bureaucratic means.

More recent research on marriage migration and cross-border marriages, nevertheless, have made evident the necessity to move far away from stereotypical perceptions of migrants in particular and foreigners in general, and to include in the analysis not only individuals' and groups' pre-migration socioeconomic status, demographic and educational characteristics, but also emotional aspects of this kind of intimate relationships. This vein of recent scholarship, that has usually developed in countries with a long experience in terms of immigration and diversity, attempts to move beyond the almost binary image of marriage-related immigrants/foreigners as essentially economically motivated; or conversely, as vulnerable victims of patriarchal and/or global financial structures of power (Charsley, 2012); and it urges to take into account the personal individual motivations and aspirations of the involved partners, the socio-cultural characteristics in which the

relationship was born and currently develops, and the internal heterogeneity of the groups to which the spouses separately belong.

Inter-group contacts thus can represent serious practical, ideological and methodological challenges for the experience and analysis of diversified contemporary human relationships within an international context, especially those more intimate ones. However, they can also offer new opportunities to experience and interpret an increasingly interconnected and intercultural world that is constantly changing and that therefore urges the redefinition (and its correspondent regulation) of the most fundamental concepts and social institutions such as love, caring, marriage, family life, etc.

In the next chapter a review of the main theories that have been exclusively constructed to analyze the social phenomenon of mixed couples and intermarriages will be developed. It is necessary, nevertheless, to remember all the time that such theories are very much context-dependent, and that they were usually formulated within a context of international massive migration that has been mostly analyzed from an economic cost-benefit assimilationist perspective.

CHAPTER 3

Migration theories on international mixed couples and cross border marriages: Couple's formation process and internal/external negotiations

As it was previously said, intermarriage has been mostly studied as an index of immigrant communities' integration in destination countries. Considering the symbolic, practical and legal meaning of this social institution, the incidence of registered intermarriages has been very useful to understand the degree of hybridization between individuals and, specially, between different groups. Such hybridization may refer to different types of categorizations and social divides, from which the most common where explained and deconstructed in Chapter 1.

Considering the crescent incidence and intensity of migration flows from South to North, East to West and, more recently, other directions e.g. South-South. The social divide that has become more salient is the one that refers to the ethnic, cultural and national background, of the implicated partners and their belonging groups. More specifically, it was after the increasing encounter of culturally and nationally differentiated groups, that the modern phenomenon of intermarriage and interbreeding raised social scientists' and national politicians' substantive formal attention.

The results have been translated in a series of theoretical and empirical contributions aimed at explaining the phenomenon from both a situational and context independent perspectives; and a series of public policies aiming at regulating –and often controlling- the phenomenon, mainly in relation to a wider international immigration influx.

This research is aimed at explaining several elements and dimensions of the observed incidence of international mixed couples and cross border marriages between people who belong to two different national groups, Italians and Mexicans. The theoretical framework to understand such phenomenon was defined to be a combination of the contributions released within two study areas, Sociology of Family and Migration Studies.

During the past Chapter 2, there was an extensive description of the main family's transformation theories that may have influenced the increasing incidence of mixed couples

and intermarriages within a crescent globalized world (the transformation from an extended to a nuclear family; the evolution of the concept of love and intimacy; and the wedging of the concept of world families). Along this Chapter 3, a review of the main theories that have been developed to explain the incidence of intermarriage from the perspective of Sociology of Migration, and more broadly of Migration Studies, will be done.

Later, in Chapter 4, a situational analysis of the groups embedded in the specific type of mixed couples and intermarriages that will be analyzed in this research, and the specific national context in which they currently reside, will be developed; so that their empirical study (Chapter 5) can be realized with a solid conceptual (Chapter 1), theoretical (Chapter 2 and 3), and contextual (Chapter 4) framework.

3.1. A theoretical approach to marriage, mixed couples and intermarriages

Heterogeneity is the main characterization of previous theoretical and empirical research on international mixed couples in particular, and intermarriage in general. The particularities of each socioeconomic, religious, racial, ethnic and/or national group to which the spouses belong (and all the multiple hybrid combinations within them), as well as the social, cultural and political characteristics of the context(s) in which these groups are embedded do influence the way in which intermarriages are socially perceived; the salient social categories by which intermarriages are classified and further regulated; and the way in which the spouses relate to each other and to their enlarged families, groups of friends, and society in general.

Marriage patterns' history and family' transformation contemporary theories may offer an adequate framework to analyze both: cross-border marriages' formation processes, and mixed partners' internal and external multidimensional negotiation processes. This social phenomenon and the salience of the "mixed" element, have been mostly approached by economics and cultural studies, often underestimating the potential contributions of sociology of family and migration studies.

If intermarriage has traditionally been considered the immigrants' surest index of assimilation or the result of a cost-benefit analysis, it is presumed that some contemporary cross-border marriages may be at least partially the output of more complexes world

family's transformation processes such as the ones described in the previous Chapter 2, and the strengthening of globalized marriage patterns.

Economic approaches (marriage cost/benefit analyses and social exchange theory) are complemented by historical and social approaches of (mixed) couples' formation and family transformations (in particular Gidden's theory on the transformation of intimacy and love and Beck's individualization process within the couple relationship previously in Chpater 2; and later Kalmijn's social forces theory on preferences, third parties and marriage markets) in order to conform a more inclusive frame analysis that may more adequately fit further diversified typologies of international mixed couples and cross-border marriages.

Understanding who marries whom, how and why has been an assignment that has drawn economists, sociologists' and social psychologists' attention since longtime ago (Goode, 1963; Kalmijn, 1998). Mating and marriage patterns offer a fundamental key reading to understand certain social phenomena such as gender relationships, economic stratification, social inequality patterns, and societies' cultural changes.

Family life as an outcome of marriage and mating patterns, after all, is the starting point of any society and rarely remains untouched by social change, whether as a cause or as an effect. But its history and systematic analysis poses an overwhelming challenge as well, i.e. its private nature and the difficulty to reconstruct every relevant detail of its ordinary experience.

In the next pages some of the main theories on marriage and family formation will be explained, particular emphasis is given to the incidence of intermarriage and cross-national couples. The context in which these theories were primarily developed is usually briefly described according to the social construction definition of the phenomenon that was previously developed in Chapter 1. If these theories were mainly formulated within a national/international migration environment, it is recognized their utility to explain other typologies of intermarriage that are related with the most diverse patterns of human mobility; however, differences are signaled pointing out the necessity to elaborate more integrated theoretical approaches that may recognize the variability and dynamicity of the phenomenon.

3.2. The economics of marriage

First attempts to systematically analyze mating and marriage patterns were developed by economists through complexes econometric models fed by a series of variables that included partners' individual and collective characteristics, and relevant demographic indicators such as sex ratio, e.g. These analyses were thought to understand the particularities of local marriage markets and to interpret the way in which these could influence social mobility, economic stratification and social cohesion.

In the 1970s, Becker pioneered the economics of marriage (See Becker, 1973). Two simple principles lie at the core of such analyses. The first principle is that, since marriage is practically always voluntary (at least in Western culture), either by the spouses about to marry or by their parents, the theory of preferences can be readily applied, and persons marrying (or their parents) can be assumed to expect to raise their utility level above what it would be if they were to remain single (utilities are primarily understood in economic terms but they can be also of diverse nature). The second principle is that, since many men and women compete (consciously or unconsciously) as they seek mates, a market for marriage can be presumed to exist. Each person tries to find the best mate, subject to the restrictions imposed by market conditions (supply and demand). A very important assumption of economic analysis is the idea that marriage occurs if, and only if, both spouses are better off, that is if they increase their utility by marrying. The utilities of marriage transaction directly depend on the commodities that will be produced by each household (not only by each individual), and such commodities may be numerous and various, i.e. the quality of meals, the delivery of offspring, real estate acquisition, prestige, recreation, love, companionship, etc. (Becker, 1973).

According to Becker, the two cited principles may explain why so many adults are coupled and married; and why sorting mates by wealth, education, and other characteristics, is similar under apparently quite different conditions. Yet, it is very important to keep in mind that marital patterns differ among societies and change over time in a variety of ways that challenge any single theory.

The basic theoretical constructs that economists use when analyzing marriage include theoretical tools that are usually employed in all micro-economic applications of

economics, i.e. cost/benefit analysis, game theory and market analysis (Grossbard-Shechtman, 2003).

Cost/benefit analysis. Costs and benefits can be compared whether one searches for lasting romantic love, companionship or economic upgrade. Men and women may all perform such analyses when looking for a mate, even if the factors that they consider as costs and benefits may differ somewhat according to their own perceptions and available information.

- Game theory. Game theories apply whenever behavior is strategic, whether its goal is holy matrimony, the satisfaction of biological needs, or the strength of political alliances.
- Market analysis. It does apply whenever choices are available on a demand side or a supply side. The existence of any possible substitute opens the door to potential competition, and where there can be competition, there is a market. In the West, competition can be observed at bars, parties, churches, etc., whereas in India it is more likely to take the form of a list of available brides and grooms printed in the local newspaper on in adequate dating sites.

Although the economic analyses of mating and marriage patterns have substantially contributed to the understanding of marriage dynamics and mating patterns, they have been strongly contested mainly by other social scientists. One of the main critics that have received this kind of analyses, nevertheless, is the assumption of spouses' predominant rational behavior as in any kind of cost-benefit transaction.

According to this assumption, economists depart from the idea that any kind of positive, negative or random assertive mating (i.e. the selection of people similar, different or random, in regards to certain characteristics such as intelligence, race, education, wage rate, etc.) obeys to the maximization of the expected household's total commodity output, although such output may be different for every couple.

Another severe criticism is the omission of other social, historical and ideological elements that may influence or even constrain individuals' marital choices (or, if it is the case, families' or collective groups' marital choices depending on the local culture).

In any case, the contributions to the analysis of marriage made by economists are doubtless, and one of them is the coining of the market marriage concept. The term of

marriage market refers to the abstract (market) place in which an individual (male or female) can find possible (marriage) mates, within a competitive environment in which the exchange of his/her own individual and family resources is fundamental. The concept of marriage market is related to the action of marrying as the result of a transaction between spouses who "choose" each other from a pool of available candidates that reciprocally exchange his/her most varied resources.

Another very important term is the one of assortative mating, that refers to the tendency of people to marry others with similar characteristics (different types of characteristics that may go from age range, education level, occupational attainment, race, cultural background, etc.) (Torche, 2010). Such term is conceptually close to the one employed mostly by sociologists, i.e. homogamy, that also refers to the tendency of people to marry others of similar race, age, education, religious background and social class. For instance, not only do college graduates more often marry each other; so do people without college educations. The opposite of endogamy would be heterogamy, thus, marrying someone dissimilar in race, age, education, religion or social class. Positive assortative mating or homogamy is usually related to social cohesion and marriage's stability, and both indicators are very much revealing in terms of social mixing, integration degree, socioeconomic stratification and cultural change.

3.3. Theories on intermarriage' formation patterns

As it was said before, mixed couples and cross-border marriages in particular, are not a new phenomenon; however, it has been until the past century that the increasing rates of observed intermarriages have raised the attention of social scientists and politicians. These first ones in particularly started to analyze the many different exogamy patterns that certain groups follow, the different individual and collective characteristics of the people that participate in mixed unions, the different regulations imposed by the State to this particular type of human relationship and the changes that these regulations have experienced over time, as well as the different implications that intermarriage has on current societies in terms of eroding (reinforcing or maintaining the status quo) social, cultural and psychological boundaries between ethnic and national groups more than other economic and political processes certainly do.

However, as Becker himself clearly specified, one single marriage theory for all societies over time, in short terms, would be impossible. This is because marriage markets and mating rules, depend not only on the spouses' very different personal characteristics and preferences (earning calculations among several others), but also on the cultural and structural characteristics of the surrounding environment (Kalmijn & Van Tubergen, 2010).

3.3.1. Social Exchange Theory

First attempts to describe and understand the phenomenon of intermarriage were born in countries that experienced slavery of minority groups and that were intensive immigrants' receptor countries, predominantly the United States.

The largest body of literature in the United States deals with the causal factors influencing individuals to become romantically involved with someone of another race and, drawing upon economists and structuralism sociologists, the interpretation of the phenomenon is mainly done by employing a cost-benefit and social exchange perspective within a highly stratified social system.

This area of research explores the rational and implications behind exogamy (marriage between members of different races, ethnicities or classes) and either confirms or refutes outdated theories of hypergamy (intermarriage into a higher social class), and hypogamy (intermarriage into a lower social class).

Studies of ethnic intermarriage in the U.S. may be found already during the first half of the XX century. Nevertheless, these studies were particularly biased by temporally dominant prejudices against ethnic minorities. Baber (1937) performed an analysis not only on interethnic but also interfaith marriages that provides contemporary researchers with and insight into public opinion and prevailing intellectual thought regarding mixed unions during that historical period. Most likely representing the author's preconceived notions about intermarried couples, the study found that on average, the happiness rating measurements for such couples was low and inferred that many couples didn't feel that they should have children. The author further found that children of interracial marriages were particularly handicapped, for they literally have no race, frequently being rejected by both the races from which they come from. The author also emphasized the notion of Blacks' prestige for "marrying up" to a White spouse and the myth of Asian Americans as being

ideal marriage partners because, when discussing Asian-White unions, they were more passive and subservient.

Baber's study is an extreme example of all the "common places" that used to be applied to the analysis of intermarriages; however, more systematical first analyses were also performed under an economic approach that took for granted the spouses' and/or their families' exclusively rational behavior regarding marriage as a cost/benefit transaction.

Such approaches, furthermore, were performed in a very well demarked system of (ethnic) power relations, in which the white native populations may be found at the top (the more desirable spouses) and the members of poorest and disadvantaged groups (the less desirable spouses) may be found at the bottom of a strongly stratified (ethnic) marriage market.

Davis and Merton, who were two of the first theorists to analyze intermarriage patterns based their arguments on the assumption that people tried to maximize gains through intermarriage, thus, minority group members traded their high educational and economic status for the high social status of the majority group member spouse. In this case, it was assumed that the minority members would have a higher level of education or occupational status than the members of the majority group with whom they would decide to intermarry.

Davis (1941) suggested that interracial marriage could be understood in terms of its (social alliance) function for the upper caste or class. He argued that an upper caste or sub-caste male usually exchanges his social position for the achievement, beauty, intelligence, youth, or wealth brought to the marriage by the female partner of a lower caste or sub-caste. David hypothesized that when intermarriage does occur it is likely to be hypergamous, i.e. the female usually marries upward. In dealing with white and black intermarriage in the United States, by far the most common form has involved black men and white women, and in this case, according to the author, the pattern corresponds to an exchange between black males who have a higher socioeconomic status with white females who stand low socioeconomically but who may profit from their belonging to a higher ethnic status.

Merton (1941) supported Davis's conclusions by asserting that blacks and whites are at opposite ends of the racial status continuum and he did apply the theory of blacks' hypogamy to discuss romantic relations between the two groups. This theory holds that as

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blacks occupy a lower status in American society, in order to be perceived as attractive partners for whites, they must possess another outstanding characteristics such as a high level of physical attractiveness, income or educational attainment. Conversely, the theory assumes that blacks are willing to accept a less wealthy or physically attractive white partner in order to benefit from the status associated to being involved with someone from a higher social class.

Van Den Berghe (1960) modified the hypergamy argument suggesting that the principle at work is not actually upwards but maximization of status. Hypergamous intermarriage occurs when the female can obtain a gain status for herself and her children and the male would suffer no substantial loss of status for himself. Monahan (1976) contrary found that white spouses in black/white marriages were more often in a higher occupational status when compared to white/white marriages. Whereas Heer (1974) found no evidence of class position hypergamy when education was also included in the independent variables.

In terms of achieved characteristics -such as education- several studies on intermarriage have found the increasing importance given specially to education level and occupational attainment, and to the increasing number of interactions between people from the more diverse groups through labor, educational, sportive, entertainment activities, etc.

Liang & Ito (1999) for example found that education can break ethnic and racial barriers, making it more likely for highly educated people to intermarry. Unlike Merton's suggestion, that Asian men would trade their high education status for the "high" group status of their spouses, the authors found evidence of an educational homogeneity among intermarried couples. Such finding is consistent with the overall marriage patterns in the United States in the past few decades, i.e. following a tendency to have more and more assortative mating along an educational dimension (Kalmijn, 1991; Mare, 1991, Qian, 1997).

These studies are an expression of a more broad theory that was often used to interpret exogamy/endogamy and homogamy/heterogamy patterns between racial/ethnic and culturally different groups. This theory is better known as *Social Exchange Theory* (Homans, 1958) and it does analyze interactions between two parties by examining the costs and benefits for each. The key point of the theory is that it assumes that the two

parties are both giving and receiving items of value from each other. Under this theory, interactions are only likely to continue if both parties feel they are coming out of the exchange with more than they are giving up; that is, if there is a positive amount of profit for both parties involved.

The power of such exchange rests in forging relationships, maintaining social bonds, creating obligations and debts, gaining status and social position, and obtaining resources needed for the life and reproduction of individuals and societies. Exchange in this way refers to many different categories of interaction ranging from food sharing in forager communities to the functioning of complex market economies and the production, distribution, and consumption of commodities. To Levi-Strauss (1969:52-68), the exchange of food, manufactured objects, and women creates relationships, and women given in marriage serve as the *supreme gift* that unites disparate and unrelated groups. Females in such analysis were mostly viewed as reserved for exchange, as an instrument to create external alliances in order to avoid or to negotiate potential conflicts with other groups.

Undoubtedly, women have gained greater autonomy in both their public and private elections; however, nowadays, there are also women the ones who (voluntarily or forcedly) look for a certain assortative mating in order to exchange the most diverse kind of material and immaterial resources.

3.3.2. Cultural Assimilation Theory

Another attempt to explain the incidence of intermarriages (particularly cross-cultural and international ones), and to include also cultural and social inciting factors, was developed under an international migration contextually dominated context. Such theoretical approach has been broadly applied to the analysis of intermarriage patterns and it is referred as the *"Cultural Assimilation Theory"*.

This theory was formulated by the Chicago School during the XX century and it was usually applied to explain the patterns of intermarriage involving immigrants from Northern, Western and Southern Europeans in the United States (Gordon, 1964; Alba & Nee, 2003). According to this theory, members of minority groups will resemble more the behavioral patterns of the majority group as far as they acquire more local language skills, education and experience in the labor market, and parallel become less attached to their

native cultural background. Thus, when the minority group will be more assimilated the possibilities of its members to marry outside their own ethnic group will increase; according to this theory when a group has lost its social visibility sufficiently to participate in intermarriage this group may be considered assimilated into the mainstream native society (Marcson, 1950).

According to Gordon's (1964) -its main exponent- there are seven-stage models; assimilation thus starts with (1) acculturation (cultural or behavioral assimilation); proceeds to (2) structural assimilation, which refers to large scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of the host society in a primary group; and follows with (3) marital assimilation. When large-scale intermarriage takes place, the minority group melts into the host society which results in (4) identificational assimilation. The others states (5) absence of prejudice, (6) absence of discrimination, and (7) value and empowerment follow naturally. Gordon claims that compared to those who do not intermarry, those who do, generally possess greater social, political, and economic characteristics that resemble those of the host society.

This theory has been extensively used to analyze intermarriage patterns of several migrant racial and ethnic groups; e.g. Gurak and Fitzpatrick (1982), using data from the New York City marriage records of 1975, found a strong correlation between the level of cultural assimilation and acculturation experienced by Asian and Hispanic ethnic groups and their rate of intermarriage.

In the United States, intermarriage with the majority population led to the fading of the formerly rigid lines that separated even European-origin groups from each other (Pagnini and Morgan, 1990; Qian and Lichter, 2001 and 2007). However, controversies were raised regarding the extent to which this assimilation pattern would also fit to more recent waves of immigrants, who come mostly from non-European source regions and are often viewed as racially or ethnically distinct. At this respect, the importance of "cultural distance" among the groups to which the spouses primarily belong (and identify with) became also evident and fundamental part of the theory's argumentation.

Kulczycki and Lobo (2002) for example examined patterns of intermarriage for Arabs and Arab Americans and evaluated, thorough a quantitative analysis with more than 16,000 respondents, how acculturation, cultural and structural factors affect marital choices. Arab

Americans continue to have higher levels of educational attainment, high incomes, and lower age average than the general U.S. adult population; however, Arab Americans have also been much denigrated as a group, with majority-group suspicions rising dramatically after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Based on the similarity hypothesis, the authors expected that similar language and cultural background would influence exogamy patterns; and that people with better educational levels and earnings would have more opportunities to meet members of other groups and to adapt more readily to host country conditions.

Particular persistent patriarchal cultural influences led the authors to hypothesize higher out-marriages rates for Arab men. First of all because Muslim communities tend to prohibit interfaith marriages more strongly for women than for men, because when Muslim women marry non-Muslims their children are considered lost to Islam; secondly, because the higher proportion of men than women among recent Arab immigrants (sex ratio), led the authors to expect a similar outcome due to a shortage of marriageable co-ethnic of the opposing sex that would create a structural force towards out-marriage.

The relevance of such analysis lies on the application of assimilation theory and its complementation with further group's characteristics and structural constraints as relevant factors to explain the incidence of intermarriage among several Arab groups. In this case, the authors found that overall, Arab Americans continue to exhibit high rates of intermarriage even after the unfavorable and very much discussed event of 09/11.

Gender and group differences were also found; thus, as it was predicted, more Arab men than Arab women were married with non-Arab partners, in the period 2007-2011 74% of Arab men and 69% of Arab women had non-Arab spouses. Collective group differences showed to have an important influence especially in terms of cultural distance and duration of the assimilation period; so the great majority of Lebanese mean and women were found to out-marry (87% and 85% respectively), with Syrians, Algerians and Moroccans also showing higher rates. The lowest rates of out-marriage are found among Yemenis and Somalis (less than 25% for both sexes).

These results show to be in line with assimilation theory's precepts, i.e. those groups who have arrived first to the U.S. and therefore have had more time to acculturate into the host society's cultural system are the ones more willing to out-marry; several Lebanese and

Syrians Americans are practitioners of Christianism and in terms of skin color and somatic traits are more difficult to differentiate than Yemenis and Somalis for example. Furthermore, researchers found that English language proficiency and partial Arab ancestry, are all positively associated with intermarriage.

Regarding measures of Arabs' achieved characteristics, results showed that intermarriage is positively associated with levels of educational attainment, income, and occupational skill levels. Among college graduates, 81% of Arab women had non-Arab spouses, compared to 31% of those with less than high school education.

Those results made evident that most people are also assumed to search for potential spouses who are attractive in terms of more acquired characteristics and socio-economic resources such as better educational levels and earnings (Qian and Lichter. 2007). Accordingly, such preferences are generally associated with weaker preference for a potential mate according to ascribed characteristics like ethnicity.

The correlation between assimilation processes and intermarriage among migrants and native populations has also been widely analyzed in Europe. Nevertheless, if race has been a particular salient social divide in the United States, in Europe research has mostly focused in other (contextually salient) religious and cultural divides. Fukuyama (2006) mentions that Europeans claim that they face a harder problem in integrating their immigrants –from which an important number are Muslims - than does the United States, where the majority of immigrants share the Christian heritage of the dominant native cultural group. According to the author, particularly such religious divide makes very difficult for immigrants to assimilate although their length of residence.

In the case of Europe both cultural diversity and migration movements have been part of the continent's history since Ancient times. The diversity of the migrant groups and the different human mobility patterns that have been observed obey, as it was previously developed in Chapter 2, to complex historical events and economic processes that vary for each country/region/city.

A migrant person in Europe could be a wealthy Asian, American or Russian businessman; a Pilipino au pair or Polish construction worker, an African or Burmese asylum seeker or a trafficked teenager. They may be coming to find work or a better quality

of life, to be reunited with family members, or to escape persecution or environmental disaster (Jackson and Passarelli, 2008: 5).

Also in Europe, the phenomenon of intermarriage has been usually analyzed almost exclusively as an outcome of integration between migrants and local inhabitants and the assimilation of the first ones into the local culture. According to Coleman (1994), intermarriage is proceeding faster than it might be expected, especially in relation to immigrant populations who are perfectly integrated in economic terms. As an example, up to 40% of West Indians born in the UK, for example, appear to have white partners as do high proportions of young Maghrebians in France; such results highlight the fact that intermarriage is particularly high among second generation immigrants, i.e. children of foreign parents but who have born or being raised already in the host country.

From a larger comparative perspective, Lucassen and Laarman (2009) applied the Assimilation Theory to analyze the propensity to intermarry of various migrant groups and their second generation children who settled in Germany, France, England, Belgium and The Netherlands during the Post-war period. The authors used large national statistics and performed a quantitative analysis aimed mainly to compare the influence that ethnic and religious background, as well as sex, age, and place of origin, would have in the possibilities of participating in an intermarriage with members of the local population in each settling country. Moreover, the authors were able to differentiate between immigrants from a former colony, who are presumed to have a common share with the host country and its culture, and economic immigrants who arrived to Europe from the most diverse places of origin.

First of all, authors found once again that religion appears to be a very important variable. Migrants whose faith has no tradition in Western Europe intermarry at a much lower rate than those whose religious backgrounds correspond with those that are common in the country of settlement. Such finding may be related to the opposition of migrants with an Islamic background towards some of the core values of Western European Societies such as equality between men and women, freedom of speech and the separation of church and state. In this way, the rate of ethnic endogamous marriages are highest in Hindu and Muslim communities, often regardless if they came to Europe as guest workers or colonial migrants. Whereas differences in religion diminish the propensity to intermarry, color or

"racial" differences seem to be noticeable less important. Moreover, authors found, as it was expected, that second generation migrants usually intermarry more often than the first generation, whose members usually arrive already married (particularly colonial migrants) or who marry someone of their own country of origin who will be later brought in the residence country (particularly guest workers). According to some authors (Roy, 2004; Klausen, 2005), although there are clear signs that a European moderate form of Islam is developing, the cultural distance between the offspring of Muslim migrants and the indigenous population has not disappeared and makes itself felt in the identificational domain.

Although the analysis was not exhaustive regarding socioeconomic background variables, evidence has been found that socioeconomic class divide remains highly relevant also in several European contexts, leading to widespread social endogamy, also known as class homogamy (marrying within the same class). Such pattern has been widely identified as the result of people's preferences regarding a partner who shares one's values, tastes, spending habits, hobbies, etc. (Kalmijn, 1994; Van Leeuwen & Maas, 2005).

The influence of acquired characteristics as explanatory variables of endogamy/exogamy rates and assortative mating processes is a very relevant topic because it does reflect the degree of meritocracy achieved by societies, and because it does offer the opportunity to implement balancing measures that may promote a higher degree of newcomers' integration and that may diminish structural inequalities among migrants and native populations. At this respect, several authors appeal to the intervention of both, formal and informal institutions, i.e. family groups, religious associations, political parties, educative institutions, national States, etc., to work on promoting positive contacts and to ban institutionalized forms of discrimination and stigmatization that not only produce isolation but also frustrate integration and assimilation processes such as intermarriage among others (Alba & Nee, 2003; Lucassen & Laarman, 2009).

3.3.3. Social Stratification Theory

The emphasis on acquired characteristics may be found in the assumptions of another theory that has been used to explain intermarriage(s) incidence, i.e. the *"Social Stratification Theory"*, which share the assimilationist assumptions but from a different

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point of view. The main statement of this theory is that as societies modernize the rates of intermarriage will increase because there will be an increased emphasis on achieved characteristics such as education and occupation in contrast or as a complement to other ascribed characteristics such as skin color, ethnicity, religion, and country of origin; however, it does also recognize that the hierarchization of achieved characteristics within a particular social structure may coincide with other innate traits' arrangements and may thus exclude certain groups from particular forms of interactions (Liang & Ito, 1999).

Social stratification is regarded as the differential ranking of human individuals who compose a given social system and their treatment as relatively superior or inferior may be analyzed in terms of the following classification scheme: a.) membership in a kinship unit; b) personal qualities; c) achievements; d) possessions; e) authority; and f) power (Parsons, 1940: 841).

Social stratification thus is conceived as a process of differential association in order to develop and preserve collective social identity. It does refer to those processes whereby social honor, prestige or other social and economic' power expressions, become distributed unequally among the members of a society.

The mechanisms of social stratification are strongly related to the interaction processes, and in particular to forms of intimate social interactions and exchanges. In this way, face to face relationships are of particular significance in the stratification system in which individuals can perceive and reproduce their own status in the judgment of others within such relationships. Through these interactions it is constantly defined which categories of persons are excluded, that is, which social boundaries are defined. These boundaries have the function of preventing "unequal" people from entering one's own sphere and restricting one's own interactions possibilities to "equals".

Social stratification wouldn't be endurable if it would operate only in the interactions of everyday life, which is the reason because it is actually preserved through formal and informal institutions and social structures. Such considerations lead to a view of social stratification as a mechanism establishing boundaries on social interactions; and such boundaries may be of the most different natures.

The social distance created between groups in such stratified social system of interactions is fed by the distinct life experiences and specific views of themselves and the

society that are developed by each groups and its belonging members. Such social distance may be related to different life domains, i.e. ethnicity, education, occupation, religion, country/region of origin, country/region/neighborhood of residence, and so forth. In general, the more complex the society, the more numerous the layers or strata of social differentiation.

The degree of stratification that may be observed in a society, the social distance between the different strata, and the degree of institutional strengthening of such stratification are considered to be highly relevant elements for the incidence of intermarriage and the diversification of exogamy patterns.

As it was explained in Chapter 2, two of the main social consequences of the process of industrialization, and overall modernization, were the increasing social class stratification of industrialized societies (that included the strengthening of a crescent bourgeoisie class and further economic and social differences between the preexisting groups); and the development of a formal instruction system together with a series of new occupational attainments. This process highlighted the importance of acquired human characteristics in contrast to other innate ones, and opened the door of social mobility for certain groups that otherwise would remain occupying peripheral roles within closed power relation's systems.

The process nevertheless, as it was also previously explained, was not homogenous among and within countries and for all social groups, specially for women during the early industrialization period but not only; however, it was the beginning of a major transformation that would influence traditional exogamy and heterogamy marriage patterns among members of the local populations and consequently among these and other (migrant or foreigner) groups.

Within the process of modernization, individuals do not cease to belong to groups or establish relations and construct multiple social circles. Actually, what it does change is how the individual's resulting multiple memberships relate to one another within the broader social context. In pre-modern societies, particularly those more remote, the individual finds himself assigned to a very restricted number of membership positions within a set of concentric circles. Whereas in modern societies, however, the individual's several affiliations are not arranged predictable and consistently with respect to one

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another; rather, they overlap, cut across one another and intersect. Individuals thus, had the chance to belong to new groups and to develop interactions in more social environments, however, the diversification of social circles also includes the restriction of some of them for certain groups, and this has been particularly noticeable for newcomers.

The heterogeneity created by these intersecting attachments promotes intergroup relations, for it means that the greater the heterogeneity the greater are the chances that any fortuitous encounter would involve persons from the most different groups. Most casual encounters, nevertheless, do not lead to marriage, but still are a necessary condition, although not sufficient, for more intimate relations to develop.

Something that has intensified during the last decades (as it was also said during Chapter 2) is, nevertheless, an observed crescent global stratification (between and within countries). Together with this process it is possible to testify the increasing incidence of the most diverse type of (balanced or unbalanced) encounters between people from different cultural backgrounds and ethnic origins, but who may (or not) share several acquired characteristics and belong to relative correspondent socioeconomic strata, among several other combinations of course, that still highlight the presence of a worldly stratified power system.

3.3.4. Social Forces Theory: Preferences, Opportunities and Third Parties

Several other factors have been identified to influence the incidence of intermarriage, among them an unbalanced sex ratio for a minority group, which will promote intermarriage between its members and people from different ethnicities and/or nationalities. This is valid especially for the first generations of immigrants from certain groups whose migration patterns are characterized to be initiated by single individuals of one of the two sexes. An old example of this pattern is the one of European men who initiated the process of colonialism in the New Continent, and more recently among the groups of Chinese men who arrived to New York as economic migrants at the beginning of the XX century.

Another important factor on the incidence of intermarriage is the absolute size of a minority group. Usually social scientists hypothesize that the larger the group is the higher

the percentage of endogamous couples. Van Tubergen and Ineke Maas (2006) add a third related variable: residential segregation. It is expected that the more concentrated in a certain space a group is, the less opportunities this group will have to interact with members of other groups. Thus, these authors hypothesize that residential segregation has a positive effect on the rates of endogamous marriages.

These factors are all included in what Matthijs Kalmijn (1998) calls *"Opportunities"* as the second of three categories named by him as *"Social Forces"*. The author, thus, organized several factors that, according to previous research, do encourage intermarriage incidence; trying in this way to create a more integrated theory that would contemplate individual and collective characteristics of the spouses and the groups to which they belong to, as well as some relevant structural variables related to the social context.

First of all, Contact Theory (Allport, 1954) assumes that people have to meet before they can start a relationship. A general factor that determines intermarriages is the opportunity to meet co-ethnics and/or members of other groups. When people interact on a daily or regular basis only with members of the own group, they naturally have a higher chance to marry endogamously. This seems a truism, but the extent to which different groups attend the same schools, live in the same neighborhoods, work in the same places, go to the same clubs, bars or worship together, strongly influences the possibilities to intermarry (Kalmijn, 1998).

A similar argument is developed by Blau et. al. (1982), who elaborated Simmel's interpretation of the modernization in the XIX century, and who claims that the opportunities of intergroup contact are higher in a heterogeneous and residentially integrated community than in a homogeneous and highly segregated one. He argues that a person's multiple group affiliations constitute mostly crosscutting circles, that foster profound and lasting intergroup relations. He further argued that intermarriage is not only affected by group-specific attributes such as group size or sex ratio, but also by the amount of spatial and social proximity between groups (e.g. socioeconomic inequality, cultural distance). For Blau the assorting of partners depends not only on preferences but also on the available opportunities to marry a person from another group (i.e., while people make marital decisions according to their individual preferences; their decisions are, nevertheless, constrained by structural reality).

A very important change that has been observed during the last decades, it has been the creation of several virtual spaces in which people can also meet without even going out from their house-rooms. One of the biggest changes offered by the spread of Internet is the opportunity to meet people who share common interests, preferences, hobbies, etc., although living in a completely different part of the world. The challenge of these kind of interactions is the lack of supervision and regulation of the web space; facing thus the possibility to encounter false internet personal advertisements and potential tricksters. Nevertheless, there is a growing literature on human relationships born in this vast virtual social space (Sautter et. al. 2010). Such condition is very much related with the process of modernization of human relationships (see previous Chapter 2) and the detachment of the traditional concepts of time and space as they used to be conceived.

The other two social forces proposed by Kalmijn to organize the factors encouraging intermarriage are *"Preferences"* and *"Third Parties"*. The first one refers to the individual characteristics considered necessary or desirable among people who participate in intermarriages. Regarding these individual characteristics it has been observed that level of education, language(s) proficiency, ethnic identification, and cultural distance between ethnic groups, are factors that influence the incidence to marry outside.

Van Tubergen and Ineke Maas (2005) have formulated hypotheses for each of these variables. One of the factors that seem to greatly influence in a positive way the rates of intermarriage is education. Higher educated group members tend to participate more in settings in which the presence of (exclusively) co-ethnics is smaller and the presence of international people is bigger such as universities and/or high status occupations which require travelling abroad and interact with people from different nationalities.

At the same time, higher levels of education are usually related to higher incomes and occupations, as well as to higher levels of acceptance and understanding toward different cultures and more open and tolerant attitudes; *"education is not only strongly related to income and status, but also to taste, values, and lifestyles"* (Kalmijn, 1998: 400).

About language skills, people who speak one or more additional languages will be more likely to meet and interact with people from different ethnicities and nationalities. In the case of minority immigrant groups, the immigrants who speak poorly the destination language will be less likely to integrate themselves in the receptor society; the opportunities

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to attain a determinant social and labor status will be less, as well as the opportunity to meet members of the out-group.

Ethnic identification and cultural distance are also important for the incidence of intermarry, considering the common preference to marry someone who is similar because similarity of values, opinions, tastes, beliefs and attitudes will lead to consensus which will directly influence the establishment of long term relations; it is hypothesized that the shorter the cultural distance is between two different ethnic groups, or at least the lack of conflictive common history, the higher the probabilities to intermarry.

Van Tubergen and Maas also include an additional variable to the ones mentioned by Kalmijn on his *"Preferences"* social force: the so called Non-White factor. This variable generally refers to the fact that certain societies may have specific racial barriers which might limit –particularly- racial intermarriages. In the case of Western European countries where the population is predominantly white, negative attitudes toward marriages which include a non white partner are more probable to exist, and that would be the case for Non-Christian religions. In the case of America this is still valid also for White/Black unions as well as for Hispanic/Anglo marriages.

There are two other factors that may be noticed on the range of individual characteristics influencing intermarriage: age or migrant generation and sex. For the case of age and/or migrant generation the common assumption is that the younger generations would tend more to marry outside of their in-group since they are more assimilated into the destination culture and their affiliation to the ethnic migrant group to which they belong is far more weakened than for those first migrant generations. Nevertheless, the results obtained by Simon Marcson (1950) on a study made in America revealed that there is not a unique pattern that presents a positive increasing relation between intermarriages and migrant generations. It seems that while certain groups such as Germans tend more to marry outside on their second and third generations in America, there are others such as Slovaks that intermarry on the first generation and marry endogamously on the second and third generations, maybe in relation to experienced changes in sex ratio of size group e.g.

Sex is also an influencing variable since it has different direct or indirect effects for different groups; its influence is especially related with the gender stratification that certain religions promote and the roll the woman plays in every society; e g. in the case of Arab

Muslims, it has being noticed that are men the ones who marry more outside precisely because of religious and cultural stronger restrictions for women.

There may be several other personality traits that may influence the preference to marry someone outside of the own in-group; i.e. a particular physical and sexual attraction for certain ethnic traits, disappointing previous experiences with people from the own in-group, openness towards diversity, lack of belonging feelings –and even rejection- regarding the own in-group, etc.

The third social force described by Kalmijn is the one that refers to *"Third parties"*, people not directly involved on the intermarriage but who might influence the incidence of it. These "third parties" are represented by the family, the religious community and the state, and by other social groups to which the spouse may commonly belong.

The potential influence of "third parties" has being divided in two factors: group identification and group sanctions. The first one refers to the grade on which an individual may feel himself as belonging to a specific ethnic group. These feelings of identification are created through the awareness of a common social history as well as a sense of self differentiation with respect to other ethnic groups. Thus, "the stronger such feelings of group identification, the more people have internalized norms of endogamy". Group identification is applicable for racial and ethnic groups as well as for social classes, religious and educational groups. The factor of group sanctions refers to the limitations that institutions such as the family, the church and the state might impose to individuals who marry or desire to marry outside. These limitations are usually justified by a necessity to preserve the group coercion and usually vary from society to society.

Among Western more individualistic societies the influence that social institutions such as enlarged family and the church may have on the spouses' choices is less than in more collectivistic and traditional societies. However, it is necessary to take into account the degree of voluntariness observed in these kind of unions, that for some (the ones that are actually able to choose for a partner) may be the result of a personal voluntary choice, whereas for others may represent an opportunity to regularize their migratory status, to emigrate to another country for economic or any kind of other reasons, or to escape from undesirable situations.

As it has being observed, all these independent variables are allocated among the main theoretical approaches of intermarriage which at the same time have being combined in order to explain increasingly complex patterns of intermarriage; in the same way, is meant to say that the incidence of this social phenomenon depends on different combinations of these explanatory factors as well as it varies for different ethnic groups, national contexts, and of course individuals.

3.4. Adaptation/negotiation strategies among (mixed) partners and their enlarged social environment

Most theories have focused on the partners' motives to be part of an international mixed couple and/or cross border marriage, as well as on other external factors that encourage the incidence of such phenomenon. However, still less attention has been given to the way in which (mixed) spouses adapt and negotiate their (cultural/national) differences. On the one hand, it is difficult to foresee all the simultaneous social divides according to which the partners may be categorized and differentiated. On the other hand, daily adaptation strategies are multidimensional, whereas negotiation processes are dynamic and strongly situational.

Nevertheless, a certain theoretical framework may be applied in other to conceptually categorize the main attitudes and practices that the partners usually employ to deal with their (cultural and not only) differences, not only among themselves but also towards the surrounding social environment in which they are embedded, and more generally towards the country of residence in which they actually live.

The (variously) mixed couples probably experience in a more explicit and acute way all the "evolutionary problems" that all couples (even the most homogamic ones) need to face, to the extent that the partners belong to different family traditions. Each couple, in fact, must build a "common way" from different habits, traditions and know how(s): what they eat and how do they cook it; how do they celebrate birthdays and religious holidays; which are important rituals and reminders; how affection is expressed and interpreted; what are the common standards of hygiene and cleanliness; how do they negotiate gender models and the correspondent activities; how do they negotiate the common budget; and how do they conceive and organize the parent-child relationships, etc.

All of these are things that are perceived and regulated in a (more or less subtly) different way in each family, regardless the belonging to the same cultural tradition and nationality or not; and therefore constitute the so called navigation map that each single person brings along when forming a new couple (Saraceno, 2007).

Hence, in the very particular case of those mixed couples in which there are further (cultural and not only) differences, and at least one of the partners needs to undergo through an adaptation process in a new/different country of residence, there have been identified a series of adaptation and acculturation strategies that serve to manage and regulate the interactions produced between the partners, as well as between the partners and their enlarged family(ies) and/or surrounding social groups.

Primarily, social psychologist J.W. Berry (1980) is very much recognized for his theoretical model of the different "acculturation strategies" that a person (particularly in a migrant condition) may adopt when confronted with a new different socio-cultural context in order to avoid, or at least to cope with, the complexity of the so called acculturation process and potential cultural shock.

Acculturation is a concept that originally described a process defined as a cultural change resulted from continuous and first hand contacts between two different cultural groups (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936). Graves (1974), nevertheless, made a clear distinction of what was originally thought to be exclusively a collective process and what it is now also recognized as an individual one; e.i. the cultural change process observed when a single individual from a certain culture experiences continuous and first hand contacts with people from a different cultural group. At this individual level, special focus is put on the personal changes that a person belonging to a specific cultural group usually experiments.

The changes that a group/person may experience when approaching a different socio-cultural context are varied (from this assumption it comes the multidimensional characterization of the process). Berry, Kim, Minde & Mok (1987) have identified five main general categories of changes –which usually overlap with each other at least partially- that may be observed when experiencing an acculturation process: 1.- Physical changes such as a new place to live, a different kind of housing, increased levels of pollution, population density, etc.; 2.- Biological changes such as alimentation habits, food

ingredients' availability, exposition to different -or even previously unknown- types of diseases, etc.; 3.- Cultural changes such as insertion to a different political and economic regime, higher levels of institutional bureaucracy, another spoken language or practiced religion, etc.; 4.- New sets of social relationships which mean to interact with new people, to leave behind a previously social network with its practical and emotional consequences, to potentially experience new forms of domination patterns between the natives and the new arrived, etc.; and 5.- Individual psychological changes that may go from behavioral changes to conflict of values and alteration in mental health status, etc. These categories are closely related with what also Maslow categorized in his hierarchy of needs, and which have been recognized as important elements for individuals' well being: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actuation (Adler, 1975).

This means that when a person and/or a group moves from one place and one specific physical and social environment to a different one (for the most diverse reasons, just as marriage in the case of cross-border marriages), he/she may experience some (or several) changes that directly or indirectly influence his/her personal well being's sources.

All these changes and its complexities –which may moreover occur contemporarily- may provoke what has been specifically called as acculturation stress and/or cultural shock, which are related to an emotional reaction provoked by an inability to understand, control and predict, human behavior (Bock, 1970).

Cultural shock may be experienced in several different ways and in different grades; and usually this way to experience cultural shock is correlated to the individual's socio-cultural and economic background, the cultural distance existing between the different cultures in which the person is immerse, and of course the several personality traits that may characterize a particular individual, among many other factors.

Berry's theoretical model is primarily based on the assumption that the attitudinal and behavioral strategies applied by people when confronted with a different socio-cultural environment, depend in two main principles: i.e the one of cultural maintenance and the one of contact-participation. Cultural maintenance refers in this case to the extent in which (foreign) individuals do value and wish to maintain their cultural identity and to continue interacting with their culture/country of origin, whereas contact-participation refers to the extent in which these (foreign) individuals value and seek to have contacts with those out of

their own in-group (natives), wishing furthermore to participate in the daily life of the larger society and to adopt cultural traits from the country of destination/residence.

According to these two principles, Berry (Ibid) identified four possible continuous (and not exclusive) acculturation strategies: Assimilation, Integration, Segregation and Marginalization, which are graphically explained in the cross-table below:

Table 3.1 John W. Berry`s Acculturation Strategies

	Cultural Maintenance = Yes	Cultural Maintenance = No
Contact Participation = Yes	Integration/Biculturalism	Assimilation
Contact Participation = No	Segregation/Separation	Marginalization

Source: Berry, J.W. (1994).

In this way, the manner in which an acculturation process is experienced and particularly the way in which people deal with stress from cultural shock, environment change and sense of loss, etc., may vary among cultural groups, cultural contexts, and even among individuals within the same cultural group, and it may consequently influence in several different forms the way in which newcomers perform and adapt to the host society.

Comparative studies on acculturation processes have been performed with different cultural groups in one host society, and also with one cultural group in different host societies. For example different intergenerational acculturation patterns of Hispanic groups have been widely analyzed in the United States (Knight & Kagan, 1977; Marin et.al, 1987; Negy & Woods, 1992; Rodriguez & Kosloski, 1998); while Turks' acculturation processes have been followed in different host societies such as The Netherlands, Germany and Belgium (Arends-Toth & Van De Vijver, 2002; Van Acker & Norbert Vanbeselaer, 2010).

In the same way, different attempts have been made in order to classify more specific life domains in which people usually face important changes and potential cultural shock. The main reason to do it has been the recognized multidimensionality involved in a migratory path (independently of the motives to move) and the way in which these abstract acculturation strategies may be implemented and concretely expressed through several aspects of social functioning such as language, customs, food, clothes, etiquette, etc. (Bhugra & Ayonrine, 2004).

In this way, multiple indicators have been singularly studied (legal status, length of stay, second language proficiency, knowledge of local civic norms and social etiquettes, interest in local events, friendship choices, food, music and film preferences, etc.) and/or integrated in an important amount of different acculturation (and more specifically integration) scales (Cesareo & Blangiardo, 2009 e.g.) that are conceptually useful to understand how complex, dynamic and multidimensional, may be an acculturation process.

In the very particular case of mixed couples and intermarriages that we are about to analyze in this project, it may be thought that their process of adaptation into the country of residence might be "cushioned" by the social status gained by the foreign spouse from the act of marrying a native partner. Nevertheless, it is necessary to remember that some foreign spouses may have been already living in the country of residence even before getting to know the native spouse and that, if that is the case, the adaptation/acculturation process may have been lived in a very different way; this is an example of some of the difficulties that may be faced when elaborating closed and rigid classifications.

What is important to notice is that such adaptation/acculturation processes that may be experienced by one foreign spouse who moves to the country of origin of the native spouse (or both foreign spouses if living in a third country) presupposes a series of changes that may be additional to the common adaptation processes that all couples do experience among themselves (further bureaucratic practices, communication difficulties, cultural differences, etc.). And that, although it is very difficult to distinguish a singular strategy for each life domain that needs to be negotiated among partners, or that need to be faced by the foreign spouse in the receiving society; it is possible to recognize which are the main overall attitudes and practices that the partners apply in order to deal with these additional difficulties.

In the same realm, Favaro (2012) has created another categorization regarding the way in which mixed families internally and externally negotiate their (cultural) differences; such categorization resembles the one previously elaborated by Berry; however instead of four categories/strategies, Favaro identifies three main typologies. Thus, the cosmopolitan couple/family; the assimilated to the majority one; and the unstable and constantly under tension kind of couple/family.

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In the first type, the spouses live their cultural differences as an opportunity of enrichment, both for them and for their offspring and enlarged families. The attitude of the spouses is usually oriented to the enhancement of both cultures without distinction in order to keep alive all the family roots and the feeling of belonging of each individual. Behind this approach there is usually a previous knowledge and appreciation for the other culture(s), sometimes even prior to the meeting of the "mixed" partner (such category may resemble Berry's integration/biculturalism strategy).

The second type that tends to assimilation, usually opts for the cancellation, isolation or minimization of the foreign spouse's cultural background, for considering it too different and/or not functional for the integration of the foreign spouse and the mixed couple within the host society. Such adaptation strategy is particularly applied when the couple needs to face a hostile environment in which cultural differences are particularly not appreciated (such category may resemble Berry's assimilation strategy).

Couples belonging to the third type are those who have not found an inner harmony and a place in the wider social environment in which they are embedded, since they are not actually able to deal with their internal (cultural) differences. These couples experience a continuing conflict and a lack of common identity. The internal relations are stressful and the situations of discomfort can often can highlight the existence of a disparity in the decision-making power balance between the partners, so that the conflicts produced between the partners are interpreted as a conflict between the cultural traditions (such category may resemble the ones of marginalization or segregation by Berry).

So far the process of acculturation (specially of the foreign spouse) seems to be conceptualized mainly along a continuum usually ranging from the foreign partners' culture of origin to the immersion into the majority host culture; this movement along the continuum more specifically presupposed that as individuals move toward the dominant culture in which they reside, they lose aspects of their original one. This assumption, nevertheless, is insufficiently dynamic and mainly incompatible with an increasingly -and already very highly- interconnected world. In such highly interconnected world, human motion and digital information are also in constant "flux", such that the circulation of people and digitally mediated content proceeds across and beyond boundaries of the nation-

states and provide ground for alternative communities, multiple identities' formation, and creation and maintenance of transnational ties and processes (Leurs & Ponzanesi 2011).

In this way, the idea of "simultaneously living between different worlds" (origin/destination but not only) becomes very much relevant and makes even more complex what the acculturation process has previously defined to be. To understand this process the notion of "transnationalism" has been so far the more adequate one to describe what modern (marriage) migrants (and actually not only them) are nowadays experimenting. Important to say that this process may be exchanged -or at least compared- with the one previously conceptualized as the "integration acculturation strategy, biculturalism or cosmopolitanism"; however, it may be argued that these terms are more properly complementary than exchangeable.

Thus, the notions of "biculturalism or cosmopolitanism" refer to the maintenance and development of more than one culture, just like two (or more) parallel lines; whereas the notion of "transnationalism" mostly refers to the properties of dinamicity, simultaneity and liquidity, in which two (or more) cultures can be experienced, maintained and developed, just like a group of curve lines that constantly touch each other while continuing to move.

Transnationalism thus has been formally defined as "the complex of processes by which migrants develop and maintain interconnected ties and social networks that operate in two or more different national societies (usually those of the country of origin and the country of destination but not only)" (Basch, Schiller & Blanc, 1994).

Although this concept has been highly contested for its supposed wideness and ambiguity, it has been clearly useful to describe what is happening in an increasingly globalized world in which it has become easier to travel from one place to another without having to necessarily "disconnect" from one or the other, or in which it has become very common to experience something locally and to share it globally.

One of the main criticisms of the notion of transnationalism, nevertheless, is the idea that such transnational activities are at least mediated by individuals' particular cultural and social capital, as well as by their economic resources, and that exactly for that reasons only those high skilled and economically solvent individuals are the ones who are able to constantly interact in both societies (origin and destination) and doing it "in a relevant way", while developing multiple cultural identities (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller, 2003; this

idea is also close to the concept of "cosmopolitanism" further developed by Vertovec & Cohen, 2002).

At this respect, Portes and his colleagues for example revealed that only five to ten percent of the Dominican, Salvadoran and Colombian, migrants surveyed in the United States regularly participated in transnational economic, cultural and political activities (2002); whereas in Italy Ambrosini (2012) concluded similarly in relation to a group of ethnic entrepreneurs located in three of the main northern urban centers: Milan, Turin and Genoa.

These criticisms may lead to the further analysis and conceptualization also of the different kinds of transnational activities (Itzigshon and Saucedo 2002); nevertheless, what is so far incontestable is that the expansion of transnational capital and mass media to even the remotest hinterlands has redefined what a process of acculturation may be. And that in the particular case of mixed couples and intermarriages, they can (re)negotiate their differences without disconnecting from any of the spouses' countries of origin, and actually constantly "acculturating" themselves not only in relation to the country of destination but also and simultaneously in relation to the links that may be (and usually are) maintained with the foreign spouse's country of origin (see also the notion of Emotional Transnationalism in Premazzi, 2013 e.g.).

Contemporary communication technologies, mass migration and increased ease of travel may expand thus the possibilities for individuals to contract marriages across borders, but also to continue living between and within different cultural traditions.

For Ulrich Bech (2013), marriage is both a metaphor for, and an indicator of, the globalization of personal lives: Transnational place polygamy, marriage to several places at once, belonging to different worlds: this is the gateway to globality in one's own life; it leads to the globalization of biography. Globalization of biography means that the world's oppositions occur not only out there but also in the centre of people's lives, in multicultural marriages and families, at work, in circles of friends, at school, in cinema, at the supermarket cheese counter, in listening music, eating the evening meal, making love, and so on.

The current research project aims thus at applying these previous theoretical contributions in combination with other theoretical approaches of (ordinary) marriage and

family transformations; incorporating at the same time a less hierarchical (economic and cultural) categorization of the individuals/groups that participate in intermarriage practices; and a wider acknowledge of the different mobility motivations and channels that may be nowadays observed (e.g. migration because of marriage, instead of the traditional marriage because of/after migration).

In order to do so, the case study involves –together with the also heterogeneous native group- a very particular and heterogeneous groups of –mostly marriage- "emergent" immigrants that may be not considered traditional migrants –at least not in the national context in which they are being studied, i.e. Italy- nor free mover intra-European migrants. In order to understand better the specific collective and individual characteristics of this group, i.e. Mexicans migrants married with Italian natives, a further analysis of both the native and the foreign national contexts involved in this "mixed combination" will be developed during the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Contemporary marriage patterns and family transformations in Italy and Mexico

Most research on international mixed couples and cross border marriages (and even more generally on migrants' integration) focuses on analyzing the social phenomenon from the destination country or country of residence's point of view. Thus, the foreign partners are usually analyzed according to their current living conditions in the context in which they are researched; however, their pre-migration characteristics, and specially their pre-migration characteristics within a larger context of the country of origin, are rarely taken into account.

The reason to consider (at least the main) socio-economic characteristics of the country (and actually it would be necessary to focus in the specific region/city) from which the migrant/foreign spouse (and also the native one) comes from (and have lived for a longer period), results to be particularly informative regarding the types of multidimensional processes and changes that a person (with his/her very particular characteristic of course) has undergone when moving from one country to the other (or even from one city to the other); the specific position in which the person finds himself/herself within an stratified local system (e.g. an stratified local marriage market); the potential motivations to migrate and/or to marry a foreign partner; and the way to experience their particular mixity.

At this respect it is important to understand better the family and migration contexts of the countries of origin from which the partners come from. This is particularly interesting considering that international mixed couples or cross border marriages do not represent a global free-for-all phenomenon as it could interpreted, in which all combinations regardless of class, nationality, ethnicity, or gender e.g. are possible. Rather, they form marriage-escapes that are shaped and limited by very particular existing and emerging cultural, social, historical, and political-economic factors.

During the next pages, a brief review of the Italian and Mexican contexts will be developed in order to understand which are the macro conditions that might have

influenced the formation of mixed unions between partners from these two nationalities, and that may have urged people to move from one country to the other, in particular from Mexico to Italy. Special attention is given to the recent transformations experienced by the marriage and family institutions in both contexts, and to the main cultural and socioeconomic indicators that may influence the incidence of mixed couples from these two nationalities.

4.1. Italian partners. Marriage and family patterns

If there is one element that has characterized the Italian society in terms of being and doing family it is the one of heterogeneity. Even before and after the process of unification of the whole territories that nowadays constitute the Italian Nation-State, important differences have been observed among the different geographical regions regarding marriage rates, divorce rates, age at first marriage and celebration rituals e.g.

Although all these internal differences, nevertheless, certain authors specify that in comparison with other countries, Italy has not ever been a country with a particular high marriage rate. During the last decades of the XIX century there was observed a 12% proportion of never married single women and men between 50 and 55 years old and, although this proportion was diminished at the beginning of the XX century with a rise in the number of registered marriages, the proportion got stable at 9-10% (Barbagli et. al, 2003).

During this period the age at first marriage was on average of 27-28 for men, and 23-24 for women; however, both observed indicators could be lower specially for the people living in the Southern regions, that were characterized by the observance of more precocious marriages. The age at first marriage still lowered for the cohorts born in the late 30s and mid 50s of the XX century, who married during the 60s and 70s within what was considered the "Golden Age" of Italian marriage.

Starting from the second half of the 70s this extraordinary period arrived to an end and it started to be observed a relentless decline of the marriage rates and a gradual increase in the average age at first marriage. Thus, if 70% of the women born in the decade of 1945-55 got married by the age of 24 years old, for those women born between 1965 and 1970, the same percentage fell until 41%. Whereas regarding the median age at first union, it did

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move from 23 to 27, respectively for the first and the second cohort of women. The general trend for young people in the North of Italy regarding the postponing of marriage has lasted over the years, whereas in the South the age at marriage also moved forward but still it remained precocious in comparison with the North.

These changes were particularly related to other economic and social transformations such as the ones that were described in previous pages. Thus, the processes of industrialization and urbanization also took place in Italy and in other Southern European countries, nevertheless, the structural transformations that resulted from these processes departed later than in other Western and Northern European countries and their settlement was mostly heterogeneous among the different internal regions, partial, and in many cases inconsistent with the local predominant culture(s).

This nexus between the prevalent economic trend, the work domain and the family life, was already signaled by Weber in his book "Economics and Society" in 1922, where he assesses that the modern capitalist economy, as well as the modern family, was born from the separation of the domestic economy and the economy of the family business.

As it was pointed before, in the past (and still nowadays mostly in agricultural societies with a subsistence economy), the link between family, work and the economy, was so explicit that it does not even constituted a problem. For the vast majority of the population of all age groups, family membership and work activities coincided, just as other life dimensions could be related to family life. And it was, precisely because the family unit was also the main production unit, that the division of labor was elaborated within the family; and the same social hierarchy was a hierarchy among families differently placed with respect to labor and the production of such labor (Saraceno & Naldini, 2001).

Such strong link between family, work and the family's economy, influenced the way in which family life was planed (if planned) and the type of decisions that were taken within a family context, i.e. to get married, the age at marriage, the chosen spouse, the number of children, the place of residence of the newly married couple, etc. In this way, and under a so called familistic way of organization, individuals (in particular women) were strongly dependant on their enlarged families' interests and considerations also with respect to their intimate life; furthermore, the context in which they could socially operate was very much restricted by the limitations of the social environment (i.e. a restricted marriage

market, a narrow range of alternatives in terms of very well delimited gender roles, religious rituals, etc).

These conditions were transformed after the arrival of industrialization, the crescent urbanization of certain population nucleus, the migration movement from rural to urban spaces, and the consequent division between private or domestic and public. Nevertheless, even this division occurred differently for different social classes and, in the very particular case of Italy, it occurred also in a different way among the different regions. Thus, being more intensive in the North, were it mostly took place the industrialization process, than in the South, where the economy kept been familistic and controlled by smaller family groups and other groups holders of political and economic power.

In this way, the small nuclear family also became the predominant Italian family form during the last decades; the number of children by nuclear family diminished significantly; and the entrance to married life was increasingly postponed, first of all for the population segments that had access to formal instruction. Early marriage was a choice practiced by most people with a low-medium qualification; both males and later females graduates married less and later than those who had a lower qualification (Santoro; 2013).

The Golden Age of Italian marriage that was observed after the Second World War corresponds to the Golden Age of marriage that was observed in other previously industrialized countries at the beginning of the XX century but with several years in delay. During this period, the increasing number of registered marriages and number of births was strongly related to a period of extraordinary economic growth and its consequent social transformations that was called the *"Italian Economic Miracle"*, which was partially financed by external resources from the Marshall Plan dedicated to reconstruct Europe after the WWII.

Nevertheless, such increasing trend didn't last for so many years, and it was after 1970 until present days that the number of both religious and civil marriages has continued to decrease. In the next table is it possible to observe the Crude Marriage Trend for the period of 1960 to 2012 (per 1000 inhabitants) according to Eurostat. For comparative reasons, there were included other Western and Southern European countries such as U.K., Germany, Spain, Greece and Portugal. In the particular case of Italy such rate decreased from 7.7 marriages for each 1,000 inhabitants during 1960, to 5 during 2000, and still

further to 3.5 during 2012. Such trend is shared by all Southern European countries and to a lesser extent by other Western European ones.

Particularly since the mid-1970s marriage has lost much of its centrality in Southern European countries, in particularly in Italy and Spain and to a lesser extent –at least during these historical period- in Greece and Portugal. Some of the reasons for this trend have been compared with other economic and social transformations that occurred in Western Europe some decades before, i.e. a crescent secularization process, the instauration of individualistic and post-materialistic values, the substitution of certain family's tasks by other social welfare policies, the postponing of the marriage life stage for other education and professional goals, the crescent participation of women in the labor force, etc.

Table 4.1. Crude Marriage Trend for the period of 1960 to 2012 (per 1000 inhabitants)
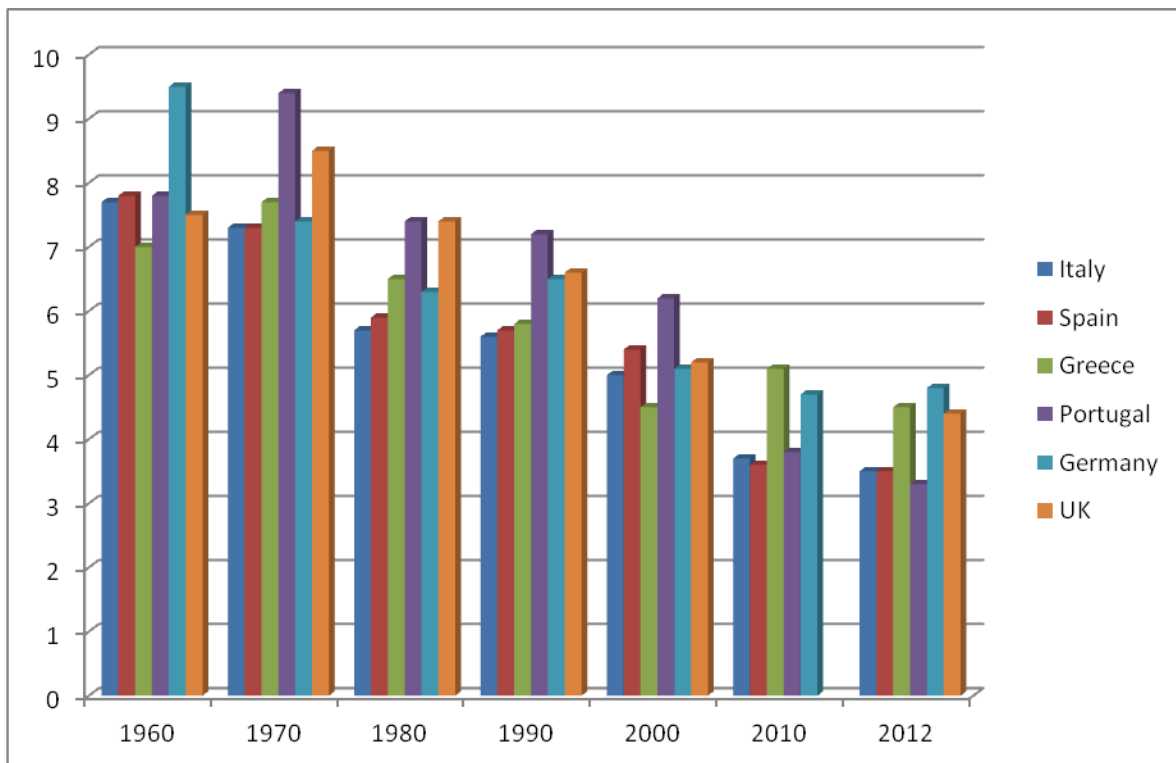
Source: Eurostat 2012 (online data code: demo_nind)

Nevertheless, these changes didn't occur in the same way in Italy, where the Roman Catholic church does still have a relevant influence in both political decisions and on

(some) actual individual behaviors. Premarital sex, cohabitation, and divorce are disregarded by the Church, whereas a high value is placed on marriage and family life. More generally, religion and religiousness still play an important role in Italy, as underlined by several studies. Starting from the three waves of the World Values Surveys between 1981 and 2001 which contain numerous questions on religiosity, Norris and Inglehart (2004) confirm the downward trend in religious participation in a large number of countries, except in Italy, Ireland, and the United States (Impicciatore & Billari, 2012).

On the other hand, there were several improvements in terms of social welfare, however, there were not enough to sufficiently promote a regular balance between private and public life for women with children. Limited labor and family conciliation policies combined to a cultural context of intense familism that is still dominant in Southern European countries (in some regions more than in others) led to a family model characterized by a traditional family with traditional family roles; and strong dilemmas regarding conciliation of family and career (Leon and Migliavacca, 2013). Preferences and ideals of the desired roles and the family model do not seem to coincide with family strategies adopted in these countries, which indicate that actually there is a transition process towards a more egalitarian family model just as it has been developed in previous pages, but that this process is often limited by the institutional context.

Authors such as Bettio et. al. (1998), Saraceno (2003) and Del Boca (2002), have emphasized the characteristics that define the welfare states of southern Europe in terms of family policies, family formation, fertility and women's employment tendencies, highlighting the permanence of traditional family structures associated with a restrictive family policy and reduced rates of working women, as well as reduced fertility indexes. The institutional peculiarities of Southern European welfare states, have shaped employment and family strategies, giving way to a model of family finances characterized by familism (family solidarity and dependency) in which the male breadwinner model is still the principal referent for defining public aid policies to families, as well as employment policies[14].

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[14] According to the OECD, Italy and Spain show fertility and labor participation rates very low in comparison not only with other Western European countries, but also in comparison with other Southern European countries such as Portugal and Ireland (less than 45% and 50% respectively and less than 1.2. children per woman). The fact that part-time employment is extremely rare in Italy is an important factor in accounting

In this way, although there is a trend towards the individuality of family decisions (whether to marry or not, with whom, where to live after marriage, etc.), such decisions are still very much dependent or at least influenced, whether openly or subtly, by the family (whose support is almost fundamental to carry forward a family project, at least one that would include children); but also by other structural characteristics and institutions that, specially for the less advantaged classes, do not allow a sufficient economic independence.

Therefore, in the case of southern European countries, a series of factors converge in such a way that the limited family public policies, together with the family dependence and a labor market that offers limited possibilities for women to work part-time, have given shape to a family model characterized by the permanence of the male breadwinner figure and the ambivalent familism that exists in a paradoxical institutional context of reduced development of family services. As a result of this complex puzzle, the male breadwinner model in southern European countries reflects the gap which exists between gender inequality, observed in families, and gender equality, defended institutionally but more as a declaration of intentions than as effective regulation (Saraceno, 2003; Di Petre, Morgan and Engelhardt 2003).

As it was said before, although the Roman Catholic Church has an important presence in Italy in terms of public life participation and social tradition, the constant process of secularization has been one of the decisive elements for which more people voluntarily choose to marry only under the civil marriage regulations.

According to Istat, in relative terms, the percentage of civil marriages has continued to grow. The percentage went from 37% of all registered marriages in 2008 to 39% in 2011 and to 41% in 2012. In the Northern regions, for the second consecutive year, the proportion of marriages with a civil ceremony (53.4%) exceeded those religious; followed by the Central regions (49.4%), and just afterwards by the Southern regions (24.5%). Only 15 years ago the incidence of civil marriages did not account even for a 20% of the total of

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for the low employment rates of married women, particularly those with children. As a consequence, married women are forced to choose between no work or full-time work, neither of which is necessarily their preferred option. Married women who choose to work tend to have full-time work commitments, which is not compatible with having large numbers of children. Moreover, even married women who do not work tend to limit their family size, at least in part due to the characteristics of the labor market. Because entry level positions are so hard to find, many children live at home until they find their first ''stable'' employment. Thus the labor market indirectly imposes large fertility costs on families even when the mother does not work; thus the structure of the Italian labor market both directly and indirectly acts so as to discourage fertility. OECD, Del Boca (2002: 6).

the celebrations. The increasingly frequent choice of a civil ceremony might be attributed at least in part to the growing popularity of second marriages as well as to marriages in which at least one of the two spouses is a foreigner. This choice, however, has increasingly involved also spouses marrying for the first time, in 2012 31.5% of the marriage between unmarried people was celebrated in this way by a civil ritual (55,076 weddings). Considering just those couples in which both the partners are of Italian citizenship, the incidence is nearly of one in four; in 2012 the percentage of both Italian spouses who choose to celebrate the first wedding with a civil ceremony was of 31% for those residing in the North; 30% of those residing in the Centre; and 16% of those residing in the South (Istat, 2012).

The preference for this marriage arrangement is parallel to the increasing number of divorces and the still more salient increase of non married cohabiting couples. Such trend was documented after 1970 when the legal figure of divorce was instituted by a law that was passed by the Parliament and then approved by the Italian people. From 1865 to 1970, under the Civil Code, marriage could only end with the death of one of the partners. With Law n. 898 of 1 December 1970, divorce was introduced in Italy. Five years later, in 1975, the possibility was introduced of requesting judicial separation without the consent of both parties. Another reform, of 1 August 1978, introduced stronger economic protection to the weakest partner. Since 1987, three years of separation, instead of five as formerly, are enough to apply for a divorce (Vignoli & Ferro, 2009).

Thus, crude divorce rate, although lower than those observed in other European countries, have continued to increase since the decade of 1970s, and it is thought that the increasing trend will continue after the last amendments of 2014 according to which a bill to speed up divorce proceedings has been approved by the Lower House and waits to be ratified by the Senate, aiming at reducing time for divorce to 12 months in cases in which the split is contested and six months when it is consensual[15].

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[15] For more information it is possible to access this link from Il Sole 24 Ore, a national newspaper (30/05/2014): http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/norme-e-tributi/2014-05-30/divorzio-breve-contenuti-testo-unificato-approvato-camera-110838.shtml?uuid=ABBWkPMB or directly accessing the Italian Lower Parliament's website: www.camera.it

Table 4.2. Crude Divorce Trend for the period of 1960 to 2012 (per 1000 inhabitants)
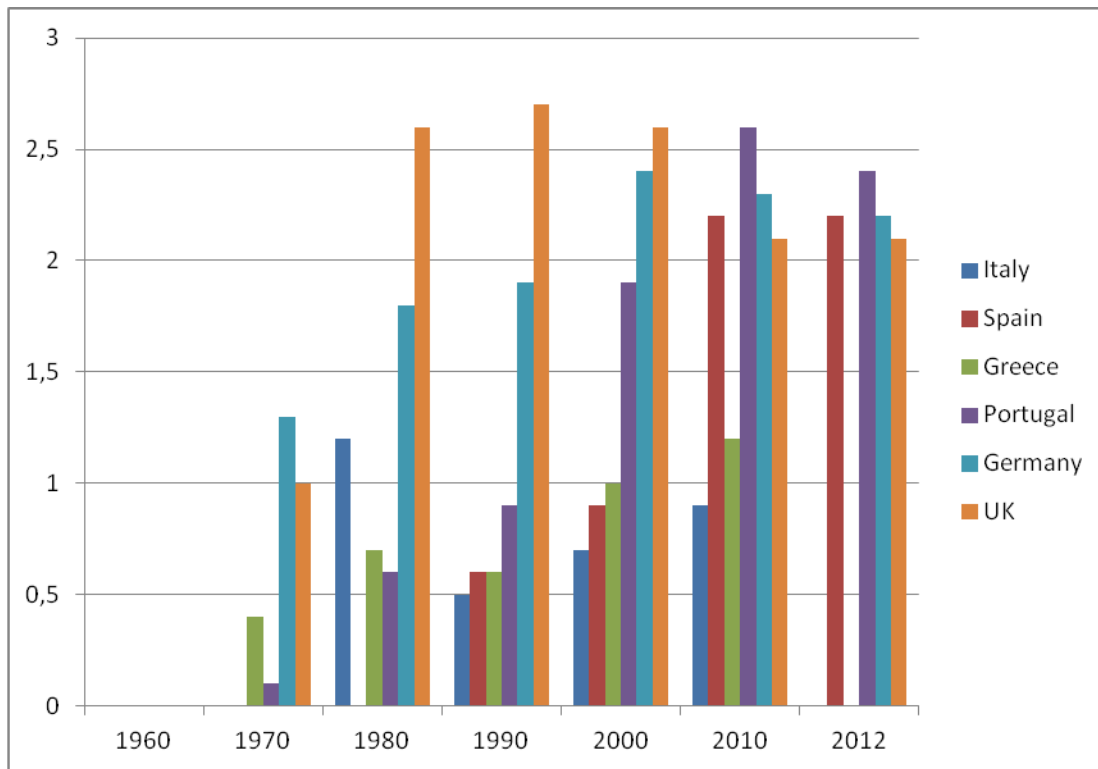
Not only the preference for civil marriages, in contrast to religious marriages, has increased; but also the preference for not marrying at all and instead cohabitating. Particularly from the 90s to today, the Istat confirms a steady increase, although to a lesser extent in comparison with other European countries, of cohabiting unions between unmarried couples. In 1998, there were 148,000 and represented about 1% of the total Italian couples; more than ten years later, in 2009, these amounted to 881,000, accounting for 5.9% of the total Italian couples; 49.7% of these couples had children and in 36.4% of cases, these children were of both partners, i.e. not from previous marriages (Istat, 2012).

If we consider regional differences, the trend of the phenomenon is particularly relevant in the North. In 2009, the cohabiting couples reached 16.7% of the total number of couples in the North-East; in the North-West and in the center about 13%, while the phenomenon was marginal in the Islands (8.5%) and in the Southern regions (4.4%). In addition, this couple arrangement shows to be more common in metropolitan areas and in the towns of medium size (up to 10,000 inhabitants), although it has have a considerable increase also in smaller towns. The presence of a period of cohabiting is manifested both in

couples in which none of the partners has been ever married, and in those in which at least one of the two partners has already been previously married (Santoro, 2013).

Within this trend it is possible to observe a process of de-institutionalization of the Italian marriage. On the one hand, the human relationship by marriage regularized seems to be increasingly fragile and constantly changing; while on the other hand, the institution that aims actually to regularize it has usually changed late and at a very slow timing.

In line with other European trends, partners seem to be more concerned by the couple relationship itself, and just later by the institutional benefits that the action of regularizing such union may actually have. Specially in the North of Italy, couple behaviors resemble more those observed in other Northern and Western European countries (specially in highly populated urban areas). Differently, in the South of Italy traditional patterns of marriage formation and family life are still prevalent; the influence of enlarged family is very much present, and cohabiting arrangement are less common. Age at first marriage is earlier than in the North for both men and women, and a preference for religious rituals instead of civil ones is still manifested.

Although individual needs and preferences seem to have a higher weight on intimate lives' decisions, and a sentiment of love is -at least hypothetically- searched to have an important –formal and non formal- legitimizing role; Italians seems to be more constrained in their choices than their Western European counterparts. The difficulties for young people to reach a status of economic independence and work stability keep continuing to delay the time that young adults spend living with their parents before marrying, cohabitating or living independently by their own; whereas a longer instruction period, a preference for marrying later or not even marrying, seems to be influenced by the difficulties of reconciling professional and personal private life.

With the correspondent regional differences, it may be noticed that social and structural relevant characteristics of Italian society, as well as further conjectural events, may influence and even constrain private life decisions such as the way to experience marriage and family life.

Table 4.3. Marriages, Separations and Divorces in Italy 1995-2010. Absolute values.
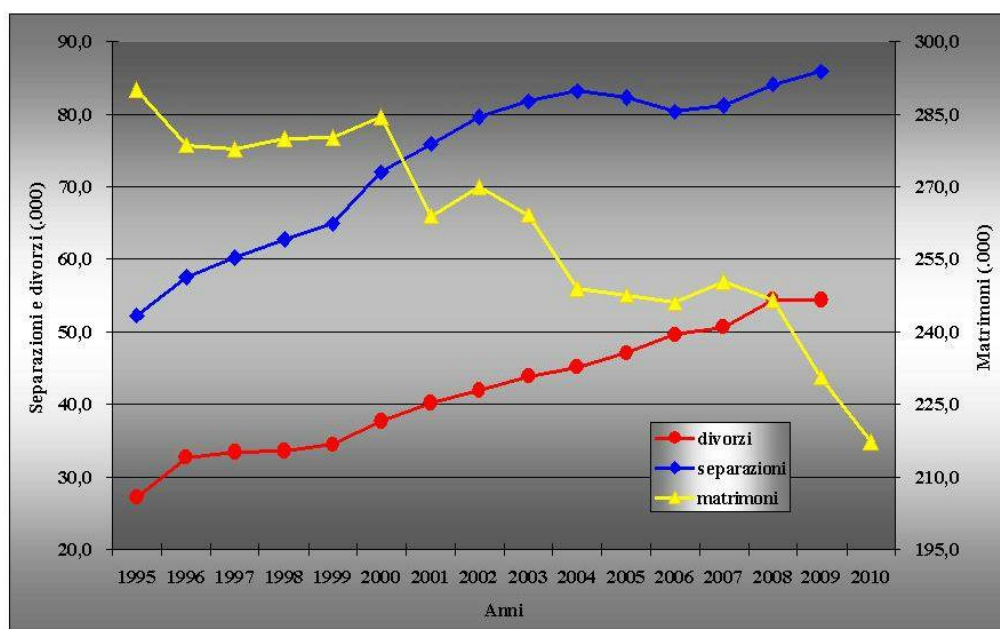
Source: Istat, 2012. Report review "Marriage in Italy".

Table 4.4. Main Characteristics of Marriages celebrated in Italy during 2008 - 2012

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total Marriages (Absolute Values)	246.613	230.613	217.700	204.830	207.138
Annual change (Absolute Values)	-3.747	-16.000	-12.913	-12.870	**2.308**
Of which					
Both spouses are Italian:					
First marriage (Absolute Values)	185.749	175.043	168.610	155.395	153.311
Annual change (A.V.)	-6.833	-10.706	-6.433	-13.215	-2.084
At least one of the spouses is a foreigner					
First marriage and second marriages	36.918	32.059	25.082	26.617	30.724
Annual change (A.V.)	2.359	-4.859	-6.977	1.535	4.107
Marriages celebrated under religious ritual	155.972	144.842	1380.199	124.443	122.297
Marriages celebrated under civil ritual	90.641	85.771	79.501	80.387	84.841
Marriages celebrated under civil ritual (by 100 total marriages)	36.8	37.2	36.5	39.2	41.0
Regime of properties' separation (by100t.m.)	62.7	64.2	66.1	66.9	68.90

Source: Istat, 2012. Report review "Marriage in Italy".

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4.2.1. When at least one of the partners is a foreigner. International mixed marriages in Italy

One of the main points that stands out when analyzing marriage patterns in Italy is the increasing amount of marriages (particularly civil ones) between Italians and foreign partners. In Table 3 and Table 4 it was possible to observe that the number of total marriages celebrated in Italy has constantly decreased from the period 2008-2011; however, there was a slight recovery during 2012.

As indicated by the Istat, the increase in the number of weddings celebrated during 2011-2012 is due to the recovery of marriages in which one, or both, spouses are of a foreign nationality: in 2012 there were celebrated 30.724 weddings of this type (15% of the total), that accounted 4.000 more than in 2011, but still less than the 36.918 that were celebrated during the peak of 2008 (Istat, 2012).

From these 30.724 marriages celebrated in 2012, the 68% (20.764) involved one Italian partner with a foreign partner (other typology is the one of marriage between two foreign nationals in Italian territory), representing this the main typology for international mixed marriages in Italy. Still from this number it is possible to observe that the prevalent typology is that one in which the Italian spouse is a male whereas the foreign spouse is a female (same sex marriages are not regulated in Italy in any case).

The type of marriage in which the husband is Italian and the wife is a foreigner national amounts for 7.9% of the total marriages celebrated in the country during 2012 (16,340) and over 10% in the Northern regions; nowadays, 1 in 10 Italian man residing in the Northern regions marries a foreign woman. Contrary, during the same year less Italian women chose to marry a foreign partner (4,424); i.e. only the 2.1% of the total marriages involved an Italian woman and a foreign man. Nevertheless, the most substantial increase in terms of mixed marriages observed during 2012, in comparison with immediately previous years, was precisely the one in which the wife was an Italian citizen and the husband was a foreigner.

Table 4.5. Marriage with at least one foreign partner by couple typology
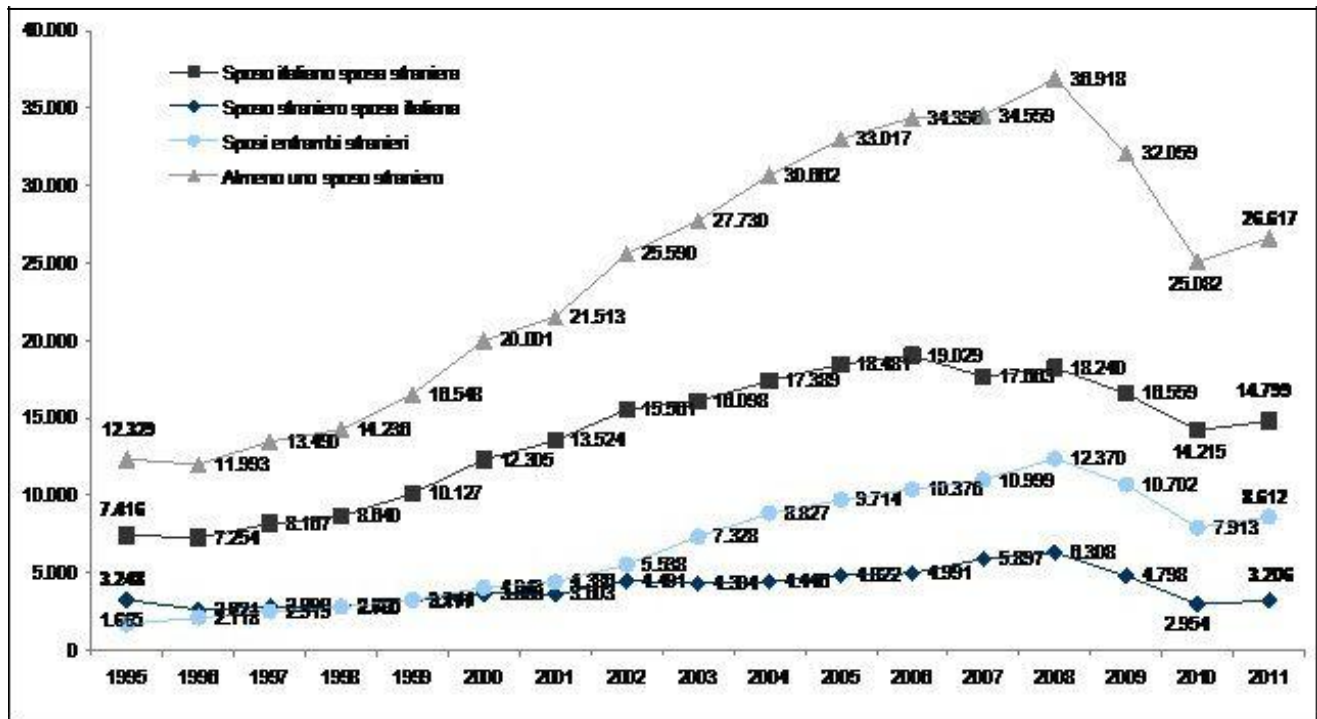
Source: Source: Istat, 2012. Report review "Marriage in Italy".

Although this substantial increase, there is still a strong asymmetry between both sexes as many more Italian men choose to marry foreign women than Italian women do. Between 1995 and 2007, marriages between Italian women and foreign men increased slightly, from 1.1% to 2.4% of the total number of marriages (particularly with Moroccans, Albanians, Tunisians, Egyptians, and Brazilians). On the other hand, marriages between Italian men and foreign women jumped from 2.6% to 7% of the total during the same period (particularly with Romanian Ukrainian, Brazilian, Polish, Russian and Moldovan). Equally noticeable is the fact that Italian men who marry outside their native in-group are often at their second marriage, whereas Italian women who marry outside are more often in their first marriage.

Although the sex ratio between male and female immigrants in Italy is very much balanced, one of the reasons for this sex asymmetry in mixed marriages with native Italians is thought to be the huge sex disparity within each immigrant community. It is found, for example, that immigrants of African descent –who marry the most with Italian women- are predominantly male (4.2 men for every woman among Senegalese, 2.4 among Egyptians

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and 1.5 among Moroccans); whereas immigrants from Eastern Europe –who marry the most with Italian men- are predominantly female (4 immigrant women for men among Ukrainians, 2.4 among Polish, 2 among Moldavians and 1.13 among Romanians) (Manasse, 2012). These migration flows and their composition are likely to influence the supply / demand equilibrium between sexes in Italy.

In this way, it is observed that members of those immigrant communities in which there is a particularly noticeable sex ratio imbalance have more probabilities to intermarry with native Italians. However, sex ratio is not the only variable that influence intermarriage patterns. According to Ghiringhelli (2011), it has been observed that these women mostly share at least two particularities that positively influence the incidence of intermarriage with Italian men; i.e. on the one hand, those female Eastern European communities are closer to Italians in terms of culture, religion and traditions, than men of African descent who are mostly Muslim, who come from geographically farther away countries, and who may practice polygamy, among other important differences.

Such trend has been previously confirmed by Tognetti Bordogna (2001) who observed a substantial religious homogeneity in couples where the male partner is a native Italian, with a wider marriage market for Eastern European, Latino American and certain Asian women. The native male, therefore, chooses to unit more frequently with women who come from countries with a Christian majority, both Catholic (Brazil, Poland, Dominican Republic) and Orthodox (Romania, former USSR). Contrary, a larger cultural distance is observed when the foreign partner is a male and the native partner is an Italian Catholic woman who usually chooses to marry a man of Islamic faith.

On the other hand, female immigrants are usually employed in economic sectors in which it is easier to meet also people from the opposite sex. In this way, Italian men have a greater ease to meet foreign women who usually work as domestics, caregivers, nurses, etc, in places such as private homes, nursing homes, hospitals and other service sectors in which the access is more immediate and quotidian. For Italian women, contrary, it is a little more difficult to meet an Egyptian man, Tunisian, Albanian or Romanian because many of them usually work in environments that are less accessible such as manufacturing and construction sectors.

According to Peruzzi (2008) although the locations of the meetings are very different, there are certain patterns that may be identified. From her qualitative research, it was observed that some mixed partners said that they met at the bar in cross-cultural associations and networks, or in private homes where particularly the foreign woman was working as a caregiver or a nurse. Such gendered pattern among mixed marriages between Italians and foreigners, nevertheless, it is thought to be influenced not only by the particularities of each immigrant community but also by certain cultural and structural particularities of the native Italian society.

In the first place, traditionally in Italy men have been the ones who are socially freer to choose their mate, and this is particularly confirmed when the partner is a foreign woman. In the second place, men have a significantly higher participation rate in the labor market than Italian women, and this condition gives them higher possibilities to economically sustain their foreign partners during the process of integration, both legally and socially, in the host society.

However, it is needed to take into account that such almost exclusively rational materialistic relationship between Italians and foreign partners may not be generalized, because it does depend on the socio-economic conditions of both partners previous to the conformation of the mixed couple.

In the case of Italian men who marry foreign women from certain Eastern European and Latino American immigrant communities, there has been signaled a link between the incidence of intermarriage and the type of labor activity by these women executed in Italy, as well as the age difference between the partners.

Thus, in Italy the domestic labor confirms itself as one of the main employer sectors for immigrant women, even for those who have an unrelated higher professional qualification obtained in their country of origin. The presence of immigrant women in an economic sector that has been largely unprotected and socially undermining, together with the status of immigrant and the correspondent legal (whether regular but not naturalized, or in several cases irregular) and socio-cultural restrictions (lower language proficiency than natives, lack of sufficient economic and social capital, lack of knowledge of local history, norms and laws, etc.), puts them in a very vulnerable condition with respect to their male Italian counterparts. Such condition is strengthened by a series of prejudices and

stereotypes that identify these women with certain representations of "femininity" that favor the idea of migrant women's cultural predisposition to take on caring roles.

Age difference is another element by which mixed couples have been usually distinguished, particularly those between Italian men and foreign women. Thus, among Italian couples it has been acknowledged a certain average age difference between the partners, i.e. 3 years; whereas among couples where the male partner is an Italian and the female one is a foreign person, the average age difference is significantly higher, i.e. 7 years. Nevertheless, such age difference is not so high when the female partner is an Italian women and the male partner is a foreign person, i.e. the average age difference is slightly higher than the Italian average age difference (Bastarelli, 2001).

Such elements indicate a series of average differences between the partners that may be interpreted as an unbalanced relationship not only between partners from a different national origin but also between sexes, and such unbalance seems to operate in a negative way for foreigners and particularly for foreign women who are in a more vulnerable social and economic position.

A further compensation indicator is made up of the education factor; the distribution between the sexes appears to be significantly unfavorable to women in the case of couples made up of two Italian partners, while in the mixed couples with an Italian female partner and a foreign male partner the educational gap between the spouses decreases; nevertheless, the disadvantage is still for women, 20% of whom have a degree or diploma compared with 27% of foreign men. Noticeable is the case of mixed couples with an Italian male partner and a foreign female partner, where there is a reversal of the phenomenon, i.e. it is observed that 21% of Italian men have a degree or diploma in comparison with 23% of foreign women (Bastarelli, 2001).

Such particularities highlight some of the main connections between the increasing incidence of mixed marriages and the presence of immigrant communities in Italy. These immigrants, nevertheless, are usually identified as people who usually find themselves in a relatively low and vulnerable position and who may translate the action of marrying an Italian citizenship (especially one who parallel find him/herself in an unfavorable position within the local marriage market) as a mechanism of social and economic mobility and regularization or further stabilizations within the host society.

Particular emphasis has been given to the unions between much older Italians (particularly men) and foreigners (particularly women); such is the case of the research developed by one of the main trade unions (Cisl) in the city of Rome during the year of 2004, according to which there has been an important increase of marriages with a at least one spouse over 50 years within the total number of marriages celebrated in Rome during the period 1996-2004. During this last year it was registered that at least 1 in 10 marriages was celebrated with a person older than 50 years old and that the 30% of these marriages is celebrated with a foreign spouse.

In 1996 in Rome there were celebrated 884 marriages with at least one spouse over 50, among these 111 were with a foreign spouse. This number changed to 389 in 2004, representing an increase of 25.7%. Analyzing this data, it is evident also there the prevalence between Italian men and foreign women. Furthermore, it is also evident here the average age difference between the partners, i.e. in mixed marriages with an Italian groom, the average age for men is on average over 60 years whereas for the bride instead it is of 40; the age difference between spouses is about 18 years for this kind of mixed arrangement. The situation is different for older Roman women who marry foreign men who are usually younger by a margin of 12 and 6 years. The study also highlighted that men who marry are both divorced or unmarried, 41 percent and 50 percent respectively.

These first data offer a general view of the phenomenon in a very particular context such as Italy. First of all, it is possible to perceive some of the partners' personal characteristics that socially construct the adjective of "mixed", thus, national, cultural and religious differences. However, it is possible to observe that such personal characteristics in which the partners differ are not exclusive and usually are accompanied by other kind of differences that may be observed, usually to a lesser extent, among native non-mixed couples, i.e. occupational attainment, average age difference, and education level.

Such characterization tend to indicate that mixed marriages may have higher probabilities to be unbalanced arrangements among the partners that usually disfavor the foreign and/or the female partner.

At the same time, it is possible to observe that such arrangements and its incidence depend very much on the group characteristics of the different immigrant communities, on

the characteristics of the local context and in particular of the local marriage market, and on the probabilities for people to meet.

It is precisely for these reasons that the phenomenon has been generally identified with the crescent immigration phenomenon, that in Italy has certain very specific characteristics and that has changed over time (in terms of the observed national groups that are mostly represented in the national territory, the composition of these groups, the increasing feminization of the phenomenon, the national regions to which immigrants usually go, and the economic sectors in which they are mostly employed); and therefore it has mostly focused in the instrumental role that mixed marriages have in the stabilization and integration of –already present in the territory- migrants and the consolidation of a pluralistic society that seems to be, nevertheless, particularly unbalanced and in most of the cases unfavorable for the newcomers.

4.2.2. *International mixed marriages and the institution of Italian citizenship*

One of the main clarifications that need to be done when studying mixed unions and heterogamy patterns is the way in which these are identified and registered by official records (e.g. cross-cultural marriages and cross-national marriages –developed in paragraph 3.1). Thus, in this particular case of mixed marriages in Italy, these are identified by the nationality of the spouses that is registered during the wedding; a wedding that, moreover, is usually celebrated in Italy. The reason to clarify this specification is because nowadays it is more common to find people who have more than one nationality, either because of the nationality of his/her parents or other ascendants, or by the place where he/she was born. In this case, there may be several people who are registered as Italians but who may have born and grown up in a different country (children and grand children of former Italian emigrants e.g.); and this may happen also to children of migrants who may be registered as nationals of another country but who, nevertheless, may have born, grown up, or passed most of his/her life in Italy.

On the other hand, this is said also because not all mixed marriages that were celebrated in other countries are necessarily registered in Italy even if the couple resides in Italy. Such specifications are made by the same Istat in order to acknowledge further

particularities of the social phenomenon that may not be reported by national official statistics, highlighting thus not only the legal definition of mixed marriages that are identified according to the nationality of the spouses, but also its remarked social constructed definition.

Analyzing the distribution of these rates of international mixed marriages with at least one foreign partner, it is revealed that its incidence is very much related with the social phenomenon of international massive immigration that was documented from the 90s onwards but that initiated during the end of the 60s and beginning of the 70s (Colombo & Sciortino, 2004).

Important regional differences are observed over the country. The frequency of marriages with at least one foreign spouse is particularly higher in the Northern and Central regions, where 1 out of 5 new marriages is between one Italian and one foreign spouse (with a peak of 19.6% in the North West); whereas in the Southern regions and the Islands the frequency is considerably lower, 7.2% and 6.5% respectively (Istat, 2012).

On the one hand, the higher number of mixed marriages in the Northern regions precisely corresponds also to the highest distribution of foreign communities in these areas. According to Istat, in 2011 there were 4,570,317 foreign residents living in Italy (335,000 more than in 2010), representing 7.9% of the total national population; and from these the 86.5% lives in the North and Central regions of the country, whereas only the 13.5% lives in the South.

On the other hand, although it was observed a steady increase in the number of mixed marriages since the 90s onwards, relative changes in its incidence observed during the period of 2009-2010 seem to be highly correlated with other changes in terms of migratory law that were particularly focused on avoiding the regularization of irregular or clandestine migrants through marriage with an Italian citizen.

The decline in this period was particularly due to the introduction of the Art. 1, paragraph 15 of Law n. 94/2009, which imposed to the foreigner partner who wants to marry in Italy the exhibition of a document attesting the legality of his/her residence in Italian territory, in addition to traditionally required "legal certificate of marriage's availability". The inability to certify such regularity influenced the decisions of many brides and grooms, who as an alternative could only get married in the foreign spouse's

country of origin. Arguably, the subsequent judgment of unconstitutionality of such "regular residence" request (i.e. residence permit for the purpose of marriage) issued by the Constitutional Court in July 2011, was the basis for the recovery of the social phenomenon from 2012 onwards.

At this respect, it is important to clarify that the human bond regularized by the institution of marriage has been one of the main channels to access Italian citizenship and before that to regularize the presence of a foreign citizen in Italian territory (Ambrosini, 2005). This is very much related to the way in which the concept of citizenship is actually defined in Italy, and the enormous weight given to the institution of (married) family. *"It is possible to speak about "ius sanguinis" to the extent that a legal system guarantees, almost automatically, the granting of citizenship to the descendants of a person that is recognized as a citizen (i.e. the commonality of blood)… as a rule, according to the Italian tradition, the valorization of the offspring is associated with the valorization of marriage; in this way, who marries a citizen becomes a citizen, if not immediately at least with a particular easiness… and indeed, in Italy this is one of the most common naturalization hypotheses, one that is perfectly consistent with the principle of ius sanguinis"* (Codini & D'Odorico, 2007: 31).

To be a child of an Italian citizen, it does not matter whether natural or adoptive, or to marry an Italian citizen, are both actions that presuppose the inclusion of a foreign citizen within a small national community, i.e. family, that is thought to be cohesive and therefore able to inherit all those values, habits, sentiments and knowledge that constitute the abstract concept of "Italianity". In this way, it is possible to say that, considering not only the enormous value given to natural descent but also to adoption and marriage, that all the guidelines that constitute the principle of ius sanguinis retain the social institution of traditional family –by marriage instituted- as the main agency for integration not only at the social but also at the political level.

This conception has several important implications for the way in which immigration has been managed in Italy. This way to approach migratory flows has been much more related to the old emigration flows from Italy to other countries, than to the more recent immigration flows from other countries to Italy. In terms of citizenship and acquired political rights, the familistic orientation of the legislation has been more concerned with

granting Italian citizenship to the offspring (regardless generational belonging) of former Italian emigrants abroad that could be counted by millions; than with granting citizenship by naturalization and long term residence to more recently arrived immigrants in Italy (Codini & D'Odorico, 2007).

Thus, although contemplating the principle of ius soli (based on a strong relationship between an individual and the national territory either by born or by long term residence, although no commonality of blood), Italian citizenship law and its actual application has been one of the more restrictive legislations in Europe making particularly difficult the complete social and political integration of new immigrants into Italian society through the acquisition of Italian citizenship and other public means. Nevertheless, this restrictive posture is not only translated in the process of citizenship acquisition but even in the process of granting and renovating regular residence permits (Bonifazi & Chiri, 2001)

In this context, a shortcut alternative mode for many migrants (specially women) to regularize or even to justify their presence in Italian territory -and consecutively access to Italian citizenship-, has proved to be marriage with an Italian citizen. To start with it was not necessary (apart of the already mentioned historical period of 2009-2011) to prove regular residence in the country for getting married; and in earlier times the granting of citizenship for marriage was practically automatic.

In a country where the acquisition of citizenship in the ordinary ius soli way is still a very distant prospect, the ability to "buy" almost automatic citizenship by virtue of marriage has pushed and still pushes to weddings often finalized only to the acquisition of citizenship or even to fictitious weddings (also called convenience marriages).

Having faced such practice and acknowledging the difficulty to recognize the authenticity of such unions, the Italian government looked to reform the requirements to access Italian citizenship through the law No. 91 of 5th February 1992, that (among several other modifications) extended the period for citizenship requisition from six months to two years of regular residence in Italy after marriage, or after three years if living abroad.

Although it may be particularly difficult to recognize which marriages are "authentic" (which already presents an ontological problem when defining the goals of marriage and its principles of authenticity) certain observed social trends (such as some of the ones described in headline 3.3) have put the correspondent authorities under alarm, as well as

social researchers and general public opinion, precisely about the instrumentalization of marriage for migration and regularization purposes, and one of these trends was precisely the declining rates observed during the period 2009-2011.

These clarifications were made in order to understand why, although mixed marriages have always existed, it was only at the beginning of the 90's that it was developed a real interest from researchers to analyze the social phenomenon, mainly regarding its relation with immigration in Italy and the potential social and political integration of immigrants into the Italian society.

If the social phenomenon's acknowledgment seems to be positive, it also highlights the fact that its nuances have been usually analyzed through an "economic migrant glance" instead of "an individual, whether male or female, –marriage/family- glance" to start with. This is particularly important in a context in which the concept of "migrant" usually does not have a neutral meaning nor a certain attested social status, but instead most of the times a fragmented and lowered one. The lack of neutrality when speaking about immigration in Italy is particularly noticed in the way that its protagonists are usually framed by news media, which usually characterizes them under very particular connotations that may go from a marginal aspect when it comes to stories of success (or at most a useful reference to give an additional light of exoticism and mystery to the migrant figure); or to a very stereotypical representation (usually negative one) when presented in ordinary daily and less attractive roles.

According to this, and confirmed by Bertolani (2002) and Peruzzi (2008) who developed important analyses regarding the topic in two Italian regions, Reggio Emilia and Tuscany respectively, the social phenomenon has been usually treated from a perspective that particularly highlights the problematic aspects of the mixed couples/marriages, departing from the presupposition that these are more likely to fail than endogamous Italian couples. Such presupposition derives from the assumption that mixed unions are, in most cases, marriages of convenience (for legal residence, citizenship or desired inheritance) that do not resemble late family transformations (e.g. decreasing tendencies to formalize the couple relationship through marriage among natives); and that such unions are intrinsically more difficult to manage and more conflictive because of the cultural and religious differences between the partners and/or their enlarged primary belonging groups.

In cases where the attention is directed instead at stable mixed families, the topic is treated as the outcome of a gradual process of stabilization of immigration flows and the possible paths of integration for migrant communities; integration of course that most of the times mostly coincides with the concept of –invisible or subaltern- integration (resembling the local –homogeneously presupposed less fortunate- native population) (Ambrosini, 2005).

This approach towards the –almost for granted- link between mixed marriages and (economic) migration inflows poses several problems; on the one hand, it does not take into consideration the complex cultural and ideological transformations that marriage patterns and family life have undergone not only in Italy but also in different countries, although at a different timing (and that were previously discussed along Chapter 2). On the other hand, the mixed couple that is mostly analyzed under an "economic migration frame" is strongly demarked by a power relationship that immediately poses natives and the national culture at the top, and migrants and their (different) ethnic background at the bottom, with the consequent assimilation assumptions.

Furthermore, the relationship is first of all one that is regarded with suspicion and observed with a simplistic glance of cost-benefit analysis that does not take into account both the spouses' personal preferences, motivations, and previous biographic stories; as well as the existence and crescent diffusion of transnational (real and virtual) communities, the particular collective cultural characteristics of the different groups to which the spouses putatively belong (culturally differentiated countries are put within the same analytical groups, e.g. spouses of Northern African countries), and the crescent human mobilization for the most diverse motives that has been observed not only within a particular national context (in this case Italy) but also and specially around the world.

4.2.3. Previous empirical researches on international mixed couples/marriages developed in Italy

In this sense it does become very much relevant to closely analyze the specific national groups to which the partners belong and of course their personal characteristics and previous biographical stories. In the very particular case of Italy, there have been several attempts to analyze this social phenomenon from a regional perspective, thus,

taking into account the structural and cultural characteristics of the specific national region in which the couples reside and the national group to which the foreign partner does belong.

Some good examples of these previous local researches are the one of Bertonali (2002) in the region of Reggio Emilia, the one of Bastarelli (2001) in the Autonomous Province of Trento, the one of Tognetti Bordogna et. al. (2004) also in the Autonomous Province of Trento, the one of Peruzzi (2008) in the less urbanized small cities and towns of the region of Tuscany, and the one of Baldoni in the cities of Rome and Florence (2008), among others. These empirical researches, at the same time, have been complemented by specific theoretical contributions of other authors such as the ones by the previously cited Tognetti Bordogna (1996) and Fenaroli & Panari (2006).

In the case of Bertolani (2002), the research performed was developed in two main directions, i.e. the first one consists on the analysis of regional socio-demographic data and focused, on the one hand, in showing the most general features of the mixed marriages' social phenomenon (number of cases, countries of origin, gender of the foreign spouse, etc.); and, on the other hand, it does highlight the rebalancing personal dynamic and exchange of social resources that occurs among the mixed partners –in terms of ethnic origin, age, education level, marital status, etc.- in comparison to what it is observed among endogamous Italian couples (according to these comparisons, the ethnic origin of the foreign spouse –usually considered an unprestigious feature in the marriage market- can be neutralized by other personal qualities that the Italian partner may not possess: a higher academic degree, a young age, etc., creating thus an stratified marriage market in ethnic terms).

The second research direction is concerned only with families between Italians and North Africans (who actually represent an important majority of the immigrant non-EU population in the region and who marry the most with Italian women; Moroccans, Egyptians and Tunisians represented in 1999 the 36.6% of all registered immigrants in the region; among these, 66.8% were male) and it deepened on the couples' internal dynamics to manage cultural differences and to neutralize real or potential conflicts. From this qualitative research emerged four prevalent strategies: assimilation and assertion (so called prescriptive or imperative relational modes), and enlargement of the possible and mediation (so called relational modes prevalently guided by the dialogue). According to the author,

among these Italian/ North African couples (although being generally considered in a lower layer of the stratified marriage market in terms of older age, lower academic degree and remarriage of the Italian female partner), there is a net prevalence, within families, of interpersonal strategies guided by a mutual compromise and the appreciation of cultural differences, considered a heritage and a richness.

The study of Bastarelli (2001) in the Autonomous Province of Trento, similarly, focused on exploring and analyzing some relational modes among mixed couples in the management of cultural differences within the couple, and regarding the partners' relationships outside of the immediate family circle. The authors studies both married and unmarried couples between Italian citizens and non EU citizens. Most of the respondents of the qualitative research in this case were Italian males married with foreign women from Eastern European and Latino American countries; whereas there were only six Italian women married with foreign males from Morocco, Algeria, Albania and Chile. The author confirms that also in this North Eastern Italian region most of the marriages are made of an Italian man and a foreign woman of a Christian (Catholic or Orthodox) background who tend more to migrate individually.

After performing a semi-structured qualitative research, and although highlighting the instrumental role of marriage as an strategy for the acquisition of Italian citizenship, the author coincides with the results obtained also by Bertolani in Reggio Emilia. Thus, that even in those family cultures where the value system of one of the partner -usually the native one- seems to be preponderant (model that is usually related to relational modes oriented towards assimilation or assertion), the most observed relational modes are oriented towards the discussion of the differences and the mutual compromise between both symbolic reference systems of the partners (model that is usually related to relational modes oriented towards the enlargement of the possible and mediation).

Nevertheless, the authors stress also the particularly problematic relationships not between the partners but between the foreign nationals with the indigenous community. Mixed couples, thus, seem to experience the daily meetings, confrontations, and cultural differences of "living together in diversity" (the actual title of the research), by hybridizing the cultures of origin and forming a new composition/story, that is usually agreed by the

partners but that may not be familiar or shared for/by the rest of the enlarged family or surrounding social groups.

Tognetti Bordogna et. al. (2004) makes a wider analysis of the phenomenon at the national and regional levels. She does acknowledge different types of mixed couples according to the place of origin and migratory experience, such as those made out of partners who come from the same continent but of a different nationality, where both spouses have one or more migratory experiences behind; those who come from different continents and of different nationalities with a transnational migratory path; or those couples made out of a native Italian and a partner from a different continent, of different nationality and who has previously experienced migration. Nevertheless, in this particular study she mainly focuses on analyzing those couples between Italian partners and foreigners who belong to some of the main immigrant communities in the region of Trentino Alto Ádige.

According to the author, apart from those countries that have become traditional immigrant sources in Italy, i.e. mainly Eastern European countries for female immigrants and Northern African countries for male immigrants, there has been an increase in the number of foreign partners who come from some sex tourist destinations such as Colombia, Brazil and also Poland. Nevertheless, the participants of the performed qualitative research belong to several different nationalities and the author does emphasize the increase of variability in terms of the foreign spouses' national origin: *"A trend that appears to be common in all mixed couples –long term and recently formed ones- is the increasing diversification of the foreign male/female partners' national backgrounds. From 2000 to 2002, new nationalities have surfaced the province of Trento. In most cases those new represented nationalities correspond, nevertheless, to minimal unrepresentative numbers. More frequent are, however, cases of Italian citizens married with partners who belong to larger immigrant groups"* (Tognetti Bordogna, 2004: 48).

In the same way that the previously described studies by Bertolani (2002) and Bastareli (2001), Tognetti Bordogna identified certain patterns of stratification, mainly in ethnic, economic and socio-cultural background terms, in the local marriage market; such stratification seems particularly unfavorable for women, both Italians and foreigners (specially for these last ones), who are the ones who try to maximize more their choices by

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exchanging their personal resources. According to the author, both Italian men and women who usually marry a foreign partner are in their second marriage, different to the foreign partners who usually marry for the first time; however, there were not observed particular age differences among the partners.

In the cases of Italian men who espouse foreign women, these seem to look for someone with a similar academic degree, but not necessarily active in the labor market. In the cases of Italian women who marry foreign men, the majority of the first ones have a lower academic degree than their foreign male counterparts, nevertheless, most of these men possess a working occupation. In this way, the prevailing pattern is the one in which Italian men marry a foreign women from an equal or relatively lower social position, and Italian women who prefer a foreign man from an equal or higher social position; in the first arrangement foreign women exchange their socio-cultural background, whereas in the second arrangement Italian women exchange their nationality and ethnic background (See also a more recent study by Maffioli et. al., 2013).

Although it is observed that in both cases (marriages with male and female foreign partners) the trend is to maximize the exchanged resources, the participants of this qualitative research in most cases where sufficiently conscious of their differences and they declared actually to valorize them. They further described the mechanisms by which these differences are usually managed, which are not so different to those observed among Italian couples. However, something that was severely pointed out were the difficulties to be accepted by ,and to relate with, the surrounding social environment (both enlarged –usually Italian native- families and the other society's members): *"...attention must be focused on the nature of the mixed couple, which does not differ substantially from the Italian one and which does not represent a profoundly different problematic; but that faces, nevertheless, more critical issues, specially with respect to the mediation of cultural differences and perceptions within the enlarged social network. The picture that emerged, in summary, clearly shows that, in reality, both foreign men and women have had similar perceptions and reactions, in relation to the external environment, which is still tied to a general feeling of distrust and non-acceptance of the mixed couples' reality. Mixed couples are the main actors of what we can define "Multiculturalism in everyday life", meaning that they are, on the one hand, the tangible evidence of the encounter and the negotiation of differences;*

and, secondly, with their presence, they do highlight the degree of prejudice and rejection of a particular local community" (Tognetti Bordogna, 2004: 64)

As it was said before, Tognetti Bordogna has been one of the pioneers in Italy to analyze the topic from different perspectives and in several local contexts, and one of her main contributions was the previous development of a mixed marriages' typology (1996) which was also used as part of the analytical framework of this applied research in Trentino. Such typology focuses on the partners' motivations to involve and formalize a mixed relationship and it does not exclude the combination of multiple categories or the transformation of one category into another over time. Here there is a brief description of some of the categories more frequently observed:

- Marriages of convenience: Those in which the marriage is the easiest and fastest way to justify and/or regularize the presence of a foreign person in Italian territory, or in which the marriage (implicitly/explicitly) significantly allows a socially/economically disadvantaged person to improve his/her current situation. Marriage "for documents" allows foreign citizens, particularly women, to enter Italy regularly with a residence permit for family reunification, and in other cases instead it is aimed to the migrant status's regularization and acquisition of Italian citizenship. This type of marriage usually allows a native person to offer a less advantaged foreign one (in terms of age, social class or ethnic background) to access the dominant culture from a relatively privileged position in exchange of other caring/sexual or other resources/services. This kind of marriage has been also exploited by an illegal market of human trafficking.

Out of dramatic situations such as the last one cited (human trafficking), this kind of marriages is not that easy to recognize, specially because of the diversity of resources that may be explicitly/implicitly exchanged by the spouses for the wellbeing of one or both the partners. Nevertheless, it may be said that in this case the marriage is usually celebrated for several other material/immaterial interests different to the marriage itself and the human relationship by the institution regulated, and that it is usually employed to improve at least one or both the partners' socioeconomic conditions. This kind of arrangement may also be observed, although under different conditions, among native couples though.

Some other types of mixed marriages may be also considered, to a different extent though, marriages of convenience, for example:

- Facilitator marriage: Used by the immigrant citizen to facilitate his/her inclusion into the country of host country. Usually foreign women and older Italian men are the ones who profit from it, and in this way it may be also considered a convenience marriage;

- Agency marriage: It does concern especially those partners (usually male) who decide to get married through the intermediation of an agency or mating association, and who choose his future wife in a catalog, from here it does come the name of the "mail order brides" phenomenon.

- Marriage for caring: It does occur more frequently during recent years, and it is celebrated between a caregiver (usually a younger women) and her/his client, or an older relative of the client that is usually outside of the local marriage market and that also needs to be cared.

Other types of marriage are those in which the partners decide to be together just for the sake of being together or for mutually satisfying other emotional and intellectual needs and desires:

- Elective marriage: Based on mutual voluntary choice, usually guided by the affective relationship that unites the couple;

- Intellectual marriage: The partners decide to marry in order to learn more from a new culture, particularly the one of the foreign/native partner.

- Cultural identity marriage: The partners get married in order to question their belonging to their own group of origin; it has been observed that this pattern is particularly frequent among Italian women who marry foreign men.

There may be several other forms of marriage that may respond to one or both the partners' several other needs and that may not be strictly considered a marriage of convenience such as:

- Fixing marriage: Is the one that occurs after –and because of- the birth of a child; in this case the convenience may be not only for one or both the partners but for the newcomer child;

- Marriage of mutual support: This is the case when a native individual often isolated, marries a person of the opposite sex who is also isolated from his/her immigrant group.

Combinations can be many and, as it was said, they do not necessarily exclude each other, or exclude the transformation of one into another over time; for example a facilitator

marriage might be transformed into an intellectual marriage. The points that are stressed by the author are mainly the degree of voluntariness/obligation of one/both partner/s; and the type of material/immaterial personal/group resources that are usually exchanged through the arrangement; such resources will depend on the personal characteristics of the partner, on the collective characteristics of the group to which the partners belong, and on their relative position within a local/international marriage market. These elements, nevertheless, may be also present among "unmixed" couples, and this is precisely the reason because the author emphasizes the ethnic/cultural background of the foreign partner, as well as his/her regular/irregular immigrant status.

If these elements may be relatively similar for both mixed and unmixed partners something in which these differ is in their social dimension, i.e. in the way they are perceived by people outside of the spouses' arrangement. The mixed marriage, in particular, is a collective event because it does involve the partners themselves who voluntarily/forcibly deal with geographical, linguistic and cultural distance (among others); the family(ies) of origin, whose tradition is questioned; and the belonging society(ies) because it does create new exogamy patterns/rules (Tognetti Bordogna, 1996).

Other authors, apart from the ones of the previously mentioned studies, have also analyzed the phenomenon mostly in its relation to a broader social phenomenon such as the immigration one; and have further emphasized its social dimension, stressing the weight for the foreign partner to be an immigrant and the difficulty that usually mixed couples face in relation to the social environment in which they are embedded (Fenaroli & Panari, 2007). Contrary, less studies have been developed regarding mixed couples between natives and foreigners who do not belong to the larger immigrant groups present in a certain country, in this particular case in Italy, whether they are members or not of the European Union. The importance of acknowledging the particularities of each group and its members lies mainly in recognizing that the differences –between the partners- at stake, the way to negotiate such differences, and the way in which the mixed couple and its individual partners are categorized and perceived, may importantly differ.

First of all, there is an important difference between those foreign partners who were already living in Italy (whether as part of a larger immigrant group or not) before meeting his/her native spouse, i.e. people who may have migrated in Italy for several other reasons

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different to marrying his/her actual partner; and people who actually moved to Italy precisely because of the development of a long term relationships and/or marriage with his/her actual Italian partner.

Such difference is not granted and actually it may highlight relevant information about the partners' background and about the couple's formation process. First of all, someone who was already living in Italy before meeting his/her partner, is someone who has already experienced at least to a certain extent an acculturation process in the local context, and who –dependently on the way in which he/she entered the country- might have already a regular/irregular migratory status.

Within this category it is possible to include those couples made of an Italian partner and a second generation immigrant who –although after have lived several years in Italy- has not yet acquired the Italian citizenship by naturalization. This modality also includes those couples made of an Italian partner (usually a male) and his/her caregiver (or a relative's caregiver) who was working either regularly or irregularly in the country before meeting the partner. For the foreign partners within these couples, marriage with a native person represents a legitimate instrument for regularizing their migratory status (for the irregular migrant who works as a caregiver e.g.), or for accelerating the acquisition process of the Italian citizenship, in this case by marriage motives (for the second generation immigrant who, by several reason, may have not yet acquired it); however, the way to experience cultural differences in particular and mixity in general, inside and outside the couple, may be very different for each of the two exemplifying cases.

Although both couples would be actually accounted as mixed couples by the marriage records, the second generation immigrant might have been socialized for several more years in Italy so Italian language proficiency would not be actually a problem, cultural and social capital in the local context may have been already developed independently of the Italian partner, and some other elements that usually do influence the partners' interaction and the integration of a recently arrived person in a completely new context would not be relatively problematic.

Different would be also the case of a couple between a native Italian and a foreign person with a nationality from another EU member state who, according to his/her country of origin, is allowed to live, work and move, at least easier than other non-EU nationals,

within the Union[16]. Recent studies have analyzed EU intra-marriages as a relatively new social phenomenon, useful to explain how new transnational families are being formed, and how a more integrated Europe is being informally built "from bellow" through the conjugal practices of its citizens (Gaspar, 2009).

Even within this very particular type of intermarriage there have been signaled different typology combinations according to the previous mobility experience(s) of one or both partners, i.e. intermarriages made out of two European free movers (the free mover-free mover type), or made out of an European free mover and a national citizen (the free mover-national stayer type). The acknowledgment of these sub-categories is useful to understand the possibly acculturation strategies that may be applied by the couple in the chosen country of residence (family assimilation strategy, binational family strategy, peripatetic family strategy, e.g.).

Although nationals of EU member states have more facilities to move from one European country to another, either for geographical closeness and/or supranational common law framework, several authors coincide that it is fundamental to take into consideration the very personal characteristics of the partners within the EU intra-marriage to understand which kind of (cultural and not only) differences are at stake and how do these differences are negotiated, and one of these characteristics that has showed to be particularly important is educational credentials (Gaspar, Ibid). After the Bologna process[17], nevertheless, there have been several attempts to homogenize, optimize and legally recognize the educational credentials of citizens from all member states; in this way, Europeans citizens in other than their own countries of origin can have the opportunity to

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[16] Nationals of an EU member state that was a part of the EU before May 1, 2004 (Luxemburg, Belgium, Ireland, Germany, France, Sweden, Spain, Greece, Portugal, Italy, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Netherlands, UK, Iceland) should normally be allowed to live and work in any other of these countries; citizens will only need a valid identity card or passport. Within the first year of joining, the Eastern European EU member states that joined in 2004 (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary) had unrestricted rights to live and work only in Sweden, the UK and Ireland. The remaining old EU countries kept most or all restrictions in place that prevented new EU member state workers from easily working there. Since this time, however, many restrictions have been lifted. Under the terms of the EU treaty, all restrictions must be lifted for a new member state no more than seven years after it joins the EU. When Romania and Bulgaria joined on 01 January 2007 (forming the current EU 27), restrictions were kept in place in most countries, including the UK and Ireland, but were eased or unlimited in some others. See also the Schengen Agreement of 1985 and the Maastricht Treaty of 1992.

[17] See the European Higher Education Area's website: http://www.ehea.info/ "About Bologna Process"

officially recognize their studies and access other labor markets within the EU. Measures like these have not only facilitated the integration of intra-European immigrants (whether for study, work or family reasons), but have also influenced the collective perception of "EU foreigners" within local societies, thus reinforcing an European identity based on (relatively) similar lifestyles, values and behaviors (King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003).

EU intermarriages have been studied thus under a different perspective. Not as (at least not exclusively as) the result of an economic migratory process and the assimilation/integration of certain (usually poorer) groups within the host society, but as result of the crescent mobility that it is observed within the continent.

At this respect, a distinction is made between 1) Non qualified citizens (traditional migrants: guest workers, low qualified/educational attainment migrants: those who migrate from poorer to richer destinations, usually from South to North or from East to West depending on the regional area's conformation); and 2) Highly qualified citizens (new migrants, free mover or "Eurostars": mobile students, transnational workers and expats) (Favell, 2003).

One concrete example of the second groups is the one defined with the term *"Erasmus Couples"* by a new study released by the European Commission as recently as 2014 regarding *"The effects of mobility on the skills and employability of students, and the internationalization of higher education institutions"*, that dedicated one section to the analysis of the Erasmus Program's influence on personal relationships. According to this research, *"there was a correlation between going abroad and personal relationships. Nearly 50% more non-mobile than mobile alumni were in a relationship. This is also the case for mobile students while they are abroad, who tended to be single with fewer social bonds, some of which they even lost over time (national relationships), but they also gained others to a considerable degree (international relationships)"* (European Commission; Erasmus Impact Study: 130-131). Furthermore, such effect was also founded in long term relationships. In this way, mobile students resulted far more likely to find an international life partner. Erasmus alumni in particular were nearly three times more often in a relationship with a person of a different nationality than non-mobile alumni, and 32% of the mobile alumni and 33% of the Erasmus alumni had a life partner of a different nationality, compared to only 13% among the non-mobile alumni.

Intra-European marriage in this way is regarded more as a mutual and equalitarian exchange of resources (that coincides with the modern concept of confluent love), especially among mostly highly qualified students or workers; of people who, regardless his/her –European- nationality, share common values, practices and lifestyles; as the result of a quotidian process of integration and European identity's formation; and almost as the "natural" result of the growing interactions between people from different countries of origin; countries that, although their cultural differences, are regarded as social equals.

As it was already said, differently, intermarriage as an assimilation index of traditional migrants it has been usually analyzed under a cost-benefit perspective, highlighting the often unbalanced characteristics of the partners (positioning the native partner at the top and the immigrant partner at the bottom of a stratified marriage market that, from the very beginning, grants a penalty to the "immigrant condition", whether irregular or even –especially if low qualified- regular); its problematic elements in terms of differences' negotiation and dissolution' probabilities; and its mostly instrumental role on behalf of the immigrant's interests and needs.

In Italy few studies have adopted the intra-European perspective when analyzing the topic of intermarriage; first of all because, as it was already said, the phenomenon has been mostly related to the broader phenomenon of immigration that in Italy has very particular regional/national characteristics and that is not regarded as a high skilled one (Venturini & Villosio, 2002) but that is mostly composed by immigrants occupied in low skills jobs (even though 54.1% of immigrants have a diploma or a degree, the number of unskilled workers is quite high, i.e. 73.4%. Brusaporci, 2011) who come from other non EU countries and from recently added EU members such as Rumania, and to a lesser extent Bulgary (Cingolani, 2009: Brusaporci, 2011).

A more recent study by Isaakyan and Triandafyllidou (2014) focuses precisely on analyzing the social and cultural dimensions of mixed marriages between British women and Southern European men, particularly from Italy and Greece, all couples who actually reside in one of these Southern European countries. In most cases, these British women are highly skilled marriage migrants who narrated some of the differences at stake with their partners and their enlarged families, the way to negotiate and/or to put up with them, and the difficulties to integrate in their new country of residence. The research highlights that,

although these women are usually regarded as social equals from a highly prestige nationality that actually (legally) allows them to reside in these Southern European countries without bigger concerns, integration in the host society and cultural differences' negotiation is not unproblematic. Most women actually considered their matrimony as a mistake, feeling isolated and disappointed; and highlighted a significant difficulty to negotiate quotidian (even minimal) differences with the surrounding social environment, in particular with the native partners' relatives. According to the authors, there is an important correlation between socio-cultural integration an expat nationalism, such that several differences faced by the partners are experienced as disagreements not only between individuals but between the cultural traditions to which the partners putatively belong. Such situation, according to the authors, may at least partially depend on the degree of nationalism and cultural stringency reported by the partners.

Although this is not a comparative research between mixed marriages with non qualified citizens and mixed marriages with highly qualified citizens, it may be hypothesized that marriage migrants from the second group have less stimulus to negotiate and specially to give up in topics regarding their cultural identity and quotidian practices; furthermore, expectations of these women to continue having a certain lifestyle and an equalitarian confluent kind of love may be higher, and therefore more difficult to satisfy not only by their partners but by a (Southern European) society that, as it was already said, in comparison with other Western and Northern European countries still presents diverse cultural and structural difficulties, specially for boosting the development of women's professional and private lives.

In this way, as it is said by Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, the "world families" (an unitary term to refer to those brought together by partners selected as a consequence of distant love via migration, travel or the increased contacts between disparate cultural and national groups) born of globalization are its winners, but there are some losers and many victims too (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2013). Such losers or victims might be also those who are attracted by a certain –exotic of stereotypical- image of the partner and his/her country, and who may be deluded after having experience a deep personal and cultural encounter that does not correspond with their aspirational image, or

with the Western ideas of individualization and emancipation to which they are used to or that they expect to.

In this way, a closer look at the national groups (whether non qualified or highly qualified citizens) to which the partners belong, at their migrant background, at the receiving social environment in which the couples resides, and clearly at the personal characteristics of the partners themselves is needed to understand better the dynamic particularities of the phenomenon that seems to be much more complex than the categorical classifications by which it has been usually demarked.

4.3. Mexicans in Italy. Marriage and Family patterns

This research precisely focuses on analyzing a particular international mixed marriage combination that it does not actually entirely fit none of the two big categories described before (those that refer to traditional migrants: guest workers, low qualified migrants, etc.; or new migrants: free movers or Eurostars) but that is located somehow "in the middle".

This is not only because of the national group to which the foreign partners originally belong (Mexicans) but because of the particular conditions of such group in the specific context that we are analyzing (Italy). Thus, Mexicans have been largely studied as a significantly numeric and traditional migrant group (both regular and irregular) but in the immediate northern neighbor of Mexico, thus, in the United States[18]; country in which this group represents the largest immigrant group since 1980 (Rubenstein, 1992; Massey & Espinosa, 1997; Durand & Parrado, 1999; etc.). Reasons for this massive migration have been widely studied from different social disciplines; however, some of the more salient causes are the geographical distance between two countries that, nonetheless their proximity, are very much differentiated by a noticeable income gap.

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[18] According to a joint report by the OECD and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations that was released in 2013 and that was elaborated during the period of 2010-2011 half of (regular) migrants in the OECD came from only 16 countries. From these, Mexico topped the list with 11 million emigrants, followed by China (3.8 million), the United Kingdom (3.5 million), India (3.4 million), Poland (3.2 million) among others. The Philippines, Romania, Morocco, Vietnam and Algeria were among the main non-OECD countries of origin. From this enormous amount of Mexican emigrants, the first and main destination country has been the United States of America (World Migration in Figures, OECD-UNDESA. October, 2013).

Furthermore, since the 20th century there have been important labor demands in the largest economy of the world, the United States, that have been complemented with the political unrest that Mexico has experienced practically since its formation as an independent country from Spain. The structural problems that Mexico has dragged all over its history have made it to become one of the most unequal countries in the most unequal region in the world, Latin America (48.1 Gini coefficient in 2012, World Bank). Within a country of almost 110 million people there are about 45 million people who live under the national poverty line and about 8 million who live under the extreme poverty line (Coneval, 2012). And whereas the national economy has had sustained growth rates during the last years, such growth has been translated into the wellbeing of very particular social segments of the society; whereas a percentage as high as 26% of the PIB is represented by those people who are employed in the informal economy without almost any kind of social welfare.

The impressive social divide from the urban and rural areas has motivated many farmers to move to the Mexican largest cities where, nevertheless, do not have enough opportunities to find a job according to their specific field skills; or to the United States where there is a higher demand for people working in agricultural activities and where, moreover, there has been a crescent formation of one of the bigger migrant diasporas in the world. Recently, moreover, the increasing insecurity that has been experienced by the constant clashes between drug gangs has become a further incentive to –at least try to– leave the country in search of better destinations.

In comparison with Mexican migrants moving to the U.S.A., less information has been released regarding a much more smaller Mexican diaspora living in other destination countries, to which this research aims to contribute.

In the particular case of Italy, Mexican immigrants (for the more diverse reasons) only represent approximately the 0.1% of the foreign population residing in Italy (Istat, 2013). Hence, such a small group is not representative at all of the migrant population living in Italy, but is not representative either of the Mexican migrant population living abroad.

Although few demographic and analytical information has been released about Mexicans living in Italy, according to the Institute for Mexicans Abroad (a federal

institution that directly depends from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and to previous research such as the one by Parrello, Guzmán & Buonanno (2010) it is possible to observe that most Mexican residents in Italy are middle age women with a superior or professional degree who entered the country for a series of motives such as tourism, to pursue an academic/professional degree, or for family formation/reunification with an Italian citizen, and that in most cases the anchor to stay in the country is precisely this last one.

Hence, as it was already said, Mexican migrants living in Italy may not be regarded as the first group of traditional unqualified migrants or guest workers; but they can't be regarded either as free movers or Eurostars because they (or at least many of them) do not count with an EU passport that may allow them a further internationalization (with the correspondent consequences in terms of free movement, former studies' recognition, access to labor market, and provided residence, etc.), nor are they socially regarded equally to EU member states' citizens or other high income countries.

Being "in the middle" thus may correspond to the emergent condition that the country has; condition that, on the one hand, has allowed a (very particular) segment of the population to have an upward mobility and an increased participation in international study/working activities; and that, furthermore, has pictured the country to be acknowledged as one of the first twenty larger economies in the world in constant economic growth and social development; but that, on the other hand, it does continue to struggle in terms of poverty, wealth distribution and security, among others, and that therefore it is not entirely perceived as a rich developed and highly democratized country.

According to Mexican official statistics (IMA, 2013) there is a total of 11,907,348 Mexicans living outside of Mexico; from this total number it is calculated that 97.85% do actually live in the United States of America, the immediate northern country. Such number does not comprehend, nevertheless, the total regular and irregular Mexican migrants living in the USA, nor the total of second generation migrants of Mexican descent living in the same northern country. That means that around 10% of the total population (118,000,000+ CONAPO, 2013) resides outside of Mexico, mainly in the United States of America, country with which it does share one of the busiest and largest crossing borders of the world, as well as a complex historical and economic background.

The dynamic relationship between Mexico and the United States has attracted important attention from sociologists and other social scientists devoted to analyze the international migration phenomenon in all its nuances. However, the magnitude of such regional social phenomenon has neglected the existence of other small Mexican communities and diasporas around the world.

In the very particular case of Italy, this European country occupies the 11th position as a destination country for Mexican emigrants (the second and third place, after the United States of America, are occupied by Canada and Spain mainly for geographical, economic and historical reasons). According to the IMA only 255,929 Mexican citizens live abroad in other countries different to the USA. According to ISTAT, in 2010 there were 4,197 Mexican residents in Italy (0.1% of the total foreign population resident in Italy), whereas during the same year there were 4,964 Italian residents in Mexico according to INEGI (the 0.5% of the total foreign population resident in Mexico).

This is to say that by researching mixed marriages between Italians and Mexicans, there is not a direct reference to a traditional immigrant group (at least not in the Italian context); there is not a migratory corridor between these two countries, and their migratory history may be considered more parallel than convergent (since both of them have been origin, transit, destination and return, migrant countries, with all the pertinent differences).

Mexico and Italy, furthermore, are not mutual key economic partners either[19]. There is not properly a complementariness in the products that these two countries export and import; such that both of them have other economic and political priorities and interests, as well as more robust historical, economic and migratory backgrounds with other countries.

The establishment of diplomatic relationships between these two countries initiated during the XIX century and these have been always developed in a cordial way, mainly through official representations such as embassies, cultural institutes and chambers of commerce. In the late XIX and early XX centuries Mexico was an important destination for many Italian emigrants (although less than other traditional destination countries for Italian former immigrants such as Argentina, Brazil or the United States). During this period, the

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[19] In terms of economic partnerships, Italy represents the 3th commercial partner of Mexico in Europe, after Spain and Germany; whereas Mexico represents the 2nd commercial partner of Italy in America Latina after Brazil. Nevertheless, Mexico e.g. it is not counted among the first 20 countries in the world to which Italy exports to or imports from.

Mexican federal government, leaded at that moment by President Manuel González (1880-1884) who wanted to populate large areas of arable land, decided to extend an invitation to the Italian government through the already existing Mexican embassy in Rome, so that Italian people –mainly peasants and small traders from the northern regions - who would like to move to Mexico would have received land to work and institutional support[20].

Italy, on the other hand, was experiencing an important emigration period, mainly due to a series of political and economic structural and conjectural problems after the unification of the country and a period of several natural catastrophes. Although the Mexican government implemented an assimilation policy towards the Italian immigrants that arrived (just as it did also with other colonizing groups), and whose descendants became part of the hybrid and multicultural mosaic that Mexico actually is, there was also maintained, particularly by some groups of middle high class, a cultural link with the country of origin, Italy. And, maybe even more importantly, it remained a certain sense of nostalgia and positive appreciation by a country that was never collectively regarded as an enemy (such as Spain, the United States or even France) but more as a cultural and religious icon with a shared friendship and brotherhood.

This is to say that relationships between both countries have been continuous but scattered, more parallel than intersectional and never actually a mutual priority. In the same way, average collective imagination of this relationship is usually based on iconic images and representations of characters that go from the artistic and historic background of Italy to the exotic and revolutionary iconic representation of Mexico.

In this way, people from one country that usually travels to the other does it because of touristic and travel experiences, participation in language courses and/or other very specific professional courses, an ancient immigrant descent, a professional experience in very specific economic sectors –tourism, furniture and fashion design, art history, lyrical

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[20] Such decision was taken after a series of diplomatic and military disagreements with other closer partners such as Spain and the United States. Thus, the decision of which groups should be invited to "colonize" Mexican territory was not easy; the colonization permits given by the national government to E. Austin to colonize the territory of Texas from 1832 to 1846 resulted in a war between the two countries and the lost of an important part of Mexican territory. In Europe, the relation with Spain was not easy either; although there was a recognized cultural proximity due to several centuries of colonization and cultural blending, there was a very diffused sentiment of rejection towards the Peninsular country from which independence was been obtained not so long ago. In this way, Italians were considered as "the least bad" (Zilli Manica, 1981).

music, energy sector, etc.- or because of personal contacts with friends or acquaintances of the particularly small diasporas that exist in both countries.

The relative scarcity of economic and institutional collaboration programs, the inexistence of such a salient common past, the lack of a numeric migrant diaspora, the lack of such an outstanding income gap differential, and specially the geographical distance and the travel costs that imply to travel from one country to the other, among several other elements that have been identified as push-pull factors (Massey et. al., 1993), have hampered the creation of a traditional migrant channel between these two countries.

Moreover, contemporary information of the current social, political and economic events that occur in one country is minimal in the news media of the other, such that average people do not actually know that much about the other country; mutual news are restricted to major events such as political scandals, social protests, natural disasters and clashes between drug dealers. Thus, people who get to deepen on complex contemporary events do it because a very personal interest, not because of the actual availability of related information.

In the very particular case of Mexicans living in Italy it has been noticed, independently of the reasons to travel to or to enter the country, that the motives to actually stay and reside in this European country are mostly led back to family formation or family reunification (Parrello, Guzmán & Buonanno, 2010); such information was confirmed by the Diplomatic Representatives of Mexico in Milan and Rome as well as by other representatives of civic associations of Mexican culture in Italy, nevertheless, exact figures are unavailable.

As it was said before, according to the ISTAT, in 2010 there were 4,197 regular residents in Italy of Mexican origin; there is not further information of potential irregular immigrants, however, mainly for the geographical distance between the two countries there it is not a high probability to find a noticeable number of them. This number, nevertheless, does not include either those Mexicans who hold a dual citizenship, i.e. an Italian passport mainly by descent or by naturalization due to marriage with an Italian citizen.

From these 4,197 Mexican residents, 67.1% were female whereas 32.9% were male (such distribution is very much in line with the salient trend of more Italian men marrying foreign female partners, than Italian women marrying foreign male ones).

The geographical distribution of this group is quiet heterogenic, however, most of them live in the regions of Lazio (37.3%) and Lombardy (16.4%) that host the two bigger Italian cities: Rome and Milan. The city of provenience in Mexico of these people is also very much heterogenic, people from the country's capital Mexico City and from other peripheral regions may be found.

In this way, it is not only Mexican individuals who have a very particular interest who travel and move to Italy, but also people who mostly belong to a very particular middle-high educational and socio-economic background. And at this respect, it is necessary to say that one of the main characteristics of Mexican society is precisely the very much pronounced social stratification that do exist (mainly but not only) through the class divide.

Although inequality is one of the biggest issues in the whole Latin America, Mexico is one the most unequal countries within the continent. There have been some improvements during recent years in terms of income distribution, mainly due to remittances' redistribution and the diversification of productive activities, however, the situation remains critic. Inequality in Mexico is a multifunctional complex phenomenon with deep historical and socio-economic roots; it is very much related to the colonial past of the country, and it is very much intermingled with other social divides such as skin color, ethnicity, gender, urban/rural background and educational attainment.

Such inequality does not refer only to economic inequality, and more specifically to income distribution (although this is one of the more salient expressions of the phenomenon), but it does also refer to the private property of resources, assets and capital to produce more wealth, and to the possibility of developing further human, cultural and social capital. Inequality in this case is a very complex combination of ethnic and racial backgrounds, accumulated levels of wealth and social capital, differentiated educational and occupational attainments; and it is further auto reproduced among generations such that belonging to a certain class, as well as the social, cultural and economic distance among classes, tend to be severely reinforced and perpetuated even along generations (Floresa & Tellesa, 2012).

A general assessment of the ethnical composition of social classes in Mexico highlights that the high income class mostly consists of white people with a foreign descent

and a Catholic religious background –usually Spanish, North American or other White European-, who are mostly self employed as entrepreneurs or employed in highly skilled and managerial activities. The middle class, on the other hand, generally consists of white and mestizo population, that is usually employed in bureaucratic activities, provision of professional services, education and research activities, secondary qualified industrial occupations, small and medium businesses' owners, among others. At the bottom, the lowest social class primarily consists of people with a prevalent indigenous descent who, as it was already said, are usually employed in agricultural and handcraft activities, industrial unskilled jobs, construction, domestic services or informal trade.

Regarding this strong relationship between skin color/ethnicity and social class, Andrés Villarreal presented in 2010 robust evidence of dramatic skin color stratification and indigenous disadvantage in contemporary Mexico based on the 2006 MIT Mexico Panel Study. The author used regression models to predict educational attainment, occupational status, and household income for Mexicans according to three interviewer-reported color categories. And he found that individuals with the darkest skin tend to have the lowest socioeconomic status, followed by those with intermediate skin colors, even after controlling for individual characteristics (Villareal, 2010).

As it was said before, the origin of such racial stratification and its intermingle with socio-economic class is such an ancient and complex phenomenon that goes back to the sophisticated stratification that did exist during pre-colonial indigenous societies, that was reinforced during the Spanish occupation, and that was perpetuated during the creation of Mexico as an independent country. Such phenomenon would need a complete dissertation due to the complexity of the individual and institutional elements that conform it and reproduce it; however, its acknowledge is useful to understand not only the strong class stratification that exist in Mexico but also its racialization/ethnicization.

One may ask which is the relationship between this short –clearly non exhaustive-description of the social class system in Mexico and the general topic of mixed marriages between Italians and Mexicans, who furthermore actually reside in Italy. But this was stated in order to understand two main things, first of all that Mexican people who travel to Europe either for leisure, studies or professional sojourns -such as it was narrated before-, mostly belong to middle-high social classes. And second, that this ethnical composition of

the social class system is also very much present in the local marriage market and it does may influence the (desirable) incidence of mixed couples –in particular of cross-border marriages- with native Europeans, and in this very particular case with Italians.

In this way, and contrary to what happens in Italy (and maybe in other traditional immigrant' receptor countries) as expressed by Bertolani (1999), Bastarelli (2001) and Tognetti Bordogna (2004), regarding the racial/ethnic stratification of the marriage market, where there is usually a penalization for an alien ethnic origin and/or immigrant background (that it does actually change depending on the country of origin), in countries like Mexico (and maybe in other former colonies and mostly emigrants' sources) there is a social reward for foreigners, particularly if such individuals are white skin of European or North American descent.

Intermarriage, furthermore, has a long history in America Latina so that the phenomenon is framed in very different terms. The hybridization of the society started many centuries ago and created a whole categorization system of intermixtures, e.g. European/indigenous, Spanish/indigenous, mestizo or half-breed/indigenous, Spanish/Black, etc. Such typology resembled very much a caste system that contributed to perpetuate social and economic distance between groups but that, at the same time, it did contribute to promote diversity and mixity (to a certain extent) as a normal feature of society.

Hence, intermarriage for a Mexican person (dependently of the partner's characteristics and the union's specific conditions) is not usually penalized but actually desirable as a mean of social mobility (even if not necessarily economic mobility) and "whitening" of the native person (González Navarro, 1993).

In such context, there are certain innate characteristics and traits that a foreign partner may positively trade in the Mexican marriage market (although residing outside of the country) just for the fact of being a foreigner. However, that does not mean that other acquired characteristics are not important or that any kind of person would be actually available and willing to marry a foreign person, and still less to further move abroad; as it was previously said, it is not a global free-for-all social phenomenon.

Within the Mexican marriage market, marrying a foreign partner is doable and potentially desirable not only due to the racialization/ethnicization of the social class

system; to the increasing possibility of travelling abroad for the more diverse reasons and meeting people from different ethnic, cultural and national origins; but also to the transformations that the institutions of family and marriage have experienced, just as it was previously described for other European societies (Chapter 2).

Also in Mexico, just as in other Latin American societies although still at a different time and intensity, the process of increasing industrialization that has been observed during the XIX century (particularly after the end of the Mexico Revolution in 1920) and the entrance into the global economy, have promoted important demographic changes.

Such changes are manifested in several ways, just as the changes that were observed almost one century before in Western Europe during the first demographic transition:

- Fertility decline (2.2. children born/woman in 2014 according to the WFB, just above replacement level and almost the Italian birth rate during the decade of 1960s), partly as a result of the widespread use of contraceptive methods driven by a major government program related to family and reproductive health planning; and the changes in sexual practices prompted by the separation between reproduction and sexuality;

- Slight increase in the age at marriage;

- Decreased mortality; and

- Increased life expectancy.

All these aspects have led to elongation of the couple's life, but also the increasing complexity of the couple's life has led to a greater propensity for marriage's rupture by separation or divorce and, furthermore, an increase of free unions and second marriages. On the cultural level, the globalization not only of the economy but also of the media, combined with the struggles that also Mexican women have undergone to enhance their reproductive rights, has spread new ideas and symbolic images of masculinity and femininity that point out towards a greater gender equity.

However, the available evidence suggests that also in this context overall transformations in gender relations have been slow in some aspects, and other practically nonexistent (García & Oliveira, 1994 and 2005).

Women do participate more in the paid labor market; however, such participation is still very low in comparison with other OECD countries (48% in 2012, the last one of the OECD just after Turkey 50%, and Italy 51%, whereas the OECD average is 65%).

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Moreover, women still earn significantly less than men for the same job, same skills and working time (women make 57% of men's salaries); women more than men are employed in low remunerated and unprotected activities, e.g. teaching, caring, cleaning and other traditional feminized activities (Rendón, 2003).

Women have made enormous improvements, nevertheless, they are still underrepresented in managerial positions, i.e. in 2013 women comprised 7% of women on boards of listed companies, and only 23% occupied senior manager positions (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2013). By 2011, 28% of women (in comparison with 29% of men) were enrolled in tertiary education; however, most women were enrolled in very specific undergraduate degree programs: 47.3% Social Sciences, Business and Law; 14% Engineering, Construction and Manufacturing; and only 5.4% Sciences (OECD, "Education at a Glance", 2013).

Mexican economy has developed in such a way that family transformations have followed just as it previously occurred in other parts of the world, just at a different rate and timing. Families have been reduced (in terms of the number of members), and the separation between private and public life has been accelerated such that the importance of the family nucleus as the main production unit has decreased. Women have increased their participation in the labor market and have acquired an increasing economic independence, that has influenced the way to do and to be family.

Women are increasingly involved in professional activities and take greater responsibilities in the workplace, just as within families. However, they are still far from achieving full control of their lives, as some studies have indicated that many of them still have to ask permission to their spouses to leave the house even to work and to visit their families (García & Oliveira, 2005). Overall, Mexican women spend approximately 4.3. hours more than men working on domestic chores, so the participation of men at home is still very scarce (OECD, Better Life Index, 2014). Furthermore, domestic violence against women remains a common form of exercise of male power within the household to the detriment of women's physical and psychological health (Gonzalez Montes, 1993).

Such strongly gendered arrangement coincides with some of the manifestations that the notion of romantic love did have in some European countries some decades before (see also Chapter 2); thus, Mexican women –particularly those who have acquired at least a

certain level of economic independence- may allow themselves to look for a partner according not only to their material but also intellectual or emotional needs. However, this degree of maturity and freedom, that would correspond to the notion of confluent love (Giddens, 1992), have not been -culturally nor structurally- achieved. Thus, many women continue to relate to men according to a very idealistic –and highly gendered- concept of love that it often results in very unequal -and even destructive- couple arrangements to the detriment of women themselves.

Hence, although there have been several changes that have guided Mexican society towards a greater gender equity, and specially to the aspirational desire of a greater gender equity, there remain important cultural and structural factors that clearly obstruct the consolidation of such process.

Such changes have also influenced the way of doing family, not only a smaller and different type of family (free unions, second marriages, couples without children, same sex couples whose union is legalized only in Mexico City, e.g.), but also a later family (in 1995 the average age at first marriage was 19.9 for women and 22.9 for men, whereas in 2013 the same indicator was 23.8 for women and 26.6 for men) (Matrimonios y divorcios en México. INEGI, 2013).

In this way, those changes, that in other industrialized societies were experimented during the postwar period and the decade of 1960s as part of the so called second demographic transition, started to be more intensively experimented in Mexico and other Latin American societies during the 90s onwards approximately; i.e. numerous structural changes have been experienced (modernization, economic growth and expansion of the services sector, higher education increasing), cultural (relative secularization specially among younger generations, increased individualistic values and personal fulfillment) and technological (the adoption of modern contraceptive methods and advances in assisted reproduction).

From these changes, Van de Kaa argues that the most important changes are actually cultural, thus the continuous secularization and individualization processes that would lead people to break several long-established behaviors; orienting social behavior towards a greater importance of the self which has led to progressive trends, understood as the propensity to embrace novelty, equality and freedom.

Some cultural and structural changes have not occurred in the same way in America Latina, although it is observed that in some countries of the region they have began to take a very similar shape during the last decades, which can be to some extent part of a complex scenario in which individual decisions are increasingly immerse in fairly complex social and cultural changes.

Important to mention the decreasing participation of enlarged families in private decisions such as the partner's choice and the residence after marriage, and such decisions included also the alternative of marrying foreign partners. Needed to remember at this respect, nevertheless, that mixed marriages have been a common practice not only in Mexico but in the whole American continent. In this way, there have been documented mixed marriages between Mexican and former "colonizers", immigrants and asylum seekers such as Spanish of course, Lebanese, Hungarians, and immigrants from other Center American countries such as Belize, Guatemala, and El Salvador, among others (Zilli Manica, 1981; González Navarro, 1993; Theesz Poschner, 2010).

In this way, although marrying a (foreign) partner is increasingly an individual private choice also in a largely considered "familistic" society such as Mexico, it may be argued that such private event is also influenced by other cultural and structural factors, such as the positive stereotypes with which some racial/ethnic groups and countries are symbolically represented and collectively perceived, and the diversification and intensification of heterogamy channels by which it is possible to meet and exchange life experiences with people from other latitudes.

The particular characteristics of the foreign partner, just as the way in which the mixed couple is formed and further experienced, nevertheless, will be strongly influenced also by several characteristics of the Mexican individual him/herself such as the education level, the language proficiency, the social class, the age, etc.

In this way, and as it was already said before, in the very particular case of Mexicans, are those individuals of middle-high class who have the opportunity to travel, to work abroad, and to develop an international curriculum, the ones that can locate themselves better within an increasingly international marriage market where certain people share a certain globalized culture, particular hobbies and lifestyles (the winners of globalization according to Beck). Whereas there are other individuals who, by their –pre-partner-

disadvantage position, may enter such international marriage market but from a very low or low position, according to partial or erroneous information about the partner or the partner's country of origin, even randomly; or by the expressed need to improve their socio-economic situation or to escape from unfortunate conditions or undesirable situations.

Such internal heterogeneity will be further appreciated over the development of the description of the empirical research that was developed during previous months with a group of Italian/Mexican mixed couples and intermarriages, and that will be overall described in the next Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

The empirical research: Mexican/Italian Mixed Couples and Cross border Marriages

During the next pages it will be described the qualitative research that was conducted between March 2012 and June 2013 with a group of Mexican/Italian mixed couples and cross-border marriages. The main recruitment methods were through an online survey and further snowball sampling; whereas the main research methodologies were auto-biography narrative and semi-structured interviews. The total participants were 60 people who are part of a mixed union (whether married or unmarried). When possible it was tried to approach the partners separately, and when it was not possible the approach was made with the partners together (in this last case, the potentiality of biased information was compensated with the possibility to observe the couple's relational dynamic).

All the respondents were currently living in the region of Lombardy, whether in Milan or in other smaller surrounding cities. Among the respondents it was possible to find couples in which the foreign spouse is a female (most of them), and others in which the foreign spouse is a male. The sample is very much heterogeneous in terms of age of the spouses and length of residence; however, through such diversity it was possible to distinguish at least two (marriage) migrant generations.

This research does not claim to be representative but deeply insightful. The case study, in this way, might be faulted for its lack of representativeness, and even for its lack of rigor in the collection on empirical materials; however, *"the strength of this type of research is precisely the account for and inclusion of difference –ideologically, epistemologically, methodologically, and most importantly humanly"* (Merriam, 2009: 53) . Thus, through the analysis of this particular sample with a very particular case study, which it is not representative of all mixed couples/marriages or immigrant groups residing in Italy, it is thought to contribute with further information about the enormous diversity that it is thought to exist within the still widely undiscovered and crescent population of "world families"; about the way different kinds of diversity(ies) are perceived and experienced; and about the way in which particularly the members of the Mexican migrant diaspora residing outside of the United States (first destination country) do actually live.

At the beginning of the Chapter some contextual variables of this small immigrant community are described; together with the results obtained by a first qualitative research on inter-ethnic gastronomic practices that was developed through an online survey (Annex 1), and that allowed to gather first personal contacts with potential participants. Later, an explanation of the applied research methods and the sample's main characteristics is elaborated.

Finally, obtained results are interpreted according to the main research questions and elaborated theories. The focus is given particularly to three main topics: i.e. the partners' main characteristics and the couple's formation process; the main adaptation difficulties in the host society; and the negotiation processes and acculturation strategies employed by the partners inside and outside the couple.

5.1. Mexican-Italian couples. Why to study this particular international mixed arrangement?

As it was previously described, in 2010 there were 4,197 Mexican residents in Italy that all together represented 0.1% of the total foreign population resident in the country. There is not further information of potential irregular immigrants, however, mainly for the geographical distance between the two countries there it is not a high probability to find a noticeable number of them. And probably it is according to this small number and to the relatively perceived cultural proximity that its presence has been barely noticed by the host country, nor by politicians, social researchers, journalists or ordinary citizens (as it was said in Chapter 4, the country is rarely portrayed in news media apart from exotic touristic representations, social protests, major environmental disasters, or clashes between drug dealers).

From these Mexican residents 65.8% were female whereas 34.2% were male. The geographical distribution of this group is quiet heterogenic; however, most of them live in the region of Lazio (37.2%) and Lombardy (16.7%), that host the two bigger Italian cities: Rome and Milan. The city of provenience in Mexico of these people is also very much heterogenic, people from the country's capital Mexico City and from other peripheral regions may be found.

According to the Institute for Mexicans Abroad, and a previous research precisely on Mexican women married with Italian men such as the one by Parrello, Guzmán & Buonanno (2010), it is possible to observe that most Mexican residents in Italy are middle age women with a superior or professional degree who entered the country for a series of (mostly regular) motives such as tourism, to pursue an academic/professional program, or for family formation/reunification with an Italian citizen; and that in most cases the reason to stay in the country is precisely this last one.

The reasons to study this group as an example of international mixed couples and cross border marriages residing in Italy were mainly three: First, according to the collected information (the sources just mentioned before; the consultations with the correspondent diplomatic authorities; and other explorative data that was collected from previous qualitative research to be described during the next paragraphs), it was clear that most Mexicans living in Italy do stay in the country precisely because of being part of a long term mixed relationship or intermarriage with an Italian citizen.

Second, the salient characteristic of this group is precisely the one of not being part of any of the two main (migrant) groups that have been identify to participate in ethnic/national intermarriages; i.e. 1) Non qualified citizens (traditional migrants: guest workers, low qualified/educational attainment migrants, refugees or asylum seekers) and 2) Highly qualified citizens (new migrants, free mover or "Eurostars": mobile students, transnational workers and expats) (Favell, 2003).

To a certain extent, Mexicans living in Italy could be considered a somehow "in the middle" case of these large categorizations, such that most of them are not poorly qualified traditional migrants from a low socioeconomic status; but most of them do not have either the flexible mobility that Eurostars and highly international professionals do have. In this way, it is possible to identify them as an interesting case of *"emergent migrants"*, who – just as their country of origin within the international community- are not generally perceived by the collective imaginary nor by the local institutions as the classical poor (economic) immigrants, but are not generally perceived either as social equals just as citizens from other European and/or farther away rich countries.

Third, my personal condition as a Mexican person living in Italy and the obvious Spanish's mother tongue proficiency would allow me to have a privileged access to the

group in order to collect not only quantitative data about the main characteristic indicators (age, education degree, etc.), but also to collect more precise qualitative data about the stories, the temporal circumstances, the anecdotes, etc. of the members of these groups and their Italian counterparts.

In this way, it was thought to collect more reliable data that could highlight the increasing diversity that may be currently observed among mixed couples and intermarriages, that –as it has been observed- have been mostly studied under a traditional (economic) migrant approach; about the role of the marriage institution itself within an international mixed (couple) arrangement; about the way to negotiate common gender differences among the spouses, as well as more characteristic (of mixed couples) intercultural differences; about the processes of integration within the host society of the foreign spouses from a very particular "emergent" immigrant group; and about some of the several difficulties that these couples might face, particularly in relation to their mixed condition.

Thus, at a first glance it does seem that Mexican migration to Italy may be approached as the result of merely individual choices; however, a second deeper glance may highlight a series of social and cultural elements that do play a role in the incidence of this particular (cultural and national) marriage combination; which, furthermore, may used as an analytical framework to comparatively analyze other (marriage) migrant groups. Not least importantly, the analysis of this particular group may highlight some of the main issues of the host society when dealing with different types of diversity(ies) within the family domain.

5.2. First research approaches. Intercultural ethno-gastronomic practices

The first approaches to -what may be called- the Mexican community in Italy were made through Internet. In order to understand their acculturation strategies and integration processes in the host country, I decided to approach people through a general topic that could be transversally interesting and furthermore common to most people without directly approaching more intimate issues, thus I initiated an online survey on intercultural ethno-gastronomic practices.

Hence, main online social networks in which Mexicans living in Italy usually interact with each other were identified; from these, the more recurrent ones were the ones of Facebook, Expat-Blogspots, and other personalized websites such as the one of the, Association Mexican Culture in Italy, Catholic Community of Mexicans in Rome e.g. These websites were generally used to meet other Mexican nationals and share the more diverse kind of information. i.e. bureaucratic advises in both countries; flights' information and offers to travel to Mexico; social and cultural events such as public parties, museums' expositions, etc.; traditional and innovative gastronomic receipts; etc.

The fundamental role of Internet to connect people, regardless of place and time, has been explored by several social researchers that, furthermore, have baptism a new research methodology such as virtual ethnography (Crichton & Kinash, 2003). According to the increasing use of ICT and individuals' participation in online social networks, this methodology has become more relevant during the last decade (Pasquali, Scifo, Vittadini 2010). Furthermore, the analysis of online and offline interconnections was lately complemented according to previous findings that have indicated a noticeable correlation between these two spheres of action in processes such as identity's formation and/or social networks' conformation, among others (Hine, 2000).

In this way, at the beginning of 2012, after have identified the virtual places in which it's very much probable to find Mexicans who access Internet, a multiple choice online structured questionnaire was posted in order to collect a short sample of the population. Thus, after ten days the questionnaire (Annex 1) was responded by 85 random people. Moreover, it was requested a personal contact (telephone number or email address) in case the respondent would be able to participate in a semi-structured deeper personal interview.

After this first approach it was obtained a sample of 77 women and 8 men, these numbers stand for 90.59% and 9.41% of the sample respectively. Although, according to the official data of the ISTAT (2010), there are clearly more Mexican women (65.8%) than Mexican men (34.2%) in Italy, the larger difference among the respondents might be due to occupation status; to the time spent in online activities; and to the occupation in domestic culinary practices mostly by women.

Although it was observed an important heterogeneity among the respondents (mainly in terms of place of residence in Italy, city of origin in Mexico, age, occupational status),

one of the main shared characteristics of this sample was the high education level of the respondents, from which 57.65% holds a university degree, 20% holds a master or another postgraduate degree, and the rest 22.35% indicated secondary school as their last level of education. Relevantly to say that, according to several both qualitative and quantitative analyses that have been performed in the United States (the main destination country of Mexican emigrants), this group is very much different to their migrant co-nationals in the North American neighbor, where the average level of education of migrants has decreased specially after 1965 influencing furthermore the wage differentials between Mexican immigrants and white natives in American society (Borjas & Freeman, 1992).

There is moreover other common characteristics that was possible to observe from the respondents' answers of the online questionnaire, and it is that most of them are middle aged (18-55 years old), married or cohabiting (72.62%), and that most of them have arrived in Italy not as economic workers but as partners of an Italian mate. A smaller proportion of the sample responded to have arrived in Italy for studying purposes and to have decided to stay in the country after have known his/her (mostly Italian) partner. Thus, according to the observed results, it seems that Mexican emigration to Italy mostly responds to family's formation or reunification motives. This result substantially differs from the socio-economic dynamics that have characterized the migration flows existing between Mexico and the United States, however, such comparison would be topic of more exhaustive and structured research.

In the next two tables it is possible to graphically observe what has been described:

Table 5.1. Immigration' motives		
Motive	**Number of respondents**	**Percentage of the sample**
Family	43	50.59%
Other*	18	21.18%
Studies	11	12.94%
Work	5	5.88%
Adventure experience	4	4.71%
Not responding	4	4.71%
Total	85	100%

*From the people that responded "Other", 14 specified: marriage, husband, boyfriend or other words related to their partner; this gives a total of 57 people (67.06%) who migrated to Italy for family/partner motives. From the rest, 2 didn't specify nothing, 1 indicated the interest of knowing the country of her ancestors, and 1 the interest of knowing other cultures.

Table 5.2. Spouse or partner's nationality		
Nationality	**Number of respondents**	**Percentage of the sample**
Italian	74	91.36%
Mexican as the respondent	5	6.17%
Other than Mexican or Italian	2	2.47%
Total	81*	100%

*The rest didn't write anything, indicating not having neither a spouse nor a partner. The difference between the number indicated in the first table of people immigrating for family motives (57) and those indicating to have an Italian partner specially (74) may lie on the moment in which the partner was met. Thus, the partner was not the reason for which people actually moved to Italy, but was subsequently met.

In relation to the main topic of such first qualitative study, i.e. interethnic gastronomic practices, 95.29% (81) of the respondents reported to have importantly changed their alimentary habits. Such changes were primarily related to the adoption of more international or cosmopolitan culinary practices (15.29%); to the complete assimilation into Italian cuisine (32.84%); and to the enrichment of Mexican gastronomic practices with further elements of Italian cuisine, i.e. gastronomic biculturalism (47.06%). The related questions were referred to the main cooking and eating habits, to the kind of prepared receipts, to the employed ingredients and innovative combinations, and to the (intercultural) social dimension of food consumption.

In terms of acculturation strategies (see Berry's model in Chapter 3), most respondents reported to apply an integration or bicultural strategy when it is a matter of food habits. Thus, most of them expressed the desire to maintain and locally reproduce their own gastronomic culture (cultures when it is a matter of different Mexican regions), but combining it with the knowledge, appreciation and consumption, of the Italian cuisine

(particularly in its regional variations). Thus, a 46.51% of the sample declared to ordinarily prepare and consume both Mexican and Italian dishes at home when the availability of the ingredients does allow it.

The importance of studying intercultural ethno-gastronomic practices does lie in two main aspects; i.e. on the one hand, in its symbolic and emotive role and, on the other hand, in its economic and quotidian role. Alimentary habits are not merely related only with food consumption, cooking practices, and socialization patterns. Particularly in a "mixed" context, food is related to the reproduction of culture, identity, tradition and family practices; whereas the production and commercialization of "ethnic" products and ingredients represents a very important sector of what has been called the phenomenon of immigrants' entrepreneurship (Turin's Chamber of Commerce, 2009).

In the very particular case of the surveyed Mexican sample, a striking 89.42% consider that "eating well" is one of his/her "important" or "very important" daily priorities; whereas a 77.65% associates a feeling of nostalgic familiarity to the act of eating a Mexican traditional dish while they are in Italy. Moreover, an 81.4% said to know local or virtual places where it was possible to buy Mexican ingredients or prepared Mexican food, and to actually buy such products with a regular incidence (31.58% Mexican food online shops[21], 34.21% ethnic local shops).

Although negotiations around food consumption have not shown to be particularly problematic among mixed unions (Peruzzi, 2008); this element has shown to be a relevant indicator of the acculturation processes that newcomers usually experience in a new country of residence. Focused for example specifically on food consumption patterns of Mexican immigrants in Southern regions of the United States, Wallendorf & Reilly (1983) found that -controlling for income differences- Mexicans don't follow an assimilative acculturation pattern, however, they neither simply blend Mexican and American food; on the contrary, what was found -after analyzing contents of garbage of three different types of household- was that food consumption patterns of Mexicans immigrants, at least in the Southern regions of the United States, are the result of the emergence of a unique cultural style. Gasparetti (2009) in a different context also analyzed the food consumption patterns but of Senegalese immigrants in Italy and found that for them food plays a strong

polyvalent role in the construction of ethnic identity; according to the observed results, the author concluded that Senegalese's food consumption practices in Italy follow an acculturation pattern of segregation, which is characterized by a strong attachment to cultural maintenance through food and food-sharing with other co-nationals, and a recognition of Italian food as something different and not even very much desirable.

Such classifications may be more deeply developed with several life domains (among mixed couples and other types of immigrants); however, the most important results obtained from this first analysis were two: a further confirmation of some of the main average traits that characterize Mexican immigrants in Italy; and specially a series of personal contacts with potential respondents for a more specific qualitative study on international mixed couples and cross-border marriages negotiations process and adaptation strategies as the overall topic of this research project.

5.3. Research methodology and sample's main characteristics

The main aims of this research were thus three: 1.) to understand the diverse elements and heterogamy channels that influence the formation incidence of contemporary international mixed couples and cross-border marriages (according to theories previously described in Chapter 2 and 3); 2) to highlight some relational modes that are particularly common for Italian/Mexican partners (mainly following the theoretical quadratic model of adaptation strategies described also in Chapter 3); and 3) to understand which are some of the main couple's adaptation difficulties (especially those of the foreign spouse) in the host society.

The research methodology that was chosen was autobiography narrative and semi-structured interview. The first one was applied to the story telling of how the partners met each other and the couple was consolidated. Such method offers rich insights into the dynamic interplay of individuals and history, inner and outer worlds, self and other. Such contribution is particularly important in a period when the self and his/her experience has became a sort of reflexive life project, a focus for reworking who people are, and communicating this to others, as well as for recreating a certain moment although computed in a different time period and further reinterpreting it, and perhaps challenging some of the

dominant stories about common people "like us" in a wider cultural context (Merril & West, 2009).

In the case of the semi-structured interviews, it was considered that such methodology would be valid to sufficiently address certain specific themes, often very delicate and intimate ones, through certain compulsory questions in the main topics of interest; but without quitting a certain degree of flexibility.

Furthermore, semi-structured interview showed to be helpful to deepen certain issues or thematic areas that were additionally raised during the interview, through the "non directive method", i.e. adapting the main instrument (see the model interview in Annex 2) in order to give the respondents the opportunity to choose the length of time dedicated to a particular topic, the degree of depth for the more intimate topics, as well as the order of the addressed general issues.

Interviews were developed in Spanish or Italian, depending on the respondents' preference and commodity. The length of the responses depended also on the participant, however, the interview was relatively guided according to the questionnaire that was previously elaborated. The encounters were organized by previous appointment and lasted in average 1.5 to 2 hours; the location was usually decided by the respondents, whether they were feeling more comfortable at their residences or in public places of their local cities of residence. With several couples I had the chance to meet more than once and to keep in touch by phone or by social media, allowing me to establish a deeper personal relationship that would help me to gather further information, specially about complex and delicate private topics.

Most interviews were audio-taped, transcribed and coded using the qualitative software Atlas.ti (Muhr 2004); however, the bigger amount of analytical work and the interpretation work was done by me, taking into consideration further personal observations. This software allows the assignation of codes to identify particular sets of topics that can then be grouped into families according to the main general domains that were early defined to be developed.

The sample of the Italian-Mexican couples interviewed was individuated in two ways: first of all, initial contacts that were obtained from the first online survey on ethno-gastronomic practices (see subtitle 5.2) and further personal participation in other cultural

events organized mainly by the Mexican diplomatic representation of the city of Milan and/or by other very active members of the community.

After have identified the first participants, it was employed the sampling method better known as "snowball sampling" and people were asked to ask their partners/spouses to participate in the project. Such method, on the one hand, offers the advantage of a facilitated initial contact between the researcher and the members of the sample; and from the other hand, it does allow a further assessment of the relational partners that connect these people.

The total participants were 60 people. When possible it was tried to approach the partners separately, and when the partners did not approve or did not feel comfortable they were approached together as a couple, trying to compensate the potentiality of biased information (for the presence of the other partner) by the possibility to observe the couple's relational dynamic.

Some filters were defined when contacting the potential respondents. The participants were asked to be married or in a long term relationship (more than two years); and since age was not a discriminant variable it was observed that there was an important variability among couples in terms of the partners' age, years of marriage/relationship, and length of stay in the country; e.g. among the respondents there were people (particularly women) who have more than 20 years living in Italy, whereas several other did not have more than 5 (for further information see Table 5.3).

Moreover, for geographical restrictions, respondents should live in the north of Italy, particularly in the region of Lombardy, whether in the largest city Milan or in other surrounding cities for geographical variation. From the total, 15 couples were living in Milan, whereas the rest were living in the next cities/towns (by alphabetical order): Brescia (2), Como (1), Lecco (1), Gavirate (1), Limone sul Garda (1), Lodi (1), Merate (1), Monza (1), Salò (1), Saronno (1), Seveso (1), San Pellegrino Terme (1), Treviglio (2).

Although during the first online research survey on ethno-gastronomic practices there were several other respondents who were living in other Italian regions (Veneto, Trentino-Alto Adige, Piedmont, Reggio Emilia, Lazio and Sicily), and who would have liked to participate in the larger qualitative research together with their partners, at the end it was decided to focus only in the region of Lombardy for some very particular reasons: 1.) The

first one because the larger number of online respondents was from this particular region; 2.) because of mobility restrictions, after considering how difficult it was to agree on personal appointments in which both spouses could be available, especially if they were living in farther away cities/towns; and 3.) because Lombardy is the second region (just after Lazio) that hosts the larger number of Mexican immigrants in Italy (almost 700 officially registered in 2010, ISTAT) and one the regions that hosts more immigrants in the whole country; 4) and, finally, because it was thought that enough urban/rural and city size variability could be already observed when comparing larger cities such as Milan or Brescia with other smaller cities such as Limone sul Garda or San Pellegrino Terme e.g.

Furthermore, in 2013 there were celebrated 4,086 marriages with at least one foreign spouse in Lombardy, making it the main northern Italian region to host this kind of unions: 2,348 among Italian men and foreign women; and 682 among Italian women and foreign men; 15.4% of total marriages celebrated in the region during the year.

Generally speaking, it was observed an important difference between people living in larger urban centers such as Milan or Brescia, and people living in smaller urban or rural dispersed communities. Such difference was particularly noticeable when the foreign spouses moved from living in Mexico City or another middle-big size city of 1,000,000,000 inhabitants or more, and arrived to live in a smaller city of less than 100,000 or even 10,000 inhabitants; or the other way around (which was less common). Furthermore, the higher degree of multiculturalism observed mainly in Milan, and to a lesser extent in Brescia, did influence the possibility to find Mexican restaurants, shops selling Mexican or other ethnic products, Mexico related cultural events, and other nationals' associations, which were all of them scarce or inexistent in other smaller cities.

There were 11 couples in which the foreign spouse was a Mexican man (36.66%), whereas there were 19 couples in which the foreign spouse was a Mexican woman (63.33%), proportion that is relatively similar to the national trend (34.2% and 65.8% respectively).

Among these, it was noticed a clearly higher willingness of most women in comparison to men (both Mexican and Italian) regarding telling their own life stories, but this potential bias might be due to the fact that the researcher was also a woman.

It was also noticed that some of these Mexican men were already living in Italy before getting to know their current partner/spouse (4 out of 11); whereas from the rest 3 of them were in a third country (nor Italy nor Mexico) when they met their current Italian partner/spouse, and only 4 of them were in Mexico when such encounter took place. From the first ones (those already living in Italy), 3 of them where already having a professional occupation and two of them have actually previously concluded their professional studies in Italy (Sous Chef, Executive Chef and Insurance Agent); the fourth one was pursuing a PhD degree in the Polytechnic of Milan. From the 3 other Mexicans that met their partners in a third country, one of them was pursuing also a PhD in Spain, another one was following an English language course in Ireland, and the third one was on a kind of spiritual holiday also in Spain. From the last 4 men that were living in Mexico when they met their current partners, one of them was still a university student in Mexico City, while another was working in a local restaurant property of his parents in one of the most touristic localities of the country, Huatulco, Oaxaca; and only the last 2 met their partners through Internet (one in a social network called Hi5, and the other in a language exchange website). Most of these men had a middle-high educational level and/or were at least having an occupational attainment either in Italy or in Mexico when they met their current partners.

Such finding seems to coincide with what Tognetti Bordogna did previously find in a similar research developed in Trentino in 2004, that women are specially the ones that try to maximize their choices in what it is conceived as an exchange of resources; thus, *"in the cases of Italian women who marry foreign men, the majority of the first ones have a lower academic degree than their foreign male counterparts, nevertheless, most of these men possess a working occupation…"* (Tognetti Bordogna: 2004; 38).

Stella (31) (Italian) (Married with Alberto who was met through Internet): *"Physical appearance pleasing, almost the same age, he had a job, he lived alone, knew how to sew, cook, clean the house, was single, was interested on me, he spent much time online with me, filled me with attention. I wanted a Mexican boy and I found him. Thanks to him, I improved my Spanish and I had the opportunity to know Mexico. I like very much his exotic look and the customs of his country"*.

Such information may be particularly important for two reasons, on the one hand it shows that several Mexican men (more than Mexican women) moved out from Mexico for

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working/studying economical reasons (6 out 11, and 1 more who was simply "travelling"). Thus, in comparison with women, less men moved out specifically because of "love/marriage reasons"; but even when they do it, they manage to professionally maximize more (at least more than Mexican women) their migratory experience, and this might be due to the opportunities offered by the local labor market (at least during a certain time period) and because of a gendered (Mexican) male concept of protective and family provider kind of love, and/or because they are actually expected to provide such kind of love. As it will be seen later, many of these foreign men actually are the only breadwinners in their households, even when during certain periods they have needed to be sustained by their Italian partner/spouse's family (e.g. working directly for the family business).

In general, and contrary to what happens in other –predominantly male- immigrant groups (such as Nord Africans), it was noticed that all Mexican men that were met were so far economically active, many of them in middle and middle-high skilled professional occupations; which is also very different to what happens among Mexican women; however, it is necessary to keep in mind that there are actually significantly fewer Mexican men than women in Italy (i.e. still a highly gendered marriage migration).

Thus, among Mexican men/Italian women couples, there were 4 international mixed couples (migration in Italy before partnership/marriage) and 7 so called cross-border couples (partnerthip/marriage before migration). And still from these 11 couples, 7 were married, and the other 4 were unmarried and not thinking about it yet either by conviction or by a young age.

Talking about age, most of these men were in the range of 29 to 43 years old; the average age difference between Mexican men and Italian women was of 3.5, quiet similar to (both partners) Italian unions. However, in this case there were some cases in which it was actually the Mexican man to be a bit younger than the Italian woman. Noticeable as well is the fact that all (married) Mexican men were in their first marriage, in comparison with Italian men, and all women (both Mexican and Italian), among which it was possible to find some second marriages.

The women married with these men are often less qualified than them, especially in case of those men who hold a Master or PhD degrees; however, there is not one of them having a lower educational level than secondary school or bachelor degree. The higher

variability found among these Italian women was in terms of occupational attainment, and at this respect it was seen that specially those women who were having children (with the exception of one) were the ones currently out of the labor market. Among Italian women married with Mexican men (independently of the ones that were only in a long term relationship), there was one of them who was married for the second time, whether for the rest it was their first time marriage.

The more detailed information about how these couples between Mexican men and Italian women did meet each other and negotiate their internal/external differences will be released during the description of the qualitative data in the next subtitle; however, what it was noticed was that the general characteristic of this particular kind of mixed couple was to be "different but not that much different" ("diversi ma non troppo") from the native Italians' marriage partners; and still somehow similar to what has been found so far in other researches among Italian women in mixed couples who –nonetheless the mixed condition- try to maximize their –mostly individual- marriage choices, although in higher socio-economic conditions to what it is observed among other immigrant groups.

Whereas for Mexican men, in contrast to what will be seen regarding Mexican women, it was observed that they have mostly met their partners after have already emigrated from Mexico. And such condition is usually related to the open willingness to move out from Mexico at a relative young age (for economical reasons and in particular for individuals belonging to middle-high social classes and highly skilled segments, this is usually due to the ambition of maximizing their professional backgrounds); and to the role of breadwinners that they usually expect, and are expected, to fulfill.

Differently, in the case of Mexican women married to Italian men there was a higher number of respondents (19 couples, 63.33%) and a higher variety among the respondents (both Mexicans and Italians). Such diversity was first of all observed in relation to the Mexican city of origin of the foreign spouse (Mexican men were mostly from the capital Mexico city, and Italian women were from the Italian cities in which they were actually residing); but also to the Italian city of origin of the Italian male partner/spouse (it was observed that 5 out of 9 Italian male partners living in Milan were actually from other cities or regions).

Also among the respondents there were some couples that had more than 10 or 15 years of marriage, whereas there were many young couples that were married or living together for less than 5 years. Average age difference among the spouses was higher than for Mexican men/Italian women couples, i.e. 5 years; and also higher than for native Italian marriages (3 years). However, there were important differences between the couples, because there were some partners who had only 1 year difference among them, whereas there were others who were having a difference of more than 10 years. There were, furthermore, two women who were a bit older than their Italian counterparts.

In the case of this particular kind of unions, there were several second marriages in both cases, 5 Mexican women were previously married and 3 of them were having children from their previous relationships; whereas in the case of Italian men there were also 5 men who were previously married but only one of them had children from his previous relationship. Differently to Mexican men and Italian women, there were only 2 unmarried couples among Mexican women and Italian men, and among these only the first couple said not to be interested in marriage at all (needed to say that this was one of the younger couples, and that the woman may be considered a second generation return migrant so that she has Italian heritage and thus a double citizenship); whereas in the case of the second (also young) couple both partners said that they were contemplating to get married because of bureaucratic reasons (i.e. sooner or later she would need to transform her student residence permit).

Furthermore, it was noticed that -in comparison to Mexican men- more Mexican women moved out from Mexico specifically for marriage reasons. From a total of 19 couples, 14 may be considered cross-border unions (migration after partnership/marriage). Further details will be given during the description of the qualitative research; however, it may be already signaled also a greater diversity in the ways in which the partners met each other, specially it was noticed a salient difference between couples in which the foreign spouse was already living in Italy before meeting the partner (among these couples Kalmijn's social forces -preferences, third parties and marriage market- showed to be particularly decisive); and couples in which, contrary, the foreign spouse was living abroad or in Mexico (in which, in many cases, it was noticed the total absence of external social regulators and therefore also social dampers). Needed to say that it was also among these

last cases, that there were observed more couples who met because of casual touristic encounters or by initial virtual meetings through Internet.

Regarding Italian spouses married with Mexican women, it was also noticed an enormous diversity that actually coincided with the diversity observed among these women. Although it was noticed a greater age divide among these couples, it was also noticed that several Mexican women have a higher educational level than their male Italian counterparts. However, in most cases differences were not striking, i.e. there were not couples in which the educational divide would be higher than one immediate education degree, e.g. secondary school/bachelor or bachelor/Master degree. From 19 Italian male partners, 12 of them where holding a Bachelor degree in the more diverse disciplinary areas, Engineering, Law, Economics and Finance, Political Sciences, among others; whereas the rest have a secondary or technical school degree. Among the women married with men holding a Bachelor degree, there were some holding a graduate degree (Master or Specialization) that was obtained abroad, or at least one previous studying/working international experience. Hence, it is also noticed among these couples a mutual exchange of resources that vary according to the particular characteristics of the single partners.

Nonetheless this higher educational attainment among Mexican women, it was among this group that there were more cases of unemployment or discontinuous occupational attainment; i.e. 3 Mexican women were working as free-lancers translators or interpreters; 1 of them was selling homemade crafts and an occasional colf; 1 was discontinuously leading dance lessons; 1 was a university student; and only two were having a middle skilled professional stable job (and from these one pursued the bachelor degree in Italy, and the other one pursued a series of specialization studies in Spain and Italy); the remaining 12 were mostly (voluntarily or involuntarily) stay-at-home housewives. Thus, it was among this group that there were noticed more women without a formal occupational attainment or with a very precarious one; even many of those who have a high qualification do not manage to apply the acquired skills whether because their qualifications are not officially recognized in the host country, or because they do not count with the sufficient linguistic or soft skills necessary to perform certain kind of middle-high qualified occupations as the ones that they say that were previously performing in Mexico (see Ambrosini, 2001).

As it was already said, it was among this second group where it was possibly to notice more Mexican women, significantly more than Mexican men, who actually moved to Italy precisely for exclusive love/marriage/partnership reasons. However, it seems that many of these women never had the express intention of living abroad, others have not ever been in Italy before or they have visited the country only for touristic reasons; in many cases previous knowledge of the in-laws was also minimal or even inexistent. According to these circumstances, there were more cases of "problematic couples" identified within this group, with several women specially complaining for deep nostalgia, loneliness, and a lack of integration in the host society (separation or marginalization adaptation strategies). Many of these women may be identified with what has been called "migrants for love", a kind of migration that has appeared from the Nineties on; and that refers to people who deliberately seek and establish romantic relationships internationally (Roca Girona, 2007).

This is one of the main differences between Mexican women married with Italian men, and other more common mixed marriage arrangements generally observed in Italy. Thus, if this social phenomenon has been almost completely identified with the larger phenomenon of (new) international immigration, it is clear that most Mexican women moved to Italy because of love/marriage reasons, thus, international migration came after meeting their current partners (cross-border marriages), and that implies a series of differences that may clearly influence both the internal relationship dynamic within the couple, and the integration process of the foreign spouse in the host country.

On the one hand, the relative cultural proximity between Mexicans and Italians and the particularly high socio-economic status and educational attainment of these women (in contrast with other women from immigrant groups) may presuppose a facilitated insertion process into the host society; however, the difficulties to experience both parallel processes at the same time, i.e. the daily adaptation process with the partner and the enlarged family, and the overall adaptation process within a new society in which it is almost impossible to spend their professional skills (when existent), may be a significant challenge specially for those women who arrived with particular love-life expectations; who lack of sufficient local cultural capital and many also of other international experiences; or who have moved at an older age and lack of further resilient resources.

In order to deeply understand these couples, nevertheless, it is important not only to look at their main characteristics but also to analyze the couple's formation process and the particular pre-migration characteristics of both partners; and only after have done it, it is possible to deduce that the incidence of such couples (especially those who got together almost immediately after have met each other) may be due to four main –non exclusive-factors, i.e. 1.) the women's conception of romantic and self-sacrificing love; 2.) the stereotypical image that these Italian men may have of foreign women, and very particularly of Latino American women; 3.) the willingness (whether conscious or unconscious) that certain women may have regarding moving out from Mexico; and 4.) the search of social mobility and/or stability through an otherwise out of reach marriage with a foreign partner (this accounts for both Mexican women and Italian men).

However, and as it was early stated, there is a higher variability among these kind of couples. There were also some other Mexican women who were already living in Italy before meeting their current partners; among this second group specially it was possible to find women from a middle-high or high social class who were in Italy (or in Europe) for a (mostly) freely chosen international experience; because of an European blood heredity; because of language or professional courses; or to a lesser extent because of economical reasons and more specifically because of a family problematic situation back in Mexico. It is, thus, especially among this group that the consequences of Westernized family transformations might be deduced (e.g. women's capacity to freely choose about their private life; and lower or inexistent interference of relatives), but it may be also testified the salient ethnic and socio-economic stratification of the population in Mexico, that usually is still reproduced even when women out-marry and move abroad (Beck's losers and winners of globalization).

It was among this group that Kalmijn's Social Forces particularly showed to have an influence on the incidence of mixed couples with natives Italians; thus, people who were already living in Italy from several years ago (at least partially culturally assimilated), managed to enter the local marriage market without significant concerns and they usually met their Italian counterparts through third parties such as common colleagues or friends.

Although many of these women did not have either an occupational attainment, both their marriage negotiations, adaptation strategies, and their overall integration into the host

society was usually mediated and "cushioned" by the previous cultural and social capital obtained while living in Italy, and of course by their initial willingness and –mostly voluntary- choice to live in the country.

Such is also the case for people who met in common international contexts, both partners Erasmus students or working expats, in which there is an express access to very particular types of internationalized marriage markets in which people do share certain common characteristics and/or interest/life styles, although the ethnic and/or national origin of the spouses differs (usually highly educated people who apply a cosmopolitan or bicultural no traditional overall adaptation strategy); and in which the three of these social forces: (international) preferences, common (usually high skilled) third parties, and the entrance into a particular (international) marriage market, do play a role.

Although in all of these marriage arrangements there were observed a series of exchanges of resources, whether social, juridical, material, cultural, intellectual, emotional, etc., it was also noticed that there were those (power) unbalanced couple/marriage arrangements in which more tensions were both expressively reported by the respondents, and personally perceived by the researcher.

5.4. The difficulty to classify Mexican/Italian mixed couples

As it was described in Chapter 3, traditional theories of mixed couples and intermarriages were developed in relation to a larger phenomenon of international migration. Thus, intermarriages with members of the native population were usually thought to develop almost exclusively after the foreign spouse accomplished a certain length of stay in the host country and did acquire a sufficient local cultural capital and socioeconomic status that allowed him/her to relate with natives as social equals, thus as the result of an assimilation process.

Furthermore, it was theorized that such unions were possible almost exclusively as the result of an unbalanced power relation –whether in terms of the partners' innate or acquired characteristics- that usually favored the native spouse who would have need very good reasons and strong stimulus to relate with the out-group mixed partner.

Also in Chapter 4, it was seen how the topic has been commonly approached under a traditional migrant perspective in Italy; such that intermarriages are usually perceived as the

result of an assimilation process (when the foreign spouse is a regular migrant, second generation migrant or naturalized Italian citizen), or as the result of an opportunistic or consensually negotiated action aimed at regularizing an irregular migrant' migratory status, shorten the process of citizen acquisition, or simply access to social and economic mobility channels, especially if the foreign spouse comes from a non EU and/or less developed country.

However, more contemporary theories on intermarriage such as the one of "Social Forces" by Kalmijn have addressed a larger complexity of the phenomenon. Thus it was contemplated that mixed marriage patterns could be also the result of simultaneous individual, group and structural explanations such as individuals' preferences, social control of third parties, and marriage market constraints. Furthermore, in Chapter 2 there were described some of the main family's transformations that have occurred in the Western world and/or in other Westernized countries; and that have influenced private life and family formation's decisions.

When respondents were approached it was possible to see that there is a significant diversity in the ways in which these Mexican-Italian couples were formed, such differences lie mainly not only in the ethnic/national characteristics of the partners but also in the socio-economic ones; in the motivations to be part of a mixed relationship; in the way such partners met each other; and furthermore in the way in which they live their mixity and negotiate their differences.

 The very first distinction was the difficulty to actually classify these couples. As it was said in the subtitle 1.5.1, there are important differences between the way in which contemporary mixed (married or unmarried) couples are (formally or informally classified). In this case, first of all, it is necessary to distinguish whether a couple is mixed in terms of ethnicity and/or culture and/or nationality.

At this respect it is interesting to highlight those cases in which some Mexican partners resulted to actually have a double nationality before meeting their Italian partner; something that it is nowadays increasingly common in certain geographical areas. In the very particular case of Latin America, such phenomenon is related to its colonial past, to the arrival of several colonizers, economic migrants and political refuges already several decades ago, such as those farm workers who arrived to Mexico from the north of Italy in

the XIX century, or more recently those who arrived from Spain after the Civil War e.g. (see subtitle 4.3); and to the enormous border crossings that do exist particularly with the United States (it is thought that more than 10,000,000 people do have or might access the double Mexican/American citizenship that, in the case of Mexico, it is regulated by the Citizenship Law of 1998; and in the case of Italy it is regulated by the Law no. 91 of the 05/02/1992). The acknowledgement of these ancient interconnections is important to understand how the world is much more globalized and interconnected (since several centuries ago) to what may be thought or actually perceived (just as it was narrated all over Chapter 2).

In the next exemplifying cases, couples may be regarded as intercultural mixed couples but not as international mixed couples (one of them was intra-European though); and actually from these only one of them was a cross-border couple (i.e. international migration occurred just after marriage between one Mexican-Italian man and one Italian woman).

Couple 1. Alejandra (Mexican/Spanish) and Enrico (Italian). Milan. An Intra-European mixed marriage. Regular European study/working migrant with a native.

Alejandra and Enrico showed to be particularly open in responding questions about their couple and talking about some anecdotes that have lived together. Although Alejandra is one of the more active members of the Mexican community in Milan (participating in cultural events and organizing social gatherings among Mexican nationals), when I did personally met her she told me her story starting from the fact that she is also a daughter of a mixed couple, i.e. her mother is Mexican whereas her father was Spanish (R.I.P). She was born and grew up in Mexico City until the end of secondary school (17 years old); however, the element of mixedness has always been present in her life, just as the continuous trips to Spain to meet her father's family in Andalusia and the correspondent Spanish passport. Furthermore, Alejandra's brother and sister respectively live in Canada and Finland, whereas other relatives still live in Mexico City and in different cities of the Andalusia region.

When Alejandra finished secondary school studies she decided to take a one year trip to Europe instead of starting immediately the university studies (including Finland where her older sister was already pursuing a Master degree); and after visiting Italy she decided

that she wanted to spend more time in the country in order to learn the language. With the approval and support of her mother, she stayed and looked for an Italian language course in a private institute; she did not want to study in one of the largest cities but in a small town where only few people could speak other languages so she would be forced to speak only Italian.

It was in this way that Alejandra arrived to a small town in Perugia, where Enrico's parents are the owners of a private institute that organizes summer schools, and several other types of "Italian language for foreigners" courses. She liked that much the experience that after learning the language, and once again with the approval and economic support of her mother, she decided to stay and to pursue a university degree in the local university. She did pursue a career on Linguistic Mediation, and after a while she started to work in the institute of Enrico's parents (although they haven't met yet).

Enrico at that time was already working in the city of Milan for a major bank, and they just met during a local party organized by the language institute when Enrico went back to his hometown.

Enrico: *"Alejandra and me met in a local party in the small town from where I come from in Perugia.. We discovered to have many things in common. She had lived in Italy for several years before we met, in the region and the town where I actually come from, so actually the fact that she was a "foreigner" was not very important. Surely there were more Italian people in Milan that I could consider more "foreigners" to me than her. The fact that she was not Italian did not affected very much; but I do recognize that her way of being, different from the Italian women that I had met so far, it was one of the things that impressed me the most at the beginning, specially knowing all the things that she have done all by herself since she arrived to Italy".*

Alejandra: *"I met Enrico in a local party organized by the language institute in which I was working for at that time, after have concluded my bachelor (12 years ago). At that time, I had lived in Italy for some years so it was normal to meet an Italian guy, I didn't even think about it. I do like learning languages and I think that I have strong skills on that so it was a good job for me. It happened that Enrico is one of the sons of the institute's owners who I have known for a long while already (first as a student and later as an employee) and I did have a very good relationship with them. When I met Enrico we found*

out that we had many similarities of character and values. Enrico and I started a kind of long distance relationship Milan-Perugia for almost 6 years, I guess his parents were happy about it because I was a good reason for Enrico to come back in town more often. After those 6 years, we decided to go further and live together, and in this case we decided that it was me the one moving to Milan. I said why not? By that time I have lived already several years in Italy, and it could be a good change for me to move to a larger city and get a new job there, and of course a good attempt to make our relationship even more solid".

Couple 2. Claudia (Mexican/Italian) and Matteo (Italian). Milan. An intercultural/not international mixed couple between a second generation return migrant and a native Italian.

Both Claudia and Matteo are very much reserved people and they are actually aware of that. Only because I was recommended by another Mexican person who Claudia already used to know, it was that they acceded to speak with me. I did approach both separately, however, Matteo did responded my questions in a very rigid and close way so that there was not space for further conversation. Currently Claudia works as a freelance translator, and Matteo works for a Software Development company. They cohabitate without any intention to marry.

Claudia: *"I met Matteo in a party of common friends in Milan. By that time I had lived in Italy for more than a year. I guess that I came to Italy to try to create a certain feeling of belonging that I have not found in Mexico. My grandmother was an Italian immigrant in Mexico, so she used to speak the language to me and therefore I had a double citizenship since I was a child. I never felt completely Mexican so when I already had a certain age I decided to come to Italy to actually experience living in the country. My Italian was not actually perfect but it improved a lot after talking some courses on Classic Art and Filmography. It was there where I made some friends and through some of them it was that I met Matteo, he is a musician during his free time. I was already in Italy and I did want to be here so it seemed normal to me to know an Italian guy, at the moment I didn't thought about the fact that he was of a different nationality from mine (although we both actually have the same nationality). We started to date after that party, Matteo is from a small town in Abruzzzo and by that time we were both almost new in Milan, so he started*

to spend most of the time at my apartment, and after 11 months we decided to actually live together… it was simply easier and cheaper".

Matteo: *"I met Claudia in a party of common friends. I'm not very talkative and neither she is actually, but maybe because of that I felt well with her since that day, so that was the important thing for me, whether she was actually Mexican or Italian or whatever. I was new in the city and it was good to be together".*

Couple 3. Viviana (Italian) and Martin (Mexican/Italian). Lodi. An intercultural/not international cross border mixed marriage between a first generation return migrant and a native Italian.

Martin was one of the first Mexican men that I met during one of the biggest Mexican holiday celebrations in Milan. At that moment, there was not present his wife; however, we stayed in touch and as soon as he asked her to participate in the project through an interview she did immediately agreed. In this way, after have previously arranged a personal appointment, I did met both at their place in Lodi; there were also their three young children present (1, 3 and 6).

From the sample description developed in the subtitle 5.3, Martin is one of the two Mexican men that was in Mexico when he met his wife Viviana. Martin is, nevertheless, the son of an Italian/Mexican mixed couple that resides in Mexico. His father arrived several decades ago to Mexico, more specifically to Huatulco, Oaxaca (a very demanding tourist destination); and stayed there to make the family of which Manuel is the younger son.

Although the most natural thing was to speak with both of them together, it was possible to observe a noticeable correspondence and coherence in their responses. A sense of well being between the couple and their children was specially perceived. However, it was also possible to notice the need of Martin for going more often to Mexico and to relate more with other people who, just as him, have been grown up there. Although growing up with an Italian father, he says to feel very close to Mexican culture, to the Spanish language, the food, and specially his family and friends who stayed there. Whereas in Lodi it has not been particular easy to make new friends or to meet people outside of his wife's relatives.

Both partners coincided in the fact that bureaucratic arrangements were very much facilitated because of the double citizenship of Martin; however, economic integration was achieved only through the assistance of Viviana's father who was actually the one that employed Manuel in his company (spare parts selling), while she is a stay-at-home mother.

Martin: *"I met Viviana in Mexico, while I was working in my family's Italian restaurant. My father arrived there for vacations many decades ago and stayed in love with the place and of course with my mother. They initiated the family business together before the arrival of my older sister. Ours is a very well known restaurant in Huatulco, where during the whole year there are many tourists and many Italians who have arrived to actually live there, at least for some months during the year. Although I have been in Italy before meeting Viviana, it was always for vacations to meet my father's family in Sicily, however it is not the same in Sicily than here… for me it was natural to be together with an Italian girl so I did everything that I had to do to be with her; however, actually living here in a permanent basis has been more complex to what I may have thought…".*

Viviana: *"For me it was the first trip to Mexico when I met Martin; I just felt in love with the place. Huatulco and the whole state of Oaxaca is amazing, the weather, the food, the sea, the people. I have lived all my life here in Lodi so it was such as good change, I was there with a couple of friends and we ended up eating at Martin's family restaurant. It was a striking encounter, he was so kind and straightforward and I was not used to that… at the end he asked me to go out together next day, and next day… and after coming back to Italy he came to visit me several times until we decided to formalize the relationship".*

These three exemplifying cases show the difficulty to categorize mixed couples accordingly only to the citizenship(s) and cultural background(s) of the partners; as well as to their civil status (Couple 1 got married only recently in a civil ceremony in Las Vegas after have lived together in Milan for almost 6 years; Couple 2 is currently cohabiting and unmarried without any further intention to get married; and Couple 3 got married through a religious ceremony in Italy, according to the wife's family traditional orientation, after the groom moved from Mexico to Italy 9 years ago). Although people with a double citizenship (especially if from an EU country) may facilitate several bureaucratic procedures when living in Italy and –theoretically speaking- may move freer within the EU, the way to meet the mixed partner, to experience the particular mixity inside and outside the couple, and to

integrate into the host society vary very much according to the partners' particular characteristics and the context in which they are embedded.

5.5. Marriage as a result of migration or migration as a result of marriage? Multiple heterogamy channels.

Although many mixed couples and intermarriages were traditionally thought to occur only after a certain length of stay period and an assimilation process of the foreign spouse into the local society; it was observed that contemporary international mixed couples/marriages are formed according to several influencing elements and through the more diverse heterogamy channels. Some of the more important differences among couples were noticed according to one particular divide, thus, international migration before getting to know the foreign partner, or getting to know the foreign partner before actually migrating to a different country. Although both types may be considered international mixed couples, the last ones (marriage migration) are usually called cross-border or transnational marriages; i.e. unions that expressly involve people actually living in different nation-states.

Among the first cases (migration before marriage), there were some cases that actually correspond to the classical "Cultural Assimilation Theory", the one that has been traditionally related with a larger phenomenon of international migration. At this respect, it was noticed that the previous presence of immigrant relatives in Italy (in this case from Mexican origin) does facilitate the insertion of the foreign partner into the host society; and that after living in the country and thus have assimilated several cultural traits (such as language proficiency or social behavior) it is actually easier to enter into the local marriage market and thus get to know potential native spouses through the intervention of third parties such as common friends or other social or professional groups.

Couple 4. Laura (Mexican) and Francesco (Italian). Milan. International mixed couple between a regular family reunification Mexican migrant and an Italian native citizen.

Laura was one of the respondents of the first online survey on gastronomic practices. She is a Fashion Designer that already has more than 5 years of living in Milan. She is very active within the Mexican community organizing parties and celebrating Mexican holidays,

especially those where children are involved because she has a three years old child with Francesco. He, on the other hand, works as a Logistics Executive after have studied a bachelor of International Studies. Currently Laura is a stay-at-home housewife completely dedicated to their small son. The age difference among them is minimal, and they are both very open, either together or individually, when speaking about their couple and the way to negotiate their differences, which –according to the two of them- are much more related to the differences that could exist in *"...whatever male/female relationship"* than to their cultural/national backgrounds.

Laura: *"Francesco and me met at a birthday party of a mutual friend, four years ago. At the beginning we talked just a little, we went out again with the company of friends and we never thought to be actually together as a couple. Then we found ourselves in a little bar in Navigli and at the end of the evening he asked me to go out again only the two of us. Since that night we have no longer separate and nowadays we have a small child together!". I came to Italy one year ago before meeting Francesco, my uncle (sister of my mother) is married with an Italian man for many years ago already, so thanks to her I could come here to give it a try and look for a job because I'm a designer and I have always dreamed with living in the capital of fashion. For me meeting an Italian person was normal since I was actually living in Italy, but to tell the true. I did not think that it was so important the fact that he was Italian... even if he would have been Chinese I would have decided to be with him any way".*

Francesco: *"I met Laura at a party of common friends. Since the beginning I thought that she was very beautiful, funny and easy going... not as problematic as other Italian girls I have met before. When I started to get along more with her I realized that we had several things in common, our approach to life... very easy going, our love for rock music and our willingness to go to concerts together. We keep doing it all the time even now that we have a child. Maybe she is more open because she is Mexican, the thing is that we got along very well. At that time we both were working so it was not so easy to meet during the week, so after some months of going out we decided to live together, it was just natural, without so many formalities, I guess I liked that".*

Also among the couples in which international migration (from Mexico to Italy) happened before getting married it is possible to find those cases in which the irregular,

potentially desperate, conditions of the foreign partner (and most probably of the native partner as well) may lead to the formation of an international mixed couple almost for merely instrumental bureaucratic motives. In this case, thus, the Social Exchange Theory may be literally applied, whether one or both partners are actually conscious or not.

Couple 5. Gabriela (Mexican) and Enzo (Italian). Milan. International mixed marriage between an irregular migrant and an Italian citizen.

Gabriela was also one of the respondents of the first online survey that acceded to participate in a larger interview. Although she convinced her husband to participate in the research, and I spoke with them both separately, it was clear that he did not want to, so he barely spoke to me. The general impression that this particular couple gave me was the one of two people who share an apartment without such a deep emotional exchange. They have, nevertheless, more than 10 years together. Enzo is a mechanical already on retirement, while Gabriela on time to time works as a colf (irregularly) and try to sell some hand crafts maybe among other Mexican women, with whom she searches for continuous contact, although he is not interested into meeting other Mexicans and even less on visiting Mexico, where he actually has not ever been.

Gabriela. *"I met Roberto in 1999 here in Milan. A Peruvian friend of mine introduced him to me because he was looking for a person that would help him with cleaning, cooking, etc… he was not able to prepare a coffee by himself, the only thing he used to do was putting his dirty clothes on the washing machine. I came to Italy as a tourist and I liked it, so I decided to stay even when my tourist free period (three months) expired. At that time it was easy to find a job cleaning or looking after old people, it was only a matter to go to the closer bus stop and someone would asked you if you wanted to work as a "colf" or "badante". After one day of working with him, we flirted each other. At that moment it was my only choice because I was a "clandestine", so he took care of me and I could regulate my situation. He may be rough but I like the fact that he looks at me for the person I truly am, and not for what my family has in Mexico".*

Enzo. *"Well… Erika came to work as a cleaning lady for me. It was you know… something immediate. It was good for her and it was good for me so she stayed at my place".*

Completely different cases were the ones of other Mexican men who were also living in Italy before meeting their Italian partner, but having regulated professional kind of jobs. Such were the cases of Carlos and Serena, Jorge and Alice, and Luis and Maria. The reasons of these men to move to Italy were mostly economic and family oriented ones; Carlos, in the first place, arrived to Italy to specifically work as a chef in a Mexican restaurant in Milan; Luis and Jorge, differently, moved to the country at a very young age (because of relatives previously living there) and studied both their professional careers already being in Italy so that they were living and working in the country for several years already (one as a Chef and the other as an Insurance Agent Administrator respectively). In all these cases, both cultural assimilation and social forces did play a role when meeting their correspondent partners. Differences among them and their partners are not particular salient, apart from the occupational attainment of these women (Jorge's wives is a stay-at-home housewives; while Carlos's girlfriend is still and university student; and Luis's girlfriend actually works as his own Executive Assistant). Among all these cases, heterogamy channels may be practically the same frequented by native Italians within the host society (common friends, common interests, job places, etc.); and the exchange of resources is relatively balanced by the particular position of each of the partners.

Couple 6. David (Mexican) and Veronica (Italian). Milan. Highly skilled international mixed marriage between two previous PhD students (A Mexican one and an Italian native).

A relatively similar case is the one of David and Veronica, who also met after David came from Mexico City to Milan to pursue a PhD in Mechanical Engineering in the Polytechnic of Milan, where she was also pursuing a PhD after have moved to Milan from the city of Vicenza. This couple was referred by other respondent, and both of them were very much willing to share their stories and their further impressions about the mixed couples that they have known so far. At the time they were expecting a second baby and David had received a very good job offer in Germany, to where they later actually moved.

David: *"We met at the Polytechnic of Milan while I was pursuing a PhD on mechanical engineering; she was also a PhD student but in a previous cycle (I was XX Cycle and she was XIX Cycle). We became good friends during the first three years of the PhD, and for the fourth one we decided to live together. Expenses in Milan are very high*

and our salaries quiet low, plus we really liked each other. The fact that she was Italian it was not that important, we were friends before regardless the nationality and I was very much used to have friends of several nationalities. More importantly, we were having common passions, hobbies and sense of humor, and maybe also it did influence the fact that we were living a common situation".

Veronica: *"We met during graduate school. It was a tough time I think. We met first as friends, through common topics of interest, common friends and kind of common schedules. I thought of him as a funny and intelligent guy, so not really as "my Mexican colleague", the relation developed a lot during those years so at a certain point we decided to share apartment with another common friend, and one year later just the two of us. I never thought of getting married in Church, is just not on my genes nor my cultural tradition, so still one more year later we formalized our couple through marriage, civil one though; religious one is not for us, but still we had a second party also in Mexico, it was great".*

Although the case of David and Veronica was very much particular, since both of them were pursuing a (long term) PhD in the same faculty. There were several cases of Mexicans who met their current Italian partner/spouse while studying in Italy a language or professional course, or participating in an academic exchange. In these cases, meeting an Italian person was very much a matter of common friends, coinciding social activities, and of course personal preferences.

Among these couples it was not noticed a particular age or socioeconomic status difference (i.e. a relative high homogamy); however, it was noticed that several foreign spouses, in particular women, started to experience certain integration difficulties when it was a matter of evolving from being a student to actually find a job (that in many cases never arrived), and from being a temporary resident inserted in a very particular social environment (university, institute or language school) to a permanent one outside of both schooling and labor market; and furthermore having to relate to the in-laws that, very often, were not so used –as their son/daughter- to deal with foreigners. Among these cases it was possible to observe the ones of Irma and Davide and Maira and Germano e.g.

In cases like these, where people voluntary decided (and was able to) spend a short time in Italy whether to study something or to get to know the language or a very specific

cultural domain, it was noticed a particular sense of delusion and contrition for the high expectations that were usually created about living in the country.

Several were the cases of Mexican women from a middle high social class who had the chance to live for short periods in Italy (mostly in the more touristic destinations or where there were universities and or/private institutes such as Florence, Siena, Venice, Bologna, Rome and Milan) and who met their partner during that period or after have returned to Mexico. Specially in those cases, meeting a native partner was a good mean to change their migratory status as tourists or short time students to long term residents as wives of an Italian citizen, or simply going to live to the country of which they were "in-love". However, in many of these cases life after marriage did actually change importantly, maybe going to live to another smaller town where the boyfriend/later husband actually was born, and in many occasions that implied living with or very near to the in-laws.

Couple 7. Maira (Mexican) and Germano (Italian). Treviglio. International Mixed Marriage between a former foreign short-time student and a native middle skilled person.

Maira was refereed by several of the respondents that I met before. She was one of the women who started to gather Mexican nationals of online virtual groups through which many Mexicans have actually managed to know each other. At the moment she and her husband were living in Treviglio so the first time we met together we did it alone in Milan, and afterwards she invited me to her house to meet her husband Germano. Maira graduated as an Architect in Mexico, and after having a couple of unsatisfactory jobs she was able to take a break and come to Milan to follow an Interior Design course. During her stay in Milan she met Germano through common friends, and even when she returned back to Mexico they stayed in contact until they decided to get together and eventually to marry.

Maira: *"I always considered myself a fan of Italian architecture and cultural in general… I have never had the chance to be in Italy until I managed to come here to follow a course in Interior Design. At that moment I was not feeling very happy with my labor condition in Mexico so it was good for me to take a break. It was great to go back to school, and to be living in Italy… like a dream come true you know… I have studied Italian before just for passion so I was able to communicate with other Italians. I used to go out a lot with my colleagues, and one of them introduced me his flat mate who happened to be*

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Alessandro. We got along immediately, of course I do think that he is a great person, but I also think that I was very much impressed by the country. We went out many times, everything was very fast. Later, I had to go back to Mexico but we stayed in contact. At that time there was mostly ICQ and Windows Messanger. He went to visit me in Mexico, in Guanajuato (the city where I'm from) and some months later we decided that I would come back to Italy to get married. The only problem is that we should go to live to Treviglio, because during that time Alessandro had to change his job and it was cheaper and easier to live there, where he is actually from. My parents knew what I wanted so they did not oppose, we got married in a very small civil ceremony in Treviglio, and a couple of years later we also married in church in Mexico. I thought that, after being married, I could be able to look for a job as I wanted to, but then I realized how difficult is to find it. First of all, my bachelor degree was not fully recognized, I had to do so many difficult and expensive things to recognize my studies; the only things that I was able to find was a job as a receptionists in a local hotel, as a baby sitter, and other related irregular and poorly paid activities, Definitively it was not what I expected.. Moreover, Alessandro's mother and I never got along quiet well, they are people who have not travelled at all, so for her, even after six years, I continue to be "the foreign" person who married her son".

Germano: *"I met Maira through a common friend with whom I was sharing apartment at that time in Milan. The connection was immediate, she was so beautiful, smart, always smiling, interested on everything… I just felt very lucky that a girl like her could look at me. So since I met her I have tried to do everything that I could to be with here. We agreed to get married so she could come to live here after I went to visit her in Mexico. By that time I got an undetermined kind of job in Treviglio where I come from, so we decided to live here. It was not easy, specially because I know that she does not manage to do what she wants, to get a proper job and to feel more independent and fulfilled. I try to do my best so we can live only with my income, but it is not easy nowadays. I know she feels alone, the relationships with my family has not been the best, and it is quiet expensive to go often to Mexico; it is not easier either for me, I feel quiet in the middle, but I just keep trying…".*

The particular importance of the specific situation in which the partners actually met was also evident in the cases of those couples that met each other while at least one of the two spouses was on holidays, either in Italy or in Mexico. In many cases such encounters seemed to be merely fortuitous, and are actually narrated in a very romantic and exciting way by both partners, either because of the place itself or because the feeling of relative freedom that these people were experiencing by being outside of their quotidian social environment (studying or travelling on holidays). Such encounters were usually mediated by a series of positive stereotypes and "common places", that in many cases resulted to be quiet delusive.

This was particularly the case of most Mexican women who met their Italian male partners while these were on holidays in Mexico, usually in a touristic destination or in the capital of the country, Mexico City. Among these couples, there were people who simply met through an old common friend like Sofia and Leonardo in Guadalajara; or in a casual encounter in the beach like Marisela and Marco, or Olga and Marco; or in one of the many museums of Mexico City like Erendira and Andrea. In all these cases, both partner were actually outside of his/her own daily routine so that the encounter happened to be very open, causal, without further formalisms.

And it is particularly in these cases, in which very different –otherwise out of the reach- people can meet each other even without having almost anything in common but the occasional situation in which they met and an early physical, intellectual and/or emotional common attraction. It is in these cases in which the separation of time and space within modern relationships can be observed, and the continuation of these modern relationships seems to be possible only due to the existence of interconnected expert systems (Giddens, 1992).

It may be necessary to search for all the particular personal and situational characteristics of the partners, that might be the most varied ones, that actually make them to further involve themselves in the relationship; however it was clearly observed that specially some men showed to be attracted not only by the woman that they met, but also by the country that they were visiting:

Couple 8. Erendira (Mexican) and Andrea (Italian). Gavirate. Cross-border international mixed marriage between a Mexican woman and an Italian man (Tourism encounter).

Andrea (Italian): *"I won't lie to you, when I met Erendira I was just completely in love with the country that I was visiting. The beauty of Mexico is striking, it is so rich in terms of cultural diversity and natural resources that it is truly breath taking. I have traveled a lot, in other countries of Latin America and Asia, but what I saw over there particularly impressed me. And you know, Italy is not experiencing its best moment. I met Erendira actually during one of the last days that I was in Mexico City, I was in the National Museum of Anthropology, and walking around I saw this lady alone that used to take so much time at looking at every single piece that I got very much interested. At a certain moment, I asked her for some information and I ended up offering her a coffee in the bar of the museum; we spoke for hours. She is much younger than me but I found out that she was so mature and smart that I liked her very much. Most probably, I haven't done that (offering a coffee) if I would have been in my daily normal life in Italy, but I think that it was one of the best things that I could have done. I met my own Aztec princess…* (particularly demarked indigenous traits)"

Couple 9. Olga (Mexican) and Marco (Italian). Treviglio. Cross-border international mixed marriage between a Mexican woman and an Italian man (Tourism encounter).

Marco (Italian): *"I met Olga when I was on holidays in Cancun, great place! We were both with our respective groups of friends and we were in a very demanded beach by Mexican young adults and foreigners. Within a group of friends it is easier to meet other people so it happened like that. I liked Olga because she is a very sweet and kind person, the fact that she was Mexican was important because we were in Mexico at the moment of course, but even before going there I have learnt Spanish already because of my job. As a lawyer specialized on immigration issues in Italy, I do work with foreign immigrants all the time, so I can perfectly distinguish between the type of foreigners that it is possible to meet. At this respect I don't think of Olga as a foreign person but just as she actually is… well, after that time in Cancun we stayed in contact and we met several times both in Italy and in*

Mexico until we decided to get married, both in Mexico and in Italy. We decided to live specifically in Italy because of my work, but since I manage to do it also online we spend several months of the year also in Mexico, I just love the country, the weather, the food, her family, her friends and the kindness of the people, there are several other issues nowadays, but in general I feel at home when I'm there".

None of Andrea's and Marco's wives have ever thought about living in Italy before. However, both of them said that they decided to move because of the "right person" (migration for love). Both of them have a very stable life in the cities where do they live, as well as one small children each. Marco's parents are very much used to deal with foreign people because of his son's profession and because of their other daughter is also married with a Lebanese man. Having a husband who is a Lawyer specialized in immigration issues, Olga hasn't had severe bureaucratic issues and, furthermore, they spend several months of the year in Mexico. Actually, they were one of the more transnationals couples that I met. Nevertheless, she does still complain of nostalgia and loneliness; specially of missing her family and friends now that they have a small child; and of having to deal with other Italians –out of Marco's family- who have been rude or unprofessional with her –at the supermarket, at the hospital when giving birth, etc.- just because of her accent and clearly Latin American physical appearance.

In the same way, Erendira realizes how her expectations were different to what she actually found out by living in Italy; although she said to have a non completely satisfactory job in Mexico City (a merely bureaucratic job in a federal governmental agency), she misses her economic independency that has not been achieved in Italy because of the lack of recognition given to her previous bachelor studies, the lack of job opportunities because she doesn't master yet the Italian language, and the small size of the town where Andrea and her currently live, Gavirate. Furthermore, Erendira said to feel very lonely, since it has been very difficult to get to know people out of Andrea's circle of relatives and friends, who have not even all accepted her in a very good manner. Such feelings of uneasiness were just relatively amortized –if not disappeared- when Ericka got pregnant, and after she gave birth all her life seems to be dedicated to the rise up of their child.

Another, lately very busy, heterogamy channel seemed to be Internet. There were many Mexican women and Italian men who actually met through the web, either in a language exchange group, in an online dating service, or through "a common friend" who introduced them through Internet. Among all the different types of mixed marriages and heterogamy channels that were found, this seemed to be the one that mostly corresponded to the notion of contemporary human relationships, developed in Chapter 2. Couples who met each other only in the virtual world, instead of the real one, completely detached from the traditional notions of (correspondent) time and (real) space, and completely dependent on the functioning of expert systems and trust.

It was in these kind of couples where the idea of human relationship as an exchange was much more evident. People since the beginning were openly exchanging languages, pictures, general information, etc., usually with the idea of obtaining the same from the other part, because actually these are usually the formal and informal rules of these sites, although they are not actually strictly "ruled". Internet daters usually search companionship, comfort after a life crisis, control over presentation of themselves and their environments, freedom from commitment and stereotypic roles, adventure, and romantic fantasy. Most online daters eventually meet, which sometimes results in abrupt rejection and loss of face, but other times ends up in marriage (Lawson & Leck, 2006), such as in the case of several couples of the sample (Denisse and Maurizio, Alberto and Stella, Brenda and Antonio, Linda and Luigi).

Couple 10. Denisse (Mexican) and Maurizio (Italian). Milan. Cross-border international mixed marriage between a Mexican woman and an Italian man (Second marriages, online dating).

Denisse: *"Although it may sound incredible, we met online more than eight years ago. When I decided to try it, it was because one year ago I got divorced of my first husband, a Mexican man with whom things did not go nothing well. I was working so I did not have enough time to meet new people, and I was needing to get distracted once in a while. I had taken some Italian lessons before so I decided to look for an Italian man, so at least I could practices what I have learnt so far. Thus I saw his profile, at the beginning it was like an adventure but when we started to chat more often I realized that we had several*

common interests and personality traits. At a certain point, he decided to come to Mexico to meet me and I agreed, I didn't have anything to lose but I do recognize that I was scared".

Maurizio: *"I met Melissa through online dating, I had some months just looking around those websites but I realized that most of them were kind of "false". She was the one who contacted me first because she wanted to speak Italian so I agreed. We started to chat very often so I decided to go to Mexico, I have not been there before, so at least it would be a holiday. We got along very well since the very beginning, I guess we have experienced similar things, regardless our age and nationality differences. She was working there but I couldn't not leave my job so I asked to move to Italy, for what we decided to get married; otherwise she could not live here. We did and, honestly, no regrets; but I do see that it has been very difficult for her to adapt".*

The last group of couples were the ones that didn't meet in the "virtual world" but neither in the "real world" of Italy or Mexico; these were the people who were both in a third country when they met. Although these kind of relationships also started by being detached of both the partners' daily life in their countries of origin; they had the advantage of "pre-select" the partners according to (previous meeting) personal characteristics, thus, a relatively similar education and socioeconomic level, a certain language proficiency skill of at least one common language, a passion for travelling, a willingness to experience other countries/cultures (internationalized homogamy). These were the couples that met when both partners were on Erasmus or other type of linguistic/academic exchange in a third country; while both partners were working as Expats in a country different than their own; or while both partners were travelling in a country that –for the more remote reasons- had something interesting for both of them. Such were the cases of Carolina and Michele, Andrea and Simone, Pedro and Christina, Salvador and Marina, Mariana and Christian, and Julian and Roberta.

Specially among these couples, it is possible to find young X generation and Millenials from a middle high, socio-economic status; who, both of them, speak at least two languages (Spanish and Italian), or even more. In these cases, there were 5 couples in which the partners met each other when both partners (independently) were studying or travelling

in different cities of Spain; and the last one when both partners were following an English course for several months in Dublin.

These couples do usually share a certain "taste for the foreign", and they manage to strength their relationship through the period that they live together both as "foreigners". Language skills and common interests are not an issue, however, further adaptation problems may come when it does arrive the moment to find a common place where to live. In this case, the partners usually move according to their work/family opportunities and needs; and here it does become important to conciliate and try to maximize both partners' international and cultural capital. At the moment, all the couples were living in Italy; however, at least in three cases the partners have also previously lived in Mexico. The advantage of these people is that because of their mostly young age, multicultural skills, and previous experience living abroad, the adaptation period has been facilitated. In the case of four of these couples, both partners are stably employed, while only in two cases the women do not work because of voluntarily staying at home with their children; in one of these two cases the breadwinner is only the Mexican man.

Just as many people who met while on vacations or through internet, the temporal detach from the partners daily life, may require several adjustments when the couple decide to continue to live together in a certain particular place; but maybe the particular characteristics of these last couples is that both partners are highly qualified, they do have more resilience resources, and usually an important family support (at least an economic one) in both cases (the same family support that in most cases they have had when they both –independently- decided to study/work/travel abroad).

Couple 11. Marina (Italian) and Salvador. Milan. Cross-border international mixed marriage between an Italian woman and a Mexican man. (Woman's second marriage, travelling).

Salvador: "*We met while we both were doing the very well known "Camino de Santiago" in 2004. I was searching for someone with whom to share my life and make a family of my own. The fact that she was Italian was not important for me. It was after three months that we met when we started to cohabitate first in Barcelona where we were both working at that time, I was working as an architect and she was working on international marketing… and later we moved to Milan, when I found a new job there, still as an*

architect. To live together, in our opinion, it was necessary to know thoroughly and realistically consider being a family. We did it, and it was just after four years, and two twin girls that we decided to get married with the idea of "order" our legal situation, but also to somehow "sealing" from a psychological and emotive point of view the creation of our new family… that by the way, has been quiet prosperous in all senses, so far we have 6 children, 5 together, and 1 from Marina's first marriage, but in general the 6 of them are ours"

Couple 12. Carolina (Mexican) and Michele (Italian). Milan. Cross-border international mixed marriage between a Mexican woman and an Italian man. (International students in Spain).

Michele: *"We met when we were both studying in Valencia, Spain. I was doing some courses as part of my Erasmus experience, and she was a doing a following an specialization course. It happened that I was sharing apartment with another Mexican girl who became the best friend of Carolina during that period. Therefore, she was all the time in our apartment. We started by being friends, I do think that Mexicans –at least the ones I met- are usually very cheerful and kind, and that was what I liked the most. Of course speaking with them I improved my Spanish language much more than actually speaking with locals in Spain. Our relationship developed until we got together. But later I had to come back to Italy and she had to go back to Mexico, we stayed in contact through internet and visited each other. As soon as it was possible I moved to Mexico city and got a job there, it was such an experience, a very big chance in such a big city but it was worthy. Carolina was working there as well so during that time we cohabitated for almost two years; later I was offered a better job in Milan and I proposed Carolina to move with me and to actually get married. Although it is difficult to coincide, by that time the relationship was already sealed I guess".*

By meeting all these couples it was possible to observe that the characteristics of the partners may be the most diverse ones, but also the elements that may influence their encounter. First of all, it is important to distinguish those people who met their partner after have emigrated, and those people who actually migrate after have met their partners. It was especially among the first ones that the social forces identified by Kalmijn showed to be

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particularly relevant, i.e. preferences, third parties in particular, and (local) marriage market; however, in the second case, there was at least two more factors that showed to be important, thus, the timing and the conjectural situation. In those cases in which the partners met being out of their daily life, the possibilities to coincide seemed very much fortuitous or influenced practically only by the personal preferences and/or needs of the partners; however, when the couples arrive to the point of choosing a place where to establish and thus to contextualize, several adaptation difficulties needed to be faced, especially when the expectations of at least one of the partners did not coincide with the "new" reality.

By analyzing not only the characteristics of the partners, their migratory history, their socio-economic status, but also the life time that they were experiencing when they met, it is possible to understand the complexities of most stories and the difficulty to classify them in a very rigid way. Many international mixed couples, just as many native couples, may get each other because of sharing a particular time of their lives or a certain experience, but when the conditions change it happens that the partners actually change as well, and may find no more reasons to stay together, at least they have enough internal and external motives to keep together. And in the case of the international mixed couples, there are – since the beginning- less external motives to be together (common parties, common background, common family friends, etc., they are something that usually the couple start to build together according to the resources that each partner individually has).

If it was observed that marriage seemed to be an important institutional anchorage for the couple and that the institution itself could signify an institutional instrument for social and ethnic mobility; it was also seen that among partners (all of them) there is a constant exchange of resources, whether economical, legal, social, intellectual, emotional, etc., that does actually depend on the very particular characteristics of the partners, on their current conditions and their previous experiences; and it was seen that it was also among those mostly "unbalanced exchanges" that more problematic situations/negotiations could be identified.

5.6. The anchorage role of marriage in international and cross-border mixed marriages

As it was said in Chapter 1, marriage may be defined as *a socially or ritually recognized union or legal contract between spouses that establishes rights and obligations between them, between them and their children, and between them and their in-laws* (Haviland et. all., 2011: 61).

Such social alliance is thus considered to be of enlarged and intergenerational scope and therefore it does not only include the spouses and their enlarged families, but also the primary groups to which these do actually belong. According to the intimacy and –usually expected- long term duration of such bond its incidence has been studied within several societies to understand the way in which different family groups, social classes, ethnic groups (and several other collectives entities) relate to each other and create new ramifications. In this way, the institution of marriage has been substantially studied as an instrument to regulate a property one, gendered human relationship that should –at least theoretically- regulate the same reproduction of the human being and the internal cohesion of the more diverse groups.

However, it was also seen that specially in those early highly industrialized countries, the incidence of registered (religious and civil) marriages has importantly decreased; whereas, at the same time, the rituals to celebrate marriage and the individual elements that conform it (in terms of sex/culture/nationality and other social divides) have particularly diversified; just as the family forms that result from these relationship, institution, ritual and life stage.

Such trend seem to respond to a series of social processes that overall have lead to the de-institutionalization of private life; that more often individuals want to decide, to experience and to rule, according to their very own principles and values; and not by the ones of other larger institutions such as the church or the state. However, it has been in this context in which the increasing registered incidence of international mixed couples has raised the attention, and the further regulation, of civil (and religious) authorities, public media and social researchers.

At this respect, the respondents were asked about the specific role that the institution of marriage had in the development and stabilization of their couple relationship, and it was

precisely observed that there were important differences among those people who have an European passport or a regular resident permit, and those who do not. Here there are some of the most exemplifying responses:

Alejandra (Mexican/Spanish) (Milan): *"We married in a very particular civil ceremony in Vegas after 12 years together that included 6 of cohabitation; we decided to get married first of all because we are very well together and we have an established relationship; moreover and maybe most importantly, the Italian laws do not recognize unmarried couples in many senses and it was for this that we decided to "formalize" our status, without going into the traditional religious or even civil ceremony, because it was just not "fitting" none of us. The fact of our nationalities did not influence such decision, because –as I already said- I also have an Spanish passport… the wedding, it was more like a vacation… and actually it was one".*

Leonardo (Italian) (Milan): *"We married after 9 years to be together, 2 in a long distance relationship and 7 cohabitating here in Milan. During the first years we did not think of marriage because Sofia was having a working resident permit; however, when the circumstances changed and she was not able anymore to renew it we finally decided to get married through a very small civil ceremony with our most closer friends. It was not a matter of getting marriage itself, it was a matter of the institution of marriage. We want to be together because we decide to, not because it is an institution to say it. I'm not the kind of ceremonial person, but I thought it was the best decision because we were able to continue to be together until now. About the religious wedding, I know that Sofia's family would have liked it in Mexico, but both bureaucratic practices and expenses were more a burden than a joy".*

Stella (Italian) (Milan): *"We married as soon as we decided to live together so he could obtain a long term residence permit. It was a very small civil ceremony, but we were never that much interested in the ceremony itself. Maybe my parents would have wanted something else, but as far as it was good for us they accepted it".*

Linda (Mexican) (Saronno): *"For us the process was forced to be different since the beginning because for my husband this is his second marriage; so after have been in a long distance relationship for a couple of years I decided to move to Italy to live together, it was*

easier for me at that moment to quit my job. So we marry in a very small civil ceremony with few relatives of both parts and some friends".

Claudia (Mexican/Italian) (Milan): *"We have more than three years cohabiting, that was our own decision so I don't think that it should affect our parents at all. So far we do not think to get married, I mean I don't believe in marriage and none of us thinks that it is necessary. I don't know whether we will do it someday but if we do it we will for bureaucratic reasons, so at the moment is not even contemplated"*.

Most couples said to have married because of bureaucratic needs; those in possession of an European passport or who have a young age, and a regular residence permit, have not even thought about it. The couples in which the wife has an Spanish passport got married after she experienced a serious health difficulty. Whereas for most cross-border couples, i.e. those that moved in specifically for love/marriage reasons, they actually got married immediately before or just immediately after starting to cohabitate.

Although most couples speak about marriage "*because of love, to be able to be together, the only alternative"*, etc., there are other couples who are perfectly aware –and speak about it- of the difficulties of not recognizing unmarried couples not only among natives and foreigners, but among Italians in general.

Mariana (Mexican) (Como): *"We married in a civil ceremony here in Como, it was after we moved here from Spain. I never had a problem with getting married but it was not one of my dreams I need to say; the thing is that we wanted to formalize the family that we decided to create. I still think that it should be allowed to couples, in this case of people from different nationalities, to live together; like a residence permit for cohabiting at first… I know that it does exist in other countries. Being in a relationship is not the same that living together, and what I have seen among many people that I know is that problems arrive because of not sufficiently knowing the person before getting married"*.

Some respondents more than others openly recognized the benefits of accessing a regular resident permit and further Italian citizenship through marriage, but even those who recognize it, do emphasize that such instrumental role is not exclusively the only one that influenced the decision of getting married.

Erendira (Mexican) (Milan): *"It was the only alternative that I was since I was an illegal immigrant because my tourist permit had expired. He, being an Italian citizen, took the whole responsibility of me and that was the reason because I learnt to love this country".*

Irma (Mexican) (Milan): *"Surely Italian bureaucracy influences to make the decision to marry, because it is very difficult to keep an immigrant regular status in a very bureaucratic country. I tried to change my resident permit as a student but it was very difficult so we gave up and got married, first by a civil ceremony here in Milan with his relatives and friends, and one year later also in Mexico because we wanted to share the event also with my loved ones over there. The Mexican ceremony was particularly fun I must say".*

At this respect, it is openly recognized by most married couples that they have received, at least once or more than once, an open questioning about their union by some relatives or friends (specially on the Italian side), even those more stable couples:

Carolina (Mexican) (Milan): *"We married after some years together first in Spain and later in Mexico; however, I wanted also to live together in Italy before actually getting married. In any case it was a different context, and the major change was going to be for me so I firstly wanted to try. Moreover, at the beginning there was not such a good relationship with my parents in law, specially with my mother in law, because she still used to think of me as someone who wanted to profit from her son. So it was difficult but we managed to obtain a residence permit by saying that I was working as a caregiver with my husband's grandfather. It was not the nicer thing but that gave us the opportunity to live together, already in Italy, without major concerns. After two years later we decided to get married 100% convinced that we wanted to be together, and we made three parties, the civil ceremony, a more informal party with friends, and finally a very big and traditional religious ceremony in Mexico".*

The transnational further legitimization of the marriage (in the two countries) in most cases depends on the spouses' values and beliefs, and on the economical possibilities and social capital of the involved family(ies), that may contemplate not only the expenses of

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one or more weddings in two very far away countries, but also the transportation expenses. Although most couples speak about the relative independence that they had when choosing for a partner –although being a foreigner- there were some couples that openly said that their wedding ceremony was organized according to their parents' traditions and expectations. Such was the case only for women though, both Mexicans and Italians.

Elizabeth (Mexican) (Salò): *"First of all we lived together for one year in Canada, although we met in Mexico before where we also lived for almost one year. At the moment, we decided that we wanted to stay together, so in 2008 I came to Italy and I tried to make some job applications in some dance companies, so far it did not work out so it was practically impossible to change my tourist status and obtain a working permit. I went back to Mexico but since he got a job here, it was more difficult for him to travel; at the end I enrolled in a language course and I was able to apply for a student residence permit; however, my family –specially my father- was not happy at all with my idea of living so far away and living together with –my boyfriend at that time- without getting married. At that point we decided to formalize our relationship, we have gone through so many things together so we organize the civil wedding here in Italy and a very big wedding in Mexico. When my father saw that, he convinced himself that the relation was for good, and that I was happy although I should be physically farther away".*

Viviana (Italian) (Lodi): *"We got married immediately before living together, after have had a long distance relationship that it was not actually easy to develop, for the distance, the expenses, etc. When I spoke about Martin to my parents they passed through all the possible stages, first they did not know what to say, later they did not understand why it should be someone from such a faraway place, but at the end they understood that it was my decision at the end of the day. The only thing that they asked me was to marry in church and to do everything according to "the normal" rules, so that was the way we did. Martin was not needing any kind of residence permit to live in Italy because he already had an Italian passport, so at the end of the day they understood that the relationship was for real".*

Contrary to what the statistics may show, several international mixed couples may be perfectly aware, and actually coincide with, the process of de-institutionalization of the marriage/couple relationship, especially when such union is mostly or importantly the result

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of individual preferences and decisions (that "relative freedom" of course it does depend on the partners' previous characteristics and on the specific situation in which the couple was actually conformed). However, many of them are also perfectly aware of the benefits that the institution of marriage may have for one or both the partners in terms of social mobility, public recognition, legal security, potential access to other transnational communities, etc.; and, particularly for the foreign spouse, in terms of migratory status, access to an EU citizenship and further internationalization; although, it was seen that many Italian partners were also interested on having an facilitated access to an emergent country such as Mexico, not that such interest was the main reason to get married to a Mexican citizen though (what may be particularly different of other minority immigrant groups).

Hence, among international and cross-border couples (whether more or less mixed), the marriage institution has recovered and further strengthened its anchorage role; but such phenomenon may be more due to the lack of alternative channels for international human mobility for both couples and single individuals than for the meaning attached to the institution itself.

Contrary, it is observed that parallel to the strengthening institutional formalization of such human relationship, the way to experience it and the elements that conform it have very much diversified; involving, thus, people from different nationalities, cultural backgrounds, skin colors, sexes, etc. However, as it was repeated several times before, not for this reason the phenomenon of international mixed couples and cross border marriages is a one "free for all"; within all these individualized partners it is possible to indentify the traits of an international marriage market still very much stratified, but specially according to certain acquired traits, in which there are always "winners and losers".

5.7. Social, cultural and economical difficulties faced by international mixed (married and unmarried) couples

In the responses expressed over the previous subtitles it was already possible to deduce some of the main difficulties faced by international mixed couples; i.e. in this particular case the long distance between both countries; the bureaucratic difficulties and relative expenses to surmount; the constant questioning that some of the partners may suffered by other relatives, friends or even ordinary acquaintances; the difficulty –

particularly for the foreign spouse- to integrate into the local labor market and the surrounding social environment; the several situational and characterial clashes that may surge between the partners themselves after a long term relationship and daily coexistence; etc.

Nevertheless, among these there were some that particularly showed to be constantly repeated. In the first place, it was the acceptance by the other partner's relatives that was particular mentioned by Mexican (both men and women) spouses.

As it was developed in Chapter 2, also in the Southern European countries there have been a series of family transformations that have granted relative more freedom to the individuals when it is a matter of taking decisions regarding their own private life. Although this is particularly observed in less traditionalist and religious regions, it has been also observed that such freedom is more relative than objective; and that the –subtle or open- interference of other family members and social groups into several private life domains are still of great importance. And this seems to particularly evident when the son or daughter decides to marry someone out of the "local group".

Here there seemed to be several divergences of perception among the partners; especially when one of them –in most cases the Italian one- responded that the relationship of his/her partner with his/her parents was "so far good", "unproblematic", "not fantastic but without major concerns", whereas on the other side there was a particular trend to emphasize the difficulties that raised as a consequence of a lack of complete approval by the in-laws.

Sofia (Mexican) (Milan): *"The relation with my mother in law was not always easy, without taking into account that nowadays is practically inexistent. She is very old, sick and weak now and lives in another place; but when she was younger she used to be very hard and rude with me. First of all, she never accepted that her son has chosen an extra-communitarian person; she used to say indirectly but also very directly that I was with him because of pure economic interest. That I have arrived to steal from them, it was not easy… at the beginning it used to affect me very much, but with time I learnt to ignore her, and when she got even older and sicker I stopped visiting her. It was not an easy decision because I know that it was hard for my husband to be in the middle all the time, but I know that it was the best, at least for my mental health".*

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Linda (Mexican) (Seveso): *"For me it is clear that many people around here are not particularly "happy" with the presence of "extra-communitarian" people, even if they do not know who they are and where do they come from, I saw it with my mother in law, and of course with the previous family of my husband –as I said, this is his second marriage-; since the very beginning, the mother in law used to make comments about me, even in front of me about how I wanted to profit from her son; she even arrived to the point of telling me that at least she could be serene knowing that –for my age, almost 40 at that time- I would not be able to get pregnant. At that point I simply stopped trying to have a relationship with her…".*

Brenda (Mexican) (Merate): *"With his parents… the relationship was bad since the beginning, and is still bad nowadays. They have the idea –or better the prejudice- that because I'm Latin American I'm easy and I'm with their son only because of money, honestly it is not that my family was starving in Mexico but what can they know".*

Salvador (Mexican) (Milan): *"One of the main difficulties that we had, if not maybe the main difficulty, was the relationship with "THE MOM", meaning her mother, that here in Italy, is THE mom of everyone. It was very difficult for her to accept a foreign son-in-law; even though my wife was previously married with an Italian man and evidently it did not work out since they got divorced. Her mom treated me since the beginning with a certain distrust, it did improve a lot after we got married and had our first twin daughters; however, I always "keep an eye" on what I say to my mother in law… you don't know when things can be used against you (laugh). On the other side, when we started the relationship, my wife already had a daughter of her first marriage, and it certainly took some time to find a balance and to be completely accepted by the girl, but that was fully accomplished over time".*

There are other Italian partners that in any case do accept that their parents had or still have several doubts and critics regarding his "foreign" choice:

Stella (Italian) (Milan): *"As I said before, I wanted to meet a Mexican guy and I did it; however, my parents were not particularly happy with that. The relationship between them and my husband was negative since the very beginning. They thought that he was a*

narco and a macho, literally… my husband, on the other side, not stand the invasion of my mother, he says that I should be more independent and actually move to Mexico with him, it is a situation hard to mediate".

Lisa (Italian) (Milan): *"So far, I guess the bigger difficulty that we have had has been the distance. First the distance between Italy and Mexico for sure, but later also the distance between Milan –where he did arrive to live after have won a university scholarship- and Trieste were I was working at that time. Just later I could get a job in Milan and moved there so we could live here together. Moreover, I need to say that it has not been easy with my parents, specially my father was very distrusting with him since the very beginning and he still is, I wonder what would happen if we would decide to get married, I do not think that he would take it that well…".*

If most relationships between Mexican partners and Italian in-laws showed to be relatively problematic or actually inexistent; most relationships between Italian partners and Mexican in-laws showed to be positive but discontinuous, and in few cases practically inexistent specially because of the geographical distance, and because some of the Italian partners have not actually ever been in Mexico.

Stella (Italian) (Milan): *"My relationship with his parents are not the best either. When I have been there, I have sustained mostly superficial conversations with his mother; with his father I don't even know what to talk about. Something that I can't stand is that they are all the time asking money from my husband".*

Enzo (Italian) (Milan): *"I don't have any kind of relationship with Erika's family; they are all in Mexico and I have not been there, I simply don't like flying".*

Laura (Mexican) (Milan): *"The relationship of my partner with my family has been very good when they have been here or he has been there. My family consider him as a son, but in Mexico is like that. He, on the other hand, is very kind but sometimes I think that for him they are nice people, but not people that he considers part of his family… the distance doesn't help".*

Claudia (Mexican) (Milan): *"My sister has come once to Milan. She was my age so there was not problem, she and my partner have a good –mostly online- relationship. The rest of my family has seen him only once in person. He is from a small town, and my mother complains a little that he is not as well educated as the Mexicans that she knows, in the sense that he is more natural and does not bother to make a good impression in front of her, that he has not brought an appropriate dress for Christmas dinner, etc.,. but at the end those are superficial things"*.

Marco (Italian) (Treviglio): *"I had a good relationship with Olga's family since the very beginning; but of course, as I already tell you, I used to speak Spanish even before meeting her because of my work. It is important to take into account that I see them only for some months during the year, but in general the relationship is very good, I do feel at home when I'm there. For me, there may be many problems in Mexico, but one of its larger advantages is that people are very open and welcoming"*.

If one of the more problematic (external) elements in the couple showed to be the relationships with in-laws, there were several other partners who indicated relatively conflictive clashes that they have had with other people around, either friends of the partner or general people in the host society; this was particularly noticed, nevertheless, in the smaller towns in comparison with Milan.

Monica (Limone sul Garda): *"I would say that some of the main difficulties that we have had are regarding other people, not properly difficulties among us, although those clashes with other people, of course, have created several discussions among us. I do remember a group of friends that he used to have for playing football, several of them stopped almost calling him and inviting him to whatever kind of gathering just after we got together. At the very beginning I tried to be nice with his friends, why I should not be it if I do not even know them? But in several occasions they were very rude, making indirect bad comments about the reasons because I was with him, or about the poverty and dirtiness in my country... at a certain point I could not stand it anymore so we started to hang around other people, either other Mexicans and other mixed couples or less prejudiced Italians"*.

Elizabeth (Mexican) (Salò): *"It has been very difficult to make new friends, honestly the ones that I have I can count them with the fingers of my hand. I understand that language can be a barrier at the beginning, but so far I have learnt it quiet well. I have lived in other countries and when I was there it was much easier, maybe because I was most of the time in a student environment, but here it seems to me that it takes a lot of time and patience. And well, when I have need to make certain bureaucratic practices, or last time when I had to go to hospital people sometimes is not particularly kind. I remember the last clash that I had with the pediatrician of my daughter, he basically told me that I was exaggerating the situation –my baby was having a certain stomachache- and that we did not have the time to understand me when I was not able to communicate well… referring to my language skills when trying to communicate certain more technical -at least for me that I'm not a Doctor- terms".*

Andrea (Italian) (Gavirate): *"I realized that it has not been easy to deal with certain people that may not understand why did you take a certain decision such as marrying a so called extra-communitarian person; people mostly think that it is because you were desperate or because she wants to profit from you. I have had that kind of experiences even with certain colleagues and friends of mine that I thought to know well. I remember a dinner that Erendira and me had with another couple in our place, we cooked some typical Mexican food they didn't want to even taste; they made also several comments that were very uncomfortable for Erendira, I just can't get how people can be so close minded and disrespectful… of course we never invited them again".*

Although there were less negative comments about social acceptance and other issues in Mexico, that may be because most Italian partners have been there only for vacations and many of them have not been actually there and, as it was explained in Chapter 4, contrary to what may happen in other European countries, Latin American ones –and Mexico in particularly- are very much oriented towards foreignness. Either for good or for bad of course, as it says Simone.

Simone (Italian) (Milan): *"I go to Mexico once in a while but because of my wife who wants me to go to meet her family. We have had a couple of bad experiences that let me a very bad memory. Once we were driving from Guanajuato to Queretaro and one policeman*

stopped us in a federal road, it was very strange; I don't speak quiet well Spanish so for me it was very difficult to understand. At the end we did at "the Mexican way" paying bribes, there you don't know what to expect so better like that… but I did feel so much unsafe, I really go because I have to".

If social acceptance either by family or other surrounding groups showed to be one of the more problematic issued among mixed couples; there were many partners, especially Mexican foreign ones, that spoke about the difficulties to adapt to the local culture; once again this was particularly emphasized by people living in smaller and mostly isolated cities, and particularly by people who used to live –whether in Mexico or in Spain in particular- in a completely different bigger urban environments.

Claudia (Mexican) (Milan): *"Although it was my decision to come here, it was not easy to be alone, to learn –well- the language, to find a job without knowing almost anyone or the local working culture. At the beginning everything was exciting as a new adventure, but after 4-5 years I was not a tourist anymore; I did have a cultural crisis. For me it was easier to think of myself as a foreign traveler and not as a "new Italian" set in an Italian city. My last 3 years have been like that, feeling a certain kind of refusal towards Italy. This phase coincides then with the economic crisis, so I had more difficulty that adapt start. Without work, without knowing what to do, what do I want, without having reached my goals, etc. I started to miss more and more the cultural offer and the movement that I remember of Mexico City, but if I decide to go back I know that I would need to end my relationship, because my partner will not ever think about moving there".*

Erendira (Mexican) (Milan): *"For me it was not easy to learn the language, and even now when I speak and people do immediately notice my accent, for example at the phone, I feel the rejection and uncomforting".*

Elizabeth (Mexican) (Salò): *"First of all the language is a barrier, and the similarity between the Spanish and Italian at times instead of helping it does affect; for example there are words that in Italian sounded like something very offensive and when I learned the meaning I could realize that it was something totally different. I would not like to generalize but, for example, when Mexican speak so it softly, everything is "tiny", por*

favorsito, niñito, etc. Italians, on the other hand, are very direct and their tone of voice is very different. On the other hand, there is a further problem, and it happens that when you finally learn Italian in a correct way, you need to speak the local dialect, because in places like this one in which I live, many people use almost exclusively the dialect. So yes, we are similar but when you get to know better the local culture, you realize that it is not like that".

Alicia (San Pellegrino): *"I can't complain about Italian culture in general, but I can complain of certain traits of the small city where I'm currently living. First of all, the lack of cultural events because it is such a small town; I'm from Mexico City so living here it is really hard. If you do not have a car, and I don't, you really depend on the public transportation that is not the more connected one let's say. Autobus don't go by every 10 minutes and going out in the evening it is really a hassle. And the language, what can I say? No matter if you speak Italian, if you don't know the local dialect and speak with the local accent you will be always a foreigner and people will treat you like that; honestly, I do live here only because of my couple".*

If social acceptance, language proficiency and other cultural differences, showed to be particularly problematic for foreign spouses; further economic difficulties were translated into the difficulties to recognize their previous academic degrees, to enter the regular labor force, not only in a certain specialization area but almost to any kind of remunerated position. As it was said since the very beginning of this Chapter 5, it was particularly noticed that almost all women (both Mexican and Italian) –some voluntarily and some forcedly- were stay-at-home mothers and housewives, or having a precarious or irregular kind of job; and even those few who were having a regular and stable kind of job they did mention that it took quiet some years to have that certain type of stability, mostly in middle skilled jobs. The case of Mexican men was a bit different; all of them were actually employed, whether in middle-low, middle, or some even in relatively high job positions, furthermore, some of them were working in something at least relatively close to their previous studies.

Maira (Mexican) (Treviglio): *"After have learnt the language, and after have followed and specialization course on Interior Design, I thought I could apply for a job as an Architect; but even when I sent many curriculums and I went to a couples of interviews in Milan, the positive answer never arrived… in years!. The only kind of jobs that I have manage to do so far have been as a receptionist and as a babysitter, which were not what I was thinking about".*

Linda (Mexican) (Saronno): *"I used to work for the federal government in Mexico so I was not thinking at all to work as a house cleaner at all, and it seems to be that those are the only kind of jobs for foreigners. When I arrived here I already had a certain age, an Spanish accent, and any will to study again so I just simply do not even try… everything you hear about is crisis, crisis, crisis".*

Luis (Mexican) (Brescia): *" I do work as an Insurance Agent, and I am on charge of some people, just like Maria that, as you know, is my Assistant; however, I do think that my case is very particular, I arrived at a very young age, I did all my university studies here, and that happened so many years ago, when there was not such a crisis; if I could loose my job I could not tell, so I better don't".*

Italian (male) partners, on the other hand, were all employed and if most of them do not complain of their current economical situation, they did acknowledge that it is very difficult to change –particularly in terms of improvement- their current position. Some of them, moreover, specified that their household situation could be better if both partner could equally work; however, most partners are aware of the difficulties that their foreign partners have experienced in that regard.

Francesco (Italian) (Milan): *"So far I have a regular and stable job yes, but I do not think that it will be forever. Milan is a very expensive city you know, and even when we have managed to live so far well, I think that it would be better if Laura could also work, but having such a small child it becomes very difficult for her to seriously focus on finding something, we will see".*

Andrea (Italian) (Milan): *"I have a regular job in a telecommunications company in Milan, so it is not easy because I have to commute every day and then Erendira stays at*

home with our baby. I can't complain but I know that many people have been fired. I am not particularly confident about the political or economical future of my country, so we stay here until I have a job and in the meantime this small house is our property; maybe something I will have to sell everything but at least we can thinking of going to live to Mexico".

Enzo (Italian) (Mexican): *"We live on my pension and that's it, Gabriela sometimes sells something or goes to some houses to clean, but that is only for her small expenses".*

Facing all these difficulties, specially by the often precarious integration of the foreign partner, and the lack of acceptance of the relationship itself, may put both partners in a relatively fragile condition. On the one hand, if the foreign partner does not manage to rationalize, adapt and overcome, those difficulties has the risk to become isolated (separated) or marginalized; on the other hand, the native partner may become a very important –if not the only one- mediator person between the foreign partner and the host society, which may be a very heavy burden.

For these reasons, it was noticed that in many cases, even in those in which the couple showed to have a substantial intellectual and emotional bond beyond the bureaucratic practices, the cultural differences, and the lack of –or partial- social acceptance; it was the native partner the one that has to act as a deterrence and shock holder; at this respect the attitudes of those who got together with a Mexican person already previously living in Italy and those whose partner specifically moved to be together may be specially different.

Michele: *"I can tell you that most of the elements and experiences that have been part of my relationship with Carolina have been positive; we have learnt a lot from each other and I would not go back. However, there have been moments that have been very hard, it has been a whole process, and maybe it will always be. I know that for her has been more difficult, she misses a lot her family although she is used to live abroad, so we try to meet them as soon as possible. I know that it has not been difficult either to adapt here and find her own place, not because she is not able, but because Italy is not the more welcoming place, it has not been it either for me that I`m Italian when I have moved from*

one city to the other, so I can imagine for her, so I just try to keep calm and help her in everything that I can".

Stella: *"I know that even if it was overall good for him to come here, it was also very difficult and still it is. Just the fact of not knowing the language, and the first difficulties that he had to get a job… I do appreciate it, and I have tried to help him and understanding as much as I can".*

Maria: *"To tell the true I do not think of Luis as a foreign person that I need to help; of course, he may have difficulties but as any other Italian person; there may be some few things that he may not understand but he has lived here for so many years, he has more and higher working experience than me, and he perfectly speaks Italian so yes, I try to be understanding but when he was a bad working day or when he has any kind of family problem… but not because he is a foreign person let's say".*

5.8. Gender and cultural differences among Mexican/Italian partners

If relationships with the external social environment showed to be particularly relevant for mixed couples, and potentially conflictive specially for those cross-border couples that met out of one or both the partners' everyday routine; there was also a lot of information on how do the partners deal with their main internal gender and cultural differences.

Although the social divide that may be more salient among these couples might be precisely the one of nationality (according to which they are officially registered and classified) or skin color, ethnicity and/or cultural background (according to which they may be primarily socially perceived as a mixed couple); several partners specified that many of their differences or their difficulties to negotiate certain issues were much more related to the fact that the partner was from the opposite sex, than to the fact that he/she was a foreigner (Mexican, or Mexican/Spanish or Mexican/Italian).

And this it is thought to be due to the overweight that has been lately given to culture –either by media, politicians, religious and social particularly extremist groups, etc.- in comparison with other social more primary categories such as sex, gender and social class,

that continue to be preponderant to define human relationships, especially in highly stratified and unequal societies.

Although there were few partners who actually openly recognized his/her personal attraction to their partners specifically because they were from a certain country or ethnic background; there were respondents who openly said that they precisely appreciated to have a partner who does not belong to their own ethnic/national group for considering it (own group stereotype) very much male chauvinist (this was particularly repeated among Mexican women), or male uncommitted (among Italian women), or because of having a particular negative experience (specially in terms of unequal gender arrangements) with their previous in-group partner.

Male, on the other hand, omitted more such kind of generalizing comments; however, there were also men (Italian and Mexican) who complained and directly or indirectly criticized the general behavior of the opposite sex within their own group, or the negative experience that they previously had with a former in-group partner. In these cases, the more recurrent responses referred to the excessive demanding attitudes of Italian women, and to the excessive gendered formality of Mexican women respectively.

Enrico (Italian) (Milan): *"The fact that she was not Italian did not affected very much; but I do recognize that her way of being, different from the Italian women that I had met so far, it was one of the things that impressed me the most at the beginning.. previously I had Italian partners, those relationships did not work out mainly because of characterial differences."*

Francisco (Italian) (Milan): *"Since the beginning I thought that she was very beautiful, funny and easy going... not as problematic as other Italian girls I have met before. When I started to get along more with her I realized that we had several things in common, our approach to life... very easy going".*

Andrea (Italian) (Gavirate): *"I had some previous relationships with Italian women, but there was not the right connection. I have the impression that Italian women had the ideal of a perfect man that simply does not exist; in their attempts to conquest equality more than equity they have loose femininity and sensibility. I did not want someone who*

would completely need of me, but someone who would not have a problem with being helped or actually collaborate together…"

David (Mexican) (Milan): *"What I have seen is that in Mexico women are much more used -and actually expect to- relate according to certain formalities that have been imposed by traditional cultural practices; move the chair for her so she can sit, open the car's door; things have certainly changed but those kind of things are still actually expected. What I have liked with my current girlfriend is that she is freer of all those expectatives, the relationship is very much less gendered, more open and direct.. I like that".*

Stella (Italian) (Milan): *"I left my former Italian after 4 years and 7 months since he did not fill me anymore with attention as the beginning of the relationship, he had more and more female friends, and was taking so long to graduate and get a job".*

Alice (Italian) (Lecco): *"I had other 100% Italian partners, I say 100% as a way of saying because my husband has already live here for many years that he is Italian, even before meeting me. I think it just work out well among us, he is very much responsible either with me and with our daughter and also with his family. I don't know if that is because he is Mexican or not, so far what I know Mexican men are thought to be very macho and women oriented, but that has not been my experience so far".*

Brenda (Mexican) (Merate): *"Mexicans are too closed-minded and very much machos, plus I have always liked blondes".*

Laura (Mexican) (Milan): *""I have many Mexican friends (male) and knowing them well I did not see myself with a Mexican, I was four years with a Mexican boy, he was a nice guy but our thoughts were different, our future was not sure together".*

Many of these comments are mentioned because whether conscious or unconscious they reflect a series of expectations regarding the current partner, specially at the moment to meet him/her. Such expectations are usually shaped for what has been previously known or experienced. And in many cases may be translated into the searching of a certain particular kind of love relationship that lies within what has been previously described as romantic love and confluent love (see Chapter 2); thus, an idealistic conception of the couple relationship that may include romance, openness in all senses, equality, reciprocity,

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companionship, etc., that afterwards may be constrained not only by the deeper knowledge of the partner whose characterial traits may not exactly coincide with the first impressions/approaches, but also by the situational context and the difficulties that such may posse to the couples and to the individual partners that conform it.

Thus when it was a matter to ask the partners how do they usually negotiate certain, traditionally gendered, activities such as the division of the domestic work; the answer highlighted that, independently of those that were the initial expectations, such arrangement mostly depend on the occupational attainment of the partners and/or the presence of children within the family, and usually both elements work in detriment of women, both Mexican and Italian.

Andrea (Mexican) (Milan): *"When I was not working I used to do almost 100% of the house, from sweeping, washing clothes, ironing, go to the supermarket ... everything. Now that both work we split the chores in two and when I have to stay at work late, he is responsible for everything and does it well and willingly"*.

David (Mexican) (Milan): *"Lately I cook more and she washes, I have to admit that I never wash my clothes, but I do work for more hours so I think it is balanced"*.

Roberta (Italian) (Monza): "*I do 60% of the work plus the child, he does the rest"*.

Marisela (Mexican) (Saronno): *"We both do everything, but sometimes it seems that I should do everything, all the "domestic duties" I mean until I simply get pissed off"*

Erendira (Mexican) (Merate): *"Nowadays that I don't work, it is me who does basically everything at home, but if I ask him to do something he does it without problems, furthermore when he is at home he is very good with our child"*.

Nicola (Italian) (Salò): *" I try to help her with the domestic work, especially now that we have a small baby, however it is me the one who spend more time outside and sometimes it is simply not possible. Something that I do is to cook, especially when I'm able to arrive home early, and to help her with our daughter"*.

Stella (Italian) (Milan): *"I do 75%, he does 25%"*.

This kind of mostly gendered arrangement, and the influence that the partners' occupation attainment (specially that one of women) may have on it, was also observed in the way that the household budget was administrated:

Alejandra (Mexican) (Milan): *"Each of us has the own bank account, we divide the common expenses at the end of each month, and then make a decision on how to adjust the payments and debits".*

Elizabeth (Mexican) (Salò): *"To tell the true we use his salary to pay for everything in the house; when I manage to earn something we use it for going out, a particular holiday, it depends on the amount".*

Laura (Mexican) (Milan): *"We have a weekly budget decided by the two of us, the only thing is that I need to repeat and remind it to him always... sometimes it seems that he does it on purpose, he leaves no money because saying that he forgot to leave it, all other payments (bills, fines etc.) he prefers to pay them personally".*

Stella (Italian) (Milan): *"The household budget? I manage it myself, being careful of any spending that we do. A small part goes for him in any case ... but he does spend it on ice creams!"*

Seveso (Italian) (Luigi): *"It is me who pays everything because she does not work and she does not do how to do certain things, and when she does she ends up discussing with someone so I prefer to do it myself".*

When it was a matter to specifically speak about cultural differences several respondents mentioned the difficulty that may imply to communicate in two languages that to a certain extent may be very similar but that specially for that reason it may be easy to confuse the meaning of certain words; other people referred to certain characterical traits that, according to them, may be very much characteristic of the partner's national group, e.g. *"Italians do speak very much loud and he does it"*, *"she is very dramatic as most Mexican women I have met"*, *"at the end, as a good Mexican macho, he does not like that I frequent alone other male friends, even when they have been my friends for years"*,

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"Italians are very much attached to the land and he, as a good countryman, does not like to travel as much as I do like".

However, from such assertions it was very difficult to say whether those differences were actually cultural, without falling into national stereotypes, and which differences were actually due to the personal characteristics/tastes/values of the particular partner.

For that reason it was decided to focus on knowing some of the concrete cultural practices that partners do share or not share among themselves, and among the people that they usually frequent together or individually.

At this respect there were mostly identified five modalities that actually correspond to Berry's four adaptation strategies (assimilation, integration or biculturalism, separation, marginalization) and to Favaro's categorization regarding mixed families' internal and external negotiations of (cultural) differences (cosmopolitan, assimilated, unstable families) (See Chapter 3).

It was seen that according to the common activities, shared hobbies, and people usually frequented by the couples, these could also be broadly classified into one of these wide categories to understand the way in which they actually experience their more concrete cultural differences; thus, regarding the language that they speak with each other, the places where they do travel together, the food that they eat, or the friends that they both have, e.g.

It was observed that people who have spent more time in Italy (especially those who arrived to the country before meeting their current partners) were noticeably more assimilated into the local culture and society (particularly in terms of language spoken with the partner, groups of friends, preferred entertainment activities, etc.); whereas people who met in a third country or who has had important international experiences (i.e. studying or working abroad) preferred to relate to each other and to the surrounding social environment according to a more cosmopolitan modality that follow up and try to reproduce certain practices and cultural manifestations that belong to different national traditions and that may, at the same time, being commonly previously known by the two partners.

There were also those couples that have had the chance to actually live in both partners' countries of origin and who, therefore, are more able to reproduce practices from both countries among themselves and with some immediate relatives or friends around. In

these cases, both the partners do speak Italian and Spanish and they actually speak both languages (sometimes even mixed) among themselves; they try to follow some of the main holidays of both countries, keep social ties in both countries, and as soon as they can travel they go to one or the other country; such modality could be called biculturalism.

Finally, there are those two modalities in which there is not (or there is minimal) contact with at least one of the partners' cultural background, separation or marginalization.

According to Berry, the application of a particular adaptation strategy depends on two main principles, thus, the degree of cultural maintenance and the degree of cultural participation into the host society; however, one of the shortcomings of this seminal acculturation model is that it does not take into account the mutual responses/attitudes/strategies and behaviors that may be received from members of the host society, i.e. as it was noticed in many cases that, although the members of the couple would have the intention to have further contacts with the host social environment, this was simply not open to it.

Thus, more recently, other models of acculturation that develop from the four initial strategies by Berry introduced are for example the Interactive Acculturation Model and the Relative Acculturation Extended Model (Navas, Rojas, García, & Pumares, 2007). The first one includes a series of potential answering attitudes and behaviors that could be observed among members of the host society towards newcomers, or in this case towards the mixed couple. Whereas the second one proposes a differentiation between the ideal acculturation strategy that a group prefers and the real or actual acculturation strategy that a certain group may follow due to constraints by intergroup reality. Furthermore, this model does not suggest that there is a single acculturation attitude for all areas of the social domain. In different aspects of social life groups may actually have different acculturation attitudes and follow different acculturation strategies. A group of immigrants, for example, may wish to assimilate at work but follow the separation strategy at their social life (see also Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2002).

Thus, it was acknowledged that an exhaustive analysis and classification of all these domains would require a bigger conceptualization work, a larger description of each of them, and several very more specific questions in the base questionnaire that was used during the interviews; however, the information released by the participants was useful to

further understand the couples' internal dynamics and the way(s) to experience their multiple mixed manifestations and mixity concrete practices, some exemplifying cases are shown next:

Maria (assimilated couple): *"Luis and me speak Italian all the time, because we met here in Italy speaking that language, he has lived here for so many years and also at work we speak Italian. Our friends are mostly Italian and there are few foreigners but who also they have studied here or lived here already for a while. Sometimes we frequent some Mexican activities and we know some people from the local community but that is not very often. We do not celebrate most religious or traditional Mexican parties, but we don't do it either with the Italian ones to tell the true. We travel once in a while and we have been twice in Mexico, but for the geographical distance we travel more to other European countries, particularly to Germany that we both like. We make some sport together when we have time and go out with our friends, that many of them are colleagues or university friends".*

Alejandra (Assimilation/Cosmopolitanism): *"We have friends from several nationalities; he has his Italian friends of all life, me… since I have lived here for so many years and I studied here I managed to have a good group of local friends. Later, we have some foreigner friends that we have met in parties or common friends, those are more acquaintances. Later, there the Mexicans that I know here in Milan, my relationship with them is good, with the majority within the limits of the friendliness, with a small group of fellows with whom I do have very good relations or even friendship. Between them and my partner there is a good relationship, probably not so intimate because of the fact that he does not speak Spanish and when we get together the conversation language is mostly Spanish but despite of that his relationship with them is open and friendly. And finally, there is other group of Spanish people who live here and with whom I also keep a good relationship. I consider myself very well integrated into Italian society, but I also do consider that the fact that I have another cultural background in very good for the relationship. We travel a lot together, and we love to cook together food from all around the world; each of us has his/her own hobbies, activities, etc., but those things at least we try to do it together, so far it has been good to keep a balance".*

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Michele (Biculturalism): *"I don't know whether I can think of Carolina in terms of their cultural background. I have lived in Mexico before and I have learnt the language, and the many different ways in which Mexicans speak Spanish in comparison with Spanish for example. But what I do with her is all the time thinking of her as a person first of all, so I could tell you many things that I like or I don't like of her, the thing is that after so many years together to learn to live together and you keep trying because you actually want to live together. I have learnt a lot in this relationship, I have traveled a lot, I consider to have another family in Mexico, I enjoy going there, I have met very cool people among Mexicans living here in Milan and I like the way they party and the way they like to keep eating certain things and so on… when I do something I don't think whether this is Italian or this is Mexican, both of them are very much internalized I guess but in any case, and considering that my wife is Mexican yes, we try to keep alive both the languages, we travel very often to Mexico and keep good friends over there, and we celebrate with others certain national holidays".*

Gabriela (Separation/Marginalization): *"We speak always in Italian because he does not speak Spanish and he is not into learning other languages. Once in a while I do cook some Mexican food but not very often. He has never been in Mexico and he is not interested either so it is very difficult that he likes something from there. On my side I have not gone to Mexico for many years, so I do try to keep alive my traditions, culture and family values, and to keep informed through internet about the news, but over time I have lost contact with many people over there, apart from some people in my close family. About Italian culture, we watch the T.V. together, the soccer games, and some of the sacred traditional celebrations. We don't travel because my husband does not like it. If I would have known how did my life was about to change, from up to deep down, I would not have left my country ever".*

Every single couple showed to be an intercultural world in itself not just because the partners were from two distant countries; for the different language(s) that they (often) speak; for the very rich stories that most of them have to narrate regarding the way they met each other; for the so many different domains that they experience together; for the enormous amount of experiences that, by this time, have shared; and the different adaptation practices and strategies that (conscious or unconscious) they mostly apply to

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overcome the difficulties that they have faced. Nevertheless, at least in this very particular group there are two salient elements that may be finally highlighted.

One of them is the fundamental importance of the individual partners' human capital, and the relative correspondence between both partners' human capital. Thus, those foreign partners who arrived in Italy before meeting and getting married with their current (native) partner showed to have more –country specific- human capital accumulated, together with a further portion of social capital that usually protects them to overburden the relationship with the partner –specially with respect to the foreign spouse's dependence regarding the native one. There were these couples, the ones that particularly showed to have less conflictive clashes among themselves, and among the surrounding social environment, and distress.

In the same way, it was seen that those partners who did not have the need to change or regularize their migratory status were freer to relate among themselves without any legal constriction, and without the haste to cut down the necessary time to get to know each other, the mutual enlarge groups to which the partners belong, their more intimate characterical traits, and the way to react to certain conjectural situations.

Precisely this was one of the problems that was more often identified; that many partners (specially women), after have coexisted with their partners for a longer time, were particularly deluded because their expectations regarding both the partner and the host society were not satisfied, and because –just after have initiated the mixed couple/marriage experience- they realized of the multiple difficulties of living so far away from their places of origin.

Nevertheless, such discrepancy may have been soften by an early acquisition of more concrete –country specific- human and cultural capital, specific knowledge and living experience in the local environment.

Although this project started with the idea to analyze mixed marriages according to the different cultural background and nationality of the partners, it was seen that since the very conformation of the couple there is a process of "self selection", that influences marriage choices and opportunities, and later assortative mating.

Thus, it was seen that partners could be perceived and classified as mixed because of such salient differences of ethnicity, culture and nationality; but in practice what truly made

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them mixed were their educational credentials, their different ways of thinking, the experiences that they have previously lived, and their emotional and characteral traits, which were very much heterogeneous even within the same in-group. Whereas there were other couples who, contrary, could be registered as mixed couples whereas in reality the partners were very much alike in other less evident traits either because of their very own personal characteristics or because of the common lifestyle that they have built during the time that they have been together.

Such self selection processes showed to be very much influenced by the general education level of both partners and by their previous experiences. And such finding corresponds to what other authors have found before, that general education may affect the probability of intermarriage by altering an individual's preferences for marrying outside their own ethnic or national group. As discussed by Cohen (1977), those who have higher levels of secular education may spend more time among people of diverse backgrounds which may decrease aversion to (or increase understanding of) members of other groups. Such effect that education may have on preferences for marrying outside one's ethnicity is referred by Furtado (2006) as the "cultural adaptability effect", most of the findings support the hypothesis that the highly educated are thus more likely to intermarry (Meng and Gregory, 2005; Lichter and Qian, 2001).

Highly educated individuals may also be less attached to their family or community of origin as they left their family and ethnic environment to obtain higher education (Kalmijn, 1998). In particular individuals with educational levels much higher or much lower than their ethnic group's average have a significantly higher probability of intermarriage.

However it is not that more highly educated people is more able to marry outside of the in-group, evidence shows that more highly educated people is more able to marry other highly educated people outside of their own in-group, but who at the same time do not have a very high ethnic-specific human capital of their own in-group, because that would imply a particular preference for the own ethnic group. In this case, the choice for marrying outside goes further away of the exclusive preference for a certain mostly innate characteristic that may not offer sufficient information about the partner in question (such as ethnicity or nationality).

Thus, among the respondents of this small sample it was seen that those partners who made a more conscious, broadly informed and responsible, choice regarding marrying outside of their own group, whether because of their own preferences or for the available marriage choices, were the ones who mostly show to experience potential difficulties in a non conflictive way; relating to the partner first of all as a person but acknowledging at the same time the different needs and desires that the partner may have according to his/her particular cultural background.

In the same way, important differences were observed according to the social context in which the different couples do actually live; whereas those people who live in larger urban centers, such as Milan and to a lesser extent Brescia, have the opportunity to meet other people from the same background of the foreign spouse, and to reproduce at least some of the more appreciated cultural practices from the country of origin; there are those couples who live in very small urban centers in which the degree of cultural diversity and openness towards "the other" is minimal, and in which the possible adaptation strategies may be much more restricted.

CHAPTER 6

<u>Overall conclusions and discussion</u>

Although several relevant conclusions have been already formulated in Chapter 5, during the next paragraphs an overall conclusion will be developed by linking the main three elements that have conformed this thesis project, the conceptual and historical analysis of the mixed couples and intermarriage social phenomenon; the heterogeneous theoretical background that has been so far conformed regarding the increasing registered incidence of these kind of unions; and the empirical research performed with a very particular "mixed" combination between native Italians and foreign Mexicans. Furthermore, at the end of the chapter, a brief description of the main research shortcomings that were faced is presented as a contribution for future deeper insights.

During the first part of this thesis project, an analysis of the main abstract concepts involved in the study of the general social phenomenon of mixed couples, intermarriages and cross-border marriages, and its historical evolution, was developed. Thus, a differentiation between the status of (mixed) couple and (inter)marriage was made in order to understand the depth and the social and legal implications of both the human bond and the regulating institution, that may be ruled by different kind of authorities; that may imply different types of commitments and exchanges between the spouses, as well as between the spouses and their offspring and enlarged families; that may be celebrated by different civil and/or religious rituals; that may imply a different amount of participants and sexual arrangements according to the prevalent social and cultural traditions; and that may fulfill several different scopes according to the spouses background and individual/collective interpretations of the relationship.

By approaching the institutions of marriage and family in a time perspective, it was possible to observe that these are far from being static and homogeneous; that their forms and content have changed over time and among different societies; that specially during the last century it was possible to observe an increasing number of different family typologies and that the incidence, as well as the ruling institutional role, of (religious firstly and civil secondly) marriage has particularly decreased in Western highly industrialized countries.

Nonetheless, marriage continues to be a fundamental social alliance in most societies (although for some groups more than others); its function of publicly recognizing and regulating a certain kind of human relationship; and its relevance as a previous step for a couple (or group of people) to be not only socially but also legally considered as a family is still considerable.

Differences between a long term couple relationship and a married couple were highlighted, particularly in terms of the property kind of relationship existing between the partners; the gendered condition of the relationship; and the extended commitments acquired towards the offspring and the enlarged families, as well as toward other social groups to which the partners individually belong.

In the same way, a clarification of the main differences between the so called ordinary –non mixed- couples (married or unmarried) and mixed couples was made. A social constructivist approach was used to understand what does a mixed couple, intermarriage and cross-border marriage actually mean; which are the main variables that have been taken into consideration for a couple to be socially and legally considered mixed; and how these variables have changed over time and among different societies.

Marrying across boundaries (whether these can be economic, religious, racial, ethnic, national, etc.) has been always considered as a way to move outside of predetermined social, political or religious rules; and as such it has been correspondently signaled or even punished depending on the closure degree and rigidity of the local society and the regulating authorities; but at the same time, it has been an instrument to promote social change and to recreate new forms of coexistence not only between the spouses but also between the groups to which the spouses putatively belong.

Interactions between social groups provide a fundamental way to describe the group boundaries that make up the social structure, specially because marriage –and thus intermarriage- is an intimate and often long-term expected relationship. Exogamy and/or heterogamy rates, not only reveal the existence of interaction across different group boundaries, but they also show that members of different groups may accept each other as social equals. Intermarriage in this way may be regarded as an intimate link not only between individuals but also between social groups; conversely, endogamy or homogamy can be regarded as forms of group closure (Kalmijn, 1998).

Intermarriage, as it was previously described, may be observed along different divides, without forgetting that at the end of the day every single individual is unique; however, the categorizations that have been further analyzed by sociologists when referring to exogamy and heterogamy patterns have been mainly socioeconomic status, religion, race, ethnicity and most recently nationality. The emphasis given to each of these divides, nevertheless, is strongly conditioned by the local context, and its relative temporality according to the historical period.

An element that was highlighted is the long term previous existence of the phenomenon, although the relative novelty of its conceptualization and the more recent development of empirical and theoretical research. This is to understand that what results more interesting is the noticeable increase on intermarriages that has been observed during the last decades, especially when –parallel- a decreased incidence of "ordinary" or unmixed marriages has been registered; as well as the increasing amount of (simultaneous) variables that are (legally or socially) considered to categorize a couple as a mixed couple (married or unmarried).

In short, what makes the phenomenon of intermarriage sociologically relevant lies in its inherent dynamicity, because it is not just a reflection of the boundaries that have separated and currently separate groups in society, but it also bears the potential of cultural and socioeconomic change and evolution. Nevertheless, this cultural and socioeconomic transformations are not that simply to asses, especially nowadays when patterns of intermarriage seem to be increasingly individualized, importantly depending not only on the very personal characteristics of the spouses themselves, but also on the groups to which these belong and, furthermore, on the contextual characteristics of the origin/destination societies in which these are embedded and continuously develop.

In this way, there was developed a long –although non exhaustive- historical analysis of the transformations that the institutions of marriage and family have experienced in the Western world, and in particular in the two countries from where the partners involved in the very particular "mixed combination" studied in this project do actually come from.

The analysis mainly focused on the increasing complexity of the main heterogamy and exogamy channels, however, the study of these patterns can't be unrelated to several other elements of marriage and family life. As it has been observed, the transformations of

these institutions were significantly influenced by several other wider socio-economic processes such as industrialization, secularization and further globalization. In this way, the complexity of each of these processes has been translated in several ways into the most intimate spheres of private life.

Hence, the separation of the private/public domain, the decreasing role of the family as an economic production unit, the increasing variety of exogamy and heterogamy channels for partners' selection, the increasing importance of acquired personal characteristics –instead of innate ones- when choosing for a partner, the degree of influence exercised by close and enlarged family when choosing for a marriage mate, the selection of civic –instead of religious- rituals to celebrate the marriage, the expected role functions of the spouses, the motives to get married, among others, have been only some of the elements that have shown to evolve together with society's transformations.

In the Western world, and particularly in those early industrialized and more developed economies, the overall result has been the crescent de-institutionalization of the couple's relationship and the decreasing number of registered (civil but more particularly religious) marriages; the diversification of family forms, i.e. single parents, divorced parents, second marriages, free unions, living apart together unions, etc. Parallel, nevertheless, there has been an increasing interest in interpreting the couple relationship and the family formation process as a means to satisfy not only materialistic but also emotional very personal preferences and needs.

The social influence exercised by immediate and enlarged family and other social groups has very much diminished to enhance what the individual does need and want about his/her private life. In this way, marriage and family have passed from being legitimized by the needs and preferences of the spouses' relatives and the immediate belonging social group, by external institutions and/or other social constraints, to be increasingly legitimized by their -not exclusive- role within a process of the individual's own self realization and by the active exercising of a certain kind of equitable, open and *confluent* kind of love between the spouses. Several contemporary sociologists such as Giddens, Beck and Cancian coincide in the conception of modern intimate love relationships as a reflection of the individual's aims of self realization and the diffusion of a process of increased individualization reflected on family life.

Such model, however, has shown to be an aspirational prototypical one more than a completely fulfilled one. This is because complete equity between the genders is rarely observed (specially in detriment of females); because not every single society's segment has already assured a sufficient material and economic stability to allow people to focus on satisfying (only) emotional and/or intellectual needs; etc. Thus, although there may be observed more marriages legitimized by love –at least in one of its multiple manifestations- there has been also observed an increasing instability in marital life, an important increase in the number of divorces and second marriages, and a strengthened pattern of homogamy in terms of acquired characteristics –instead of innate ones- that has resulted in an increased (global) stratification and sustained inequality.

Modern human relationships may be further characterized by taking place (also) at long distance and within significantly less institutionalized environments. The improvement of several transportation and communication technologies has allowed to establish a series of interconnected relationships independently of the physical location of the partners, thus that their development importantly rely on the well functioning of expert systems, defined as *"systems of technical implementation or professional expertise that organize large areas in the physical and social environments in which we live today"* (Giddens, 1994: 37), that have promoted the progressive separation of time and space in terms of human relationships.

These changes have been experienced within a crescent globalization process, that has had as cause and consequence the increasing mobility and exchange of ideas, cultural models, quotidian information, products and, last but not least, people. In this way, the propagation of such aspirational and prototypical model(s) of marriage for love (in its several manifestations) and equity within relationships, may have been exported to other places of the world, and further transformed and adopted in other (Westernized) societies at a different timing and in a different way(s).

Furthermore, the increasing amount and intensity of human mobility, and individual/intergroup contacts for the more diverse reasons (increasing flows of international economic migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, international students, expats, virtual web surfers, etc.), have diversified the places -contemplating also those differentiated by long cultural and geographical distances- where people do look for and/or

find potential mates, making also local and international marriage markets to become more complex and interrelated. In this way, the increasing weight gave to individuals' own decisions/constraints, priorities and preferences when choosing for a partner is combined, to a larger or lesser extent, with other cultural and socio-economic contextual elements that may be found in each society.

Although the observed de-institutionalization itself of marriage, the importance of the human relationship by this institution regulated does still maintain its relevance for society's reproduction and continuity; however, the nuances of such relationship have been significantly diversified according precisely to the most diverse needs and preferences of the individuals, and groups, embedded.

Within this extraordinarily complex contextual environment, in several highly industrialized countries (mostly traditional and recent immigrants' receptors), there has been observed an important increase in the number of registered mixed marriages between people from different ethnicities/nationalities, and particularly between natives and foreigners/immigrants. Such mixed condition, may refer not only to racial, ethnic, cultural and religious differences -all together- between the partners, but it may also –and particularly- refer to differences in terms of nationality/citizenship, that has been the one divide that has become more salient when categorizing a couple as "mixed".

The reason to do this is because cultural and national differences have become more salient due to the increasing encounters between people from different parts of the world, that have been observed particularly during the last decades due to the intensification of human mobility flows for the most diverse reasons. However, that does not mean that other kind of social divides (not only between but also within societies) have been cancelled. Contrary, the divides between rich and poor countries, and between population segments within countries, have been actually strengthened.

In this way, when it has been a matter of categorizing a couple as a mixed (international) couple, such distinction is usually made according to the nationality registered in the official marriage records (further registered divides refer to sex of course, and to the date and place of birth e.g). However, there is not further information on the spouses' socioeconomic background in their countries of origin and/or countries of residence, on their formal and informal education, on their class of origin, on their religious

beliefs and specific practices (their denomination may be registered according to the kind of marriage celebrated, but the specificities of the religious personal identity and practices are not registered either), on their previous international experiences or migratory past; and still less on the way that the partners met each other, their personalities, sexual/physical preferences, interests, skills, etc.

Considering that in the Western world individual traits have become more and more important when choosing for a mate and forming a family, it is noticeable the fact that several of the elements previously cited are not taken into account when categorizing and analyzing contemporary (international) mixed couples and cross-border marriages, nor by public institutions and citizens, nor by social researchers and local media.

In this way, the increase of these registered marriages has usually risen suspicion and distrust such that contradicts the current de-institutionalizing local marriage trends; and therefore its incidence has fed the idea that most mixed marriages are the result of a purely rational cost-benefit analysis aimed at regularizing a foreign migratory status, obtaining citizenship or/and access to public welfare and local marriage market, among others.

Thus, the nexus between this type of marriage arrangement and international migration has been almost taken for granted, so that the phenomenon has been mostly studied as an outcome of immigrants' integration/assimilation processes, and thus the transformation and (relative) consolidation of plural societies.

Although this is certainly a very important part of the social phenomenon, it is only one part of it. Nowadays, people move from one country to the other (voluntarily for forcibly) for the most diverse reasons and decide to, or is constrained to, form a couple with a foreign person even before experiencing a migratory process (the so called cross-border marriages).

As Ulrich Beck says, there is an increasingly diversified "cast" of marriage and family outcomes that have resulted from the intensified encounters of people from different parts of the world. All of these have been denominated by the author as "world families"; however, the same author does recognize that within this very complex phenomenon there are still several different typologies and hybrid combinations, just (or even more) as it does happen with "non mixed" couples and families who have (also) experienced a series of relevant transformations during the last century and even before.

In this way, it is noticeable the fact that there are those cultural and national differences among the partners the ones that have been (almost) over-weighted when analyzing inter-group and individual contemporary mixed relationships; but often without considering that there has been also a wide spread of global culture specially among younger generations; that several wider socio-economic processes that have importantly influenced family life have also been spread out and reproduced in other latitudes, although in a different way and at a different timing; and that all societies are -at a different extent- extremely heterogeneous. This is to say e.g. that a couple of two persons from the same nationality but from a different social class, may be even more mixed (live their mixity in a different way and be socially perceived in a different way) than a couple of two people from a different nationality but from a correspondently social class in their own countries of origin, and the same goes –specially- for the educational divide and other achieved characteristics.

One of the reasons of the simplification that often has been made of this social phenomenon lies in its –almost automatic- correspondence to a wider one –social phenomenon- of international migration. This correspondence has been the result of a clearly observed increase in the number of registered (international) mixed marriages in traditional immigrants' receptor countries. These increasing rates were the ones that raised attention not only of social researchers but also of national politicians, mainly under the suspicion that the institution of marriage could be instrumentalized for different other aims (marriage migrants' entrance, regularization, naturalization, etc.).

Within this context, first studies were developed under an economic (migrant) perspective that interpreted such unions merely as the result of a purely rational cost-benefit analysis aimed primarily to satisfy the imminent needs of newcomers.

In this way, intercultural/international mixed marriages were all further interpreted as the result of an assimilation process of certain migrant groups within the host society; this assumption hypothesized that, over time, migrants acquire a certain degree of cultural and social capital, linguistic skills, occupational attainment, and several other acquired characteristics, that help them to increasingly resemble the native population, and to overcome or diminish certain "penalized" innate traits, such as the color of the skin, a collectivistic cultural background, etc.

Considering the degree of intimacy, strength and long term expected duration, of the marriage bond, when a member of an ethnic minority or migrant group does marry a member of the "native" majority group, it is assumed that, through the spouses, members of both groups would interact with each other as social equals. However, such interpretation is actually far from being socially equal or fair; because people from the less social prestigious groups are regarded as equals only to the extent that they resemble the member of the more social prestigious group; or as far as they posses "something", i.e. highly social prestigious acquired characteristics, that may be exchanged for the majority group's acceptance and further inclusion into the mainstream society.

Such were some of the first assumptions of certain theoretical approaches regarding contemporary mixed couples and intermarriages, that were mostly developed in the United States, such as the Exchange Social Theory and the Cultural Assimilation Theory. The development of these analyses highlighted the existence of a highly stratified marriage market, that usually coincided with a wider ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic stratification of the hosting societies. However, such stratification was saliently characterized by locating (the homogeneously perceived) native group at the top of a vertical continuum, and the alien groups (hierarchically organized according to their particular characteristics, common history and symbolic stereotypes, among others) at the bottom of such continuum.

Although these attempts to theorize the several factors embedded in the incidence of such phenomenon, it is recognized that every particular case is actually influenced by the cultural, social and economic characteristics of the context; by the traits that particularly distinguish the groups to which the (mixed) spouses putatively belong; and by the specific characteristics of the spouses themselves within such (broadly heterogeneous) groups. Thus, one single theory of intermarriage for all societies over time, would be truly impossible.

This assertion has been accurately confirmed specially during the last decades, when individuals' decisions regarding private life have increasingly relapsed on the single individual him/herself and his/her particular characteristics, preferences, beliefs, needs and values (although it is recognized that such individualization process has not been computed in the same way between and within societies, i.e. only certain population strata find themselves in the position of "freely" decide regarding their own private life's decisions).

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Facing the several modernization process that societies have experienced during the last decades, and its effects in several life domains, more integrative theoretical approaches have been lately developed regarding the elements that positively/negatively influence the increasing incidence of registered intermarriages (whose definition, furthermore, continues to be socially redefined and therefore subjected to continuous changes).

From these, the one by Kalmijn of "Social Forces: Preferences, Opportunities and Third Parties" has been widely applied in several (mostly immigrants' receptors) countries; recognizing thus the importance not only of the spouses' particularities but also of the context; the increasingly complex marriage market; the collective characteristics of the groups to which the spouses belong (particular emphasizing the role of the church and other relevant social groups); and furthermore the State, that at the end is the one that does regulate who is able to marry with whom.

If such theoretical approach does recognize further social dimensions of the phenomenon, and several mechanisms that have translated the increasing complexity of social life into individuals' private daily life, it does still not fully recognize the increasing diversity of human mobility patterns, and their situational particularities, that may be currently observed. Needed to remind that this is a theoretical perspective that was born also through the traditional (economic) migrant perspective though.

The current research project has aimed thus to apply these previous theoretical contributions in combination with other theoretical approaches of (ordinary) marriage and family transformations; incorporating at the same time a less hierarchical (economic and cultural) categorization of the individuals/groups that participate in intermarriage practices; and a wider acknowledge of the different mobility motivations and channels that may be nowadays observed (e.g. migration because of marriage, instead of the traditional marriage because of migration).

Furthermore, it has attempted to understand the way in which (already formed) mixed couples and intermarriages do negotiate their (mainly cultural) differences among themselves, and with regard to the social environment in which the partners are embedded (particular emphasis is given to the relation between the foreign spouse and the social groups and local institutions of the country of residence).

In order to do so, there has been developed an analytical description of the broadly known William Berry`s theoretical model of the main acculturation strategies applied by (migrant) individuals when approaching a new socio-cultural context. Such model is also employed at analyzing intercultural relations, and it is based on two main principles, i.e. cultural maintenance and social contacts with the native population.

From this first approach to intercultural negotiations there have been recognized a series of general attitudes, modalities and behaviors, that are basically oriented to acknowledge and preserve both spouses' cultural traditions (biculturalism), or a more integrative and internationalized cultural tradition (cosmopolitanism); only the native spouse's cultural tradition (assimilation); or none of the spouses' cultural traditions (segregation, marginalization or instability).

Although the conceptual utility of these categorizations, it is recognized that they do not manage to acknowledge the increasing real and virtual mobility that characterizes current societies; nor the dynamicity and multidimensionality with which different "strategies" may be contemporarily applied to different life domains. At this respect, a further contribution is given by the widely discussed concept of transnationalism, as a representation of the "simultaneously living between different world" condition in which many (marriage) migrants (and not only) do actually live.

Transnationalism thus is defined as "the complex of processes by which (different categories of) migrants develop and maintain interconnected ties and social networks that operate in two or more different national societies" (Schiller et. al., 1995); and in this particular research project it is employed to further understand the constant adaptation and renegotiation processes that mixed couples experience not only regarding the country in which they currently reside, but also regarding the foreign spouse' country of origin.

Such specific countries i.e. Italy and Mexico, nevertheless, have been observed to have a more parallel than intersectional (migratory) history that, at least to a certain extent, does difficult the partners' –simultaneous- interactions between two contexts that are geographically, economically and politically, far away from each other. If it is true, on the one hand, that mostly Catholic Mexicans –especially if mestizos or with an European ascendency- may be not perceived as different as mostly Muslim black Senegalese e.g., it is also true that relationships between these first two countries have been rather discontinuous

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and scarce because of the lack of complementary economic interests or because of the relatively inexistent presence of numerically significant diasporas of Italians in Mexico or Mexicans in Italy.

Considering that the incidence of a very particular combination of mixed couples and intermarriages was studied also in a very particular context, i.e. Italy, there was made first of all a clarification of the kind of mixedness that is observed in this country, and how does this has evolved until being almost completely identified with a larger phenomenon of international immigration that initiated since the 70s but that became particular salient during the 90s (several decades later than in more traditional and earlier industrialized countries of Northern and Western Europe, and North America).

The incidence of such phenomenon, nevertheless, may be attributed not only to the intensification of immigration flows during the last decades of the XIX in Italy, but also to the several transformations that the native society, and more particularly, the institutions of marriage and family, have experienced during previous years.

Just as it happened in other Western and European countries several decades before, it was observed that the process of industrialization and its multiple dimensions did influenced the way in which Italian people experience private life, couple and family issues.

Private domain increasingly became more separated from the public domain, and the functions traditionally performed by the extended family were substituted by other public benefits, services and social welfare. If the early industrialization period promoted an increasing number of marriages and newborns together with a mortality of the decreasing mortality rates, that was translated in an important population growth; the first exhaustion signals of such model started to be observed as early as during the 1970s decade. During this period, a decreasing and postponing incidence of the marriage life stage started to be the rule more than the exception; both civic and religious marriage rates started to decrease importantly together with the increasing of new family forms, second marriages, unmarried couples, marriages with significantly less or none children, etc.

All these complex changes, industrialization, increasing urbanization, and further secularization, that in this particular national context occurred in a very fragmented and regionally differentiated way, had several effects in the individualization and constant

diversification of private lives; in the decreasing control of third parties, and in the increasing complexity of a much more stratified and varied marriage market.

In this way, it might be thought that partners' choice, marriage and family arrangements would increasingly be the outcome of the individuals' preferences and emotive needs (especially when material needs have been already satisfied); however, in the very particular case of Italy this was not the case such that those developing processes were not fully accomplished and strengthened for very particular cultural and structural reasons. People kept strongly relying on the enlarged family to fulfill both their public and private needs; the rather scarce participation of women in the labor market; the difficulties to absorb a higher qualified labor force; and the lack of economic growth, have severely complicated the possibilities of younger generations to decide their own private life, specially for certain social classes, and specially for the less developed Southern regions.

It is within context that it must be analyzed the increasing arrival of migrant groups and the consequent process of mixity with the native population. At this respect, mixed marriages between immigrants and natives have been usually studied under two perspectives; i.e. 1.) between natives and traditional –either low skilled or with a low occupational attainment- migrants (just as it is the case of the prevailing trend in Italy); or 2.) between natives and citizens of other richer and highly industrialized European countries, that usually to be perceived as highly skilled and more socially equal unions (intra-European marriages).

According to this dual classification, most case studies in Italy have been analyzed under the first perspective, precisely because of such strong presupposed relationship between the increasing incidence of mixed marriages and the presence of immigrant communities in Italy. Immigrants, nevertheless, that are usually identified as people who usually find themselves in a relatively low and vulnerable occupational positions and who may translate the action of marrying an Italian citizenship (especially one who parallel find him/herself in an unfavorable position within the local marriage market) as a mechanism of social and economic mobility and regularization or further stabilizations within the host society. At this respect, particular emphasis has been given to the unions between much older Italians (particularly men) and foreigners (particularly women).

However, if this is one –and maybe the more salient- modality of mixed marriage, that does not mean that it is the only one. Specially because, as it was said before, very different concepts of (love) marriage, (international) family life, and global families have been globally spread around the world, and people nowadays do move because of many diverse reasons, that may not imply –uniquely and necessarily- the acquisition of a foreign citizenship because of marriage.

People as it was observed, moved also because of the –probably idealistic- search of a confluent –whether international or not- love (migration for love); because of the expressed will to form an international mixed family; because an innate or acquired openness towards cultural diversity; because of the existence of the more unimagined small diasporas and international social connections that have developed over time after the increasing encounters of people from all around the world; because of the ancient existence of strongly ethnic and economic stratified marriage markets that favor certain physical, intellectual, economic and social traits; etc.

Thus, this research aimed at contributing to implement this internal diversity within the wide world of global families, analyzing a group of mostly marriage migrants in Italy that may be not categorized as traditional migrants nor as highly mobile free movers or Eurostarts.

Thus, the group in question are Mexicans living in Italy who have an Italian native partner or spouse. Such group, at least in this particular national context, may be regarded as a third "emergent" category. Thus, people who do not belong to any of the two mentioned categories, but are somehow "in the middle". Such condition may correspond to the emergent condition that the particular country of origin has within the wider international context; condition that, on the one hand, has allowed a (very particular) –middle-high- segment of the population to have an upward mobility and an increased participation in international study/working activities; and that, furthermore, has pictured the country to be acknowledged as one of the first twenty larger economies in the world in constant economic growth and social development; but that, on the other hand, it does continue to struggle in terms of poverty, wealth distribution and security, among others, and that therefore it is not entirely perceived as a rich developed and highly democratized country.

Considering that intermarriage patterns –usually as part of a wider process of immigrants' integration- have been often studied almost exclusively according to the perspective of the spouses' place of residence (destination country); a further review of the country of origin of the foreign spouses, i.e. Mexico, was developed.

At this respect, several macroeconomic data were described, together with a further explanation of the salient economic stratification that may be observed within the country and that, for very complex historical reasons, does coincide with the ethnic stratification of the society and, therefore, of the marriage market. Thus, it was seen that in former colonies –such as Mexico or other Latin American countries and not only-, and contrary to what it usually happen in former colonizing countries –and contemporary immigrants' massive receptors-, the relative characteristic of being a foreign, especially if a white one from a rich and highly industrialized country, may be positively regarded.

In this way, there were described some of Mexican society's characteristics that may at least hypothetically influence the incidence of intermarriages and cross-border marriages with people from Mexican origin. To start with, the ethnic stratification of the marriage market (and not only) and the favoring of certain (foreign) traits whose acquisition may be a means for social mobility; the increasing participation of Mexicans (specially of those from a middle-high or high social class) in several international activities in which it is possible to encounter people from other nationalities and cultural backgrounds, i.e. international university programs, international touristic leisure trips, intercultural exchanges, a crescent participation in the international –highly qualified- labor market; as well as the spread existence of small Mexican communities in other countries and the presence of foreigners who travel to and/or live in Mexico for the most diverse reasons, etc.

Moreover, also in Mexico there have been several social and economic family transformations that have influenced the way in which Mexicans do experiment their private life; family nucleus have become smaller in urban areas as a result of several economic and ideological transformations that have decreased its importance as a production unit; women have incremented their participation in the regular (and irregular) labor force and, to a certain extent, have increased their possibilities to personally decide the way to experience their private life; different social institutions such as the family itself and the church have lost certain social and moral authority to influence younger generations

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regarding the way to do and to be family; and just as in different societies the –at least idealized- search of emotional satisfaction has become one of the more relevant legitimizing factors to choose for a (romantic) partner.

That does not mean that there are not relationships that are born for the sake of merely satisfying economic and material needs and wills (just as it may happen in any other society, whether in mixed or unmixed unions); but that the motives and the involved factors in the process of partner selection have –also there- become much more complex.

This means that international real and virtual (that should not be minimized) encounters have become much more available for people of the more diverse social and cultural backgrounds; however, the phenomenon –as it was said before- is not a one free-for-all, and from all the possible encounters that may be observed only some of them actually evolve to the point of becoming more intimate and further legitimized such as the case of intermarriages.

Thus, there may be several materialistic and un-materialistic reasons that may positively influence the incidence of intermarriages with people from another nationality; i.e. the express or unconscious will to move out of the country of origin whether for economic reasons, for the open desire of travelling and/or have a further international career or lifestyle, or for escaping a climate of insecurity or a negative family environment, etc. Apart of all these reasons there may be those more emotional ones such as the idealization of a certain country/person; the conceptualization/experimentation of love in its multiple nuances, even as resignation of all other life domains; and, of course, the finding of a characterially complementary and compatible partner –although his/her different nationality and cultural background-, etc. Reasons may be several, and many of these –according to what it was seen also among the respondents- may be even unconscious, such that choosing a marriage partner it is usually far from being a purely rational choice.

However, what it was observed along the empirical research that was developed is that mixed couples/marriages follow a series of very diverse patterns; that not only the characteristics of the partners (between and within couples) may be very much diversified; but also the motives to get together (which are usually associated to personal emotional reasons), and to move out/in from a certain country can be very different; as well as the

way to experience the (mixed) relationship with the partner and within the surrounding social environment.

One of the main difficulties that was identified was the one of actually classifying international mixed –married and unmarried- couples exclusively according to the nationality/citizenship divide. This is because nowadays several countries do allow to have more than one contemporary citizenship and such is the case of both countries, Italy and Mexico; so there were some (Mexican) respondents who specified to have a second Italian (or from other EU member state) citizenship. In the particular case of the Latin American countries, it must be remained that an important part of the population has a foreign heredity or a migratory background, thus, although numbers are inexact there are many people who have a double citizenship, whether Mexican/American, Mexican/Spanish, Mexican/Italian, or Mexican/another Latin America country, etc.

At this respect, a clear differentiation between international couples and exclusively inter-cultural ones was made; in both cases partners may deal with negotiating their particular (cultural and not only) differences, but in the second cases the whole bureaucratic process that comes together with a migratory process is importantly facilitated. Thus, having a passport released by the destination country or in this case by another member state country –such as particularly Spain- may facilitate the foreign person insertion and stabilization in the host country, and therefore may allow the partners to focus more on their actual relationship than one the legal and bureaucratic aspects of it.

However, not all people who count with a (local) national passport may have a smooth integration process into the host society; because the exclusive possession of such identity document -and all its social and political implications- does not necessarily imply, nevertheless, that people already count with the sufficient country specific cultural capital, nor with an enlarged local social capital, nor that the person is actually identified by natives as a national of the host country; such as it was reported by some of the participants who were actually holding a dual passport even before getting to know their partner. However, this condition does avoid an additional –legal and bureaucratic - pressure on the partners to formalize the union as a means for the foreign spouse's entrance in the country or for regularizing his/her migratory status.

A second clarification was also made precisely in relation to the migratory status of the foreign partners. Among the respondents it was seen a clear differentiation between those people who met their partners just after have emigrated from their country of origin, and thus partners who contrarily met their partners while still living in their country of origin. Among the first ones, there were some people who were already specifically living in Italy, while there were other people who met their partner in a third country.

Such differentiation becomes very important because it throws information about the potential reasons of a person for moving out of their country of origin. Among those people who were already living in Italy –previously meeting their partner- marrying a native person may signify a further reason to anchor in the country and to get further stability within their –personal- migratory path. These people, nevertheless, have already obtained at least a certain cultural and social capital in the social context in which they are embedded, and this may be actually the reason because they get together with a native citizenship (according to the Cultural Assimilation Theory).

The people who were in this situation manifested to have usually met their partners according to some of the Social Forces identified by Kalmijn, thus according to their very own personal preferences, desires and needs; to the intercession of local third parties such as common friends, colleagues or other social groups; and thus to the entrance into the local marriage markets that does not seem to be particularly problematic. Mexicans who have previously immigrated to Italy, furthermore, are not the classical poor Latin American migrants; contrary, they are mostly people who usually move to this country for very particular interests, whether for experiencing the local culture, following a particular language or professional formation degree, fulfilling a particular job position, or overstaying their period as tourists for getting a job, although there were only few cases of irregular migrants identified.

There were particularly these people the ones who showed to have followed a (inter) marriage pattern somehow similar to Italian natives. Particularly among Mexican men and Italian women there was not such a relevant age difference, and in both cases (Mexican women and Italian men) there were not striking education or economic divides –although this last ones were more difficult to assess. However, there were important occupational divides, and it was observed that at this respect women (both Italian but specially Mexican)

were more often disoccupied in comparison to men (both Italian and Mexican). Such condition was particularly noticed for women having children and who have not managed to validate their previous academic and professional degrees.

Another group that could be identified according to the migratory divide were those that specifically moved to Italy for living together and/or marrying their partner. Among these were significantly more women than men, and there were many more heterogeneity channels identified. Thus, among these there were people who met while one or both partners were on vacations abroad, while following a language course in a third country, when having a working/voluntary experience either in Mexico or in a third country, through Internet, etc.

Something that was particularly observed is that mixed partners could be considered pre-selected according to the specific situational condition in which they met each other. Thus, if several categorizations have been developed according to the particular characteristics of the partners or the motives to get involved in a mixed relationship (Tognetti Bordogna, 1996), I would firstly suggest to additionally focus on the collective characteristics of the partners' countries of origin, and even more specifically on the conjectural situation in which the partners met each other, because I do consider that the access that specific people may have to particular marriage markets defines the kind of partner that such person may potentially meet.

The necessity to contextualize the environment in which the partners meet was already signaled by Erick Cohen (2003) when analyzing transnational marriages of Western men and Thai women who met in Thailand; and who realized that Kalmijn's Social Forces theory was not completely fitting the singularities of this particular kind of intermarriage that was strongly dependent on the specific environment in which these Western men could meet their potential Thai partners.

In the same way, among Italian and Mexicans it was seen that there were several correspondent characteristics among the partners, thus, differences in terms of age, education, socio-economic class, were –in most cases- not striking, and the reason for this was the particular heterogamy channel in which the partners met. Thus, although it may be particularly romantic and exotic to think of mixed couples in terms of the poor Cinderella kind of story, what it has been observed is that people usually marry with other people who

have similar educational and socioeconomic characteristics or in this case international experiences (heterogamy that enforces socioeconomic or educational homogamy), even if they differ in terms of nationality (this is particularly clear among the two extremes of the divide, the more and less average educated; Schwartz & Mare, 2005).

Thus, particularly Generation X and Millenial partners who have a rather high education background, who are used to speak other languages, who have lived and travel abroad, and who are thus very much used to deal with people from different cultural backgrounds, have also higher probabilities to access certain marriages markets in which they are potentially exposed to meeting other similar partners (universities, cultural exchange groups, international companies, etc.). Whereas in the same local markets, the probabilities of meeting a person with several similar social and economic traits are rather high according to the places and the groups that are regularly frequented.

Probably, the difference that has been lately observed is that many more people can relatively easily access certain marriage markets that in the past would have been impossible to enter. Thus, either through occasional touristic trips or through Internet it is always easier to contact people from different nationalities and/or cultural backgrounds and to start a relationship for the more diverse reasons.

However, it was also among this group that more problematic relationships were actually identified. The main reason for these clashes between partners, or between partners and their enlarged families and/or social surroundings, was mainly the lack of sufficient time for previously getting to know each other; the discrepancy between expectations about the couple (love) life and/or the several life domains in the new host country and the encountered reality; the lack of family and/or social acceptation; the difficulty to learn the local dialects (more than the Italian language); the isolation of certain small mostly rural localities; the difficulties to fit in the local labor market and the almost impossible effective spending of the foreign spouses' previous academic degrees and professional skills. All of that combined with a personal nostalgia that many foreign spouses seem to experience for the family, economic conditions, and cultural traditions that were left behind in the country of origin.

Among Italian partners there were also expressed the difficulties that were usually caused within the couple thanks to the precarious economic, mental and emotional situation

in which the foreign spouse could potentially find him/herself because of the lack of integration within the host society and because of the geographical distance with the country of origin. However, there were also some mixed couples who explain their problems according to certain situational events, external elements or cultural differences, when in reality the clashes between the partners may be due to problems of characters' incompatibility such as it would happen in any other unmixed ordinary relationship; nevertheless, in several of these cases the salient differences among the couples served to justify certain responses, attitudes or behaviors that –most probably- would not be tolerated with other –same nationality- partners (see Isaakyan & Triandafyllidou, 2014).

In relation to the way in which mixed couples negotiate both gender and cultural differences, it was seen that such processes were highly influenced by the particular context in which the spouses are embedded. Thus, although partners may initially attempt to accomplish a relatively equitable gender arrangement the possibilities to accomplish it highly depend on the social environment, thus, in the predominant gendered culture of the local context and in the possibilities that women may have to achieve a regular labor occupational position that may allow them to have at least a certain economic independence, a certain professional fulfillment, and a certain degree of work-family life balance.

However, it was seen that both the cultural and structural conditions to achieve that kind of equitable gender arrangement in Italy are far from being achieved not only for foreign but also for Italian women, who are both usually the ones that spend more time on domestic and caring activities in contrast to men (both Italian and Mexican).

In relation to cultural differences, both Mexican and Italian partners (especially those who do not fully speak both languages) mentioned the communication language difficulties and misunderstandings that may imply having a partner who speak another language that is so similar whose words' meaning may be often confused. However, almost any person considered that such difference could be that much significant as to promote strong divergences among the partners. Usually both couples expressed a significant openness for knowing and practicing cultural traditions of their partner's country of origin; however, they also acknowledged that it was particularly difficult for the foreign partner to reproduce his/her culture in an cultural context in which there is not a spread knowledge of the foreign

spouse's country, and that this was particularly salient for people who live in smaller urban or rural centers in which cultural homogeneity and closeness is particularly high.

In this way, although the cultural exchange was very much appreciated among the partners (although idealistically talking), the real cultural exchange showed to be particularly biased toward the native partner, something that conscious or unconsciously showed to cause a certain uneasiness and deception among several foreign partners.

Particularly in the way of negotiating cultural differences and elaborating intercultural relationships there were identified at least some general modalities that were very much related with the degree of national identification and willingness to maintain the own cultural backgroudn, and the willingness and possibility to interact with the local culture through establishing local social contacts and acquiring a local-specific cultural capital.

These five modalities or acculturation/adaptation strategies were elaborated according to William Berry's acculturation model, and are cosmopolitanism (valuing the acquisition of multiple identities and cultivating cultural and social contacts with different international traditions); biculturalism (maintaining and cultivating cultural and social contacts specifically with the two partners' countries of origin); assimilation (adopting mostly the necessary local cultural and social capital of the host society, whether ignoring or diminishing that one of the foreign spouse's country of origin); separation (trying only to maintain the social and cultural capital of the foreign spouse's country of origin, without trying to adapt to the host society); and marginalization (isolating from social groups and cultural traditions of both the foreign spouse's country of origin and the native's host society).

These closed categories may seem particularly insufficient to categorize the way in which both –mixed- partners relate to each other and with respect to other people regarding to the most different life domains; however, they may be generally indicative to understand the couple's integration pattern that many couples follow not only in the host society but also with respect to the foreign spouse's country of origin.

However, something that was particularly noticed was that, just as the heterogamy channel by which the partner originally met, the particular adaptation modality(ies) that is usually applied in order to negotiate differences and endure a certain lifestyle in the host

country (and potentially also in the foreign spouse's country of origin) strongly depend on the human capital –both general and country-specific- accumulated by the partners. Thus, there were usually those partners with a higher local language proficiency, with a larger length of stay in the host society, with a relevant country-specific cultural capital, with a regular occupational attainment and a relative economic stability, the ones that managed to more significantly interact with the host society; whereas, at the same time there were also those partners the ones that managed to more actively interacts with the country of origin, although the large geographical and cultural distance.

Human, economic, cultural and social capital, thus, showed to be particularly important for both integrating into the local society and to maintain at the same time significant transnational ties with the country of origin.

Hence as a conclusion it may be lastly said that even when the international mixed couples may offer a good opportunity to observe how members of local societies do react towards different kind of diversity(ies); they may also offer a good opportunity to analyze the way in which modern relationships –more detached from the ordinary conceptions of time and space- develop; and they may, furthermore, be approached -each of them- as a good example of very complex and particular intercultural labs in which, in many cases, the difficulties that may be found when living with and beyond borders are overcome of further strengthened.

Finally, it is important to mentions several research shortcomings that were faced when developing this research project. To start with, the lack of representativeness of the analyzed sample population that does not allow to elaborate further generalizations among the particular group that was studied, nor about the larger universe of international mixed couples and cross-border marriages, or several other typologies of world families, that may be contemporary observed.

In the same way, it was seen that even when analyzing an immigrant population as a migrant from the same ethnic group, i.e. analyzing Mexicans as a Mexican, could offer particular rich contextual insights; in many cases this same condition made even more difficult the possibility to openly speak with the participants, who in many cases showed to distrust of my role as a researcher and to accurately choose their responses maybe because of the thought that I could speak about their (problematic) stories with other members of

the community. Similarly, it was observed that my condition as a woman also seemed to difficult the communication with men (both Mexican and particularly Italian) who, in comparison with their female counterparts, were even less willing to share their stories; and were particularly less willing to speak about the problems and difficulties that could be faced within the couple; maybe because of a certain distrust that I could speak about it with their partners, even though all participants were always assured about the confidentiality of their responses.

At this respect, it was confirmed that dealing with couple and family issues keeps being a very difficult topic to be deepened, both because of the intimate nature of such relationships and because of their inherent quotidianity, dynamicity, and concrete situational dependency.

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ANNEX 1

**Inter-ethnic gastronomic practices of Mexicans in Italy
www.thesistools.com**

Dear respondent,

Thank you very much for your participation in this online survey. This has been created exclusively with academic purposes in order to understand the role of gastronomic inter-ethnic practices in the processes of adaptation of people who have immigrated in Italy.
The information collected will be handled with the utmost discretion, will be used for processing statistics and the development of a sociologic research project in the University of Milan, in accordance with law. 196/2003 "Code regarding the protection of personal data."
Please respond to each of the questions and at the end click on the bottom "Submit".
Thank you very much for your collaboration.

Querido participante

Le agradecemos su amable respuesta a este cuestionario on-line. Éste ha sido creado exclusivamente con motivos académicos pues queremos analizar el rol que las practicas alimentarias juegan en el proceso de adaptación de las personas que deciden inmigrar en Italia.
La información recolectada será tratada con la máxima discreción, se utilizará para la elaboración de datos estadísticos al interno de un proyecto de investigacion sociológico en la Universidad de Milán, de conformidad con la ley. 196/2003 "Código en materia de protección de datos personales".
Por favor responde a cada una de las preguntas, y al final presione el boton "Submit".
Muchas gracias por su colaboracion.

Start

1. **Si pudieses describir el tipo de comida que consumes en Italia, como la podrias catalogar:** *

○ 5. Comida Italiana

○ 4. Mezcla entre comida Mexicana y comida Italiana

○ 3. Comida de variedad internacional

○ 2. Comida Mexicana cocinada con ingredientes Italianos

○ 1. Comida Mexicana cocinada con ingredientes Mexicanos

2. **Si pudieses hacer un recuento del tiempo que has vivido en Italia, como crees que han cambiado tus practicas de consumo alimenticio?** *

○ 5.- Han cambiado mucho, me he acostumbrado enteramente a la gastronomia Italiana.

○ 4.- Han cambiado, pero he simplemente adoptado algunos elementos de la gastronomia Italiana a lo que solia comer en Mexico.

○ 3.- Consumo practicamente lo mismo que comia en Mexico, pero usando ingredientes Italianos.

○ 2.- En mi casa comemos solo comida Mexicana cocinada con ingredientes provenientes de Mexico.

○ 1.- He comenzado a comer platillos de diversas culturas internacionales

3. **De que manera crees que tus habitos alimenticios te han permitido relacionarte con tus conocidos Italianos (familia, amigos, companeros de trabajo)?** *

○ 4.- Mis conocidos Italianos estan muy interesados en conocer la comida Mexicana, por lo que el intercambio de recetas me ha permitido conocer nuevas personas y relacionarme con ellos.

○ 3.- La manera en que como no influye para nada como me relaciono con las personas.

○ 2.- He dejado de comer comida Mexicana porque no encuentro los ingredientes justos/ o no me gusta cocinar

○ 1.- Prefiero integrarme a la forma de comer de mis conocidos (parientes, amigos, etc.) Italianos

4. **Conoces algunos lugares en los que puedes consumir productos de origen Mexicano?** [*]

○ 1.- Si

○ 2.- No

5. **Si tu respuesta fue si, cuales son los lugares que conoces y utilizas para surtirte de productos Mexicanos?** [*]

○ 5.- Tiendas on-line

○ 4.- Envios directos desde Mexico de familiares o amigos.

○ 3.- Tiendas cerca de mi vecindario o en mi ciudad que venden exclusivamente productos Mexicanos.

○ 2.- Tiendas cerca de mi vecindario o en mi ciudad que venden productos "etnicos".

○ 1.- Otro, especifica [_____]

6. **De acuerdo a tu escala personal de prioridades, que tan importante es para ti la comida que ingieres diariamente?** [*]

○ 5.- Muy importante

○ 4.- Importante

○ 3.- Realmente me da lo mismo

○ 2.- Poco importante

○ 1.- Es la ultima de mis prioridades

7. **De acuerdo a tu escala de prioridades, que tan importante es para ti conservar los habitos alimenticios que tenias antes de llegar a vivir en Italia?** [*]

○ 5.- Muy importante

○ 4.- Importante

○ 3.- Prefiero combinar los habitos alimenticios que tenia con los nuevos platillos, ingredientes y sabores que conosco

○ 2.- Mas o menos importante

○ 1.- No es importante, trato de adaptarme al maximo a la comida local

8. **Cocinas Comida Mexicana en tu casa?** [*]

○ 3.- Si

○ 2.- A veces

○ 1.- No

9. Acudes a restaurantes Mexicanos en el area donde habitas? *

○ 4.- Si

○ 3.- A veces

○ 2.- No

○ 1.- No hay

10. Si pudieses asociar un sentimiento a la comida Mexicana que consumes cual seria? *

○ 3.- Me da un sentimiento de familiaridad con Mexico en el lugar donde me encuentro

○ 2.- No me produce ningun tipo de sentimiento

○ 1.- Otro, especifica ▢

11. Que tan importante es para ti encontrarte con otros Mexicanos para comer comida tipica? *

○ 5.- Muy importante

○ 4.- Importante

○ 3.- No es relevante

○ 2.- Poco importante

○ 1.- Nada importante

12. Menciona alguna de las festividades Mexicanas que procuras celebrar en Italia consumiendo comida Mexicana *

○ 5.- Navidad y/o Ano Nuevo

○ 4.- Dia de Reyes

○ 3.- Dia de la Independencia Mexicana

○ 2.- Dia de muertos

○ 1.- Todas las anteriores

○ 0.- Ninguna de las anteriores

13. Haz llevado comida preparada o productos tipicos de la gastronomia Italiana a Mexico? *

○ 1.- Si
○ 2.- No
○ 3.- No aplica

14. Que tan importante ha sido la comida y/o productos alimenticios Italianos para que tu familia y amigos en Mexico conoscan la cultura en la que actualmente vives? *

○ 5.- Muy importante
○ 4.- Importante
○ 3.- Mas o menos importante
○ 2.- Poco importante
○ 1.- Nada importante

15. Que edad tienes?

[ ]

16. Cuantos anos o meses (por favor especifica) tienes de haber llegado a vivir en Italia?

[ ]

17. Que motivos te trajeron a vivir en Italia? *

○ 5.- Familia
○ 4.- Estudios
○ 3.- Trabajo
○ 2.- Aventura
○ 1.- Otro [ ]
○ 0.- Prefiero no responder

18. Sexo *

○ 2.- Mujer

○ 1.- Hombre

19. Ultimo grado de estudios *

○ 5.- Educacion basica

○ 4.- Educacion media

○ 3.- Educacion media superior

○ 2.- Carrera universitaria

○ 1.- Maestria o posgrado

20. Estado Civil

○ 4.- Soltero

○ 3.- Casado

○ 2.- Divorciado

○ 1.- Viudo

○ 0.- Prefiero no declarar

21. En caso de ser casado o tener pareja, de que nacionalidad es la persona?

○ 3.- De la misma que yo

○ 2.- Nacionalidad Italiana

○ 1.- De otra nacionalidad, es decir, no es ni Italiano ni Mexicano

22. Envía por favor un contacto personal (nombre, email o número de teléfono) si te gustaría participar en una entrevista personal más profunda.

[   ]

Submit

Thank you very much for your precious time!
Muchas gracias por tu precioso tiempo!

ANNEX 2

International Mixed Couples and Cross-Border Marriages

Semi-structured Interview Pattern

1. Quando, dove e come hai conosciuto il tuo attuale partner?

2. Quali elementi hanno fatto maturare la scelta di formare una coppia (rapporto sentimentale) con il tuo partner? In che modo ha influito su questa scelta il fatto che lui/lei non sia/non sia Italiano/a?

3. Quali elementi hanno fatto maturare la scelta di convivere e/o sposarti (status istituzionale) con il tuo partner? In che modo ha influito su questa scelta il fatto che lui/lei non sia/non sia Italiano/a?

4. Quanto tempo dopo il primo incontro con il partner è cominciata la convivenza e/o matrimonio? In quale paese?

5. Se tu e il tuo partner vi siete sposati, potresti parlarci della vostra cerimonia matrimoniale? e.g. Che tipo di rito (civile, religioso) avete scelto?, Dove l'avete fatto?, Quali elementi delle vostre diverse culture sono stati rappresentati?, etc.

6. Quali sono stati i principali elementi "esterni" e "interni" della coppia (burocratici e.g.) che hanno creato difficoltà alla nascita ed alla continuazione del rapporto con un partner (non) Italiano/a?

7. Quando e com'è stato il tuo primo contatto con la cultura del paese d'origine del tuo partner (prima o dopo l'incontro con lei/lui)?

8. Com'è stato l'approccio iniziale della tua famiglia verso il tuo partner e come si è evoluto?

9. Com'è stato l'approccio iniziale della famiglia del tuo partner nei tuoi confronti e come si è evoluto?

10. Le frequentazioni comuni della coppia sono prevalentemente italiane, della nazionalità del tuo partner, di altre nazionalità, miste?

11. Quali credi siano state le principali difficoltà del tuo partner appena arrivato/a in Italia? E come si sono risolte (se si sono risolte)? O quali sono state le tue principali difficoltà appena arrivato/a?

12. Quali sono le divergenze più difficili da negoziare con il tuo partner?

13. Quali sono le principali differenze che potresti considerare culturali tra te e il tuo partner?

14. Com'è organizzata la divisione dei lavori domestici e la gestione del budget familiare all'interno della coppia?

15. Secondo te quali sono i principali aspetti positivi di avere un partner di nazionalità diversa alla tua?

16. Sesso

17. Età

18. Città d'origine di residenza attuale

19. Esperienze internazionali precedenti (trasferimento famigliare, studio, lavoro, etc.)

20. Stato Civile

21. Numero di figli

22. Ultimo titolo di studio conseguito (specificare il paese di rilascio)

23. Occupazione attuale

24. Appartenenza religiosa (indicare se si è praticante attivo)

25. Lingua usualmente parlata con il partner