Negotiating Identity: Media and the Romanian Diaspora in Italy

By

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Chapter 1: Introduction: Romanian Migrants and Italian Media

In the fall of 2007, Italy passed emergency legislation allowing the deportation of Romanians. The Decree-Law 181/2007 was passed by the Italian Cabinet on October 31, 2007, the day after Italian Giovanna Reggiani was brutally robbed in Rome by Romanian Nicolae Romulus Mailat. She died in the hospital shortly afterwards. Extensive media coverage dedicated to Romanian criminality suggested that admitting Romania to the European Union on January 1, 2007 was an overhasty decision resulting in a Romanian invasion of the Peninsula. As a result of the spike in Romanian immigration, the major Italian cities were faced with serious security issues. Therefore, Italian authorities were forced into action even if the price of defending public order was contradicting one of the fundamental principles of the European Union, namely the right of free circulation for its citizens. Decree-Law 181/2007 was unprecedented in the European Union, because it equated low income with criminality. In the first days of November 2007, hundreds of Romanian citizens were summarily deported from Italy and dozens of nomad camps around the country – like the one Mailat lived in – were razed. In addition, several Romanians were attacked on Italian streets. A bomb went off in front of a shop selling Romanian delicacies; the owner happened to be named Mailat. The assailants left behind a painted Celtic cross and the message "we will crush your heads in!" The police brushed it off as a copycat crime without any political meaning. Romanian children were threatened and beaten up in school by their Italian classmates.

Of course, these events did not occur in a social-political vacuum. Not only did Romania join the European Union in 2007, but at the same time, the global economy entered a period of crisis. In the fall of 2007 there was also an intense election campaign going on in Italy, leading

up to the general election of April 13–14, 2008, which saw the center-right candidate Gianni Alemanno become the first conservative mayor of Rome after the Second World War. One of the major themes of the winning candidates in the election campaign was national security and cracking down on crime. In this context, Romanian criminality was converted into a virtual "dog whistle" issue (Critcher, 2006) in which Romanians were constructed as a threat to Italian society, compelling Italians to contrast themselves to "criminal Romanians" and to take action to neutralize the threat.

As Italy's geopolitical importance dwindled after the rise of the EU, Italian leaders tried to demonstrate their "rightful" place alongside the core Western European states. Repeatedly, in international meetings, in bilateral relations with neighboring nations and in a wide variety of other social and cultural settings, Italians discursively linked their past and present to Enlightenment values of progress, modernity and rationality. While this dissertation is about the Romanian community in Italy, the case also speaks to a larger discussion about EU integration by examining various axes of discrimination and creation of vulnerabilities brought about by questions related to (1) citizenship in a supranational entity, (2) social solidarity beyond the national level in the context of significant international migration and (3) the prospects of an EU identity in the context of enlargement and ever greater internal mobility.

One of the key cultural sites of discrimination and the creation of vulnerability in Italy is the media. Specifically, Italian print and broadcast media contributed heavily to the constitution of the Romanian "criminal" as a threat to the heart of Italian sense as core Europeans. Thus, I approach this project with a set of three specific questions: (1) How do Italian media represent Romanian immigrants? Who and what is included in these representations and what is erased? (2) How does the media coverage portray the claims to inclusion and belonging for Romanians,

both in Italy and in the EU? (3) How do various social actors, Italian and Romanian, locate themselves within these representations? Specifically, do the identity positionings of Romanian immigrants change in connection with their representations in Italian mainstream media? And if so, how?

Nicolae Mailat was sentenced to 29 years in prison in 2008. In court, he admitted to robbing Reggiani, but he strongly denied killing or sexually assaulting her. Even though there was no DNA or forensic evidence linking Mailat to the crime and despite an autopsy confirming that Reggiani had not been raped, many politicians were outraged at the "lenient" sentence. Prosecutors filed an appeal to extend Mailat's sentence and in July 2009 he was condemned to life in prison.

The Mailat case focused massive negative media attention on the Romanian community in Italy. Another major scandal broke out in the media on Valentine's Day 2009, when a 14-year old girl on a walk with her 16-year old fiancé was raped in the park of Caffarella in Rome. Soon thereafter the Italian government passed an anti-rape decree imposing mandatory preventive prison for those accused of rape, but not for those accused of murder. Just four days later the Italian police were commended for their professionalism after arresting two Romanians, Alexandru Loyos Isztoika and Karol Racz. A flurry of reports featuring the full names and pictures of the Romanians followed. Despite the extensive exonerating evidence such as DNA, fingerprints, witness accounts and cell phone locating evidence, the two were kept in prison for over a month and they were only released after the arrest of the true perpetrators, incidentally also Romanian. The two rapists incriminated by the DNA test, 27-year old Oltean Gavrilã and 18-year old Jean Ionut Alexandru were later tried and sentenced. Although Isztoika and Racz

claimed not to know either Gavrilã or Alexandru, the fact that Isztoika had been imprisoned in Italy for a week just two cells down from Gavrilã in 2007 was enough to charge him in court in 2011 with having intentionally covered up the real Caffarella offenders.

In another case that attracted a lot of sustained media coverage the female victim was Romanian and the aggressor was Italian. On October 8, 2010, security cameras at the Anagnina subway station in Rome captured how a Romanian woman, Maricica Hãhãianu, was punched in the face by a 20-year old Italian named Alessio Burtone, following an altercation. She immediately fell to the ground while the aggressor walked on without a glance. Several people walked past her without even noticing her inert body until someone finally called for help.[1] After 7 days in a coma, she died in the hospital. Subsequent investigations revealed that the quarrel started while standing in line at a small shop nearby. Very different versions of the incident emerged. According to the defense, the woman cut in front of the line and Burtone reprimanded her by asking "in your country, don't you respect the line?" However, the first media accounts[2] of the event stated that it was the man who cut in front of the line and the woman who protested. At any rate, a verbal dispute ensued with the woman allegedly calling the man "Italian pig" and the man retorting "dumb whore, go back to Romania!" In the end, Burtone was sentenced to nine years in prison. On appeal the sentence was reduced to eight years. In 2013 the sentence was reduced to house arrest.

The Mailat, Hãhãianu and Caffarella cases attracted much Romanian-centered media coverage in Italy after Romania's accession to the European Union in early 2007. Understanding the media as the sphere where representation takes place, I focus on these three major cases to

[1] The entire video is available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgKRRzuYfJw.

[2] "Lite nella metro a Roma, donna in coma colpita da un pugno, passanti indifferenti," Gabriele Isman, October 13, 2010, *La Repubblica*.

tease out (a) the tropes of the construction of Romanianness in the Italian society and (b) the kind of responses they elicited from Romanian migrants.

The remainder of the chapter first provides some background on the origins of Romanian emigration and the ways in which it was complicated by the EU accession and then briefly sketches the Italian mediascape. Chapter two introduces the framework of moral panic, connecting it to theoretical work on identity. Chapter three introduces relevant media theory focusing particularly on news and ideology as well as the research methods I use to investigate media coverage and Romanian identity negotiations. Chapter four examines how media coverage served to construct a particular notion of Romanianness, amenable to such extreme solutions as deportation. Chapter five analyses the strategies that Romanian immigrants use to negotiate acceptable identity positionings for themselves vis-à-vis the representations of Romanian criminality in the media. Finally, the conclusion (chapter six) addresses the way in which this case study speaks to the more general questions of citizenship, social solidarity and EU citizenship and how these concepts are drawn upon in the course of the media-constituted moral panic to impose specific definitions of identity, both Italian and Romanian.

Introducing Romanian Migrants

Until the fall of the communist regime in Romania in December 1989, the frontiers of the country were sealed and the possession of a passport was considered more of a privilege than a right. Therefore, migration was largely limited to internal mobility from rural to urban environments, under the pressure of industrialization (Cucuruzan, 2010, p. 73). With the fall of communism, the Romanian economy entered a long transition process (lasting roughly from 1990 to 2002) that saw the disappearance of more than 3.5 million jobs and resulted in a decrease of the employed population by 44% (Horváth, 2007, p. 3). Some sectors were hit particularly

hard: for instance, during the aforementioned period, industrial jobs declined by one-half (Horváth, 2007, p. 3). Adding to the economic instability of the country was a soaring rate of inflation that, in the early nineties, exceeded the 200% mark for several years in a row (Anonymous, 1993). The years immediately following the revolution in 1989 also saw a degree of political restlessness that, coupled with the other serious economic factors, prompted many Romanians to seek a better living abroad.

Immediately after the opening of the borders after the collapse of communism, the prevailing type of out-migration was of an ethnic type, with members of long acknowledged ethnic minorities in Romania seeking to reunify with family members abroad – 75% of all migrants during this time were Germans, Jews and Hungarians (Siar, 2009, p. 11). Then, in the late nineties, as this type of migration subsided, there appeared a new form of short term, circular labor migration, which was sometimes concealed by tourist visas or political asylum applications (Cucuruzan, 2010, p. 73).

Dumitru Sandu (2006) distinguished three different phases of Romanian emigration. Between 1990 and 1995 emigration was below 0.5%, between 1996 and 2001 it was 0.6-0.7% and in 2002-2006 it grew to 1-2.8% (qtd. in Cucuruzan, 2010, pp. 73–74; qtd. in Horváth, 2007, pp. 3–4; Sandu, 2006, p. 18; qtd. in Siar, 2009, p. 11). If in the early years, it was mostly young men from Romanian cities looking for a better life abroad, after 1995 men and women were equally represented, and the Romanian region of Moldavia was the main supplier of migrants (Sandu, 1996 qtd. in Cucuruzan, 2010, pp. 73–74). Lãzãroiu notes that the early presence of Italian companies in the area of Moldavia – especially textile and shoemaking factories – has constituted a powerful pull factor for the inhabitants of this region, by facilitating the flow of information and the building of networks (2003, p. 4). In 2003, there were 12,000 Italian

companies operating in Romania and employing 500,000 Romanians (Forti, Pittau, & Ricci, 2004).

The preferences of emigrating Romanians have changed considerably over the three migration phases differentiated by Sandu (2006). The first stage, between 1990 and 1995, was a time of primary exploration of Europe by Romanians (Sandu, 2006, p. 18). Since access to most Western European countries was severely limited, emigration was largely clandestine, involving high risks and often requiring extreme physical resistance – hence the preponderance of male migrants during this time. Emigration tended to be an adventure during the early nineties, only 22% of the migrants of the period reported having any help in going abroad (Sandu, 2006, p. 22). The main targets during this early stage were Israel and Turkey, with Italy, Germany and Hungary (mostly the choice for ethnic Hungarians) forming the second tier of preference (Sandu, 2006, p. 18). In the second phase of Romanian out-migration, between 1996 and 2001, Italy became the most attractive destination, with Israel following in second. The existence of more Romanian workers abroad led to the establishing of the first migration networks: 40% of the migrants in this second phase have benefitted from outside support when leaving the country (Sandu, 2006, p. 22). Things changed considerably after January 1, 2002, when the countries of the Schengen space[3] removed visa requirements for Romanian citizens. Now Romanians only needed a valid passport and proof of health insurance and sufficient financial means (typically €500) to enter the countries of Western Europe legally. While restrictions on work permits still applied, the barrier to entry in foreign territories had been lowered significantly. Migratory networks also became more extended and more active: 60% of the departed took advantage of them from 2002 to 2006 (Sandu, 2006, p. 22). The most useful resources for new potential

[3] Members in 2002: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden.

migrants were their local relatives (23%), followed by their local friends (16%) and local acquaintances (5%) already living in the receiving country (Sandu, 2006, p. 22). The main destinations in this third stage were clearly Italy and Spain, chosen overwhelmingly for temporary labor migrations. Sandu notes that of the number of departures – not of the number of the departed, though – 50% were Italy-bound in the timeframe between 2002 and 2006 (2006, p. 19).

If in the pre-Schengen phase there is a doubling of the migratory phenomenon compared to the initial stage (1990-1995), in this third phase (2002-2006), the magnitude of Romanian migration tripled compared to the pre-2002 stage. The accession of Romania to the European Union on January 1, 2007 with the accompanying right to free circulation across the EU had yet again redefined the context for Romanian mobility. Nevertheless, in 2007, it was just 11 of the 27 member states that granted Romanian citizens full and unrestricted entry to their labor markets[4], while others imposed access restrictions lasting from two to seven years (Horváth, 2007, p. 4). In mid-2007 it was estimated that there were 3.4 million Romanians working abroad, of which but 1.2 million were employed legally (Horváth, 2007, p. 4). At the end of 2007, the biggest immigrant community in the European Union was the Turks, followed by the Romanians (Caritas Italiana, 2010). Romania placed third in 2010 in the Europe and Central Asia region in terms of remittances received with $4.5 billion, but only tenth in 2009 when remittances were reported as percentages of the GDP (with 4.4%) (World Bank, 2011, p. 26). While in the first stage of Romanian migration (1990 – 1995) finding a job happened mainly with the help of employment agencies (22%) and with assistance from friends (25%), the importance of employment agencies declined steadily to account for less than 11% in the third

[4] Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Sweden.

stage (after 2001). Inquiring directly with potential employers has remained relatively constant at 15% (Sandu, 2006, p. 23). The most prevalent occupations were in construction work for men, as domestic helpers for women and in agriculture (Sandu, 2006, p. 24). Incidentally, the sectors most predisposed to illegal hiring are also agriculture and domestic work (Sandu, 2006, p. 25).

Sandu (2006) found that the three general stages of Romanian migration are also reflected, with slight modifications, in the history of Romanian migration to Italy which represents the most attractive destination country for this population. Taking into account the number of Romanians holding a residence permit (*permesso di soggiorno*), Sandu sketches the phases of migration to Italy as follows: 1990-1996, 1997-1999 and from 2000 onwards (2006, p. 18). In Italy, most Romanians find a job with the help of their friends and relatives (Sandu, 2006, p. 23). The last remaining restrictions for the Romanian seeking to enter the Italian labor market legally were lifted in 2012 ("International Migration Outlook 2012," n.d., p. 1).

The number of Romanians residing legally in Italy has been rising steadily from less than 8,000 in 1990 to 968,576 on January 1, 2011 (Istat, 2011, p. 3). Representing 21.2% of the entire immigrant community present in Italy, the Romanians have been for several years the most numerous immigrant group in the country, followed by the Albanians (482,627 in 2011) (Istat, 2011, pp. 1–3). The most spectacular increase in the number of Romanians living in Italy happened in 2007, after the country joined to the European Union, and continued, in more modest terms, in 2008 and 2009 (Istat, 2011, p. 4). So, Romanians represent a recent, yet consistent presence in Italy, particularly in the northern and central parts of the country.

Compared to residents of neighboring countries that exhibit similar migration preferences for Italy, Romanians have the advantage of having a mother tongue that is extraordinarily similar to Italian. This language similarity represents significant cultural capital in terms of Romanians'

quick adjustment to the receiving environment. It is the combination of structural factors – including the Romanian economy, the EU legal environment, the cultural background and, not least, the Italian labor market with its specific workforce demands and a certain laxity of legal standards – that have favored and directed this sizable Romanian migratory flow. Giuseppe Sciortino (2004) eloquently explains how, after the massive incorporation of Italian women into the workforce in the 1970s, the Italian state, unwilling to invest substantially in social services, came to rely on the cheap work of immigrants in sectors such as personal and household services. In this indirect way, the Italian state is thus providing structural incentives both for attracting immigrants and for maintaining them in these positions. This comes as a contradiction to the commonly held view of an "immigrant invasion," draining the Italian economy with their remittances and taking away jobs from the local population. As Sciortino (2004) and others demonstrate, the kind of jobs available to immigrants are precisely those which Italian citizens refuse to fill on account of the low pay, harsh working conditions, long hours and lack of promotion opportunities. It is thus no accident that these same jobs in caretaking are the jobs taken by Romanian women.

Romanian immigrants living in Italy tend to have strong connections to the home country, ranging from what could be called a circular migration pattern to more infrequent, but regular visits to Romania. It appears that the Romanian is a transnational type of migrant, since they "forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc, 1995, p. 48). The nation state remains significant for this type of process, even if the migration fundamentally takes place in its interstices. Glick Schiller et al. (1995) note that transnational processes are accompanied by the "re-inscription" of identity onto the territory of the homeland. Central to the notion of

transnationalism and to the related concept of diaspora is the idea of increased hybridity in both the sending and the receiving society (Braziel & Mannur, 2003).

The concept of transnationalism has been criticized for its vagueness and for the fact that oftentimes it comes to be used precisely as its opposite, standing in for highly particularistic attachments antithetical to the type of relations deriving from globalization (Waldinger & Fitzgerald, 2004, p. 1177). For this reason, some authors prefer to use transnationalism to refer primarily to impersonal forces like globalization, while reserving the term diaspora to discuss the human phenomenon resulting in ideological, financial, political, and national flows that are transhuman or transmigrant (Braziel & Mannur, 2003, pp. 8–11). The advantage is that the term diaspora, with its implications of repeated traversals, questions the rigidities of identity itself (Braziel & Mannur, 2003, p. 3).

This oscillation between two worlds intrinsic to both the concept of transnationalism and diapora is reminiscent of Simmel's (1950) stranger and Park's marginal man (1928). Like the stranger, Romanian immigrants are also mobile, coming into close contact with the population in the receiving society as they predominantly fill jobs inside Italian homes. As such, they are a synthesis of distance and nearness, indifference and involvement (Simmel, 1950, p. 404). Simmel made it clear that "[t]he stranger, like the poor and like sundry 'inner enemies,' is an element of the [receiving] group itself. His position as a full-fledged member involves both being outside it and confronting it" (1950, pp. 402–403). This element of constitutive alterity that Simmel brings up prefaces the importance of the abjected non-self in the construction of identity (see chapter two). Like the Romanians in Italian media, strangers do not tend to be conceived as individuals but, instead, as representatives of a particular type (Simmel, 1950, p. 407). Simmel (1950, p. 405) sees the stranger as practically and theoretically freer, unburdened

by habits, piety and precedent and therefore more objective. It then becomes interesting to look at the degree to which strangers come to internalize the dominant discourse of their receiving society. Romanian immigrants are also similar to what Park (1928) called the marginal man. The cultural hybridity of the Romanian resident in Italy predisposes him to be a citizen of the world, but as a marginal man he may end up stranded on the margin of two societies (Park, 1928, p. 892). Park attributes to immigrants a "divided self" situated in between two cultures, plagued by moral dichotomy and conflict that results in inner turmoil. He explains that what sets the marginal man apart is the fact that this period of crisis is relatively permanent (Park, 1928, pp. 892–893).

In making sense of immigrant identity negotiations it is important, as Cunningham and Sinclair (2001) have pointed out, to dispense with the assumption of the coterminous nature of nation and culture. Cunningham and Sinclair (2001, p. 8) argue that this can only result in a static and reified view of culture that is no longer relevant to a world of heightened mobility across increasingly porous national borders. Instead, they propose understanding immigrants as productively constructing new hybrid identities through processes that simultaneously act to maintain and to mold the original home and the newly acquired hosts culture (2001, p. 5). This approach is consistent with Stuart Hall's (Hall & Du Gay, 1996) insistence on the highly dynamic character of cultural identity, which rejects an understanding of culture as a closed, impermeable and unified entity (Cunningham & Sinclair, 2001, p. 8). Instead, migrants are deeply involved in a process of cultural fusion which results in a range of fluid social relations proper of what Jan Nederveen Pieterse called "translocal" culture (1995, in Cunningham & Sinclair, 2001, p. 8). In this deterritorialized approach to culture, migrants are seen to "selectively adapt to host cultures, intermingling and evolving to form a regenerative "new"

culture, a culture related to, but distinct from, both the original home and host cultures" (Cunningham & Sinclair, 2001, p. 8). In other words, the migrant is stranded between the margins of two societies as Park (1928) argued, but both these margins are deeply marked by the cultural adaptiveness and innovation that comes with the hybridity of the immigrant – far from being static, absolute entities, they are forever shifting, which makes the internal conflict even deeper for the marginal man. In turn, this means that migrants sharing the same home country and receiving society can come up with many different kinds of what Cunningham and Sinclair (2001) call "floating lives," individualized negotiations that offer the opportunity to present diverse forms of resistance to domination and marginalization. In subsequent chapters I use media analysis (Chapter 4) and in-depth interviews (Chapter 5) to make sense of the cultural positionings of Romanian immigrants in this transnational context.

Overview of the Italian Mediascape

Any attempt at untangling the social identity implications of the events that began in Italy in late 2007 needs to take a critical look at the Italian media stage. Historically, the media have played a fundamental role in promoting discourses supporting a democratic and united Italy, a shared national culture and in disseminating standard Italian among dialect speakers (Grassilli & Zinn, 2002, p. 245; Hibberd, 2008, p. 134). Perhaps the most striking feature of present-day Italian media – and certainly the most criticized, both internally and internationally – is their intricate and extensive connection to the realm of politics ("BBC News - Italy country profile," 2012, Osservatorio Europeo sulla Sicurezza. Demos & Pi. Osservatorio di Pavia. Fondazione Unipolis, 2013, p. 7; Grassilli & Zinn, 2002; Hibberd, 2008, p. 133). More specifically, the way in which contemporary Italian media is structured along with the consequential legacies of the past make it possible for powerful Italians to exert a degree of influence over media decisions

and portrayals that would be nearly unimaginable in other democratic countries. For example, as one of my informants put it, Silvio Berlusconi officially controls 50% of the media ventures in Italy, while unofficially influencing the other half.

Print media in Italy have been historically weak (Hibberd, 2008, p. 129), allowing television to assert dominance both in terms of reach –80% of the population, the highest percentage in the EU, are said to rely on television for its daily news ("BBC News - Italy country profile," 2012) – and in terms of revenue, attracting more than half of the advertising market (Hibberd, 2008, pp. 128–9). In my media analysis I found that the Italian press not only was dependent on the television sector for story ideas, but also sometimes printed exact quotations of statements made on TV shows.

Television. Broadcasting is dominated by the Radiotelevisione italiana (RAI)-Mediaset (formerly Fininvest) duopoly created in 1984. RAI-Mediaset reached 90% of the market between 1984 and 2004. By 2011 the audience share of the duopoly had fallen to 76.8%, a level still unmatched by any other country in Europe (Hibberd, 2008, p. 100; "MAVISE : Database on television channels and TV companies in the European Union," 2012). Of the eight free national TV channels, three are owned by Italy's public broadcasting company, RAI – Rai Uno, Rai Due, Rai Tre – and three belong to the private network Mediaset (the property of Silvio Berlusconi): Rete 4, Canale 5, Italia 1 (Giomi, 2010). About 800 local TV channels (Giomi, 2010) complete the broadcasting landscape of a country which has historically been characterized by the predominance of the reception of terrestrial transmissions ("MAVISE : Database on television channels and TV companies in the European Union," 2012). Each of the major players, RAI and Mediaset, currently offer paid-for as well as free channels on Digital Terrestrial Television

(Giomi, 2010). [5] The RAI - Mediaset current joint market share of 76.8% is a result of the competition with the rapidly increasing Pay TV which is gaining popularity more rapidly against RAI than against Mediaset (Giomi, 2010). Although Pay TV is rapidly becoming more popular, the audience is still largely concentrated among national free channels. Moreover, since RAI is financed both through advertising and the licensing fee, it remains the leading media company in Italy with revenues of $3.7 million (in 2008), compared to Rupert Murdoch's satellite TV Sky Italia with $3.55 million and RTI[6]-Mediaset's $3.4 million. Within the advertising market, RTI-Mediaset is firmly in the leading position (Giomi, 2010).

While RAI started broadcasting in 1954, privately-owned, commercial television first became possible in Italy in 1976 and Berlusconi's three channels were launched between 1978 and 1982 (Giomi, 2010). In the early years, Berlusconi's channels offered a diet of internationally purchased quiz shows, talk shows, television movies, cartoons, telenovelas and soap operas, using entertainment to attract the broadest audience possible and the largest share of the advertising market (Giomi, 2010; Hibberd, 2008). It was only after the 1990 Mammì Law, requiring commercial broadcasters to include a newscast in their programming, that the first news bulletin started on a Mediaset channel, Canale 5, in 1991 (under the name of Tg5). At first, Mediaset was reluctant to change as it feared losing its audience once it was pushed beyond entertainment and into news (Giomi, 2010). Before the Mammi Law of 1990, RAI had typically addressed the citizen, whereas Mediaset catered to the apolitical consumer (Giomi, 2010). Nowadays, the evening news bulletins of Berlusconi's channels (Tg5, Tg4 and Studio Aperto) are competitive with RAI's news programs (Giomi, 2010). In 1994, when Silvio Berlusconi first

[5] The analogue switch-off throughout the country was completed on 4 July 2012, with 94.1% of Italian homes reportedly equipped to receive DTT (Digital Terrestrial Television) in January 2012 ("MAVISE : Database on television channels and TV companies in the European Union," 2012).

[6] Reti Televisive Italiane (RTI) is a society from the Mediaset Group handling the television licensing of the group.

ran successfully in the Italian general elections, Mediaset abandoned its former "apolitical" nature, offering heavy and unbalanced political support to its owner turned prime minister (Giomi, 2010; Hibberd, 2008).

The intertwining of media and politics in Italy with its serious consequences at the level of diversity and freedom of speech has generated critique over the years. The subjugation of the public broadcaster RAI to the needs of the governing parties was even enshrined in law through the 1975 Broadcasting Act and the subsequent development of the system of *lottizzazione* (political allotment) (Hibberd, 2008, pp. 76–86). The Act split RAI into two separate network directories, which facilitated the creation of two ideological camps, with one network representing a broad Catholic culture and a second one dedicated to a lay culture, which were then transformed to fit party lines. As a result, the organizational structure of RAI was better fitted to serve political interests than to provide a public service. According to the 1975 Broadcasting Act, the responsibility of directing RAI was given to a parliamentary commission with extensive powers, including the right to appoint the members of the Administrative Council. Just as an illustration, the president of the RAI was a Socialist and the director-general was a Christian Democrat and then the individual television networks were Christian Democrat (Rai Uno), Socialist (Rai Due) and Communist (Rai Tre), with the three radio networks split between smaller government parties (the Liberals, Republicans and Social Democrats) (Grassilli & Zinn, 2002; Hibberd, 2008). Clearly, with the system of *lottizzazione* in place, "Italy's premier media institution lost any ideas of political autonomy and impartiality it may have harbored before the reform process began" (Hibberd, 2008, p. 76). The system of *lottizzazione* brought a one-sided relationship, "a relationship of master and servants" (Hibberd, 2008, p. 85) which, on top of all the advantages it presented for the political establishment, also presented a major liability, since

it made the political parties which were profoundly involved with RAI also accountable and responsible for Italy's public broadcaster. However, by 1992, the dissolution of the two main political parties controlling RAI, the Christian Democrats and Socialists, left the company with a political vacuum on the brink of financial bankruptcy (Hibberd, 2008, p. 101). Therefore, in 1993, the government led by Carlo Azeglio Ciampi set out to restructure RAI with a view to providing a more independent, accessible and relevant public service and, to this end, to dismantle the *lottizzazione* system (Hibberd, 2008, p. 102).

Traditionally, the *lottizzazione* system had served Italian political elites on at least two levels: (a) by symbolically emphasizing who was in control in the country through their appointment in high offices within the RAI and (b) most importantly, by influencing the appointments to politically sensitive positions inside RAI, particularly the news services (Hibberd, 2008, p. 103). As a result of the 1993 reform, the members of RAI's Administrative Council were no longer chosen by a parliamentary commission, but by the two highly respected presidents of the Parliament in a joint decision making process. Although, in theory, this put the control of the RAI in the hands of institutional guarantors (the second and third most senior positions in the Italian state after the President) and above party politics, complete *delottizzazione* was impossible to achieve in a country where party interference is so deeply rooted (Hibberd, 2008, p. 103). Moreover, the victory of Silvio Berlusconi's right-wing coalition in the elections of May 1994 ushered in a new form of political interference which "undermined the fundamental tenets of public service broadcasting, and, […] struck at the very heart of good democratic governance" (Hibberd, 2008, p. 104). For all its ills, the *lottizzazione* system as it had been set up after the 1975 Broadcasting Act, guaranteed a certain degree of internal and external media pluralism, since (a) each channel still had staff from a variety of different parties,

making the news program of each channel more likely to reflect the full spectrum of Italian politics and (b) the different political actors were afforded their "own" channels within RAI. The exceptional harshness with which Berlusconi's government reasserted political domination over the RAI led the President of the Republic, Scalfaro, to launch an appeal in 1994 in favor of pluralism and impartiality, centering on the importance principle of *Par Condicio* (equal treatment in the media) for democracy (Hibberd, 2008, pp. 105–106). Scalfaro's letter on *Par Condicio* led to a heated debate which eventually ushered in mass public demonstrations across the country. Ironically, and despite the harsh control over the RAI, Berlusconi's first government was forced to resign on December 22, 1994 when one of its coalition members withdrew.

However, Berlusconi's most striking clash with RAI came during his second term as Prime Minister, after he won the 2001 general elections. Paradoxically, it was the left-wing government which had preceded him that gave Berlusconi almost absolute control over Italy's public broadcaster (by transferring 99.5% of RAI shares to the Treasury). After a blistering attack on Berlusconi published in April 2001 in the UK-based *The Economist* which attracted large international attention on the "gargantuan" conflict of interests plaguing the Italian Prime Minister, in May 2002 Berlusconi went on to make scathing accusations of his own during a visit to Sofia (Hibberd, 2008, pp. 113–6). In what later became known as the "Bulgarian edict," Berlusconi accused some of his most outspoken critics, the highly respected journalists and political commentators Enzo Biagi and Michele Santoro and the comedian-satirist Daniele Luttazzi, of making "criminal use" of RAI at the license-payer's expense and suggested they be banned from state television (Giomi, 2010; Hibberd, 2008, p. 115). The RAI management promptly suspended the three programs, officially due to scheduling considerations. Four years

later, Biagi and Santoro were reinstated, but Luttazzi never returned to TV (Giomi, 2010; Hibberd, 2008). The larger importance of the "Bulgarian edict" lies in demonstrating "that RAI's autonomy existed only on paper" and that internal pluralism in RAI was compromised (Hibberd, 2008, p. 116). With the passing of the Gasparri Law in 2004, *lottizzazione* resurfaced at RAI and the responsibility for naming the public broadcaster's Administrative Council was passed back to the Parliament, after a 10 year in the hands of the two presidents of the Italian parliament (Hibberd, 2008, p. 116).

Berlusconi, with his numerous and sizable holdings in media, finance and commerce, has been widely accused of conflicts of interests. It has even been said that the Gasparri Law passed in 2004 under the second Berlusconi government (2001-2006) was designed to favor the Prime Minister's interests in the media sector to the detriment of the industry and the public service broadcasting (Giomi, 2010; Hibberd, 2008, pp. 117–118). In 2005, the European Commission for Democracy through Law, also known as the Venice Commission, severely criticized the Gasparri Law of 2004 for acting to preserve the status quo in Italy, despite professing to enact legal provisions to increase media pluralism (Hibberd, 2008, pp. 116–119). In an attempt to deal with the Prime Minister's apparent conflict of interest, the Berlusconi government adopted the Frattini Law on July 30, 2004 which declared incompatibility between the management of a company and holding a public office, but *not* between ownership and a public office. The Venice Commission's report of 2005 was very critical of the ability of the Frattini Law to impact the situation in Italy. It then comes as no surprise that the Freedom House report of 2006 lists Italy and Turkey as the only European countries where the press is only "partly free," commenting that "[a]lthough freedom of speech and press are constitutionally guaranteed, media freedom remained constrained in 2005 by the continued concentration of media power in the hands of

Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi" (qtd. in Hibberd, 2008, pp. 120–1). As recently as 2009, The Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders placed Italy at No. 49, because the country was experiencing a systematic exclusion of certain stories from the main TV news bulletins. The political scandals and trials involving Berlusconi were systematically underrepresented (Giomi, 2010).

Print Media. Compared to other European countries, newspaper readership in Italy is low, particularly among youth ("BBC News - Italy country profile," 2012; Giomi, 2010). In 1999, only 19% of 16-to-24-year olds read a newspaper on a daily basis (Hibberd, 2008, p. 99). In recent years, the aproximately150 paid-for dailies (national and local/regional combined) have seen decreasing advertising revenues, after a peak in sales in 1992 (Giomi, 2010; Hibberd, 2008). The Italian association of advertisers, Utenti Pubblicità Associati, placed the market share of the press at 30.7% of the global advertising market in 2008, at a time when television claimed 48.5% of the market (Giomi, 2010). This relative inability of the printed press to attract more revenue is also one of the reasons for its historic weakness. In an attempt to check the declining popularity of newspapers in Italy, the publications begun to publish more tabloid-style stories in the hopes of attracting new and younger readers and started offering more sections and supplements specifically targeting different socioeconomic groups. Some newspapers even changed from a broadsheet size to the smaller Berliner style (midi) format (Murialdi qtd. in Hibberd, 2008, p. 99). The circulation of print newspapers suffered an additional blow with the emergence of Internet newspapers. The first Italian online newspaper appeared in 1994. Many Italian newspapers created their online editions between 1997 and 2000 and today all major newspapers have online editions, financed through advertising.

Another major challenge to circulation figures was the free newspapers distributed in major Italian cities at bus, rail and underground stations, after 1998. These publications, which are supported entirely by advertising, rely heavily on color photography, short articles and a focus on infotainment and soft news (Hibberd, 2008, p. 100). The freesheets include *Metro* (launched in 2000 in Italy), *Leggo* (established in 2001), *City* (created in 2001), *Dnews* (born in 2008) and the *E-Polis* chain of free local newspapers launched between 2004 and 2009, each bearing the name of the city where it is produced. Although the agency monitoring the circulation of traditional newspapers does not take into account freesheets, the publishers of these free newspapers claim that jointly the five distributed more than 4 million copies per day in 2009, with *Leggo* being the most widespread one, reaching one million copies per day.

In comparison, the most important national paid-for newspapers - *L'Avvenire*, *Il Corriere della Sera*, *Il Giornale*, *Italia Oggi*, *Libero*, *Il Manifesto*, *Il Messaggero*, *La Repubblica*, *Il Sole 24 ore*, *La Stampa* and *L'Unità* –jointly, sold just 2.032 million copies between May, 2008, and April, 2009. Within this group, there has always been an intense competition between *Il Corriere della Sera* (averaging daily sales of 522,202 copies in 2008 and 2009) and *La Repubblica* (average daily sales of 467,116 copies) for the title of the most popular paid-for newspaper. As of September 2013, their circulation had decreased to 443,505 for *Corriere della sera* and 397,781 for *La Repubblica* (Federazione Italiana Editori Giornali, 2013)[7]. Both of them put out their own weekly magazine (Giomi, 2010). Historically, Italian newspapers have been linked to political parties (Grassilli & Zinn, 2002, p. 247) and the dwindling fates of the political benefactors have been mirrored negatively in circulation figures. There are no tabloid daily newspapers in Italy; instead the most popular dailies are the sport papers like *La Gazzetta dello Sport* (Giomi, 2010).

[7] http://www.fieg.it/documenti_item.asp?doc_id=251

In Italy there are 136 monthly and 63 weekly magazines, reaching combined sales of 20.5 million copies in 2008 and 2009. The magazines are also affected by the same decreasing popularity trend as the paid-for newspapers.

In terms of ownership, the Italian newspaper market is fragmented. The most important actor is the group L'Espresso, owner of *La Repubblica*, three magazines – including *L'Espresso*, an important left-wing political magazine – and 15 local paid-for newspapers. Another major player is the RCS Media Group, the owner of *Il Corriere della Sera*, *La Gazzetta dello Sport*, the free newspaper *City* and two magazines. Yet another group, the Caltagirone Editore group owns the national newspaper *Il Messaggero* along with four local paid-for newspapers, including the free newspaper *Leggo*. Finally, among the most important book publishers in Italy is the Mondadori group, now under the control of Silvio Berlusconi's family. The Mondadori group owns 40 magazines, including some very popular ones like *Panorama*, a widespread right-wing political magazine (Giomi, 2010).

Radio. Radio broadcasting in Italy is highly fragmented with around 1500 stations roughly organized in five categories: (1) RAI radio stations (Radiouno, Radiodue, Radiotre, Notturno italiano and Isoradio); (2) national private radio; (3) syndications; (4) local radio serving areas of no more than 1.5 million inhabitants and (5) national and local nonprofit "community" stations focusing on a common theme (Hibberd, 2008, pp. 127–128). Unlike other media sectors, profits for radio in Italy have been growing (Giomi, 2010; Hibberd, 2008, p. 128). In 2008, radio reached 73 percent of the Italian population over the age of 11. Among the most popular stations are two publicly owned ones, the RAI divisions Radiouno (news, public affairs, culture) and Radiodue (news, culture, music, entertainment), which in the first six months of

2009 were the first and third most listened-to stations in the country (with 6.214 million and 3.87 million daily listeners on average). Also part of RAI is Radiotre, with a loyal audience enjoying its offerings of classical music blended with information about theatre, movies, and books. Jointly, private networks claim a larger share of the audience. The most appreciated private actors are the music stations RTL, RDS-Radio Dimensione Suono and Radio Deejay, popular especially with younger audiences (Giomi, 2010).

New Media. Although particularly quick in adopting mobile phones, Italians have proved rather slow in embracing the Internet. In 2009, 61.3 percent of the population aged 11 to 74 – roughly 30 million people – stated that they had a connection to the Internet (be it at school, at work or at home). In comparison, 88.9 percent of Italian people aged 11 to 74 (or 42 million people) owned a mobile phone. In Italy, broadband penetration is still low compared to other European countries, reaching just 41% of Italian households in March 2009. One of the biggest factors hindering the diffusion of the Internet is the low general level of media literacy and the widely cited inability to use a computer. In 2009, Italians most often visited Msn.it, Virgilio.it, Libero.it, Yahoo.it, La Repubblica.it, Tiscali.it, and La Gazzetta dello Sport.it. Internet's market share of advertising exceeded that of radio for the first time in 2008 (with 6.3% vs. 5.9%), a positive trend which continued in 2009 (Giomi, 2010).

In this chapter I have discussed the context of the Romanian migration to Italy and offered an overview of important sectors of the Italian media environment. Having thus sketched the background for my study of media and identity negotiation among Romanian immigrants in Italy, in the next chapter I will introduce the moral panic framework that helps us

make sense of the political and cultural stakes at the center of the construction of Romanianness in Italy.

Chapter 2: Moral Panics and Identity

In this dissertation I argue that the construction of Romanianness in and through mainstream Italian media was a central part in a Romanian-centered moral panic beginning in the fall of 2007. I therefore dedicate this chapter to introducing the moral panic framework and sketching the Italian identity context.

The concept of moral panic has experienced a vigorous resurgence in the 1990s, even being called the most influential sociological concept generated in the second half of the twentieth century (Ditton in Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2011, p. 20). The term "moral panic" was coined by British sociologist Jock Young in 1971, but it was his colleague Stanley Cohen who, in a now classical study published in 1972, has fully developed the concept (Thompson, 1998, p. 7). This is how Cohen starts his seminal study:

> Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the object of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic passes over and is forgotten, except in folklore and collective memory; at other times it has more serious and long lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way society conceives itself. (S. Cohen, 1972, p. 9)

Therefore, moral panic is a concept which "specifies the common characteristics of those social problems which suddenly emerge, cause consternation among powerful institutions and seem to require exceptional remedies" (Critcher, 2006, p. 2). The deportation decree of November 2007 falls squarely within the category of such "exceptional remedies." For Cohen, a crucial feature of a moral panic is the construction of "folk devils" that act as visible reminders of what society should *not* be. Consistent with the transactional approach which underlies Cohen's work, is the idea that the identities of folk devils are public property (S. Cohen, 1972, p. 10). I read this observation to mean both that folk devil identities are publicly constructed (through the media, for example) and that they belong to the public through the fundamental purposes they serve (such as catharsis, displacement of public anxieties, etc.)

Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) argue that a situation can be considered to be a moral panic if it fulfills five criteria: concern, hostility, consensus, volatility and, most importantly, disproportionality (for a critique of the criterion of disproportionality, see Waddington, 1986; Hunt, 2011; Wilby & Spencer, 2011). In their definition, Hall and his colleagues touch on this last characteristic of disproportionality in two separate ways: both the disproportionality of the reaction and the discrepancy between media portrayals of increased incidents and the reality on the ground:

> When the official reaction to a person, groups of persons or series of events is *out of all proportion* to the actual threat offered, when 'experts,' in the form of police chiefs, the judiciary, politicians and editors *perceive* the threat in all but identical terms, and appear to talk 'with one voice' of rates, diagnoses, prognoses and solutions, when the media representations universally stress 'sudden and dramatic' increases (in the numbers involved or events) and 'novelty,' above and beyond that which a sober, realistic

> appraisal could sustain, then we believe it is appropriate to speak of the beginnings of a *moral panic*. (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 1978, p. 16)

Despite the obvious similarities, there is no moral panics "theory" and the phenomenon can be theorized from almost any established framework in sociology (Critcher, 2006, p. 2). For instance, in his seminal study, Cohen used a symbolic interactionist approach, drawing specifically on the sociology of law, the sociology of collective behavior and the works of Howard Becker and Neil Smelser. Hall et al. praised Cohen's approach for its ability to highlight that "deviance is a social and historical, not a 'natural,' phenomenon" (Hall et al., 1978, p. 185), but at the same time they criticized the tendency of the transactional perspective to conceptualize the processes of labeling and reaction largely at level of the micro transactions. Therefore, Hall at al. justified their choice of a Marxist approach to the study of moral panics understood as forms of hegemony (Critcher, 2006, pp. 2–3) by arguing for the need to inquire deeper into the shaping context. For Hall, the "background issues" are "exactly the critical forces which *produce* 'mugging' in the specific form in which it appears," thus warranting the need for "a more historical and structural view" able to illuminate over the longer term the larger role played by the legal institutions in maintaining the cohesion of the entire social formation (Hall et al., 1978, p. 185). Yet others, like Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) chose to link moral panics to social movements.

Critcher (2006) outlines four reasons for studying moral panics. First, they appear constantly. Second, they have assumed increasing political importance, producing so-called "dog whistle" issues which stimulate automatic responses from the electorate. Third, moral panics reveal who is able to define a social problem and prescribe appropriate action. Here, Critcher goes on to identify five groups that potentially have this power which he calls "the five

powerful Ps of moral panics:" (i) the press and broadcasting, (ii) pressure groups and claims makers, (iii) politicians and government, (iv) police and law enforcement agencies and (v) public opinion (2006, p. 4). Consistent with Critcher's recommendations, this dissertation focuses on the workings of the media and connects these with the positions of the other four powerful Ps of moral panics. Like Hall (1978) before him, Critcher also reminds us that consensus on the definition of a social problem and on its fitting remedies by no means emerges automatically but, instead, needs to be achieved (2006, p. 6). Fourth and finally, moral panics make us confront awkward questions about the truth in relation to social problems (Critcher, 2006, pp. 3–7).

Goode and Ben-Yehuda define a moral panic as "the outbreak of moral concern over a supposed threat from an agent of corruption that is out of proportion to its actual danger or potential harm" (2011, p. 21). Thompson (1998, p. 8) sees five key elements or stages in a moral panic: (1) something or someone is defined as a threat to values or interests, (2) this threat is depicted in an easily recognizable form by the media, (3) there is a rapid buildup of public concern, (4) there is a response from authorities or opinion makers and (5) the panic recedes or results in social changes. All these phases can be easily traced in the case of the Romanian immigrants in Italy.

Thompson (1998) agrees with Young, Goode and Ben-Yehuda that at the center of the moral panic there is a putative threat to a moral universe. A moral panic is not an irrational illusion or an uproar about something mundane, but a threat to the core of the social order:

> You cannot have a moral panic unless there is something morally to panic about, although it may not be the actual object of fear but the displacement of another fear, or, more frequently, a mystification of the true threat… Further, in the most substantial cases, the objects of panics do represent a direct threat to the core values, the strategy of

> discipline, and the justification of rewards of those that panic. Only there is a direct threat in a moral and symbolic kind rather than in a material sense. (Young, 2007, 60 qtd. in Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2011, p. 22)

Thompson (1998, pp. 140–141) attributes the renewed popularity of the concept of moral panic to a number of structural, technological and cultural changes. Figuring prominently among the structural changes with profoundly unsettling effects (leading to feelings of anxiety and increased risk perceptions) is immigration. Other changes refer to increased multiculturalism, the fragmentation of cultures, and the inherent conflicts over identity, lifestyles and morals. Referring to this last set of changes, Thompson explains that

> the culture industries have become more central to economic and social life, and so there is a constant drive to promote cultural changes, which can provoke resistance and conflict. They also entail increased efforts at cultural and moral re-regulation, with the development of expert regulatory authorities, and *the exercise of power through fixing discursive formations, and surveillance*. (1998, pp. 140–141; my italics)

In the following chapters I will show how power through discourse combines with visibility and surveillance to discipline Romanian immigrants and to police the boundaries of Italian-ness.

Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2011) attribute the success of the moral panic approach to its capacity to focus attention on fundamental social processes. Thompson (1998), Critcher (2006) and Hunt (2011) explicitly link moral panic to moral regulation, but they all agree that moral panics are about episodes disrupting the normal routine of society, suitable for inquiring beyond the surface of things. In Goode and Ben-Yehuda's words, "[t]he concept's very adaptable, protean quality enables the analyst to read symbolic meaning into claims making, rhetoric, and

discourse to understand complex cultural manifestations on an array of fronts" (2011, p. 34). A further proof of the concept adaptability is the fact that the different models that have left their imprint on the field (Cohen, 1972; Hall et al, 1978; Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994; Thompson, 1998) are regarded by their authors as mutually compatible (Critcher, 2006, p. 27), allowing the contemporary analyst to draw on a vast repertoire of features. This ability to unpack deep-seated social processes is precisely what made me choose moral panic as a framework for this dissertation.

Moral Panic Research and Media

At the center of moral panic research are the media (S. Cohen, 1972; Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2011; Hall et al., 1978; Thompson, 1998). Media report on issues and, in so doing, operate as "agents of moral indignation" (S. Cohen, 1972, p. 16) generating concern, anxiety or panic by the mere fact of reporting. Cohen clearly uses a transactional approach to his analysis, explaining that the media are able to suddenly *create* social problems "by thrusting certain moral directives into the universe of discourse" (1972, p. 17). Furthermore, Cohen (1972) stresses that news about deviance constitutes the main source of information as to what the normative contours of a society are.

Stuart Hall and his colleagues (1978) offer a particularly insightful analysis into the complex linkages between the social production of news and crime. In a particularly instructive chapter of their book *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*, they tease out both (a) more passive and (b) more active ways in which the news making process connects to the social processes within which it is embedded. Within the former category, they look at newsworthiness, professional ideology and source availability. Within the latter category, they analyze selectivity, coding and mediation. A fundamental feature of Hall's undertaking is that –

despite putting forth at times scathing criticism of the phenomena at hand – he thoroughly contextualizes and historicizes his analysis making it thus impossible to be written off as simplistic conspiracy theory. While chapter 3 will review media theory more closely, it is worthwhile here to briefly summarize Hall at al.'s (1978) points.

(a) Hall et al. start off by explaining that the news, far from being something naturally occurring or something intrinsic in the event itself, is actually "the end-product of a complex process which begins with the systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to socially constructed set of categories" (1978, p. 53). Structuring the whole process is the professional ideology of what constitutes "good news," a set of loose, informal norms which, nevertheless, are central to the professional socialization and practice of journalists. For instance, items which can be categorized as "out of the ordinary" are considered by newsmen to possess "cardinal news value" and, consequently, playing up the extraordinary, dramatic and tragic elements of stories enhances their newsworthiness.

Hall et al. argue that what makes us members of the same society is the fact that we have access to the same "maps of meaning", implying an agreement in fundamental interests, values and concerns, as they are embodied in these maps (Hall et al., 1978, p. 55). Importantly, the process of signification, as it is carried out in news-making, "*both assumes and helps to construct society as a 'consensus'*" (Hall et al., 1978, p. 55).

A final point about the more passive ways in which a set of structural imperatives function to produce ideological reproduction through the media, concerns the accessible sources of information under the constant pressure of time. Two factors are at play here: (1) the urgency of the deadline makes journalists dependent on news sources that are willing and able to preschedule their activities (such as institutional sources) and (2) the values of "impartiality,"

"balance" and "objectivity" underwriting media reporting powerfully orient the newsmen towards "accredited" sources. Taken together, these two factors which are ironically meant to ensure the impartiality of the media, effectively lead to "a systematically structured *over-accessing* to the media of those in powerful and privileged institutional positions" (Hall et al., 1978, p. 58). As a result, the media are structurally oriented to replicate the "definitions of social reality" of the institutional spokesmen and, in so doing, to reproduce symbolically society's existing power structure. In the process, those deemed to be "accredited sources" become "the *primary definers* of topics," meaning that they establish the *primary interpretation* of the issue at hand, thus *setting the limit* for all subsequent discussion by their *framing* of the problem (Hall et al., 1978, pp. 58–59).

(b) Turning to the active ways in which the media effect the reproduction of dominant ideologies, Hall and his colleagues first look at *selectivity*. By this, they mean the criteria of selection that each newspaper appropriates and operationalizes differently, according to its own perceptions of the newsworthy and its own sense of audience. Consequently, each paper has a unique "social personality."

Second, Hall and his colleagues turn to *coding*, the process by which an event is transformed into a finished news item. Each paper develops a distinct way of address which is the newspaper's version of the language of its target audience. This language draws directly on the underlying common stock of knowledge for its designated public, making use of the rhetoric and imagery familiar to this audience and, thus, creates a reciprocity between the journalist and the reader. Hall et al. call this particular mode of address "the *public idiom* of the media" (1978, p. 61). Translating issues into a public idiom makes them more accessible to the audience and, at the same time, naturalizes them by giving them "an *external public reference* and validity in

images and connotations already sedimented in the stock of knowledge which the paper and its public share" (Hall et al., 1978, pp. 61–62). Public issues thus become objectified. This type of translation in the media concomitantly reinforces and disguises the links between official definition and ordinary conversations, by offering the language of the public with the critical twist that it has been "*inflected with dominant and consensual connotations*" (Hall et al., 1978, p. 62).

Third, Stuart Hall and his colleagues draw attention to the connective and mediating role played by the press. The media are able both to legitimate and reinforce the actions of the controllers (whenever they use a public idiom) or, on the contrary, to put pressure on the controllers by summoning public opinion (when they "take the public voice" as they tend to do in editorials). The main reference in this whole sequence is the public which, ironically, despite the effective legitimating work it does, is in fact completely bypassed in the process. Moreover, it is often the case that the media representations of public opinion are subsequently enlisted by the controllers as impartial evidence, thus setting in motion spirals of amplification. The media are also involved in actively shaping public opinion, since, on the one hand, they possess a near-monopoly over "social knowledge" and, on the other hand, they control the passage between knowledgeable actors and the structured ignorance of the general public. The formal and structural independence of the media both from authoritative sources and from the public actually works to reinforce, rather than weaken the press in its mediating role leading to a near ideological closure around the dominant definitions of events.

Reporting on Crime

The disruptive nature of crime marks it as the quintessential newsworthy event. Hall et al. explain that crime offers a prime opportunity for presenting a *dramatized symbolic reassertion* of societal values:

> Crime, then, is 'news' because its treatment evokes threats to, but also reaffirms, the consensual morality of society: a modern morality play takes place before us in which the 'devil' is both symbolically and physically cast out from society by its guardians – the police and the judiciary. (Hall et al., 1978, p. 66)

This Durkheimian interpretation of crime news as upholding community has been confirmed by other authors working within the moral panic framework such as Mary Douglas (qtd. in Thompson, 1998, p. 23). According to Hall, violence represents "a fundamental rupture in the social order" and its use marks the distinction between people who are "fundamentally *of* society and those who are *outside*" (Hall et al., 1978, p. 68). Crime stories are distinctive also because they rely almost entirely on the definitions of the primary definers. Moreover, the very nature of the deeds makes crime *less open* to competing and alternative definitions: not only are criminals not organized in the way counter-definers need to be to even have a chance at a public voice, but by being criminals they have effectively "forfeited the right to take part in the negotiation of the consensus about crime" (Hall et al., 1978, pp. 68–69). It is in this way that the illusion of consensus over crime is created and then the only logical avenue for the treatment of crime becomes the *pragmatic* one:

> This makes the avenue of crime a peculiarly one-dimensional and transparent one so far as the mass media and public opinion is concerned: one where issues are simple, uncontroversial and clear-cut. For this reason, too, crime and deviance provide two of the main sources for images of pollution and stigma in the public rhetoric. It is not

> merely coincidental that the language used to justify action against any potential group of trouble-makers deploys, as one of its critical boundary-markers, the imagery of criminality and illegality. (Hall et al., 1978, pp. 69–70)

It is precisely this one-dimensional portrayal of crime that Cohen took as his object of analysis in his seminal work *Folk devils and moral panics: the creation of the Mods and Rockers*. The definition of deviance that he drew from Howard Becker (1963) seems very useful for problematizing the apparent simplicity of crime news:

> deviance […] is created by society. I do not mean this in the way that it is ordinarily understood, in which the causes of deviance are located in the social situation of the deviant or in 'social factors' which prompt his action. I mean, rather, that s*ocial groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance*, and by applying those rules to particular persons and labeling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is *not* a quality of the act that the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an 'offender.' The deviant is one to whom the label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label. (Becker, 1963, pp. 8–9)

Stanley Cohen urges the scholars working on deviance to question the labeling established by certain dominant groups. He even offers a guide of three *definitional* questions that need to be asked in addition to the behavioral questions (clarifying *why* somebody committed something):

> why does a particular rule, the infraction of which constitutes deviance, exist at all? What are the processes and procedures involved in identifying someone as deviant and

> applying the rule to him? What are the effects and consequences of this application, both for society and the individual? (S. Cohen, 1972, p. 13)

Within this framework, deviance is conceived in terms of "a process of becoming… rather than the possession of fixed traits and characteristics" (S. Cohen, 1972, p. 13) and, moreover, the meaning and interpretation that the deviant gives to his own acts is seen as crucial, especially since oftentimes his behavior does not stray too much from other forms of behavior which, paradoxically, are socially approved. The transactional approach does not presuppose that any person labeled as deviant has to accept this identity: at times, the deviant label may not "take" (S. Cohen, 1972, pp. 12–15).

With this approach, Cohen takes a major shift from the conventional study of crime to a type of analysis that no longer looks at the deviant act in isolation, but that refocuses attention on the relation between deviance and the social reaction to it. Hall argues that this change of focus alters the nature of the phenomenon in search of an explanation (Hall et al., 1978, p. 17). Cohen insists that there can be no identification of deviance without also conceptualizing its nature:

> The deviant is assigned to a role or social type, shared perspectives develop through which he and his behavior are visualized and explained, motives are imputed, causal patterns are searched for and the behavior is grouped with other behavior thought to be of the same order.
>
> This imagery is an integral part of the identification process: the labels are not invented after the deviation. The labellers– and the ones I have concentrated on are the mass media – have a ready-made stock of images to draw upon. Once the initial identification has taken place, the labels are further elaborated […] The primary label, in other words, evokes secondary images, some of which are purely descriptive, some of which contain

> explicit moral judgments and some of which contain prescriptions about how to handle the behavior. (S. Cohen, 1972, p. 74)

So labels, particularly when applied to dramatic public events, are responsible for placing and identifying those events, but more importantly, they effectively assign events to a context. Whenever those labels are used, they mobilize the *whole differential context* that is connected to them (Hall et al., 1978, p. 19). Therefore, the aim of my study is precisely to go beyond these labels to the social content which they both reflect and disguise, bearing in mind that the crises tend to be about other things than crime per se. Helping to mystify the situation is the fact that "[c]rime has been cut adrift from its social roots" (Hall et al., 1978, p. ix), artificially separated from its determining conditions. Most frequently, these crises have been interpreted as crises of hegemony and symptoms of the disintegration of the social order (Hall et al., 1978).

Typically, as Cohen (1972) explained, the labeling process starts off with the use of emotive symbols such as "hooligans," "thugs" and "wild ones." Once these terms enter the mythology, they provide a composite stigma – made up of a hard core of stable attributes and a range of fringe attributes – that swiftly, but effectively render conspicuous a certain group of people. Another type of spurious attribution, in addition to labeling, is guilt by association which makes an entire category of people potential deviants. Neither of the two types of spurious attribution operates in a vacuum. Instead, they both draw on the existing stereotypes of other folk devils, grafting the new picture that they are minting on what is a socially readily available composite image (S. Cohen, 1972, pp. 54–57). It is fundamental to give the devil a particular shape for this is the only way to know what values are being asserted. Having acknowledged Cohen's point, I reserve the second part of this chapter for a discussion of the most conspicuously discriminated groups in Italy along with the most durable axes of prejudice.

The stereotyping which constitutes folk devils "*reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fixes 'difference'*" (Hall, 1997a, p. 258). Additionally, stereotyping works to maintain social and symbolic order by establishing the symbolic frontier between what is "normal" and what is "deviant" (Hall, 1997a, p. 258). It does so by deploying the strategy of "splitting," resulting into "stereotypical dualism" (Hulme, 1988, pp. 49-50 qtd. in Hall, 1996d, pp. 215–216). This process divides the normal from the abnormal and then expels everything which is different. In turn, this practice of closure and exclusion of the stereotype "*symbolically fixes boundaries, and excludes everything which does not belong*" (Hall, 1997a, p. 258). It is in this way that the Rest (of the world) becomes everything that the West is not, its mirror image (Hall, 1996d, p. 216), albeit an inversed image, of which Eastern Europe – when contrasted to the core countries of the European Union – is a prime representative. Stereotypes do the kind of work that is key to the up-keeping of what Hall (1978) calls the societal shared "maps of meaning." Since the stereotype refers both to what is imagined in fantasy and to what is perceived as "real," what is visually produced is only half the story: "[t]he other half – the deeper meaning – lies in *what is not being said, but is being fantasized, what is implied but cannot be shown*" (Hall, 1997a, p. 263). It is this implied half that is at the heart of perpetuating the "maps of meaning" and, along with them, the idea of societal consensus. Hall, following Foucault, consider stereotyping "a 'power/knowledge' sort of game," in which people are classified according to a norm and excluded are constructed as "other" (1997a, p. 325).

Touching on how criminality is constructed in moral panics, Cohen stresses that Lemert includes in his notion of the societal control culture not just the official institutions and laws designed to punish and rehabilitate the deviants in the name of a collectivity, but "also typical modes and models of understanding and explaining the deviance" (1972, p. 75). The images the

media disseminate are essential in justifying a given view of the world and they form part of what Berger and Luckman call the "conceptual machinery that accounts for the deviant condition" (in Cohen, 1972, p. 75). They feed back into a consensual model of society where no decent/"normal"/genuine member of society would tolerate such a behavior: "The deviant is seen as having stepped across a boundary which at other times is none too clear" (S. Cohen, 1972, p. 75). Cohen has no doubts that the mainstream reaction expressed in the mass media, consisting of putative deviance, punitiveness and the creation of new folk devils, has successfully been integrated into the public imagery and has subsequently formed the basis of control measures (1972, p. 70).

Cohen conceptualizes the role played by media in moral panics by referring to Leslie Wilkins' (1964) model of deviation amplification. In a nutshell, the nature of the information about deviance – which is typically received through the media – may structure societal reaction to deviance in such a way so as to actually increase deviance, rather than decrease it or check it. Wilkins (1964) sees the social isolation of the deviant group as conducive to their alienation, increasing the self-perception of their own deviance and, consequently, resulting in even more non-conforming behavior which, in turn, triggers even harsher punitive reactions from the mainstream.

Hall and his colleagues build on this kind of work on amplification spirals to develop the notion of "signification spiral" defined as a "*self-amplifying sequence within the area of signification*" (Hall et al., 1978, p. 223). The important difference here to approaches such as Wilkins' (1964) is that, for Hall, the event at hand is *escalated* – its threatening potential is heightened – in the very course of signification, from within, as it were. Hall at al. go on to identify the common elements of a signification spiral: (1) the identification of a specific issue of

concern; (2) the identification of a subversive minority; (3) "convergence," meaning the linking, by labeling, of the issue at hand to other problems; (4) the notion of "thresholds" which, once crossed, can lead to an escalating threat; (5) the prophecy of more troubling times to come if no action is taken and (6) the call for "firm steps" (Hall et al., 1978, p. 223). The spiral has two escalating mechanisms: convergence and thresholds.

Convergence is said to occur when through the linking of events in the process of signification parallels are drawn between them – either implicitly or explicitly (by coining the term "student hooliganism," for instance). The effects of convergence are threefold: (i) it sets new problems in the context of already familiar old issues, (ii) it equates distinct events based on an *imputed* common denominator and (iii) it effectively links a whole series of social problems when they are spoken together as part of a deeper, underlying problem or just the "tip of an iceberg" (Hall et al., 1978, p. 223). Much like in the case of Cohen's spurious attribution, the overarching outcome is the amplification, not necessarily of the material events themselves, but certainly of their perceived threat-potential. Hall and his co-authors also point to the ways in which signification can be used to depoliticize an issue by *criminalizing* it, while at the same time simplifying complex issues, for instance "by 'making plain' through elision what would otherwise have to be substantiated by hard argument" (Hall et al., 1978, p. 224). Moreover, stressing just the most extreme and violent overtones of an event serves both to produce a control response to it and to simultaneously legitimate that response (Hall et al., 1978, p. 224).

Thresholds, the other escalation mechanism in signification spirals, symbolically delineate the boundaries of societal tolerance (Hall et al., 1978, p. 225). In order of decreasing openness, Hall et al. discuss the low threshold of permissiveness (corresponding to the contravention of traditional moral norms), the legal threshold and, finally, the violence threshold

marking the challenges to the fundamental bases of the social order itself. If one event can be portrayed together with other apparently similar ones, then a relatively harmless activity coupled with a more harmful one, can lead to the escalation of the perceived threat to society. In this way, a benign activity is hurled over acceptance thresholds because it has been re-signified in terms of what it *may* cause. In a similar vein, the stigma of a certain activity or behavior can not only be intensified, but it can be spread to collateral groups by what Cohen calls "the 'widening of the net' effect" (1972, p. 83). Rationalizing that the case at hand is but the thin edge of a larger wedge, makes other targets more visible, effectively rendering them candidates for social control. As Cohen rightly points out, these collateral targets are not chosen randomly; instead, they are drawn from groups which are already structurally vulnerable to social control (1972, p. 83).

Conceptualizing Identity

In this study, I take a conscious departure from the traditional meaning of identity with its overtones of an all-encompassing sameness, devoid of any kind of internal differentiation. Instead, I conceptualize identities explicitly following Stuart Hall (1996b), stressing that identities are constructed within discourse and not outside of it and that, above all, they are the product of the marking of difference and exclusion and not the sign of any naturally occurring unity. In fact, the "unities" which are central to traditional understandings of identity are by no means primordial, but instead they are the results of "the naturalized, overdetermined process of 'closure'" (Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1993 qtd. in Hall, 1996b, p. 5). This kind of understanding of identity that looks rather to the processes of becoming than to the state of being is fundamental for making sense of a moral panic. The stress within this approach, as Hall (1996b, p. 4) explains, is displaced from questions related to "who we are" and "where we came from" to

issues of what we might become, and crucially for analyzing a moral panic, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. Fluidity is the key term for this conceptualization – as Slack explains, "the context is not something *out there, within which practices occur or which influences the development of practices*. Rather, *identities, practices, and effects generally, constitute the very context within which they are practices, identities or effects*" (1996, p. 125). This approach sees difference as fundamental to the construction of identities, for it is only through the relation to the Other, to its *constitutive outside* that an "identity" can be constructed (Derrida, 1981; Laclau, 1990; Butler, 1993 qtd. in Hall, 1996b, pp. 4–5):

> identities can function as points of identification and attachment only *because* of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render 'outside,' abjected. Every identity has its 'margin,' an excess, something more. The unity, the internal homogeneity, which the term identity treats as foundational is not a natural, but a constructed form of closure, every identity naming as its necessary, even if silenced and unspoken other, that which it 'lacks.' (Hall, 1996b, p. 5)

Etienne Balibar (1990) offers a persuasive example of this when he writes that "the racial/cultural identity of 'true nationals' remains invisible but is inferred from… the quasi-hallucinatory visibility of the 'false nationals' – Jews, 'wops,' immigrants, indios, natives, blacks" (qtd. in H. K. Bhabha, 1996, p. 55). Because identities are constructed through difference, by depressing that which threatens them (Laclau, 1990, p. 33 qtd. in Hall, 1996b, p. 5), they are also constantly destabilized by what they leave out. For Judith Butler (1993) the discursive construction of a constitutive outside and the production of abjected and marginalized subjects, apparently outside the field of the symbolic, the representable means that these can then

return to trouble and unsettle the foreclosure which we prematurely call "identities" (qtd. in Hall, 1996b, p. 15). Summing up his approach, Stuart Hall writes:

> I use 'identity' to refer to the meeting point, the point of suture, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate,' speak to us or hail us into practice as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken.' Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us (see Hall, 1995). They are the result of a successful articulation or 'chaining' of the subject into the flow of the discourse, what Stephen Heath, in his path-breaking essay on 'Suture' called 'an intersection' (1981: 106). (1996b, pp. 5–6)

It is important to note that, for Hall, an effective suturing of the subject to a subject-position requires both the "haling" of the subject *and* the subject's investment in the position. Therefore, Hall, building on the work of Foucault linked to psychoanalysis, conceives this suturing not as a one-sided process, but as an *articulation* (1996b, p. 6). Articulation is conceptualized as "a moment of arbitrary closure" (Slack, 1996, p. 115), it is

> the form of the connection that can make the unity of two elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. […] The so-called 'unity' of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary 'belongingness.' The 'unity' which matters is a linkage between the articulated discourse and the social forces with which it can, under certain historical

> conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected. (Hall, 1986, p. 53 qtd. in Slack, 1996, p. 115)

Articulation, this kind of arbitrary "fixing," addresses "the necessity of thinking unity *and* difference; difference *in* complex unity, without this becoming a hostage to the privileging of difference as such" (Hall, 1985, p. 93).

Notes on the Identity Context in Italy

Recent international migration to Italy can only be conceptualized in the context of the prevalent Italian identity narratives over time. The sheer presence of immigrants from Eastern Europe and elsewhere has, according to Norma Bouchard (2010), led to a fermentation of nationalistic myths based on geography, culture, and ethnicity in Italy, coupled with increasingly stricter legislative measures to contain and minimize their influx. Italian identity narratives are shaping the ways in which the immigrant subject positions are being constructed, while, in that very process they themselves are reiterated, restructured and recontextualized. Writing on Italian cultural diversity, Jeff Pratt follows Max Silverman (1992) in stressing that categories such as "foreigners" or "minorities" are neither recent, nor contingent, but instead "they are all forged in the institutional and discursive nexus tied between nationhood, citizenship and state-building" (2002, p. 26).

There is widespread agreement that questions of Italian-ness have been high on the political agenda since the Risorgimento[8] (Bouchard, 2010, p. 106; Grillo, 2002, p. 11; Pratt, 2002, pp. 26–29). Pratt thinks that D'Azeglio's memorable phrase of the 1861, "Now we have made Italy, we need to make Italians" (qtd. in Pratt, 2002, p. 26) unsettles the usual assumptions

[8] The Risorgimento (literal meaning: Resurgence) was a XIXth century ideological and literary movement that helped to construct an Italian national consciousness. The Risorgimento culminated in the unification of Italy in 1861.

that the Risorgimento represented the struggle of a fully formed nation for achieving self-determination. Actually, he argues, towards the end of the 19th century, millions of migrants discovered that they were Italian only after having crossed the Atlantic (Pratt, 2002, p. 26). Migration literature in contemporary Italy is questioning the overarching discourses of a unitary national character which were based on the reconstruction of an imagined past, taking the Risorgimento as their point of origin (Bouchard, 2010, p. 105; Orton, 2012, p. 21, Eaglestone qtd. in 2012, p. 22). Migrants play a central role in questioning the nationalistic agendas of Italian culture, for, as Gramsci reminds us in *The Southern Question* (1991), neither the founding of the modern Italian state in 1860, nor the concept of "Italian-ness" can be separated from processes of colonization and global migratory flows (qtd. in Bouchard, 2010, p. 106).

> [T]he arrival of so many immigrants from Eastern Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America caused Italians to perceive migration as a foreign invasion and as a threat to a presumed Italian authenticity, culture, and way of life. The xenophobic discourses and practices that ensued reveal that despite centuries of cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic plurality, the product of nation-building pursued by Italian governments from Unification on, had somewhat succeeded. The revival of a mythology of Italian national identity based on imaginary notions of shared civic values, a territory linked to a common culture, and, at times, even a genealogical descent, testify to this. As documented by Triandafyllidou, widely circulating press discourses stressed 'the different ethnic origins of immigrants […] identified as 'foreigners,' 'north Africans' or 'Albanians,' and hence distinguished from 'Us,' 'Italians,' 'Europeans' (2001: 106). (Bouchard, 2010, p. 105)

It does not come as a surprise that, as late as 2005, the President of the Senate, Marcello Pera, would appeal to what Bouchard called "latent Fascist fantasies of racial purity" (2010, p. 106) by stating that the immigrants would transform the Italian stock into a "half-caste." In fact, the Italian unification had been built around the project of throwing out the foreigners (Pratt, 2002, p. 27). It is in this context that Bouchard places the passing of Italian immigration law (1989, 1998), culminating in the Bossi-Fini Law of July 30, 2002 which she considers "by all accounts, a repressive bio-political apparatus that transforms the immigrant into the *homo sacer* of Agamben's *State Of Exception* (2005), that is to say, into the bare life of the *bios*" (2010, p. 106).

Italy has a very particular internal dynamic when it comes to difference, which goes back to the years of the Risorgimento and which has been taken up by the likes of Gramsci in *The Southern Question* (1991). In 1860, after the Italian peninsula was unified territorially, the northern monarchy of the Savoy annexed the independent Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Bouchard (2010, pp. 107–108) explains that going along with this colonial expansion, there was a sustained effort at deculturation which led to the erasure of minority languages and cultures. Critically, this process was sustained by a discourse that represented the South as an exotic and bizarre land and which instilled the image of the South "as a place of barbarism, irrationality, and backwardness and therefore as a colony to be tamed by the civilized and progressive north" (Bouchard, 2010, p. 107). The resultant discourse of racial inferiority not only proved very resilient, but it offered a very convenient justification for the failure of the state to successfully implement social and economic reforms in the south. Others have noted that, even now, Italy's self-representation rather than being unified, continues to be built around the North – South duality (Pratt, 2002, p. 29). This is all the more relevant, as it has been noted that the

Southerners have frequently been represented using the very same categories that are nowadays used for foreign migrants (Mai, 2002; Carter, 1997, Riccio, 1999 qtd. in Grillo, 2002, p. 11). The North tends to stand for "development, rationality and modernity," while the South is thought of as "backward, magical and archaic" (Pratt, 2002, p. 29). Pratt, following Dumont's (1966) analysis of the caste system, argues that this type of perception has created a hierarchicalized difference, in which a position is assimilated to all those above it and opposed to all those inferior to it (2002, p. 29). In a further inflection, the North, representing industry and modernity, stands for its own higher referent which is the family of economically advanced Western countries to which Italy strives to belong. Therefore, this perception of belongingness to the core nations of Western Europe along with the Italian political tradition, structured the representations of Italian identity along an East – West axis during the Cold War, rendering Italy's "Other" as "barbaric and Eastern… destroying Western civilization and freedom" (Pratt, 2002, p. 31). The very powerful social mechanisms of polarization and exclusion developed during the years of the Cold War can still be seen at play today in what Pratt (2002, p. 38) describes as the tendency for outsiders to be judged as conclusive representatives of their presumably homogeneous group, individuals dissolved into a stigmatized collectivity.

The Italian identity narrative, structured as it is by the North – South tension, is further complicated by episodes of migration which effectively shaped this metanarrative. Bouchard (2010) places in historical perspective the founding moments of modern definitions of Italian identity following the country's territorial unification, the so-called Risorgimento. There was a two-fold reaction to the annexation and subsequent colonial acculturation of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies: rebellion – in the "brigand's war," where destitute masses opposed the Italian army – and emigration. Between 1876 and 1976, in what could be considered a postcolonial exodus,

25 million people – two-thirds of them Southerners – left mainly for the Americas, but also for Africa. Colonizing African territories in this way was, on the one hand, a form of nationalistic expansionism, and, on the other hand, a convenient solution to an oversupply of labor and a large landless peasantry (Bouchard, 2010, p. 107). It is in this way that Somalia was occupied in 1889 and that Eritrea became an Italian colony in 1890. Ironically, the very same masses that represented the discarded surplus were re-signified in the Italian imperialistic rhetoric as conquering warriors (Verdicchio, 1997 qtd. in Bouchard, 2010, pp. 107–108). More importantly, in the process,

> the same discursive tropes employed to describe southern Italians were once again mobilized. The dichotomies of white/black, conqueror/conquered, progressive/backward, civilized/barbarian established in the years following Unification, now justified the acquisition of African territories. (Bouchard, 2010, p. 108)

Looking at this historical evolution, we can see how a label has been created and how the complex meanings that it calls up have been interwoven and sedimented throughout its long existence. We are seeing here the kind of continuous elaboration of labels and of their associated stocks of images that Cohen discusses (1972, p. 74). It becomes particularly important to historicize labels as this is the only way to grasp what Hall calls the *whole differential context* (Hall et al., 1978, p. 19) that the label mobilizes whenever it is used.

Although Italy was forced to abandon all its colonies through the Paris Peace Treaty of 1947, Italian migration continued, albeit internally between the South and the North of the country. Between 1951 and 1972, two million Southerners moved north, attracted by industrial jobs, thus giving birth to the largest European interregional migration of the postwar era. This was the last episode of mass migration before Italy became a country of immigration in the early

1980s. Considering this process in historical perspective, the way Bouchard does, it becomes clear that

> contexts of national and transnational colonialism and migration are undoubtedly part and parcel of the modern definition of Italian-ness. They constitute the global Italian nation, a transnational Greater Italy, often originating from the subaltern classes... (Bouchard, 2010, p. 108)

Nevertheless, this kind of pivotal migratory experience of the subaltern has been removed and repressed (Bouchard, 2010, pp. 108–109) from metanarratives of Italian-ness, it has never come to form part of a collective ethos and, instead, has been remembered as just the private adventure of some (Turco qtd. in Bouchard, 2010, p. 108). Yet now, more than 150 years after the founding of the modern Italian state and "at this demographic juncture" of global migratory flows, it has become impossible to conceptualize Italian-ness "outside a theory of cultural dispersion" (Allen and Russo qtd. in Bouchard, 2010, p. 116). Even nowadays, the North – South opposition, with its deeply entrenched inflections, continues to shape representations of new minorities in Italy. This kind of geographical imagination is perpetuated in that migrants from the developed Northern countries in present-day Italy are not considered to be migrants at all, but merely mobile professionals and investors:

> It is worth stressing the invisible socio-economic axis which underlies the representations of migration and the politics of cultural difference. Paradigmatically, migrants are from the South and have come to the North. Representations of difference are hierarchicalized along a North – South polarity, merging a series of mutually reinforcing 'common-sense' themes which combine and 'totalize' economic and cultural backwardness. (Pratt, 2002, p. 36)

The dominant narratives of the Risorgimento along with the idea that Italians will be produced through the civilizing mission of the North upon the South, have gained renewed political currency in the 1990s with the rise of Umberto Bossi's *Lega Nord* (Northern League). This political party claims that an Italian culture never existed and that an Italian state never should have appeared. The League demands greater autonomy for Padania and federalism, believing that in the new environment of the European Union they belong with the North and modernity and that the solution to all their problems lies in their separation from Southerners and migrants. *Lega Nord* has done much to articulate the view that Northern people are hardworking and substantially different from those in the parasitic South. It has also legitimated xenophobia with its numerous attacks on Southerners and immigrants (particularly those from outside the European Union, the so-called *extracomunitari*) (Pratt, 2002, pp. 36–37). So, on the one hand, there is a deeply ingrained sense of Italian cultural superiority in the face of foreigners (*stranieri*) –and especially *extracomunitari* – while, on the other hand, Italy has always been represented and has also represented itself as economically and organizationally backward when compared to other European countries (Dickie, 1996; Gribaudi, 1996 qtd. in Maritano, 2002, p. 64):

> in the 1990s, because of the collapse of the previous political and moral order, and of the pressures exerted by the process of a construction of a European cultural and political identity, Italy re-imagined itself in relation to new others by redeploying the symbolic dichotomies and oppositions that have been shaping its national identity since the very beginning: North/South, Europe/Africa, Christian/Non-Christian, developed/backward. These categories can be seen as re-emerging, as the 'residue of a complex and selective social amnesia' of 'the experience of Italian emigration, of Italian colonialism, of Fascism, the knowledge of the complexity of the Italian society itself,' in order to 'create

boundaries between the newcomers and the host societies' (Maher, 1996, p. 168)" (Mai, 2002, p. 88).

As an essentialized version of European identity became the referent around which Italian identity was redefined in the 1990s, the old labels North/South, developed/backward, "us"/"them" were yet again mobilized to construct the two symbolic poles of the current debate: Europe-modernity versus immigrants-uncivilized. The view that many Italians hold of themselves, "as good, polite, agreeable, even altruistic," claiming values "such as justice, democracy, and tolerance" (Aden, 1997 qtd. in Mai, 2002, p. 92) is compatible with an articulation of Italian identity in terms of efficiency, modernity and solidarity. This would place the country squarely within the "European 'club'" (Perlmutter, 1998 qtd. in Mai, 2002, p. 88).

Orientalism and Balkanism

The idea of a set of qualities which are always symmetrical and yet diametrically inferior to their truly European counterpart has been analyzed in-depth by Edward Said (1978). He specifically references the trope of the "Other" within when he writes about how "the Orient and Islam are always represented as outsiders having a special role to play *inside* Europe" (Said, 1978, p. 71). He coins the term *orientalism* to refer generally to the Western approach to the Orient. Additionally, orientalism is also (i) "the discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery, and practice" and (ii) "that collection of dreams, images, and vocabularies available to anyone who has tried to talk about what lies east of dividing line" (Said, 1978, p. 73). Orientalism is made up of a set of limitations of thought which render the information on the Orient consensual, homogeneous (Said, 1978, pp. 41–42). Orientalism is "a style of thought based on ontological and epistemological distinction

made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (1978, p. 2). Arguably, in our times one of the preferred ways of proliferation of such discourse is represented by the media. The problem with such a media practice is that, inadvertently or not, it also perpetuates hierarchies of power since it normalizes the notion of actors entitled to speak and actors who need to resign themselves to the position of being spoken for. "It is Europe that articulates the Orient; this articulation is the prerogative, not of a puppet master, but of a genuine creator, whose life giving power represents, animates, constitutes the otherwise silent and dangerous space beyond familiar boundaries" (Said, 1978, p. 57). Therefore, speaking on behalf of an imagined of "Other" not only effectively imposes the parameters of current conceivability for that topic, but it also insidiously limits the vocabulary and the imagery available for further understandings. As Said, clearly building on Foucault, emphasized, the importance of texts is that they "can *create* not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe" (1978, p. 94).

Inspired by Said's "orientalism," while, at the same time, inviting critical comparison, Maria Todorova (1997, 2009) developed the notion of "balkanism." The term expresses "the idea that explanatory approaches to phenomena in the Balkans often rest upon a discourse or a stable system of stereotypes that place the Balkans in a cognitive straitjacket" (Todorova, 2009, p. 193). The term "Balkan" has formed since the beginning of the twentieth century part of the repertoire of disparagements, *Schimpfwörter*, of Europe, understood as synonymous to a reversal to the primitive, barbaric, the "other" of Europe, not conforming to standards of behavior (Todorova, 1997, p. 3). Balkanism was shaped as a discourse in the early decades of the twentieth century, but its roots go back to patterns of representation in circulation since the sixteenth century (Todorova, 2009, p. 193).

Todorova argues for the historicity of balkanism and for recognizing it as different from orientalism. In her conceptualization, balkanism is not just a subspecies of orientalism (Todorova, 1997, p. 8); although the two phenomena are similar, they are by no means identical (Todorova, 2009, p. 11). The main difference between the two types of discourses touches on "the historical and geographic concreteness of the Balkans as opposed the intangible nature of the Orient" (Todorova, 2009, p. 11). Todorova reminds us that the East has not always been the unpleasant pole of Europe and that, in fact, after the fall of Rome, for several centuries it was the West that was synonymous with barbarity and crudeness, while Byzantium represented the center of European civilization. The reversal of perception started only after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 with the accompanying eclipse of the Orthodox Church. As Larry Wolff (qtd. in Todorova, 2009, p. 11) demonstrates, the prevailing division in Europe used to be between the North and the South and this was supplanted by the invention of the now conventional division into East and West only comparatively late in the eighteenth century. It was primarily the economic advance of the West that made the East "be identified more often, and often exclusively, with industrial backwardness, lack of advanced social relations and institutions typical for the developed capitalist West, irrational and superstitious cultures unmarked by Western Enlightenment" (Todorova, 2009, pp. 11–12). This, Todorova argues, has made the element of time with its developmental aspect the most important element in contemporary perceptions of East and West as backward/modern. It is interesting to note the uncanny weight that this same vector time – with its correlative stigma of backwardness – carries in the long history of the structuring of derogatory labels applied to inferior "others" in the Italian context, be they Southerners or immigrants.

Whereas the Orient tended to be represented as utopian, wealthy and excessive, the Balkans' almost completely lack wealth along with their unimaginative concreteness "induced a straightforward attitude, usually negative, but rarely nuanced" (Todorova, 2009, p. 14). Also, and in contrast to the prevailing conceptualizations of the Orient as female, balkanist discourse is singularly male: "the standard Balkan [is] male… uncivilized, primitive, crude, cruel, and without exception, disheveled" (Todorova, 1997, p. 14). While the West and the Orient tend to be represented as incompatible entities -- but as complete antiworlds at that -- central to all perceptions of the Balkans is their transitory status. So, unlike the unbridgeable chasm that Said saw separating the Orient from the West, the Balkans always evoked the image of a bridge or of a crossroads, linking Europe and Asia, on the one hand, and stages of growth ("semideveloped," "semicolonial," "semicivilized," "semioriental"), on the other hand (Todorova, 2009, pp. 14–15). However, Todorova explicitly rejects the idea of a colonial status for the Balkans: "to me, this is impossible, since the Balkans are Europe, are part of Europe, although, admittedly, for the past several centuries its provincial part or periphery" (2009, p. 17). In the Balkans, there was no self-perception of being colonial; even in the times of the Ottoman Empire the consciousness of a certain degree of autonomy was always present and this, ironically, may explain why the Balkanist discourse has not been met with the same kind of contestation from anthropology and cultural criticism as in the case of other Third World countries and has continued to thrive in the press. Todorova also believes that while orientalism has been superseded as a whole, this has not happened for the Balkans.

The final difference between orientalism and balkanism, is that the former is dealing with a difference between (imputed) types, whereas the latter treats the differences within one type (Todorova, 2009, p. 19). Stuart Hall offers the example of the Eastern Europeans which are

considered to be “barbaric” to illustrate how the West, while opposed on the whole to the rest of the world, can nevertheless have its own internal “others” (Hall, 1996d, pp. 188–189). Todorova introduces the distinction between liminality, marginality and the lowermost. Liminality implies significant changes in the dominant self-image, marginality refers to images on the same plane as the dominant self-perception and the lowermost suggests “the shadow, the structurally despised alter-ego” (van Gennep, 1991, pp. 40-41 qtd. in Todorova, 2009, p. 18). She considers the Balkans to be an illustration of the lowermost case of the West, “an incomplete self” (Todorova, 2009, p. 18) on two accounts: religion and race. In religion, the East – West dichotomy is reproduced in the opposition between Greek Orthodoxy and Catholicism with the consequence that Orthodoxy is considered to be a schismatic, heretic deviation of its Western counterpart. Racially, despite pervasive accounts about the mongrel nature of the region, “the Balkans are still treated as positioned on this side of the fundamental opposition: white versus colored, Indo-European versus the rest” (Todorova, 2009, p. 19). Summing up, while Orientalism “is a discourse about an imputed opposition, Balkanism is a discourse about an imputed ambiguity” (1997, p. 17).

For the West, the Balkans are “the Other within” (Todorova, 1997, p. 188). Homi Bhabha identifies ambivalence “as one of the most significant discursive and psychical strategies of discriminatory power” that is central to the stereotype (2004, p. 95). It is, he explains, ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency as it guarantees its repeatability across changing historical and discursive conjunctures (H. K. Bhabha, 2004, p. 95). The stereotype depends on reiteration as it is “a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is already ‘in place,’ already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated” (H. K. Bhabha, 2004, pp. 94–95). The existence of the Balkans as the West’s “Other

within" can be best understood following the lead of scholars such as Stuart Hall or Judith Butler who stress the crucial importance of alterity in the structuring of identity. Homi Bhabha develops this same line of thought when he writes that "otherness" "is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity" (2004, p. 96).

Dwelling on the issue of ambiguity, Todorova concludes that ambiguity is treated as an anomaly, leading to the perception of people in transitional or marginal states as dangerous, both for themselves and for others (2009, p. 19). The Balkans have been perceived as the complete opposite of what they are expected to be and while "[t]his in-betweenness of the Balkans, their transitory character, could have made them simply an incomplete other, instead they are considered not as other but as an incomplete self" (Todorova, 2009, p. 18). Balkanist discourse thus conveniently pre-constructs the peoples of the region into "natural" poles of difference for the construction of the identity of a self as European. I argue that the undeniable cultural similarity between the Italians and the Romanians makes the latter all the more vulnerable to discrimination in the context of a generalized identity redefinition process: the physical presence along with the symbolic accessibility as an incomplete self allows the ready articulation, through difference, of the complete Italian self, the modern, civilized and, above all, European entity that Balkan Romania may never strive to become.

This is how an Austrian author, Alexander Vodopivec, concerned about the balkanization of Europe, described the Balkans in the mid-1960s: "a synonym for unreliability, lethargy, corruption, irresponsibility, mismanagement, blurring of the competencies and borders in the order of law and much else" (Todorova, 1997, p. 35). Balkan is also known to mean "filth,… misogyny, propensity for intrigue, insincerity, opportunism, laziness, superstitiousness, …

inefficiency, incompetent bureaucracy" (Todorova, 1997, p. 119). While Balkan overlaps with Oriental, it carries the additional nuances of "cruelty, boorishness, instability, and unpredictability" (Todorova, 1997, p. 119). "Europe," when used as a distinction from their own Balkans was understood as "progress, order, prosperity, radical ideas, that is, an image and an ideal… not Europe as a geographic entity" (Todorova, 1997, p. 43); "the culturally higher stage of development" related to the Balkans (Todorova, 1997, p. 119). This view coupled with the power to impose this representation resonates with Bhabha's commentary on Fanon's feeling of the belatedness of the black man, the idea that the black man, as a latecomer, will always be separated from others by an already conceived white world (qtd. in Bhabha, 2004, p. 339). Much in the same way, the Romanian is overdetermined, made stereotypical and symptomatic of the Balkan backwaters, *as* they are constructed by the dominant discourses in Western Europe.

Typically and in what might be regarded as the internalization of balkanist discourse, the Romanians resent being depicted as part of the Balkans. Instead, they insist on their direct connections to Western Europe (without even considering Central Europe as an intermediary) and "on their missionary of role as outposts of Latinism and civilization among the sea of (Slavic and Turkic) barbarians" (Todorova, 2009, p. 46). Romania has been avowing "the idea of [its] uniqueness and complete separateness, the 'cultural Narcissism – often encountered within 'small cultures' – which is the counterpart to the official entertained isolationism" (Todorova, 1997, p. 46). This tendency culminated under Ceauşescu [president between 1965 and 1989] serving "as a compensatory mechanism for the self-conscious and troublesome feeling of being trapped in an ambiguous status, the in-betweenness of East and West" (Todorova, 1997, p. 48). Todorova signals that many contemplators think that Romania's identity "vacillates nervously over the reopened border between the Balkans and Central Europe, and more generally between

West and East, a country embodying the 'transition between Occident and the great Asian Orient,' 'some kind of no man's land, not European at all, but not Asiatic at all'" (1997, p. 49). Clearly noticeable here is the ambiguity that is central to balkanist discourse: Romania is perceived as neither European, nor Asian. Todorova rightfully insist that Romanians have an aversion to be qualified as Balkan, since this category is seen as being deprecatory (2009, p. 49), but she nevertheless includes the country under the rubric Balkan (2004, p. 13). Romanians' disavowal of their belonging to the Balkan category need not be contradictory to their de facto subsuming under that very heading: Todorova explicitly rejects the possibility of a "Balkan mentality" as chimerical (2004, p. 9). It is simply the mind of the outside observers that renders the Balkan a unified concept (Todorova, 2004, p. 17), thus constructing a "*homo balkanicus*" and a putative Balkan identity. Similarly, the charges of irrationality that are so often levied against the Balkans are by no means implicit in the object of study. Todorova explains that "[t]hey vest with the eye of the beholder and they become characteristics not of the mentality of the region but of the mentality of the observer" (2004, p. 9).

So, Todorova argues that this specific discourse which she calls balkanism "molds attitudes and actions towards the Balkans and could be treated as the most persistent form or 'mental map' in which information about the Balkans is placed, most notably in journalistic, political, and literary output" (2009, p. 192). As Hall (1978) has shown, the existence of these shared mental maps helps to make sense of new and problematic events very quickly, while it simultaneously strengthens the consensus in society. Summing up, there are four main categories when it comes to mentioning the Balkans (Todorova, 2009, pp. 193–194): (1) in the simplest form, "Balkan" is a name, initially of a mountain range and since the nineteenth century it has been applied to the region as a whole; (2) "Balkan" as a metaphor "for the aggressive, intolerant,

barbarian, semi-developed, semi-civilized, and semi-oriental" (Todorova, 2009, p. 194), a pejorative since the beginning of the twentieth century, triggered by the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of economically backward nation-states, fighting to modernize; (3) the Balkans as a concrete geographic region, currently most often used as synonymous with Southeastern Europe and, finally, (4) the Balkans interpreted through the notion of historical legacy, an original approach proposed by Maria Todorova. It is the second use outlined above that shapes interpretations of the Balkans and subsequent actions. Todorova explains that Southeastern Europe or the Balkans cannot be treated as mere subregions of Europe since "Eastern European" constitutes what, following Jakobson, she calls a *marked* category (2009, p. 197). In this context, the rest of Europe is made up of *unmarked* categories that are ordered hierarchically to the marked ones: "[m]arked categories become different while unmarked categories retain power as the standard against which the rest must be positioned" (Todorova, 2009, p. 197). Todorova envisions the task of Eastern Europenists "not so much of 'provincializing' Europe but of 'de-provincializing' Western Europe, which has heretofore expropriated the category of Europe with concrete political and moral consequences" (2009, p. 202).

The media appear as a prime site for studying Balkanist discourse as Todorova notes that this type of discursive formation is rampant primarily in journalistic and in quasi-journalistic literary forms such as travelogues, political essays and especially hybrid academic journalism (1997, p. 19). Moreover, although balkanist rhetoric has subsided considerably on the political scene after a number of former Warsaw pact countries joined NATO in 2004[9] and, especially,

[9] The first countries of the region to be invited into NATO were Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, all of which became members in 1999. Following them, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Bulgaria joined NATO in 2004. Albania and Croatia joined in 2009.

after several countries were admitted to the European Union between 2004 and 2013[10], this type of discourse "is still encountered abundantly in journalism and fiction, as well as scholarship" (Todorova, 2009, p. 192). As a matter of fact, Todorova entertains no illusions about the possibility of normalizing journalistic discourse about the Balkans:

> The Balkans' exist for the media only as moral stories about violence, victimization and vitriolic memories. Those parts of the Balkans that cannot be described in those terms, i.e. the ones that look normal, do not exist at all. […] The Balkans are represented sporadically and exclusively in their political hypostasis of a production field of violence and political disruption (Todorova, 2004, p. 17).

It is from this repertoire of images, connected to the balkanist discourse, that moral panics in the West pointing towards Eastern European immigrants draw in constructing the labels they affix to the newly minted folk devils. Unsurprisingly then, the media coverage in Italy indeed completely obscures the "normal" parts of the Romanian immigration. So, even in the face of a recent and unprecedented migration such as that from Romania to Italy, there is no pristine field of representation. The widely publicized images of the Romanians in Italian press have not been constructed, as it where, from scratch, as a "natural" outcome of the encounter of two different peoples. It is not just that this difference is socially produced and embedded into specific "maps of meaning," but, inevitably, in the course of representation, the whole background of the labels, lodged as it is in the historic dynamic of Italian North – South relations, on the one hand, and in balkanist rhetoric, on the other hand, has been mobilized. It is

[10] The first Eastern European countries were admitted to the European Union in 2004 (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), followed by Romanian Bulgaria in 2007 and Croatia in 2013.

impossible to understand the stakes of the present-day game of representation and, connected to that, the core issues triggering a moral panic without historicizing the labels deployed.

In this first chapter, I set the theoretical groundwork for grasping the complex dynamics at play in the Italian media representation of Romanians after 2007. The next chapter will present the media theoretical approach and the research methods I employ in investigating the Italian media coverage and the identity negotiation processes it triggers in Romanian immigrants.

Chapter 3: Media, Ideology and Representation: Theory and Method

In this dissertation, I argue that Romanian crime has meaning only within a historically and culturally specific type of discourse, namely the Italian discourse about immigrant crime in the first decade of the 2000s. In order to understand how a confluence of events can come to be defined as a threat serious enough to spark a moral panic, we have to attend to the ways in which words and symbol are made to mean. As Hall (1978) has pointed out, meaning making lies at the very center of producing both the crime and escalating it within signification spirals to the rank of an acute threat to the fundamental social order. I thus turn to theoretical work on media and representation to parse the inner workings of moral panics. In so doing, I follow Hall's interpretation of meaning as a "struggle for mastery in discourse," (1982, pp. 77-79 in Hardt, 1992, p. 187) something which needs to be actively produced, rather than simply recognized as a pre-existent entity embedded in events. In Hall's famous words, "[t]he world has to be *made to mean*" (1982, p. 67 in Hardt, 1992, p. 187). In this vein, it is then necessary to turn to an investigation of ideology in an attempt to explain how power configurations are maintained and how consent is generalized (Hall, 1982, p. 86 in Hardt, 1992, p. 187). Therefore, in the remainder of this chapter I will preface a discussion of ideology by discussing the cultural construction of a social problem and the role played by media in imposing that construction. I will then consider the media implications of the aforementioned discussion before finishing with a review of the methods I used in this study.

A Cultural Constructionist Approach to Social Problems

Problems do not come into discourse simply because they exist in the material world or because they bear on our wellbeing. Instead, "[t]hey are critical in determining who exercise

authority and who accept it" (Edelman, 1988, p. 12), thus contributing to maintaining the status quo. Intricately connected with power as they are, "[p]roblems come into discourse and therefore into existence as reinforcements of ideologies" (Edelman, 1988, p. 12). In fact, the acceptability of the ideological premise implied by the problem is fundamental in determining what reception a given problem explanation will receive. Since a social problem is a construction and not of verifiable entity, the explanation it entails is necessarily part of that construction and not a set of falsifiable propositions (Edelman, 1988, p. 18). Problems not only create beliefs about the relative importance of events, but they come to constitute people as subjects (Edelman, 1988, p. 12), making them crucial in the understanding of any kind of identity narrative. Once put into discourse, problems are fundamental in defining the situation at hand and, beyond that, what Edelman calls "the contours of the social world" (1988, p. 13), by withdrawing from public attention the areas *not* defined as problems and, thus, rendering them immune (Edelman, 1988, pp. 12–13). The approach that Edelman (1988) takes in discussing the construction and the uses of social problems, is reminiscent of the work of Gaye Tuchman (1974, 1978) and the transactional approach supported by Howard Becker (1963) and Stanley Cohen (1972, 1981). He emphasizes that language forms help to moderate in subtle ways the intensity of social conflict (Edelman, 1988, p. 14) by controlling the ways in which a specific problem is posed. Significantly, evoking a problem's origin acts as a manner for assigning blame and praise because in the process of bringing up a specific origin that issue gets reduced to a particular perspective, to the detriment of alternative views (Edelman, 1988, p. 17). Each origin "reflects an ideology and rationalizes a course of action" (Edelman, 1988, p. 17), thus lending additional support to the status quo. Edelman even goes so far as to argue that in a certain sense problems

are constructed to allow for particular reasons and particular remedies to be offered for public acceptance (1988, p. 18):

> But the striking characteristic of the link between political problems and solutions in everyday life is that the solution typically comes first, chronologically and psychologically. Those who favor a particular course of governmental action are likely to cast about for a widely feared problem to which to attach it in order to maximize its support. The process is not necessarily self-conscious or deliberately deceptive. (Edelman, 1988, pp. 21–22)

He goes on to call the name a problem is assigned "a condensation symbol" (Edelman, 1988, p. 22), placing himself in continuity with Cohen's (1972) thinking on the elaboration of labels in, and through the media. Van Dijk is reasoning along the same lines when he writes that in many respects crime is a media construction (1988a, p. 212). Edelman considers that the attachment of a solution to a problem is critical in winning public support because it acts to couch discourse in rational terms (Edelman, 1988, pp. 22–23). Ironically, the construction of problems at times helps to actually perpetuate or even to intensify the conditions which are defined as problematic (Edelman, 1988, p. 25). While Hall (1978) focuses on the importance of meaning creation in explaining the same somewhat counterintuitive phenomenon through his model of the signification spirals, Edelman points to the inefficiency of the attempts to deal with the "problem" by changing just the consciousness or the behavior of the individuals, while leaving the institutions that generate that consciousness and behavior untouched (1988, p. 25). Moreover, drawing on insight from Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, it becomes clear that the "penalty does not simply 'check' illegalities; it differentiates them, it provides them with a general 'economy'" (1977, p. 7). Looking at it through this lens, the decree passed in November

2007 allowing for the deportation of Romanian citizens from Italy without trial may be understood less as a measure for protecting national safety and public order and more as a symbolic action demonstrating the impossibility for a certain group of people to belong to either the Italian national body or, more generally, to the "authentically" European citizenry.

Vesting with authority. Certainly, "[n]ational security is a key symbol" (Edelman, 1988, p. 29) whose mobilization ensures the developing of a contagion which spreads widely and rapidly. Therefore, defining the situation in terms of threats to national security after the murder of Giovanna Reggiani in the fall of 2007 could not have been a happenstance. It was intricately related to past definitions of the situation sedimented in the Italian lifeworld which form the basis for the current and the future socially shared "maps" of meaning. In Edelman's words, "[t]he single problem takes its meaning from the constellation of problems with which it overlaps and from narratives about its past and its future consequences" (1988, p. 29). The way in which problems are framed in the media, with their corresponding gamut of definitions of the situation and labels, actually shape in crucial ways the world that people are experiencing. This world of everyday life "is a chameleon world that transforms its contours with the changing cues that news accounts convey" (Edelman, 1988, p. 29). The labels used to construct a specific problem are crucial in understanding a worldview, particularly if we take into account that the language used to construct a problem also serves as "a rationale for vesting authority in people who claim some kind of competence" (Edelman, 1988, p. 20). What reinforces the status quo and furthermore even creates authority is the willingness to suspend one's critical judgment in favor of the solution presented by another person perceived as able to cope with the problem (Edelman, 1988, p. 20). There is a circular relation of play here. On the one hand, the

spokesperson derives his/her authority from the fact that "his speech concentrates within it the accumulated symbolic capital of the group which has delegated him" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 111). On the other hand, the same spokesperson in "speaking about a group, speaking on behalf of the group, surreptitiously posits the existence of the group in question, institutes the group, through that magical operation which is inherent in any act of naming" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 250). It is this circularity that fosters the charismatic illusion that the spokesperson may appear – in his own eyes and in front of others - as causa sui (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 249). A deep complicity is involved here between those endowed with authority – acting as the primary definers of social issues – and the mainstream as the discourse of authority only exercises its specific effects if it is *both* understood and *recognized* as such (Bourdieu, 1991, pp. 111–113). Authority can never exist without the willing cooperation of those it governs who need to misrecognize the symbolic power at play as arbitrary (Bourdieu, 1991, pp. 113, 170). All this works to sustain the societal consensus favored by the dominant individuals who are interested in preserving things as they are, since it is the current agreement on the principles of di-vision that ensures their authority (Bourdieu, 1991, pp. 130–131). The most effective way for restoring "the silence of the doxa" striven by dominant individuals is through a process of naturalization of social order that borrows heavily from the language of nature (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 131).

In other words, it is the very definition of the problem that generates authority – and crime falls squarely within the category of issues which give rise to authority (Edelman, 1988, p. 20). Furthermore, news about minorities belongs to a special category in this respect as research has proven that these groups are mostly figured in media stories together with the national or local authorities or with the judiciary and the police (van Dijk, 1988b, p. 188). Due to the close

association, it stands to reason that stories about immigrant crime generate especially high levels of authority for the officials featured in the new stories alongside the "foreign" deviants.

Applying Edelman's crucial insight to the 2007 murder of Giovanna Reggiani and the subsequent deportation decree, the definition of the situation as an *internal* problem, generated authority for the Italian police, the only institution qualified to deal with *domestic* affairs. What seems to be underlying the framing of the matter as an Italian domestic problem – in a *double* sense – is the understanding, implicit in the labels used to define the issue, that Romanians are not truly EU citizens. This issuing of a law that flagrantly contradicts the fundamental principles for the functioning of the European Union is predicated upon an implicit understanding of a second-rank EU citizenship, as it applies to Romanian nationals. The originators of the deportation decree (Decree-Law 181/2007) must have perceived it as permissible and abiding the superordinate legal requirements for domestic legislation only insofar as they regarded Romanian nationals as not being covered by the umbrella of EU citizenship or, at least, not in any substantive way. Furthermore, as Entman (1993, 2010) reminds us, the popular acceptance of a frame depends on its affinity and compatibility with the ideas that people already hold. Edelman also stresses that the recognition of a condition as a social problem hinges on whether a large part of the public accepts it as one (Edelman, 1988, pp. 32, 33), in a way that again resonates with the transactional approach of Howard Becker (1963) and Stanley Cohen (1972). So, in this second sense, the whole Romanian deportation debate could not have been defined as an Italian *domestic* problem in any sustainable way, unless the idea underlying it about Romanian nationals' "inauthentic" type of EU citizenship also resonated with the beliefs of the masses. Also worth noting is the fact that communicating beliefs implicitly, without actually articulating them – as we may reasonably suppose they were transmitted in the 2007 Romanian-

provoked scandal in Italy – drastically diminishes the probabilities that they will be challenged (van Dijk, 2008, p. 93).

From this discussion it follows that labels are at the center of constructing social problems. In this dissertation, I use a concept of labelling that incorporates a lot of elements from frame theory, while drawing directly from the original conceptualization of the term by Stanley Cohen (1972). In addition, I use the work of Jűrgen Habermas (1981a, 1981b) to help extend the classical conceptualization of labelling.

Labelling. My preference for using the term labelling in this dissertation is not meant to be a disavowal of frame theory. I certainly acknowledge fully the many merits of framing theory which include (1) transcending the dichotomous conceptualization of bias, (2) acknowledging that people are by no means passive receptacles for whatever frame dominates the media (Entman, 1993, 2010, p. 333) and (3) highlighting the iterative and additive character of framing (the outcomes of certain [sub]proceses serving as inputs for subsequent [sub]processes) (D. Scheufele, 1999, pp. 114-115 qtd. in D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010, p. 4). However, in its current use, framing is primarily concerned with increasing the salience of specific issues in the news through priming. Without denying the obvious importance of noticing some issues before or instead of others, in my analysis I am more concerned with the "signification baggage" which is assigned to stories as they are being presented in the media.

In Cohen's original conceptualization, labels assign events to a context and, in so doing, prove fundamental in the sense-making process, as the labels are *not* invented after the deviation (1972, p. 74). Moreover, labels are constantly elaborated and the mass media, as prime societal labelers always have a ready-made stock of images at their disposal which they can deploy in

stories (S. Cohen, 1972, p. 74). The fundamental feature about labels that makes me prefer the usage of this term over framing is, in Stuart Hall's (1978, p. 19) terms, their ability to mobilize the whole differential context that is connected to them. Using labeling allows me to hone in on the ways in which the whole history of the label weighs down on the interpretation of a news story and, crucially on the processes through which an image is created and then elaborated on through time. Additionally, framing has been criticized for not thoroughly taking into account the competition between various frames and the vastly different ways in which some of the same frames can function in different stories (D. V. Shah, Boyle, Schmierbach, Keum, & Armstrong, 2010, p. 216). The use of labels allows a more accurate account of the contradictions and ambiguities present in stories. It is crucial to allow space for bounded dissent to make the opinions appear "natural" and labels are excellent tools for exploring the workings of hegemony and ideology. I explicitly shun the view that readers are hopelessly manipulated as wholesale gullible subjects. Critical interpretations that go against the hegemonic discourse are possible (Edelman, 1988, p. 34) and completely within the reach of average individuals as long as the information they consume is diverse enough to support such heterogeneous understandings.

In this dissertation I envision labels as double-tiered constructs. I see labels as being composed of (a) an interpretive package along with (b) a set of rules of interpretation that structure all subsequent understandings. In so doing, I build upon Goffman's conceptualization of frames as specific "schemata of interpretation" (1986, p. 21) by proposing a notion of the label, that in addition to that structure, is also loaded with a specific content, a bundle of images, made up of both textual and visual representations. I perceive the set of rules constitutive of the label to be implicit, yet having a subtle and insidious effect, structuring subsequent readings of the world. The fact that these rules are implicit means that they place themselves beyond the

reach of consciousness and can therefore not be problematized. It is these rules which secure the convergence of the label with other meaning-making processes over time, but without weeding out all contradiction. The two tiers of the label are meshed together, intricately interwoven in a dynamic interaction process that is constant and iterative, yet they can also act independently. This kind of very special connection between the two tiers which can very easily accommodate contradictory elements enables labels to remain relevant and up to date.

The interpretive package of a label can be said to resemble an iceberg, as most often only a couple of elements from the complex meanings it contains are referenced explicitly in discourse. Nonetheless, evoking just one element activates the entire semantic edifice, even if this process is not entirely conscious. The associations within an interpretive package are deeply entrenched, yet not rigid. Often they are very complex, resulting in something like a diffuse feeling, an activation of emotion, rather than a strictly cognitive, rational content which makes the whole process much more insidious and more likely to escape critical assessment. The interpretive package of a label is never delivered completely, revealed in its entirety at one moment in time. Rather, pieces of it are strewn over discourse and time, much like pieces of a puzzle, that can be assembled following the rules of interpretation. It is these rules that dictate the affinity between different parts, yet the bonding is never rigid. Therefore, a label is never imposed from above, but rather it seeps into consciousness and its various constitutive elements are assembled seemingly independently, albeit unwittingly following the structuring influence of the rules. This makes labels much more convincing and more difficult to displace. The different parts of a label are articulated to each other, which makes them retain a high degree of flexibility, rendering the whole construction very tolerant of contradiction. This apparently disjointed character also has the advantage of enabling various parts to be differently accented providing

the label as a whole with a high degree of resilience. While acknowledging along Stanley Cohen (1972) the significant part played by the media in elaborating labels, I argue that they can in fact be self-perpetuating in that the rules for interpretation can actually enable a label to graft itself onto common-sense and then become common-sense itself (in a Gramscian sense). As such it is obviously positioned outside of the area of the criticizable. The flexibility of labels thus conceived and the way in which their different elements are articulated not only makes them very resilient, but also renders them highly fertile, with numerous ramifications articulated and dis-articulated over time.

Much like frames, labels too have both an individual and an interpersonal dimension which is embedded in public discourse. While the latter quality is often referenced or even postulated, it is rarely explained how that interpersonal dimension can be brought about and maintained. In what follows, I turn to Jűrgen Habermas' work on the theory of communicative action (1981a, 1981b) to show how labels hold intersubjectively. I argue that Habermas' reflections on the definition of the situation and the lifeworld help to explain why labels function so seamlessly across groups, while crucially taking intentionality out of the equation. Below, I will be referring to what Habermas calls the lifeworld from the perspective of participants, which acts "only as the horizon-forming context of an action situation" and not to the everyday concept of the lifeworld which is presupposed in the perspective of narrators (Habermas, 1981a, p. 137).

Habermas starts off his explanation of the concept of the lifeworld by stressing the necessity that communication participants have to define situations in common whenever they are acting within an orientation to mutual understanding (1981a, p. 121). Since situation definitions form the background of a communicative utterance, they need to overlap enough and every new statement is a test that either confirms, modifies or partly suspends the definition of

the situation that is implicitly proposed by the speaker (Habermas, 1981a, p. 121). Habermas defines a situation as

> a segment of *lifeworld contexts of relevance* [*Verweisungszusammenhänge*] that is thrown into relief by themes and articulated through goals and plans of action; these contexts of relevance are concentrically ordered and become increasingly anonymous and diffused as the spatiotemporal and social distance grows (1981a, pp. 122–123).

Therefore, definitions do not act to sharply delimit situations which preserve the characteristic of shifting boundaries (Habermas, 1981a, pp. 122–123). Here is how the author envisions the relation between the lifeworld and specific context of relevance:

> Before it becomes relevant to the situation, the same circumstance is given only in the mode of something taken for granted in the lifeworld… It is not even 'known,' in any strict sense, if this entails that it can be justified and contested. Only the limited segments of the lifeworld brought into the horizon of a situation constitute a thematizable context of action oriented to mutual understanding; only they appear under the category of *knowledge*. From a perspective turned toward the situation, the lifeworld appears as the reservoir of taken-for-granteds, of unshaken convictions that participants in communication draw upon in cooperative processes of interpretation. Single elements, specific taken-for-granteds, are, however, mobilized in the form of consensual and yet problematizable knowledge only when they become relevant to the situation. (Habermas, 1981a, p. 124)

Therefore, the definition of a situation is a context of relevance that is brought into focus by a particular situation. Essential to this understanding of the definition of the situation is the idea that it needs to hold intersubjectively, while it is intricately related to a whole host of

implicit, "fringe" knowledge – namely the lifeworld – which, in turn, is not problematizable since it is not directly in focus. Tried and true situation definitions are deposited into the lifeworld represented by "a culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns" (Habermas, 1981a, p. 124), "a cultural stock of knowledge that is 'always-already' familiar" (Habermas, 1981a, p. 125) and they may be reused in subsequent processes of reaching understanding. Common situation definitions are worked out in reference to the objective, the social and the subjective world (Habermas, 1981a, p. 120).

Using the insight from Habermas' work, I understand a label in this dissertation as a definition of the situation, intersubjectively negotiated, that is then appropriated back into the lifeworld where it becomes ossified as common sense. Since it is improbable that all ramifications of a complex label are brought into the horizon of a situation that may require the deployment of the label, a large part of it is bound to remain unthematizable. This would be the part lurking under the sea if we thought of the label as an iceberg. The advantage of this Habermasian inspired approach is that it explains the structural workings of the definition of the situation that virtually immunize labels against total revision, by highlighting how the parts outside of the immediate purview of a given situation also remain outside of the reach of reason for that context. This also makes it easier to understand why the disconnects in the application of labels are not questioned: they are simply beyond the area of the thematizable in that given situation. Crucially, the approach accomplishes a convincing explanation of the perpetuation of labels that seem to blatantly go against good sense, while eschewing the assigning of blame, by leaving individual and group intentionality out of the discussion.

In order to grasp the power dynamics at play, I now turn to the work of Michel Foucault on discourse.

Understanding discourse. Discourse is a term that is frequently used by both social theorists (like Foucault) and linguists (like van Dijk) (Fairclough, 1995, p. 54), albeit with slightly different meanings. Foucault moved away from the linguistic usage of discourse as pieces of connected writing or speech to mean "a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic of a particular historical moment" (Hall, 1992, p. 291 qtd. in Hall, 1997b, p. 44). Significantly, for Foucault discourse is about the production of knowledge through language and since all social practices entail meaning which, in turn shapes what we do, there is a discursive aspect to all practices (Hall, 1997b, p. 44). So, for Foucault discourse ceases to be a purely linguistic concept and instead becomes about language *and* practice (Hall, 1997b, p. 44). Fairclough too emphasizes that discourses, as ways of representing aspects of the world, are not simply mirroring an objective reality, but are simultaneously and fundamentally "also projected, imaginaries, representing possible worlds which are different from the actual world, and tied in to projects to change the world in particular directions" (2003, p. 124).

Foucault does not analyze only what was said or thought, but he also directs his attention to all the a priori discursive rules which are considered to be so fundamental that they remain unvoiced and unthought (Young, 1981, p. 48). Discursive practices are so dominant that they make it virtually impossible to think outside them, as transcending them would mean "by definition, to be mad, to be beyond comprehension and therefore reason" (Young, 1981, p. 48). As Stuart Hall explains, for Foucault, discourse "constructs the topic. It defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about" (1997b, p. 44). In so doing, discourse not only "rules in" certain ways of

conceiving a topic, but it also "rules out" and restricts other ways of talking and thinking about it (Hall, 1997b, p. 44). While Foucault's approach to discourse is able to deal with power more adequately in this way, Habermas' strength is in explaining the importance of the definition of the situation and how it becomes possible to have ample potentially contradictory contents within the lifeworld that may not have a direct bearing on the situation.

The forms of discourse are at once constituted by and also central in the reproduction of the existing social system (Young, 1981, p. 48). This is why Foucault encourages us to restore to discourse its character as an event, breaking what he considers to be the reduction of discursive practices to textual traces (Foucault, 1972, p. 229; Young, 1981, pp. 50, 66). The same discourse will tend to appear across a range of texts and

> whenever these discursive events 'refer to the same object, share the same style and… support a strategy… a common institutional, administrative or political drift and pattern' (Cousins and Hussain, 1984, pp. 84-5), then they are said by Foucault to belong to the same discursive formation. (Hall, 1997b, p. 44)

Foucault's is markedly a constructionist account, arguing that our knowledge of things is predicated on them having a meaning and since things only take on meaning, while also becoming objects of knowledge in the process, within discourse, it is discourse and not the physical existence of things which produces knowledge (Hall, 1997b, p. 45). In the words of Robert Young,

> we must not imagine that the world turns towards us a legible face which we would have only to decipher; the world is not the accomplice of our knowledge; there is no prediscursive providence which disposes the world in our favor. We must conceive

> discourse as a violence which we do to things or in any case as a practice which we impose on them… . (1981, p. 67)

Just like "madness" can only exist meaningfully *within* the discourse about madness (Hall, 1997b, p. 45), so too , I argue, can a discourse on Romanian criminality make sense only in the historical and cultural context of Italian discourses about immigrant crime. Following Foucault (cf. Hall, 1997b, p. 45), I also believe that the discourse on crime in Italy that I analyze in this study prescribes what is "sayable" and "thinkable" about immigrant delinquency, constituting in the process the subjects – the Romanian delinquent/rapists (as described in Harja & Melis, 2010) – who come to personify the discourse. As the signification spirals (Hall et al., 1978) are escalated, the knowledge about Romanian criminality acquires authority as it comes to constitute the "truths of the matter" at a certain historical conjuncture. This is how Stuart Hall, drawing on Foucault, explains the power/knowledge nexus:

> Knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of 'the truth' but has the power to *make itself true*. All knowledge, once applied in the real world, has real effects, and in that sense at least, 'becomes true'. Knowledge, once used to regulate the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation and the disciplining of practices. Thus, 'There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations' (Foucault, 1977, p.27). (1997b, p. 49)

The fundamental insight that Foucault offers here is that truth is not and cannot be outside of power (Foucault, 1980, p. 131 qtd. in Hall, 1997b, p. 49). Yet, this should not lead one to reduce discourse to the simple translator of systems of domination, rather "discourse is the power which is to be seized" (Young, 1981, pp. 52–53). As Foucault wrote in *The History of*

Sexuality, discourses are neither once and for all subservient to power nor raised up against it (qtd. in Young, 1981, pp. 50–51). Instead, we need to take into account the complex and highly variable process that renders discourse "both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (Foucault qtd. in Young, 1981, pp. 50–51). Discourse certainly reinforces power as it transmits and helps in producing it, but, at the same time, it also serves to undermine and to expose it, making it fragile (Foucault qtd. in Young, 1981, pp. 50–51). In what follows I will examine the role of media in constructing a social problem and a particular way of seeing things.

Media and Representation

In this dissertation, I take an explicitly interpretive approach to news. Instead of perceiving news primarily as the mirror of society, I believe, following Gaye Tuchman (1978), that in the very process of describing an event, the news also works to define and shape that event (for a more comprehensive discussion see Gans, 1979, pp. 78–80; Gitlin, 2003, pp. 249–252; Schudson, 2003, p. 33; van Dijk, 1988, pp. 95–138). The media dominate the cultural sphere of modern societies, rendering them prime objects for a critical analysis that necessarily needs to be centered on questions of power and ideology (Hardt, 1992, p. 190). Stuart Hall sees at least three ways in which media work to maintain their cultural and ideological position: (1) by providing and selectively constructing social knowledge, (2) by classifying and reflecting upon the plurality of social life and (3) by constructing a complex, acknowledged order (1979, 340-2 qtd. in Hardt, 1992, p. 190). In the process of transforming an occurrence into a public event, news reports help to shape the public definition of the happenings (Tuchman, 1978, p. 190), thus actively participating in the construction of an event (Maneri & ter Wal, 2005). News accounts "construct the social reality to which people respond and help construct the subjectivity

of actors and spectators as well; [while] in the process, they reinforce established power structures and value hierarchies" (Edelman, 1988, p. 34). This explains my choice to examine media reports in order to tease out the implications of narratives at the level of identity positionings. Since texts are "always simultaneously constitutive of (1) social identities, (2) social relations and (3) systems of knowledge and belief" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 55), the analysis of media narratives appears as the prime way for grasping the intricacies of identity formation for an immigrant group. The news is, as Phillip Schlesinger put it, "the exercise of power over the interpretation of reality" (qtd. in Gitlin, 2003, p. 251). As such, an analysis of news is an important way to grasp the workings of power in the formation of identities.

Critical discourse studies (CDS)[11] could be defined as "a scholarly movement specifically interested in theory formation and critical analysis of the discursive reproduction of power abuse and social inequality" (van Dijk, 2008, p. 1). The unequivocal attachment to social and political goals in CDA has attracted a fair deal of criticism. Both text and context are objects of study in this approach (Fairclough, 1995, pp. 28–29; van Dijk, 1988a, pp. 23–25). The main tenets of CDA specify that 1) CDA addresses social problems; 2) power relations are *discursive*; 3) discourse constitutes society and culture; 4) discourse does ideological work; 5) discourse is historical; 6) the link between text and society is *mediated*; 7) discourse analysis is interpretive and explanatory; 8) discourse is a form of social action (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, pp. 271-280 qtd. in van Dijk, 2008, p. 86, my italics). CDA offers critical insight for the analysis conducted in this dissertation as it typically studies how context features influence the way in which dominated groups come to define the situation in accordance with "preferred context models" (van Dijk, 2008, p. 92) or, using Hall's terminology, consistent with the interpretations

[11] Teun van Dijk makes an argument in favor of replacing the currently generally accepted term Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with the denomination Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) on the grounds that the latter better speaks to the plurality of methods existent in this cross-disciplinary domain of inquiry (2008, p. 2).

of the primary definers. Additionally, and also supporting the investigation in this dissertation, CDA focuses on how discourse structures influence people's mental representations (van Dijk, 2008, p. 92). Fairclough's dialectical-relational approach to CDA, extending the socio-cognitive approach of Teun Van Dijk, is particularly suited to the present study as it entails a distinct emphasis on the ways in which socially available genres and discourses are drawn upon with a view to understanding how discursive practices in the media constitute social and cultural change (Fairclough, 1995, p. 29). Since momentous change threatening to transform the established social orders is what sparks a moral panic, this approach offers a useful way to unpack the narratives at work in Italy in the early 2000s.

Fairclough's (1995, p. 30) insistence on inquiry at the intertextual level is particularly advantageous in this study. Simply put, intertextuality refers to "the presence of actual elements of other texts within a text" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 39), such as quotations or reported speech. According to Bell, news is among the genres of media discourse with a heavily embedded and layered character, meaning that earlier versions are embedded within later versions (1991, pp. 50-5 qtd. in Fairclough, 1995, p. 48), fully warranting an intertextual focus in the study at hand. In conceptualizing intertextuality, it is important to question which relevant external texts and voices are included in a given text and which, on the other hand, are significantly excluded, paying special attention to the ways and the specificity with which these texts are attributed. Other issues here include the manner in which reported texts and voices are recontextualized and framed in relation to other included texts and to the authorial voice (Fairclough, 2003, p. 61). Fairclough explicitly encourages going beyond the mere recording of the presence or absence of a plethora of voices in media contributions, explaining that news reports include mechanisms for ordering these voices and for subjecting them to social control (1995, p. 84).

The news and the status quo. The media play a central role in maintaining the status quo in society since "[i[deologically news implicitly promotes the dominant beliefs and opinions of elite groups in society" (van Dijk, 1988a, p. 83). Reification, in the way it is achieved through the news, acts to support the status quo by engendering into the audience the view that individuals are powerless in dealing with reified forces perceived as erratic and that, in turn, the authorities are doing everything within their power to control the situation (Tuchman, 1978, p. 214). In so doing, "news both draws upon and reproduces institutional structures" by objectifying centralized sources as the legitimate and the only appropriate sites for gathering information (Tuchman, 1978, p. 210). Hall and his colleagues (1978) make the same point when they emphasize the systematically structured over-accessing of official sources in the media which enables them to become the *primary definers* of topics, therefore effectively setting the limit for all subsequent treatments of the topic by their *framing* of the problem. Commenting on the same issue, van Dijk notes that "[t]he social hierarchy seems to be reproduced in the rhetorical hierarchy of credibility and reliability" (1988b, p. 87). Hall et al. (1978) offer a conclusive account of the ways in which news values such as "impartiality," "balance" and "objectivity" act to powerfully orient the newsmen towards "accredited" sources. Van Dijk continues this line of analysis showing that it is rather "the illusion of truth that is at stake in the rhetoric of news" (1988b, p. 86) along with the sheer presence of numbers – as opposed to the precision of the figures reported (1988b, p. 88). This explains the high frequency of direct reporting and eyewitness interviewing in the popular press (van Dijk, 1988a, p. 86). It is remarkable that minority voices are conspicuously absent from the media, even on dedicated minority issues (van Dijk, 1988a).

In turn, this reinforcing of the status quo reasserts the consensual view of society that Hall and his coauthors (1978) bring up, by aligning neatly with what Hall et al. call the societal *pre-existing* "maps of meaning" or the "background frames of reference." Hall et al. draw attention to the fact that the process of signification underlying news-making is both predicated upon and actively participating in the construction of society as a "consensus" (1978, p. 55), making the perspective promoted by the central value system the only legitimate one in society. Essential for the maintenance of societal consensus is the espousal of an *apparent* freedom of choice that is insofar guaranteed to feed back into the status quo as the relevant alternative facts which would allow for a different definition of the problem are not made public by the media (van Dijk, 1988b, p. 203). So, in the very process of creating the illusion of a fair debate, an ideological closure is also effected, excluding all alternatives to the dominant framework. Therefore, while the media may not tell us *what* to think about non-mainstream groups – although van Dijk argues that they often do – they are able to define the communicative situation in such a way as to dictate to the majority of their audience *how* to think about les powerful groups (van Dijk, 1988b, p. 208). Central to the preservation of the veneer of freedom of opinion is the perception that the dominant ideology is in fact reproduced within disconnected, individual, completely unconstrained but ultimately group-based opinion formation processes (van Dijk, 1988b, p. 205). Indeed, what makes the power of the dominant interpretive frameworks so insidious is the fact that it is implemented both in societal institutions and "it also transpires in the knowledge, information, and action of individual members of the dominant…group" (van Dijk, 1988b, p. 205). It is this double character that I strive to capture with my notion of label, which I introduced earlier in this chapter.

Van Dijk argues that a considerable part of the public consensus, especially as it relates to issues of alleged immigrant criminality, can *only* have come about through mass-mediated communication and information (1988a, p. 212). We can thus conclude with Gaye Tuchman that "news legitimates the status quo" (1978, p. 216).

Media and Ideology

For Stuart Hall, the problem of ideology is represented by "the ways in which ideas of different kinds grip the minds of masses, and thereby become a 'material force'" (1986, p. 29, in Hardt, 1992, p. 188). Before him, Althusser defined ideology as "a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (1971, p. 162), which also has a material existence inscribed in actions, governed by rituals and defined by an ideological apparatus. Therefore, for Althusser "ideology is not a pre-existing body of beliefs which are somehow imposed upon, or merely inculcated, hammered into an unsuspecting and innocent mass of people. It is, instead, a process and relationship of living" (Ferguson, 1998b, p. 31). Furthermore, it is ideology that constitutes us as subjects. Althusser, drawing on Lacan, writes that we are "always-already" subjects. "Ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among individuals… [by] interpellation or hailing….." (qtd. in Ferguson, 1998b, p. 32). By hailing out to us the way the police might do to somebody on the street making a turn, ideology interpellates us, thus making us concrete subjects. For Althusser, "there are no subjects except by and for their subjection" (1971, p. 182).

Hall nuances Althusser's work when he rejects the notion of identity and proposes instead the concept of identification. The change in terminology to identification implies that every person is interpellated in a certain way, at a *specific* time, within a *specific* space and for a *specific* purpose; everyone is hailed to those positions as a historical project. So, in appropriating

Althusser's terminology, Hall adds an inflection: whereas identity implied that we are always already subjects, identification rejects this, accepting that we are hailed in certain ways from the moment we are born, but crucially adding that we respond to these interpellations in certain ways at certain times. This safeguards the category of identity from ossifying and from being taken in unreflectingly. Hall also stresses that the nation-state is no longer the central legitimizing principle for identity as national identity is competing ever more frequently with subnational or supranational structures (Ferguson, 1998a) – and certainly international migration and the enlargement of the European Union pose fundamental challenges to the nation-state.

To Hall, ideological power is the power to signify events in a particular way and by no means a neutral force in society. Since signification needs to be struggled over, ideology becomes a site of struggle between contending definitions and it can no longer be seen as a dependent variable, a mere reflection of a pre-given reality in the mind, in the way some limit interpretations of Marxism saw it. Neither are the outcomes predictable, for they depend on the politics of signification. Hall imposes a redefinition of ideology as a system of coding reality and not a determined set of coded messages. In this view, ideology is a structure, a set of semantic rules to generate messages and it is relatively autonomous of the consciousness of its agents (Ferguson, 1998b).

In his theoretical work, Hall was also inspired by Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Gramsci envisioned hegemony as the securing of some form of consent from those who are dominated which is always backed up by the threat of violence. For Gramsci, successful rule requires both coercion and consent; making intellectual and moral leadership absolutely necessary alongside domination. Although not denying the importance of the economic dimension, the ethical-political hegemony is decidedly multi-dimensional and multi-arena in

character (Hall, 1996a, p. 424). Hegemony necessarily encompasses the critical domains of cultural, moral, ethical and intellectual leadership, in addition to the economic and administrative fields (Hall, 1996a, p. 426). For him, hegemony is a dynamic process and by no means a natural state of affairs, which means that it can also be lost. Gramsci does not believe in any pure cases of coercion or consent, but only in different combinations of these two dimensions. This means that leadership will always have its coercive aspects, despite the ascendancy of consent within this type of rule (Hall, 1996a, p. 426).

Setting Gramsci apart is his constant concern with organic ideologies, meaning the practical, everyday, common sense aspects of ideology that go beyond its philosophical core (Hall, 1996a, p. 431). He does note that the works of intellectuals are most powerful when they can provide common sense explanations, because such explanations are, on the one hand, pervasive (common for everyone) and, on the other hand, deeply seated in people's thinking. With this notion, Gramsci draws attention to the way in which common sense elements contribute to people's subordination by naturalizing inequality and oppression for them, in a contradictory, yet deeply ingrained, mixture of truths and misrepresentations (Forgacs, 2000, p. 421). To be more precise, ideology, for Gramsci, consists of two distinct floors he calls "philosophy" and "common sense" (Hall, 1996a, p. 431). What distinguishes "common sense" is its "disjointed and episodic," fragmentary and contradictory character owing to the fact that it holds "the traces and 'stratified deposits' of more coherent philosophical systems have sedimented overtime without leaving any clear inventory" (Hall, 1996a, p. 431). As already explained in this chapter, I draw on this understanding of "common sense" in the notion of label that I have proposed for this study.

These contradictory forms of "common sense" constitute a crucial site for the construction of a popular hegemony and, as such, represent a key stake as objects of political and ideological struggle, since they can act both as resources and/or barriers to change (Hall, 1996a, p. 439). What this brings to the conceptualizing of ideology is a keen awareness of the fact that questions of ideology are always collective and social, never individual, just as there can never be just one single, unified and coherent "dominant ideology" pervading everything (Hall, 1996a, p. 433). With this, "Gramsci explicitly acknowledges the necessary complexity and inter-discursive character of the ideological field" (Hall, 1996a, p. 433). The implication here is that in analyses ideology needs to be approached as a differentiated terrain, concentrating attention on the points of juncture and break between the different discursive currents and the relations of power between them, thus encompassing the whole discursive formation in the study (Hall, 1996a, p. 434). Given the multi-accentual make-up of the field of ideology, change can never happen as a substitution or imposition of new beliefs, but will rather come about as the articulation and the dis-articulation of ideas (Hall, 1996a, p. 434).

Marcuse also refuses simplistic notions of a language of domination and proposes that control is exercised, paradoxically, through freedom of choice:

> Language not only reflects these controls but becomes itself an instrument of control even where it does not transmit orders but information; where it demands not obedience, but freedom… This language controls by reducing the linguistic forms and symbols of reflection, abstraction, development, contradiction; by substituting images for concepts. … But this kind of discourse is not terroristic. The new touch of the magic-ritual language rather is that people don't believe it, or don't care, and yet act accordingly (in Ferguson, 1998b, p. 27).

Hall draws on Gramsci's concept of dynamic hegemony when he writes that signs cannot be assigned, in a determined way, permanently to any one side in the struggle. The media are part of the process of the "production of consent" as they are shaping the consensus while reflecting it. Hall and the cultural studies approach have brought a decisive contribution to disposing of the idea that identity as an absolute. To this end, they introduced the concept of identity formation as a chaotic process that can have no end and have emphasized that cultural identity is a premise of political action and not a substitute for it.

Ferguson's stresses that ideology is not directly visible, but can only be experienced and/or comprehended as a lived relationship "of power and subordination/subjugation which is socially and historical situated and which is, within identifiable parameters, changeable" (Ferguson, 1998a, pp. 44–45). Since social realities are necessarily obscured through ideology, it is imperative to take ideological analysis to the level of the deep, invisible and unconscious level at which discourse is coded (Camargo Heck, 1980, p. 122). Understanding ideology as a system of coding reality rather than as a determined set of coded messages within that system allows one to extricate intention from the equation: in this conception, consciousness is limited to the points of view that social actors hold, but does not extend to the semantic rules and categories that make possible those very points of view (Veron, 1969 qtd. in Camargo Heck, 1980, p. 123). Approaching ideology as "*a level of signification* which can be present in any type of message" (Veron, 1971 qtd. in Camargo Heck, 1980, p. 123) allows one to eschew simplistic conceptualization plagued by conspiratorial misgivings, while lending attention to what is said, the way it is said and what is left out.

Hall explains that the media work to maintain their cultural and ideological position by providing and selectively constructing social knowledge, classifying and reflecting upon the

plurality of social life, and by constructing a complex, acknowledged order (in Hardt, 1992, p. 191). Some of the media mechanisms working towards these ends are typification, reification, objectification, naturalization and framing.

Gaye Tuchman explains that, in an effort to control the work flow, newsworkers have developed typifications of occurrences as news stories, which she defines as "classifications arising from practical purposive action" (1978, p. 46). Typifications work by imposing order on the raw material of the news and thus reducing the variability of occurrences (Tuchman, 1978, p. 58). In the habitual typifying of happenings as news events in the media, past events serve as guides for the present (Tuchman, 1978, p. 211), often making reporters less likely to be able to process innovation (Tuchman, 1978, p. 215). Moreover, the "methods of identifying facts, including methods of identifying appropriate sources, objectify social life and, at times, *reify* social phenomena" (Tuchman, 1978, p. 213), meaning that these circumstances are no longer perceived as human enterprises and instead become fixated as non-human, "inert facticity" (Tuchman, 1978, p. 213). Often, phenomena such as riots are reified in the media, with their portrayal resembling the whimsical fluctuations of the weather rather than the workings of their profoundly social determinants.

One of the strategies through which reification is accomplished is naturalization (H. Shah, 2009, p. 6). Tuchman draws on Alfred Schutz to explain that individuals tend to accept their world, regardless of its contents, as "natural," unwittingly taking the existence of social phenomena for granted (1978, p. 186). The underlying process, called naturalization implies "a metamorphosis of sorts, where something created by humans is mistaken as something dictated by nature" (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2009, p. 339) and, what is more important, it renders alternative ways of viewing the world increasingly impossible. In the process, naturalization

also eternalizes issues making it not only seem that transitory state of affairs are in fact permanent, but also they have always been that way (H. Shah, 2009, p. 6).

The objectification of facts in the news is also achieved by divorcing the indexical from the reflexive aspects in the production of news. Inspired by the ethnomethodologists, Tuchman defines reflexivity as the concept which "specifies that accounts are embedded in the very reality that they characterize, record, or structure" (1978, p. 189). Indexicality is the twin concept of reflexivity, specifying that "in using accounts (terms, utterances, or stories), social actors may attribute meaning to them apart from the context in which those accounts are produced and processed" (Tuchman, 1978, p. 189). Oftentimes, news stories are presented detached from their context of production, rendering them indexical by discounting to reflexive character of their production (Tuchman, 1978, p. 192). This, in turn, leads to the objectification of facts in the news. Tuchman insists that "the indexicality of news is contained in both its ahistoricity and its logic of the concrete, the newsworkers' insistent refusal to present stories in their ongoing situational context" (1978, p. 192). Typifications, objectifications, reification and naturalization are intrinsic to the production of news, making it impossible to disentangle the recording from the construction of social reality.

Tankard (2001) explains that the media framing approach emerged as an alternative to the traditional objectivity and bias paradigm, complicating our understanding of the news and focusing on the underlying ideology. Frames in the media are "principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of *little tacit theories* about what exists, what happens, and what matters" (Gitlin qtd. in Schudson, 2003, p. 35, my italics). These specific "schemata of interpretation" (Goffman, 1986, p. 21), inherently privilege some meanings over others, which makes them prime "unifying social devices" (Entman, 1993, p. 53). Frames thus feed into the

social consensus that is directly dependent upon the existence of shared meanings (Tuchman, 1978, p. 188). With its ability to perpetually define and redefine, constitute and reconstitute social phenomena (Tuchman, 1978, p. 215), the news certainly situates itself at the heart of this consensus maintaining process. Frames do not only color what we "know" about the social world (Edelman, 1993, p. 231), but they also define social relations within given time periods (Durham, 1998, p. 102). Furthermore, there is both an individual and an interpersonal dimension to the sense making enabled by frames: "[a]udience frames are both cognitive representations in an individual's memory and devices embedded public discourse" (Kinder & Sanders qtd. in McLeod, Kosicki, & McLeod, 2002, p. 231). This fact, taken together with the work that frames do at the individual and the social level, renders them excellent tools for creating and enacting difference between groups.

The first person to offer a unified account of framing was Robert Entman (1993). In a now classic piece, he explains that to frame means to "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Entman draws on Gamson in emphasizing that frames serve to diagnose, evaluate, and prescribe, often prompting a particular solution (1993, p. 52) and they are able to shape and alter audience interpretations through priming (Entman, 2010, p. 336). The functions carried out by frames – problem definition, diagnosis of causes, making moral judgments and suggesting remedies – seem to fit particularly well with the stages of a moral panic and the way in which signification spirals are escalated. Significantly, Entman (1993, pp. 52–53) acknowledges that frames may reside in at least four different locations within the communication process: the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture. In so doing,

not only does he allow for the possibility of an unconscious deployment of frames on the part of the communicator, but he also emphasizes the importance of the receiver's frames and of the culture understood as "the stock of commonly invoked frames" (Entman, 1993, p. 53) in the interpretation process. This dovetails nicely with Hall's (1978) notion of the pre-existing maps of social meaning, Also in line with Hall's (1978) thinking, it is the political elites who control the framing of issues (Entman, 1993, p. 57). Entman insits that framing "plays a major role in the exertion of political power, and the frame in a news text is really the imprint of power – it registers the identity of actors or interests that competed to dominate the text" (1993, p. 55). So, framing may aid both in consecrating identities and in maintaining the status quo.

Research has confirmed that the power of framing is especially manifest in stories with which readers or viewers have little personal experience (Coleman, 2010, p. 244; Entman, 1989, p. 79, 1993, p. 56). In such cases – and the life of immigrants easily falls under this category – the frames serve as a source of information and orientation about the topic. To put it in Hall's (1978) terms, topics removed from personal experience, such as immigration, are particularly susceptible to being defined in the terms favored by the primary definers in society, namely the authorities. Van Dijk reminds us that the elite, through the media, are able to provide the pre-formulations of many prejudices in society (1988a, p. 212). A major concern in the process is who has the power to impose a certain definition of the situation and, with it, a particular way of viewing the happening and what interests are at stake within each distinct definition. This is why in approaching a news account, it is equally important to lend attention to the interpretations left out or even obscured by a frame in addition to those included in that frame (Coleman, 2010, p. 240; Entman, 1993, p. 54).

Significantly, frames are not limited to texts. Gitlin defined framing as the "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers organize discourse, whether verbal or *visual*" (qtd. in Schudson, 2003, p. 35, my italics). As a matter of fact, oftentimes the visual information actually overwhelms the verbal (Baran & Davis, 1995, p. 271 qtd. in Coleman, 2010, p. 234), but, unlike words, images are indexical, meaning that they tend to get treated as direct pointers and not as constructed representations of reality (Messaris & Abraham, 2001 qtd. in Coleman, 2010, p. 234). The special characteristics of visuals including their iconicity, their indexicality and especially their syntactic explicitness render them "very effective tools for framing and articulating ideological messages" (Messaris & Abraham, 2001, p. 220 qtd. in Coleman, 2010, p. 238). Additionally, visual messages often manage to tap into the emotional side of viewers, thus bypassing rational processing and resulting in ideas which are taken for granted and sheltered from questioning (Coleman, 2010, p. 244). This gives visual frames the ability to convey meaning which would be protested as inappropriate in a text form (Messaris & Abraham, 2001 qtd. in Coleman, 2010, pp. 244–245). Moreover, should the verbal messages be different from the visual cues accompanying them, people's interpretations tend to be in line with the visually conveyed information rather than the text (Coleman, 2010, p. 242). Even in cases where the information in the pictures was not mentioned in text, the audience's perception was in line with the pictures (Gibson & Zillmann, 2000 qtd in. Coleman, 2010, p. 243). What is more, the effects of visual framing have been shown to be greater whenever negative visuals are used (Newhagen & Reeves, 1990 qtd in. Coleman, 2010, p. 243). It is not surprising that "racial appeals now often take place through visual imagery without any explicit or overt reference to race" (Messaris & Abraham, 2001, p. 221 qtd. in Coleman, 2010, p. 245).

Media at Work

In this study I am particularly interested in two aspects related to the operation of media: (a) the way in which they participate in moral panics and (b) the way in which they deal with race and ethnicity in the context of a moral panic.

Media in moral panics. As I have already discussed, the media are the center of negotiating and disseminating the preferred definitions of the situation, acting to vest with authority along the way. They are also essential in reinforcing the societal consensus, particularly at times of perceived crisis.

Focusing more on the particularities of Italian media, the construction of the Romanian immigrant problem is consonant with previous ways of reporting on immigrants in the Peninsula. In the 1990s, there was a shift in the Italian press from approaching cases of migrant crime as individual crises to increasingly dealing with them as part of the routine daily coverage (Maneri, 1995, 1998 qtd. in Maneri & ter Wal, 2005, p. 22). So initially, the coverage of ethnic affairs in Italy went through a rather long phases of latency, with issues being picked up as emergencies only occasionally, either as a result of political agenda-setting or of media campaigns (Marletti, 1989; Maneri, 1995 qtd. in Maneri & ter Wal, 2005, p. 22). However, as the 1990s drew to a close, anti-immigrant protests and public order interventions became a favored press theme (Belluati, 1998; Dal Lago, 1999; Maneri, 1995, 1998; Mazzara, 1998 qtd. in ter Wal, 2002, p. 243). During that same timeframe, Maneri found that reports on local protests against migrants in Italy followed a script containing four elements: disorder brought by migrants—neighborhood protest—police intervention—resolution of the problem. He pointed out that this sequencing lent itself very well to blaming the victims of the protests, on the one hand, and to presenting the policing of migrants as a "natural" action, on the other hand (1995, p. 39 qtd. in Maneri & ter

Wal, 2005, p. 13). It therefore appears that the construction and the deployment of the label "Romanian" in the way it was accomplished in Italy after 2007 served to mobilize particular scripts about understanding and dealing with immigrants that had been deposited into the Italian lifeworld. At the same time, drawing on the label's history in such a way has made it possible to naturalize police intervention, but only *after* convincingly constructing the criminalization of foreigners. In fact, the very satisfactory resolution of the problem, with the police intervention that underpins it, appears to be dependent on the initial criminalization of the migrants that then lends legitimacy to the involvement of the law and order forces.

Problems not only serve to generate authority and to reinforce the status quo. "Fashionable" problems also offer the opportunity to control "the behaviors and the language of large numbers of people who wield little power and may be suspect on other grounds" (Edelman, 1988, p. 21). A large, recent and still potentially increasing immigrant community like the Romanians would definitely fall within the confines of this description, especially if one considers that focusing on a problem only serves to reinforce established inequalities. Edelman explains that problems are not usually dealt with in any substantive manner as this would require a profound "reexamination of established economic and social institutions and so might threaten existing power inequalities" (1988, p. 21). With this contention, Edelman is pointing to yet another way in which the construction of problems contributes to the perpetuation of the status quo. Indeed, the central consequence of the construction of public problems is the fact that "it discourages resistance to immanent conditions and it rationalizes acceptance of the world as it as" (Edelman, 1988, p. 36). Additionally, the construction of problems is "often a way of excluding systematic attention to history and to social structure" (Edelman, 1988, p. 36), which undoubtedly renders the extant inequalities and social structures more acceptable.

Minority groups are stereotypically categorized in the media as a "problem" (van Dijk, 1988b, p. 204, Hartmann & Husband, 1974, qtd. in 1988b, p. 182). Since crime emerges as the dominant subject involving minorities throughout Europe, it may very well be that this label with its three-fold connotations of immigration, the threat of problems to come and, crucially, delinquency in a complex and often contradictory mixture, has achieved transnational currency and a level of permanence that has facilitated its absorption into the lifeworld. There may be an additional structural factor reinforcing the link between foreigners and delinquency in Italy in recent years. Jessika ter Wal (1997) found that in the 1990s most Italian news items on immigration were reported under the heading of the local or crime news genre (called *cronaca* in Italian) and most of the journalists who were assigned to cover ethnic issues were selected out of the pool of those with a general professional interest in the *cronaca* genre that (qtd. in Maneri & ter Wal, 2005, p. 6). It stands to reason that their understanding of news values, their world views and subsequent descriptions may have been colored by their affinity for the crime news genre.

Moreover, in a study conducted in the Netherlands, van Dijk found that, much like in the English press, issues are very seldom dealt with from the point of view of the minority group - as their problems – and, instead, they tend to be about the problems which "society" or a dominant "we" have as a consequence of the presence of "foreigners" (1988a, p. 172). Portrayed in this way, minorities seem to have no positive or active control of their own situation (van Dijk, 1988b, p. 188). What often happens is that, "[s]emantically and lexically, the Others are … associated not simply with difference, but rather with deviance ('illegitimacy') and threat (violence, attacks)" (van Dijk, 2008, p. 92). It is, therefore, no accident that generally – but especially in the Italian media – the crime committed by minorities tends to be topicalized in the

headlines in the press. Positioning such a topic in the headline may have a strong influence on how an event is defined in terms of a "preferred" mental model (van Dijk, 2008, p. 92) which, in turn, following W.I. Thomas' dictum may result in very real consequences. It stands to reason that the frequent and prominent mentioning of the Romanian ethnicity in the headlines of crime reports acts as a cue for activating a very specific mental model for processing and categorizing the information. This is all the more probable as, even beyond the title, reporting about minorities tends to be constrained to a series of stereotypical situations including immigration and expulsion, discrimination, demands, social and cultural problems, culminating in crime and deviance (van Dijk, 1988b, p. 188). It is not only that other topics and other roles for minorities are virtually absent making reporting on non-mainstream groups both stereotypical and negative, but the association of crime with a specific ethnicity, particularly in the headlines, tends to become more explicit as it becomes easier to explain away minority involvement by "their" peculiar cultural habits (van Dijk, 1988b, pp. 188–190). The strategy of vaguely attributing negative actions to culture has proven to be both a safe and an effective one (van Dijk, 1988b, p. 197) as it simultaneously allows the ascription of inferior characteristics to the minority group while it rules out all alternative explanations resulting in a swift ideological closure. Oftentimes, journalists employ news scripts in the interest of simplification, meaning that they tend to resort to a certain narrative structure whenever they write about a specific type of recursive events (Maneri & ter Wal, 2005, p. 6). However, the fitting of a new occurrence into a pre-existing script that leads to an easily interpretable story requires the paring off of all ambiguity, opening the door for the simplifying label work to slip in effortlessly along the way.

In reporting on the Romanians living in Italy, the practice of placing new instances of alleged Romanian crime in the context of similar past occurrences, while often also excluding

any other contextualizing factors may thus tend to create an inadvertent connection between the Romanian ethnicity and delinquency. This is consistent with van Dijk's (1988a, p. 194) observations that ethnic groups tend to be portrayed as being violent, threatening, strange and, therefore, as people who are generally not to be trusted. News values and their operationalization may contribute notably to the forging of this link between a specific ethnicity and delinquency (see Gordon & Rosenberg, 1989 qtd. in Maneri & ter Wal, 2005, pp. 5–6). Many of the newsworthiness values residing in actors and events seem to lend themselves very well to reinforcing this connection between ethnicity and crime. According to Bell, these news values are: negativity, recency, proximity, consonance (with preconceptions about the social group involved), unambiguity, unexpectedness, superlativeness, relevance (to the lives of the audience), personalization, eliteness, attribution (to a credible and preferably elite source) and facticity (the featuring of hard facts and figures) (1991, pp. 156–158). In the interest of making reports compatible with the news value of unambiguousness, the process of reducing complex situations to simple generalizations leading to quick – but all too often superficial – explanations often results in the overlooking of the circumstantial factors of the crime.

Adding to this is a contrasting tendency to portray the negative instances involving the mainstream as mere incidents, with positive topics being representative of systematic forms of action (for the Dutch case see van Dijk, 1988b, p. 181). It is essential not to take the typical representations of authorities – as active, firm, arbitrating, and neutral or positive factions – as social facts, but instead to realize that they form part of "the media production of a consensual definition of societal structure" (van Dijk, 1988b, p. 211). What happens is that

> With these systems of belief and opinions solidly entrenched, the strategies of the actual interpretation of news events and press stories are inherently geared towards their

> confirmation. Models of situations are construed simply by examples from such general belief and attitudes schemata. With a lack of concrete experiences, ethnic situations are understood as follows: events, acts, and their participants simply run to type. (van Dijk, 1988b, p. 206)

Van Dijk is not proposing a simplistic model here where the audience is devoid of all agency, bound to forever be duped into subscribing to the views of a more or less oppressive but certainly prejudiced intellectual elite. His is rather a refined framework trying to account for the indirect favoring of stereotypical, prejudiced, or racist views embedded within the media portrayals of minorities. Van Dijk (1988a, p. 207) openly allows for audience agency, merely stressing that the framework underlying the media portrayals subtly but firmly serves to define the boundaries of the possible variation in beliefs and opinion formation. Certainly,

> the presentation, semantic content, point of view, and style of minority portrayal in the media are related in many ways with the economic, social, and cognitive conditions of news production. Professional ideologies, class interests, news values, and ethnic attitudes combined with properties of newsgathering, such as available or preferred elite sources and with expectations about, and actual reactions of, the reading public. This also means that the media portrayal of minorities is not simply a reflection of dominant ethnic attitudes in society at large, that is of the reading or viewing public, nor a passive reproduction of the ideology or practices of the power elite (van Dijk, 1988b, p. 211)

So, van Dijk prefers to stress the structural factors at work in the production of news that result in a negative portrayal of non-elite actors, with a particular emphasis on their (alleged) deviance. He even states that news discourse, taken in principle or in its intention, is not persuasive. However, in a more indirect sense, news discourse may have a persuasive dimension

as it constantly presupposes certain positionings or opinions by virtue of its social and ideological embedding (van Dijk, 1988a, p. 179).

Race in the media. The ways in which groups are referred to and categorized in the news "are of vital significance; they provide a set of conceptual tools with which to construct an understanding of how the world works" (Law, 2002, p. 103). It is because race and ethnicity have the power to categorize and classify perceptions of "reality" (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007) that the explicit naming of ethnic or racial groups, as it often occurs in Italian media, can easily foster the impression that races are indeed real (Law, 1996 qtd. in Law, 2002, p. 103).

We routinely take for granted an entire range of powerful assumptions about identities, relations and rights. Significantly, it is the normal invisibility of the ideological assumptions and the power relations that underlie our linguistic practices that actually helps to sustain these power relations. This means that there is no necessary correspondence between potentially racist intentions on the parts of journalists and their faithful reception by the audience. Actually, it is quite possible for well-intentioned newsworkers to produce content that can be read as deliberately hostile just as openly racist messages may or may not be appropriated or even recognized by their consumer (Law, 2002, pp. 34–35). Thinking of the work of Pierre Bourdieu makes it easier to understand how there could be an automatic orchestration that, while escaping consciousness, is fraught with issues of power.

Race is certainly a highly complex notion with numerous, intricate, but most often subtle relations to power that frequently finds its way in one fashion or another into media discourse. Race can be defined as "a symbolic category, based on phenotype or ancestry and constructed according to specific social and historical contexts, that is misrecognized as a natural category" (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2009, p. 336). Desmond and Emirbayer (2009, p. 336) proceed to

unpack this definition by explaining that a symbolic category is something actively created that belongs to the realm of ideas, meaning-making, and language and which, in marking differences between grouped people, actually acts to bring those people into existence. They insist that a symbolic category does not refer to a pre-given entity that only needs to be labeled (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2009, p. 336). Political and legal racial taxonomies not only flatten diverse histories, practices and religious beliefs under one heading thus effectively creating *a* people out of a diversity of groups, but they also bear no necessary correspondence with the quotidian processes of identification practiced by classified subjects (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2009, p. 336). In the case I am examining in this dissertation, there seems to be a misrecognition of a national category as a racial term at play. My study follows closely Stuart Hall's (1996a) recommendations about the necessary historical specificity in the study of race. Simply because racism is so widespread, it does not mean that it is everywhere the same (Hall, 1996a, p. 435), so here I am not presenting an analysis of racism in general but an in-depth look at one of the very many racisms active in the world today. Again, inspired by the influential scholarship of Stuart Hall (1996a, p. 435), I chose to emphasize national characteristics in my study, fully subscribing to the view that although the impact of racist practices is penetrative, it remains uneven. It is on account of this misrecognition that some people living in Italy become ashamed of being Romanian as this process allows "Romanian" to become resignified as "rapist," where it once meant "born in Romania, from Romanian parents." In line with the recommendations of Desmond and Emirbayer (2009, p. 337), this dissertation is an attempt to challenge the perceived correspondence between "official" categorizations and the practice of racial identification.

Desmond and Emirbayer (2009, p. 337) continue unpacking their definition of race by explaining that race organizes people into bounded groupings based on their phenotype or

ancestry, with the latter category often including a person's national affiliations. This echoes the findings of Ian Law that nowadays, in contrast to the mid-1980s, ethnicity is being increasingly given precedence over racial references in news discourse, making the term "ethnic" acquire a racialized coding (2002, p. 105). Indeed, "[r]ace, ethnicity, and nationality are overlapping symbolic categories" that operate in mutually reinforcing ways (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2009, p. 339). In a similar vein, I argue that the extensive and at times obsessive referencing of the Romanian ethnicity in Italian media, particularly in crime reports, has acquired racialized undertones, warranting this excursus into to the theory of race for this dissertation. This point becomes easier to grasp if one takes into consideration the fact that racial categories are both *space-* and *time-specific* (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2009, p. 338), changing across ages as well as geographic and social contexts. It is, therefore, possible that the inflection of the ethnic denomination "Romanian" with the racist undertones in and through the media is restricted to the geographical and cultural space of the Italian society in the most recent 20 years. More importantly, in constituting "Romanian" as a label – as opposed to just another "innocent" word featured in a dictionary – axes of discrimination older than the idea of race seem to have been mobilized. In the Middle Ages, the primary social division was drawn between the "civilized" and the "uncivilized" (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2009, p. 338).

Entrenched and in many respects extended through an abiding case of internal discrimination structured along a North–South opposition, the civilized-uncivilized antagonism was thus very much available in the mental "maps" shared within the Italian society as the Romanian immigration picked up. Given its high affinity with the Balkanist discourse which also has notions of barbarity, savagery, lack of civilization at its core, it was easily appropriated, expanded on and apparently "organically" fused into the newly minted label "Romanian". In

this way, something that in another context would simply be a term designating an ethnicity, "Romanian", becomes within a bounded geographical and social space, sometime between the nineteen nineties and the early 2000s, a label, a complex entity linking in subtle, powerful and not always straightforward manner connotations of the uncivilized and the barbaric Balkan on the solid foundation of sublimated racial prejudice. In the words of Desmond and Emirbayer, "[t]oday's society is directed, constructed, and molded by—indeed grafted onto—the past" (2009, p. 344), making it crucial to approach race as a historical invention. Understanding how the internal prejudice of the past pitting the Italian "North" against the "South" can be appropriated and inflected with up-to-date vectors of discrimination making it stick seemingly "naturally" to the recent Romanian immigrant group helps to avoid the ahistorical fallacy in conceptualizing racism that denies the current relevance of racism.

One can clearly see how the constitution of the "Romanian" label in Italy over the last 20 years is intimately related to what Desmond and Emirbayer (2009, p. 340) describe as the very fluid, layered, and situational character of the ethnicity construct. Only an in-depth study can untangle the mutually reinforcing relation between race, ethnicity, and nationality that, while making it unthinkable to separate them from one another, also makes it impossible to collapse these three categories (Brubaker et al., 2004 qtd. in Desmond & Emirbayer, 2009, p. 340). Desmond and Emirbayer (2009, p. 340) make it clear that race, ethnicity and nationality are all marked and made, both ascribed and achieved. They are *marked* through taxonomies that impose these categories on people, *ascribing* them a certain race, ethnicity or nationality. At the same time, however, they are also *made* and performed through practices like gestures, tastes, word choices, religious beliefs, ways of bearing the body that make one *achieve* a certain race, ethnicity or nationality. Nevertheless, despite the constitutive fluidity of these concepts, there

are certain boundaries beyond which a race, ethnicity or nationality is decided for someone: "[t]he crucial point is that the degree to which an individual can slip and slide through multiple ethnic identities depends on the degree to which those identities are stigmatized" (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2009, p. 340). A choice of words, wardrobe or a strict policing of the accent may help to play down one's Romanianness (see chapter 5), but most often these strategies will have little impact on how that person is labeled by others, owing to the fact that members of the dominated racial groups have considerably less ethnic agency than those belonging to the dominant and normalized group (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2009, pp. 340–341).

Method

In this dissertation I tease out the identity formation processes of Romanian immigrants in Italy in, through and (possibly) against the Italian news media construction of this diasporic community. This study poses the following research questions regarding the Romanian-centered moral panic in Italy starting in the fall of 2007: (1) How do Italian media represent Romanian immigrants? Who and what is included in these representations and what is erased? (2) How does the media coverage portray the claims to inclusion and belonging for Romanians, both in Italy and in the EU? (3) How do various social actors, Italian and Romanian, locate themselves within these representations? Specifically, do the identity positionings of Romanian immigrants change in connection with their representations in Italian mainstream media? And if so, how?

Acknowledging that media represent prime sites for defining situations, articulating identities and exploring competing claims of belonging, I structure this study in two parts, with a media and an ethnographic component. The Italian media landscape – consisting of hundreds of daily newspapers, weekly print publications, public and privately owned TV channels and radio stations, news agencies, web-sites, blogs – is enormous. In this study I am conducting an in-depth examination of a rich slice of media content disseminated between October 30, 2007 and

October 30, 2013. Taking the two most popular national paid-for newspapers in Italy, *La Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera*, a search for the term "Romanian" yielded more than 10,000 articles distributed as follows over the last 10 years:

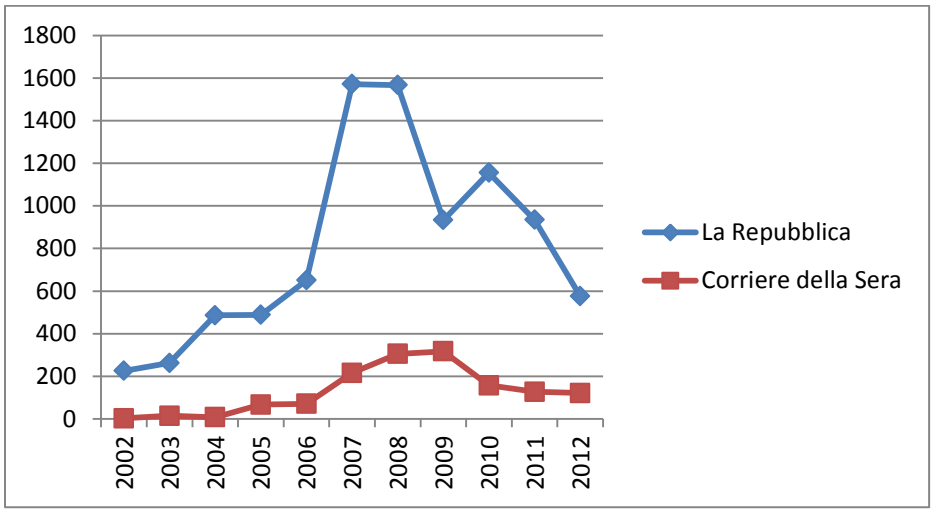

Figure 1. The number of articles featuring the term "Romanian" (2002-2012)[12]

There is a very clear peak of media attention in 2007, with the number of articles more than doubling for each of the two relevant sources (up to 216 from 61 in 2006 for *Corriere della Sera* and reaching 1572 from 651 the previous year for *La Repubblica*). This high level of attention does not start constantly declining until after 2010. The intense coverage between 2007 and 2010 recommends this time frame as the quintessential period for negotiating a Romanian identity in and through media reports. Additionally, my interviewees often referred to this period as a time of intense scrutiny almost bringing on a full blown attack on the entire Romanian immigration in Italy, in direct connection with the media portrayals. It is for these reasons that I decided to focus my media analysis on the events which attracted most coverage for the

[12] Data extracted from the online archives of the two newspapers (http://www.repubblica.it; http://www.corriere.it/). Corresponding to the English term 'Romanian', there are at least three Italian terms: romeno, romena, romeni. While http://www.corriere.it allowed an aggregate search for 'romen*', http://www.repubblica.it would only yield results for the three terms (romeno, romena, romeni) separately. Believing that the latter search may have provided some results common across all three categories, I have averaged the number of articles found for romeno, romena, romeni for each of the years included in the graph. (Accessed on November 25, 2012.)

Romanians between 2007 and 2010, namely the murder of the Italian Giovanna Reggiani in Rome on October 30, 2007 at the hands of Romanian Romulus Mailat, the Caffarella park rape in 2009 and the death of Romanian nurse Maricica Hãhãianu after being punched by Roman Alessio Burtone in the Anagnina subway station in Rome in 2010. Extensive, long-term reviews of the Italian press coverage on immigration have demonstrated that it tends to be dominated by negative themes of immigrant crime, often presenting the newcomers as a "social pathology" (ter Wal, 2002). Being aware of this inclination of Italian media to present immigrants as marginal and deviant, I decided to focus on the 3 cases above that attracted by far the most media attention.

In the media analysis section of the project, I use close reading and textual analysis to study the content of the coverage. To form a primary sample I searched the data bases of the two main paid national dailies, *Corriere della Sera* and *La Repubblica*, separately for the keywords *Mailat, Caffarella, Burtone* yielding 454 articles which I coded using the Nvivo software. Of these, 110 articles appeared in *Corriere della Sera* and 344 were published in *La Repubblica*. I also searched the archive databases of Rai and Mediaset for all the television and radio features that matched either of the keywords *Mailat, Caffarella, Burtone* (yielding 3 results for Mediaset and 112 for RAI), which I then translated and transcribed. I coded these transcripts in a similar fashion to the articles in the printed press. In the analysis of audiovisual content, in addition to focusing on the words and the textual imagery, I also attended to the visual devices and editing techniques, looking at juxtaposition, repetition, erasure, etc. to supplement the process of inductively teasing out the master narrative.

I also performed several Google image searches with the keywords *romeno, romena, romeni, Caffarella, Mailat, romeno/Caffarella* AND *DNA* that yielded 24 relevant cartoons. In

my analysis, I found that these vignettes spoke directly to the main themes I identified after the coding of the newspaper articles and TV and Radio content transcripts.

In the examination of the media texts, I paid special attention to examining the language and rhetoric of the articles, linked to the social, political, and cultural contexts of their production (Foss, 2004). In so doing, I first focused on patterns of recurring phrases and imagery which I then grouped, using various queries in Nvivo, under specific strategies of representation. I further used the query function in Nvivo to support the inductive judgments I made about which thematic emphases were predominant in the media coverage, treating the interconnections between these main themes as a guide to understand the way they are woven together into a narrative structure. This allowed me to gain an understanding of the ways in which the latent meanings about ethnicity, identity and power were constructed.

Among the limitations of this approach and sampling method is the inability to generalize findings across the entire Italian media coverage. However, in this study my goal is not to reflect the media coverage on Romanian immigrants in its entirety, but, instead, to identify relevant media content that offers a vibrant snapshot of the main themes at the center of the moral panic. I specifically looked for samples with a high level of internal validity and I am confident that the method I chose successfully captured the main thematic emphases of the Italian discourse on Romanian immigration.

In the ethnographic portion of my study, I used in-depth interviews to tease out the ways in which Romanian residents negotiate an identity positioning for themselves in light of the pervasive and oppressive media construction of Romanianness. I conducted interviews in several trips to Italy, using a set of open-ended questions and allowing interviewees to discuss at length the issues that they perceived as important for their lives abroad, probing them further where

necessary. Some respondents were interviewed multiple times in less formal settings using more of a free flowing conversation approach. I took the opportunity to meet and talk to my informants, with some repeatedly over the entire three year span of my fieldwork, as a way of conforming validity for my study. I conducted 12 interviews in 2010 in Rome, 25 more on a field trip in 2011 in the same city and 33 more during my three months of fieldwork in Florence, Lucca and Rome in 2012. In 2010 I had 8 female and 4 male subjects, in 2011 I interviewed 19 women and 6 men and in 2012 I talked to 19 women and 14 men. My network as a female researcher was dominated by female contacts as it was both easier for me to approach women and, compared to men, they also seemed more willing to accept being interviewed. While the human research protocol prohibited me from soliciting any kind of identifying information, including the occupation of my interviewees, in some cases they chose to spontaneously reveal it. The majority of my respondents were working class, although roughly half stressed the fact that they had graduated from college in Romania and had worked – sometimes for decades – as lawyers, engineers and teachers prior to relocating to Italy. Most of my female informants were caretakers (*badante*) and maids, while the majority of my male respondents were construction workers or handymen. My sample also included executive secretaries, paralegals, priests, religious officials, engineers, students, electricians, janitors, gardeners, dental assistants, nurse's aides, housewives, waitresses, entrepreneurs, translators and presidents of Romanian cultural associations. A few of my informants also happened to be unemployed at the time of the interview, while lot of them complained about being underemployed. My youngest informant was 18, the oldest was 62 but the majority of my interviewees were in the 40-55 age bracket. I used four strategies to recruit subjects for my study: posting announcements on online message boards; snowballing technique using initial local contacts, approaching Romanian speakers on

the street and enlisting the help of local community leaders, often priests who are widely recognized as bridging figures between immigrants and Italian institutions (Gherghina & Braghiroli, 2010). Although my sample was not random or systematic, I am confident that it did allow me to obtain a thick approximation of what immigrant life is like for most Romanians living in Italy.

I transcribed and translated the 70 in-depth interviews and coded them in Nvivo, looking for the specific ways in which these people managed to work out the implications of the moral panic in their adoptive country, particularly at the level of identity positionings. This component of my research is essential to grasping how the real consequences of representation take shape and are negotiated in everyday life as it connects the press coverage with those who experience it in the double quality of subjects and objects of discourse. Critically, my interviewees illuminate a whole realm of discussion and negotiation that, as the flip side to the system of visibility created within the mainstream, never enters the media arena. Yet this huge space of invisibility engulfs the experiences of the overwhelming majority of Romanian residents who are then forced to eke out identity definitions in response to the mainstream construction of Romanianness that can be reconciled over both a personal and a social level. One of the main strengths of this method is its open-ended character allowing the different individual concerns and adaptive strategies to emerge in ways that at times confirmed my previous observations and, at other times, gave me completely new ways at looking at situations. Limitations to this approach include the possibility of personal interpretations changing over time and the absence of a representative sample from a rigorous statistics point of view. However, while my goal in this dissertation is not to compile a statistically relevant reaction of the Romanian community to their representation in the Italian mainstream, I am confident that I have captured the main

identity negotiation strategies of the largely erased Romanian majority of honest, hardworking people. Also, while certainly not excluding the normal tendency of opinions to evolve over time, the value of the present study is that it encapsulates the ways in which people made sense of the dominant identity narratives at a certain point in the discussion, allowing for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the social and political struggles connected with labor migration.

The main advantage of the inductive, multi-method approach I take in this dissertation is its ability to illuminate the gaps and erasures in narrative as it examines events and discourse from various angles concomitantly. This method manages to tap into the rich cultural meanings crystallized in, around and against media portrayals, shedding light on silenced, neglected or simply implied interpretations of events. This case study, although touching on just one national context, is illustrative of the integration hurdles arising with the enlargement of the European Union. In acknowledging the decisive influence of historical and contextual features such as the dynamics of international migration, current political and economic concerns – at the national, European and world level – the portrayal of other large minorities in Italy and the specific identity tensions between the North and the South in the Peninsula, this study strives to continue the line of research prompted by the publication of Stuart Hall's seminal book *Policing the Crisis* (1978).

This chapter introduced the media theoretical approach and the method used for this study. In the next chapter I use media analysis to examine the Romanian-centered moral panic in Italy starting in the fall of 2007 as an introduction to an in-depth discussion of the media construction of Romanianness.

Chapter 4: Constructing Romanianness in and Through the Italian Media

In this chapter I will discuss the role played by media labelling in the stirring of a moral panic, drawing on the concept of discourse, along with notions of race, ethnicity and identity. I will also examine how a particular construction of a social problem intersects with questions of power and ideology in working to reinforce the status quo and the perceived societal consensus, while also investing with authority certain societal definers. Finally, I will integrate this into a larger discussion about immigration and the way it is appropriated within the maps of meaning at a certain time.

Mechanisms Setting in Motion the Moral Panic

Stuart Hall (1978, p. 16) argues that at the center of stirring up a moral panic lies the remarkable consistency both in the way of perceiving the fundamental threat and in diagnosing it. In this vein, I now turn to examining the manner in which the consensus on the definition of the situation was *achieved* for the Romanians living in Italy, paying special attention to the rationale for having this particular menace, of Romanian criminality, picked up by the media. Based on the official statistics alone, there were several other immigrant groups that potentially could have made equally convincing folk devils (S. Cohen, 1972). In this section, I argue that there was a structural rationale for the surge of the moral panic that dovetails nicely with a peculiar blend of factors making Romanian residents in Italy particularly fitting candidates for social control.

A moral panic cannot exist in the absence of a threat to the core of the social order (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994; Thompson, 1998). I argue that in Italy starting in the fall of 2007 the Romanian community represented a threat at two distinct levels: (a) politically as a consequence of Romania's recent accession to the EU and (b) at the level of cultural identity,

owing to the changing perceptions of similarities and differences. Each of these levels taken individually imposed a need for differentiation (Bourdieu, 1984). When they apply simultaneously in the way they did in late 2007, the urgency of constructing the distinction is greatly amplified. Probably the most convincing way of tracing and reinforcing the moral contours of society is by constructing, exposing and then crushing crime. Fashioned in this way, delinquency serves to present a dramatized symbolic reassertion of social values (Hall et al., 1978, p. 66) and, in the process, to firmly (re-)draw the boundaries of belonging. Power, albeit in different forms, was implied at both of these levels as the effort to maintain the status quo was automatically a struggle over the perpetuation of existing power configurations. Discourse, steeped as it is in the lifeworld and the consensual view of society, then appeared as the central site for waging this battle.

Political threat. When Romanians became EU citizens on January 1, 2007 they also acquired the right to vote in the European Parliament and in the Italian local elections, as well as the right to enlist candidates for local councils in the Peninsula. The acquisition of these rights boosted the status of the Romanian community among the other large immigrant groups in Italy and even acted to close part of the gap separating them from the Italian population. Therefore, this sudden inflation of rights could have been perceived by the native population as added pressure to ensure what Bourdieu calls the "constant distinctive gaps" (1984, p. 481). It stands to reason that whenever a sizable group experiences some sort of significant upward mobility, the factions placed above it in the social hierarchy experience a corresponding, even if indirect, devaluing of their position which could well result in a sense of diffuse anxiety. This, in turn, offers an excellent precondition for redrawing the social boundaries with a view to reintroducing the lost differentiating distance by means of partially redefining the classificatory schemes.

Bourdieu (1984, p. 482) explains that the best and most common classifying properties are those which function as signs of infamy or stigmata, particularly when they intersect with the name of a nation or an ethnic group. So, producing the concept of Romanian criminality would literally serve to produce the group thus represented. Furthermore, as Goffman (1974, pp. 2–3) reminds us, attaching a stigma reduces a person from a complete individual to a tainted, discounted one. In this case, discourse functions as a "a separative power, a distinction, *diacrisis*, *discretio*, drawing discrete units out of indivisible continuity, difference out of the undifferentiated" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 479). It is in this way that the Romanian criminal as the emblematic representative of an entire delinquent community was born.

Consistent with my reading, the political enfranchising of Romanian immigrants living in Italy was met with resistance. There is evidence that Romanians were prevented from making use of their right to vote in the administrative Italian elections of 2007, with some regions insisting on the technicality of a legalized translation of the word "Bucureşti" (Romanian for Bucharest, in Italian *Bucarest*). In 2012, the delay with which the Italian government passed the regulations on the voting requirements only allowed Romanian citizens a 20-day time window to sign up for the supplementary election lists, the only way they could make use of their right. Representatives of the Romanian Identity Party in Italy criticized the government (in the pages of the Romanian immigrant press) for maintaining these cumbersome requirements after other countries such as Spain had eliminate them and interpreted the delay as a willed attempt at preventing the massive participation of EU citizens in Italian local elections.[13] Given how numerous the Romanian community was, it may have been in a position to articulate a political position of its own and to promote at least in part its specific interests.

[13] "27 martie termenul limita pentru inscrieri," Adina Harja, March 17-30, 2012, *Actualitatea Magazin*.

But Romania's 2007 accession to the European Union did not only result in the potential of Romanian migrants to impinge on existing political configurations; it also had implications in terms of the labor market. As EU citizens, the continued residence of Romanians in Italy was no longer predicated on a residence permit (*permesso di soggiorno*) which, in turn, relied on stable employment and the proof of a required level of minimum income. My interviewees have confirmed that oftentimes this legal loophole would be exploited by employers who conditioned the provision of the necessary paperwork on the acceptance of barely legal contracts and working conditions. Specifically, workers would be forced to sign part-time and underpaying contracts while working full- and over-time, in order to save the employer taxes. In theory, acquiring EU citizenship would also empower Romanians to get fairer working conditions. Maybe as a preventive reaction to what was perceived as a new power leverage for the Romanian community in Italy, in 2007 a lot of employers chose to fire longstanding Romanian employees and to hire other illegal immigrants in their place. My interviewees explained that the legal vulnerability of recent third-country nationals was central in this hiring logic.

Identity threat. A key factor attracting Romanians to Italy and, at the same time, determining their rapid integration into the labor system upon their arrival is the great cultural similarity between the two nations. The Romanian language is very close to Italian and there is an ingrained sense of a shared heritage going back almost two millennia. Romanians take great pride in being a Latin people in what they often call a Slavic see and those Latin roots go back to the Roman conquest of Dacia at the beginning of the second century A.D. Actually, Trajan's Column detailing the emperor's exploits in the Dacian wars of 101-102 and 105-106 A.D., which led to the birth of the Romanian people still stands in Rome. The common understanding in Romania is that Romanians and Italian are brothers. My informants recounted that in the Italian

take on the same story Romanians and Italians are portrayed as cousins, still related peoples, but not as siblings. Certainly, out of all the major immigrant groups living in Italy (the Albanians, the Moroccans, the Chinese, the Ukrainian, the Filipinos) the Romanians are the ones most culturally similar to the native population. I, therefore, argue that this very cultural affinity singles Romanians out as excellent folk devils, highly visible reminders of what society should not be as Cohen (1972) put it. They are similar enough to be perceived as the "Other within" (Todorova, 1997, p. 188) in relation to which the Italian self can (re-)articulate its identity (Derrida, 1981; Laclau, 1990; Butler, 1993 qtd. in Hall, 1996b, pp. 4–5). The immediate consequence was an urgent need to redraw the boundary that excluded this constitutive outside and was meant to prevent it from adulterating what was perceived as the core Italian identity.

I argue that the moral panic erupted at this point because the recent granting of EU citizenship to Romanians had muddled identity boundaries, thus posing a latent threat to the core self-perception of Italians. As a consequence, the margins of the dominant identity construct needed to be reinforced through representation work that reformulated and exacerbated the otherness of the abjected non-Us who suddenly threatened to call into question the established limits. Pushing this representation work was the acute need for distinction of the "Us" against "Them." It is worth noting that the work done by labels here is insidious and shrewd: the interpretive rules packed into them ensure that the identity tension between "Us" and "Them" is iterated in endless diversity, thus avoiding both ossification and any kind of meaningful resistance. So, not only do these labels ensure that the filling in of the dots happens at the individual level following recognizable prompts from the media, but they paralyze attempts at contesting discourses by confronting them with a daunting and ever-growing multiplicity of forms.

In this effort of distinction, conferring what Balibar calls "a quasi-hallucinatory visibility" (1990, qtd. in H. K. Bhabha, 1996, p. 55) on the Romanians as *de facto* pseudo-Europeans, despite what their *de jure* status as EU citizens may indicate, automatically reinforced the genuineness of the cultural identity of Italians and their belonging with the coveted Western Europe. This excessive visual availability of the Romanians in the media, far from being the arbitrary manifestation of the search for sensationalism by the press, actually came to constitute what Foucault called a "system of isolating visibility" (1980, p. 147). By illuminating all the dark corners of "crime" and subjecting them to a generalized, anonymous public gaze, the media helped the wielding of this type of "power through transparency" (Foucault, 1980, p. 154). Foucault demonstrates that there is a shift in publicity in modern times as the relations of public and private become inverted. Now, "all of society, vicariously (through publicity) or directly, takes on the role of judge and engages in normalizing judgments" (J. L. Cohen & Arato, 1992, p. 288). This shift from the punishment to the trial by no means implies that dignity and moral freedom are respected, but merely that justice no longer takes public responsibility for the violence inflicted by its practice, making the public before whom the exercise of power is made visible hardly distinguishable from the police (J. L. Cohen & Arato, 1992, pp. 288–289). It is in this way that a system of surveillance takes shape, which functions entirely without material constraints and simply with a visibility-engendering gaze:

> An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorizing to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising the surveillance over, and against, himself. A superb formula: power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be a minimal cost (Foucault, 1980, p. 155).

The brilliance of this system of visibility is that it ensures what Foucault describes as a surveillance which is both global and individualizing, while at the same time carefully separating the individuals under observation (1980, p. 146). This is precisely what was achieved by aggressively displaying the pictures and the full names of Romanian suspects in the media, despite sustained protests from Romanian journalists in Italy, such as Miruna Cajvaneanu. On the one hand, this rendered specific alleged Romanian perpetrators visible for the public now acting as the supreme judge, while simultaneously projecting this type of repressive, overseeing gaze over the entire Romanian community understood as the genus proximum of criminality. The consequence was a catch-all type of surveillance and a suspecting gaze which, tragically, was unwittingly interiorized by the Romanian immigrants as they became wholesale subjects of social control. This tension between an identity and its constitutive outside which it depresses in marking its difference also renders the whole construction vulnerable to constant destabilization by that very excluded alterity. In this way, the newly boosted Romanian qua EU citizen, as the lost brother/cousin came back to haunt its more established cultural "relative" imposing on him a burden of distinction. I dedicate chapter five to teasing out the repercussions that the unconstrained, yet unwitting subscription to the dynamic hierarchy of social power has at the level of identity for the Romanian immigrants.

Additionally, I use the concept of label in the way I conceptualize it in chapter three to explain how the history of the struggles over identity within the Italian nation favors an interpretation of Romanians as different, criminal, uncivilized, savage, poor and backward. Migration, colonization and racialized notions of the Italian North and the South and European East and West are central to producing a swift resettling of the identity boundaries to the "Other within" (Todorova, 1997, p. 188). Throughout this whole discussion I argue that the basic

cultural similarity binding the Italians and the Romanians is critical to the effective and seamless investment in labels. It was this very cultural similarity that allowed for the automatic orchestration of the differentiation processes necessary to reestablish the distinction gap. I argue that once the situation had been defined by the elites as a security crisis brought about by (a constructed notion) of Romanian criminality, the affinity between the circumstances at hand and previous state of affairs which have left their mark in the Italian lifeworld made labels take effortlessly. It was the interpretation rules packed within dominant labels that created a latent link to existing labels deposited within the lifeworld, making their application in this context seem automatic. In this way, deeply entrenched notions of the separation between the North and South became almost automatically re-appropriated and inflected with East vs. West overtones, thus mobilizing their whole differential context in the process. At play here was also a process of convergence as Hall (1978, pp. 223–224) theorized it that swiftly set the Romanian immigration in the context of already familiar Italian ethnic distinctions, thus contributing to the establishing of a "tip of the iceberg"-style logic that had direct practical consequences in the search for remedies. If in the past, the role of the constitutive other for the articulation of the mainstream Italian identity was played by southern Italians, nowadays, as the Italian equation is being projected beyond national borders against a European background, the Romanians came to constitute the "Other within." I argue that this transformation was heavily favored by the articulation of several types of discourses, including the Balkanist discourse and the historically situated competing narratives of Italian identity. The availability of sets of already crystallized images constructed through these different discourses and deposited into the lifeworld made it extremely easy to quickly assemble what I call an interpretive package proper of the Romanian criminality label. What is essential here is that since the piecing together was orchestrated

through the rules implicit in the label and, thus, happened in a culturally decentralized manner, without being dictated from above or ever even presented exhaustively in the media, the composite result, taken in its entirety, escaped rational inquiry. Only bits and pieces of the resulting Romanian criminality label were ever drawn into a concrete definition of the situation, rendering them vulnerable to rational contestation. The immense and intricate rest, like the mass of the iceberg, lurked beneath the surface, critically influencing perceptions, while at the same time eschewing any kind of problematization. I argue that this is the key to understanding the seemingly sudden escalation of racist attitudes towards the Romanians living in Italy. I demonstrate in this way that the tropes underlying the moral panic in Italy have a profound and deeply consequential history that needs to be critical engaged with in order to understand how it was possible for them to take so easily in this new context, inflaming a crisis in virtually no time. The critical advantage of this approach is that, while certainly not denying the existence of individual prejudice, it looks towards structural ways of articulating and perpetuating racialized understandings.

The Moral Panic about Romanian Crime in Italy

I argue that 2007 marked the beginning of a moral panic in Italy that had Romanian immigrants defined as the main – and sometimes seemingly sole – threats to fundamental social values. Using the five interrelated criteria established by Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) (concern, hostility, consensus, volatility and disproportionality) I will demonstrate that the upsurge in Romanian-focused media coverage starting in the fall of 2007 was indeed part of a moral panic.

Concern. Italian researcher Ilvo Diamanti talks about a "wave of media insecurity" reaching its pinnacle in the fall of 2007 and spring of 2008 (qtd. in Marinaro & Pittau, 2010, p. 213). Surveys showed an explosion of all the indicators of fears related to personal safety in 2007, sharply declining after May 2008 (Diamanti, 2008, p. 7). This made researchers think that a "security flare-up" (Diamanti, 2008, p. 9) trickling from the media into popular perception fueled a seemingly unstoppable "'fever' of criminal fear" in late 2007 (Diamanti, 2008, p. 8). In a language reminiscent of moral panic theory, Diamanti talks about a spiral of anxiety (2008, p. 1) that sweeps up reality, public opinion and media to fuel the "great fear" (Diamanti, 2008, p. 2) of November 2007 – May 2008. Displacing anxiety on personal safety issues in the context of the most serious global economic crisis since the Great Depression, demonstrates how not drawing a matter into the horizon of a situation as it is being defined serves to retire it from the area of the thematizable (Habermas, 1981a, p. 124). Through this specific construction of the situation, diffuse anxieties were channeled on the Romanians, constructed into an easily identifiable folk devil (S. Cohen, 1972), responsible for the sudden and dramatic increase in acts of violence against the person of unprecedented ferocity (consistent with Hall et al., 1978, p. 16).

Hostility. Surveys showed that the only time immigrants were perceived as a danger rather than a resource for the Italian society was between October 2007 and May 2008 (Diamanti, 2008). Moreover, this perception of immigrants posing a danger to public order and personal safety dropped dramatically in late 2008, after five years of constant increase. By far the most salient group in this regard, getting the brunt of the bad press, was the Romanians. It does not seem incidental that, at the time, Italy was heading into the last leg of a heated election campaign which concluded with the victory of the Right in mid-April 2008. Studies showed that Italian voters overwhelmingly believed that center-right parties were better equipped to deal with

the central issues of the election campaign (Diamanti, 2008, p. 4)– namely those of criminality and public order, largely framed in terms of immigrant responsibility. In this context, the hostility towards Romanians mounted as Italians considered them to be the minority causing most trouble in the country (Istat, 2012, p. 12). As a matter of fact, the populations most affected by discrimination in Italy were, in descending order, "the Romanians, the Roma and the Sinti" (Cooperazione per lo sviluppo dei paesi emergenti, 2009, p. 12). Moreover, as late as 2011, 63.6% of Italians stated they would not have any problems if their daughter chose to marry a US citizen, but 68.9% declared they would have a problem if she chose to marry a Romanian (Istat, 2012, p. 8). It is in the context of these persistent negative perceptions of Romanians that one needs to understand the deployment of military forces for handling public order emergencies, such as the 2007 deportation decree. It is in fact the logic of the moral panic and not pure chance that placed immigrants, a category which is seen as being *outside* the social body par excellence, in the crossfire of a debate about moral *boundaries*.

Consensus. The restrictive measures devised in late 2007, including the deportation decree and the demolishing of countless nomad camps, were met with "ample consensus" at the time and they still enjoyed "a high degree of support among the citizens" in November of 2008, after the fear wave had tapered off some (Diamanti, 2008, p. 5). A survey conducted by Metro Media Transilvania has showed that 60% of the Romanians immigrants interviewed in late 2007 maintained that the press and the politicians demonstrated a prejudiced attitude toward them (Caritas Romana & Lazio [Italy], 2008, p. 39). Diamanti found that the political debate of those days had been "transferred, one to one, in the perception of the citizens, until it generated a kind of 'social panic'" (2008, p. 2).

Some have talked of a "heinous political-media campaign directed against the Romanian community… a true and genuine Romanianphobia."[14] The majority of what Hall (1978) calls the primary definers, be they politicians on the left or the right or journalists, agreed over one essential fact: that the right to free circulation within Italy granted to Romanian citizens with their accession to the European Union on the 1st of January of 2007 was to blame for the murder of Giovanna Reggiani in the fall of 2007, at the hands of Romanian Romulus Nicolae Mailat (Barbagli, 2008, p. 138; Caritas Italiana, 2010). In the statement he made two days after the murder of Reggiani in 2007, the incumbent mayor of Rome, Walter Veltroni, summarized this perspective:

> There are so many good people who were running away from starvation and who come here to have a more dignified life, but also *thousands* of individuals who *come here just to commit crimes with an unheard of atrocity*. All the more inacceptable because it plagues the women. In the first seven months of this year, those arrested in Rome are *to 75% Romanians who have raped, robbed, murdered*. It is obvious that it is *a specific problem.*[15]

Singling out the Romanians as the perpetrators of unprecedented crime, Veltroni corroborated what has been called the "invasion syndrome" (Caritas Romana & Lazio [Italy], 2008, p. 41) brought about by Romanian immigration. In the common understanding of things, a kind of malignant intentionality was attributed to the Romanians as they traveled to Italy – by the thousands! – with the sole intention to commit crimes of previously unconceivable atrocity. Veltroni even re-emphasized in his closing statement the fact that this criminality was confined,

[14] "Botte, insulti, poi la denuncia "Romeni vittime di razzismo"," Giovanni Gagliardi, November 14, 2010, *La Repubblica.*

[15] ""Basta orrori, è emergenza nazionale"," Giovanna Vitale, November 1, 2007, *La Repubblica*. (my italics)

as a specific problem, to the Romanian community. Remarkable was also the specious use of statistics to bypass accusations of racism. The conspicuous absence of any kind of context about the design of the statistical study served to effect a discursive closure through neutralization. Through this strategy, value positions become hidden and value-laden activities are treated as value free (Deetz, 2007, p. 466), making it possible to convincingly prove a point and to retire it from any attempts at contestation simply by presenting "data" that hides some of the criteria for choosing it over other "data." This was a case where, following van Dijk (1988b, p. 87), it seemed that it was the illusion of truth that was at stake in the rhetoric of news. Nevertheless, offering such ostensibly legitimate motivations for the repressive measures against Romanian immigrants served to maintain the consensus on the definition of the situation and to amplify the moral panic.

Volatility. Media coverage tends to be fickle in Italy, with sudden outpours of attention on topics previously ignored. A study of Italian media coverage revealed that, despite a largely erratic and conjunctural disposition of the data until 2006, in a late 2007 there was "a true explosion of news related to criminal acts" (Diamanti, 2008, p. 37). No topic attracted more attention during those days than the murder of Reggiani. This sudden increase in coverage happened in the context of an already heightened attention to crime: the Italian TG1 presents twice as many crime-news reports than the public Spanish news bulletin and 20 times more than the German news program (Marinaro & Pittau, 2010, p. 215). It then comes as no surprise that while watching more television tends to be positively related to higher levels of anxiety, this was particularly true for the viewers of crime-heavy news programs TG1, TG5 and Studio Aperto (Marinaro & Pittau, 2010, p. 215). What marked the whole situation as exceptional was the fact that as the number of crime related news items was booming, the statistics actually registered a

decrease in the number of crimes committed (Diamanti, 2008, p. 38). According to the media researchers of Osservatorio di Pavia this plunged the understanding of news as the mirror of reality into a deep crisis (Diamanti, 2008, p. 38). Critically, the perception of criminality in Italy at the time followed the media data, instead of the real trend (Diamanti, 2008, p. 38). Moreover, the media wave of late 2007 and early 2008 left a fear residual which prevented the rate of crime perception from returning to the level it held in 2005, even if the number of offenses was lower than ever before during the period under study (2005-2008) (Diamanti, 2008, p. 38). Interestingly, as the anti-Romanian media campaign subsided, the news related to crimes against the person also tended to be replaced by offenses having to do with unemployment and a precarious economic situation brought on by the financial crisis (Diamanti, 2008, p. 48). This points to the fact that there was no intrinsic logic to establishing the Romanian-centered "system of isolating visibility" (Foucault, 1980, p. 147) outside of the volatility proper of the moral panic.

Disproportionality. Despite the explosion in crime news, the number of crimes committed In Italy was essentially stable over the period stretching from 2005 to 2008. What is more, it even showed a declining tendency starting in the second half of 2007 that made researchers conclude that the newsworthiness of crime followed a logic all of its own, having little to do with the number of the perpetrated offenses (Diamanti, 2008, p. 40). The surveys of the Demos & Pi Institute considered it reasonable to think that "the media exposure affects significantly the fears of the citizens but, above all, … these fears are set adrift by the media waves more than having been caused by real sensations of risks connected with the increase of criminality" (Diamanti, 2008, p. 40, my translation). Italians with little or no contact with foreign subjects tended to distrust immigrants (Bordignon & Ceccarini in Demos&Pi, 2007, p. 6) – people, therefore, who derived most of their information about immigrants from indirect

sources and, presumably, from the media. As a matter of fact, a study commissioned by the Italian Ministry of Interior has shown that 85% of the interviewees form an opinion on immigrants based on what they see on television news bulletins, often leading to blatantly false ideas regarding third country nationals (Caritas Romana & Lazio [Italy], n.d., pp. 6–7). Ranking highly among the collectivities consider to be "villain" ("*canaglie"*) (Marinaro & Pittau, 2010, p. 218) were the Romanians. The complaints filed with the Italian police against Romanians have increased by 32.5% between 2005 in 2008 (from 31,405 to 47,234), while the Romanian population has almost tripled in size during the same period (going from 297,570 people to 796,477, +267.7%) (Caritas Italiana, 2010; Marinaro & Pittau, 2010, p. 218). So, while the Romanians made up 24.9% of the foreigners residing in Italy, they accounted for just 13.8% of the denounces, well below the average of 19.9% of the denounces for all immigrants in the country (Caritas Italiana, 2010; Marinaro & Pittau, 2010, p. 218).[16] After 2007, there was a marked declining tendency for the number of complaints filed (Marinaro & Pittau, 2010, p. 218). It should be taken into account when looking at such statistics and those referring to incarcerated foreigners that for equal sentences the immigrants were less able to take advantage of alternative measures and other substitutive sentences to detention in comparison to Italian citizens, leading to their over-representation in Italian prisons (Barbagli, 2008, p. 53). Also, Romanians tend to be involved more in petty crime as they were conspicuously absent from any kind of criminal activity that required organization or was highly profitable. As a matter of fact, in Italy only 3 to 5% of this type of crimes were committed by immigrants (Barbagli, 2008, p. 142). So, consistent with Hall's (1978) findings there was a double disproportionality, both in the media

[16] These statistics also include the complaints filed against illegal immigrants and other types of foreigners, such as tourists.

representations which depart markedly from sober statistics and in the severe and unanimous official reaction supporting deportation.

The Media Construction of Romanianness

Following Stuart Hall (1996c, pp. 39–40), representations and the ideological categories connected with them *position* us by prescribing certain social identities for us which have real effects. In this dissertation I look at the media as the stage for negotiating, imposing and enacting identity and, consequently, I trace the effects produced by the moral panic back to media representations. In the remainder of this chapter I will outline the major tropes in the construction of Romanian identity in the Italian media discourse. These tropes are intricately intermeshed in the lifeworld, in such a way that mentioning one evokes consciously, or more frequently subconsciously, the whole construction achieved through labeling.

I see the cultural pathologies attributed to the Romanians as being constructed along two dimensions demonstrating distinct layers of incompatibility: on the one hand, Romanians were constructed as incompatible with Italian society on grounds of their criminality, aggressiveness, dangerousness, savagery, generalized guilt and sharp distinction from the receiving society (Us vs. Them), while, on the other hand, they were portrayed as incompatible with modernity and civilization in general since they were backward, uncivilized, degenerate, irrational, subhuman and interchangeable. Both of these layers of incompatibility seemingly imposed the need to racialize the Romanian subjects across all their characteristic categories as a "natural" consequence of their irreconcilable difference when, in fact, their racialization was the very foundation of all the other constructions.

Incompatibility with the Italian society

Criminal. In the Italian mainstream, Romanians were constructed as inveterate criminals, with a penchant for rape:

> *an excessive people, a people entirely criminal (wholesale), a people guilty in its entirety* … It is not just the verbal license according to which Radio Padania Libera is able to broadcast complicit telephone calls in which the Roma are defined as "*a bastard race which needs to be exterminated, for which a man would be needed like the one with the moustache.*" I am not only thinking about the violent campaigns against the camps…in which ever more often *the necessity of gas chambers is evoked*. I am thinking above all of the concerned letters of citizens who in good faith ask me: why are you defending the Roma? In so doing an equivalence is implied: you are defending the Roma, therefore *you are defending the thieves, the rapists, the instigators to infantile mendicancy*. … Can't you see that *the Roma "by their very nature" are irremediably criminal*? The *stereotype of the people that is threatening "by its very nature" is feeding, with insecurity, a current of underground violence that permeates our society*.[17]

Romanians were portrayed as irredeemable, inborn criminals. (In Italian media discourse, Romanian and Roma were treated largely as synonymous.) The quotation above even points to two elements central to identifying a moral panic: a call for *exceptional remedies* and an appropriation of the rhetoric by *right-thinking politicians*. The same editorial asserted "the existence [among the Romanians,] of a chauvinistic criminal tradition that is difficult to combat."[18] Fashioning Romanian criminality into a tradition insinuated that it was at once

[17] "Il codice perduto della civiltà," Gad Lerner, November 2, 2007, *La Repubblica*. (my italics)

[18] "Il codice perduto della civiltà," Gad Lerner, November 2, 2007, *La Repubblica*.

incurable and *voluntary*. The rhetorical effects here were devastating as it was implied that crime, as a tradition, was a firm component of the Romanian-type of social interaction, having binding force within that community, that probably even perceived it positively. As a tradition, crime was also marked as culturally specific and it was at this point where racist prejudice showed its fangs. The construction of criminality as a "natural" Romanian propensity imposed the necessity of disciplining and policing the subjects fashioned into "inborn" delinquents with extreme practices such as deportation. Media reports acknowledged the fact that the deportation decree appeared as a hasty solution to Romanian crime following the murder of Giovanna Reggiani and it applied primarily to this ethnicity as it "has made it possible to expel hundreds of 'undesirables,' almost always Romanian."[19] Romania's premature admittance to the EU[20] has allowed the criminal risk intrinsic to the Romanians to materialize en masse, giving Romanians the leadership in the most serious crimes.[21] By marking their accession into the EU as the inflection point in terms of their delinquency, the narrative successfully cast serious doubts on Romanians' suitability as Europeans. This was a highly efficient exercise of differentiation, symbolically widening the gap of distinction between the Romanians and the Italians.

One of the predilect instruments for forging this equivalence between Romanians and criminality was the specious use of statistics. Alarming percentages of alleged Romanian criminality were intensely circulated by Italian media starting in late 2007, branding the country as a genuine "Mecca of crime," a rich country with a lenient system of justice. According to professor Luca Ricolfi, a frequent contributor to *La Stampa*, the Romanian immigrants had a propensity to rape that was 17 higher than that of Italians and they were several times more

[19] "Espulso, fermato e poi rilasciato per tre volte Loyos ha beffato la legge," Massimo Lugli, February 18, 2009, *La Repubblica.*

20 "Omicidi, violenze, furti: il «caso romeno»," M. Antonietta Calabrò, February 23, 2009, *Corriere della Sera*.
[21] Idem.

likely than other foreigners to commit theft, murder and aggravated injury.[22] These statistics were used as "scientific" proof for naturalizing the beliefs about Romanian criminality and projecting them beyond the area of damnable racial prejudice and firmly into the cold realm of "objective" investigation. I could find just a single news piece in my generous sample that took issue with the way in which these statistics were deployed in public communication. In the rest, these "data" were taken as an absolute truth.

A slightly different picture may have emerged from an experiment featured on an Italian TV show. An Italian journalist pretended to be Romanian and approached a group of Italian youths at night in Rome, by asking them with a strong Romanian accent if they had a spare cigarette. An Italian young man denied his request and started obsessively interrogating him if he was one of those people who went around assaulting people and raping little girls. The pretended Romanian denied and presented apologies as the Italian man took out a knife and, proffering offenses, repeatedly tried to stab him threatening "I will open you all like mussels!"[23] Although this whole scene was featured in a talk show format which normally included substantive commentary from the guests (respected political figures, journalists, experts), there was a conspicuous absence of any type of commentary relating to this situation. I argue that the silence in this case was actually very telling, speaking volumes about the capacity of the labels current in the Italian lifeworld to construct highly convincing images of Romanian criminality with direct and brutally real consequences. In the words of Giancarlo Giurgea Germani, the

[22] "Il catalogo dei reati etnici," Gad Lerner, March 7, 2009, *La Repubblica*.

[23] "Liberi per lo stupro, ma restano in carcere," *Porta a Porta*, March 10, 2009, Rai Uno.

leader of the Romanian Identity Party in Italy, "if the aggressor is Romanian, he is more of an aggressor. And if the victim is Romanian, he is less of a victim."[24]

This construction of Romanians as criminal within the sphere of representation had palpable consequences. Constructing Romanian immigrants as the ones who "come into our home to rape our girls… and to smash our skulls with hammer blows"[25] justified the "manhunt for the Romanian" (*caccia al romeno*),[26] which concentrated attention solely on the Romanians – all of them – as soon as crime happened in Italy, to the total exclusion of any other options. The much praised arrest of Alexandru Loyos Isztoika and Karol Racz just days after the rape in the park of Caffarella in February 2009 and their continued confinement in prison for over a month after they had been exonerated by DNA and other evidence came as an instantiation of this obsessive concentration on the Romanian who simply had to be criminal. The invocation of genetics in an effort to forge a link between the Romanian DNA and crime spoke to the larger trope of unredeemable Romanian criminality. In the same Caffarella case, newspaper articles following the exculpation of Racz and Isztoika explained how genetic tests had established that the real perpetrators had Romanian ethnicity, despite the inability to extract such information from DNA analysis. Two unrelated caricatures circulating in Italy in the wake of the Caffarella debacle delivered this point vividly:

Vignette 1: Character 1: The DNA test is decisive.

Character 2: The two Romanians are officially accused of being Romanians. [27]

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[24] "I romeni: 'Ora rispetto Non siamo tutti criminali'," Laura Serloni, October 17, 2010, *La Repubblica*.

[25] "Mostri sotto casa," *Prima Pagina*, April 26, 2008, Radio 3.

[26] "Gli stupri negli ultimi anni a Roma e la promessa di una città più sicura," Valeria Forgnone, February 26, 2011, *La Repubblica*.

[27] http://salamelik.blogspot.com/2009_03_01_archive.html

Vignette 2: Woman: The biological trace material does not belong to the Romanians.

Man: As always, those delinquents probably stole it.[28]

Here, sarcasm laid bare the connection between Romanian DNA and delinquency. Romanian criminality in the way it was constructed through media discourse was so inveterate in the very nature of this ethnicity that it was incorrigible, impervious to any kind of punishment, thus making the sheer attempt at any kind of reformation unnecessary. This construction was very refined in the way it molded itself onto the coordinates of Italian society, widening the distinction gap separating it from supposedly inferior ethnicities while, at the same time, disguising the weaknesses of the mainstream. So, it was not that Italy has an inappropriate and excessively bland justice system that was unable to ensure the much discussed security for the country – it was just the fluke of the "invasion" of the Romanian super-criminal who was impervious to any kind of correction. Similarly, at guilt was not the neglect of Italian authorities to launch any initiatives to integrate socially the sizable Romanian immigration, but their "nature" which thwarted any such attempts, even before they happened. An essential consequence of this construction of Romanian criminality was their symbolical branding as not just inassimilable to the Italian society, but profoundly incompatible with Europeanness. This redoubled the deportation decree on the symbolical level, marking the Romanians' de facto banishing from Europe in and through representation. So, relating back to my second research question, it is clear that the media coverage was effecting a symbolic ousting of Romanians from both Italy and Europe.

Constructing such small scale criminality which can then monopolize attention was not just a very useful strategy for winning elections. Fracesco Rutelli, at the time a prominent

[28] http://vauro.globalist.it/

Democratic Party member and former mayor of Rome, admitted that the phenomenon of Romanian criminality in Italy drew attention away from the global economic crisis and from the ways in which "such a large economic and financial crisis can result in a very important expansion of the great criminality, of the mafia."[29] However, this remained a highly isolated nugget of criticism that was simply suspended in a flurry of statements, probably because of the ingrained perception of Romanians who were "by definition dangerous and above all alien: an easy scapegoat for all the fears and insecurities."[30]

Dangerous. Romanians were not just constructed as perpetrators of very serious crimes in Italy. They, as a community, were fashioned wholesale into potential delinquents, making it seem that it was simply a matter of time until they materialized their inborn criminal potential. Also, the responsibility for their present marginal status was completely placed upon their shoulders. There was no discussion of the kind of segregation and discrimination that would make a Romanian not be able to utter a single sentence in Italian after several years of living in the country (the case of Racz), when his compatriots usually master the language within weeks of beginning work for an Italian employer. Nor was there any scrutiny of the Italian state which has tolerated for decades the existence of hundreds of nomad camps all over the country – over 50 just on the outskirts of Rome! And, of course, there was no examination of the Italian tacit acceptance of the economic activity typical of these shantytowns. It was not the Italian authorities who needed to seal the interstices which enabled these people to survive by doing odd jobs situated, indeed, on the outer edge of legality – but for the longest time condoned by the receiving society. Instead, it was the sole responsibility of the ill-fated inhabitants of these

[29] "Arrivano I mostri!," *AnnoZero*, March 5, 2009, Rai Due.

[30] "Quell' applauso ad Alessio che ferisce i romeni," Chiara Saraceno, October 20, 2010, *La Repubblica*.

baraccopoli for having exploited the one crevice within their reach, in the face of pervasive marginalization. And their occupying of this precarious position now marked them as dangerous which, when coupled with a Romanian passport, translated into certain delinquency "sooner or later." This type of logic accelerated activities frequently carried out by the poorest Romanians (metal collection, recycling, …) across what Hall (1978, p. 225) called societal thresholds of permissiveness ranging from the moral norms to the legal order and, finally, to violence as these activities were being re-imagined in terms of what they could potentially lead to in an indeterminate future. As a result, the underlying perception of generalized Romanian dangerousness was reinforced.

Italian media often quoted the Romanian Minister of Justice, Cãtãlin Predoiu, who declared that 40% of all Romanian criminals were hiding in Italy. The conclusion that was often drawn was that "criminality in Romania has decreased enormously."[31] Such statements created the impression that Romania had exported a problem, and thereby, as the originator, Romania was the only actor who needed to solve this problem, exonerating Italy of any kind of responsibility and leaving deportation as the only conceivable solution.

It was consistently implied in Italian media that Romanians were "a nation of rapists."[32] The point of view expressed by Piero Sansonetti in this regard was almost singular among the Italian media features of the time:

> The newspapers behaved very badly . … Creating the idea that there are ethnic groups that have directly in their DNA the social dangerousness or directly the tendency to savagery. This is exactly the structure of ideas that then provokes the worst racist

[31] "Liberi per lo stupro, ma restano in carcere," *Porta a Porta*, March 10, 2009, Rai Uno.

[32] "Stupri," *Sabato & Domenica*, March 21, 2009, Rai Due.

> episodes. The saying goes "the Romanians are particularly violent, like the Albanians." In this respect, the newspapers have been tremendous. No respect for the rights of the accused and no respect for general principles that are fundamental for our civil life together, for our civilization.[33]

In addition to the dangerousness arising from the "innate" criminal proclivity of Romanians, there was yet another way in which some of these people were marked as dangerous. Racial prejudice was essential to producing anxiety within this dimension as well. After the initial debacle in the Caffarella case with the arrests of Alexandru Loyos Isztoika and Karol Racz, the police apprehended two other Romanians, Gavrilã Oltean and Alexandru Jean Ionut who matched the DNA profiles and also confessed. It was reported that the judge contemplated requiring an invasive examination of the rapists Oltean and Ionut that featured HIV tests, since the two young men had been prostituting themselves to homosexuals and, should the tests turn out positive, the prosecution would add the charge of attempted murder to the existing indictment of robbery and sexual assault.[34] By releasing this information about the previous sexual conduct of the accused parties, a complex picture of delinquency was forged for Oltean and Ionut. These two Romanians were not only dangerous through their ferocious criminal behavior, but their very bodies were a presumed source of danger, automatically contaminating whoever came into contact with them, willingly or not. The prompt for action in the direction of their aseptic removal from the Italian social body through deportation asserted itself as the only sensible way to handle in this situation. This, in turn, demonstrates how the complexity packed into labels worked to reinforce the preferred social solution, which temporally predates the stirring up of the moral panic.

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[33] "Salvati dal Dna, ma c'è un mistero," *Porta a Porta*, March 9, 2009, Rai Uno.

[34] "Stupro, il pm: il 'biondino' voleva coprire Gavrila," M.Bisso and M.Lugli, March 25, 2009, *La Repubblica*.

Guilty. Romanian wholesale guilt in the way it was constructed within Italian media discourse was not only common sense and thus a priori, defying any need for proof, but it was also extremely resilient: Romanians were guilty regardless of disapproving evidence. A vignette featured on Italian television in 2009, at the time of the Caffarella scandal when repeated DNA tests had exonerated the two Romanians initially arrested for the rape (Isztoika and Racz), eloquently illustrated this point. A security vigilante reacted to an official statement:

> Statement: "The DNA test casts doubts on the guilt of the Romanians arrested for a rape in a park in Rome"
>
> Vigilante reaction: Cutting a long story short, the Romanians have it in their **DNA**, which is furthermore as false as Judas.[35]

This vignette provides an excellent example of how labels were able to engage contradiction to support what was in danger of becoming an illogical and unsustainable point. By projecting the interpretive package of the label into the common sense (conceived in Gramscian fashion), it became possible to uphold the (generic) guilt of the Romanians above all conceivable doubt. The DNA was both the definitive proof of the Romanian inborn criminality and a mendacious, false friends when it cast doubts on the old established a priori culpability of Romanians. Paring off the obvious sarcasm, the reasoning in this vignette closely reproduced, albeit in a caricaturized manner, the dominant discourse in Italian society. Numerous media features discussed at length the status of "queen proof" (*prova regina*) of the DNA test, until two separate sets of tests came back negative on the arrested Romanians. At that point, the narratives shifted, asserting that the DNA expertise was not actually that reliable. Police chiefs and prominent politicians alike tried to silence the force of DNA as proof, pointing to other pieces of

[35] http://maurobiani.it/

rather shaky evidence such as the definitive identification by the highly traumatized victims – glossing over the fact that they had initially "definitively" identified another man and that their statements had changed significantly over time. Although these narratives aimed at discrediting DNA as the ultimate proof, they simultaneously worked to maintain the deeply entrenched connection between the Romanian "nature" and the thoroughly criminal DNA of this ethnicity. When Romanian a priori guilt is common sense, the presumption of innocence for any Romanian suspect becomes superfluous. The following dialogue is about Isztoika and Racz who were still in prison, after repeated DNA tests had exonerated them:

> Piero Sansonetti ("il Riformista"): Excuse me, Alemanno! Once they used to say that one is innocent until proven guilty. Now **we have the proof that he's innocent**, because the DNA evidence constitutes scientific evidence that they did not perpetrate that crime.
>
> - No, no, no! (a choir of voices at unison in the studio)
>
> Gianni Alemanno (incumbent Mayor of Rome): The thing is that these people were present at the scene, surely they were not the only ones there.
>
> Sansonetti: There isn't even a shred of evidence showing that they were present! There's evidence that they did not commit the crime. Why have they not been released from prison?
>
> Alemanno: I don't know that. I know that there are very qualified investigators who are looking for the truth. (…) (outraged) Who could have an interest to accuse these people of a crime?
>
> Sansonetti: You know it very well! Catching a guilty person no matter how…! Justice always commits errors… It has made an error, own up to it!...
>
> Alemanno: Absurd! Absurd! If there is an error, it will be corrected in the investigation!

Sansonetti: **There is an error**, because the DNA…

Alemanno: Other people could have been present![36]

The two Romanians were guilty against all evidence and even if they were not directly responsible for the rape, they were still guilty of *something*. After the initial accusations of brutal rape were thwarted by DNA evidence, the charges against Isztoika and Racz shifted to having witnessed and abetted in the sexual violence, having committed other rapes and thefts, having lied to cover up the real perpetrators so that these could escape to Romania, while being fully aware that they themselves would be exonerated by the DNA test and, finally, calumny, self-defamation and calumny against the Romanian police. None of these imputed offenses could be substantiated and eventually Italian authorities had to reluctantly release Isztoika and Racz from prison in 2009. As the dialogue above showed, Romanians were constructed as a necessarily cohesive group that operated – always criminally – in packs, clans or gangs. Isztoika and Racz had witnessed and assisted in committing a crime by others "of their kind." Again, the capacity of the label to incorporate contradictory information while silencing any critique became apparent. On the one hand, the testimony of the two victims (the 14-year old girl and her 16-year old fiancé) was elevated above the reliability of the DNA tests. On the other hand, one of the few constant elements across the various versions of the victims' testimonies was the existence of just two aggressors. The failure to raise this point in front of the protests of Mayor Alemanno who gave the existence of more than two offenders as highly probable – or anywhere else in the press on this topic – constitutes evidence of the efficiency of the label to preempt critique.

[36] "Salvati dal Dna, ma c'è un mistero," *Porta a Porta*, March 9, 2009, Rai Uno.

Interestingly, the image of the Romanians fashioned in this way aligned very well with the main tropes of the balkanist discourse. The oppressive system of visibility creating the always-already guilty criminal Romanian was central in amplifying and even generating criminality. A vignette circulated at the time of the Caffarella case in 2009 spoke eloquently to this ingrained perception of Romanian guilt. One person reading the newspaper comments to his neighbor: "Nevertheless, for sure he was Romanian!"[37] Implied in the subtle Italian formulation is the idea that Racz may have not been a rapist, but that still did not exonerate him from being Romanian – with all the meanings that were attached to this ethnicity in the process of representation. As a matter of fact, for Romanians in Italy there was no presumption of innocence, nor was there any credence wasted on the evidence exonerating them. In the words of Michele Santoro, the host of the popular show *AnnoZero*, the Romanians Isztoika and Racz had been

> presented in all newspapers as rapists, titles without question marks. Because here the legal principle which aims at safeguarding a person's civil rights and liberties obviously reaches up to a certain point; *when it comes to people of a certain kind, there is no more protection of civil liberties, they are suddenly monsters, rapists, human beasts*.[38]

Indeed, Romanians were commonly perceived in Italy as criminal monsters or beasts and this image was a fundamental, if tacit, component of the legitimation for the restrictive measures taken against the Romanian community. For the always-already guilty Romanians, trial and the possibility to defend oneself before being expelled from Italy was rendered unnecessary. This, in turn, legitimized acts such as the deportation decree. It is significant that Romanians were

[37] http://humour-ugb.blogspot.com/2009/03/coscienza-tranquilla.html

[38] "Arrivano I mostri!," *AnnoZero*, March 5, 2009, Rai Due. (my italics)

generally considered to be at fault and this was not restricted only to those accused of having broken the law. Even in the position of victims, Romanians were seen as culpable.

There is a pervasive narrative asserting that Italians did not discriminate against anyone who did not want to be discriminated against, meaning that any bias that may have been present in Italy was directed exclusively towards "those who would do not want to be integrated and only come here [in Italy] to take advantage."[39] While this discourse absolved the Italian mainstream from any accusations of racism, it could not be reconciled with the actions of violence directed at random hardworking and earnest Romanians, such as assaults, bombings or accusations in school that "you stink of Romanian! You're disgusting, you gypsy!"[40] which pushed a 13-year old Romanian to attempt suicide. Other Romanians school children were threatened and insulted on grounds that they belonged to "a people of killers."[41] In fact, the anti-Romanian climate created in the course of the moral panic has affected the entire community: a survey conducted in 2009 showed that about 80% of Italians did not have a positive way of relating to Romanians. The dialogue below exemplifies a typical rationalization of this result:

> Francesca Martini (Undersecretary for Health, Lega Nord): It is said that everyone harvests what they have sowed and they probably sowed bad things …
>
> Maria Cuffaro (journalist, TG3): If I would be Romanian, I would feel almost offended by what the Undersecretary said. This is what they have sowed; this is what they are harvesting…
>
> Francesca Martini: This is the reality, the surveys!

[39] "Io rumeno in carcere innocente," *Porta a Porta*, March 24, 2009, Rai Uno.

[40] "Insultata e umiliata," TG3, January 28, 2010, Rai Tre.

[41] ""I nostri bimbi romeni insultati a scuola"," Roberto Bianchin, November 12, 2007, *La Repubblica*.

> Maria Cuffaro: But it isn't the reality! There are hundreds, thousands of Romanians who take care of our children, of our parents and this is something that you also know.
>
> Francesca Martini: But I have to say that *this happens less every day*, because this is ever more demanded of other nationalities, unfortunately *because of the grave cases that we have seen of larceny and battery of elderly people, behind closed doors*.[42]

The argument made here is very insidious: the flip side of the system of visibility constitutive of the Romanian criminal was a vast area of invisibility engulfing the overwhelming majority of the Romanians working in Italy. This sizable population with menial jobs spent most of its time hidden from sight in Italian homes. These diligent people filled very physical, uncomfortable jobs neglected by the local population, but highly necessary for the Italian social system. For most of them, trustworthiness was a key prerequisite for their job, since they worked in Italian homes around the clock. As such, they could not have been any further from the image of the Romanian criminal constructed in the media, in the eyes of those who were in constant contact with them. Yet, with a swift turn of phrase, this large group was successfully de-legitimated by extending the shadow of generalized guilt over them. The power of labels again shows through, projecting the same tropes of criminality and guilt over this largely invisible Romanian majority.

Savage. Romanian delicts, both proven and alleged, were described in horrifying detail in Italian media, generating what I have demonstrated to be a disproportionate interest and media coverage. Right-leaning politicians have repeatedly made the point that the intimidating and at times oppressive media buzz was fully justified by the unprecedented atrocity and violence with

[42] "Liberi per lo stupro,ma restano in carcere," *Porta a Porta*, March 10, 2009, Rai Uno. (*my italics*)

which Romanians perpetrated their crimes.[43] Romanian suspects were routinely called wild beast, their ethnicity was compulsively emphasized and the presumption of innocence was for the most part absent. It was also quite common for Romanians – suspects and otherwise – to be called executioners and torturers (*carnefici*), thus naturalizing the idea of their malicious intentionality. Romanians were said to commit "horrible, truly horrible violence, superior to any common imagination,"[44] having a behavior that was "bestial and disgusting."[45]

The fact that Romania is a country of abject poverty seemed to be set in stone and as such it preempted any further need to understand this complex phenomenon:

> Romania, shattered by the yoke of the Comunist Securitate then had to endure not only the *poverty*, but also *the desertification of family relations, of the sentiments, of the affections*. Not only the impressive number of *abortions*, but also the record percentage of children abandoned by the tens of thousands in *orphanages, in the years following Ceauşescu*. That tragic choice of getting rid of the newly born by admitting him to an institution was *not judged as truly blameworthy* by the surrounding society. Meanwhile the sewers of Bucharest were being populated by *droves of savage children who lived from stealing and who were doping on ether.* Will it ever be *possible to domesticate those children*?[46]

Although the editorial quoted above espoused in general a very enlightened stance, the pernicious work of labels showed through, demonstrating their insidious capacity to orient the

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[43] "Liberi per lo stupro, ma restano in carcere," *Porta a Porta*, March 10, 2009, Rai Uno.

[44] "Salvati dal Dna, ma c'è un mistero," *Porta a Porta*, March 9, 2009, Rai Uno.

[45] "Caffarella, altri due arresti Incastrati dal test del Dna," March 20, 2009, *La Repubblica*.

[46] "Il codice perduto della civiltà," Gad Lerner, November 2, 2007, *La Repubblica*. (my italics)

understandings and the definitions of even the most open-minded members of society. The droves of savage children produced by the lethal mixture of perpetual poverty and the destruction of feelings and humanity who cannot possibly be domesticated went on to hold Italy under siege and terrorize it with their barbaric crimes. As savages, they were incompatible with civilization and impossible to assimilate, thus legitimizing the absence of any efforts at integration supported by the Italian state as senseless. Drained of humanity, these people in whom even the maternal instinct has atrophied are necessarily alien to any understanding of Italianness and irredeemable savages. I read this kind of narrative as actually serving to assign blame firmly and exclusively to the Romanians, while laundering the consciousness of any Italian who might be plagued by self-doubts about the possible operation of racial prejudice within his/her own person. This believable explanation appeased the curious, while simultaneously operating a rhetorical closure by barring the search for more in-depth explanations. No mention was made of Ceaușescu's barbaric population control measures that effectively created masses of orphans who later took to the streets. It seems oversimplified to blame this national drama brought about by a ruthless social experiment on the now proverbial callousness of the Romanians, who were supposedly foreign even to the most basic human instincts. Constructed in this way, the Romanians qua citizens, let alone Europeans, became completely delegitimized.

The case of Karol Racz, initially arrested for the Caffarella rape in 2009 and then blamed with another case of sexual violence, later completely exonerated by DNA tests offered insight into the intricacies of constructing the "typical" Romanian monster:

> With that square-shaped jawbone, the squashed nose, slit eyes and a scar on the forehead, it's probable that Cesare Lombroso would have pronounced him guilty without waiting for the confirmation of the DNA. And not just Lombroso.[47]

Racz who has been identified in the media almost exclusively as "the boxer"/"boxer face" (*il pugile*/ *faccia da pugile*) or "the Moor" (*"il moro"*) in reference to his dark skin has been recognized as "the perfect felon"[48] and constructed in consequence. The mobilization of racial prejudice and balkanist tropes in the construction of Racz as a monster was obvious. It has been said that "these people see the woman as a prey,"[49] since they came from a culture that has absolutely no respect for women:[50]

> Was Nicolae Mailat looking for the purse or the life? The money or *a woman to grasp as prey*, in order to feel like *a man fulfilled in the act of overpowering* according to an *atavistic teaching* perpetuated from the caves to the tents, up to the shed in Tor di Quinto?[51]

The Romanian is an ancestral kind of savagery, continued almost as a tradition through the generations. This assumption both naturalized the construction of Romanian savagery and critically inflected it with a vector of intentionality that lies at the center of its perpetuation. The Romanians are monsters with a propensity for misogynist violence both out of their own accord and because it is in their "nature."

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[47] "Il «perfetto colpevole» scagionato da tutto e già pronto per i talk show," Giovanni Bianconi, March 24, 2009, *Corriere della Sera*.

[48] "Il «perfetto colpevole» scagionato da tutto e già pronto per i talk show," Giovanni Bianconi, March 24, 2009, *Corriere della Sera*.

[49] "Stupro Caffarella, sentenza troppo mite," Rory Cappelli, October 6, 2009, *La Reppublica*.

[50] "Liberi per lo stupro, ma restano in carcere," *Porta a Porta*, March 10, 2009, Rai Uno.

[51] "Il codice perduto della civiltà," Gad Lerner, November 2, 2007, *La Repubblica*. (my italics)

In a discussion[52] about security in Italy in the wake of the DNA evidence dismissing Isztoika and Racz as suspects in the Caffarella rape, a big, fear inducing picture of Racz emerged from behind the spectators in the studio who were literally (maybe also metaphorically?) in the dark. The camera angle made it seem that this daunting looking face was creeping up on the unsuspecting public. Racz was shown in the huge video wall in the studio only from the nose up. The absence of the mouth may point to the fact that he was silenced and always spoken for, implying that he is incapable of speaking. The angle of the shot, from the bottom up, made Racz look powerless and was therefore demeaning. This appears consistent with Coleman's (2010) findings about the ability of visuals to bypass rational processing, particularly in conveying meanings that would be considered inappropriate in text form. Indeed, in Racz' first talk show presence after being released from prison, the host, Bruno Vespa, made a point out of noticing that the Romanian "even needs physical assistance from a translator" [53] since he did not speak any Italian. Throughout the show Racz was being spoken for either by his lawyer or by the translator who took quite a lot of liberty in restructuring his statements and constantly added new information to his answers. Racz' body language was telling: oftentimes he appeared clueless with nobody translating the discussion to him, looking right and left, totally confused. His behavior seemed weird and out of place, reinforcing the idea that he did not belong in the Italian society.

Representation carried very palpable consequences in this case as well:

> We arrive at the paradox that, for the safety of two "mostrified" persons, like Alexandru Loyos [Isztoika] and Karol Racz, the perhaps safest place today in Italy remains the

[52] "Arrivano I mostri!," *AnnoZero*, March 5, 2009, Rai Due.

[53] "Io rumeno in carcere innocente," *Porta a Porta*, March 24, 2009, Rai Uno.

> prison in which they are detained. And that of course does not justify their staying in prison. If and when they will get out, it's foreseeable that they will disappear like thieves. In this way, the conformist will have his conviction reinforced: see, I had told you that they were a bad lot! And it will be possible to start the manhunt again, ennobled by the suffering of the raped women. Without justice.[54]

This was a very rare type of commentary in the Italian media, in an editorial penned by one of the most liberal journalists in the country, Gad Lerner. The Italian police have been universally praised for their work in the Caffarella case and Gad Lerner represented the fine exception who explicitly stated that the investigation unfolded in a climate of collective hysteria falsely justified as an exercise of solidarity with the victim.[55] The moral panic offered a propitious background for the creation of Romanian monsters. Analyzing the media narratives through the lens of the moral panic it becomes clear how the construction of the Romanian savage criminals linked up with pre-existing notions deposited in the Italian lifeworld, which, in turn, became easily mobilized with the aid of the interpretation rules contained in the labels. Since these rules operate under the radar, the whole process lends itself extremely well to being naturalized into the "normal," "logical" outcome of the situation, without any connection to the people involved or to representation. Realizing that these constructions of Romanian brutality are historically and culturally situated as I demonstrate here is central to grasping the work achieved through representation without which the whole edifice would remain unintelligible.

Aggressive. Romanians were constructed as the quintessential aggressors. It was not only the (suspected or condemned) Romanian delinquents who were extremely aggressive, but

[54] "Se i due romeni fossero romani," Gad Lerner, March 13, 2009, *La Reppublica*.

[55] "Se i due romeni fossero romani," Gad Lerner, March 13, 2009, *La Reppublica*.

aggressiveness seemed to be the defining feature of all Romanians, including the Romanian victims and the Romanian police.

In the much publicized death of Romanian nurse Maricica Hãhãianu after a punch from Italian Alessio Burtone in the Anagnina subway station in Rome in 2010, there was a constant effort from the defendant and his lawyer to defuse responsibility by directly and insistently blaming the victim. Intertextuality played a central role here. While no journalists overtly took the side of Alessio Burtone, they quoted repeatedly and at length eyewitness accounts, the statements of the defense lawyer and of Burtone's friends and family who argued that the woman had initiated the violence, she had practically been looking for it and the young Roman was simply forced to defend himself. The state prosecution was quoted just once saying that it had been in fact Burtone who had started the conflict. The fact that Burtone had previously punched two other people in the face, including one woman was quickly glossed over. During the trial, the prosecution argued that there was no provocation and, moreover, "'… there is no proportionality between the presumed danger [from Maricica] and his action, the boxer gesture with which he responds'… a purposive 'uppercut, directly to the chin, a direct and violent punch typical of an expert boxer'."[56] However, Burtone was the one the media constantly called "the boy," while Romanian Karol Racz, proved innocent of all accusations was obsessively identified as "the boxer." In 2012, Burtone was sentenced to eight years of detention, acknowledging the "generic mitigating circumstances" (young age, his alleged nonviolent nature, lack of the intention to kill) and the fact that he had been provoked. We see here at work Hall's (1978, p. 225) threshold of permissiveness, albeit in the direction of diffusing instead of escalating the threat potential of a situation. The incident between Burtone and Hãhãianu has been

[56] "Pm: 20 anni per l'assassino di Maricica La famiglia: risarcimento di 2 milioni," March 6, 2012, *Il Messagero*.

characterized in the media as "a most trivial (*banalissimo*) argument."[57] The word choice is highly efficient in imposing a particular definition of the situation that completely eschewed the allocation of responsibility and minimized the facts. The construction of this conflict as an isolated verbal dispute eloquently demonstrates the point of Cohen (1972), Becker (1963) and Edelman (1988) that crime does not reside in the happening itself and is instead a social fabrication. It also shows that the definition and interpretation of an occurrence is not inherent in that event and, instead, it is brought on through discourse. Imposing meaning on an event (Young, 1981, p. 67) not only serves to construct that occurrence in a very specific way, but it simultaneously shuts off other competing interpretations, such as assault, battery, hate crime, proffering ethnic slurs, malicious disturbance, disturbing the peace, disorderly conduct or the failure to comply with the duty to rescue. The lawyer of the Hãhãianu's husband was unsatisfied with Buertone's mild sentence, pointing out that the Romanian woman who in another subway station in Rome and following a similarly spontaneous conflict pierced the eye of an Italian woman with an umbrella and thus caused her death received 16 years. The lawyer Di Giovanni spoke openly about discrimination of the Romanians in court, declaring that the sentence would have been very different had the victim been Italian and not Romanian. This was yet another case demonstrating the material consequences of representation. The handling of the Hãhãianu case has made a Romanian official ask the Italian Prime Minister in an open letter "is it possible that 'the crime' of being Romanian is more serious than homicide?"[58]

Us versus Them. Romanians were consistently constructed as the incongruous and confrontational "Other" in Italian media discourse. The entire portrayal of immigration as an

[57] "E' morta Maricica Hahaianu i medici staccano la spina," October 15, 2010, *La Repubblica*.

[58] "Omicidio di Maricica, la difesa di Burtone:«No al carcere. Fu manata non pugno»," Ansa, October 20, 2010, *Corriere della Sera*.

epidemic relying on the classic imagery of immigration as invasion served to create this incompatible subject that was necessarily opposed to the receiving society. The frequent use of a mixture of water metaphors and medical tropes cemented both the idea of the intrinsic hostility of these extraneous elements and the necessity of their aseptic removal from the Italian social body, thus prefacing and sanctioning the preferred solution of deporting them.

The representation of Romanians in no way allowed their reading as elements of enriching difference, adding to the Italian cultural diversity. Instead, they were trapped in a construction with strong pathologic undertones that (1) imposed the necessity to take urgent measures in their case and (2) prescribed a single, highly repressive course of action, while effectively effacing all other options. The rare descriptions of Romania[59] made it seem like the antipode of the Italian society where it is only brutality that rules. It follows that the immigrant Romanians could only be perceived through the antithesis Us/Them as elements actively striving to pollute the Italian order, making their urgent excision absolutely necessary.

In an uncharacteristic move, an Italian TV show debating Romanian criminality allowed a short statement from a young Romanian, Raluca, who had just obtained her PhD in Italy:

> Moderator: Raluca, despite your great successes here in Italy, you always have your suitcase ready to leave, why do you have this sensation?
> Raluca: … Tonight there has been a lot of talk about Romania and the Romanians, about the Romanians and Romania as aggressors or as victims. I am here to… maybe, in a certain way, *I feel like representing the 1,000,000 Romanians who are in-between, those who work from dawn till dusk. And who are here and who make daily efforts to integrate themselves, in their jobs, in their daily lives, as citizens of the country that hosts them. I*

[59] "«Beveva, colpa di una donna»," Marco Imarisio, November 5, 2007, *Corriere della Sera*.

would like that all those present here would imagine, for a moment, to be, tonight, with all that you have seen, Romanian! (holding back tears and getting applause) (…)

Francesca (right-leaning Italian woman): Those who, on the other hand, are Italians, how should they feel?

Raluca: I, beyond a strong signal of solidarity to my people who, despite everything, are still here to work, l would like to give a strong signal of solidarity to the Italians, above all to the victims of violence, to their families, ok? *But why do I have to feel guilty for these things?* Explain this to me! Who can explain this to me?

Francesca: But why do you have to feel guilty?

Raluca: Why do I have to feel guilty when *there is a media bombardment and a hunt for the Romanians*, that is to say for me! That is to say *for me, as an ethnicity*! No! (…) This thing shouldn't be done! (…) What is being done at the moment in Italy is *a manhunt for the Romanian, it is the deviation of the true problems of Italy*! I agree that those who make a mistake need to pay. I'm the first one to say that. (…) [But] when it happened to me, not quite two weeks ago, to see in the middle of the street a young man lying on the pavement, in the middle of the street and no-one around at 11:00 PM… nobody stopped on … a normal street, so I stopped, ok? I talked to him – look at this case and think about this well! - *first of all I talked to him in Romanian! Because such is the media bombardment that whoever commits a crime, I feel like talking to them in Romanian! Does it seem fair to you? No!* And then this guy replied to me in a perfect [Italian] Veneto dialect![60]

Raluca's powerful statement beautifully illustrates the insidious work of labels that unwittingly orient the understandings of Romanianness in Italian society. There was a pervasive

[60] "Arrivano I mostri!," *AnnoZero*, March 5, 2009, Rai Due. (my italics)

sense that everything that was wrong in the Italian society was necessarily Romanian. This aligned perfectly with the operation of a moral panic which displaces anxieties relating to the fundamental social order on an easily identifiable folk devil amenable to a simple and clear-cut solution like deportation. Raluca also exemplified how deeply intermeshed the tropes of Romanianness are in the Italian lifeworld. What I have identified as the interpretive rules inside the labels (see chapter three) act to bind together the different images into a composite construction of the Romanian immigrant in Italy. It is in this way that the Romanian homogeneity in crime was shaped as the fundamental Romanian characteristic and the automatic acceptance of wholesale Romanian guilt was achieved. This whole edifice was supported by a deeply entrenched view of the radical split separating Romanians and Italians as unreconcilable parties, perpetually pitted against each other. Significantly, Raluca also bore witness to the painful consequences of having to live on a daily basis with an identity dilemma whereby one is forced to renegotiate the bases of her belonging, lest she should be instantly converted into a stigmatized individual – an automatic social outcast.

Incompatibility with Modernity and Civilization

Irrational. Irrationality is a trope that has been long used to construct a superior and modern Italian identity against an illogical, disorderly and immoral "Other" (Cotesta, 1999; Mai, 2002). If in the nineties it was most often deployed against Albanians, it has more recently been displaced to apply to the Romanians, inflecting it appropriately along the way. In keeping with the mainstream wariness of potential racist suspicions, it was most often Romanians who gave voice to testimonies of irrationality:

> Any ways, after the accession to the EU, let us speak clearly, it is possible for all those to exit Romania who should never go out. When the revolution happened and Ceauşescu

> fell, all students, the youth took to the streets, the workers went out of the factories. My grandfather…told me "look, they are free and they are rejoicing, *but they will not know what to do with this freedom tomorrow" – they had not been prepared for this freedom.* The example he gave to me was with the *lion* who has been enclosed all his life in a cage in the zoo, and when you set him free, it tears everything to pieces because, if not… It has to eat, what else does it have to do?[61]

Coming from the mouth of a Romanian woman the imagery of the lion, the savage beast destroying everything within its reach once it has escaped its confinement, spared the media outlet from explaining this reprehensible choice. Having thus bypassed accusations of racism, the statement implied that Romanians were irrational, unprepared for freedom and unable to deal with it. In a sense, they were not full beings for they were incapable of living a "civilized" life even when it was handed out to them. As such, they were in dire need of policing, lest they ravaged everything around them. This incongruity with EU values made them incapable of ever being Europeans. They are hopeless Balkans, driven by their lowest impulses, uncivilized, incompatible with a Europe conceived as fundamentally modern and, therefore, they deserved to be expelled from the EU. As a matter of fact, given their irreconcilable "nature," deportation appeared as the only solution for them. Since Romanians were hopelessly immature, they needed to be disciplined like children.

Even Romanian crime was constructed as irrational: a Romanian is reported to have butchered a married couple with a hammer, not touching any of their property and leaving investigators wondering about a reason for the brutal double murder.[62] There was a lot of talk in

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[61] "Liberi per lo stupro,ma restano in carcere," *Porta a Porta*, March 10, 2009, Rai Uno. (my italics)

[62] "Mostri sotto casa," *Prima Pagina*, April 26, 2008, Radio 3.

the media about the irrationality of Isztoika at initially confessing the Caffarella rape. His motivations about the beatings and threats he had received from the Romanian police were quickly discounted and silenced. However, this attribution of irrationality to Isztoika proved very useful at two different levels. On the one hand, it provided a "logical" base to ground further complicity charges for Isztoika while, on the other hand, it offered a prime opportunity for constructing the Italian police as rational, efficient and impartial, as predicted by van Dijk (1988b). Not only was there no criticism directed at the Italian police who imprisoned two innocent people for over a month and blasted their pictures through the media, but there was consistent praise for the "investigative lucidity" and "professional honesty" of the investigators, including from the lawyers of the wrongfully imprisoned Romanians.

Subhuman. At times, the constructions of Romanians in Italian media did not resemble real, full people. In fact, on TV shows there has been the occasional remark that when talking about the Romanians one also had "the responsibility to say 'they are human beings'."[63] There seems to be a risk that the mainstream, bombarded with media constructions, may forget that Romanians belong to the human kind too:

> Now, what words will we invent for expressing the ferocious nature of Romanian men – and of their Roma, gypsy, subspecies – who are often associated with the Italians in the Latin cultural matrix? It's difficult for us to ascertain how the European man is far away from having triumphed over the material needs which continuously risk reducing him to a beast. It embarrasses us to deal with *a subhumanity, arrived among us from too close and with the documents scandalously in order*. The same shameful places in which this *subhumanity* gathers, encampments that frighten and shame us, confirm the suspicion of

[63] "Salvati dal Dna, ma c'è un mistero," *Porta a Porta*, March 9, 2009, Rai Uno.

> *an uncivil nature without hope of normalization*. So, what kind of "hatchways" has Romania opened wide, to use the language of mayor Veltroni? *What kind of lowlife population has Bucharest diverted to do damage in our homeland*?[64]

Again, various tropes associated with the construction of Romanianness in the Italian media resurfaced here. The ferociousness of the Romanians defied conventional vocabularies, so new ones had to be invented implying that Romanians were so foreign, so alien to the European essence despite their frequent pooling together with Italians that they were irreconcilable and, consequently, the Romanians *needed* to be ousted from Europe. Their savage nature was the ultimate and undebatable proof for the complete absence of any kind of right to lay claim to Europeanness. They were radically different, in a negative and inferior way and, fundamentally, there were so in an irredeemable way. As subhumans, even if their documents were in order – what a travesty! – they could not be pooled together with the civilized, superior "Us." I read the reference to the paperwork that was scandalously in order to be an intimation of the kind of distinction that this moral panic aimed to establish: despite the *de jure* status of Romanians as Europeans, *de facto* they were not EU citizens, nor could they hope to ever become. Additionally, the allusion to the scandal of the Romanian legal immigrant status harked back to the trope of the inopportune admission of Romania to the European Union. Indeed, the quotation definitively established that the Romanian subhumanity was of an uncivil nature that could not ever be amended. As so often implied in the discourse about the Romanians, here there was an explicit reference to the unchanging, essentialized "nature" of this ethnicity that was incompatible with any degree of civilization. The paralleling of balkanist tropes in this narrative was remarkable. Statements of this sort also created the impression that all Romanians lived in camps of subhumanity which was very far from the truth. In fact, the camps have existed and

[64] "Il codice perduto della civiltà," Gad Lerner, November 2, 2007, *La Repubblica*. (my italics)

have been tolerated in Italy for decades before the advent of the Romanians, with a variety of ethnicities populating them, including Italians. Most Romanians did the kind of domestic work in Italy that required live-in housing arrangements. The system of visibility created at the center of the moral panic, however, rendered this part of the Romanian population, the overwhelming majority, invisible and mute. Whoever did not fit the mold created by the media was discarded as irrelevant and the fetishism of numbers and statistics – so rampant in fashioning the image of the Romanian criminal – was quietly cast aside here, since the inconsequentiality of the majority had been firmly established ex ante within discourse.

The final two sentences of the quotation above, replete as they are with imagery of the flood and invasion – so typical for immigration in Italy – strengthened the idea of the very urgent need to confine the swarming Romanian invaders. A double intentionality was imputed to them. On the one hand, it was implied that Romania had sent its criminal and irremediably inferior population to Italy on purpose. This deliberately harmful act was equivalent with a symbolic attack on the Italian social body which, in turn, justified the deployment of military repressive measures in amending the situation. This constituted a great example of what Edelman (1988) referred to when he argued that the solution predated the creation of a social problem. On the other hand, it was suggested that the Romanians who invaded Italy have done so with the direct and sole intention of wreaking havoc, much like a destructive tidal wave. This too called for extreme measures, the situation could not be taken lightly and the only solution was to push the Romanian invaders back to the backwaters they came from and to firmly close the hatchways to make sure that they remain permanently confined in future. In this context, the repeated demands of the Italian government to Romanian officials to deny the right to leave the country for all sentenced delinquents appeared symbolically legitimated.

Backward. In the Italian media, Romania was presented as a wild territory somewhere in the East, both the origin and a safe haven of the most hardened criminals who enjoyed total impunity there. Romania appeared to be a territory without laws or authorities, a callous country teeming with highly dangerous criminals and a thoroughly corrupt place – a genuine Mecca of bribery. Interestingly, there was no discussion of how the status of EU member state may enable the long arm of the law to reach for anyone who has committed offenses in Western Europe, even if they did return to Romania. There was talk about how (some) Romanian parents only begrudgingly sent their children to school in Italy, ignoring the fact that primary education has been free and compulsory in Romania for more than 150 years. Similarly, there were mentions of Romanian children as old as nine who have never known immunizations when, in fact, these too are mandatory in Romania.

This is how Vittorio Rizzi, the head of the Mobile Police Task Force in Rome described the relations of Isztoika and Racz:

> They weren't part of that type of pyramidal structure because they don't do that, they were into *a clan-like formation,* they relate to a number of persons based on the *nomad life* they live.[65]

With this reference, the police chief not only drove the point that the Romanians were incapable even of modern organization, but he projected them in a time horizon of barbaric prehistory, inflicted with tones of racist prejudice relating to the inborn criminality of their genetic stock. Typically, whenever Romania was brought up, it was a case of highly emotionally moving descriptions, with no kind of background offered. Everything in that country seemed to be of an extreme depravity and callousness: a mother who had no feelings, an extremely

[65] "Liberi per lo stupro, ma restano in carcere," *Porta a Porta,* March 10, 2009, Rai Uno. (my italics)

degraded, unhuman environment.[66] In this way, the composite image of Romania was that of the "natural" breeding ground of depravity, crime and callousness. In the way it was constructed in Italian media discourse, Romania knew no law, no moral and no change, thus excluding the possibility of evolution – it was the bulwark of extreme backwardness and complete lack of civilization. It was interesting how these images of the imputed Romanian backwardness were diametrically opposed to the image that Italy sought to project of itself as a modern, civilized and welcoming (*accogliente*) country, yet they followed closely the pattern of previous constructions of immigration in Italy which had also been interpreted as backward (for a detailed analysis of the Albanian case see Mai, 2002, pp. 88–93).

Uncivilized. A frequently encountered trope in Italian media narratives was that of the decrepitude that envelops all things Romanian (or at least those that were made visible in the press). This was a description of all of a locality in Romania:

> It is not a village, it is a shantytown. In the highest points, the mud on the streets comes up higher than knee-level. There are almost 300 houses and they all look the same. Boards and metal plates stacked up, dry dirt instead of cement. The homes are fenced with wooden poles; there are piles of iron in the yards, alongside laundry hung out to dry and children who play in the mud. The better off families can be recognized because they have a horse kept in a stable built with more care than the homes reserved for the humans.[67]

This kind of description naturalized and generalized the squalid living quarters known from Italian nomad camps to the entire population of Romania. It seemed that Romanians ended

[66] "«Beveva, colpa di una donna»," Marco Imarisio, November 5, 2007, *Corriere della Sera*.

[67] "«Beveva, colpa di una donna»," Marco Imarisio, November 5, 2007, *Corriere della Sera*.

up living in improper conditions in Italy, because that was the type of arrangements they preferred, as their homes proved. Rendering the revolting living conditions typical of the Romanians in this way, once again the distinctive gap separating the Italians and the Romanian – thus marked as radically different – was widened. A disgruntled Italian interviewed during a TV show attributed his unemployment to the Romanians who were satisfied with a monthly salary of €800 because "twenty of them" shared the same house in order to save on rent. [68] It was implied that these uncivilized people, leaving on what was almost the threshold of humanity thus made life impossible for honest Italians.

Below is the testimony of the so-called "super-eyewitness" in the Caffarella case. He is an Italian doctor jogging through the park who had seen two men fitting the description of Isztoika and Racz, sitting on a bench on the afternoon of the rape:

> I have noticed two citizens, perhaps from the East, because they were occupying the gym equipment without working out and especially the dark one because he had a marked face… he struck me because of his marked and unsettling face.[69]

It seems that the super-eyewitness deduced the Eastern-ness – which, in Italy, tended to be used as a synonymous for Romanianness – of the two men from their lack of civility in sitting on sports equipment, instead of working out on it. In this manner, the lack of civilization became a proxy for Romanian and the other way around. The quotation above illustrates how easily racist tropes can be recruited into this type of discourse that established the uncivilized nature of the dark and unsettling Eastern men – marked within this particular type of construction as

[68] "Arrivano I mostri!," *AnnoZero*, March 5, 2009, Rai Due.

[69] "Caffarella, ora c'è un superteste," Marino Bissom, March 10, 2009, *La Reppublica*.

irreconcilably different from the Italian mainstream. The sarcastic remark of Piero Sansonetti applies very well here: "It is not me who is racist, it is them who are Romanian!"[70]

Degenerate. The trope of the degenerate immigrant is well represented in Italy (Mai, 2002, p. 81) and could, thus, be easily mobilized and customized to include the newly arrived Romanians. I discern three main axes of degeneration in the construction of Romanianness in Italian media: sexual, physical and moral.

It was widely implied that Romanians have a characteristic degenerate sexual drive that pushed them to commit innumerable acts of sexual violence, with a predilection for gang rapes. The blunt motivation of the five Romanian rapists in Guidonia in January of 2009 was that they "wanted to have fun."[71] The two Romanian offenders in the park of Caffarella a month later rejoiced in forcing the boyfriend of the victim to witness the rape of his 14-year old girlfriend. In this context, the proposal of the Subsecretary for Health to introduce chemical castration as *the* therapeutic *treatment* for rapists[72] made sense, since there could be no other way to deal with degenerates. Even beyond the realm of the prosecuted offenses, it was suggested that sexual promiscuity was normal for Romanians. Notions of the normalcy of the Romanian prostitutes, the Romanian prostitution lords and, increasingly, the Romanian male prostitution have become common sense in Italian media.

In the Caffarella case, there was a great emphasis in the media on the degenerate physical appearance of the rapist christened, in an unmistakable racial key, "the Moor." He was said to

[70] "È razzismo C'è la prova del Dna," Piero Sansonetti, March 6, 2009, *il Riformista*.

[71] "Guidonia, due agguati in poche ore "Volevamo divertirci"," Marino Bisso and Paolo G. Brera, January 29, 2009, *La Reppublica*.

[72] "Liberi per lo stupro, ma restano in carcere," *Porta a Porta*, March 10, 2009, Rai Uno.

have a "marked" deformed face, missing two frontal teeth and three fingers on a hand. The trope of the maimed body aligned very well with the notion of stigma (Goffman, 1974) that renders people tainted and discounted. Constructed as a physical degenerate, Karol Racz was not only symbolically stained, but he was fashioned into a dangerous criminal.

Finally, it was implied that Romanians had a characteristic degenerate morality. Newspaper articles relished in teasing out how Mailat's concubine used to be engaged to his uncle before fathering a child with the brother of his stepfather. Other reports brought up the complete absence of feelings in Mailat's family and the callousness with which the deaths of several of his siblings were recounted by his mother. There were also discussions about the ease with which countless Romanian parents had given their children away in the Communist years, making it seem that these were a different breed of people with a very degraded type of humanity that placed them on the outer edge of the barely human. As such, they were irretrievably lost to civilization and needed to be aseptically excised from the social body they have invaded and will inevitably pollute.

All the same. Romanians were constructed as a homogeneous and organized invading group. Any differences that may have supported the idea of individuality were flattened out as Romanians were reduced to criminals within the oppressive system of visibility perpetuated by the media. Below is an excerpt from a discussion about the fear of walking at night through a park in Rome, in the wake of the Caffarella case:

> Reporter: Whom would you see coming from the dark? As the fear, what face would you give to this fear? The face of a Romanian citizen? Of an Italian?

Italian actress: But *it's clear that the first response* that comes to your mind *with everything that we hear is a Romanian citizen*. I don't want to say that. I don't want to say that. What comes to my mind it's *as if there were people who emerge from underground, there is something indistinctive, indefinite, without face, without name that could be a people that you don't know, that you cannot distinguish. You don't know anything. This is what induces even more fear. The idea induces even more fear that there is a nation of people who are hungry, who are longing for, who commit terrible crimes, especially against the most vulnerable people* – we hear that those are the women, the children, women regardless of age. And it even comes to mind that *there is something more sadistic, more violent, almost something having to do with slashing*, almost… I don't know, I seem to be able to read in it *something more evil than a sexual robbery*.

Reporter: Meaning that if you indicate the Romanian, the Romanian then reacts.

Italian actress: Meaning that these deeds that we hear of at this time committed by this type of people, in my opinion, *they don't only have to do with a sexual desire that needs to be satisfied. But instead with something that has to do with asserting ownership over a nation that probably rejects you*.[73]

Romanians were thus perceived as quintessential predators, symbolically raping an entire nation. There was a pervasive sense that the entire Italian social body was under attack by a pack of marauding aggressors. In a similar vein, the incumbent Mayor of Rome, Gianni Alemanno, portrayed rape – the emblematic offence of the Romanians - as "a kind of symbol, a

[73] "Arrivano I mostri!," *AnnoZero*, March 5, 2009, Rai Due. (my italics)

way for immigrants in a position of disadvantage and discomfort to attack Italian institutions."[74] This neatly coordinated community of congenital sexual degenerates seemed to be orchestrating an organized assault on the unwitting Italian population, punishing the receiving society through rape and terror for its innate indelible baseness and incompatibility with civilization. The pervasiveness of this kind of tropes of the army of the invading Romanians which constructed all members of the ethnicity into an indistinguishable mass elided the existence of Romanian individuals who could potentially be different. Since Romanians were primarily processed in bulk, it was acceptable, as Piero Sansonetti[75] put it, to have doubts about the guilt of any specific Romanian, but not concerning the guilt of "the Romanians" in general.

There was a puzzling case of mistaken identification with Karol Racz that spoke directly to the underlying belief in the fundamental Romanian homogeneity in crime. The identikit described a 20-25 year old person, 5'11" tall, with long hair covering his forehead and speaking Italian. The apprehended Racz was 36, barely 5'1", with pronounced frontal alopecia and unable to speak a word of Italian. Yet, the victim insisted on her "positive" identification of him as her aggressor, even after repeated DNA tests had exonerated him. The obvious physical mismatch in the face of persistent accusations prompted the idea that what was at stake here was not apprehending a determinate individual, but chasing after a typology. In fact, the Court of Appeal has motivated, upon releasing Racz from prison, that the physical characteristics supposedly individuating him as the perpetrator were actually "common to an indefinite number of individuals belonging to a certain ethnicity."[76] This kind of linking of typical physical characteristics with deviant behavior suggested the possibility of symbolically creating an

[74] "Alemanno: "Stupri? Potrebbe essere un modo di attaccare le istituzioni"," March 9, 2009, *Quotidiano*.

[75] "È razzismo C'è la prova del Dna," Piero Sansonetti, March 6, 2009, *il Riformista*.

[76] "Il dna incastra due volte il romeno accusato dello stupro di San Valentino," April 6, 2009, *Coriere della Serra*.

ethnicity of crime. Assuming, in this way, that all Romanians were, by their very nature, criminal enabled one to understand how Mailat could come to trigger acts of violence against unrelated compatriots. The same idea about the interchangeability and the steadfast Romanian attachment to delinquency seemed to underpin the statements of Alessandro Silj from the Italian Council of Statistical Social Science. He concluded that if the Romanian immigrant associations will not succeed in convincing Bucharest to deny passports to its citizens with criminal records, the ignominy will indiscriminately taint the entire Romanian population in Italy,[77] confirming the stereotype of a wholesale guilty nation. A cartoon circulating through the media in the wake of the Caffarella park rape mocked this perceived Romanian homogeneity in crime. In the vignette, two policemen were having a conversation:

> Policeman A: The affair of the rape should teach us something.
>
> Policeman B: When you see a Romanian, arrest him: you don't know the reason, but he certainly does.[78]

Despite the obvious satirical tinge of the caricature, it managed to capture vividly the trope of generalized Romanian a priori guilt, which allowed of no exceptions.

In this chapter I have argued that, despite the explicit tone of the media features, this explosion of attention to Romanians living in Italy was not a mere reflection of the events taking place in the Peninsula. Instead, I demonstrate that the heightened media attention was intricately linked to the construction of a specific social problem, namely Romanian immigrant criminality.

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[77] "Omicidi, violenze, furti: il «caso romeno»," M. Antonietta Calabrò, February 23, 2009, *Coriere della Serra*.

[78] "Informazione distorta: rivedere la deontologia professionale," Lorella Lattavo, March 17-30, 2012, *Actualitatea Magazin*.

I argue that it is only in the historical, social and cultural environment of the early 2000s in Italy that this discourse about Romanian criminality is intelligible. The real concerns behind what came to be regarded as a genuine media campaign fixated on Romanian crime were intrinsically linked to power. I maintain that the ultimate stakes behind the overwhelming media attention have to do not only with the power to represent, but also with political power. The fears that were manufactured and mobilized along the way were firmly attached to perceived threats to the fundamental social order, in an unfolding of events typical of moral panics. It is with the implied rationale of preserving the existing configurations of power that a moral panic was unleashed against a collective subject portrayed as the undisputed source of all social anxieties. It is a rather infelicitous coincidence that the Romanians living in Italy, as a societal character, so closely fit the bill of the bogeyman. Without denying the existence of prejudiced attitudes in the Italian society at the beginning of the 2000s, I do not believe that these would have sufficed to unleash anything like the wave of hatred and violence the Romanians in Italy experienced as a result of the mounting of the moral panic. As a matter of fact, I do not believe that the moral panic was spurred by racial hatred at all, despite the elaborate construction of Romanian otherness in mainstream media. This may seem paradoxical, given that racial prejudice represents a major part of what gets mobilized to set in motion the moral panic. However, I think this is simply due to the great purchase of racial prejudice as a very quick way to activate latent rules of interpretation and to create new socially shared labels. An additional advantage of mobilizing racial prejudice is that the labels it rapidly fosters seem to have emerged "naturally," in a bottom-up process, without any prompting from primary definers who are then able to use the diffuse sense that "the people" perceive Romanians as criminals as a legitimation for their corresponding and apparently merely reactive definition of the situation. This allows for a swift

resolution of the "problem" in the intended direction: the physical elimination of the constructed threat through deportation. My interpretation relies on a Foucauldian understanding of power as a "machine working by a complex system of cogs and gears, where it's the place of a person which is determining, and not his nature" (1980, p. 158). Therefore, this was not about anything inherent in this or that Romanian perpetrator or even anything native to the Romanian community as a whole (i.e. racial hatred), but solely about the position they happened to occupy in the dynamic configuration of social power in late 2007 in Italy. A classic case of the wrong people, at the wrong time, in the wrong place who got caught up in the whirlwind of social anxiety, with specific consequences of the level of identity through sedulous representation work. Having outlined here the elements of Romanian otherness which mark them as incompatible both with the Italian society (criminal, aggressive, dangerous, savage, always guilty, Us vs. Them) and with modernity and civilization in general (backward, uncivilized, degenerate, irrational, subhuman and all the same), I dedicate chapter five to examining the consequences of this extensive and aggressive media coverage for Romanian identity positionings.

Chapter 5: Identity Negotiation Among Romanians in Italy

As discussed in chapter four, the construction of Romanianness in Italy is highly effective, pervasive and oppressive. This interpretation of Romanianness marks the members of this ethnicity as blatantly incompatible with the Italian society, modernity, and civilization itself. The incongruity between the mainstream construction of Romanianness and anything that stands for core European values is such that it forces every Romanian living in Italy to negotiate a solution to this perceived identity antagonism. In my interviews, episodes came up repeatedly where people felt the need to justify and further qualify their ethnicity by asserting "I am Romanian, *but*…" In analyzing the data gathered during my fieldwork, I have synthetized inductively eight distinct strategies used by Romanians in negotiating their identity positioning vis-à-vis the construction of Romanianness in Italian media. Throughout this dissertation, I conceptualize identities, following Stuart Hall, as "the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (1990, p. 225). Therefore, the transformative potential wielded through these adaptative strategies lies at the very center of articulating these more advantageous, but equally unstable points of identification within the discourses of history, culture and media (Hall, 1990, p. 226). Since these cultural identities do not exist once and for all, transcending place, time and history (Hall, 1990, p. 225), the burden of their articulation is largely placed on the individual, forced to produce identities for himself. Since these positionings have to be created within representation, they are strategic as they continue to be arbitrary, for they cannot escape the play of signification in the infinite semiosis of language (Hall, 1990, pp. 229–230). As these positionings attempt to pose reactions to mainstream definitions, they continue to be inscribed within the continuous play of power. I dedicate an entire chapter to teasing out the implications of a particular type of historically and

culturally situated discourse in terms of identity as I read the entire moral panic as a battle in the realm of the politics of identity. I understand symbolic power, defined as the "power of constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 170) to be the instrument for waging this battle.

Romanian immigrants in Italy find themselves in a liminal position that makes it necessary to come up with various, complex and often overlapping strategies to find meanings in their lives in a way that projects them into the realm of the acceptable, if not as full-fledged, recognized members of society, at least as tolerable ones. The in-betweenness typical of the Romanian in Italy is reminiscent of the sociological type of the stranger. Georg Simmel discussed how the stranger, while inorganically appended to a group is still an organic member of that faction (1950, p. 408). As a potential wanderer who does not belong to the group from the very beginning, he imports qualities into the group (Simmel, 1950, p. 402). I argue that the qualities imported by Romanian immigrants in Italy are negative (criminality, backwardness, savagery…), yet they are essential to imposing the desired definition of Italian identity. Despite the very bleak construction of Romanianness (as rapists, murderers…), I agree with Simmel that the specific form of interaction connected to the stranger is a very positive one for the receiving context as it allows, with its role of "constitutive alterity", the construction of a glorified notion of Italian identity. Furthermore, this particular construction of Romanianness enables the imposition of this hardened notion of Italian identity: everything happens seamlessly, apparently "naturally" making it seem that things have always been that way and they will forever continue to be like that. In turn, this projection into eternity adds further weight and purchase to the Italian identity fashioned in the process. What is intriguing in light of what Simmel (1950, p. 405) identifies as the practical and theoretical freedom of the stranger unbridled by habitus, piety

and precedent is the degree to which that Romanian immigrants internalize the dominant gaze. I read this as a deep investment into the game (Bourdieu, 1984, 1991, 2000), signalizing the Romanian willingness to be recognized as full-fledged fellow European citizens, making their eventual rejection all the more bitter.

Of the factors imposing the necessity to eke out individual grounds for inclusion in the Italian society I will pay special attention to transnationalism, identity hybridity, precariousness, the lack of a united Romanian immigrant community, an attitude of resentment towards the home country and an awareness of one's exclusively formal belonging to the European Union. This constellation of factors defined the special background against which all negotiations of Romanian identity in Italy take place.

Acknowledging together with Jonathan Rutherford that "there are no ready-made identities … we can unproblematically slip into" (1990, p. 25) and that identities are always evolving within representation (Hall, 1990), it becomes easier to understand why the experience of migration itself puts pressure on the Romanian residents in Italy to negotiate an identity positioning for themselves that reconciles an imaginative memory of the home country with the dominant discourse in the receiving society. My informants often broke out in tears when I asked them where home was for them as a lot of them explained that while they felt at home both in Romania and in Italy, they did not feel completely at ease in either location. Whenever they were in Italy they would miss Romania and as soon as they arrived in Romania they would miss Italy terribly. This feeling is typically associated with transnationalism, meaning "the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link their societies of origin and settlement" (Glick Schiller & Basch in Schmitter Heisler, 2000, p. 87). After residing in Italy, they would feel neither flesh, nor fowl, literally pushed into a gray zone that brought up

the distressing question of fundamental identity allegiance and, for some people, loyalty. Even for people living with the dream of an eventual return to Romania, the place of redemption where they would again be their own masters, there was an acute feeling of being stranded between two worlds. This is proof of the fact that assimilation and transnationalism are inextricably intertwined in practice and the classical way of seeing them as dichotomous terms should be superseded as Waldinger and Fitzgerald (2004) recommend. Victor[79] explained beautifully why he would no longer choose to leave his country if he could turn back time:

> Victor: When I think about *home*, honestly, I don't know, I don't know, I feel like… (fairly long pause) *a solitary wolf*…home, after I have already lived in Italy for five or six years, the connections, the way they say "you forget the eyes that you do not see" (…) *it's not the same thing, you've lost the relationship*! When I went home, even this summer *I felt (...) like a fish outside of the water*, I couldn't understand how (…) *I feel between two worlds*… (…) *It is just as if you would take out of the earth a tree or a flower, roots included, from the terrain where it was born, you've moved it and you've planted it somewhere else and then it needs time to grow roots* – it's the same here. Meaning that *you have to grow roots, to show to yourself who you are as a person, (...) so to grow roots and to start, as it where, from scratch*. The way the saying goes, at home, if you have nothing, or your parents are not well off, you're also starting from scratch. But it's not quite that way because if you already have parents, acquaintances, friends, you do not start from scratch. So, *being in Italy, you need to form a personality for yourself, to start from scratch…* (…) *I still have some of my roots in Moldova and the Moldovan land made me bloom a lot better, but here I am like a tree that lives, that does*

[79] Victor (fictitious name) held double Moldovan-Romanian citizenship.

> *not die, so it has roots, it lives, but it does not grow any other roots, or even if it does grow roots it does so at a much, much slower speed.* (…) By coming to Italy I have lost these connections and (…) *I feel that I have no-one by returning to my country, it's as if I would come from Italy to another foreign country and I would have to start from scratch all over again. I feel in an uneasiness psychologically and sentimentally and spiritually – very, very deplorable* and I would want to improve my social standing, the way I live and once I get to a somewhat better off situation, I already want to return home to see how things are. (Victor, personal communication, March 10, 2012, my italics)

So, the experience of migration in itself imposes an acute need to sort out one's identity allegiance that potentially renders one more vulnerable to the workings of labels. Victor's statement illustrates Waldinger and Fitzgerald's (2004) prediction about the ways in which international migration inevitably collides with the mechanisms of the nation-states, by refusing neat categorization. Interestingly, although the dominant discourse tries to fix Romanians in a place of unnegotiable and indubitable inferiority, their transnational existence and the hybridity connected with it means that they remain profoundly Balkan in that they are not able to dispense in the least with their in-betweenness. Rather, their cultural and geographic relativity is exacerbated and, at times, the ambiguity that this implies can actually serve as a refuge in the face of widespread discrimination. That same ambiguity can also form a basis for the negotiation an acceptable identity positioning.

One of my informants discussed his belief that people take their home country with them wherever they are, explaining that "people are huge snails who drag on through life. They do not have to show it on their backs, but they carry that shell in their souls" (Adrian, personal communication, March 24, 2012; my italics). The home country in this case, as Hall (1990) and

Cunningham and Sinclair (2001) remind us, is not a static cultural entity. The painful awareness of the impossibility in identity terms of any kind of final and absolute return to that pristine, "original" home country clearly showed through in Victor's words. Just as much as Romanian immigrants needed to navigate the constructions of Romanianness in the Italian mainstream, they also needed to come to terms with narratives of the home country that recombined in imaginative ways affective memory, fantasy and myth. The diaspora experience is necessarily one of heterogeneity, difference and hybridity (Hall, 1990, p. 235). This explains why there can be no static concept of Romanianness among the immigrants, but one with many different re-inscriptions. At the same time, conceptualizing identity in this way allows one to understand the multi-vectorial identity tensions that Romanians need to negotiate on a daily basis, and which, on occasion, risk to overwhelm them and bring them to the brink of tears.

Complicating the situation is the high variability intrinsic to identity positionings. The negotiation of acceptable identity positionings for Romanians working in Italy happened primarily at an individual level, with the precariousness of the Romanian standing and the lack of unity in the community acting as determining factors. As virtually all of my informants repeated, most Romanians came to Italy thinking that they will work for short periods of time and they were consequently entirely focused on securing the funds they need and almost completely disengaged from any other types of concerns. While in Italy, they lived highly segmented lives, exclusively focused on material gain. Unfortunately, for almost everyone those initial months of sacrifice turned into long years as the increasing economic demands at home kept prolonging the stay in Italy, without ever really changing the short term, financially-focused mindset of the people. In this way, a lot of immigrants came to realize that they had lived in Italy for eight, nine, 10 years or more with this perpetually deferred prospect of their permanent

return to Romania. This type of survival lifestyle did not afford one the luxury of time for reflection for a satisfactory negotiation of identity and this, in turn, rendered people more vulnerable to the insidious work of labels. In a similar way, the Romanian lifestyle in Italy did not favor the articulation of a common, strong Romanian voice that could potentially present more meaningful resistance to the mainstream construction of the ethnicity.

Several informants, particularly during their early adjusting stages in Italy expressed frustration with the home country. Glick Schiller (1995) explains that transnational processes are accompanied by the "re-inscription" of identity onto the territory of the homeland and this, at this times, can be a painful process. Through this kind of re-inscription the interior conflict characteristic of the marginal man (Park, 1928) permanently stranded between two worlds is heightened and it is not always easy to deal with the resulting psychological pressure. This is how one of my subjects explained her annoyance with the motherland:

> Interviewer: How do you find Romania?
>
> Simona: The way *we, Italians,* put it *schifo* (something revolting, disgusting). *I don't like it.* Really, the situation in Romania changes from year to year and it grows ever worse. I look at my parents who have a pension, they get by, but you cannot say that they live a decent life. It happened to me once to go home and my mother told me that she cannot even afford to buy two bananas. And I said: "how come? You do have your pension."
>
> "Yes, but I may need that money later because I am old."
>
> Interviewer: So you don't like what's going on in Romania economically?
>
> Simona: No, first and foremost *politically*! Because I think in Romania all that happens is that we are really being sold from now for 200 years.
>
> Interviewer: Because of *corruption*?

> Simona: *Yes, it is precisely because of this that I left. This is maybe one of the essential reasons. Underneath the economic one*. (Simona, personal communication, July 10, 2010, my italics)

Simona, a woman holding double Romanian and Italian citizenship, was one of the very few people I talked to who, on occasion, would refer to herself as Italian. (At other times, she would just as casually use the expression "we, Romanians.") This kind of oscillating, forever indecisively, between a sense of belonging with the Italian society and an equally strong one identifying her with the Romanian context, both of them incomplete and impossible to exist in the absence of the other term, is indeed reminiscent of Park's (1928) marginal man. The type of aversion to Romania that Simona referenced may result in a greater openness to assimilate the interpretations circulated in Italian media. Yet, the type of exasperation with the home country that Simona expressed resonated with several other people I interviewed. One woman almost broke out in tears explaining how angry she was at Romania for having forced her to abandon her city, her family and her country which she still loved dearly, despite resenting it for not offering any kind of opportunities to continue living there. In the words of another interviewee,

> I consider my entire existence here to be an exile. Why? Because I left [Romania] because I couldn't develop as I would have wanted or as I would have been capable to develop…. I was sick of Romania. (Petru, personal communication, March 22, 2012)

Common to several of my informants was the memory of a Romania that was both resented and deeply loved, desired and rejected in a disconcerting and often contradictory mixture of feelings that was often overwhelming at a psychological level. The tears that I frequently saw were at once an expression of frustration and of repressed longing. The nostalgia of the origins and of the good old days that these people expressed was very much like Hall

described it: “it can neither be fulfilled nor requited, and hence is the beginning of the symbolic, of representation, the infinitely renewable source of desire, memory, myth, search, discovery” (Hall, 1990, p. 236). This tension between the resentment for the uncongenial motherland and the almost compulsive need for a symbolic recuperation of it in order to anchor one’s identity positioning rendered the immigrants productive in the existing power regime. Moreover, it made them more vulnerable to inflicting symbolic violence upon themselves as they appropriated the labels of the dominant discourse.

Most of my interviewees were clear about their feeling that Italian society was out to “eliminate” them (Mihaela, personal communication, July 20, 2010). At the same time, the vast majority of my informants felt that this was a well-deserved measure, given the ferocious criminal behavior their compatriots had exhibited in the country which had welcomed them, ignoring the fact that, in the way it was passed, the emergency decree made possible the deportation of virtually any Romanian, without appeal and without any burden of proof on behalf of the Italian authorities. At this juncture, Romania’s membership in the European Union was perceived as a formal shield hampering mass deportations. Nevertheless, there was a deep awareness of the fact that Romanians were not seen as being on an equal standing with other West-European countries:

> Mihaela: We [Romanians] will never be on par with Italy! Or maybe in ten years …
>
> Interviewer: Why not?
>
> Mihaela: Because they have a lot here. They have money and they’re doing well. It’s true that there are also poor people, but not as many as we have.
>
> Interviewer: So is it just about the economic situation?

Mihaela: Nowadays, it's the economic situation that gets talked about. Who cares about culture? They're not all that cultured! (Mihaela, personal communication, July 20, 2010)

Romanians in Italy had to deal with a multidimensional rejection: the motherland denied them all gainful prospects, Italy repudiated them as killers and their construction in the media marked them as incompatible with civilization and, thus, with Europe at large. This painful experience was doubled by the deep awareness that all of my informants expressed about their lack of legitimacy as genuine and complete EU citizens. Interestingly enough, it is the lack of material means that these people, in line with mainstream constructions, read as an indelible mark of inferiority. Romanian poverty in Italy was re-signified into a cultural pathology that was equated with a total lack of moral compass. Oftentimes I would hear the stories of mainstream media replicated in my interviews as applying to a generic, unknown Romanian woman who choose to go to Italy specifically to steal someone's husband. The implications of promiscuous sexuality of Romanian women – as opposed to the degenerate sexuality of Romanian men – and their willingness to exchange sexual favors for money are illustrations of the insidious work of labels within the Romanian community itself. Internalizing this construction of the specifically Romanian type of poverty with its far reaching moral implications often had consequences at the level of identity:

Ana: But *I already feel less Romanian*!

Interviewer: And what are the conditions that make you feel less Romanian?

Ana: *The fact that the living standard in Romania is very low*.

Interviewer: From what point of view?

Ana: *Economically, socially, and first of all politically*. I'm fed up with it, whenever I talk to my family they tell me that they've cut another 25%, another 50%, that makes you

> not want to hear anything more! At least for me, there are times when (…) I don't even want to hear Romanian on TV! (Ana, personal communication, July 18, 2010; my italics)

Romanian poverty, understood as an insurmountable hindrance in the way of civilization and of a genuine belonging to Europe, above and beyond the formal EU citizen status, acted to strip people of their previous identity allegiances. There appeared the need to renegotiate one's identity in a way that served to dissociate oneself from a painful reality that seemed completely beyond one's control. The eight strategies that I discuss in the remainder of this chapter represent different options to compensate for one's perceived flaws. This is a complex multilayered process involving distinct, but not mutually exclusive strategies. As a matter of fact, during participant observation I could see that most Romanian immigrants had a repertoire of such identity negotiation strategies that they would draw on, depending on the context.

Identity Negotiation Strategies

Obliteration. The most radical move to resolve the identity strain that came with the inescapable mainstream representations was an attempt to obliterate any traces of Romanianness. By the obliteration I mean the complete and permanent erasing of all traces of Romanianness within one's control. Some of my informants reported that their children resulted from mixed marriages, but bearing Romanian last names had to deal with discrimination in Italian schools. Even if they were born and raised in Italy, speaking the language fluently and without a foreign accent, their surnames marked them in a way which put them ill at ease. One of my interviewees reported that his children, returning from school, insistently asked to have their surname changed on grounds that they did not like it being Romanian. Another subject explained how it happened that her 10-year old grandson could not speak any Romanian:

> Monica: Up until age three, he spoke Romanian. Until he was three, the child spoke it at home with his mother and father. As soon as he went to school, to kindergarten, at age three, when his mom picked him up from the kindergarten –he was three – *he simply refused to speak Romanian*! His mom would tell him "Simone, speak Romanian!" and he would answer "*no, me Italian!*" … Now I speak Romanian to him, he understands, [but] he answers in Italian.
>
> Interviewer: Would you like him to learn Romanian as well?
>
> Monica: Of course! Of course! I always tell him that the Romanian language is beautiful; we have a lot of authors and a lot of beautiful tales. When I tell him a story I ask him "how should I tell it? In Romanian or in Italian?" And he answers [speaking Italian] "in Romanian." Of course I would've liked it. (Monica, personal communication, June 14, 2011; my italics)

While the young age of the subjects and their relative lack of investment in the Romanian heritage certainly played a role in adopting this negotiation strategy, the sudden and complete dissociation from any elements of Romanianness pointed to some sort of underlying identity tension. It seems that belonging was mapped in binary terms, with a Romanian surname or the ability to speak the Romanian language adulterating one's Italianness. This identity tension did not seem to allow for a lot of variance – and certainly not of a Romanian kind at that. The easiest way to resolve it then within the boundaries of Italian identity was to obliterate any traces of Romanianness. Although I did not encounter this strategy in any adult, the fact that children so quickly came to an awareness of the identity strain brought about by one's Romanianness demonstrated just how pervasive the work of the labels was in Italian society.

Concealment. This strategy refers to the attempt to obscure and, at times, camouflage one's Romanianness. Some of my interviewees were extremely bothered at what they perceived to be attempts by some of their compatriots to hide their Romanian identity. One of my informants recounted how she helped another woman on the bus with directions and even translated into Italian for her some common Romanian phrases, explaining that those were the expressions used in her home country to congratulate someone. The unknown woman then happened to drop some paperwork and my informant was appalled to see that this woman who had responded with a wry smile to her Italian translations was also Romanian. When asked to confirm her citizenship, she responded – in Italian! – that she was indeed Romanian. My informant concluded:

> So many cases like these with Romanians have happened to me… And this is the way some of them are, but *this doesn't mean in any way that I'm hiding my own identity*. *I am Romanian and I'm proud of that*, this is what it is! (Anica, personal communication, June 4, 2011; my italics)

Anica's indignation was due in part to the fact that she felt that she had been played for a fool, but, more importantly, it came from her inability to accept the idea that Romanianness was something to be ashamed of that therefore needed to be concealed. She even openly admited that she was proud of her Romanian accent in Italian, yet not everyone shared her views:

> most of those [Romanians] who have a certain value and a word to say in what regards national identity *hide because in some way they want to be assimilated with the Italians*. A lot talk… – although you can notice it, however much you strive to seem Italian, it is nevertheless noticeable and you become ridiculous. It is noticeable from the face, from

the traits, you can tell from the gaze. (Dumitru, personal communication, March 20, 2012; my italics)

Despite frequent attempts by "worthy" Romanians, it was impossible to completely conceal one's foreignness from the receiving society, because there were definite markers of identity that prohibited passing. Accent, however faint it may have been, was such a sticky marker. However, what seemed to be at issue here was less concealing that one was alien and more obscuring the fact that one was Romanian. This pointed to the underlying perception that that it was not foreignness as such that was automatically constructed as negative – and which consequently needed to be avoided at all cost – but specifically Romanianness that epitomized a sum of undesirable traits. In this way, it appeared that the act of concealing was directed more towards one's compatriots than to the receiving society. This may explain why Dumitru found it difficult to meet Romanians with a similar educational background to his during his first seven years in Italy, making him choose to build friendships exclusively with Italian citizens.

Looking beyond this concealment strategy it becomes apparent that Romanians were not constructed as strangers in the way that Georg Simmel conceptualized them as fixed elements of a given social group, that are not fully part of that group, because they do not belong to it from the very beginning and they may leave again (in Coser, 1971, p. 182). Rather, the Romanian represents in this ordering and scaling of foreignness what Jakobson would call the marked category (in Todorova, 2009, p. 197) that is hierarchically subordinated to the unmarked category of alien. Similar to Simmel's stranger (in Calhoun, Gerteis, Moody, Pfaff, & Virk, 2007a, p. 298), Romanians were not perceived as individuals, but merely as belonging to a (criminal, backward, uncivilized, etc.) type. The critical difference to Simmel's stranger was the fact that they were not constructed as organic members of the group. In fact, the Romanian

savage invader was constructed as incompatible with civilization, his mere presence having a relentless deleterious effect on the receiving society that allowed for just one solution: deportation.

What is more, there seemed to be an interiorizing of the disciplining gaze proper of the system of visibility constructing Romanians as vile criminals. Stuart Hall explained this phenomenon in terms of "the power to make us see and experience *ourselves* as 'Other'" (1990, p. 225) as he distinguished it from mere demonizing from the outside, as it were:

> It is one thing to position a subject or set of peoples as the Other of the dominant discourse. It is quite another thing to subject them to that 'knowledge,' not only as a matter of imposed will and domination, by the power of the inner compulsion and subjective confirmation to the norm. (Hall, 1990, pp. 225–226)

In this vein, I argue that the Romanian immigrants in Italy not only internalized the dominant discourse, but actually came to live it, misrecognizing as it were the knowledge imparted by that dominant narrative as springing from their own subjectivities. In this way, they came full circle in the process of naturalization, completely eliding the social origins of (their) signification and of the power mechanisms they were inscribed within. It is important to notice that the Romanians were not by any means poor cultural dupes, merely putting up with a type of power that was primarily repressive. Following Foucault (in Calhoun, Gerteis, Moody, Pfaff, & Virk, 2007b, p. 203), I conceptualize power as fundamentally productive, forming knowledge and producing discourse throughout society. This type of approach closes what may otherwise appear as an immutable gulf separating those who exercise power from those who are just subjected to it, as it recognizes the very identity negotiation strategies that Romanians put forth as a type of knowledge created by power and endowed with power. Of course, acknowledging

the socially diffuse nature of power in this way does not in any way exclude the possibility of symbolic violence, as Foucault himself acknowledged that power circulates in society on unequal terms (Hall, 1997a, p. 261), without erasing inequalities.

One of my informants identified a particular type of gaze as specific of the Romanian immigrant in Italy:

> a gaze that looks like it is searching for an answer. He is *searching to see if he is recognized*, if he sees somebody he knows, I don't know, it's a fugitive gaze. … *The people who have managed to integrate themselves have lost that gaze, that fear*. At first, there was also the fear of not being recognized by the authorities, because not having documents the police would make controls and before entering the EU the *carabinieri* [Italian national military police] would stop you on the street, they would be asking for your documents and then they could send you home. A lot of people were not working legally and they couldn't be working legally because they had no documents and so on. Probably this was the origin of the whole thing… (Dumitru, personal communication, March 20, 2012; my italics)

It looks like Romanians have internalized the gaze at the center of the system of visibility which constructed them as incompatible with Italy, civilization and modernity itself. Experiencing themselves as "Other" by the force of inner compulsion, that gaze came to materialize on one's face as an indelible marker and a reminder of one's marginality and precariousness. This behavior is reminiscent of what Goffman (1974) calls the stigma of the discreditable, a taint that is not immediately perceivable, but that could be discovered at any moment, thus justifying the anxiety of its bearer. It is the awareness that comes with internalizing the gaze that prompted some people to resort to concealing the signs of Romanianness within

their control, in order to ease their passing. It may very well be that, at least for some, concealment was just one phase in an evolutionary process of negotiating identity positionings. Dumitru wished that he may be able to speak Italian without an accent "but not in order to hide – I have grown out of the time when I wanted to hide myself" (personal communication, March 20, 2012). While it may be convenient for some situations and for determined periods of time, it is hard to see how concealment could yield a satisfactory identification in the long run. Nevertheless, my fieldwork showed that it was still used extensively, by itself and also in conjunction with other strategies.

Situational use. This strategy involved the deployment of different constructions of self in different contexts. For those enjoying the luxury of having a repertoire of potentially valid identities, it became easier to pick and choose depending on the situation in question or even to mix and match hybrid positionings. This is how one of my Romanian-Moldovan informants defined himself in public:

> Victor: To be honest I answer, honestly, I'm telling you this honestly, honestly, honestly: I say that I am Moldovan and from the Republic of Moldova. Look, I am in a situation where I cannot say that I am either Romanian or Russian, I have lived in the Republic of Moldova because I was born during the times of the USSR and I have a culture and a civilization that is mostly Soviet, it's rather more Russian in character. From a cultural point of view, I have done my studies at the Romanian-German High School, meaning that *I have embraced with all my soul the Romanian culture and population* and before we were part of the USSR we used to be a united country[80]. *And I have fought, many times I have gone out into the square to demonstrate for the rights, for Romania, to enter*

[80] From 1918 to 1940 Moldova was part of Greater Romania (România Mare).

> *Europe*, meaning… *But living it Italy, during the first years I would say that I was Romanian and the people would already look at me differently.* And then I would tell them that I was from the Republic of Moldova and they would ask "where is the Republic of Moldova?"(..) "hmmm, I have never heard of such a Republic" (…) And then, it has not happened to me only once that even if I said that I was Moldovan… people would look at me with an eye…
>
> Interviewer:… slightly better than if you were Romanian
>
> Victor: Yes, yes! And at this point I would already tell a lot of people that I was from Russia, from the USSR, from the Republic of Moldova, the former Soviet Republic. Then all people would look at me as if I were American, Russian, with a respect and such a large and intense smile as if I were… ! (…) And, look, now when I meet people I tell them at first contact that I am from Russia, meaning from the former Soviet Union, Moldova. And then they no longer even pay attention to Moldova, they pay more attention to USSR and Russia and then they say "oh, Russian? I like the Russian literature and Russian culture a lot!" *They look at me a lot, a lot different than it if I would say that I'm Romanian or Moldovan! And although I have fought and I have gotten out into the squares in the Republic of Moldova for the [introduction of the] Romanian language, the alphabet and the culture and so on, I have re-orientated myself here*… (Victor, personal communication, March 10, 2012).

There was an unmistakable sense of pain in the descriptions of this young man who identified culturally as Romanian and even admitted that had he never left his native Moldova he would have felt Romanian through and through, whereas living in Italy, where he was confronted directly with the discriminatory construction of Romanianness, made him feel Russian,

disavowing his upbringing. Incidentally, it was his Romanian passport that allowed him to reside legally in Italy, as the Republic of Moldova is not part of the EU. Victor's statement eloquently illustrated the very real consequences of representation underpinned by a system of visibility that constructed Romanianness as the marked category within the range of foreignness existing in Italy. The relative invisibility of Moldovans appeared as an advantage here. Victor's statement made it clear that the understanding and the deployment of identity could be utterly situational, revealing the plasticity of the concept of identity. This makes it interesting to probe for the deeper reasons that prompt one to re-orient himself both inwardly and outwardly. At this point, the thoroughly social character of identity became apparent. Paraphrasing George Herbert Mead (1934 in Calhoun et al., 2007a, pp. 292–294), in this re-orientation, both the "me" as the internalized set of attitudes of others and the "I" as the response of the organism to these attitudes are transformed. The burden of negotiating an identity that reconciles the two phases of the self then falls on the "I" that resorts to drawing on different parts of the identity repertoire based on the situation at hand. While this certainly demonstrates the pervasiveness of labels and their ability to work in ways that eschew rational criticism, Victor's pain also pointed to the fact that it was very difficult to swiftly wipe out all previous identity anchorings. Recounting how different suturings of identity were developed in time (Romanian, Moldovan, Russian), Victor's words also illuminated the highly dynamic character of identity. Again, although this repositioning of identity was an effect of the power produced and disseminated through representation, it did not place the subject outside of the realm of power. Indeed, as Homi Bhabha reminds us, "cultural hybridity gives rise to something different… a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation," (1990, p. 220) thus potentially empowering the subject.

Displacement. This strategy refers to the attempt to substitute one's Romanianness for another type of identity anchoring. Some of my interviewees, when asked by strangers to define themselves, expressed a preference for displacing their elements of Romanianness to foreground other aspects of their identities. So, they would respond by saying that they were Christian, Catholic, *comunitario* (EU citizen), etc., revealing only upon further probing the fact that they were also Romanian. This insistence to play up other types of identity allegiance that, while not interfering with Romanianness, pointed to inclusion in larger groups had very much to do with a deep awareness of the bad reputation of the Romanians as an ethnicity in Italy. In the words of one of my informants, "we [Romanians] don't have a lot of things to be proud of" (George, personal communication, March 24, 2012). The ethnographic part of my study has revealed that the Romanians living in Italy tend to have a cleft approach to their criminalization in the media. On the one hand, they were keenly aware of the pervasiveness of the Romanian criminal image to the exclusion of any other potentially redeeming traits. This sort of statement was repeated in virtually all my interviews:

> They come up with a stereotype right away, if you tell them *Romanian, it's already like a label*. What are the things that are attached to the Romanian? *Criminality*, with everything that we see on TV, *with everything that journalism produces*. Whenever you say Romanian, they have the TV screen and the newspaper in front of them (Diana, personal communication, March 9, 2012; my italics)

Yet, despite the acute awareness of the involvement of the media in disseminating the construction of the Romanian criminal, there was a steadfast belief that the media portrayal was a

faithful reflection of the actual acts of delinquency perpetrated by a large number of Romanians. This was a typical description of the situation, recurring throughout my interviews:

> Stela: There was a time when we were *discriminated because of our own fault*. Our fault is a way of saying, it was the *fault of one Mailat who killed*… you know the events that I'm talking about…
>
> Interviewer: Giovanna Reggiani…
>
> Stela: Yes, there was a time when it seemed to me, *that I as a Romanian, I was against my own Romanians*, meaning that you come here and you rape *their* girls in the parks of Milan – imagine that the Italians would come and they would rape *our* 15-16-year old girls!
>
> Interviewer: How many cases of this kind were there?
>
> Stela: *A lot of them*! There was a time when they seemed to *flood in*. (Stela, personal communication, June 10, 2011; my italics)

There was an ingrained notion that delinquency was deeply embedded within the Romanian nature and if this propensity was not manifest in Romania it was simply because the former communist authorities had covered it up. As the quotation above illustrated, there was a remarkable replication of the discriminatory tropes of the dominant discourse in the self-understandings of most Romanians living in Italy: we as a group are the sole responsible for the way in which the entire ethnicity is treated, even if crime is clearly attributable to isolated Romanian individuals. Moreover, the perception of a deluge of Romanian crime was highly consistent with the typical imagery of moral panics, especially when it played out, in the way it is implied above, in an Us versus Them framework. It was therefore less than surprising that there arose feelings of aversion towards one's in-group that did not invalidate one's belonging to

that same group. Yet, that very exasperation may have been an excellent basis leading to the reordering of one's identity allegiances in the direction of the displacement of Romanianness. Additionally, the indignation at the torrent of criminality characteristic of one's own compatriots came as a confirmation of the seamless work of labels that only allowed one option as the solution to the situation they have helped to define and construct. The outrage at those whom you still perceived as your own countrymen reproduced on a psychological level the need for separation imposed through the representation effort and thus legitimized the prescribed solution of permanent physical separation through deportation. The complicity of the demonized achieved in this ingenious and subtle way marked a level of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 164) that was fundamental to the maintaining of the symbolic power order. Bourdieu explained how this complicity is secured:

> Symbolic violence is the coercion which is set up only through the consent that the dominated cannot fail to give to the dominator (and therefore to the domination) when *their understanding of the situation* and relation *can only use instruments of knowledge that they have in common with the dominator*, which, being merely the incorporated form of the structure of the relation of domination, make this relation appear as natural; or, in other words, when the schemes they implement in order to perceive and evaluate themselves or to perceive and evaluate the dominators (high/low, male/female, white/black, etc.) are the product of incorporation of the (thus naturalized) classifications of which their social being is the product. (2000, p. 170, my italics)

This points to the kind of work that the interiorization of the dominant gaze allows. Since this effect of symbolic domination escapes consciousness (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 170), it becomes possible to understand how the same people can be able to respond to the calls to order

embedded in the social world (because the internalized gaze predisposes them to notice these), while at other times presenting different degrees of resistance to dominant discourse.

I found it very intriguing to see that the vast majority of my subjects had a keen awareness of the role played by media in focusing the magnifying glass on Romanian criminality, paralleled by an unshaken faith in journalistic values and the information conveyed through the media. Statements like "Romanians have been the criminal layer in all possible sectors, whenever there is a journalistic scandal, it's not a crime itself that produces devastating effects, but it's the journalism!" (Diana, personal communication, March 9, 2012) were interpreted in terms of the excessive visibility they created for the ethnicity, which some of my interviewees connected to the search for profit and sensationalism in the press. Nevertheless, the images disseminated by the Italian media or their basic underlying assumptions about the innate Romanian delinquency were never questioned, pointing once again to the efficiency of labels and to symbolic violence.

This absolute reliance on the media construction of Romanians was all the more surprising given that, throughout my interviews, there was a very clear perception of the profound disconnect separating the daily experience of most Romanian immigrants and their portrayal as a group in Italian media. There seemed to be two parallel images of the Romanians in the Peninsula, as one Orthodox Prelate explained:

> it depends. I ask the [Catholic] Bishop, the Mayor, the Police Commissioners and even the ones from the central government that I meet with – they [the Romanians] are perceived positively, they are seen as hardworking people, very adroit, and the good reputation is brought upon us especially by the women who are in the houses of the

> Italians, so who share the intimacy of the life of a family, meaning that they take care of their dearest, the parents and the children. And then… but the ones who do bad things ruin our good reputation (High Romanian Orthodox Official, personal communication, March 27, 2012)

As a matter of fact, when the Romanian Orthodox Church in Italy wrote an open letter about the excessive focus on Romanian crime in the media, these same social actors responded with beautiful letters of support condemning the incrimination of an entire community for the offenses of an isolated few. Yet the lived everyday experiences of most Romanian immigrants were not able to invalidate the media portrayals.

Supplementing. This strategy points to the tendency to reinforce one's Romanianness with other redeeming qualities. Some of my informants seemed to be particularly concerned by the incomplete character of the mainstream construction of Romanian identity. In this understanding, Romanianness provided an undeniable base for identity, but an insufficient one at that, for it did not suffice to justify its bearer in terms of (acceptable) allegiances and, especially, the rights s/he was entitled to in Italy. Therefore, those adopting this strategy did not shy away from asserting their foreignness, but they were very careful to supplement it with a mention of their Italian citizenship:

> If somebody asks me whether I am a foreigner, I say "yes, I am a foreigner, but I also hold Italian citizenship" because oftentimes it's as if people look at you differently, because of everything that has happened and is still happening. Meaning that people

should not start saying "oh, you've come again, go home!" and so on. (Corina, personal communication, June 25, 2011)

Corina's statement pointed to the ways in which the mainstream construction of Romanianness in Italy acted to disenfranchise Romanian residents, making it clear that they could not ever belong to the receiving society on account of their own criminal behavior. Not only could Italy never become the home of these people, but urging them to return to the sending society because they were Romanian – and thus incapable of civilized, non-criminal behavior – was normalized. In this case, the boundaries of belonging were drawn and hardened through representation. The Romanians were not just constructed in the process, they themselves subscribed to the norm by internalizing the gaze and they thus became complicit in upholding the very representation they were attempting to react to.

The desire to proudly highlight one's Italian citizenship where it existed in addition to the Romanian one was in part justified by the widespread sincere admiration for Italy as a country. Most of my informants, consistent with a balkanist line of thinking, perceived Italy to have a civilization superior to Romania's:

Interviewer: What do you miss from Italy [when you are away]?

Rodica: (…) I miss… *here there is more civilization*! Why should I not say it? I have not seen in Italy, ever since I've been here, it has not happened to me [in 16 years] – I'm not talking about other people – any arguments on the bus, arguments on the street, people swearing on the street or people lowering their pants because they are drunk, I have not seen this! Like there is…

Interviewer: It has happened to me the day before yesterday (laughs)

Rodica: Here? He wasn't Italian!

> Interviewer: Yes he was, they almost started a fist fight!
>
> Rodica: Well, you see? It has happened to my daughter, but not to me personally! So *their civilization*, (…) we should learn from the Italians the fact that they have more tolerance, they are more patient, we are more irascible (Rodica, personal communication, June 17, 2011; my italics)

Not only did they display less civility, but Romanians were also perceived to be politically unsophisticated and not prepared to deal with freedom as rational and fully European subjects would be: "we are not used to democracy. Democracy in Romania, during Ceaușescu was understood the way it was understood, and now it's understood even less" (Dumitru, personal communication, March 20, 2012). In turn, this political incapacity disqualified Romanians from claiming *de facto* EU citizenship. So, echoing my second research question for this study, it was not just the mainstream that symbolically placed Romanians outside of Europe, but they themselves projected an identity positioning that excluded them from genuine EU membership.

Another significant reason prompting immigrants to supplement their positioning as Romanians with a self-conscious assertion of their Italian citizenship was the desire to preempt debasement. Humiliation seemed to be a constant companion for the Romanians living in Italy, including for those few who had succeeded. This example coming from a former live-in maid was just one of the many I heard in my interviews:

> [My 38 year old employer] would leave all kind of dirt in the kitchen sink for me to clean up. Her panties, for example. (..) Stained by… and I would pick them up, and put them in the washer. *I was so humiliated, because I came from there [i.e. Romania] so I had to wash her panties*. (…) So when she would place her panties in the kitchen sink, I

> would get a knot in my stomach. I couldn't speak Italian, so I told her "m'am, in my country we don't do that" "what don't you do?" "we don't put the panties …" to which she turned all red and she said "there's nothing wrong with that, just wash the sink!" And then I told this to my [Italian] friend Rosa (…) "Rosa, why shouldn't I call her out on this? You've given me this job, but I came here to work and not to get sick." Do you know what my friend answered me? I thought she was my friend (…) She said "No, Stela, she's under the impression that you Romanians even eat shit," to which I said "listen, Rosa, we are poor –" this happened back in '93 – "we are poor, but we are clean." (Stela, personal communication, June 10, 2011; my italics)

In the same interview, Stela recounted how resignation was the only solution when confronted with this type of treatment along with her resentment of that fact. This deeply entrenched belief in the radically different "nature" of the Romanians had very real, material consequences. Another informant described in tears how her able-bodied male employer forced her to regularly wash his intimate parts, while his severely disabled wife managed her hygiene without any assistance. The same woman talked about how abased she felt when her employer told her that he refused to even flush the toilet because that was why he was paying her. This was just one of the many cases that I encountered where economic and social vulnerability, along with discrimination on the labor market – which is intrinsically related to the construction of Romanianness in Italy – exposed migrants to all kinds of humiliation and abuse, including some of a sexual nature. In this specific situation, knowing the dire economic necessity of the woman who had to continue paying for the treatment of her gravely ill child in Romania and the low probability of being able to quickly find another steady job, it was possible to force her into doing things that offended her sense of dignity. These marginalized women were doubly

victimized: first, they needed to abandon their children in Romania in order to make ends meet and put food on the table and second, they were forced to work mainly as caretakers for the elderly or as live-in maids, without any access to psychological or legal counseling. They were, therefore, unprepared to cope with sexual abuse or to deal around the clock with severely demented patients constantly accusing them of theft or tending to become physically violent. One of the Romanian priests I interviewed put this in terms of an interior struggle between following the instinct to answer to the person who is oppressing you or keeping quiet and carrying on in order to help out the family in Romania. This made a lot of Romanians turn to the church with even more fervor than in Romania which then became, in the words of the prelate I interviewed, an assisted integration factor. As poverty became re-signified as a complex moral pathology for the Romanians, it exposed them to a host of urgent social and psychological problems.

Universalism. This negotiation strategy entails the repudiation of ethnicity as a valid basis for identification. Some people, indeed, chose to negotiate the identity tension brought about by the mainstream construction of Romanianness by dismissing ethnicity altogether as significant and, instead, pitching their positioning in terms of identity at a higher level of generality. One of my informants who identified as "a citizen of the world" explained why he chose to call his cultural association Euromeni:

> Euromeni means a new type of citizen that we have envisioned. He has chosen to live his life in a different place than where he was born, he integrates completely into the society

> that hosts him, but he preserves his cultural, linguistic values. (Romanian Association President, personal communication, March 25, 2012)

So, this type of cosmopolitan citizen refused to inscribe himself within the claustrophobic confines of ethnicity, yet he laid claim to complete integration into the receiving society, but on his own terms. This is how another informant explained it in an unrelated interview:

> I think that I am a citizen of the world, you can take me wherever in this world and if I find in a front of me a person who is limited and that person necessarily needs to pass me immediately a coat of be it Romanian, Italian, Chinese, then that is his problem! But it's not my problem, I'm a citizen of the world, and I can go to America without speaking English and I can feel good there. (Elena, personal communication, March 11, 2012)

Elena understood a citizen of the world to be an open-minded person who refused to accept any limits. A citizen of the world acknowledged that all people are brothers and sisters on this earth and lived accordingly. In a lengthy argumentation she asserted that, despite what national statistics say, the Italians were actually not racist:

> it is the people who require to be treated as foreign or as servants, they require a certain behavior of you… the Romanian, because he comes with a complex in front of you, the Italian, he imposes on you to treat him badly and condescendingly. (Elena, personal communication, March 11, 2012)

However, the individualization of experience that Elena used to ground the feasibility of her approach to a universalistic identity, freed from the bounds of ethnicity, did not spare her from dealing with the reality of the messy character of identification. On different occasions during the same interview she explained:

> I am a citizen of the world. *In my soul I am and I will remain Rumanian, even in the coffin*.
>
> I am and I will stay Romanian! On my ID I have Italian citizenship because I have obtained it through marriage and it's comfortable to say Italian when you fill out a form, even in the bank there are the advantages of the Italian citizen and those of the Romanian citizen… I can only say this: that *I know how to feel Romanian when I should feel Romanian and to feel Italian when I should feel Italian*. (Elena, personal communication, March 11, 2012; my italics)

So, she did not disavow her Romanianness, that she perceived as very close to her heart, and she was able to carve out ways in which she could combine it with her Italian citizenship. The situational deployment of identity to which she referred in the quotation above demonstrates that the different strategies that Romanians adopt in Italy in order to negotiate an acceptable identity for themselves are not mutually exclusive and, in fact, it is possible to switch between a number of them. Yet things became even messier when she was asked "what are you?":

> This question will never be posed by somebody who is open, who is a citizen of the world. This question *will be posed by an Italian who is 100% Italian* and who has a distorted view of reality and of today. Whenever he asks you this question, *he asks it so that he can humiliate you, so that you would feel Romanian!* Because he feels troubled in front of you – either because you're beautiful, or you're too intelligent and then he wants to hit you with something and *he wants to hit you with the fact that you are Romanian*. So then why should I give him the satisfaction of answering that I am Romanian? How do I answer? *Do I answer "Italian" and thus humiliate the Romanian?* No! When somebody asks me this question, I raise my gaze, I look deep into his eyes and I tell them "I come

> from Bucharest." And they do not known geography and so they don't know where Bucharest is. And then, completely befuddled, "yes, but I do not know where that is…" A lot of them mix up Budapest and Bucharest. "Hungary? Bulgaria?" And so the stupid one reveals that he doesn't know geography. And they realize that they posed the wrong question. And they change their discourse in two minutes. *They want to put you in a difficult situation because you are Romanian. Another person who feels bad because she's Romanian would answer that she is Italian, because that's what the ID says. No! I am neither Italian, nor Romanian. I am a citizen of the world, I am a human being in front of you and you do not know how to treat me as a human being*. He has an inferiority complex in front of me – he sees that I am beautiful, he sees that I am intelligent. "I have to find something about her. I have been asking her out for coffee for three years and she's not accepting. Elena, but where do you come from?" "I come from Bucharest." "Bucharest, Bucharest, oh God, Hungary? Bulgaria?" And then they see that they cannot guess it. He cuts his own enthusiasm short and he realizes that he made a mistake with this question. That's the way that all people should answer this question. (Elena, personal communication, March 11, 2012; my italics)

Elena's statement points to an implicit ranking of identity allegiances in which Italian is superior to Romanian. There was also a deep awareness that linking somebody to the Romanian identity automatically resulted in humiliation for them, demonstrating yet again how inescapable the tropes of the construction of Romanianness had become in Italian society. By arguing that the few Italians who exhibited racist attitudes were racist merely because they were limited culturally and certainly not because they had any kind of meanness towards the Romanians, Elena turned a blind eye to institutional racism. I have a twofold reading of Elena's general

strategy to individualize virtually all social processes. On the one hand, I see this as a protective measure, reassuring the individual that the world at large is congenial to one's endeavors, despite some isolated cases pointing to the opposite. On the other hand, l read this thorough individualization as a strategy of empowerment convincing oneself that we are living in an endlessly malleable world, where it is enough to abolish any personal limitations to bring anything within the reach of the individual. This also creates the space for some bounded resistance, where it was possible to mock and defy ingrained perceptions about ethnicity, by refusing the fatality of sharply pre-drawn boundaries.

However, this coping strategy whereby racism was re-signified as a lack of education put the person at ease by dismissing the harmful foundations of racism, but only at the price of a simultaneous discursive closure through the subjectification of experience (Deetz, 2007, pp. 467–468) which precluded the examination of the social formation. Following Omi and Winant (1994, pp. 54–55), in this study I reject both the temptation of thinking of race as an essence and as a simple illusion, acknowledging that it continues to play an essential role in the structuring and the representation of the social world. Understanding race in this way, "as an element of social structure rather than as an irregularity within it" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 55), it seems that subjectifying it leaves untouched what Foucault (1977, in Calhoun et al., 2007b, p. 208) would call the political, economic and institutional regime of the production of truth through representation. In fact, as Waldron (in Habermas, 1998, p. 116) argues, the cosmopolitan strategy is not about denying the role of culture in life, but about challenging the assumptions that, firstly, the social world divides up neatly into particular cultures and, secondly, that everyone needs just a single, coherent culture to give meaning to his life. So, Elena, in laying claim to a greater level of generality in terms of identity positioning than ethnicity could offer

was trying, along a cosmopolitan line of thinking, to invalidate the rationale for her marking. Yet, her attempt to resettle the identity game on a new field focused more on meritocracy had to deal with the thorny problem of the possibility of a social tabula rasa. In her interview she admited that her ability to pass physically on account of the difficulty to pin her traits to a clearly identifiable ethnic matrix favored the plasticity of boundaries in her specific case. But things may look radically different for those people who happen to "look Romanian". A remarkable feature of this sophisticated identity negotiation strategy is that in the very act of introducing dissent it also favored the overlooking of some disturbing, yet most real consequences of representation. In so doing, it aligned neatly with the mainstream gaze and logic which placed the entire burden of integration and succeeding in the Italian society firmly on the shoulders of the immigrant. It is for this reason that I read this space for personal resistance that this universalist strategy created as an area of bounded dissent that was very consistent with the trope of the welcoming (*accogliente*) Italian society and the ungrateful Romanian immigrant, so widespread in the media. Throughout my interviews, my informants expressed a genuine appreciation of the welcoming Italian spirit that seemed to not be contradicted by the fact that the experiences recounted by these immigrants clearly showed that they were not able to integrate on their own terms. It appeared that being *accogliente* happened exclusively on their non-negotiable terms.

Exceptionalism. This strategy entailed accepting one's Romaniannes, but, at the same time, claiming that one was an exception going against the ingrained character of the ethnicity. By far the most frequent reaction I got in my interviews when asking about the portrayal of Romanians in Italy was summarized through the saying "there is no garden without its weeds". My

informants exhibited an interestingly cleft approach to the construction of Romanian criminality. On the one hand, they completely subscribed to it, considering the Romanian community in Italy with its outrageously delinquent behavior to be the sole responsible for the harsh treatment they received both in the media and by the authorities. On the other hand, they themselves claimed to be the exceptions to that rule as honest, peaceful and hardworking people and, in so doing, positioned themselves against the media trope of the assumed Romanian homogeneity. Going even further, many of my informants decried the lack of unity among the Romanians in Italy, at times even exposing elaborate psychological theories that explained the kind of deep seated enmity that makes the Romanian immigrants a very scattered group, rather than a genuine community.

Interestingly, the belief about the exclusive Romanian responsibility and the justified suspicion with which these migrants were handled in Italy was in no ways shaken by a widespread awareness of the fact that the delinquent proportion was well below the 10% mark of the sizable Romanian population. As one of my interviewees put it, "it's like an iceberg: what is on the surface are the ones doing bad things and the great majority is beneath the surface" (Mihai, personal communication, March 25, 2012). At another more subtle level, however, a lot of my informants demonstrated an interiorization of the trope of Romanian sameness which showed through whenever they justified their a priori suspicion against other Romanians. Many of my subjects chose to severely limit their traditionally extensive social networks, at times even cutting off contact with relatives living in the same receiving city. This was all the more surprising as everyone confirmed that finding employment in Italy was heavily reliant on recommendations and, by choosing not to engage with other (potentially dubious) Romanians, they were also relinquishing a great deal of social capital.

The belief in the allegedly monstrous extent of Romanian immigrant crime was also not shaken by the incongruity between media portrayals and the daily existence of most Romanians in Italy. A lot of my subjects who worked as caretakers reported having excellent relations with their employers who considered them a part of the family. Many told me about the positive valuing of the work ethic of Romanians which even lead to the coining of sayings such as "work hard like a Romanian." Nevertheless, this radical fracture between the image of Romanianness constructed in the media (quintessential criminals) and the picture emerging from everyday interaction (dependable workers) allowed for the materialization of perverse effects. Seduced by the concreteness and immediacy of the positive perception, it became easy for a Romanian individual to take on a claim of exceptionalism, choosing to turn oblivious to the workings of the labels beneath the surface of discourse. In this way, the illusion of the punctual – and, thus, "justified" – applicability of the negative images was fostered. This, in turn, disguised the pervasiveness of labels and their extraordinary capacity to orient understandings of Romanianness, particularly unwittingly.

Yet, the tremendous efficiency of labels was demonstrated perhaps most convincingly by looking at the degree to which Romanian immigrants themselves internalized the demonizing tropes of the dominant discourse. Even when Romanians were met with condescendence, they tended to rationalize this type of behavior as a rare and unfortunate exception. One of my informants recounted how a 5-year old neighboring Italian girl reacted when she was kindly asked to play with her grandson:

> the five year old girl replied "*you shut up*!", the five year old! So I wanted to ask her why I had to shut up. She replied "*because you're foreign*." It was not that little girl, because she's five years old, *the fact that in the family… so, you feel humiliated*. And

> the fact that… I don't know if it would be… the Italian person, from what I can see as a person, is tolerant, is welcoming, *accogliente*, but the fact that there was a time when the Romanians… for a handful of Romanians who tainted the country, they put us all in the same pot, so they looked at us, I cannot even tell you how they looked at us and how we were treated! (Adriana, personal communication, June 8, 2011; my italics)

There was certainly a widespread awareness among the Romanian immigrants of the negative perceptions the mentioning of their ethnicity tended to elicit in Italy. Although they were often subjected to a process of speech robbery (Honneth, 2000, p. 120), Romanians mostly glossed over it, justifying it by saying that "You're always a guest here! As long as you behave yourself, they let you do what you want" (Maria, personal communication, June 16, 2011). This, in turn, was consistent with the constant need to be policed and disciplined like a child, proper of a people incompatible with modernity and civilization, and, therefore, alien to the core European values. The entire work of the labels rendered Romanians irretrievably incompatible with any civilized society which means that they could not possibly make a claim to be accepted on their own terms.

Resistance. Perhaps the most daring strategy of negotiating individual grounds for inclusion in the Italian society, despite one's Romanianness that automatically marked one as unworthy, was that of resisting mainstream representations. The remarkable feature of this resistance was that it was always partial and it should not be understood as a total break, but merely as a crack that does not endanger people's subscription to the fundamental rules of the game. The straightforward questioning of tropes disseminated through Italian media was an extremely rare

occurrence in my 70 interviews. This is how a high official of the Romanian Orthodox Church serving in Italy casted doubts on the idea of the invading hordes of Romanian criminals:

> they [the Romanians] *come to a space where they have no benchmarks, they're in no man's land or in the wild, wild west and then they also become wild*, unfortunately. And they perpetrate very serious things that, for instance, they wouldn't have perpetrated in their village or in the home country, I don't believe so. Although there are some even in the home country who perpetrate those things. Every garden has its weeds and there is a percentage of crime and crime perpetrators and you can also find them in our community. These are people who at their base I don't think they had a solid education, neither a Christian, nor a family one and this makes it possible for them to be recruited oftentimes by those who send them to perpetrate things in various places, they don't do it directly. (High Romanian Orthodox Official, personal communication, March 27, 2012; my italics)

In connecting the lack of social control with the criminal behavior of the confused Romanian immigrants, the quotation above effected a reversal of the trope of savagery. Italian media, certainly echoing balkanist imagery, portrayed Romanians as "naturally" savage criminals who, once in the Peninsula, brought about a reign of terror as their unbridled instincts materialized in acts of unprecedented ferocity. My interviewee instead, rationalized this savagery as arising from the interaction between an environment devoid of any toeholds and a vulnerable individual who may appropriate and further develop the worst characteristics of the receiving society. This understanding went against the Italian mainstream notion that Romania willingly exported its criminals to Italy and, as such, it would be compatible with solutions striving for a better integration of the immigrants and not with their mass deportation.

Resistance was deployed much more frequently in private discussion to justify one's own claim to exceptionalism. One of my informants recounted how offended she was when, during a casual conversation, an Italian acquaintance told her that Romanians proved unable to evolve after the retreat of the Roman Empire from their territory in the third century A.D. She suddenly counteracted this ingrained image of backwardness, but such discussions which strove to prove the equal standing of Romania and Italy in terms of civilization were typically terminated with a rhetorical question along the lines of "if things are so bright in your country, why did you leave? And why don't you go back?" The president of a Romanian cultural association even argued on national Italian TV that the "Romanians are neither uneducated, nor uncivilized – we are a European people, with traditions" (Livia, personal communication, March 23, 2012). Other informants repeatedly referred to the superior quality of schooling in Romania, the better childhood afforded to the young ones in the home country or to the tendency of Romanians to be, on average, more cultured compared to the Italians. Yet all such scattered cases of resistance failed to address the widespread perception of abject Romanian poverty. In this case, poverty was racially coded as a mere consequence of the Romanian moral weakness and it was understood as a well-deserved state of affairs. In a characteristically circular racist logic, the economic deprivation of Romanians was then taken as proof of their vileness. The naturalization of Romanian poverty as a state that will exist in all eternity without any possibility of amendment – both in the home country and abroad –resonated deeply within my informants. Although many of my interviewees mentioned the discrimination they faced on the labor or on the housing market or in their dealings with authorities and social services, they still hung on to the belief that these were just inevitable trials and tribulations, "normal" for life abroad, and which, moreover, had been brought onto themselves by their own delinquent behavior as an

ethnicity. Just one informant attempted to offer a contextualization of the economic disparity between Romania and Italy by referring to the effects of the Marshall plan after the Second World War. He also discussed how widespread nepotism and the strong informal networks that bar access to any type of government employment for non-Italians worked to maintain the economic gap between the native population and the immigrants. For the most part though, the equation of poverty with criminality from mainstream media was faithfully replicated by Romanian immigrants who shied away from interrogating the structural causes for their perennial poverty or even from mentioning their exploitation within the Italian society in low paid jobs without benefits or prospects for promotion.

In my 70 interviews I came across just one case of more vigorous systemic criticism articulated by the president of a Romanian cultural association. He talked openly about a media campaign focused on the Romanians meant to distract attention from the economic crisis that had started in 2007. While he did not deny that Romanians had indeed committed a lot of offenses, he stressed that that it was primarily petty crime that was portrayed in a media system largely under the influence of Berlusconi as if it were a serious case of organized crime. In his opinion, the campaign had proven efficient because the Right had managed to win the elections by demonizing the Romanians. He believed that the reason behind fashioning Romanians into scapegoats was the fact that "common people like to be fed with illusions and appreciate the possibility of deferring blame for their failures on someone else" (Alexandru, personal communication, March 19, 2012). Alexandru went on to criticize the Italian system because it did not afford Romanian immigrants a real chance to integrate in society, by maintaining them in a permanent state of uncertainty, without opening up any opportunities for upward social

mobility for the gifted and hardworking. This kind of incertitude was fundamental to intentionally maintaining immigrants in a marginal position:

> for you as a state in order to come up with a person who is useful for society, you need 20 years, up until the age of 20 you're only investing in him. … But with them [the immigrants] you have *an extraordinary resource* because they come here able to work, *but you have not invested anything*. They pay taxes, they pay social security, because you always pay the taxes, even if you're working on the black market, you still pay them indirectly by purchasing products, gas etc. ... So you also get more consumption. So, with this mass [of immigrants] you either acknowledge it and then you have to give it some rights or you make pretend. *You pretend that you don't know that they exist, you make a law that if you so choose, you can kick them out*. *This is what happened in Italy*. When you went to Germany, you could only survive there for two or three months and then the situation needed to be sorted out, but here there are people who after 14 or 15 years still do not have paperwork. (Alexandru, personal communication, March 19, 2012; my italics)

By pointing to the systemic determinants of the current state of affairs, Alexandru marked a definite break in discourse that drew attention to the ways in which immigration, far from being the generous toleration of unfortunate others that it was constructed to be in the mainstream, was in fact a win-win situation. By discussing the ways in which a disenfranchised immigration benefited the Italian state, Alexandru was raising awareness for what one was worth and highlighting the structural factors serving to maintain one in a position of perpetual marginality economically, socially and politically. This was the only instance in my interviews of a person who did not buy into the game and decidedly overstepped the boundaries of the

dominant discourse in a way that could serve as a basis for political mobilization. Alexandru even presented an alternative reading of the trope of Romanian invasion, so common in Italian press:

> [After the EU accession of Romania in 2007] out of the blue the Italian state got a lot of demands for legalizing [immigrant] situations. *Politicians have speculated this thing, saying that there was an invasion, but, in fact, those people had been here for years*. Or even more! During that time, there was a very favorable economic climate in Romania and a lot of people returned, during that time: 2006, 2007, 2008. And those demands for legalizing one's own standing came from people who had been here and *had been living here in the shadows for years*. … They had been used, yes, yes. Except, they did not use to see them before or they pretended not to see them. As soon as they got the possibility to get … *permesso di soggiorno*, all these requests appeared and *they thought that it was an invasion, when, in fact, they had been here for a long time and their number had actually gone down*. (Alexandru, personal communication, March 19, 2012; my italics)

In this open critique of the failures of the Italian state, Alexandru offered an example of the ways in which representation can act to structure subsequent perceptions of events. The Romanian invasion was as legitimate an interpretation of the situation – in principle – as the alternative of an exploitative Italian state presented by Alexandru. What made the first interpretation take, completely erasing the disapproving evidence of the decreasing numbers of Romanian immigrants, was the insidious work of labels supported by a specific system of visibility. In fact, it looks like the flip side of the system of visibility created in the mainstream is an invisibility of two different types: the invisibility of the barely legal migrants that favored their exploitation and the invisibility of the Romanian who did not fit the bill of the criminal.

Interestingly, here representation managed to operate a de-linguistification (*Entsprachlichung*) (Honneth, 2000, p. 120) of all Romanian groups, since the visible ones were not entitled to speak after they had positioned themselves, as Foucault (2007) pointed out, beyond the boundaries of society by breaking the law and the invisible Romanians were robbed of their speech by their existence in the shadows of society. Alexandru appeared as an exception among my informants through his very critical stance that was based on an explicit skeptical reading of media reports. He was the only one to draw into discussion alternative views of occurrences, such as the time when he asked why it was that the media only reported that Romanians held the record for petty offenses in Italy, overlooking that the same ethnicity also held another record for the most casualties on the job.

Indeed, presidents of other Romanian associations acknowledged that following the Reggiani case in 2007 a lot of Romanian immigrants had lost their longtime jobs as a direct consequence of the media campaign striving to make Romanians into a people of criminals. Yet, they also thought that the campaign was an accident arising from the journalistic search for sensationalism, without any deeper underpinnings and devoid of long-term repercussions. Some cultural associations were trying to find a voice that was strong enough to articulate a response to what they understood as primarily a lack of information about Romania on the Italian side:

> I think all Italians consider themselves superior to Romanians because they don't know [any better]. … At first I was working for a family … [and] he asked me "where is Romania? In Africa?" *This was the most painful question, though I don't know if he meant to tease me with that* or if he was serious. But he would ask me for everything*: "But do you also have tomatoes? But do you also have cars? Do you also have a TV set?" – I mean some questions that hurt you.* I have never responded to him in an angry

> voice because *he was not asking with malicious intentionality, it was just the ignorance of the person who does not know*. … So *a lot of Italians consider themselves superior, but that is until they meet people who can prove them the opposite. And we, through the associations, and we are one of these associations, we're trying to change this mentality. We're also bringing forward the valuable things that we have*. (Adrian, personal communication, March 24, 2012; my italics)

Although in the rest of the interview Adrian talked at length about how Romanians were the only ones to blame for their negative image in Italy that included tropes of criminality, backwardness, lack of civilization, etc., he did not seem to be sure as to whether those same tropes held for the understandings that upper class Italians formed of their Romanian employees. This is yet another instance of the shrewd ways in which labels operate, allowing those made into folk devils to paradoxically appropriate the dominant discourse, while at the same time ignoring its workings within others. This, in turn, acted to naturalize the images of Romanianness, making it seem that they arose "naturally" and independently of any act of representation within people's minds.

Summing up the media analysis, the direct and sole responsibility of the Romanians for the serious criminal acts they have perpetrated in Italy was in no way denied in any of my interviews, but several informants mitigated it through an ulterior discussion of the inevitable incidence of delinquency in any sizable population like the Romanian. While this way of thinking put into perspective the criminal offenses committed by Romanians, what was striking about it was the reified perception of delinquency and its media representations as "naturally" occurring phenomena, much like a storm or a drought, with no underlying logic other than

haphazard. The logic of the dominant discourse shone through in a subtler way here, but it nevertheless did so in a very efficient way as the rhetorical closure achieved through naturalization withdrew the whole phenomenon from a systematic critical examination of its structural determinants. Misrecognizing the representation as arbitrary secured the perpetuation of the extant configurations of symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991).

Any attempt at resistance that tried to overstep the boundaries of acceptable dissent was understood as pernicious and nonsensical. Several of my informants condemned other Romanians for refusing to eat pasta or any other type of Italian food and doggedly holding on to the time-consuming Romanian dishes. The attempt to continue to live in Italy in the way they were used to from the home country – following Romanian media and not making a sustained effort to build friendships with Italians – was read as a foolish reactionary move. The behavior of these people who attempt to build, in their homes, "a Romania" (Andrei, personal communication, March 23, 2012) was read as a hypocritical reaction meant to disguise their rejection by the Italian society and their inability to integrate. This type of perception once again placed responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the Romanians and it aligned very well with the compulsive policing of borders prescribed by the mainstream. While bounded dissent was acceptable on grounds that it could be easily ignored, transgressions were intolerable. At work here was once again the trope of the welcoming (*accogliente*) Italian society, but exclusively on its own terms and as long as the otherness in question did not transcend the area of submissiveness. Interestingly, Romanians have internalized the dominant gaze to such a degree that they proscribed their compatriots' attempts at cultural fusion if this implied negotiating what Cunningham and Sinclair (2001) called a regenerative "new" culture that did not strive to

emulate the receiving environment, but instead sought to preserve and promote (some) difference.

Although the resistance that Romanians could present to their portrayal in mainstream media was interstitial and, for the most part, fell within the general parameters of the overriding construction of Romanianness, without actually endangering to destabilize it, the immigrants were far removed from being cultural dupes. Rather, the Romanian population exhibited a fascinating phenomenon of concomitant marginalization and integration. On the one hand, their integration was seamless as they obviously bought into the game, into the *illusio*, when they internalized the gaze. On the other hand, through that very integration they were being marginalized, leading to symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991) in a case of remarkable complicity in constituting and upholding the "common sense" through oppressive principles of vision and di-vision. So, they were never outside of the realm of power, as they were never merely passive subjects of an oppressive, stifling type of power.

In this chapter, I have discussed the strategies Romanians used to negotiate identity positionings for themselves that were acceptable within the overriding logic of dominant discourse. I understand this effort as an examination of the brutally real consequences of representation. In this whole process, labels operate in a very shrewd way turning the illogicality of fashioning a whole ethnicity into criminals – without as much as contemplating the necessity of any proof – into the only logical option. The definition of the problem is of central importance here, because it is this construction of the problem that gets deposited into the Italian lifeworld. It then seeps into the demonized people, bypassing rational control and logical validation, thus forcing them to qualify their Romanianness in a way that, while not contradicting the mainstream construction, is reconcilable with civilization. In line with the mainstream,

Romanians typically exhibited an essentialized way of understanding identity when it referred to the Romanian immigrant community as a whole. As a consequence, they needed to emphasize even more the difference that was specific to the person against this background of widespread criminality. The subjectification of experience thus produced put enormous pressure on the individual and worked in definite disciplining ways. As Axel Honneth (2000, p. 122) explained, the task of such a politics of individualization is the control of social injustice awareness, by isolating experiences and thus hindering the communicative identification of social injustice. Specifically, the existence of this universally accepted background of criminality automatically subjected each Romanian individually to the pressure of distinction. Having interiorized the disciplining gaze, Romanian immigrants were forced to differentiate themselves and to perpetually prove themselves - both to others and to oneself – thus subjectively conforming to the norm, as Hall (1990) put it. My findings here bear out Hall's insight about the "inner expropriation of cultural identity [which] cripples and deforms" (1990, p. 226). With their type of difference automatically being coded as a mark of inferiority rendering them incompatible with civilization, Romanian immigrants needed to negotiate individual grounds for inclusion in Italian society. A sizable immigrant population was thus constituted in and through representation into a disconnected mass of individuals capable to pass through the cracks of Italian society.

Chapter 6: Identity, Immigration and the Nation-State

In this study, I analyzed the conditions of possibility and intelligibility of the discourse on Romanian crime in Italy in the early 2000s. In so doing, I was particularly interested in the ways in which the structural imperatives of the media interlock with signification processes to maintain extant power configurations. Having analyzed the main tropes in the media construction of Romanianness (chapter 4) and the ways in which these impinge upon the self-understandings and subsequent identity negotiations of Romanian immigrants (chapter 5), I now turn to examining how my findings speak to the ways in which nation, ethnicity and race become differently accented as they are being reappraised in the context of the newly enlarged European Union.

I read the Romanian-centered moral panic starting in Italy in late 2007 as part of a larger project of recuperating and glorifying an endangered Italian identity. At that time, a number of identity related anxieties plagued the prevailing construction of Italian identity as the effects of the global financial crisis, which hit the country particularly hard, were starting to be felt. Moreover, Italy had lost some of its international prestige as its individual profile in geopolitical matters receded with the ascendancy of the European Union. At the same time, the most recent eastern enlargement of the EU that led to the incorporation of Romania and Bulgaria in the Union put added pressure on Italy to prove its belonging with the core Western European nations and to mark its distinction from the newly admitted member states. This, in turn, imposed a reassertion of Italian national identity along the lines of the fundamental western values of progress, modernity and rationality. This profession of modernity and Europeanness was interpreted in Italian media as a return to a national self reimagined in the guise of a unitary *Volk*

under the siege of hordes of foreign invaders. This choice became all the more intriguing at a time when the nation-state as a basis for grounding identifications faces ever more challenges.

I understand the creation of Romanian criminality in Italy as an opportunity to reinscribe the idea of nation and citizenship in the context of a larger discussion about inclusion and social solidarity in a transnational entity. The moral panic thus ignited may be a desperate attempt at preventing what Glick-Schiller (1995) considers to be the declining ability for the nation-states to form and discipline its subjects, a problem that comes with the increasing permeability of borders brought about by international migration. By constituting Romanian invaders in this way and disciplining them in the direction of their physical removal from the Italian territory, it is possible to symbolically re-seal the borders and to reaffirm a notion of Italianness grounded in a time of secure, familiar and reassuring social contours. If transnational migration brings into question the state's ability to define "the people," the moral panic is precisely an exercise in reasserting the state's control of "how the people are 'written' or constituted and how their meaning is fixed" (Cynthia Weber in Jacobson, 1996, p. 6). In this way, the moral panic serves to reassert the sovereign authority of the state.

The deep intertwining of politics and media peculiar to the Italian mediascape allows the primary definers easy access to means of mass communication. Berlusconi's "Bulgarian edict," which not only was heavily cored by RAI, but also set the stage for RAI to fire the three employees who had openly criticized the Prime Minister offered a dramatic illustration of the possibilities of policing public talk in Italy. In this context, it is easy to understand how the preferred definitions of situations can be disseminated through the media, while blatantly serving the electoral interests of a certain party. Furthermore, the relatively low diffusion of new media in Italy compared to the rest of Europe favors the circulation of the consonant definitions

proposed by the primary definers through the medium of television. With the historical weakness of the printed press in Italy, television is able to dictate what news is and how it should be handled across the entire Italian mediascape. Drawing on Foucault, Stuart Hall wrote that those "who produce the discourse also have the power to *make it true*" (1996, p. 205) by enforcing its validity. Certainly, the longstanding intertwining of media and politics in Italy make the enforcing of certain type of knowledge easy. The structure of the present-day Italian mediascape does not allow the circulation of radically dissonant definitions or information, rendering it the perfect environment for accelerating the signification spirals in a moral panic. In turn, this conspicuous absence of differing information acts to naturalize the definitions proposed by the primary definers by effectively retiring everything else from the domain of the thinkable. This not only legitimizes the dominant principles of vision and di-vision but actually acts to further vest the primary definers with authority in a circular knowledge/power construction typical of a moral panic.

European citizenship is thought to embody the highest legal form of a new kind of post-national membership (Soysal, 1994, p. 148). Joppke explains that the immigration challenge to the nation-state can be interpreted in two fundamental ways (1998, pp. 7–8): (1) conservatively as a challenge to be incorporated within the existing framework of nation-states (as does Roger Brubaker) and (2) progressively as a challenge that points to the fundamental transformation of nation-states (as exemplified by Soysal). Brubaker reconceptualizes the state as membership association, considering the new forms of denizenship as deviations from the normal model of national citizenship. In so doing, Brubaker shies away from even considering a reconfiguration of nation-states in response to immigration. In contrast, in Soysal's interpretation immigration transforms, rather than reaffirms the nation-state model. For Soysal, rights and identity become

uncoupled (Soysal, 1994, p. 159), with immigrant identities undergoing diasporic transformations and creolization (Joppke, 1998, p. 8). In Soysal's understanding, "the individual transcends the citizen" (1994, p. 142) as universal human rights replace national rights. The big paradox in Soysal's model is that post-national rights, while legitimated at a transnational level through international treaties, remain organized at the national level (1994, p. 143). It is, in other words, the paradox of "a deterritorialized expansion of rights despite the territorialized closure of polities" (Soysal, 1994, p. 157). Soysal attributes a lot of weight to modes of discourse which she perceives to be "as consequential as organizational mechanisms in facilitating new understandings of citizenship" (1994, p. 6). In fact, membership is organized in the same scheme in the classical (Brubaker) and the postnational (Soysal) citizenship model (Soysal, 1994, pp. 142–143). What immigration does change, however, is the composition of the population in an ethical-cultural way, which, in turn, changes its horizon and opens it up for different discourses on the same questions, with different results (Habermas, 1999, pp. 255, 266).

The massive Romanian immigration represents a case study for examining the feasibility of this new type of citizenship epitomized by the European Union. The Romanians' status as de jure EU citizens grants them a number of rights in terms of voting, labor market access and residence. Yet, confirming the observation of Soysal about the media facilitating the new understandings of citizenship, it is precisely through discourse that this newly acquired EU citizenship is symbolically undermined. This is a case where the construction of Romanian identity impinges on the implementation of rights by creating the idea that Romanians are not worthy of the effort required of the Italian state to ensure their rights as Europeans. Through representation, these people are dehumanized and reduced to their bare Romanianness which, in turn, is coded in a way that poses deportation as the only solution to their conundrum. Despite

the fact that Romanian immigrants are not just passive subjects of dominant discourse, actively negotiating their identity positionings (see Chapter 5), they are unable to change the horizon of the Italian society by opening it up to new discourses, as Habermas predicted. It seems Romanians are largely robbed of their speech (Honneth, 2000), either through invisibility or through an excessively muffled visibility – both of which are constructed within representation – that puts them in a position where they can make use, at best, of what Samers (2010, pp. 257–258) calls "some" degree of post-nationalization of rights. The Romanian case demonstrates the importance of studying the "modes of incorporation" (Portes & Böröcz, 1989) into the receiving society in order to perceive both the material and the discursive dimensions of social exclusion. Membership in a group only comes with full benefits if one is recognized as a member, since the absence of recognition often leads to the eroding of technical entitlements, thus turning formal equality into a sham (Crowley, 1999, p. 29). It is the sense of belonging that gives meaning to formal membership (Crowley, 1999, p. 38). The EU citizenship that Romanians acquired on January 1, 2007 is largely meaningless if not accompanied by a subjective sense of belonging to Europe and by the general recognition of this belonging.

Habermas considers that for the future of Europe an awareness of the common belonging is necessary that will enable "the 'freely associated union members' to *jointly* identify as state citizens" (Habermas, 1998, pp. 35–36, my translation). In this way, a longstanding interweaving of interests will be transformed with the development of a Europe-wide political public sphere and a common political culture into an awareness of common belonging (Habermas, 1998, p. 37). Although Habermas is optimistic about the prospects of creating a collective identity, he draws attention to the fact this will not be possible in the absence of a "politics of recognition" (1998, p. 113). For him, "the mutual recognition of the other in his otherness" (Habermas &

Steinmeier, 2008, p. 12) lies at the very core of a future common European identity, since he understands individual identity as intertwined with collective identities and reliant on a network of mutual recognition for its stability (Habermas, 1998, p. 113). In this way, solidarity would shift away from the *Volk* interpretation of the nation and its devastating exclusions to the more abstract basis of a "constitutional patriotism" (Habermas, 1998, p. 114). Migration could, in this scenario, bring about a transformation in the form of social integration, by adding to the "functional integration" brought about by horizontal relations of exchange a totally different form of integration "achieved through understanding, intersubjectively shared norms and common values, a 'social integration' of the lifeworld of collectives, that can have a common identity created" (Habermas, 1998, p. 125). While the pressure to openness would make the lifeworld disintegrate, it would be possible (and even necessary) for it to "close once again, but certainly in *extended* horizons" (Habermas, 1998, p. 127).

Yet, as this case study of Romanian immigrant life in Italy demonstrates, it is precisely the lack of recognition and the delegitimation of the constructions of otherness that impede the development of a common, inclusive European identity. The encouraging in the Italian press of the appeals of Romanian immigrant associations with the Romanian government to deny convicted Romanian felons the right to leave the motherland points to the fact that there seems to be no kind of attachment or perceived commonality of fate with the Romanians as fellow-EU citizens. While Italian media reports commended this initiative pushing restricted travelling rights for Romanians with a criminal record, an analogous proposal denying Italians with a charge sheet the right to travel outside the motherland would be unimaginable. Potentially, the imposing of this type of legislation in one part of the EU may trigger its generalization to all member states, but this concern never came up in Italian media. Implied here was the idea that

Romania was a distant backwater in need of policing and whatever happened there had no purchase for the "civilized" section of the European Union. It was entirely conceivable for the Italian mainstream to lobby for restrictive travel privileges for certain categories of Romanian citizens, even withholding the right of owning a passport, yet this problem did not need to be posed in the context of the fundamental rights of EU citizens because it was taken for granted that it would only apply to Romanian citizens, an antagonistic category perceived through an "Us vs. Them" lens that was profoundly disengaged from the Italians. Remarkable also is the profound feeling of guilt that plagued the entire Romanian community living in Italy who, through its actions of self-containment, implicitly acted to reinforce dominant discourse.

Instead of the ideal scenario outlined by Habermas, what I found in my study is that migration, accented as it is in the present-day context with what Joppke calls the "dual implications of post-national membership and multicultural identity politics" (1998a, p. 23), indeed poses a profound challenge to every component of the classical model of citizenship. However, this acute stage of social disorganization (Thomas, 1966) was appropriated by the Italian state as an opportunity to impose a hardened definition of its material and symbolic boundaries. W.I. Thomas (1966, pp. 8–9) explained that one of the biggest challenges with social reorganization is to make the group accept the new schemes as social rules or institutions. In this study, I showed how the massive Romanian immigration, in a context of global economic uncertainty, has been shaped by the over-accessed primary definers on the Right into a problem capable of sparking a moral panic. It is the definition of a situation that imposes meaning on events as "there are rival definitions of the situation [and] none of them is binding" (Thomas, 1966, p. 241). In the words of Robert Young, "the world is not the accomplice of our knowledge; there is no prediscursive providence which disposes the world in our favor" (1981, p.

67), meaning that discourse is a violence which we do to things by imposing it on them. By instituting the construction of Romanians as criminals to the exclusion and erasure of all other possible definitions of the situation, the distinction gap between the welcoming Italians and the uncivilized Romanian invaders was widened tremendously.

At the same time, this definition of the situation made possible a re-inscription of Italian identity as modern, progressive and rational. As I have shown in chapter two, whenever Italy had to redefine its identity in the 150 years of its existence as a unified state, it chose to re-imagine itself using the same range of tropes, themselves a residue of the complex history of colonialism and migration of the country (Bouchard, 2010; Mai, 2002; Maritano, 2002; Pratt, 2002). These tropes include the ideas of a modern, efficient, progressive, civilized and welcoming (*accogliente*) Italy thus placing the identity that the country lays claim to in this way squarely among the very potent mythologies of "progress" proper of the West (H. Bhabha, 1990, p. 209). The Italian meta-narrative branding the equivalence of modern, rational and European can only be constructed through a process of othering (H. Bhabha, 1990, p. 219). What happens is that

> the centre expels its anxieties, contradictions and irrationalities onto the subordinate term, filling it with the antithesis of its own identity; the Other, in its very alienness, simply mirrors and represents what is deeply familiar to the centre, but projected outside of itself. (Rutherford, 1990, p. 22)

The choice to instantiate the difference specifically through the criminalization of the Romanian immigrants suddenly became understandable as a projection of longstanding Italian anxieties about its troubles at home with the Mafia. The othering of the Romanian immigrants through criminalization offered a supple solution to a whole range of problems. It appeased fears

both at the political and the identity level that may otherwise have threatened to destabilize the fundamental contours of Italian society. Moreover, the criminalization of Romanians automatically increased the profile of the Italians perceived through this kind of "Us" versus "Them" lens. Critically, constructing Romanians as delinquents allowed for an easy, quick and economical solution, namely deportation. The symbolic satisfaction derived from the production of a social problem followed by its swift resolution could be played up very effectively in the quest for gaining votes and, as fate would have it, a heated election campaign for the office of mayor of Rome was unfolding in late 2007 when the moral panic was ignited. Additionally, the criminalization of an immigrant group and the establishment of a system of visibility in the Foucauldian sense are excellent ways for displacing other fears, such as those caused by the outbreak of the global economic crisis or the longstanding issue of metropolitan under-development and the urban insecurity connected to it. Finally, the construction of Romanian criminality was an excellent opportunity for primary definers to reassert their privileged access to power and to help to perpetuate the status quo.

From the host of symbolic advantages presented by the criminalization of Romanians, I will dwell on those which address the mechanisms responsible for setting in motion the moral panic in Italy in late 2007, namely the political and identity fears. Criminalization was probably the most efficacious way to accomplish both (a) the disenfranchising of those turned delinquent and (b) the widening of the distinctive gap between the constructs of an Italian and Romanian identity. While other possible solutions are imaginable, the fashioning of the Romanian criminal was unique in that it allowed for a quick demonstrative resolution, offering a great degree of satisfaction, at minimal cost.

Disenfranchising through criminalization. Branded as criminals, Romanians were no longer a newly enfranchised group with a significant political potential, but an indistinct mass of delinquents. Both Foucault (2007, p. 44) and Hall (1978, p. 68) discuss how criminalization takes an individual outside of the social consensus and of society, rendering him an outcast. As such, he is no longer able to make any political demands as someone who has irremediably broken the social contract. Any rights he may have been entitled to as a citizen are now rendered void as he is symbolically and physically removed from the ranks of a society he has irreparably wronged. Although Romanian immigrants have showed their potential for political mobilization when they tipped the Romanian presidential elections in 2009 and they could certainly have an influence in the Italian local elections given their geographically concentrated pattern of settling in the Peninsula, their criminalization delegitimized and depoliticized them.

Rhetorically, criminalization is a very refined move as it lays the blame for the deed exclusively on the person constructed as the perpetrator. What is wrong with a criminal is fundamentally a matter of his dishonorable character, something which can potentially be built into a trait of his "nature" and, through what Cohen (1972) called a "widening of the net" move, it could be extended to encompass the entire Romanian community. This move was all the more probable in a country like Italy that, since the Cold War, has represented its "Other" as a homogeneous collectivity of barbaric and Eastern destroyers of civilization (Pratt, 2002, pp. 31–38). In addition to being the only ones responsible for their unspeakable state of depravity, the criminalized Romanians were also portrayed as being irrecuperable offenders. The complete absence of any discussion regarding a possible solution to the constructed Romanian criminality problem other than their aseptic elimination from the social body (imprisonment leading to deportation) effectively retired all other potential options from the realm of the thinkable. There

was no talk of integration or even crime prevention: the only avenue rhetorically left open was the symbolical and physical elimination of those fashioned into criminals. This is a very refined strategy of discursive closure that placed the blame squarely and exclusively on the constructed criminals, thus rendering the correlative course of remedial action – i.e. the deportations – uncontestable. This incrimination strategy was no unfamiliar move in the Italian context as the tropes mobilized to other the Romanian immigrants closely resembled those deployed in the 19th century against the Italian South as a justification for the state's failure to implement reforms.

The impression that the Italian media discourse fostered was that criminality was simply a matter of time with Romanians: there were no honest Romanians, just some (apparently not many at all) who have not the broken the law *yet*. Unsurprisingly, the presumption of innocence never applies to Romanians in media reports. Not only were Romanians named rapists, murderers or thieves immediately upon their arrest and before any trial, but –in a perverse reversal of the principle of innocent until proven guilty – they were considered guilty even when they were proven innocent, as it happened to Isztoika and Racz. The linking of DNA to crime and ethnicity in the way it occurred in Italian media resulted in a racialized construction of Romanianness. This, in turn, shed some light on the reasons that make superfluous a discussion of the social factors potentially favoring a higher rate of criminality among immigrants in Italy. Making it plain that delinquency was rooted in the Romanian DNA obviated the need for a discussion about the widespread discrimination faced by these migrants on the labor and housing markets or the abject poverty that afflicts some of them. Not only were things streamlined in this way – with complex problems rendered simple and easily remediable – but it simultaneously spared the Italian mainstream an examination of racism within its structures, as it reaffirmed the ingrained equivalence between economic and moral backwardness. In so doing, it even signaled

the Italian belonging with the coveted "European club" of core western nations that, per Habermas, exhibits an "European affluence chauvinism" against the immigration from the poverty the regions of the east (1999, p. 269). In this way, the despised poverty understood as proper of the Romanians was constructed as non-European, at odds with the basic image of the core European nations as affluent, modern and efficient states.

Stuart Hall (1978, p. 66) depicts the media portrayal in cases of moral panic as a modern morality play resolved by the prompt intervention of society's guardians, the police and the judiciary, who both symbolically and physically drive out the "devil." Foucault (1980, p. 53) explains that in modern times the elimination of hostile elements to safeguard the social body ever in need of protection is done by the method of asepsis through criminology and the quarantining of those classified as "degenerates." Preventing any type of contact to pre-empt contamination thus becomes essential. With the social problem constructed in these terms, the only possible solution became deportation, the aseptic symbolical and physical elimination of the newly minted folk devils. Criminalizing the Romanians was an excellent way to perform the representation work needed to simplify the reality at hand in a way that was consistent and conducive exclusively to the solution of deportation. Criminalization was at the same time a kind of subjectifying experience, since the blame for the deviant behavior resided entirely within the individual. This focusing on personal experience precluded the examination of the social formation and allowed the individual to be blamed for the effects of social institutions in a strategic move of discursive closure (Deetz, 2007, p. 467). When an entire ethnicity is criminalized by forging links between delinquency and DNA, the blame, and with it the rhetorical closure, is generalized to an entire nation. At the same time, this peculiar definition of the situation created authority for the Italian police and politicians, who have been constantly

commended for their professionalism and efficiency, even in the face of blatant abuses and mistakes.

Distinction through criminalization. As I already mentioned, there is a historically anchored perception of similarity between Italians and Romanians and the granting of EU citizenship on the latter was enough to trigger a kind of identity anxiety in the receiving country. Bourdieu (1984) explains that when one group in society experiences sudden upward mobility, the faction situated immediately above it perceives this as a devaluing of its own standing and is thus pressured into symbolically increasing its distinction from the class that is getting dangerously close. The quest for re-widening the identity gap in this case, owing to the very similarity cited, could not be as plain as simply asserting that Italians were good, whereas Romanians were bad. Instead, what is needed is a construction of Romanian-ness that rendered them qualitatively different from Italians in an inherently negative manner. As Rutherford put it, "[t]he centre invests the Other with its terrors. It is the threat of the dissolution of self that ignites the irrational hatred and hostility as the centre struggles to assert and secure its boundaries, that construct self from non-self" (1990, p. 11). Criminalization was again the perfect solution and, as Rutherford predicted, in this case too it was the Right that made use of the electoral promise of defending the Italian social body "against the transgressive threat and displacements of difference" (1990, p. 11). An added bonus was the fact that through the construction of the Romanian criminal, the Italian social establishment could eschew any accusations of racism: crime – and certainly when it is as odious as rape – automatically disqualifies a person from any claim to membership in any society. So, not only does criminalization appease identity fears, but it actually boosts the standing of the Italian status quo as the welcoming, lenient, civilized receiving country, irreparably wronged by the ungrateful,

criminal, uncivilized Romanian immigrants. Also, by constructing Romanian criminality as something rooted in "nature" and irreparable, it became immunized against revision.

There is a well-documented tendency in Italian media to construct "specializations" in terms of types of crimes of immigrant communities (Dal Lago, 1999 qtd. in ter Wal, 2002, p. 247). Rape was constructed as the Romanian crime par excellence (Harja & Melis, 2010) and often reinterpreted in the media as an attack on the entire Italian social body. Interestingly, until recently in Italy rape used to be a crime against morality, and not against the person. As such, rape would threaten the fundamental moral contours of society much more than any other crime and, consequently, it lended itself much more for mobilization to spark a moral panic. Additionally, as a crime primarily targeted against women, that literally preys on the weak, it involved a sense of urgency on behalf of the Italian authorities to protect the vulnerable women who could not fend for themselves. This sense of emergency could then be easily extended to the level of the whole nation and deployed in such a way as to legitimize the desired solution, radical as it may have been.

Critically, constructing rape as the quintessential Romanian crime automatically marked the perpetrators as degenerates. As such, Romanians were rendered inassimilable by the Italian society, leaving deportation as the only option. The portrayal of the Romanian rapist linked up effortlessly with racialized notions of deviant hypersexuality, therefore automatically mobilizing powerful strands of racial anxiety and rapidly connecting to previous definitions of the situation deposited in the Italian lifeworld. Moreover, Cotesta argues that in the current negotiation of Italian identity against an immigrant "other," the Italian "us" positions itself in contrast to the immorality of others (1999, qtd. in Mai, 2002, p. 81). Rape and the degenerate sexuality that underpins it mark the outer, extreme edge of that immorality which forms the constitutive

"Other" for the current understanding of Italian identity. Finally, rape constitutes a symbolical reiteration of the idea of the immigrant invasion and the contamination it implies. Under attack by invading hordes, the most logical reaction is to secure the status quo, bad as it may be, against external aggression. This, in turn, resulted in even more authority for the primary definers in society who, in this way, were able to successfully deflect concern from other areas such as the shortcomings of the current administration and the inequalities in the extant configuration of power. The construction of the Romanian immigrants as "natural" born rapists, thus, was essential for crystallizing anxiety and sparking a moral panic with a view to securing existing configurations of power. The progression to a military-style operation directed against these ghastly Romanian rapists became almost automatic. This type of discourse also recuperated balkanist tropes to symbolically oust the Romanians from Europe. It is the transient status of the Balkans as semideveloped and semicivilized, a periphery of Europe suspended between Europe and Asia that imposed the need to symbolically bind the Romanians to an undisputable status that would automatically disqualify them from any glimmer of Europeanness they could have potentially laid claim to. The ambiguity peculiar to the Balkans was resolved in this case in the direction of totally silencing the traces of Europeanness and thus portraying this structurally despised alter-ego not as the incomplete Western self that it was, but as its antithesis.

As explained in chapter four, in late 2007 and early 2008 there was a sudden bracketing of substantial global economic anxieties followed by a displacement of concern to personal safety issues. This foregrounded nicely the restrictive measures that were to follow: reducing fear through elision and limiting it to the body and the immediate belongings of a person made the "problem" much more amenable to a simple solution and it also prompted people to think just in terms of a practical intervention. Acting within this oversimplifying definition of the

situation, it became much easier to accomplish symbolic satisfaction by taking a harsh course of action towards the perceived "threat." There is an intriguing circuit of power at work here: the power to define the situation in a certain way rendered just one –highly restrictive – course of action as the solution, the only one logically admissible, while, at the same time, it served to legitimate that punitive undertaking. We see here at work the same kind of reductionist process that Stuart Hall singled out in his seminal study about mugging for rendering crime reporting in the media peculiarly one-dimensional, yielding all potential alternatives in the treatment of crime outside of the crudest and most pragmatic ones effectively invisible. Actually carrying out that restrictive course of action offers symbolic satisfaction to those potentially wronged by the threat and it carries the aura of mission accomplished for law enforcement. Constructing identifiable anxiety sources – as opposed to the abstruse whims of global economy – enabled the channeling of resentment that could then be dispelled with the elimination of "the problem." Focusing negative attention on a marginal group like the Romanians rendered the whole situation more controllable and paved the way to the only complete and genuine solution: the aseptic eradication of the threat, meaning deportation.

Representation worked swiftly here to create authority. Bourdieu reminds us that "what creates the power of words and slogans, a power capable of maintaining or subverting the social order, is the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them. And words alone cannot create this belief" (1991, p. 170). There is a circuit of symbolic power at work here that is misrecognized as arbitrary. Bouchard notices that the nexus global migration – citizenship – nationality has traditionally been conceptualized in terms of border defense, surveillance and security in Italy (2010, p. 106). It is then unsurprising that the construction of Romanianness was linked up with sanctioned definitions along these lines deposited in the Italian lifeworld and

it quickly acquired symbolic and practical purchase. Gramsci's comment that each individual "is a précis of the past" (1988, p. 326, in Rutherford, 1990, pp. 19–20) applies equally in regards to one's self-understanding of identity and to the social constructions of identity. The diffuse existence of these definitions of situations in the Italian lifeworld lends them legitimacy and as they are never completely drawn into the contexts of relevance of the Romanian situation, they can continue to perform signification work, beyond the realm of the criticizable. A new label was constituted in this way, drawing on the existing definitions of the situation. In the very process of imposing a certain definition of Romanianness to the exclusion of other potential ones, authority was created and certain people were invested with it. In turn, whenever these people presented the definition of the situation as the only admissible way to look at occurrences, they bestowed legitimacy on the words they uttered. There is a circuit of symbolic power that is supported by existing power configurations.

The frequent mentioning in the media of the fact that in a short time span, the Romanians have managed to displace the Albanians, in terms of criminal prominence in Italy, was an illustration of these power dynamics. In the 1990s a host of similar tropes were used in the discourse marginalizing the Albanians, including criminalization, dangerousness, backwardness, irrationality and immorality. These previously elaborated labels served as fertile ground for quickly and seamlessly constructing Romanian criminality in the 2000s. These labels were deposited in the Italian lifeworld and their frequent deployment during the 1990s led to a strengthening of the links within the interpretive package of the label, ensuring that the mentioning of one term automatically brought up the whole label, including its wide-reaching symbolic implications. The fact that they were kept, in this way, very available mentally, favored their quick mobilization for the definition of Romanianness. This kind of deep cultural

grounding of labels made blatant racist discourse superfluous, since it was able to achieve the same results more efficiently and bypassing both accusations of prejudice and the possibility of rational contestation.

The moral panic thus ignited favored, in turn, what Bouchard calls "the revival of a mythology of the Italian national identity" (Bouchard, 2010, p. 105) which is founded on notions of commonality of culture and genealogical descent. It is interesting that in an era of fundamental challenge to the nation-state through international migration, Italy chose to recontextualize its "nationness" in the face of the universalistic discourse of human rights not in the direction of the blurring the boundaries and the meanings attached to nation as Soysal (1994, p. 162) predicted, but in the direction of a return to a more exclusionary definition of Italianness. My study confirms that Joppke was right in his critique of Soysal's post-national model when he argued that the European Union does not manage to break the association between citizenship and nationality, and, instead, only renews it in a slightly different way (1998b, p. 30). The surprising finding here is that this association was renewed in the direction of a hardening of boundaries under the pressure of a perceived threat to the authenticity of Italian identity. My analysis also confirms Joppke's assertion that it is the legal system –and not civil society – that represents the key protective institution for immigrants (1998a, p. 18). Indeed, my informants reported with pride their successes in getting their rights formally acknowledged – sometimes in court – against the dissent of the Italian public. By using the modern morality play of Romanian criminality, it was not only the Romanians who were constituted as a people, but also the Italians who were repositioned within a mythology of the Italian national identity. As Bhabha reminds us,

> The concept of a people is not 'given', as an essential, class-determined, unitary, homogeneous part of society *prior to a politics*; 'the people' are there as a process of political articulation and political negotiation across a whole range of contradictory social sites. 'The people' always exist as a multiple form of identification, waiting to be created and constructed. (1990, p. 220)

In constituting the Romanian immigrant as the margin of this peculiar reactionary reassertion of Italianness, this repository of fears and anxieties has the possibility of resistance: "Even as difference is pathologized and refused legitimacy, new terms and new identities are produced on the margins" (Rutherford, 1990, p. 22). Indeed, this study demonstrated that identity is a complex game and, as such, it is forever provisional. My informants constantly switched between the eight identity negotiation strategies I have discussed in chapter five oscillating between different levels of subscribing to the dominant discourse and presenting resistance. This demonstrates the dialectical position between what Stuart Hall called the "hailing" of the subject *and* having the subject invest in that position (1996d, pp. 5–6), both of which are necessary for a successful suturing of identity. The same attempts at resistance lend some hope to the idea of a future European identity. While it is clear from this case study that in Italy the immigration challenge was interpreted within a classical model of citizenship (Brubaker), the fact that some of my informants were partially successful in negotiating variations of nested identities and marble cake positionings (Risse, 2005, pp. 295–296) that incorporate European identity in different modes and degrees gives some hope for the future. As of now and as it pertains to the Romanian immigration, in Italy citizenship continues to be "a powerful instrument of social closure" (Brubaker, 1992, p. 23) which means that "outsiders are defined negatively and residually" (Brubaker, 1992, p. 29). Although for the Romanians the

formal closure was strongly reinforced by informal closure relying on tacit, uncodified, internalized classificatory schemes (Brubaker, 1992, p. 30), not all outsiders were treated equally. Romanian immigrants were clearly at the top of a hierarchy of mostrified otherness that had at its other end migrants from rich western European countries who tended to not be considered immigrants at all, but simply mobile professionals and investors (Pratt, 2002). We are seeing here a correlative hierarchy of levels and modes of foreignness (Simmel, 1950) that positioned Romanians rather as marginal men, permanently inhabiting the conflict- and contradiction-rife margin of two cultures and two societies (Park, 1928). So, for the Romanians, and against Soysal's (1994) predictions, rights and identity actually became symbolically reconsolidated as the attempts at the political enfranchising of these new EU citizens were thwarted within representation. This, in turn, was accompanied by a very territorialized closure of identities in which Romanians were "spatially incarcerated" (Appadurai, 1988) in that "other place" that was perceived as proper of that backward, savage and radically different "other culture" (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997, p. 43). As a consequence, some of them, like Siu's (1987) Chinese laundrymen in the United States, came to live a mental life in the motherland, despite their physical presence in Italy by building a small Romania in their homes. Nevertheless, European identity is certainly not a zero-sum game (Risse, 2005, p. 295) and it allowed for a variety of identity negotiations that, notwithstanding the reified construction of difference, does not exclude the evolving of a sense of belonging and commonality in future.

This study looked beyond simplistic blame allocation toward the structural determinants of the media portrayals triggering the identity negotiations. Bourdieu (2000, p. 178) explains that the state has no need to use physical coercion in an attempt to produce an ordered social

world if it can secure doxic submission to the established order. He describes how this is accomplished:

> The construction of the State is …accompanied by the construction of a kind of common historical transcendental which, after a long process of incorporation, becomes immanent to all its 'subjects.' Through the structuring it imposes on practices, the State institutes and inculcates common symbolic forms of thought, social frames of perception, understanding or memory, State forms of classification or, more precisely, practical schemes of perception, appreciation and action… (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 175)

It thus becomes clear that there was neither a conspiracy at work, nor were the subjects involved poor cultural dupes. Instead, this common historical transcendental that instilled similar ways of thinking and seeing, much like the internalized gaze from Foucault's system of visibility, formed the foundation of "an immediate, prereflexive consensus on the meaning of the world, which is the basis of the experience of the world as the 'common-sense world'" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 172). In turn, the state lies at the heart of the logical and moral conformism, to use Durkheim's phrases, thus achieved (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 172). This makes it easier to understand why the moral panic was steered in the direction of re-affirming the value of the Italian nation-state in a context of increased transnationalism. The widespread subscription to the construction of Romanianness in Italy was not a case of triumphant propaganda or an act of free recognition of the legitimacy of the construct. Instead, as Bourdieu points out, "it is the prereflexive agreement between the objective structures and the incorporated structures…which explains the – ultimately astonishing – ease with which … the dominant impose their domination" (2000, p. 178). Bourdieu even contradicts Weber in arguing that the recognition of legitimacy is not "a free act of lucid consciousness; [instead] it is rooted in the immediate

agreement between the incorporated structures, turned into practical schemes… and the objective structures" (2000, p. 177). In other words, once the dominant gaze is interiorized and the immigrant perceives himself as "other" through the force of inner compulsion, as it were, it becomes difficult to think completely outside it, for it is this gaze that structures everything that one perceives. This explains the absence of more resistance, both quantitatively and qualitatively, to the dominant discourse without, however, fashioning its subjects into dupes.

Although Romanians certainly contribute with their acceptance of generalized Romanian guilt to the establishing of the symbolic power that they themselves undergo, Bourdieu makes it clear that this complicity is by no means a "voluntary servitude" springing from deliberate, conscious thought "but it is itself the effect of a power, which is durably inscribed in the bodies of the dominated, in the form of schemes of perception and dispositions" (2000, p. 171). In turn, the basis of this relationship of practical knowledge whereby Romanians came to perceive themselves through the dominant gaze is profoundly obscure to itself (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 170). In this way it is possible to make sense of the coexistence of multiple often contradictory self-understandings of people who are both proud of being Romanian, while concealing this fact and avoiding all compatriots as the prereflexive manifestation of cleft habitus,[81] proper of marginal men stranded between two worlds pitted against each other. However, Bourdieu admits the possibility for people to "awaken…from their doxic slumber" (2000, p. 172). Acknowledging the extraordinary inertia resulting from the inscription of social structures in bodies he rejects all calls to raising an illuminated consciousness and instead thinks that "only a thoroughgoing process of countertraining, involving repeated exercises, can, like an athlete's training, durably transform habitus" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 172). In this way, the work of Bourdieu helps us

[81] For Bourdieu, habitus is "a system of durable and transposable dispositions which, integrating all past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions, and make it possible to accomplish infinitely differentiated tasks, thanks to the analytical transfer of schemata " (1977, p. 261).

understand the seriousness and the long-term effects of representation that, far from being just "empty talk," presents palpable consequences at the level of identity. However, the forms of classification inculcated by the state are neither total, all-encompassing, nor eternal. Rather, these schemes are the stakes in a perpetual struggle that, just like in hegemony, is never definitely won. Therefore, the state needs to perpetually re-affirm these schemes of perception and, in the process, impose an advantageous identity narrative. The Romanian-centered moral panic in Italy is precisely one case of such an anxious re-affirming of Italian identity at a time when the balance in the symbolic struggle appears like it may tip the wrong way for the established power configurations in Italian society. The sheer presence of a large number of actors changing the ethical-cultural composition of the population, as Habermas (1999) put it, threatened to destabilize the entrenched principles of vision and di-vision in Italian society, thus triggering a swift and categorical reaction in the form of a moral panic.

My study of the media portrayals of Romanians in Italy is an investigation in the discursive constitution of power and its instrumentalization in maintaining the status quo. In this analysis, I demonstrate that the moral panic in Italy starting in late 2007 was not primarily motivated by any kind of racial hatred directed against the Romanians. Instead, as I have shown, the primary stake was a reassertion of Italian identity consistent with the ingrained mythology of Italian national identity. The Romanians as a group happened to be a particularly advantageous option for imposing that return to a hardened identity definition, while displacing other fears in the process. So, although racial prejudice is mobilized heavily during the moral panic, it is the efficiency of this type of imagery to impose convenient definitions of the situation, its practical efficacy as it were, that compelled its deployment and not any kind of underlying hatred of the Romanians. This, in turn, opens up different avenues for the Romanians, even as they are being

constructed into the folk devil, to negotiate acceptable identity positionings for themselves (see chapter five). My work lays bare the symbolic roots and the social construction of an acute problem with very "real," palpable material consequences in present-day Italy, explaining and debunking them. My project unpacks the moral panic framework as it discusses the constitution of social problems with a view to forcing these constructions outside of the shield of common sense and the unquestionable. This case study complicates current understandings of the opportunities and pitfalls of EU integration as it helps to better conceptualize the current axes of discrimination and the vulnerabilities within the social fabric of the European Union in view of further enlargement and ever greater internal mobility.

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Appendix

Interview Guide

1. Is it better to be Romanian in Romania or in Italy? Do you think that there are Italians who consider themselves superior to Romanians? On what grounds? Do you think that there are also Romanians who consider themselves inferior to Italians? On what grounds?
2. The do you think that if you were born Romanian, you remain Romanian, regardless of where you live in the world and for how long? Can things change? How and under what circumstances?
3. Does the fact that you are Romanian ever make you feel different from those around you? If yes, how? Can you feel any difference? Are Romanians different from Italians? How so?
4. Has it ever happened that you introduced yourself differently based on the context or on the people were around you? Is your behavior different when you are with Italians than when you are with Romanians? How do other Romanians behave when in the company of Italians as opposed to Romanians?
5. Do you feel that Italians may judge you incorrectly when they do not know you personally and they judge you just as the member of a group? Does their perception change when they get to know you? What can be the source of that perception?
6. Is the Romanian community covered and the Italian media? What kinds of topics are most frequently covered? Is the coverage mostly positive or negative?
7. In the Italian media, does the Romanian community also have a voice of its own or is it mostly just Italian journalists who discuss about it?

8. Are there organizations fighting for the rights of Romanians in Italy? How about Romanian-language newspapers, TV channels, magazines, radio stations? Are these produced in Italy or imported from Romania? Is it possible to study Romanian in school in Italy, at least as a foreign language?
9. Where is home for you? In Italy or in Romania? When you think for yourself, in what language do you think? In what language do you dream, if you dream in words?
10. Under what circumstances would you return to Romania permanently?
11. Is there an interest from the Italian side to find out more about Romania or about the Romanian culture? How would Italians be able to find out more about Romania?
12. If you would win two million euros in the lottery tomorrow, what would you do with the money?