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A Matter of Power? (Ethnic) Identification and Integration of Albanian-Origin Immigrants in Thessaloniki

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Abstract

The literature on the second generation has generally considered ethnicity as ‘the issue’ marking the identity formation of the children of migrants. This paper looks at Albanian-origin teenagers in Thessaloniki and explores their experiences and narratives of identification processes, focusing on the role of ethnicity. Results show that other identity traits are very important to the teenagers, whereas references to ethnicity are determined by contextual characteristics and factors, rather than parents’ or the ethnic community’s ‘legacy’. Ethnicity itself, at least in primordial terms, is perceived as a symbolic and external entity to which Albanian-origin teenagers have to relate in their everyday lives. The findings contrast with previous studies based on analysis of other second-generation groups and countries, which have established ethnicity as the core of the factors influencing the identity and integration strategies of the second generation. This paper shows that the type and frequency of references and choices in relation to ethnicity can be rational even among members of ‘new second generations’, with differences between self-identification and ethnic labelling conditioned by personal experience and by the centrality of ethnicity in the host society’s political and social spheres.

Introduction

‘Greek you are born, you cannot become ... your blood will be shed, you pig Albanians’.¹ This is one of the rhymed chants of the troops of the Greek army marching in the streets of Athens on national independence day in spring 2010. An expression of primordial ethnicity, clearly alive and guarded institutionally, this reminds us that, while national belonging is increasingly defined in terms of civic participation (Tzanelli 2006), and while transnational studies regard single loyalty to the nation-state and the consequent pressure on immigrants to assimilate as a thing of the past (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1995: 51), this is not yet the case of Greece. How does this reflect on interethnic relations and immigrant identification and integration in a country which is now host to a large immigrant population? And how are these sharp symbolic boundaries played out within the framework of a still-newly emerging multiculturalism?

It may be too much to ask from a new immigration country like Greece, given that minority integration issues have been just as alarming in the countries of North-Western Europe, despite their much longer experience with immigration. My focus here, though, is on the immigrants and especially their descendants, not least because of a lack of attention to this latter group in the countries of the European South. At the same time, the shift in attention relates also to academic developments in the field. The main developments in research on the second generation in Europe have been concentrated on recognising the role of the national context and the institutional arrangements on integration, highlighting the incapacity of the major theoretical frameworks developed in the US to explain different patterns of second-generation integration across Europe (Crul and Vermeulen 2003a, 2003b; Crul and Schneider 2010), but research has mostly focused on North-Western Europe. Meanwhile, the focus on the relevance of ethnicity in the second generation’s integration process is important theoretically. The literature on the second generation has widely considered ethnicity as ‘the issue’ marking the identity formation

¹ BalkanWeb, http://bw.balkanweb.com/videoAlbum/popup.php?VIDCategory=45&IDVideo=2863&va_id_video=2863
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of the children of migrants. As a result, ethnicity has been at the core of theoretical models explaining the second generation's identification and integration processes. This is at the same time when literature on ethnic identification is increasingly focusing on the concept of boundaries and is emphasising the need to look at the intersections of multiple identities.

Interest in the study of the second generation in Greece has been increasing in recent years. Most of the studies have looked at the second generation in Athens, and mainly children in elementary schools (e.g., Gogonas 2007; Michail 2008); to date there is no research conducted with Albanian-origin teenagers in Thessaloniki. This paper seeks therefore to fill this gap by exploring the perceptions on ethnicity of Albanian-origin teenagers. It aims to explore the role of ethnicity in the identification process of the second generation, by analysing the references made to ethnicity, the situational engagement with ethnicity and its role in the perception of identity. Findings show that other identity traits are very important to the teenagers, whereas references to ethnicity appear as determined by contextual characteristics and factors, rather than by parents' or the ethnic community's 'legacy'. Ethnicity itself, at least in primordial terms, is perceived as a symbolic and external entity to which Albanian-origin teenagers have to relate in their everyday lives.

Ethnicity and Identification Processes of the Second Generation

Ethnicity and identity

Ethnicity has had its own distinct evolution as a term. Broadly put, ethnicity is associated with discourses on subjectivity and identity construction, acknowledging that such discourses are placed, positioned and situated in a particular historical, social and cultural context (Hall 1990, 1996). However, Wimmer (2008a, 2008b) notes that academic discourse on the conceptualisation of ethnicity has evolved

around two dichotomous terms: 'primordialism', based on the assumption that ethnic membership was acquired through birth and thus represented a 'given' characteristic of the social world; and 'instrumentalism', which posited that individuals choose between various identities according to self-interest. Nowadays, this dichotomy has been blurred and increasingly the two terms are not seen as mutually exclusive. By seeing the dichotomy through a cognitive lens, Brubaker *et al.* (2004) argue that the real difference between the primordial and the situational stance is that the former emphasises the tendency of participants to naturalise real or imputed human differences and the way groups are conceived, while the situational approach can explain how ethnicity takes relevance in particular contexts and everyday interactions. Jenkins (1997) maintains that ethnicity is a ubiquitous social phenomenon rather than a 'natural' group characteristic – a claim that has been wrongly confused with the primordial stance on ethnicity.

The developments on ethnicity from the primordial stance to the cognitive approach have been long and fragmented. It is important to note here the original definition of ethnic groups by Max Weber (Roth and Wittich 1976: 389), who maintained that 'we shall call "ethnic groups" those human beings that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; thus *belief* must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely it doesn't matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists' (*italics mine*). A crucial moment was the introduction into this debate of the concept of boundaries by Barth (1969), who considered ethnicity a product of a social process, attributing thus a more active role to individuals' and groups' engagement in redefining their ethnicity, by seeing ethnic identity as defined by the combination of the view one has for oneself and the views of others about one's ethnic identity. Others have

followed a similar line. For instance, Alba (2005: 22) maintains that ethnicity ‘... is a distinction that individuals make in their everyday lives that shapes their actions and mental orientations towards others; and it is typically embedded in a variety of social and cultural differences between groups that give an ethnic boundary concrete significance (so that members of one group think, “They are not like us because . . .”).’ Jenkins (1997: 165) delineates the post-Barthian anthropological model of ethnicity based on several propositions:

- ‘ethnicity is about cultural differentiation (bearing in mind that identity is always a dialectic between similarity and difference);
- ethnicity is concerned with culture – shared meaning – but it is also rooted in and the outcome of social interaction;
- ethnicity is no more fixed than the culture of which it is a component or the situations in which it is produced and reproduced;
- ethnicity is both collective and individual, externalised in social interaction and internalised in personal self-identification’.

Jenkins (2004) furthermore points to the contrast between individual and collective identities by maintaining that the former emphasises difference whereas the latter similarity. By considering identity ‘a practical accomplishment, a process’, Jenkins (2004: 23) maintains that both individual and collective identities use a unified model of the dialectical interplay of processes of internal and external definition, with time and space being central to both these processes. Another classification is that of Karner (2007), who sees ethnicity as a triad of constructs: in terms of structures that affect social action, as a cognitive process affecting perceptions of the world, and as an emotional way of experiencing life situations. Anthias (2009), furthermore, calls for a distinction to be drawn between notions of ethnic identity and of ethnicity, as the latter refers to a practical term

expressing the mobilisation on the basis of ethnic ideas.

As signalled above, ethnicity is built on two major constructs: identity and culture (Nagel 1994). It is worth noting that the literature on identity is characterised by various strands that are based on different epistemological and disciplinary approaches working in different domains and levels. Indeed, one could not agree more with Gilroy (1996: 224–225), who stylishly points to the ‘the passage into vogue’ of identity and the academic mess that surrounds the concept (see also Handler 1994). One of the most confusing and analytically problematic approaches has been the ‘soft’ constructivist version which posits that identity is multiple, fluid and always changing, which raises questions on its operationability and usefulness as a research construct (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 19; Todd 2005). Brubaker and Cooper (2000), in their explicit ‘attack’, acknowledge the importance of the developmental approach in establishing the term and at the same time ‘blame’ it on Erikson (1968) as the start of a saga of confusing terms and models that have made identity an ambiguous analytical concept. They instead propose the use of three clusters of terms: identification and categorisation; self-understanding and social location; and commonality, connectedness and groupness. In these clusters, the classic triangle of aspects of identity – the question of self, that of sameness and of solidarity (Gilroy 1996) – are reviewed and challenged. This reorganisation of the identity literature highlights the growing emphasis on the processes and agents that do the identifying, the cognitive awareness and the multiple forms and degrees of commonality and connectedness discussed under various types of collective identities (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). On the other hand, relating identity with a shared culture and perceived common origin has been the way ethnic identity has been differentiated from other social identities (Barth 1969; Jenkins 1997; Levine 1999; Vermeulen and Govers 1994).

Ethnic identification, however, is not a 'flat' and uniform process across contexts and groups. Jenkins (1997) maintains that culture is taken for granted until the moment when identity is problematised along the interaction across the boundaries, a process that leads to an explicit acknowledgment by the members of an ethnic group of the distinct common features, both to themselves and to the non-members. Barth (1969: 14) furthermore recognised that the features that are proclaimed as distinct are not always objectively selected, but consist of those that the main actors regard as significant. The salience of ethnic categories can vary in different socio-cultural systems; they may be 'inactive' or may pervade social life – in general or selectively in limited sectors of activity.

This view is furthermore elaborated by authors who relate ethnic identity and its performance to structure. While acknowledging these theoretical assumptions and the role of agency in identification processes, Nagel (1994: 155) maintains that 'the chosen ethnic identity is determined by the individual's perception of its meaning to different audiences, its salience in different social contexts, and its utility in different settings'. She further notes that ethnicity is both the product of actions undertaken by ethnic groups as they shape and reshape their self-definition and culture, and the 'outcome' of external social, economic and political processes and actors that shape and reshape ethnic categories and definitions (Nagel 1994: 152). This view partly reflects the 'situational' stance on ethnic identity which holds that ethnic identity is unstable over time and life-span, with different settings 'activating' different aspects of one's possible range of group identities, while self-identification is increasingly given the status of the most appropriate means of measurement of ethnic identity (Banton 2008; Stephan and Stephan 2000).

But what are the factors and actors that influence identity formation and how do they combine in affecting the way that

individuals and groups identify? Until recently, academic work on racial and ethnic identities has emphasised Barth's relational perspective and has considered these identities as the result on the one hand of a process of self-definition and on the other of the construction of symbolic boundaries and assignment of collective identities by others (Lamont and Molnar 2002). Jenkins (1997) supports this view and maintains that ethnicity is transactional; these transactions are processes of internal and external definition, which constrain and shape ethnic identification. However, most of the post-Barthian literature has overlooked the importance of external definition and social categorisation and has mostly analysed ethnicity based on internal definition and group identification. Neither Barth, nor the members of the Manchester School who developed the situational approach, have paid sufficient attention to the external constraints that condition ethnic identification. The main working concepts extensively used in the study of ethnic identity, such as 'boundaries' and 'choices', have proved to be useful to analyse the already established ethnic categories, but they do not explain how some of ethnic categories are developed and engaged in social action (Levine 1999). This has been ordinarily associated with a conceptualisation of social relationships as egalitarian and conflict-free, based on equitable negotiations (Jenkins 1997). External categorisation is, however, seen as framing and conditioning the internal malleable construction of identity at an individual level, and as a means used by political entrepreneurs to affect collective identification and modify collective action (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Barth (1994) proposed a multiple-level approach, which entails a combination of the interpersonal interactions at micro level, the processes that create collectivities at a meso level and the role of state at macro level.

Increasingly processes of identification are associated with issues of power. Barth (1994: 16), in his review of academic work on ethnic boundaries, maintains that the process of the construction of a boundary is

a joint work shared between members of both contrasting groups, 'though they are probably differently empowered in their ability to impose and transform the relevant idioms'. This empowerment is related to the salience of ethnicity in local settings as a result of differentiation, which results in ethnicity becoming an integral part of an individual's point of view of selfhood starting in early primary socialisation. External categorisation, however, features as a very important factor in shaping ethnicity and the element through which power differentiations are expressed and materialised (Jenkins 1997). Sokëfeld (2001) goes as far as to maintain that certain individual and collective identities are chosen and claimed not on the basis of psychological or sociological categories; they are informed and conditioned by issues of power and resistance, which are intrinsically connected with identity. These power differentiations are expressed in various settings and apply to '...immediate everyday life, which categorizes the individual, marks him [*sic.* etc.] by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power, which makes individuals subjects' (Foucault 1982: 781).

This view is taken up by Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002), who furthermore emphasise that the anthropology of ethnic groups within modernising or industrialised nation-states tended to describe these as culturally different from the 'majority' population because of their varying historical origin, including their history of migration, rather than to see these differences as a consequence of the politicisation of ethnicity in the context of nation-state-building itself. They point to the fact that the 'politicisation of ethnicity' was a central part of the nation-state project to define all those populations not thought to represent the 'national culture' as racially and culturally different, which contributed to efforts to build unity and identity. The newer conceptualisation of ethnicity that followed maintains that ethnic boundaries

are the outcome of the classificatory struggles and negotiations between actors situated in a social field and the behaviour and strategies of these actors are determined by three characteristics of a field: the institutional order, distribution of power, and political networks (Wimmer 2008a: 970).

However, Levine (1999: 168) maintains that too much emphasis has been put on forces of personal development and calls for more attention to be dedicated to the interaction between mind, society and culture as a main factor influencing the engagement of ethnic categories. Levine's view is part of the cognitive strand in the studies of ethnicity, which criticises the tendency towards 'groupism' in conceptualising ethnic groups, taking them as the ubiquitous and elementary constituents of social life. Rather this movement concentrates on 'group-making' through activities of classification, categorisation and identification and considers groups as collective cultural representation (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 45).

The cognitive approach, with its emphasis on cultural representations and the involvement of the mind in the elaboration of ethnic categories, gained even more currency with the introduction of an interactional model of identity formation by Todd (2005). She gave full recognition to power relations and resource distribution as two important variables in explaining identity change. However, she notes that '...if we posit a slowly changing "cultural sub-stratum" that may underlie more radical category change, we need a different model of how identity-categories function. We need to recognize not just the complex and varying meanings of these categories and their lack of fixed or foundational status, but also their social "embeddedness" and their personal "anchorage", which allow change or stasis to occur out of phase with other variables, and to affect them in turn' (2005: 433). The new model associated the process of identity formation and change with

intentionality expressed in the incorporation of new elements of meaning and value while rearranging the old, or a combination of social practices in a new way, which leads to the production of different meanings. Todd (2005) maintains that the social constraints and the cognitive schemas rooted in early infancy are thought to condition this process, while calling for identity and culture to return into the models attempting to explain socio-cultural transformation.

On the other hand, wider social and cultural institutions and principles of social differentiation are thought to be strongly related to ethnic identity. Firstly, although the taxonomic logic of ethnic identity is found to be hierarchical, ethnicity itself is thought to be one of the many sources of identification overlapping with some important others, among which social class and gender feature strongly (Banton 2008; Jenkins 1997). Furthermore, this overlapping is seen to have implications in the process of external categorisation. Broader principles of social differentiation impact the ability of certain actors to categorise others, especially on the basis of relations of power and authority (Jenkins 1997).

This is why the concept of boundaries is back to the fore in studies of identity in various disciplines, by emphasising the need to look at the intersections of multiple identities. Interestingly, the idea of boundaries related to socio-cultural differences within ethnic groups dates back to the 1960s, with Gordon (1964: 234) defining an ethnic group as an 'a large subsociety, criss-crossed by social class, and containing its own primary groups of families, cliques and associations – its own network of organizations and institutions'. Recent studies on ethnic and racial boundaries are increasingly focusing on the construction of collective identities and are attempting to elaborate models that link cognitive and cultural aspects with the social processes underlying ethno-racial boundary-making (Pachucki *et al.* 2007). Lamont and Molnar (2002) furthermore

distinguish between symbolic and social boundaries, with symbolic boundaries being based on conceptual distinctions, which stand on the basis of categorisations made by social actors. Symbolic boundaries are found to interact with social boundaries – the objectified forms of social differences defined in terms of access and distribution of resources – by being used to maintain and transform them in various ways in different social contexts (2002: 168, 186). The context-dependency of the nature of ethnic and racial boundaries was further supported by Alba (2005), who maintains that the process of defining the boundaries between immigrants and the natives depend both on features of the social and institutional spheres of the host societies, and on the characteristics and histories of the immigrant groups themselves.

The concept of boundaries, however, falls short in explaining the meaning, content and purposes that ethnic meanings serve. Nagel (1994: 162) points out that ethnic boundaries help us to understand who we are, but does not explain what we are, or, as she puts it, what fills 'Barth's vessel'. Here the concept of culture, seen itself as fluid and negotiated, proves useful in animating and authenticating the boundaries by assigning historical, ideological and symbolic systems of meaning. On the other hand, Levitt (2005) brings the transnational perspective to the study of boundaries. In line with the transnational stance in general, Levitt (2005: 50) maintains that, in the study of meaning-making and boundary creation, cultural sociology and transnational scholarship should move beyond the nation as natural container for social life and focus on multiple cultural repertoires that transcend national contexts and are available at multiple levels.

Ethnicity and the second generation

Ethnicity has been at the core of theoretical models explaining the second generation's identification and integration processes. The straight-line assimilation theory assumed that the more time spent in the

'host' country, the more likely it would be that the second generation would identify ethnically with the dominant group (as cited by Waters 1990). Similarly, the 'second-generation decline' framework developed by Gans in 1992 is based on the assumption that, facing discrimination, the second generation would turn to their ethnicity of origin and create reactive sub-cultures based on a low consideration for educational and job market performance, opposing the mainstream. Ethnicity was also a central framework in developing some key concepts on the identification patterns of the descendants of migrants, such as 'optional' (Waters 1990), 'symbolic' (Gans 1994) and 'situational' (as cited by Le Espiritu 1992) ethnicity. It should be noted that these approaches take an assimilationist perspective and the empirical evidence they refer to speaks about the third and fourth generation of immigrants in the US or cases when 'quantitative transformations of ethnic consciousness' have happened over decades (Le Espiritu 1992: 2). To put it more crudely, they do not refer to the newly arrived immigrants that '... appear as spots on the pure colours of the national fabric, reminding nationalist state builders and social scientists alike of the ethnic minorities that have been "absorbed" into the national body through a politics of forced assimilation or benevolent integration' (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002: 228). Similarly, Portes and Zhou (1993) took an ethnic stance and proposed a segmented model of incorporation adding a third dimension: linear ethnicity or the strong ethnic community as a source of social capital for the second generation.

A newer conceptualisation of ethnicity that followed maintains that ethnic boundaries are the outcome of the classificatory struggles and negotiations between actors situated in a social field. The behaviour and strategies of these actors, it is argued, are determined by three characteristics of a field: the institutional order, distribution of power, and political networks (Wimmer 2008a: 970). These developments, however, show that, when the differences

between groups are defined, the process seems to be based on certain 'core values' shared by or ascribed to its members, which suggests that ethnic identification can be characterised by negotiations, but the 'primordial' aspect of ethnicity is still alive. Nevertheless, the new conceptualisation of ethnicity was timely as scholars in Europe had already opposed the employment of a somewhat essentialised concept of ethnicity and its role in the identification processes of immigrants and their descendants. Some examples include Caglar (1997), who maintains that, in migration studies, ethnic identities (national or religious) are treated as the most basic identities that people possess, to the exclusion of other forms of identification, with ethnicity treated as the naturalised marker of an immutable cultural difference. De Vries (1999: 41) argues in the same vein and explains the ethnicity of Dutch Euroasians as a new form of ethnicity, in which traditional aspects of ethnicity such as an ethnic community or its ascriptive functions regarding role behaviour and social position have retreated to the background or no longer have any significance at all. More explicitly, Wessendorf (2007) maintains that the process of identification of the second generation is associated with a 'de-essentialising' process of ethnicity. Thus, rather than being fixed in their ethnicity, the process of identification among the second generation is characterised by constant negotiations of their identity which refer to multiple frames of belongingness – both in the 'homeland' and 'host country' – and, moving away from a primary focus on ethnicity, by the plural social systems in which they grow up.

However, despite these writings, it is still widely maintained that the formative years of the second generation are characterised by a process of reconciliation of the values of their country of ancestry held by their parents with those of the country where they live (Kunz and Sykes 2006). The 'academic mentality' is broadly based on the assumption that 'getting along' with the ethnicity of origin is an important business

for the second generation, handled by them and marking their identities in different ways. In the meantime, the main developments in research on the second generation in Europe have been concentrated on recognising the role of the national context and institutional arrangements on integration, highlighting the incapacity of the major theoretical frameworks developed in the US to explain different patterns of second-generation integration across Europe (Crul and Vermeulen 2003a, 2003b; Crul and Schneider 2010). As a result, the need for cross-national studies to better understand the impact of the national context on the positioning of the second generation across Europe has been emphasised (King *et al.* 2006). A generic view holds that the paths to integration diverge in various ways relating to structure, culture and personal agency, and the outcome of the integration process is very much decided from their interplay in a particular context (Thomson and Crul 2007), but empirical evidence is missing.

The current study

This paper considers the above-mentioned issues and focuses on the identification processes of Albanian-origin teenagers in Thessaloniki. This group consists of a 'new second generation' – a characteristic of the Albanian second generation inevitably related to the history and chronology of contemporary Albanian migration in Europe, which dates only to the beginning of the 1990s.² This has two main implications for the approach of this paper. Firstly, it provides the opportunity to investigate the processes of integration of a newly settled immigrant community with almost no previous migration experience, and their

² I should clarify here that I am referring to migration from the country of Albania; there is a longer history – of labour migration dating back to the early 1960s – of ethnic Albanians from the former Yugoslav republics and regions of Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro when they were part of the large-scale Yugoslav migration of the 1960s and 1970s. It is interesting to note here that often the Albanian identity of these earlier migrations was hidden under wider hegemonic labels such as 'Yugoslav' or even 'Turkish' (Blumi 2003).

descendants. Secondly, the paper aims to draw attention to a group potentially 'at risk'. This expectation is based on research data on the performance of the first generation of Albanian migrants, which show that Albanians in the three main receiving countries (Greece, Italy, the UK) are concentrated in low-profile jobs, live in marginalised neighbourhoods, do not get organised in communities, and face strong stigmatisation and discrimination, despite making a significant contribution to the labour market (Bonifazi and Sabatino 2003; Hatziprokopiou 2006; King 2003; Markova and Black 2007). These data would indicate a disadvantaged starting-point for the Albanian second generation, in light of the US-derived theories on the integration of the second generation, which consider concentration in poor inner-city neighbourhoods, racial discrimination and the absence of a strong ethnic community as predictors for a rapid downward social mobility (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993).

My overall approach is also based on other scholars' observation that the second generation in the US and Europe came to the attention of the researchers and policy-makers only when it 'came of age' (Crul and Vermeulen 2003b); while the literature in both continents points to clear examples of failure to address issues of discrimination and exclusion, which led to the marginalisation of large second-generation groups.

Research Context

Immigration and ethnic relations in Greece

Like other EU countries, diversity and related issues in Greece encompass the 'old ethnic minorities' and the new immigrants of the post-1990s (Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2007), although in this case their weight in the diversity 'issue' is of a different scale. Greece became host to a large number of immigrants after 1990, having previously experienced large-scale emigration over several decades of the twentieth century, and especially during the

1950s and 1960s (Fakiolas and King 1996). By 2007 the number of immigrants was reported to have arrived at 1.2 million or 10 per cent of the total population and 12 per cent of the labour force, making for one of the highest percentages of immigrants within the EU (Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2007: 9). Albanians in Greece constitute the biggest Albanian migrant community in Europe (600,000; Government of Albania 2005). They are also by far the biggest immigrant group in Greece. The flows to Greece date from 1990 and 1991. Students of immigrant background make up 9 per cent of the school population in Greece, with Albanians being 72 per cent of the foreign pupils in 2004–05, the number being high also due to high rates of family reunification and settlement (Gogonas 2007). From calculations based on Census and other sources, Baldwin-Edwards and Kolio (2008) conclude that, of 120,000 non-Greek residents of all ages *born* in Greece, 110,000 were of Albanian origin. Immigration of Albanians in the 1990s has been largely irregular; the only way to immigrate legally was through tourist visas or family reunification procedures. However, the first regularisation programme for immigrants in Greece was in 1998, where two thirds (241,561) of the total illegal immigrants regularised were Albanian (Hatziprokopiou 2006).

On the other hand, the predominance of one ethnic group among the new immigrants – Albanians making up more than half – makes the Greek case unique in Europe (Apostolatos 2004). Rovolis and Tragaki (2006: 99) maintain that the ‘average’ immigrant worker in Greece is young, male, and from an ex-communist country, pointing to a clear gender division in the reasons and forms of migration. However, although most immigrants come from the neighbouring countries in Central and Eastern Europe, newer waves originate in Asia and the Middle East, and less significantly in Africa (Baldwin-Edwards and Apostolatos 2008). As a result, immigration patterns in Greece are affected and represent features of three different models:

the Balkan dimension, the Southern European, and the global (Fakiolas and King 1996; Hatziprokopiou 2004). Specific patterns of immigration to Greece include the proximity between countries of origin and the destination, the sudden transition of Greece into a migrant-receiving country, the weight of specific immigrant groups (above all, Albanians) and that of immigrant ethnic Greeks, the late policy response towards immigration, and the specific features of the Greek economy and labour market. There are some important differences between various regions and localities and between the urban and rural environment. On the other hand, the Balkan features of regional cooperation and the historical alliances and fractures seem to impact the patterns and current features of immigrant integration, while increasingly immigration in Greece shows the features of global migration, in the variety of migration forms, countries of origin, channels, routes and categories of migrants (Hatziprokopiou 2004). Furthermore, the dynamics of these new phenomena are shaped by features of Greek labour markets, such as the segmentation of work, the predominance of the informal sector, the widespread importance of self-employment and family enterprise. These features create in Greece a particularly ‘pure’ form of the ‘Southern European immigration model’ (King 2000) and significantly impact on the development of a coherent migration policy (Fakiolas and King 1996: 187).

In effect, migration policy in Greece is characterised by a lack of legal migration channels, reactive measures against largely illegal immigrant flows, fragmentation of these measures which further cause the return to illegal status of previously regularised immigrants, and a major focus on control of migration flows (Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2007). The attitude of the Greek authorities exhibits reluctance to accept that immigrants are settling and creating communities (Baldwin-Edwards 2009; Triandafyllidou and Veikou 2002). Starting with a law in 1991 mainly designed to regulate admission and control policy,

Greek authorities responded to the fast-increasing stock of illegal migrants during the 1990s with two presidential decrees in 1997, based on which immigrants could apply for a short-term White Card and then a longer-term (one to five years) Green Card, which did not however give any right of renewal. Another regularisation took place in 2001 with a new immigration law introduced, followed by others in 2005 and 2007 (Baldwin-Edwards and Apostolatos 2008). However, very minimal measures are predicted for immigrants' integration and, when this is done, the focus is on assimilation, ignoring the increasing diversity in the Greek society, while migrants' legal uncertainty has significantly affected their economic bargaining power, impeding their strategies of integration (Baldwin-Edwards 2009; Glytsos 2005). Triandafyllidou and Veikou (2002: 191) explain the delay in authorities' response towards immigration as affected by the novelty of the phenomenon, while the lack of an integration policy is explained in relation to the fiercely ethno-cultural definition of Greek nationality and citizenship. This is seen to be directly reflected in the policies and measures on immigration, and also in the policy implementation and institutional culture. Jordan *et al.* (2003) found that, apart from problems with efficiency, flexibility and overall quality of public services, the immigration services were guided by serious prejudice towards immigrants and their cultural background, and therefore incapable of proper policy implementation.

The definition of Greek nationality and citizenship is rooted in the way Greek identity is constructed (Kapllani and Mai 2005). The main historical influences on Greek nationalism are the Enlightenment which impacted the construction of nation-states in Europe, and Greece's classical past, contributing to the conceptualisation of the Greek national community as both singular and universal (Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2007). Drawing from its Byzantine tradition and Christian Orthodox heritage, Greek identity was further amalgamated with the Western institutions

transplanted into Greek identity during the nation-building process of the nineteenth century and then reinforced by intensive political, educational and cultural policies during the twentieth century (Triandafyllidou and Veikou 2002), based on the Greek *ethnie* as a pure continuation of the antique version (Tzanelli 2006). As a result, the contemporary definition of the Greek identity rests on a triple boundary that distinguishes Greek ethnics: the common ancestry, cultural traditions (especially language) and religion (Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2007). This is in line with developments in other non-Western societies, where the absence of a middle class gave rise to a 'cultural nationalism' based on religion, culture and language (Kapllani and Mai 2005: 159). In particular, religion is an important element of Greekness, with Orthodoxy being recognised and officially sanctioned as an important condition of Greek nationality and citizenship (Tzanelli 2006).

Tzanelli (2006: 40), however, then brings the discussion to a higher level, by pointing to the conflation of the discourse on Greek national identity with that of race, because of the symbolic references to Greekness as based on 'blood bonds'. She maintains that the Greek identity is composed by two main discursive layers. On the one hand, the 'civic' and the 'ethnic' are interchangeable in Greek identity, while on the other, the naturalised status attached to the ethnic notions of identity creates the potential for ethnic identity to take racial connotations, inspired also by the international definition of Greekness as unique, and practices of homogenisation at a European level (2006: 45). Other research has related the emergence of this conflation to the social changes taking place in Greece since the late 1980s and the country's ambivalence of belongingness (as European, Balkan, Mediterranean etc.) which impacts the perception and definition of difference. This has caused the emergence of racism based on both biological and cultural characteristics, which greatly impacts the opportunity structure and the positioning of

immigrant groups (Lazaridis and Koumandraki 2001).

Nevertheless, Greek national identity has been under significant pressures in the past twenty years and it has shown signs of transformation based on changing international and internal conditions, with some of its features being more emphasised accordingly (Kapllani and Mai 2005). Immigration as a new phenomenon in the 1990s has been one of the important causes of such transformations, but also of the revitalisation of the racist discourse (Triandafyllidou 2000). Lalioti (2005) goes even further, arguing convincingly that immigrants are a new pole against which the Greek identity is negotiated and defined. This is particularly evident in the policy-making process on migration, which in turn shows the redefinition of the boundaries of national identity and of in-group and out-group members, based now also on needs and current pragmatic considerations. While the lack of a coherent migration policy is blamed on the particular (Albanian) ethnic identity, the latter shows signs of some adaptability to internal and external pressures, trying at the same time to retain the strength of attachment of its members (Triandafyllidou and Veikou 2002: 197). Thus, the initial 'fetishisation' of Greekness during the 1990s against the threats put forward by new internal conditions and international political affairs was followed by a more flexible notion based on civic and territorial elements (Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2007: 7). However, the development of this new identity is slow to emerge and to have an impact on the policies and their outcomes for immigrant- and minority-origin residents in Greece (Baldwin-Edwards 2009). The problematic situation of the welfare system in Greece adds to the problems that an immigrant family has to face (Hatziprokopiou 2004) with many immigrant-origin children dropping out in high school to enter the labour market (Papandreou 2005). The recent economic crisis in Greece only compounds the problems of survival for immigrants there.

It is important to see developments in Greece within a larger context of global development. As a result, changes are taking place in the national identity and the respective immigration policies are impacted by the external pressures because of EU integration (Meintanis 2005) and the large immigrant population in the country (Hatziprokopiou 2004). Nevertheless, the emergence of a kind of de facto multiculturalism has found partial recognition in the public debate. Although the cultural and religious difference is slowly being recognised, the debate on the definition of the nation leaves out the 'sensitive' differences presented by minorities. While the immigrant population is becoming ever more diverse (Rovolis and Tragaki 2006), the presence of immigrants has rather made evident the different traits of Greek identity by leading to the construction of a hierarchy of Greekness, with different immigrant groups at different levels around the ethno-national main core (Triandafyllidou and Veikou 2002: 189; Tzanelli 2006). These distinctions are also institutionalised in the definition of national citizenship, which is based on *ius sanguinis*, while there are no legal provisions for the residence of the children of immigrants, and the naturalisation of immigrants is regulated by one of the strictest regimes in Europe (Gogonas 2007; Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2007).

Thessaloniki: background as a city and context of incorporation

Thessaloniki is the second biggest city in Greece with over one million inhabitants, and one of the oldest cities in Europe, with a continuous urban history dating back to 315 BC and a rich multi-ethnic and cosmopolitan past (Mazower 2004). Its diversity is related to its positioning between Western Europe on the one hand, and the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean on the other, which gave Thessaloniki both Oriental and Occidental features (Hastaoglou-Martinidis 1997). From its origin, the city has been a meeting point for merchants and trade, coming from Macedonia and the Byzantine provinces

and further afield from the Italian and Iberian peninsulas (Hassiotis 1997). As a result, by the twentieth century Thessaloniki was characterised by a mixture of many of the cultures found throughout the Eastern Mediterranean, especially when compared to other areas in the south of Greece (Hastaoglou-Martinidis 1997; Mazower 2004).

Thessaloniki represents some of the common features of the cities of Southern Europe, but its urban history has particularities which have had a significant impact on the spatial and social characteristics of the city (Hassiotis 1997; Leontidou 1990). Urbanisation was significant from the 1950s, being associated with surplus population in the countryside more than with industrialisation and port activities. Moreover, both Athens and Thessaloniki show a strong employment linkage with the spatial dispersion of the population, in combination with residential choices based on the value of land and sectoral development of the industrial areas, as well as a large informal economy (Leontidou 1990: 101–102). However, while other cities in Greece expanded without planning, Thessaloniki's urban history was marked by major events at the beginning of the twentieth century and strong governmental policies (Hastaoglou-Martinidis 1997).

These policies are broadly related to the nation-state-building process and the foundation of the Neo-Hellenic state in Greece in the nineteenth century (Hastaoglou-Martinidis 1995). There were two major events – the great fire of 1917 and the arrival of 117, 000 refugees after the war with Turkey in 1922 – that brought about the actual changes in its urban structure (Hastaoglou-Martinidis 1997: 494). Also relevant, however, were the emerging nation-state and its ideology (Mazower 2004). This ideology gave rise to the process of modernisation which influenced the shape of the city so as to serve three purposes: to ensure a link with the West, to disguise its rural past and its related memories of foreign rule and

backwardness, and to serve as a link between the ancient past and the modern state (Hastaoglou-Martinidis 1995: 99).

Therefore, both for its history and for its impact on urban, spatial and social structure, the process of urbanisation in Greece, and in Thessaloniki in particular, differs significantly from what took place in Western Europe (Hastaoglou-Martinidis 1995; Leontidou 1990). Thessaloniki was, as a result, created as a 'new' European city so as to restore civilisation, with its space arranged according to models adopted by other European nations. This reformed the old traditional town according to the needs of a centralised state and the new urban space was seen as a laboratory to create new social values through a homogenised and unified structure. This in turn impacted the social, demographic and ethnic composition, especially noticeable in the case of the main ethnic and religious communities and even more so in the placement of the refugees, who were dispersed in different areas of the city, causing greater class stratification (Hastaoglou-Martinidis 1997). These spatial divisions are found to persist today, with the eastern part being richer compared to the western areas and a mixed centre, although the presence of a large and dispersed middle class softens the social divisions (Hatziprokopiou 2004).

In effect, the issue of the refugees and the state's policy on their settlement reflects broader issues related to the attitude towards multiculturalism and diversity. Although the city's history is marked by significant discontinuities, the different pasts, notably the Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman periods, were largely denied and actively erased through publishing programmes, research institutes' agendas and the educational curriculum. This was more clearly seen in the renaming of public places, the erasure of the Ottoman period and its heritage, and the denial of the refugees' presence, who were assimilated through various policies, despite their contribution to the transformation of the city into a regional

metropolis (Hastaoglou-Martinidis 1997). Thus, inspired by nationalist claims and emphasising the Hellenic past at the expense of other important influences, the city's claimed history is rather one '... of forgotten alternatives and wrong choices of identities assumed and discarded' (Mazower 2004: 474).

Currently Thessaloniki is host to a large number of immigrants and, like many other Mediterranean cities, is transforming itself into a multicultural metropolis. The immigrants in the city account for 7.2 per cent of the total number of immigrants in Greece, the main groups being Albanians (75 per cent), Georgians (9 per cent) and Bulgarians (5 per cent) (Hatziprokopiou 2004). Thessaloniki's migrant population is thus mainly composed by immigrants from the Balkans and the former USSR; while Athens is far more mixed and diverse. The new immigrants are gradually contributing to the city's urban transformation, through their use of social space and their settlement, and the characteristics of the labour markets that migrants have access to. Their integration and participation in the different domains of social and economic life in Greece are significantly affected by their regularisation, whereas their settlement appears to follow the social geography of the city, which may well counter the segregation trends fuelled by exclusion by the locals. In turn, their cultural proximity with the natives impacts their visibility and adaptability in the city (Hatziprokopiou 2006; Labrianidis and Hatziprokopiou 2010). However, spatial proximity does not lead to social proximity, and inclusion and exclusion operate differently in different domains and levels (Kokkali 2007), while various factors such as national origin of the migrant population, the time spent in the receiving country, agency, place and the proximity offered by the common Balkan context appear as interdependent factors that shape every migrant's incorporation experience (Hatziprokopiou 2006: 269–270).

At a city level, however, the impact of the new waves of immigrants has uncovered

old debates on the city's complex cultural identity. Yet, so far, the new discourse on multiculturalism lacks substance (Mazower 2004). Perhaps not surprisingly, due to its historical past, the city has been the epicentre of harsh debates over the issue of the name of Macedonia, the objections against the use of the Rotonda, a Roman monument, as a cultural centre, the downplaying of its Ottoman past in favour of its Byzantine tradition when chosen as a European capital of culture, objections towards the non-inscription of religious beliefs on the Greek ID cards, and brutal abuse of immigrants' rights, both first and second generation (Hatziprokopiou 2006). These issues reveal the difficulties the city still has in coming to terms with diversity within.

Methodology

Research for this paper was carried out from March to June 2008 in Thessaloniki. I interviewed 28 teenagers, 15 parents, 5 teachers and 3 key informants. I also conducted 3 focus groups; 2 with parents and 1 with teenagers. Interviews were conducted following a snowballing recruitment strategy, although various 'entry points' were followed, such as through the community organisations, personal contacts and others given by other researchers, Greek organisations and activists, schools and casual contacts made during the fieldwork. The ages of the teenagers ranged from 12 to 18 years. The average age was 15 years old and the average time spent in Greece was 11 years. The average age of the parents was 37, with ages ranging from 32 to 42, and the time spent in Greece varying from 8 to 17 years. All teenagers lived with both parents. The majority of parents had finished high school and came from various parts of Albania, from rural and urban areas and the capital, Tirana.

Informants recruited lived in various parts of Thessaloniki. Immigrants in general and Albanians in particular are not very concentrated in any particular area in the city (Hatziprokopiou 2006). The names of

the interviewees were changed, but an attempt was made to keep the same 'category' of name – for example, if a child held a Greek name, I gave him or her a Greek pseudonym, and where he or she had an Albanian name, I changed it for another one of the same type. This is for the very important role that names are found to have in the way identities of immigrants in general are perceived (see for example Silberman *et al.* 2007).

Interviews lasted about an hour; those with parents were longer than those with the teenagers. The parents were interviewed in Albanian. The teenagers mixed both Albanian and Greek during the interviews, and in some cases combined also with some English. All interviews were recorded and some of the interviews conducted mostly in Greek were transcribed and translated by bilingual postgraduate researchers.

Ethnic Identification Patterns of Albanian-Origin Teenagers in Thessaloniki

The identification processes of Albanian-origin teenagers in Thessaloniki show complex patterns and seem to be affected by several factors operating at different levels. Ethnic identification was measured during the interviews through items that explore self-identification and through analysing narratives where more spontaneous expressions of identity were made. In order to understand the dimensions of their identity and the positioning of ethnicity among these dimensions, participants were offered the possibility to discuss and choose between a list of identity traits, such as girl/boy, teenager, European, pupil, son/daughter, Greek, sister/brother, Albanian, artist, sportsman, which they were invited to enrich with other roles or traits. Both the self-identification items and the multiple identity choice item were included taking into account the importance that self-identification is found to have as a means of 'measuring' ethnic identity (Jenkins 1997; Stephan and Stephan 2000). Multiple identities seem natural although, as shown

in Orjana's quote below, once offered the option, the teenagers' choices show that they define themselves through non-ethnic identity traits. Being a teenager/young person, a student and their hobbies seem to be of great importance and what mostly characterises them as persons.

Orjana (girl 15): At this moment, teenager. This is the one [...] because... Well, OK. I am a teenager, I have my own problems. Everyone thinks that I haven't grown up yet; they don't give me that much importance.

There is a noticeable downplay of the importance of divisions into ethnic groups and ethnic categorisation; indeed, some of the teenagers distanced themselves from this kind of topic. Hall (1996: 169) maintains that 'we are all, in that sense, ethnically located and our ethnic identities are crucial to our subjective sense of who we are'. Challenging this assumption, most of the participants responded that they do not identify themselves ethnically.³ As Kleo explains below, in some instances human values and local sub-cultures are referred to as frames shaping their identities, such as being 'a person of all groups', being 'a Thessalonikís, because of its good night life' and so on.

ZV: Do you speak at home about Albanian culture, Greek culture? Do your parents make a difference, do you?

Kleo (boy 18): We don't distinguish between cultures. I am not a person that pays attention to culture. I won't distinguish between Greek, Albanian or English culture. I don't deal with this kind of thing, like culture. The culture of one person is same everywhere, that of being a (good) person. That is the main culture: to be a (good) person. The culture of the state or place has nothing to do, or the traditions... I don't feel anything about them; they don't grab my interest.

³ Which is not to deny that Hall may be right, in the sense of ethnicity being 'assumed' and 'subconscious' and thus 'unspoken' in the interview setting.

Lamont and Molnar (2002) and Wimmer (2008b) group this avoidance of ethnic categorisation as a boundary-blurring strategy of ethnic minorities to counter racist stigmatisation, while 'universalising' general human values as a basis to distinguish between groups of people or referring to local urban lifestyle to counter the perceptions of sharp ethnic divisions. However, a distinction should be drawn between the primordial and the more situational forms of ethnicity (see also Kibria 2002). Both avoidance and self-identification in ethnic terms are referred to the externally and primordially articulated ethnic identities, which are in general not questioned or challenged. This is not to say that consciousness of the politics of such distinctions is missing, as Anna tells us below. However, self-identification and the related strategies here are very rational, expected to change over time and conditioned by the attitude of the host society, the economic conditions of the country of origin and the opportunities available in the future.

ZV: Which ethnic group do you identify yourself with?

Anna (girl 16): I believe that essentially there aren't any of these divisions that you are in some groups; it is all in people's mind. It is the people that make these divisions, maybe so that they feel they belong somewhere. But I don't believe that in reality there are these groups, so basically this is all in the minds of people and they do this because it is convenient to them, so that they feel something, not because in reality there are (ethnic groups).

On the other hand, although downplayed and not clearly and openly acknowledged, hybrid identities are under construction (Bhabha 1994). 'Ethnic narratives' of these teenagers referred to age-related experiences like the way of dressing, favourite music and friendship circles as characteristics that marked their daily 'ethnic' experience. This also resonates with Barth (1994: 14), who defined the cultural content of ethnicity as analytically

organised around two orders: *the overt signals or signs* – the external features through which identity is often shown, such as dress, language, house-form, or general style of life; and *the basic value orientations*, which consist of more substantial and idiosyncratic standards, such as those on morality and excellence by which performance is evaluated. Although, at both levels of Barth's typology, a distinction should be drawn between explicit self-identification and the underlying identity processes where both overt signs and signals are constructed and redefined. The primordial ethnicity – both Albanian and Greek – is referred to when a stance is taken and external categorisations are discussed or resisted. Pan-ethnic identities, European in this case, are also engaged as part of self-identification and avoidance, showing a relation to the contextual issues, since European identity is salient in contemporary Greek public discourse. The quotes below from Joana, Anna and Vilma further elaborate on these points.

ZV: From all these qualities that we mentioned, which one characterises you?

Joana (girl 16): That of a teenager!

ZV: Would you say that in another time you would choose another category as the most relevant?

Joana: Yes, I would. I would choose Albanian in future [...] because the more time passes, the more Albanians are liked better here in Greece, because now we still have a little bit of racism...

ZV: Would you choose another category in another time?

Anna (girl 16): (identified herself as Greek) In future I would choose European, because... we will be more united and Greeks will not be so important, so being European would be better...

Vilma (girl 16): European and Greek. Because it's here I grew up, I have the same way of behaving like the Greeks, way of dressing, style of here; I have lived here most of my life. In Albania I was a little child, I don't know anything (from there); it's here I have learnt most of the things. And also European, because now Greece has joined Europe; we behave a bit more differently from before, the foreign languages that have been integrated to communicate with people... I believe these two groups represent me the most. [...] I think it might change in future, because Albania has slowly, slowly started to... what to say? To progress: has started to make the first steps in terms of economy, culture, and I believe that one day Albania will be at the same level as Greece. And then we can say freely that we belong to the Albanian ethnic group, because then they will be equal.

Similar patterns are evident in expressions of belongingness, attitudes towards the ethnic group and the maintenance of language. Like the references to ethnicity, expressions of belongingness seem based on the everyday and local manners, age-related experiences, and knowledge of the place where they live. It is interesting to note a straightforward relation that teenagers establish between their belongingness and space rather than groups, which may reflect the conflation of ethnic and national identities in Greece. As is common in adolescence, there is a shift and ambivalence characterising the articulation of identity and belongingness, with these teenagers often not identifying ethnically or identifying themselves as Greek or belonging to Albania, or vice-versa. As the quotes below show, the lack of social integration and the continuing existence of discrimination in Greece, the extended family and positive experiences during holidays in Albania constitute the main factors that influence their feelings of belongingness to Albania, whereas the weak economic situation in Albania and better opportunities in Greece seem to

inspire belongingness to Greece. Sometimes the memory of migration at an early age and the expected difficulties of resettlement upon return strengthen a feeling of belongingness and settlement in the host country – 'here' as opposed to 'there' (Albania). Three contrasting quotes:

Fabiola (girl 14): I don't belong, let's say, to neither... How to explain it... I don't know how to say it. [...] I have learnt the way of life here, the manners, things that we do; if I went there it would feel very different, because let's say... OK, it will be the language also that would make things difficult for me, but... They have different way of living, they will, for example, listen to different songs or they will dress differently... kids of my age and... They do different things ... because of this. I am used with what we do here. [...] I wouldn't like to return, because it would be very difficult. Until I would find school, until I would find friends, until I would learn the language well... Until I would get to know the places; this is very difficult. Until you get to know the place where you are, because here I know where I am and what's around; I know very well. And here it's easy. But there until I get to know the places that people there frequent, what they do there... This would be very difficult.

Vilma (girl 16): (I belong) to Albania. Because when I go there I get accustomed very easily. Immediately when I get out of the car I get accustomed to the place, I like to go out, to speak to people, to see what they learn, where they live. Because I have come here and I have learnt about Greek history, whereas about my country I know nothing and I like to learn many more things. Whereas here, I feel like a stranger, I have been here 10 years and I still feel a foreigner. I go very often to Albania and I see the differences between the two countries and I see that I am not from here. ... It seems like I belong more to Albania than here.

Olta (girl 16): I mostly feel I belong here in Greece, because I can't even think of going back and starting again from the very beginning with everything; friendships, life... everything I have been doing here. So I can't think of going back and start from zero and in those conditions.

Attitudes towards the Albanian community seem to be defined by referring to the local migrant community and to migration as a livelihood strategy to secure a better life and future for their children, referring to Albanians as 'they' and assessing objectively their performance as migrants and individuals more generally. The classic collective terms based on a common culture, common ancestry, history and traditions, 'us' versus the others, based on Weber's concept of ethnicity, do not seem of relevance (Roth and Wittich 1976). Similarly, language maintenance for the second-generation teenagers has also been mostly instrumental. Parents learned the Greek language over the years, some of them still being unable to read and write competently, so using Albanian at home has been dictated by the first generation's lack of fluency. They are also more interested for the children to learn Albanian if they want to return and to facilitate the 'transnational experience' – for visits and keeping in touch with 'home'. The two following instances come, first, from my field notes on observing Sunday classes on the Albanian language for second-generation children, and, second, from a quote from one of the participants in these classes.

Albanian activist (man 65) said that the number of children (learning Albanian) in the Albanian weekend classes was far higher when they started in 2000. In the early 2000s there was a hope in the parents that Albania was developing and that they would return soon, so they wanted their children to learn Albanian. But this hope has faded and many families have started to distance themselves from the school. Especially those from Korça; they have

distanced themselves more. Because they have been registered as Vorio-Epirote⁴ [...]

Flavio (boy 14): I come to learn my language so that if I return tomorrow, I would like to know my language, but even if I don't return, it is not that bad to know your language. If you want to write a letter or something and you don't know your language. Just like my mum and dad here in Greece, if they want to write a letter in Greek, they don't know to write it. And I don't want to be like that, not to be able to write something in my language.

Indeed, understanding the 'content' of ethnicity for the Albanian-origin children in Greece starts at school. The process of 'discovering' ethnicity is coupled with becoming conscious about the negative external articulation of Albanianness in Greek public discourse, experienced in the micro- and meso-levels of institutional settings. These instances are experienced as confrontations in early years of schooling and exclusion on the basis of ethnicity, these being harsher in the case of children who arrive at or after the school age. The stigmatisation has wider connotations that include 'Albanian' as the 'other', the 'different', the 'immigrant', the 'Muslim', referring to a politicisation of Albanian ethnicity in a broader sense and a general level. The national media and its role in 'launching' and further elaborating these connotations feature prominently. Although 'racism' is part of the teenagers' narratives as part of the lay jargon, in substance their narratives support Anthias's (1992) argument that racism is not necessarily built on racial categorisations, but rather by using the ethnic category as a building-block and then materialised in exclusionary practices towards groups defined on the basis of racial and ethnic categories. The quotes below of Blerim, Orjana and Vilma speak for themselves.

⁴ A term used in Greece to identify Greek minorities of Albania, while Vorio Epirus refers to the territories in Southern Albania claimed by the Greek state as Greek territory.

Blerim (boy 13): Because I was from Albania, they used to insult me 'You are Albanian!'; they used to beat me up. Everyone was against me. But after that, from the third year onwards, because I have changed three schools after that, some people left, some came, people changed and now they stopped. Now I am the same with the others.

Orjana (girl 15): I have heard them calling '*Albanós*',⁵ '*Albanós*' and everything, without knowing anything (about the person); so just hearing 'Albanian' and they withdraw and distance themselves... Last year a new pupil came from Albania and everyone was saying 'Oh, the Albanian won't make it!'. She didn't know a word in Greek, but knew French, English and stuff ... and now she gets 18 and has shown to everyone where they stand!⁶ [...] So they say 'Oh, he is Albanian' and they see him with a different eye, until they give him an opportunity to know him. They will say '*Albanós*' and will put him in that category; they won't see what kind of person he is, or what kind of pupil he is.

Vilma (girl 15): When we (Albanian-origin students) speak, they laugh at us, like 'You are like this, like that...'. For example 'You Albanians shouldn't come to Greece!', 'Greece is full of Albanians!', 'Here there is only Albanians!', 'You have fights; you kill each other'. When an Albanian student is very good at school, they are very jealous 'Oh, Albanians came and they are taking over the school as well!'. There are many cases when the Greeks feel this way.

More importantly, this articulation has been internalised and further exercised among the second-generation teenagers themselves. The images taken from the media and the stereotypes suffered at school have also caused a negative

perception of the teenagers towards the Albanian migrants in Greece and towards Albania in general. This is seen in the attitude of the teenagers towards co-ethnic classmates, especially when they are newly arrived from Albania and have not yet acquired sufficient language skills. Inter-group exclusion is also practised towards the relatives or other first-generation migrants that take the role of kin since they provide the main or only source of support during the process of settlement (see also Foner 1997). As most of the Albanian migrants have very humble jobs, including the highly skilled who have experienced de-skilling, children associate Albanian identity with a poor and not-so-interesting life and with uneducated and uncivilised behaviour. Moreover, as the quotes cited above and the ones that follow show, in the presence of negative external categorisation in the form of strong discrimination, it seems like these teenagers are 'expropriated' from the boundary-making attribute and ability; it is rather the host society that establishes who they are.

Orjana (girl 15): It's the origin. So the origin is a fundamental criterion based on which someone judges/considers you immediately, and the appearance... maybe the appearance comes first. These two are the main that someone sees firstly, before one approaches you. [...] I have seen racist behaviours, but not towards me. I have seen it with my other classmates, but I haven't said anything, so when something doesn't have to do with me, I don't get involved. Towards me, no. So I don't get engaged with those things; I look after myself, I look after my friends. I won't sit and deal with those things.

Anna (girl 16): Because to know that you are like a Greek, it means that you don't feel separated from Greeks, so you feel better and this is more important, because... you don't feel distanced from the others and you are not afraid that they will call you 'Albanian' or anything else... they won't insult you. Because I look like a Greek;

⁵ The Greek pronunciation for Albanian.

⁶ The highest grade in secondary schools in Greece is 20, so 18 is very good.

when I tell them that I am Albanian, they don't believe me and that makes me feel better and more relieved...

ZV: OK. Is this what you feel, is this what you want to feel, or is this something that you want others to see in you?

Anna: Others to see in me.

As Anna's quote above especially shows, these everyday life accounts show a strong agency at an individual level. Although all the interviews reveal discrepancies and multiple subjectivities, they show the teenagers as active agents, and the identification choices as a way of life to survive, by enabling social identities and socialisation processes, all so important in adolescence. The discrepancies between the ethnic labels chosen and the experiences revealed refer not only to the ambivalence of identification processes in adolescence, but also the awareness of the need to assimilate, a high understanding of the state of affairs and political connotations that their identification is expected to have, while a process of hybridisation takes place unclaimed and unrecognised by the 'host' society.

As a result, one of the main patterns of the ethnic identification strategies of Albanian-origin teenagers in Thessaloniki consists of distancing themselves from their own ethnicity, striving to cross the boundary, but facing insurmountable difficulties, living thus at the edge of the boundary. Helplessness and an 'identification limbo' characterise the identification narratives of Albanian-origin teenagers who speak Greek as a main or their only language, have adopted the Orthodox religion and are prone towards assimilation, but are forbidden a Greek identity. While changing the positioning of boundaries is hampered by a weak ethnic agency as a group, the change of the boundaries' meaning is made impossible by the resistance of the Greek society and an ethnocentric Greek identity, holding on to ancient civilisations, culture and religion. This resonates with what Jenkins (1997: 57) writes about ethnicity,

social categorisation and power: 'internal and external identification do not exist in isolation. Identification is never a unilateral process: at the very least there is always an audience'. Moreover, according to Tzanelli (2006: 41) 'contemporary Greek political discourse has also hermeneutically adapted the nineteenth-century formula of Albanian exclusion. This discourse, which is structured around conflation of physical boundaries with symbolic borders [...] promotes a fictional preservation of racial purity against "alien contamination", feeding the urgency for the Greeks to claim direct racial and cultural continuity from antiquity'. As the quotes of Anna and Maria show below, racialisation in this case is experienced as dehumanising, alienating, and disempowering.

ZV: You chose Greek as the category you experience the most. How do you experience being Greek?

Anna (girl 16): How is it? It is like you feel like a human being. Because you are a human being first of all. Furthermore feeling Greek you feel that they don't separate you from others, and you won't have any problems. If you say that you are ... let's say Albanian ... or in general, if you say that you are from another country lower than Greece, they will see you as inferior, and you will encounter a different reaction. OK, until now we said we don't have racism, but still there is something else... They see you differently! That's why it is more important to look and behave like a Greek before everything else. Because first of all... Let's say, athletes⁷... It is the first thing to be Greek; after that if you say you are Greek, you can become whatever you want; it's something like that...

⁷ The case of athletes can have a very symbolic meaning here, as they exemplify the most successful cases of integration of Albanian migrants in Greece, although as Tzanelli (2006: 33) points out, these cases consist of 'exceptions to the rule' by being associated with an important aspect of Greekness: the Olympic ideal.

ZV: Do you see yourself like being part of an ethnic group?

Maria (girl 12, born in Greece): I don't think so. Basically I wouldn't like to be part of an ethnic group. But often this can't even happen. Let's say, I can't say 'my country'... that Greece is my country, that this is the history of my country, and that this is the religion of my country... I can't say this. This would have been good, but this is not possible. [...] Let's say, the teacher says 'Now we will do history'. I can't say 'Oh, the history of my country'. Because the other children will hear and they will say 'She went mad! This is not the history of her country. This is the history of *my* country' [...] Yes. Greece is not my country. But neither Albania can become... It is not possible for Albania to be my country, because I know neither the language, nor the traditions, nor the history, nor anything from religion. I really know nothing from the history and traditions ... nor from religion do I know anything... So I constantly feel like I am somewhere at the border: I can go neither that way, nor this way!

Religious Identities

The case of Greece shows an example of the institutionalisation of 'bright' boundaries or sharp symbolic categorising distinctions based on religion, citizenship and language (Alba 2005; Lamont and Molnar 2002). According to Baldwin-Edwards and Apostolatos (2008), for the greater part of the twentieth century, both the Greek state and society can be characterised as exhibiting a very high degree of politicisation of ethnicity. Although the relationship between religion and ethnicity is 'intimate' (Hammond 1988: 3), in Greece it is also the national ideology in Greek political culture and public discourse that is based on a hegemonic form of Hellenic-Christian nationalism. Religion therefore holds great importance in drawing political, social and cultural frontiers between 'us' and 'them', in

constituting individual and collective identities (Chrysoloras 2004). Moreover, although religion is mostly experienced as ceremonial, Hellenic-Christianism becomes very important for the natives to define themselves against the immigrants (Xenitidou 2007).

Indeed, religion has been highlighted by both Albanian parents and teenage participants as the crucial element of cultural distinction perceived by the host society, representing a barrier to inclusion and a basis for expression of racism towards them and their children. The quote below shows this from the perspective of a group of parents.

ZV: How has racism been expressed?

Fran: They have called them (the children) '*Alvané*' (in Greek: Albanian); '*Turk*'...

Mira: ...mostly on the issue of baptism. My son says: 'My friends tell me "Don't play with us. You are not baptised! You are not good!" [...] Who hasn't got (an Orthodox) name, they say: 'You are not baptised!'

Fran: For every name, they ask you 'How is this name translated into Greek? How can we say this in Greek?' Just like everything started in Greece!

Mira: (they ask you) '*Ti eortázeis?*' (in Greek: Which name day do you celebrate?)

Gjin: ... '*Ti simáinei?*' (in Greek: What does your name mean?)

These findings are consistent with recent publications that try to put religion in a more central focus of migration scholars, maintaining that the religion of immigrants in Europe is perceived as problematic depending on the religiosity of the native population and of the immigrants and the historical institutionalisation of religion (Foner and Alba 2008). Others point to empirical studies that show that religion supports and gets transformed by the migration experience, while the children of immigrants are increasingly turning to

'inherited religion' as their primary source of identity, as part of their strategies towards greater social integration (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007).

The attitude towards religion of Albanian-origin teenagers, however, speaks of a different religious story. As the vast majority of Albanian parents included in my study said, whether they were Christians by origin or decided to get baptised or remain spiritual in Greece, 'they just believe in God' and 'they are not used to religion as, in their time, there was no religion in Albania'.⁸ However, a number of my 27 teenage interviewees answered positively to the question of them being religious. Most of them have been baptised, all as Christian Orthodox, often reporting that parents are 'spiritual' or only sceptically 'religious'. They have been active with Sunday church school, they visit church occasionally, 'though not fanatic' about religion, while their name days feature as one of the main celebrations in their families. This is how Monda and Daniela describe religiosity in their families:

Monda (mother 50): I am baptised. I go and light (candles)... because there has remained the tradition that you need to believe in something [...] but I am not a fanatic of faith. Here we became Christians; so just like in every other religion it means don't steal, don't kill [...] I don't insist on my faith [...] my faith is for myself, not to give to other people [...] For example, my son bought a motorbike and said he wanted a *panagia*⁹ to have with him, because of the environment where he lives. 'Here it is', I gave him one. My daughter goes to the children's groups (in the church) that get together to sing, but I don't oblige her to follow that line. [...] Although we are here due to certain conditions [...] I believe in God; it probably doesn't exist, but my father left this to me: that God does exist, and

he told me that God is for everyone, for the Muslim, for the Roma, for the Christian. I don't have racism for anyone in the world and I don't lobby for religion or anything else; whoever wants to be religious can learn from books and go ahead.

ZV: Is your family religious?

Daniela (girl 17): They (parents) are and they aren't at the same time.

ZV: And you?

Daniela: I am.

ZV: Why do you say you are?

Daniela: I am baptised; we are baptised, the three of us (sisters). And we go to the church for example, with our godmothers, always...

The references to religion include religiosity as a condition and therefore a means to be accepted by their native peers, but in some of the cases religion seems to be associated with faith and consists of a common life practice. The baptism appears as the outcome of pressure from the side of those few Greek acquaintances and the society in a broader sense, as it seems to be the only means for the families to have friendly relations with the locals. At the same time, their narratives hint at the role of the godparents, who are often natives related to the family as employers or neighbours, as a source of support and as important for the families and their limited social integration. This is how two parents describe the religiosity of their children.

ZV: Are you religious in the family?

Abaz (father 44): We don't believe a lot, but now we are mixed with religion because the children are baptised. We feel ourselves Muslim, but we don't follow any rites...

Entela (mother 42): My children are baptised; I got them baptised when we came. Not that I wanted, but a Greek insisted 'I want to baptise them...!' Eh...! And the children believe in God, but it's not that they go to churches and take a special

⁸ The constitution of 1976, Article 37, prohibited religion in Albania until 1990, when the communist regime collapsed (Dingo 2007).

⁹ Saint Mary's icon.

interest (in religion)... like asking which (saint's) day is today or which celebration... no. But they do believe. I see them for example praying 'My God, will you help me? Mum, please pray to God that he helps me to get a good grade'.

However, while baptism has helped in the social integration at a micro- and meso-level and bearing a Greek name has counteracted the visibility as 'other' and as non-Orthodox, Albanian parents had to later recognise that, as Tzanelli (2006: 39) points out, 'even religious conversion would not truly "open" participation in the Greek "nation" to outsiders'. As pointed out in Monda's quote above, religiosity has been instrumental for the first generation, although this is sometimes more a reinterpretation at a later stage of their immigration process. As awareness of the opportunity structure and identity politics of the host country developed over the years, this is also referred to as an 'identity sacrifice' that often generated limited positive outcomes in terms of integration.

Matilda (mother 33): Racism is this: we came here to Greece, we changed our names, surnames, those of our parents; all names! And we all became *kaurrë* (Albanian: non-Muslim)! Why? Because of the fear that if they would know that our name was *Selim* or anything else, they will point the finger towards us 'She is a Muslim!'. Wherever you go they ask you 'Are you a Muslim or an Orthodox? Are you baptised or not?' so we all changed our names. Why? We shouldn't change our names! [...] I have two sons. The oldest one is called Kosta. The other one I called him Fabio.¹⁰ He (Kosta) says to the younger son: 'I celebrate (the Orthodox name day). You don't! You are a Muslim; I am an Orthodox!'

ZV: Why didn't you give also to the younger one a Greek-Orthodox name?

Matilda: I didn't want to!

Although on previous historical occasions the religious conversion of Albanians has had a function in resisting assimilation while Albanians have preserved their distinct identity (Doja 2000), this 'encounter' with religion has significantly changed the cultural practices of Albanian immigrant families in Thessaloniki. Orthodox names, celebrations in the family and church-going consist of important religious symbols and practices, regardless of faith and despite their (in)frequency. Referring to work on religion and ethnicity, Hammond (1988) maintains that the practising and other forms of adherence to the characteristic religion of one ethnic group is considered as an indication of one's group ethnic identity, while the involvement with the church is either involuntary as a result of overlapping primary group ties, or voluntary and occurring despite the other social ties an individual can have. While socialisation processes play an important role in the independent religious practices adopted by the second-generation teenagers, religiosity among the first generation and in the immigrant family in general has both pragmatic and emotional elements intertwined and has substantially changed in time during the settlement process. In fact, religiosity consists of one of the main inter-generational discontinuities. The next section examines intra- and inter-generational relations more in depth.

Intra- and Inter-Generational Differences

Reading the literature on ethnicity from a 'generational' perspective, one line of argumentation has been that ethnic identity changes 'quantitatively and qualitatively' (Le Espiritu 1992) in different directions, over time and generations. There is, however, in my sample a difference between the first and the second generation, and more interestingly between teenagers and their siblings, which emerges especially from the interviews with younger siblings (see also Song 1997), but also with

¹⁰ Fabio is an Italian name that has taken the status of an Albanian name due to the extensive use of Italian in Albania and familiarity of Albanians with the Italian language and culture (see Mai 2003).

the parents. Most of the teenagers interviewed had younger siblings, which may be related to the timing and selective ages of emigration from Albania. The older children who were born in the early 1990s, and who came with or joined their parents in the first years of migration, tend to have a very developed agency as sometimes they had to share some of the parenting duties with their parents. Their expressions of the 'immigrant identity' (Waters 1994) – as being self-sufficient, studying harder than the others, being more goal-oriented and prone to succeed and realising, as the main goal of their parents' migration plan, 'a better future', coupled sometimes with more empathy towards the parents – seem to weaken in the younger siblings. This difference is clearly pointed out by Vilma and Joana below.

ZV: Do you see any differences between you and your younger sister?

Vilma (girl 16): Yes, there are differences between me and my sister because she has become just like the Greeks. She always has to ask my mum about her lessons, like 'Mum, can you have a look on this?' Greeks don't do the lessons themselves; they have to be dependent on their parents. I tell her 'Try to do your lessons yourself; you will make a mistake, but you will learn for the next time'. She is the type who needs to ask mum. She is still very young, but it seems she is a bit insecure about what she does.

Joana (girl 16): Yes. We are very different... I read much more and feel more anxious (about achievement), whereas my sister is quicker and catches things more easily; she is also more outgoing... [...] I want to be the best, none to be better than me, and want to know everything, because I want to go higher ...

ZV: How about your attitude towards Albania, visits...?

Sister (13): Yes!

Mother: The younger one wants more to go (to Albania).

Many of these teenagers have developed a very strong feeling of distancing from their ethnicity, hiding their identity and devaluing everything that has to do with Albania and Albanians. The absence of an ethnic agency or Albanian organisational structure blocks the development of strategies for countering stigmatisation; on the other hand, the same absence seems to prevent the creation of a reactive or adverse identity in its classic definition. The reaction, mostly observed in the case of the boys, is usually expressed as employing the role of 'the reckless', asserting a kind of existence by breaking the rules, again by not referring to any collective ethnic frames. The recognition of discrimination in the case of the girls shows at times the converse trend: a clear distancing from discriminative attitudes towards Greeks or any other people on the basis of ethnicity.

The differences between siblings may have various explanations, firstly relating to the particular age of the group under study, as the identification patterns and an understanding of ethnic identity can change significantly in adolescence. Indeed, Doan and Stephan (2006) found that the adolescent period is associated with an increasing awareness among the second generation of the existence and the social significance of the ethnic categories in the societies where they live. They may also face stronger confrontations at school by this age, as some of the teenage participants report. The narratives of parents and teenagers who are older children and who accompanied or joined their parents in the first years of immigration in the host country, however, point to the inability of parents to help them during childhood and their illiteracy in Greek language, their continuous absence through work and lack of social networks, difficulties in starting education in a foreign language, the suffering of broken ties with family and friends in Albania, and a stronger stigmatisation of Albanians that was very evident during the 1990s.

There are also differences in the perception of discrimination: older siblings personalise it and have internalised it more, whereas the younger ones find it more 'external' and exaggerated. This points to what has already been emphasised in the literature, namely that the mode of incorporation of the first generation has a strong impact on the second generation, providing differing amounts of cultural and social capital and exerting differential pulls on their allegiances (Levitt and Waters 2002: 15). But it also suggests that the stage of incorporation can be very important. Younger children seem more relaxed towards language use, visits to the homeland, and show more interest towards Albanian language and TV, although sometimes developing a stronger hyphenated identity. Although the attitude towards Albania and Albanian ethnic identity is not always positive among the younger siblings, they show a better capacity in taking a stance towards their ethnicity and their identity more in general. In the following extracts from a discussion meeting in Thessaloniki,¹¹ parents and grandparents recall the negative instances of discrimination and their impact on their children's attitude towards their ethnic identity.

Albanian mother: We have been here for so long and nothing changed! Do you know that my son who is now 20 years old doesn't want me to go with him anywhere so that people don't recognise him as an Albanian?! 'Mama', he says to me, 'You don't speak Greek well, so I don't take you with me!'

Grandmother: As I see things, Fabiola was very affected by the experience of nursery. The teacher was very negative. We came in August and Fabiola went to nursery in September. She with her attitude... She [the teacher] was a very bad person; she was trying to impose

the (negative) feeling to the child 'Albanian, Albanian'...!!

Mirjeta: ... The teacher used to say 'speak Greek to your child!', but we didn't know Greek ourselves! How can I speak to my child if I don't know it myself?! My daughter used to cry and didn't want to go to nursery, because she was having a bad time there. Because the teacher knew that she didn't know Greek, she spoke to her in Greek and with a certain tone. She used to bully her 'Quickly, quickly...'

Grandmother: ...Oh, god. Those were horrible times! She was very tough; she was always at the point of beating her! I think since then Fabiola was badly affected and now she doesn't want to speak Albanian. She knows, she speaks, but it comes easier to speak Greek, because she also doesn't want to try. 'I don't want!' she says. She has difficulties because she left (Albania) when she was 3 years old. She had learned only to speak the everyday language. Christina (the younger sibling born in Greece) has learnt a lot from the TV, because now they have DigitAlb¹² at home. She watches many Albanian programmes so she hears the formal Albanian language. I think she will be more fluent than Fabiola, because she also seems more interested (to learn).

These recollections point also to a different attitude among the parents. The first-generation immigrants who came in the 1990s were discriminated against harshly. In reaction, they strove for acceptance and, as a result, some of them cut all their ties with Albania, changed their names, got baptised and also baptised their children. Expecting a better integration of themselves and their children, some of them adopted completely the Greek identity, sometimes registering themselves as members of the Greek minorities of Albania. They also encouraged their children to identify as

¹¹ Fieldnotes from a meeting in Greece on 16 May 2008 organised by migrant and anti-racist organisations in Thessaloniki, with the participation of migrants and with a human-rights lawyer on the legal framework for migrants and the rights and citizenship issue of the children of migrants.

¹² Albanian digital broadcasting platform operated by Top Media in Tirana.

Greek, with some of the younger children only discovering by incidents at school or elsewhere that they were of Albanian origin. As Valmira recounts below, many parents, and in this particular case especially those highly skilled who are experiencing de-skilling, have been following a long 'identity trip'.

Valmira (mother 38): Of course these are not as the early years. I would be lying if I would say that it's the same as the early years, because many progressive steps have been made... although slow steps. I remember when I came for the first time in Greece, I saw how small (metaphorically) the Albanian was. Basically how small it felt if you would say that you were Albanian. When I was hanging around in the beginning, since I was speaking in English they were asking 'where are you from?' 'I am from Albania' and they would be looking at each other and I was asking myself 'What's going on?... I don't... What is he saying with that look?'. And this way I lost all my respect that I had for myself and for Albania, for my parents, my relatives, my friends and for everything I had experienced and had learnt in Albania. I lost it completely, I 'deleted' it and it took a long time to understand that people are individuals who have their qualities and those out of Albania (foreigners) are not Gods! Everyone has his own merits and faults. It took a long time, it took a long time... Of course my experience in the tailoring workshops, in these jobs where not everyone is cultivated, in my opinion it helped me because it was there that I realised that I had my own values; why not show them? Why not fight for them, and this way I started to work on myself and ask for other things so that I could have a better life than what I had, or have a better prospect than I had.

The Albanian community in Thessaloniki is now a 'mature' community and has a good idea about the opportunities that will be given to them in Greece. The families have

now completed the 'golden' 5-10 years of migration and put their return 'on hold', partly to secure a better education and potentially better life prospects for their children and partly because return is resisted by the children themselves. However, although the children were born or came when they were very little and so grew up in Greece, they were refused citizenship and the current Greek legislation predicts no specific rights of residence for the children of migrants, legally treating them up to the age of 18 as a newly arrived immigrant and allocating them only a few attributes related to education and work opportunities. The attitude towards getting organised despite these recognised issues remains low.¹³ Nevertheless, the persistent racism and continuous rejection of the children's claims of feeling Greek on the one hand, and on the other, the significant improvement of their economic situation which has served as a source of empowerment and as a factor for 'softening' Greek society's stance towards Albanians, made them change their attitude towards their origins and their children's identification. Pratsinakis (2005) recognised a definition of the collective identity of Albanian immigrants in Thessaloniki based on qualities of honesty, trustworthiness and capacity for hard work as a strategy to counter ethnic stereotyping. However, this 'change' of Albanian migrants towards a form of ethnic identification reflects also the relevance and migrants' understanding of generic principles of hierarchical social differentiation and access to economic resources in conditioning the ability of different actors to categorise others (Jenkins 1997), which obstructs or enables a group's collective ethnic agency and its ability to define its own ethnic identity. It also relates to the perspective of Todd (2005: 452) on identity change, which she explains in terms of three variables: existing identity structure, power relations, and resource distribution.

¹³ In a demonstration organised in Thessaloniki by Greek and Albanian activists on 5 April 2008 for the rights of the second generation there were only 20-30 Albanian participants and no Albanian-origin teenagers.

The quote below shows a simplistic interpretation of these dynamics by a group of unskilled male Albanian migrants.

Ismail: We have been here for 10–15 years, but we are still considered the same as someone that comes here to Greece for the first time. We prepare the same documents... It is the same document for us that have been living here for 18, 16 or 12 years and for someone that comes today to Greece as a 'refugee'.¹⁴

[...] They have started to see the Albanian with a different eye, not like they used to see him in the beginning. And this is due to the Albanians themselves.

Neritan: They have changed it (the attitude) because we (Albanians) work a lot!

Auron (to Ismail): ... This has happened because Albanians now have started to take loans and buy houses. From the Greek banks there has been no confiscation until today. I have never heard for an Albanian that they had been confiscated anything, whereas from the Greeks and Russians they have confiscated a lot of things. And because of this they have started to see us with another eye...

Neritan: Albanians are the most correct and hard-working people here in Greece. Although they tried very hard and with all means *'të na bëjnë rezil'* (idiom: to give us a bad a reputation), we showed ourselves who we are!

Auron: ...And also because of the children. Our children are still young, but some are very clever, they are the top students. And when there are celebrations at school, they don't allow our children to hold the flags. The flag is always held by the best of the school, but they still don't allow them to do this, so they are nothing! The school that they do is useless. The child gains

nothing through it; their children can become doctors, lawyers... They (Albanians) are zero!

As the parents above say, children feature both as 'victims' of a harsh impact of the first generation's settlement within a 'homogeneous' host society, and as the strongest agents of a boundary blurring process. The presence of the children in schools is, on the one hand, an everyday reminder of a 'growing differentiation/heterogeneity' in the Greek society, while their educational success has caused at times significant 'ethnic identity incidents' by initiating discourses of national, ethnic and racial identities, with the rejected flag bearer having become the symbol of their discrimination in Greece (see Kapllani and Mai 2005; Tzanelli 2006). From a bottom-up perspective, children's presence ensures a significant contact and exchange between the natives and non-natives as a result of their social integration in schools, as friendship and love transcend boundaries.

Entela (mother 41): His friend used to tell him (her son): 'My dad says I shouldn't make friends with Albanians. But you are Albanian and you are so good. What's wrong with you Albanians that my dad says don't make friendship?'. So basically at an early age, the little children do not understand... they hear the words 'Not with Albanians!' and they react and say why, when we socialise with them we notice no problems. The mother of my son's friend told me: 'My son used to tell me "But mum, Kostas is more intelligent than me, better student than me, he dresses so nicely and is so clean and neat". And then we got to know him ourselves...'. I notice that Greek children like the Albanian children both at school and in the neighbourhood. They do make friendship and then say that they are told things (by their parents)...

¹⁴ 'Refugee' is the word usually used by immigrants to refer to 'immigrant'.

Albanian parents are very open towards the host society's culture, as long as respect for the family, education and hard work are appreciated by the second generation. Among my participants, only one case arose where the child reported that the father actively encourages learning about the history of Albania and about customs and wedding traditions. They also try to 'dilute' the discrimination that their children face and, interestingly, as Monda explains below, they intentionally avoid inculcating negative feelings towards Greece in their children. On the one hand, this attitude shows both as a consciousness and a specific attitude towards the politics of identity, an acknowledgement of the existence of ethnic boundaries and an acceptance of 'soft' and very porous boundaries from the side of the Albanian 'group'. On the other hand, good parenting and children's prosperity seem to take priority over the collective identity and its recognition.

Monda (mother 50): We do not have this attitude... like pushing children to be against the Greeks, because if we would say to the children 'The Greeks do this, the Greeks do that!' then the child develops hate, because these things are taken from the parents. We don't want the children to have hate; we let them grow with the culture of here. We will give them the Albanian culture, our family tradition, the love, and not to forget Albania. Even when it comes to history, we tell them this is our history, this is how things stand. We don't know what historians and states do; that's their job. We are taught this way; they are taught in a different way, and everyone has his own right. We don't induce hate in children... No, no.

This is not to say that intergenerational conflict was not taking place. There was a typical 'intergenerational disruption' because of the impossibility of parents to catch up with the changes taking place in the family because of the impact of social and economic conventions in the host country, usually referred to as 'the different lifestyle'. This conflict, especially lamented

by the girls, makes the Albanian migrants and their children yet another new case in the 'saga' of immigrants and the newer generation (Waters 1994: 814) that conflict with parental discipline and strictness, which teenagers described as 'the Albanian culture'. For instance, parents do not find it easy to give freedom to the children after 18; they expect to keep them at home, referring to their own youth spent under strict rules and parental control during communism in Albania. This is otherwise expressed also in the form of contempt by the parents and the children when commenting on the shortage of resources and the simplicity of life under communism – having one pair of shoes, one outfit for years and being always obedient to their parents. Greekness, as opposed to Albanian culture, is perceived as being outgoing and spending, which goes against parents' goals to achieve economic security. As Zhou (1997: 84) also found, parents look at the future and put severe demands on the children in terms of discipline, sexuality and education achievement. The 'generational gap' is expressed here also as the difference between the two generations on their views and expectations. As compared to the parents, teenagers tend to have more post-modern requests and aspirations, especially evident in those who arrived very early in life or who were born in Greece.

Discussion and Conclusions: A Matter of Power?

The experience of Albanian-origin teenagers in Thessaloniki shows that 'group' ethnicity is not the central frame of reference that affects the identity processes of the Albanian-origin teenagers. Following Barth (1969: 14), there seems to be a difference between the process of self-ascription to an ethnic group and the experience, and especially the performance, of an ethnic identity. However, the measurement of ethnic identity has not combined indices of self-identification and labelling with other more indirect measures. A combination of such measures in this research shows that

ethnic identification and belongingness seem to be instrumental, rationally selected, and to change over time depending on the opportunities and host-society attitudes. The teenagers' narratives show that the patterns of identification are context-bound and are shaped by factors operating at different levels, related to the structural features of the host state/society and the immigrant group. More specifically, they point to these main factors: the institutionalisation of sharp symbolic boundaries by the dominant group and the politicisation of the 'other'; the positioning and the relative size of the migrant group; the mode and stage of incorporation of the first generation and different sources of social capital interacting at different levels, mostly the family.

In the face of 'bright' boundaries imposed by the host society, assimilation into Greek society is attempted as an individual boundary-crossing strategy, but seems obstructed by the exclusive nature of Greek ethnic identity. As Dümmler *et al.* (2010: 34) conclude, 'If symbolic boundaries are widely agreed upon and institutionalised through reified ideas about culture, nations, tradition and gender relations, then minority groups have to deal with social boundaries that assume a kind of natural and objectified character. This in turn renders it impossible to blur, cross or shift the boundaries'. Likewise Wimmer (2008b), observing earlier developments in the literature, very rightly notes that the boundary crossing can be made even more difficult by the dominant groups when they 'seal' their boundary against trespassers. Therefore, while national belonging at an international level is increasingly defined in terms of civic participation (Tzanelli 2006), and transnationalism regards single loyalty to the nation-state and the consequent pressure on immigrants to assimilate as a thing of the past (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1995: 51), this is not yet the case of Greece and its immigrants.

As a result, a recognition of 'blending of cultures' – an expectation that one would have when working with second-generation

teenagers – is almost lacking. There is a contraction of the ability to relate to any of the 'cultural sources': the original one is unwanted, as it is the most stigmatised in their everyday environment, and the 'host' one is unwelcoming and a full membership and belongingness are forbidden. As cited above, academic work on ethnicity (Barth 1969; Wimmer 2008a) assumes that the process of boundary making is put in motion by the active role of actors situated in a social field. More specifically, Wimmer (2008b: 1031) distinguishes between strategies that attempt to change the location of existing boundaries and those that do not aim at the location of a boundary, but try to modify its meaning and implication, by challenging the hierarchical ordering of ethnic categories, de-emphasising ethnicity and emphasising other social divisions or changing one's own position *vis-à-vis* the boundary. The Albanian second generation shows a weak 'ethnic agency' in performing the strategies that target the location of existing boundaries or modify its meaning by challenging the hierarchical order of ethnic categories. The boundaries are externally erected and the strategies that require a group's ethnic action are not distinguishable. What is more visible is the tendency towards boundary crossing and repositioning, performed at an individual level and accompanied by an indifference towards other co-ethnics and referring to the negatively articulated 'Albanianness' as the reference for distancing. There is a typical way of referring to others when reporting discrimination. When positioning themselves along the boundaries, external categorisation and identification by others are the main frames which Albanian-origin teenagers refer. According to Jenkins (1997: 61), 'A claim to ethnic identity must be validated by an audience of outsiders or Others – because without such an audience the issue would not arise – but it seems to make little sense to talk about an ethnicity which does not at some point and no matter how weakly or tenuously recognize itself as such'. This also reminds us that, different from what American authors

maintain, the effect of structural factors can have the reverse effect on ethnic identification. Instead of strengthening ethnic identity and the vitality of the ethnic group (Waters 1990), structural forces such as discrimination in face of the absence of an ethnic agency can have the opposite effect.

The lack of resistance towards discrimination and the forced assimilation experienced at the beginning of their settlement in Greece, and the change in attitude over the years, could well be explained within the framework of power and capital. Barth (1969: 28) did not elaborate extensively on this element, but sensed an 'anomalous' general feature of ethnic identity as a status: while *ascription* rests mainly on origin and commitment and does not depend on any specific assets, the *performance* of the roles required to realise identity is conditioned on certain assets. He noted, however, that a change in cultural differences between groups is not associated in any simple way with a change in the same direction and of the same scale in the organisational relevance of ethnic identities or in boundary maintenance processes. However, Bourdieu (2004: 15) is very clear on the role of capital in the structure and functioning of the social world. He defines capital as 'accumulated labour (in its materialised form or its "incorporated", embodied form) which when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive basis by agents or groups of agents enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living world'. In particular, agency and culture, and all the interrelations they are part of, are marked by the notion of power. As Ratner (2000: 430) maintains, the individual notion of agency as based on personal meanings ignores the barriers agents encounter in their struggles for a sense of equality, democracy and fulfilment. A common view in the literature that recognises power as a factor that shapes the social world is that people are situated in different social locations, which are influenced by power hierarchies, including those attached to gender (Pessar and Mahler 2003). Power

hierarchies are also taken as the mechanisms that make individuals subjects through the imposition of categories, the impact of their individuality and identity, and the control they have on the law of truth, which individuals must recognise and others should also recognise in them (Foucault 1982: 781). On the other hand, power and capital are inter-related with the possession of capital resting on the basis of power (Bourdieu 1989).

Nevertheless, the 'cultural repositioning' as a group in a host society and the above-mentioned strategies of Albanian-origin immigrants can also be related to the 'structure' of Albanian ethnic identity. Scholars have pointed to the feeling of historical priority and cultural homogeneity and indifference towards religion as 'myths' of Albanian identity, employed symbolically by the Albanian diaspora in the historical struggles to build a national ideology (Malcolm 2002). Others have observed Albanian ethnic identity as based on the respect for the family and kinship and on respect for the given word, considering the lack of a single common religion as a historical obstacle to a strong ethnic identity (Dingo 2007), referring thus to a more 'micro-level' ethnicity. As a result, it is rather the 'migrant identity' that characterises the Albanian first generation and, from their narratives, it seems that the 'ethnicity' of their incorporation strategies is the realisation of their migration project: a better life for them and a brighter future for their children, which results in the individual boundary-crossing strategies of their descendants. However, the migration experience associated with accumulation of resources and capital enabling the gaining of power, has caused a significant change in agency, and has developed a knowledge of identity politics and class and a capacity to recognise boundaries and the mechanisms that determine them. Compared to the lack of civic engagement and responsibility in Albania¹⁵ – this

¹⁵ See Totozani (2010) 'Une, shqiptari' in *Shekulli* newspaper 18/12/2010 for an excellent reaction of a member of the Albanian elite and civil society to the issue

process of external identity contestation followed by a self-questioning and hybridisation at a later stage may well consist of the genesis of a 'reproduction' of ethnicity in the Albanian diaspora.

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