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The Albanian diaspora : immigration and settlement experiences

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THE ALBANIAN DIASPORA:
IMMIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES

by

Valbona Sulemani, HBA, University of Toronto, 1998

A Major Research Paper
Presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in the Program of
Immigration and Settlement Studies

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Valbona Sulemani

Master of Arts 2009
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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to analyze the immigration and settlement experiences of the Albanian diaspora. The paper takes an historical and anthropological perspective in outlining the experiences of Albanian people through a comparative analysis of Europe and North America. This paper examines the different experiences of migrants in Greece and Italy to those of the United States and Canada in relation to the country of origin (Albania, Kosova, or Macedonia), the time period of migration, and the reason for migration. This study will outline and analyze the more positive experiences of Albanian people in North America, compared to the somewhat more negative experiences in Europe, with a discussion on the effects media representation has had on Albanian migrants in Greece and Italy. The history of a receiving country strongly affects its perspective on immigration and consequently its reception of immigrants.

Key Words: Albanian; diaspora; migration history; immigration; settlement; Canada.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this piece of work to so many people for a variety of reasons, but most of all I dedicate every minute of time I put into research to my children. The value of education cannot be contested. My children, at such a young age, have an excellent understanding of the importance of setting and attaining educational goals. My family was there for me every step of the way in achieving this goal, and so I would like to give this work back to them.

Two very important people in my life made a decision when they were a young couple to move to Canada so that they can raise a family here - my parents. They came to Canada so that their children would have lots of opportunities and be free of discrimination. I have learned so much from them both, through their years of hard work to give us a better life than they had. I am indebted to them both for supporting me in everything I choose to do throughout the years.

I would also like to dedicate this study to all the Albanian migrants around the world. Many of you, like my parents, are in search of a better life. I hope you find your way to a place that lets you realize your full potential and that makes you happy.

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Migrants around the globe have common experiences, however migration itself is a complex and diverse phenomenon. The migration of Albanian people has been understudied by scholars in the field. There is a surprising dearth of scholarship on the topic, because of its complexity. To gain a full comprehension of Albanian migration which could address several dimensions of the phenomenon, would entail a challenging agenda. For example, the specific migration dynamics, commonalities, and key actors would need to be addressed with regards to subjectivity, intentions, strategies, aspirations and experience of the migrant situation. It would also be important to document the cultural, historical, social and economic resources involved.¹ To fully examine the process of migration, all of these factors should be considered from a comparative perspective to produce a complete picture of this multifaceted phenomenon.

Collaborative, comparative and interdisciplinary research and the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods can enrich migration research. This paper takes an historical and anthropological perspective, and utilizes primary and secondary sources of information to analyze the immigration and settlement experiences of Albanian people in Europe and North America. Secondary sources complement the primary research by lending support to findings from previous studies. A review of the new and old studies on Albanian diasporas abroad lends insight to the effects the country of origin and country of destination have on migration experiences.

During the past two decades Albanian people have fashioned a new international diaspora. Albanian migrants have settled mainly in Greece and Italy, and the rest reside in

¹ Nicola Mai and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, "Albanian Migration and New Transnationalisms" *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 29, no. 6 (2003): 940.

other West European countries, the United States and Canada.² The various experiences of these migrants are discussed in relation to the time period of migration, the country of destination chosen, and the reasons for migration. This paper will focus on main countries of destination in Europe, which are Greece and Italy; and the effects media representations have had in these countries. These experiences will be analyzed in contrast to those of Albanian people in North America. This paper postulates that the history of a country strongly affects its perspective on immigration and consequently its reception of immigrants, which is demonstrated through an examination of the migration and settlement experiences of Albanian migrants. The Albanian migration phenomenon is one that is unique and distinct from other countries, due to its indignant history which is outlined in this paper.

There exists a body of literature on Albanians in Italy, Greece, and the United States (U.S.), although the research is still in its infancy. There is a lack of research regarding the Albanian people in Canada. This paper seeks to fill this gap through interviews with Albanian people in Canada, specifically in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). This study attempts to analyze the differing experiences reviewed from previous research to the primary research being carried out by the principal investigator.

The Albanian people and the history of the Balkans will be reviewed to allow for an understanding of their migration patterns. The term “Albanian people” will be used, which in this paper is defined linguistically, specifically the mother tongue of the population or the language spoken within the family.³ The term “Albanian” is more commonly recognized in

² Kosta Barjaba, “Migration and Ethnicity in Albania: Synergies and Interdependencies”, *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* XI, no. 1, (Summer/Fall 2004): 231-232.

³ Nicola Guy, “Linguistic Boundaries and Geopolitical Interests: the Albanian Boundary Commissions, 1878–1926”, *Journal of Historical Geography* 34 (2008):451.

today's society, and is therefore the term used in most literature. However, Albanians refer to themselves as '*Shqiptars*'. This term encompasses all those who speak Albanian and not just people from the Republic of Albania. Other terms commonly used are Arbëresh for those in Italy, Arvanite for those in Greece and Arnaut for those in Turkey. Therefore, this paper will refer to Albanian people to include all those that speak Albanian from the Balkan region.

Albanians key determinant to identity is language, rather than religion. Nationals from the Republic of Albania, as well as Albanians in Kosova, and Macedonia will be included in this discussion on Albanian people. The borders of the Balkans will be discussed to give some context and understanding of the region. How and why these borders were created the way they were early in the twentieth century, and recent issues that have risen as a result of these borders, will also be reviewed.

Ancient history of the Albanians will be reviewed to document the origins of Albanians. This will be followed by migration periods before, during, and after communism in Albania, which lasted from 1944 to 1990. Also, the Kosova conflict of 1999 will be examined. With an understanding of the history of the Albanian people and their migration patterns and experiences, one can move forward to further expand research into understanding when and how Canada became a destination country. Subsequently, an exploration of the immigration and settlement experiences of Albanian people in Canada follows. Understanding this history allows one to better grasp the current conflicts of the Balkan region with regards to Albanians.

Most historians of the Balkans contend that Albanians are descendants of the ancient Illyrians, who were Indo-European tribesmen that inhabited the western part of the Balkan

Peninsula. Their territories around 1225 BC included what is known today as Croatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and portions of Macedonia and northern Greece. The Illyrians were subdivided into tribes and clans. Albania derives its name from one of the Illyrian tribes called the Arber, or Arbëreshi, and later the Albanoi located in central Albania.⁴

Early preliterate Albanians left nothing in terms of literature, inscriptions, or documents. Archeologists who have unearthed many stone structures of monuments, dwellings, tombs, mosaics, ceramic pottery, and various artifacts of metal, have assisted in the reconstruction of the prehistoric culture. Linguists have offered additional insights in relation to the names of mountains, rivers, heroes, and divine figures as well as inscriptions of coins which can offer clues to the primitive culture. Albanian is recognized as an Indo-European language which forms its own branch and has no close ties to any other language. Ancient Greek and Roman scholars recorded encounters, folklore, myths, and legends of their Albanian neighbours.⁵ These three sources shed light on the past of Albanians and lend support to the belief that they are one of the original inhabitants of the Balkan region.

Slavs invaded Illyrian territories in the late sixth century. The Slavs of the Balkans include four groups we know today as Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, and Bulgarians. The Serbs moved into the region of what is today known as Kosova. They believe this area to be their historic medieval heartland. During the period of the Medieval Serb Empire, rule over Kosova and parts of Albania was short lived from 1184-1216. By the fifteenth century, the

⁴ Van Christo "Albania and the Albanians", (2007) <http://www.frosina.org/articles/default.asp?id=207> (accessed March 9, 2009); see also Edwin E. Jacques, *The Albanians: An Ethnic History from Prehistoric Times to the Present* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, Inc., 1995), 81.

⁵ Jacques, 2-11.

Ottoman expansion took over the entire region, which subsequently lasted five centuries.⁶

Migration data prior to 1945 are limited. Albanian migration flows have a lengthy history from the Balkans.⁷ The earliest periods of emigration occurred in the fifteenth century, after George Kastriot's (also known as Skanderbeg)⁸ death in 1468, which signified the fall of his stronghold at Krujë to the Ottomans.⁹ At this time, approximately one quarter of the population fled their homes and settled mainly in present day Italy and Sicily, some in Greece, and along the Dalmatian coast.¹⁰ Those that migrated to Italy are referred to as Arbëresh. They founded several towns in the southern regions, where these Albanian communities are still present today.¹¹ This was a religiously motivated emigration because the Ottoman Turks' occupation forced the Islamization of the Christian Albanian population.¹² Hence, the earliest known Albanian diaspora groups are the Arbëresh of Italy and the Albanians of Greece whom are referred to as Arvanites.

After the Ottoman Turks conquered Albanian lands they established a system of administration by dividing it into four provinces, or vilayets, called Shkodra, Kosova,

⁶ Edith Durham, *High Albania: A Victorian Traveller's Balkan Odyssey*, (London: Phoenix Press, 1909), 3-4; see also Eric Margolis, "America Rescues the Albanians", *Inside Track on World News*, February 25, 2008, <http://www.bigeye.com/fc022508.htm> (accessed May 15, 2009); Julie Vullnetari, "Albanian Migration: State of the Art Review", IMISCOE (2007), 6; Robert Elsie, *Historical Dictionary of Kosova*, No. 44 (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2004), 1.

⁷ Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, "Albanian Migration and Diasporas: Old and New Perspectives", (paper presented at the Workshop on the National Strategy on Migration, February 21-22, 2005), 106.

⁸ George Kastriot was a great leader and national hero of Albanians and Christendom. (See Mehmet Konitza, *The Albanian Question*, (London: Williams, Lea and Company Ltd., Printers, 1918), 8.

⁹ Russell King and Julie Vullnetari, "Migration and Development in Albania", Sussex Centre for Migration Research, Working Paper C5, (2003), 21; Anton Logoreci, *The Albanians: Europe's Forgotten Survivors* (London: The Garden City Press Limited, 1977), 30.

¹⁰ King and Vullnetari, 21.

¹¹ Robert Clegg Austin "The Albanians", *The Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, (1999), 179; Carletto et al, "Internal Mobility and International Migration in Albania" ESA Working Paper No. 04-13 (2004), 2.

¹² King and Vullnetari, 21.

Manastir, and Janina. The Ottoman Empire ruled Albanians for more than 500 hundred years.¹³ In January of 1878, Serbian troops invaded the region of northern Kosova and the Montenegrins moved in towards Shkoder (northern Albania). By February, the Greeks also invaded the vilayet of Janina. The Serbian army expelled Albanians from Leskovac to Nis, and annexed this region to Serbia. Although the Albanians wanted independence from Ottoman rule, they found themselves forced to fight on the side of the Turks in order to save their lands from Serbian encroachment. Albanians have historically sided with those that are able to serve their interests, whether this alliance was based on political or religious grounds. In this case, they found themselves fighting on the side of the Ottoman Turks until they finally declared independence in 1912.¹⁴

Albanians have shifted from one religion to another with relative ease throughout their turbulent history, being Catholic, Orthodox, or Muslim depending on how this best served their interests at the time. Under Ottoman rule taxes were imposed on all non-Muslims. Those who converted to Islam were offered employment, given opportunities to serve in senior administrative positions, and were paid well for serving in the military. Those who did not convert either fled or paid elaborate taxes, therefore converting to Islam served the Albanians' interest at that time. Some Muslim Albanians enjoyed these luxuries and wished to remain under Ottoman rule. A nineteenth-century elegy by intellectual Pashko Vasa stated that "the religion of Albanians is Albanianism".¹⁵ This statement was embedded into Albanians by the communist president Enver Hoxha. He lectured that mosques and churches

¹³ Christo, retrieved from <http://www.frosina.org/articles/default.asp?id=207>.

¹⁴ King and Vullnetari, 22.

¹⁵ Miranda Vickers and James Pettifer *"Albania: From Anarchy to a Balkan Identity"*, (New York: NYU Press, 2000), 96-97.

keep the state divided and enslaved, and that religions were gifts of the enemy. He argued that Islam came from Turkey, Orthodoxy came from Greece, and Catholicism from Italy. He failed to note that that communism came from Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union.¹⁶

“Albanianism” as the religion of Albanians has served as a common ground to unite all Albanians throughout their tumultuous history in trying to stay together as a unified national group. Their language kept them distinct from the Ottoman Turks who attempted to swallow them whole by thrusting Islam on them and not allowing the Albanians to be educated in their own language. This continued until the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78, after which point the Albanians were at the mercy of the Great Powers. They relied on the Great Powers to unify them into a single nation based on their ethnicity, which was defined linguistically.

Boundary commissions were used as a means of settling boundary disputes in the Balkans as a result of the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Between 1878 and 1926 there were five boundary commissions (two in 1878, two over 1913-14, and one over 1922-26) which were important in determining the boundaries of Albania as we know it today. These commissions were utilized to sort out the “Albanian question”, which referred to the competition for control of and influence over the eastern Adriatic Albanian inhabited lands under Ottoman sovereignty.¹⁷

On March 3, 1878 Russia imposed the Treaty of San Stefano on the Ottoman administration. This was designed to control Austro-Hungarian influence in the Balkans and to strengthen Russia’s position in the region.¹⁸ This treaty did not recognize the existence of Albania as a nation, but rather acknowledged that Albanians or Albanian-speaking people

¹⁶ Jacques, 546.

¹⁷ Guy, 448-9.

merely inhabited a geographical area on the eastern Adriatic coast. Albanians were penalized because they were considered to be part of the Ottoman Empire for almost five centuries. As a consequence, the four vilayets were divided: Shkodra was given to Montenegro, Kosova went to Serbia, Manastir went to Bulgaria, and Janina was given to Greece.¹⁹ Austria-Hungary and Britain contested the arrangement due to the position it awarded Russia in the Balkans which disrupted Europe's balance of power.²⁰ Many Albanians living in these territories were driven away from their homes and fled to other parts of Albania, as well as Turkey.²¹

The Treaty of Berlin took place from June 13 to July 13, 1878, through which the United Kingdom, Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire revised the Treaty of San Stefano, which was signed a few months earlier. The Treaty of Berlin replaced the Treaty of San Stefano, but was not much better for the Albanian people. The treaty gave territories owned by the Ottoman Empire inhabited by Albanians to Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece. The Albanians from the four Albanian-inhabited Ottoman vilayets formed the League of Prizren to lobby against implementation of these treaties as they could not accept either subjection to the Slavs or continued occupation by the Turks. They longed for full independence. The Albanians did not want the four Albanian populated vilayets to be partitioned amongst their neighbouring countries.²² The region was in turmoil.

The First Balkan War occurred from October to December 1912. On November 28, 1912,

¹⁸ Miranda Vickers, *The Albanians: A Modern History*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), 29.

¹⁹ Christo, retrieved from www.frosina.org/articles/default.asp?id=207,

²⁰ Zickel, Raymond and Iwaskiw, Walter R. *Albania: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the US Library of Congress, 1994 www.countrystudies.us/albania (accessed on July, 4 2009).

²¹ Logoreci, 40; Vickers, 29.

²² Jacques, 256-7.

an assembly of eighty-three Albanian leaders met in Vlora and declared Albania an independent country. After independence in 1912, the government remained secular. The Albanians were the last Balkan nation to achieve their independence from the Ottoman Empire.²³

In December 1912, an ambassadorial conference was opened in London by the Great Powers to discuss the issues that arose from the declaration of independence by Albania during the First Balkan War. This peace conference was to address the question of Albania's fate. Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Italy represented the Triple Alliance, while Britain, France, and Russia stood as the Triple Entente. The role of the Great Powers was paramount in the formation of the Albanian boundaries. They decided to form boundaries based on ethnography, which meant linguistic boundaries corresponding to nationality, specifically the mother tongue of the population. This mapping based on language was important for Albanians because of their religious differences, which include Catholics, Orthodox, and Muslims. A series of conflicts between the Great Powers resulted in compensation arrangements designed to protect geopolitical interests. The ethnic objectives which initially guided the Great Powers' mapping exercise soon gave way to their own geopolitical interests. For example, the Triple Alliance did not want Russia and other Slavs to gain more land on the eastern Adriatic, yet the Triple Entente was eager for the Serbs to gain an Adriatic outlet which would open a naval port for the Russians. Diplomacy of the time was complicated. The Balkans was considered a "tinder box", as eagerness for more territory brought on the First World War. The prime objective in creating Albania no longer followed an ethno-

²³ Vullnetari, 6; see also Guy, 450-1; Jacques, 256; Vickers, 31; Vickers and Pettifer, 97.

linguistic rationale, but rather the Great Powers' political interests outweighed the prior objectives.²⁴

The Treaty of London ended the First Balkan War, which finally decided on creating an autonomous Albania under continued Ottoman rule, but with the protection of the Great Powers. The treaty was quickly abandoned in the summer of 1913 and the onset of the Second Balkan War. The Treaty of Bucharest ended the Second Balkan War in August 1913, at which point the Great Powers recognized an independent Albanian state ruled by a constitutional monarchy. Montenegro and Serbia reluctantly gave up their hold on Albanian lands. However, the treaty left large areas with majority Albanian populations, specifically Kosova and western Macedonia, as well as significant populations in Montenegro and Greece, outside the new state. This treaty failed to solve the region's nationality problems.²⁵ Albanian boundaries emerged as the most controversial issue at the conference. Not one of the Powers wanted to hand over Albania in whole to another Power, so the end result was a partitioning of Albanian lands without consideration of the will of the people, which was a formula for fresh trouble.²⁶

By August 1914 the commission had not completed their ethnographic mapping exercise, however with five of the six Great Powers at war the operations came to a halt. After the outbreak of the First World War, political chaos erupted in Albania. The Albanian people began to split along religious and tribal lines, each demanding that a prince who suited their interests be the protector of the privileges they enjoyed under the previous rule. Late in 1914, Greece occupied southern Albania, including Korçë and Gjirokastër. Italy occupied Vlora,

²⁴ Guy, 449-54.

²⁵ Ibid, 454-5.

while Serbia and Montenegro occupied the northern parts of Albania. By the time the war ended on November 11, 1918, Italy's army had occupied most of Albania. Serbia occupied much of the northern region. Greece occupied a small area in the south, and France occupied Korçë and Shkodër as well as the Kosova region, which were later handed over to Serbia.²⁷

The unfinished boundary commissions resumed in March 1922 and lasted until 1926. Once again, like the previous commissions it had a linguistic goal, but Great Power interests were protected.²⁸ Albania became the object of conflict between Italy and the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes – later Yugoslavia, which was adamant on control over the country. The United States emerged as a foreign protector through a diplomatic intercession. Since 1926, Albania's boundaries have remained relatively the same.

During the interwar period, Albania was extremely undeveloped, poor and remote. Albania's educational and social development remained decades behind other Balkan countries. Illiteracy plagued most of the countries inhabitants. However, literature began to flourish, despite the meager educational opportunities. A priest, Gjergj Fishta, Albania's greatest poet, monopolized the literary scene with poems about the Albanians' perseverance during their quest for freedom. Also during this period, religious life in Albania changed. The Orthodox population wished to reform Albania, by moving it away from its Muslim, Turkish past. The Muslim Albanians broke their last ties with Constantinople in 1923 and pledged primary allegiance to their native country when the first president of Turkey Mustafa Kemal

²⁶ Konitza, 20.

²⁷ Vickers and Pettifer, 143; see also "The National Awakening of the Albanians", *The Albanians*, http://www.thealbanians.com/history/national_awakening.htm (accessed July 4, 2009).

²⁸ Guy, 463.

Ataturk abolished the Caliphate.²⁹

The decisions made by the Great Powers from 1912 to 1926 resulted in the separation of ethnic communities, most notably in Kosova and western Macedonia. This created destabilizing consequences for the Balkan region. The problems in the Balkans have been continual over the century.

Mehmet Konitza stated in 1918 that the problems of the Balkan region are complex and difficult to resolve.

“But one thing is certain, and that is that no lasting peace can be made unless the solution of these problems is based upon the principles of nationality”, and that “the redrawing of maps and the destinies of peoples is the Albanian Question, a question which is little understood, and which appears to be small, but which is nevertheless of the greatest importance. It is with big consequences, and if those whose duty it is to consider it persist, as in the past, in regarding it from the standpoint of foreign aspirations, and not from the point of view of the Albanian people and public interest, those consequences may prove disastrous.”³⁰

In a nation state where three religions could be a major obstacle to unification, it was only natural for Albanian national identity to be founded on language and culture. Language is the strongest evidence of Albanian homogeneity. Language was the most efficient tool for Albanians who possessed one of the oldest Indo-European languages clearly distinguishable from its Serbian and Greek neighbours. In the nineteenth-century, the diaspora began to promote the publishing of Albanian language literature, which was strictly prohibited under Ottoman rule. The goal of the diaspora was to stimulate the national consciousness and strengthen the ties of unity among all Albanians. A cultural revolution was undertaken by expatriates who founded national societies and sponsored cultural and political programs to promote the Albanian language. Many of these people migrated to Constantinople, Romania,

²⁹ Zickel and Iwaskiw.

Egypt, Bulgaria, Greece, and the United States. Their goal was to stimulate the national consciousness and strengthen the unity of Albanians everywhere by promoting the use of the Albanian language in these communities as well as in the homeland.³¹

In 1928 President Ahmed Zog amended the constitution turning Albania into a kingdom, in which President Zog became King Zog I, a reign that lasted until 1939. Unification of Albanians was temporarily implemented. In 1939, Italy conquered Albania and by 1941 united Albania with other Albanian populated lands, principally Kosova. However the Great Powers restored these territories to Yugoslavia at the end of the Second World War.³² Albanians remained on their traditional lands, but under new rule. Other Albanian communities continued to grow beyond the boundaries of the Balkans.

Albanian communities exist in Turkey (Istanbul, and Izmir), and from the end of the 19th and early 20th century in the United States (mainly Boston and New York) and Australia (chiefly Sydney, Melbourne, Perth).³³ There are also many old Albanian communities across Europe. Many of these communities have maintained their distinct identity, language and stories of expulsion, exodus, and origin to the present day. The Balkan Wars and two World Wars caused significant population shifts, for example the Serb interwar colonization and land confiscation programs in Kosova that were designed to encourage emigration to Albania or Turkey. Similar expulsions of Albanians occurred in Macedonia by Bulgarian rulers.³⁴ The Turks and Greeks adopted a population exchange agreement at the Convention of Lausanne in January 1923. Many Albanian Muslims from border areas in Greece were sent to

³⁰ Konitza, 1-2.

³¹ Jacques, 287.

³² Guy, 464. see also Tim Judah, "Greater Albania?" *Survival* 43, no. 2, (2001), 8.

³³ Barjaba and King, 7.

Turkey. This agreement accounted for most Albanians in Turkey, who are referred to as Arnauts. The Chams, who are Albanians from Chamëria in northern Greece, found themselves classified as refugees inside Albania due to this agreement. Many of these refugee Chams fled to Turkey and settled mainly in Izmir. The Chams fled from their villages in northwest Greece in three phases, between 1912-14 (Balkan Wars), after the Greek-Turkish Convention of 1923, and towards the end of the Second World War from the summer of 1944 to March 1945.³⁵

During the nineteenth and early twentieth century large numbers of Albanians migrated for political and economic reasons as Albania changed hands. As transport and technology progressed, emigration to more distant lands became feasible. The destinations at this time were both near and far, including Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Egypt, the United States, Argentina, Australia, and Canada. The predominant destination was, however, Greece, where by the mid 1930s Albanians numbered around 400,000.³⁶ Many were employed in big factories, and less worked in their former occupations. This route opened up opportunities for the less skilled emigrants. However, these long distance emigrations required more initial financial investment; therefore most passage money for distant emigration was financed by loans which were paid later, after the migrant arrived abroad.³⁷

The years following World War II marked the greatest turning point in Albania's political history, which changed Albanian migration for decades. Communism affected the social, economic and cultural life of all Albanians. Albania is one of the most linguistically

³⁴ Elsie, 1; see also Schwandner-Sievers, 107.

³⁵ Vullnetari, 10; see also Schwandner-Sievers, 107.

³⁶ Carletto et al, 2.

³⁷ Vullnetari, 15.

homogenous countries in eastern and central Europe. A considerable number of Albanian people still reside beyond the frontiers of Albania, primarily in Kosova, but also in Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro and Greece. The majority of these Albanian people's exclusions can be attributed to the boundary decisions made by the Great Power before and after the First World War.³⁸

Despite population shifts, no Balkan state has achieved their ideal of a European national state based on linguistic, religious, and ethnic homogeneity; however Albania has remained one of the most homogenous in the region.³⁹ The homogeneity of Albania is due in large part to the long standing period of communist rule which restricted the mobility of its people.

Between 1941 and 1944, the Albanian communist partisans and nationalist guerillas fought the occupation forces of the Italians and Germans. They were also often engaged in a brutal struggle to gain control of Albania. The partisans were supported by Yugoslavia's communists and armed with United States and British weaponry. Albania's communist partisans defeated the nationalists in a civil war that was fought during the period between Italy's submission in September 1943 and Germany's withdrawal of forces in late 1944.⁴⁰

In October 1944 the Communists formed a provisional government and a month later seized control of the entire country. Migration came to a virtual halt during the communist period which lasted from the end of 1944 to 1990. Emigration was officially prohibited and those who tried to escape illegally were severely punished.⁴¹ Any attempt to emigrate was regarded as an act of treason and punished by death or lengthy imprisonment. A barbed wire

³⁸ Guy, 466.

³⁹ Ibid, 467.

⁴⁰ Zickel and Iwaskiw

⁴¹ Carletto et al, 2; see also Stampini et al, 50; King and Vullnetari, 41; Vullnetari, 30.

high-voltage fence was erected that ran the entire length of the land border with Greece and Yugoslavia. A few refugees took the risk to escape the dictatorship by crossing Albania's dangerous borders. Hoxha's communist regime came down with an iron fist on the country. The Communist party tightened its hold on the country in the first couple years of the regime. This caused many members of the anti-communist parties, such as *Partia e Legalitetit* (Legality Party) and *Balli Kombëtar* (National Front), to flee by the thousands in fear of persecution. Thousands of these party supporters fled mainly to the USA between 1945 and 1946,⁴² after initially being put in refugee camps in Greece, Yugoslavia, and Italy. Many escaped between 1945 and the early 1950s. Albania became more isolated after subsequent breakdowns in relations with the Yugoslavs in 1948, then with the Russians in 1961, and last with the Chinese in 1977. Militarization of the country became more pronounced due to fear of invasion. Villages along the border were partitioned off as a 'border zone' and entry was only possible with a special permit obtained at the district police office. Those that entered the border zone without a permit faced a penalty of up to two years imprisonment. During Hoxha's communist rule, only 20,000 were able to leave the country during the entire period.⁴³

However, in Yugoslavia the political climate was more relaxed and Albanians from Kosova, Macedonia, and Montenegro continued to emigrate.⁴⁴ Many of these Albanians were working in Switzerland as guest-workers since the 1960s. At this same time there were also guest-workers in Germany and Sweden. As of 1991, this was no longer possible after a shift

⁴² Vickers, 163.

⁴³ Vullnetari, 29-30.

⁴⁴ Austin, 180; Judah, 8.

in immigration policies in Switzerland, at which point immigration from former Yugoslavia was only possible by seeking asylum or through family reunification.⁴⁵ These Albanians were travelling on Yugoslavian passports and therefore it is difficult to trace their migration through statistics in their various countries of destination.

The Communist regime ruptured the emigration history for forty-five years, but it finally came to an end in 1990. Emigration and internal migration were stringently controlled. Also, powerful propaganda portrayed migration as a hindrance of the past and laden with negative connotations of separation, loss and destruction. The migration that followed the fall of communism is one of the most significant modern global migrations, both in terms of volume and typologies. No other country in Europe has been so entrenched by migration as Albania was in the two decades following communism. Migration is at the heart of economic, social and cultural change.⁴⁶ Migration is possibly the single most important political, social and economic phenomenon after the fall of communism.

Since the fall of the communist regime in 1990 emigration has reached near exodus proportions. Approximately 600,000 and 800,000 Albanians have moved abroad since 1990, mostly to Greece and Italy. According to the 2001 census, 710,000 people out of a population of 3.07 million have migrated, which is about 23% of the population.⁴⁷

July 2, 1990 is the date that pinpoints the start of the Albanian emigration. The group of people that began this wave of emigration was called the 'embassy migrants'. On this date

⁴⁵ Janine Dahinden. "Contesting Transnationalism? Lessons from the Study of Albanian Migration Networks from Former Yugoslavia", *Global Networks* 5, 2 (2005), 192-3; Judah, 8-9.

⁴⁶ Russell King, "Albania as a Laboratory for the Study of Migration and Development", *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans* 7, no. 2 (2005), 133, Vullnetari, 30.

⁴⁷ Lisa Arrehag, Örjan Sjöberg, and, Mirja Sjöblom, "Post-Communist Corss-Border Migration in South-Eastern Albania: Who Leaves? Who Stays Behind? *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 32, no. 3

around 5,000 Albanians sought refuge in Western embassies in Tirana. Eventually they were allowed to leave Albania for the West, primarily to Germany, Italy, France, and other European countries. From the time of the initial embassy migrants until early 1991, approximately 20,000 people left. As these migrants settled into their new countries, they became the initial base for the chain migration that followed.⁴⁸

The main mass exodus occurred in 1991 and 1992, when there was a stream of migration that was wholly uncontrolled due to the initial political instability, social unrest, and economic downturn associated with the change in government. This led to the largest surge of Albanian migration in recent times, when approximately 300,000 individuals left the country, primarily to Greece and Italy. Most of the emigrants fled by boat to the neighbouring countries, and therefore this period has been referred to as the 'boat exodus'.⁴⁹

During the years between 1993 and 1996, there was a period of stability with regards to migration, as the economy was growing. Migration decreased at this time, but still remained sizable. It is argued that the key factor in Albania's economic upturn at this time was a result of emigrants' remittances. It is estimated these remittances totaled approximately US\$700 million dollars per year, which is a quarter of the country's GDP.⁵⁰

Carletto et al (2004) add to the discussion on remittances. Remittances sent home by emigrants were mostly used for families' immediate needs, but a portion was invested in private pyramid saving schemes which flourished during 1995 to 96. The rules and regulations that governed the official banking sector in Albania were poorly developed. The

(2006), 378; see also King (2005), 138-9; Stampini et al, 51; Vullnetari, 43.

⁴⁸ Erind Pajo, *International Migration, Social Demotion, and Imagined Advancement: An Ethnography of Socioglobal Mobility*. (New York: Springer-Verlag, 2008), 19; see also Vullnetari, 15.

⁴⁹ Austin, 181; see also Pajo, 15; King and Vullnetari, 25.

pyramid schemes had their origin in a weak formal credit system and a thriving informal market unregulated by the government and fuelled in large part by remittances. Interest rates that were offered increased to a point where they could no longer be sustained. People sold their homes, livestock and other assets in hopes of becoming rich quickly, but most of the investments were from international remittances. The collapse of the pyramids in late 1996 and early 1997 led to a period of political and economic hardship verging on civil war in some parts of the country and this turmoil produced another boat exodus to Italy in the early spring of 1997. Approximately 70,000 people emigrated within a few months due to a combination of unemployment and poverty.⁵¹

Since 1998, a slow progression in economic, political, and social conditions and more favourable immigration policies in two primary receiving countries, Greece and Italy, have increased legal migration and reduced illegal flows. For example, bilateral labour agreements on seasonal employment have been signed with Greece in 1996, Italy in 1997, and as well as Germany since 1991. In 1998, Greece opened up the first wave of regularization of migrants. A total of 371,641 applications for regularization were submitted, of which 241,561 or 65 percent were Albanians. A second regularization was initiated in 2001, which brought in 367,860 applications.⁵²

However, just across the border in Kosova, the civil war between ethnic Serbs and ethnic Albanians escalated. Kosova had enjoyed provincial autonomy in Yugoslavia since 1974 which was awarded to them by Communist leader Josip Broz, later known as Marshall Tito.

⁵⁰ Vullnetari, 70.

⁵¹ Vullnetari, 32.

⁵² Kosta Barjaba, "Contemporary Patter in Albanian Emigration", *SEER South East Europe Review for Labour and Social Affairs* 2, (2000), 62; see also King, (2005), 142; Barjaba and King, 12.

Slobodan Milosevic came into power in Serbia in 1987 at which point he paid a visit to Kosova and promised that he would take care of all the Serbs in Kosova and that no force could stop Serbia's unification. This aroused nationalist sentiment in the Serbs. In 1989 Milosevic changed the constitution to limit Kosova's autonomy. Demonstrations began for the national liberation of Kosova. Tens of thousands of protestors rallied in Kosova which brought on violence by security forces that were governed by the Serbs. The Kosova Liberation Army (KLA) began to appear in 1997 after violent clashes between Serb Police and Kosovars. The Jashari family, founders of the KLA, were massacred in Prekaz, Kosova in March 1998. At this point the violent clashes escalated as Serb forces attempted to clear Kosova of its Albanian population, and this continued through to 1999.⁵³ Milosevic was not dissuaded by international pressure from pursuing a policy of ethnic cleansing against the Albanians of Kosova. NATO launched air strikes against the Yugoslavian army towards the end of March 1999. About 860,000 Kosovar Albanians were forced to flee their homes to neighbouring countries during this civil war.⁵⁴ Some of these refugees came to Canada, where a safe haven was given to about 7,000. Albania took in 500,000 Kosovar Albanian refugees that came through the north. As these refugees were being resettled into other countries, many northern Albanians mixed themselves in with the Kosovars and used this as a transit route to seek asylum in other countries. The Kosovar refugee crisis exacerbated the already fragile economic and demographic situation in Albania, especially in the northern

⁵³ James Pettifer and Miranda Vickers *The Albanian Question: Reshaping the Balkans*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), Preface xii.

⁵⁴ Tracey M. Derwing and Marlene Mulder, "The Kosovar Sponsoring Experience in Northern Alberta", *Journal of International Migration and Immigration* 4, no. 2, (Spring 2003), 218.

region.⁵⁵ Therefore, Albanians spread out beyond Greece and Italy to other EU countries and even North America. Networks and numbers of migrants developed and consolidated in France, Germany, Belgium, the UK, the USA, Canada, and Australia.⁵⁶

The Great Powers continued to play an essential role in determining Balkan boundaries at the end of the twentieth century following the war in Kosova. After the Kosova conflict subsided and many Kosovars returned, Kosova worked long and hard to become an autonomous state. The United States was in support of this idea, while neighbouring countries such as Serbia and Greece as well as Russia were opposed. Kosova became a pawn in the battle between Russia and the United States. Once again little attention was paid to the real interests of the Albanians, Serbs, and others living in Kosova. Decisions pondered over by these Powers, would greatly affect the lives of all those living in Kosova. The ethnic Serbs in Kosova wished to remain a part of Serbia, while the Albanians in Kosova wished for a new border to be formed removing them from the grips of Serbia. Creating new boundaries based on ethnicity in the region was once again pondered, but not wholly accomplishable. Proposals to create ethnic states which would redefine Balkan frontiers are not new ideas, but are ones that keep coming up.⁵⁷

Kosovars declared unilateral independence from Serbia on February 17, 2008. For almost nine years, Kosova remained a protectorate under United Nations, European Union, and NATO. They wanted the same rights as other nations and peoples in the former Yugoslavia.

⁵⁵ King and Vullnetari, 10.

⁵⁶ Vullnetari, 34.

⁵⁷ Jean-Arnault Dérens, "An end to Balkan national states", *Le Monde diplomatique*, (February 2008), retrieved from:
<http://74.125.95.132/search?q=cache:c8MW0x71AAJ:mondediplo.com/2008/02/10kosovo+redrawing+balkan+border&cd=6&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=ca>

Russia fought hard for Montenegro's independence, and supported them through this endeavor. However, Russia refused to support the EU's plan for the larger population in Kosova to join other former Yugoslavian regions as an independent state. Russia also supported the separation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Georgia by invoking its interpretation of the Kosova precedent, in that NATO moved in to protect Kosova, so Russia can protect South Ossetia.⁵⁸

To date, Kosova's independence has been recognized by sixty-two out of one hundred ninety-two UN members and formally recognized by twenty-two EU member states.⁵⁹ On the contrary, countries such as China, India, Indonesia, Russia (Serbia's historic protector) and Spain are nervous about Kosova's declaration, as they are multinational states with separatist tensions.⁶⁰ Canada also has separatist tensions with regards to Quebec, however it recognizes that Kosova is a unique situation.

Kosova rests in the heart of the Balkans. There have been ongoing fears of another mini-Cold War. Europe's twentieth century wars can be seen as one long conflict that began with violent Balkan ethnic and nationalist squabbles which brought on the First Balkan War and ended with another Balkan brawl which eventually devolved Yugoslavia. The twenty-first century now has a difficult task in trying to keep peace among the Balkan states.

United States President Barack Obama's new director of national intelligence, Dennis Blair, identified Kosova and the Balkans as one of the five key areas of concern for U.S. intelligence agencies. Blair stated that the "events in the Balkans will again pose the greatest

⁵⁸ John J. Metzler, "Political Fault Lines – Georgia and Kosovo", *Korea Times*, June 30, 2009. Retrieved from: <http://virtualcollector.blogspot.com/search/label/Kosovo>

⁵⁹ Kosovo Thanks You, <http://www.kosovothanksyou.com/>

⁶⁰ Metzler.

threat of instability in Europe in 2009".⁶¹ The Balkan conflicts go well beyond the Balkans.

On April 20, 2009 at Chatham House, a London-based foreign policy think-tank, *The World Tonight* and the journal *International Affairs* held a conference to decipher what the rules say about when a country can be dismembered against its will. They came to the conclusion that for a claim of self-determination to be successful it needs to be supported by a powerful external state, such as the U.S. in Kosova or Russia in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. One speaker at the conference called it "strategic hypocrisy – we'll back your right to self-determination only if it suits us (or if the violations of human rights are so egregious that they simply cannot be ignored)".⁶²

The notion that issues concerning nationality can be solved by redrawing borders is imbedded in the illusion that borders can be accurately remapped along ethnic lines. Borders are historical artifacts, and the legacy of military and political stratagem. Therefore they are no more just and accurate than they are natural.⁶³ But certainly over time and in some instances they are or become legitimate and functional. Borders allow sovereign states to control certain types of transactions for economic, political, or social reasons. They are often seen as barriers to keep out the undesirables, yet for the markets of today they are functioning as bridges. They are more porous, and allow cross-border social and economic interaction.⁶⁴ Albania has definitely taken advantage of these more porous borders for economic gains. The

⁶¹ Austin Bay, "A Balkan Birthday", *Washington Post*, February 20, 2009. Retrieved from: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/feb/20/a-balkan-birthday/>

⁶² Robin Lustig "State Rights vs Human Rights", *BBC Radio 4*, April 22, 2009. Retrieved from: http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/worldtonight/2009/04/state_rights_vs_human_rights.html

⁶³ Dérens.

⁶⁴ Mathias Albert and Brock Lothar, *Identities, Borders, Orders: Rethinking International Relations Theory*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 29.

migration of Albanians, post-communism, have primarily been due to economic strife in their homeland. Making it across the border in hopes of reaching more prosperous lands is perceived to be the only way to ensure survival for their families.

Since the year 2000, things have been relatively stable. The Albanian economic and political situation gained more stability as the continual crisis and emergency situations of the 1990s seem to have come to an end. This marks the end of large-scale mass emigrations from Albania.⁶⁵

Previous studies have identified three types of migration among Albanians. First, there is the short term migration, which is almost exclusively to Greece, most often from the bordering regions. Second, there is the long term migration, to Greece and Italy as well as other countries in the European Union. And third, legal long term international migration to the USA and Canada.⁶⁶

Research suggests that when seeking out a destination country, some key factors for Albanians have been geographical, cultural, and linguistic proximity, as well as legal accessibility. Between 1992 and 1995, Greece, Italy and other European countries were the main destinations. The U.S. and Canada emerged as significant destination countries after 1995, due to admissions policies favouring skilled and well-educated migrants. Greece and Italy have remained the top two destination countries since the 1990s.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Vullnetari, 34.

⁶⁶ Etleva Gemenji and Ilir Gedeshi, "Highly Skilled Migration from Albania: An Assessment of Current Trends and the Ways Ahead". Centre for Economic and Social Studies in Tirana, Albania, Working Paper T-25 (2008), 10.

⁶⁷ Barjaba (2004), 236; see also King, (2005), 139; Ankica Kosic and Anna Triandafyllidou "Albanian Immigrants in Italy: Migration Plans, Coping Strategies and Identity Issues", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 29, no. 6 (2003), 999.

The top destinations for Albanian professionals are the United States and Canada, respectively. Emigration to Canada began to notably increase between 1997 and 1999. Many emigrants with a PhD leave Europe for the United States and Canada. One source reported that emigration to Canada has developed rapidly in recent years due to the plentiful opportunities for researchers, high standard of living, and better working conditions in terms of safety and dignity. In 2005, the geographical distribution of Albanian lecturers and researchers reveal that 26.3 percent were in the United States, 18.4 percent in Canada, 13.7 percent in Italy, 12.9 percent in Greece, 9.7 percent in France, 6.3 percent in Germany, 2.9 percent in England and 2.6 percent in Austria.⁶⁸

Greece is the primary destination country for temporary migration. The majority of temporary migrants are from the rural areas that travel to Greece for short-term employment opportunities to complement their insufficient earnings, mainly in the agricultural sectors.⁶⁹ Seasonal and short term migration was especially common by the Albania-Greece border. More distant destinations for temporary work have also been sought out in recent years, despite the higher costs involved. Previous family exposure to migration and migrant community networks facilitate temporary migration.⁷⁰

After the emigration explosion of the 1990s, Albanians became Europe's most noted emigrants, whom were initially celebrated and exoticized because they were behind an iron curtain for so many years, but later continuously vilified and stigmatized, especially in the two main destination countries Italy and Greece. This doesn't occur due to their essential

⁶⁸ Germenji and Gedeshi, 10.

⁶⁹ Carletto et al, 10.

⁷⁰ Barjaba and King, 20-21.

‘difference’ in these societies, but because the Albanian neighbours represent the ‘near other’, who essentially becomes the ‘other within’ through immigration.⁷¹

Greece and Italy have experienced a turnaround in migration patterns, from emigration to immigration. Historically, these two countries were regions of intense emigration, but since the 1970s they became an important destination for people from Africa and Asia, and then after 1989 for those from eastern European countries as well. This phenomenon gained momentum between the late 1980s and the early 1990s.⁷²

The situation of Albanian migrants in Greece and Italy has been referred to as one of differential inclusion, in which immigrants are incorporated into some areas of society, most notably the labour market. However they are excluded from others, such as welfare systems, citizenship, and political participation.⁷³

Media representations are extremely important in the formation of identity. Consumption of media increasingly encompasses everyday life which plays a key role in the formation of common cultural codes. Visual and narrative scripts emerge via the media which address individuals as members of groups or as the ‘other’.⁷⁴ The receiving country of migrants hold the keys to the media and therefore their portrayals of Albanian migrants have created identities entrenched with negative stereotypes. The main political actors in Italy argued that the key solution to Italian society’s structural problems include containing and stopping immigration. They used the media as a vehicle to propel this idea to the masses. Many studies conducted in Italy highlighted the alleged connection between the arrival of immigrants and

⁷¹ King (2005), 143.

⁷² Mai and Schwandner-Sievers, 942.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Russell King and Nicola Mai, *Out of Albania: From Crisis Migration to Social Inclusion in Italy*.

the increase in criminal activities.⁷⁵ These types of studies presented through the media provide evidence for the Italians to propel the vilification of Albanian migrants. A connection between immigrants and Albanians was made to brand them as criminals. It is believed that Albanians play a disproportionately large role in Europe's drug cartels, but statistics gathered through research in Europe paints a different picture. "In 2006, only 6% of those arrested for heroin smuggling in Italy were ethnic Albanians, 65% were Italians and 19% were North Africans".⁷⁶ This is evidence that the Albanians are somewhat involved in crime, however there are other cultural groups that are assuming a larger role than the Albanians, yet the Albanians remain the most stigmatized.

Russell King, Co-Director of Migration at the University of Sussex, explains that the Italian reaction towards Albanians appears to have been driven by the media. The media plays a prominent role in the construction of images of Albanian migrants. These images have been increasingly negative and stereotyping Albanians as undesirables and criminals.⁷⁷ The media has fluctuated between the rhetoric of brotherhood and of help in emerging from communism on the one hand, and on the other hand, a message stressing invasion of poor, and landless people. The Albanian newcomers became unwillingly and unwittingly the Italian society's constitutive other. Due to the negative press received, Albanians were defined as a threat to societal values and interests. Despite media stereotyping, Albanians have had some success integrating into Italy. King states Albanians are the closest immigrant nationality to Italians somatically, and in terms of their geography, linguistics, and culture.

(Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), 15.

⁷⁵ King and Mai, (2008), 15-16.

⁷⁶ "Confounding the Sceptics, Up to a Point", *The Economist* (February 12, 2009).

⁷⁷ Barjaba and King, 15-16; see also King (2003), 293; Kosic and Triandafyllidou, 1000.

However, they remain the most stigmatized and rejected by Italians. There have been reports of unfair treatment in relation to Albanians' access to health, education and social services, and in some instances there have been instances of inappropriate behaviour by the Italian police.⁷⁸ Many Albanian participants in King and Mai's (2008) interviews in Italy, reported that they do not always openly admit they are Albanian to Italians because they get mixed reactions. They receive statements such as "but you do not look like an Albanian" when they tell people they are Albanian. This is believed to be result of the negative media representations of Albanians in Italy, in that Albanians that are met face to face do not match the stigmatized figures in the media.

This ongoing stereotyping of Albanians as criminals and other negative connotations has had important consequences. First, is the Italians' behaviour towards Albanians in various aspects of life, such as accommodations and employment. Albanians are generally able to secure low-status jobs in Italy, however they experience discrimination in many instances, including being paid less than Italians for the same work. There appears to be a glass ceiling for Albanians who try to access qualified jobs. The second consequence is Albanians' behaviour in how they present themselves towards Italians and other Albanians. They appear to internalize the stigmatizations. Some Albanians have reported that they believe Albanians have behaved poorly and deserve the bad reputation they have. These same Albanians noted that they choose to socialize with Italians and avoid fellow Albanians, if they are not part of their family or a close friend.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Russell King and Nicola Mai, "Italophilia Meets Albanophobia: Paradoxes of Asymmetric Assimilation and Identity Processes Among Albanian Immigrants in Italy." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 32, no. 1 (2009), 117. see also King, (2003), 294; King, (2005), 134; King and Mai (2008), 15.

⁷⁹ King and Mai (2009), 124-5.

The vilification of Albanians has been more severe in Greece, which King (2003) argues is a reflection of the massive presence of Albanians and the lack of other prominent migrant nationalities. The media construction of 'Albanophobia' frames many factors of the social exclusion that occur in Greece. A 2003 study of Albanians in Thessaloniki, found that Albanians are marginalized in the Greek labour market, usually accepting very low paying jobs and work extremely long hours to make ends meet. With respect to housing trajectories, some of the respondents revealed that they get doors slammed in their faces when they say they are Albanian. The widespread 'Albanophobia' in Greek society is an expression of one of the many faces of discrimination, which denies some social groups the right to participate because they are stigmatized.⁸⁰

Many Albanians in Europe are not well integrated due to being an undocumented or irregular immigrant. However, recent regularization campaigns and the passage of time have improved the situation. Ethnographic studies of Albanian immigrant communities in a range of cities across Greece and Italy have shown them to be increasingly well integrated, with good language skills, and improved occupational profiles. Albanians have moved on from the extreme social exclusion. Over time, Albanian immigrants in Thessaloniki manage to successfully organize their lives in terms of work, residence and interpersonal relationships. However, the social stigmatization of Albanians in Greece and Italy, and in some other European countries, appears to be ingrained rather than a residual phenomenon.⁸¹ It appears that Albanians have exhibited an ability to bridge the gap between social exclusion and

⁸⁰ Panos Hatziprokopiou, "Albanian Immigrants in Thessaloniki, Greece: Processes of Economic and Social Incorporation", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 29, no. 6 (2003): 1053; see also King and Mai, (2009), 122-3.

⁸¹ King, (2005), 139-43.

inclusion, especially on an individual basis. However, at the collective level, they are still the most stigmatized and criminalized migrant group in Italy and this affects the nature and speed of their trajectories from a situation of social exclusion to one more increasingly of inclusion.⁸²

It is important to take a closer look at how and why these Albanian migrants are doing better in Greece and in Italy after a period time. Is it because the receiving country's reactions to these Albanians have changed, or have the Albanians changed? The literature suggests that the latter seems to be the case in Greece and Italy. Albanians have developed strategies to help them improve their situations in their receiving countries. Some strategies developed by Albanians to better integrate into their destination countries, is the practice of changing their names, adult baptism and baptizing their children (those of Muslim origin), and acquiring the mainstream language to facilitate their children's acculturation. This can be perceived as assimilation into the Greek mainstream culture to make life easier for their children.

The longer immigrants stay in their country of destination, the more values they adopt from that country. However, this does not inevitably have to lead to assimilation. Adapting to change is regarded as an important feature of the Albanian identity. The strategies of assimilation adopted by Albanian migrants, such as the adoption of a Greek name, or conversion to the Orthodox faith do not lead to the abandonment of their own Albanian identity.

Dorothy Zinn (2005) found a predominant trend of assimilation into Italian culture and

⁸² Nicola Mai. "The Albanian Diaspora-in-the-Making: Media, Migration and Social Exclusion", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 29, no. 6 (2006), 545; see also King and Mai, (2008), 101.

language by Albanian children. Her study showed that the Albanian language retention is not well maintained in the second generation. As Albanian youth assimilate into Italian society, the connection to the Albanian language and culture weakens. These second generation children appear to have little desire or incentive to preserve their Albanian language and their parents do not offer much encouragement either. The parents see their children's future in Italy therefore they see little value in maintaining their mother tongue. Also, if children are speaking Albanian in public settings they would be recognized as an Albanian and then might be subject to discriminatory or racist reactions by other children in the street or playground.⁸³

Eda Derhemi's (2003) study examined the encounters between Albanian immigrants in Piana, Italy with the Albanian diaspora called the Arbëresh. The Arbëresh do not necessarily make the life of those with the same ethnic origin easier. From the evidence of this case study, Derhemi argues that ethnicity rests on social rather than on biological factors, and that social categories are constructed and subject to change. Derhemi (2003) argues that Albanians, who stay for some years in Piana, increasingly lose their native Albanian accent. Many of the children report they can still understand Albanian, but can no longer speak it. Whether the authors agree on the term assimilation, for what is being experienced by Albanians in Greece and Italy, it appears to be apparent.⁸⁴

The settlement experiences of Albanians have most notably been documented in the two main destination countries of Greece and Italy. The literature reports much of the negative experiences are due to media representations of Albanian migrants. They have been treated in

⁸³ Dorothy Zinn, "The Second Generation of Albanians in Matera: The Italian experience and Prospects for Future Ties to the Homeland", *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans* 7, no. 2 (2005), 269-70.

⁸⁴ Eda Derhemi, "New Albanian Immigrants in the Old Albanian Diaspora: Piana Degli Albanesi", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 29, no.6 (2003), 1016.

an obsessive manner by the media as noted in the book *The New Albanian Migration*:

“The role of the media, especially TV, has been absolutely decisive in the organization of a negative perception of the phenomenon of Albanian immigration. To broadcast spectacle of desperation, poverty and violence in the world of the Albanian exiles – even when done with a Christian compassion – has generated fear and anxiety. The fear of being affected by this ‘other world’ has prevailed over other sentiments. Thus feelings of support for pro-immigrant groups have become weaker; and wider scope, if not encouragement, has been given to attitudes of indifference, and of rejection and expulsion of immigrants from Italy”.⁸⁵

These sentiments were a shared feature among Greek and Italian societies. Other Albanian diasporas across the globe in North America have enjoyed a different experience than their counterparts in Europe.

The first Albanians to arrive in North America were Orthodox Tosks from southern Albania who settled in and around Boston towards the end of the nineteenth century. Historian Robert Austin notes that reports received through oral testimony suggest that a small group of approximately twenty-five Albanian immigrants came to Canada around the same time. These immigrants left Albania due to poor economic conditions, religious persecution, and to avoid serving in the military forces of the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁶ Many just wanted to work and hoped to return home after they had made some money. One emigrant stated that their goal was “to work as much as we could, to spend as little, and to send the rest back to Albania was our holy trinity”. Many of these new immigrants in Canada and the United States returned to Albania when the country’s independence was declared on November 28, 1912 with more than forty percent of its population remaining outside of these newly declared boundaries.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Barjaba and King (2008), 15-16.

⁸⁶ Austin, 180.

⁸⁷ Vullnetari, 10-15; see also Austin, 179.

The first Albanian reported to have arrived in the U.S. was in 1876, but soon relocated to Argentina. Another Albanian by the name of Kole Kristofer, who was later ordained as a priest, was one of the first Albanians to arrive in the U.S. sometime between 1884 and 1886. Kole settled in the Boston area and was from southern Albania. In 1892, Kole went back to Albania and spoke to his countrymen of the wonders of the new world, and then returned to Boston that same year with seventeen other Albanians.⁸⁸

Prior to World War I, many Albanians migrated to the U.S. because of poor economic conditions, political concerns, or to escape military enrollment in the Turkish army. Approximately 20,000 and 30,000 Albanians left the U.S. and returned to Albania between 1919 and 1925 with all their life savings. However, after their first couple of years back in Albania, they found themselves disappointed with the economic and political situation, and a third of these same Albanians once again migrated back to the U.S. intending to settle permanently.⁸⁹

By 1936, it was estimated that there were approximately 14,000 Albanians living in Massachusetts, with about 8,000 of them in the Greater Boston area. By 1999, the estimated number of Albanians in the Greater Boston area grew to over 35,000 including some 1000 Albanians from Kosova. The U.S. granted legal alien status to about 20,000 Kosovar Albanian refugees in 1999. These refugees went to the U.S. to join their families, friends, or charitable sponsors, but some returned once the conflict in Kosova subsided.⁹⁰

The number of Albanians in the U.S. differs depending on the sources of the data. First,

⁸⁸ Jane Jurgens <http://www.everyculture.com/multi/A-Br/Albanian-Americans.html> (accessed June 30, 2009); see also Christo www.Frosina.org; Maria Koinova, "Diasporas and democratization in the post-communist world", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 42 (2009): 48. Julie Vullnetari, 15.

⁸⁹ Jurgens: www.everyculture.com/multi/A-Br/Albanian-Americans.html; see also Vullnetari, 15.

Albanian community organizations suggest that by 1989 there were an estimated 250,000 Albanian people from Albania, Kosova, and Macedonia residing in the U.S.; including second and third generations this estimate had reached half a million by 2000.⁹¹ However, the government of Albania estimated 150,000 Albanians were living in the U.S. by 2005. This number more closely reflects the U.S. immigration authorities' data, which based on the 2000 census, reported a total of 113,661 Americans of Albanian ancestry.⁹²

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the states with the highest Albanian populations are New York which has the largest number of 32,428, with a concentration in the Bronx, followed by Michigan with 15,343 where the Albanians are primarily found in the Detroit area. In Massachusetts there are 10,594, in which they focus in the Greater Boston Area. There are also sizeable communities in New Jersey which numbers 7,336, and finally Connecticut with 7,200. Albanian settlements can be found in Chicago, Los Angeles, Denver, Detroit, New Orleans, Pittsburgh, and Washington D.C.⁹³

Prior to 1920, most of the migrants from Albania went to the United States were Orthodox Tosks from the city of Korçë in southern Albania. They primarily settled around in the Greater Boston Area where unskilled factory labour was available. The majority of the migrants were young males who migrated for economic reasons or were seeking political asylum and their intentions were not to remain permanently in the United States. They lived in cheap community barracks or *konaks* which allowed them to save their earnings and then

⁹⁰ Christo; see also Jurgens.

⁹¹ Vullnetari, 39.

⁹² Aida Orgocka, "Albanian High-Skilled Migrant Women in the US: The Ignored Experience", in *The New Albanian Migration*, edited by Russell King, Nicola Mai, and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2005), 140.

⁹³ Megan Brody, 2003, <http://www2.bc.edu/~brisk/albania.htm>, (accessed on July 15, 2009).

send home all their savings to their families. As women and children began to join the men in the United States, these *konaks* were left behind for more permanent family homes.⁹⁴

There have been several waves of Albanian immigrants. There was an influx of immigrants after Albania came under the Communist control in 1944. In 1967 religion was outlawed in Albania which spurred another wave. After the Kosova riots in 1981, thousands of Kosovar Albanians resettled in the New York area. And a final wave of emigration came once again in 1990 after the fall of communism in Albania. The majority of the Albanian immigrants who went to the U.S. from Albania after 1990, went to escape political instability. This final wave of emigration is estimated to have almost doubled the size of the Albanian diaspora. This wave included economic migrants, refugees from Kosova and the “brain-drain” generation.⁹⁵

Research that fully addresses the experiences and contributions of Albanians in the United States does not exist. However, it is believed that Albanian neighbourhoods have resisted assimilation in the United States. The Albanians have been able to preserve a sense of communal identity, traditions and customs in the many organizations, associations and coffee-houses or *vatra*, they have established wherever Albanians live.⁹⁶ They have organized various clubs, established religious institutions, put on concerts of Albanian dances and folk music, as well as staged theatre shows with Albanian themes, including many comedies, which Albanians are fond of.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Jurgens: see also Brody.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*: see also Koinova, 49.

⁹⁶ Jurgens.

⁹⁷ Peter Prifti, “The Cultural Heritage of Albanian Americans”, *Albanian-American National Organization*, <http://www.aano.org/cultural.php> (accessed on July 16, 2009).

Many of the early Albanian migrants in the USA were illiterate. Jane Jurgens notes that according the Denna Page in *The Albanian-American Odyssey*, it was estimated that in 1906 only 20 of the 5,000 Albanians in the United States could read or write their own language. By 1919 the literacy level increased significantly, 15,000 of 40,000 Albanians could read and write their own language due to the efforts of community leaders to supply books, pamphlets and other educational materials, such as the newspaper *Kombi*, available in the *konaks*. The Albanians were still apprehensive about the way of life in the United States, and therefore were hesitant to send their children to American schools. Over time, they realized that an education laid the foundation for a better life in the U.S. Albanians began living side by side with Americans at work and in school without any conflicts based on their ethnicity or religion.

On the other hand, Albanian communities in the Midwest tend to have assimilated more quickly. In a 1935 newspaper article, it was reported that the Albanians were "not a clannish people . . . [they] associate freely with other nationalities, do business with them, partake of their common culture, and participate in a typically middle class way to the general life of the city".⁹⁸

There are a few main groups that have been influential in the Albanian diaspora. The Albanian Orthodox Church of America was founded in Boston in 1908. Also in Boston, was the Pan-Albanian Federation of America called 'Vatra' (The Hearth) which was founded in 1912. The Albanian-American Civic League (AACL) based in New York was represented by a former Congressman of Albanian ancestry, Joseph DioGuardi. The Albanian-American

⁹⁸ Arch Farmer, "All the World Sends Sons to Become Americans," *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, July 28, 1935.

National Organization (AANO) was founded in New York in 1946. The National Albanian-American Council (NAAC) was formed in 1996 founded in Washington D.C. There were also some other groups that were formed during the communist period to represent some of the post-war exiles. However, the AACL and NAAC have been the most influential since the 1990s.⁹⁹

Some Albanians were really successful and famous in the U.S. For example actors John and James Belushi, Regis Philbin, and Eliza Dushku are well known Albanians. Another prominent Albanian is Ferid Murad, who was the winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for discovering how nitric oxide in the body acts as a signalling molecule in the cardiovascular system, making blood vessels dilate. Another international citizen who also won a Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 was Mother Theresa, who is famed for her humanitarian work and advocacy for the poor and helpless. There are many Albanians around the world that live in their countries of destination but are not documented as Albanians.

Much like the first Albanian migrants to the United States, those that came to Canada came around the same time and in small numbers. The southern regions of Albania experienced more contact with other countries therefore the Albanians that first migrated to Canada were most likely Orthodox from the Korçë area. Migration to Canada continued up until World War II, although the numbers were still small.¹⁰⁰

Statistics available on the Albanian community in Canada are limited. This is due to the fact that prior to 1981 Albanians were assigned to the category 'other' or put under the

⁹⁹ Prifti; see also Vullnetari, 39; Koinova, 50.

¹⁰⁰ Austin, 180.

heading 'Balkans'.¹⁰¹ Citizenship and Immigration Canada's (CIC) Field Operations Support System (FOSS) added 'Albanian' as a code under the category of mother tongue in late March 1992. As mentioned earlier it is difficult to track the migration patterns of Albanians.

According to the 2006 census, there were 22,395 Albanians and 1,530 Kosovars in Canada, of which 51 percent were in the Greater Toronto Area, primarily in Mississauga.¹⁰² Other smaller groups reside in Quebec, Manitoba, British Columbia, and Alberta. This number has grown significantly since the 1986 census which notes there were only 1,435 people in Canada of Albanian ancestry and by 1991 the number almost doubled to 2,565. These are approximate numbers, because second and third generation Canadians of Albanian origin might not list their ethnic background. The Albanians estimate that the size of their community is much larger than that which is reported by the census, but many believe this to be an exaggeration. Historian Robert Austin notes that the vast majority of Albanians in Canada came from areas outside of Albania. He states they are mostly economic migrants from Kosova and Macedonia and came to Canada in the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁰³ All these migrants that entered during this period have not been captured under the category of 'Albanian' through the census or through Citizenship and Immigration Canada's statistics. A review of some of the numbers from CIC sheds some light on this discussion and is an area for further research, as this type of analysis goes beyond the scope of this paper.

Statistics gathered from FOSS by CIC compiled a report of the number of people that identified 'Albanian' as their mother tongue. (See appendix B).¹⁰⁴ It is evident from the

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Statistics Canada, 2006 Census.

¹⁰³ Austin, 181.

¹⁰⁴ Richard Carlton, "Immigration Statistics", Citizenship and Immigration Canada, via email on July 8, 2009.

permanent residence statistics from CIC that over the course of 17 years 20,599 people noted Albanian as their mother tongue upon becoming a permanent resident in Canada. These numbers do not include children born to these immigrants, nor do they include Albanian people that immigrated to Canada prior to 1991. As Robert Austin notes, most of the immigrants in the 1970s and 1980s were those from Macedonia and Kosova, which were not captured as Albanians through CIC or through the census. These people most likely entered Canada on Yugoslavian passports. The Albanian community's estimates on the size of their population in Canada might hold some truth. From the earlier cohort of Albanian people, there exists second and third generations of Albanians which would add to these numbers.

The immigration experiences seem to vary across the different countries of origins of Albanians. The empirical research presented here is based on thirty interviews conducted with Albanian immigrants from Albania, Kosova and Macedonia, which took place from July 3, 2009 through July 31, 2009. The participants included ten immigrants from each country of origin, with an equal representation of men and women from each country varying in ages from twenty-six to seventy-four. Complete methodology for this research can be found in the appendices.

The Albanian participants from Macedonia ranged in age from twenty-six to sixty-six. The length of time in Canada as permanent residents ranged from seven to thirty-nine years, with four out of ten having been in Canada for more than twenty years, three of them have been here for ten to nineteen years, and the other three have been in Canada for less than ten years. Of these ten participants eight entered Canada through the family reunification stream, one was a refugee, and the other one entered through the points system. Ninety

percent of these participants noted the primary reason for wanting to leave their country of origin was due to discrimination.

The ethnic Albanians of Macedonia state they were discriminated against due to their ethnicity and religion (Albanian and mostly Muslim) by the Slavic Macedonians in every area of their life from employment, accommodations and social services. One participant (male, age 61, Macedonia) who was a professor of mechanical engineering stated that he was not able to purchase a home for his family because the seller was pressured not to sell to Albanian people by doubling the price for Albanian buyers. When asked why he wanted to leave his country of origin he said

“It’s not the people themselves, it was the politics. The board of education would give free apartments to staff, I was first on the list for that year and they made false documents and gave a second one to the director instead of giving one to us. We found out we are not getting an apartment and that was the biggest reason”.¹⁰⁵

This participant had a good job while he was in Macedonia, while many of the other participants’ reason for wanting to leave Macedonia were due to discrimination in employment opportunities. They state they weren’t given jobs, or turned down as soon as the employer would see their ‘Albanian’ names on their documents. Without jobs, they were unable to provide for their families. All ten of the participants had at least one family member in Canada, which was the main pull towards Canada in hopes of a better life and more opportunities. Four of the participants stated they initially came to Canada on a temporary basis, and had planned to return once they had made enough money to build a life back in Macedonia, however after arriving in Canada these plans changed to more permanent roots. All ten of the participants stated they thought life in Canada would be “so easy” and “just

¹⁰⁵ Interview, Male 61, Macedonia, July 13 2009.

perfect”, but soon realized that life was very “fast paced” “difficult” and “definitely not perfect”. One participant (male, 66, Macedonia) stated that he wanted to leave and go back to Macedonia initially, but was embarrassed to return for he would be seen as a failure. He is now grateful he stayed and built his life here due to all the opportunities Canada gave him. He said “even though I didn’t speak the language, they gave me a job here and the chance to learn. They don’t even give you a chance in Macedonia and I am fluent in the language there”.¹⁰⁶ Canada paid this gentleman to go to school to learn English as a second language in 1970.

Five of the participants from Macedonia, four of which were females, noted that they had watched television programs about Canada prior to coming which influenced their perception about Canada. They saw images of beautiful nature, landscapes and people which caused them to idealize Canada and were then a little bit disappointed upon arrival on how different life really was. However, all ten stated they quickly adapted to the fast paced lifestyle in Canada and all embraced the many opportunities that were available to them. They were surprised and impressed with the fact that Canada was so welcoming, helpful and fair to all immigrants and gave them opportunities to build their lives here by gaining employment, purchasing homes, and re-educating themselves. Six of the participants from Macedonia spoke about Canada’s multiculturalism policy and how this was perceived in a positive light which assisted them to integrate into Canadian society.

The Albanian participants from Kosova were between the ages of twenty-six to seventy-four at the time of the interview. The length of time Kosovars have been in Canada is

¹⁰⁶ Interview, Male, 66 Macedonia, July 3, 2009.

much shorter, on average, when compared to the Albanians from Macedonia. One participant came to Canada thirty years ago in search of a better life. He feels he was lucky not to experience all the disasters of the 1980s and 1990s. On his feelings about Canada upon arrival, he stated: "It was such a big change from my communist country of Yugoslavia, when I came here I saw such freedom, people of all cultures, all colours and religions living in such harmony, was such a surprise for me".¹⁰⁷

Another two of the participants were recently sponsored to Canada by their spouses, and have been in Canada for three and five years. The other seven out of the ten participants from Kosova have been in Canada for ten years. These seven individuals came to Canada as refugees to seek a safe haven from the genocidal atrocities that forced them out of their country. The seven refugees from Kosova gave very similar accounts of their departures from their homes. They state they were physically "kicked out by the Serbs. They only gave us one hour to clear the village and to go to Albania on foot".¹⁰⁸ Five of these seven refugees state they had never planned to leave Kosova. They had plans to live the rest of their lives there until the war began. One participant summed up all the responses of the other participants:

"We were physically forced by the Serbian army and police, they came with their tanks and heavy artillery and they started shooting all over the place screaming that we have to leave right away. We went to Kukës Albania; it was a three days wait to cross the border to go over. The Serbian police took all of our identity documents and money and gold whatever they could see and take from letting us across. It was very dangerous, we were lucky to give just that up. People were getting killed just for some misbehaviour. They were taking young girls, so the girls were covering themselves up like old women so that they wouldn't get pulled aside and sexually assaulted. Young men would dress like women as well to hide themselves so they wouldn't get killed".¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Male, 55, Kosova on July 31, 2009.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Male, 74, Kosova, on July 22, 2009.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Male, 35, Kosova, on July 22, 2009.

Why did these Kosovar refugees choose Canada as their place of resettlement? The responses received, once again were all quite similar. After going to northern Albania, the Red Cross advised them of some of their options. They were told that Canada was an option among some other countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and many EU countries. All of the refugees had some family in Canada which was the major pull towards Canada, coupled with the knowledge they had on Canada. They heard Canada was an excellent country with lots of immigrants from all over the world, so they would fit in here and not be targeted like in the former Yugoslavia. They learned about Canada's geography through school, watched television programs, and had seen many pictures from their relatives that were in Canada. They wanted the life they saw in those images.

Upon arrival in Canada most of the Kosovar refugees state they were extremely excited and happy to be here. They felt they were welcome, as many charities came to take them out to picnics, Niagara Falls, and on other day trips. They were given food, clothing, phone cards, and an interpreter, and security guards were stationed on site for them. They finally felt "secure" and "free". Two of the older refugees were not as happy, as they felt their entire lives they built had been robbed from them and they were forced to leave a country they didn't want to leave. They are now happy they are in Canada because of the opportunities awarded to their children. Their children have completed their education and have obtained employment. Five of the seven refugees stated they wanted to return to Kosova as soon as things settled down there. All seven of the refugees have now made Canada their permanent homes and plan to only visit Kosova.

Two of the participants, male, 30, Kosova in Canada for three years, and female, 26,

Kosova in Canada for five years, were not sure if they wanted to remain in Canada for the rest of their lives and stated that they think of returning often. Both of these participants were sponsored to Canada by spouses, rather than the majority of the Kosovar participants who entered as refugees. These different immigration experiences may be a contributing factor to their current feelings, and also the fact that they are younger than many of the other participants. These two participants continued to live in Kosova after the war was over and have a different experience of the Kosova they left behind in comparison to the Kosova the refugees left behind.

The other ten participants from Albania, have yet another set of immigration and settlement experiences. These participants ranged in age from 28 to 46, with the majority in their thirties. Nine of the participants have been in Canada for a period of time that ranges from four to nine years. One participant has been in Canada for fourteen years. Eight out of the ten participants state they wanted to leave Albania for a better life and more employment opportunities. Their economic situations in Albania were not favourable, hence they wanted to seek out a destination country that would give them the opportunity to realize their full potential. Eight of the participants came to Canada through the independent point system, while the other two came as political refugee claimants.

A study of Albanian migrants in Italy reports that many participants believed that it is easier to emigrate to the United States or Canada from Italy, rather than directly from Albania. The findings note that the most powerful motivation for migration was to improve quality of life for themselves and their families.¹¹⁰ Two of the participants in my study had

¹¹⁰ Kosic and Triandafyllidou, 1003.

actually migrated to Italy and two had previously migrated to Greece before coming to Canada. These participants were well educated and had planned to work in Italy and Greece for a short period of time, until they earned some money while they were waiting for applications to be processed to go to Canada. They stated they chose to come to Canada due to the admissions policies that favour skilled and well-educated migrants. The seven participants that came through the points system admitted knowing that they would not get jobs in Canada immediately, but that they had to first have their certificates equivocated and in many cases would have to be re-educated in the Canadian academic system. The majority of these participants had friends or acquaintances in Canada that they spoke to before coming and were somewhat prepared not to expect what they had seen on television about Canada.

One female participant, aged thirty-two said:

“At the beginning we knew it would be very hard but we took that chance. I am satisfied with my life in Canada. We have more challenges to overcome. I can’t say that I am more happy than I was in my country; I invested a lot of time in education and work there. I still need more time to develop here to my full potential”.¹¹¹

Knowing the difficulties before them, many still make this same choice to emigrate from Albania daily. As one participant noted “we had nothing in Albania; just good education, but no opportunity”.¹¹²

Twenty-eight out of the thirty participants stated that they plan to live in Canada for the rest of their lives, and would like to go back to their country of origin for visits only. Two of the participants that were elderly Kosovar refugees stated they still want to return, but are remaining in Canada because their children have built their lives in Canada now and they

¹¹¹ Interview with Female, 32, Albania on July 17, 2009.

¹¹² Interview with Female, 34, Albania on July 28, 2009.

want to be with their children and grandchildren.

When the question of ethnicity and identity was asked of the participants, all thirty participants stated that they consider themselves to be Albanian. Six of the participants from Macedonia said they usually state they are Albanian first, but always make a point to tell people that they are from Macedonia. Two of the ten participants from Macedonia also noted their religion as a secondary factor of their identity. Nine of the Albanians from Kosovo made this same distinction in referring to themselves as Kosovar Albanians; once again two participants mentioned their religion. Those from Albania simply stated they were Albanian, with no mention of religion, region or any other distinction. Upon further discussion on this topic, it was made clear by twenty-five of the thirty participants, that differences in religion, regions or countries did not change who they are, and that they believe to be Albanians no matter what border surrounds them. One participant from Macedonia stated:

“Albanians are always Albanian first. Nothing can change that, no dictator or super power’s false borders can erase who we are. Borders have been changed for several centuries, but it is the same people on the same land for thousands of years. Whether they call us Illyrian or Albanian - we are all Shqiptars”.¹¹³

The distinctions made by those from Kosova and Macedonia more often exist in the English language, after translation of the word ‘Shqiptar’ has come to mean Albanian. Regardless of the border that surrounds them Albanians identify themselves as ‘Shqiptars’. “The people live together in perfect harmony. They are Albanian before everything. Albanians make no distinction between Christians and Muslims”.¹¹⁴

Overall, it appears as though the Albanian people in Canada have had positive

¹¹³ Interview with Male, 35, Macedonia on July 6, 2009.

¹¹⁴ Konitza, 3.

immigration and settlement experiences in Canada, whether they came in an earlier or more recent cohort, and regardless of their country of origin. The over arching sentiment gathered from all thirty interviews is that Canada is a land of opportunity that accepts people of every race, nationality and religion; and that with dedicated hard work one can realize their dreams. Throughout the Albanians' turbulent history, it appears as though freedom and opportunity is their main quest. Once achieved, albeit primarily in North America, they seem satisfied.

The principal investigator acknowledges possible effects that being part of the Albanian community and a Citizenship and Immigration Officer can have on participants' responses. This social positioning may have contributed to the more positive experiences shared in the participants' responses. It is possible the participants did not want to completely disclose their true feelings which could denote failure in adaptation, and this limitation is acknowledged. In spite of these limitations, the majority of the responses received were generally in line with one another, as well as with that of existing literature. These immigration and settlement experiences can be further addressed by reviewing the plurality of the countries migrants have chosen to settle in.

Many societies are culturally plural as a result of immigration. That is, people of many different cultural backgrounds live together in a diverse society. Culture is a powerful molder of behaviour. Therefore, it is necessary to review the effects cultural changes have had on the Albanian people as they migrated to Europe and North America. As migrants change their cultural settings, from the one they developed in to a new one, complex patterns of change and continuity in how these individuals live their lives in the new society occur.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ John W. Berry, "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation", *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 46, 1 (1997): 6-8.

The concept of acculturation has been widely used by a variety of disciplines, but most notably in cross-cultural psychology, in discussions revolving around migrants' settlement into their new cultural settings. The classical definition of acculturation was first identified by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits in 1936. They defined it as "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups".¹¹⁶ In principle, change can occur in either or both groups, however, in practice, more change usually occurs in the less dominant group than in the dominant group. Acculturation is also a phenomenon at the individual level, which requires individuals from the society at large and those from the acculturating groups to coordinate new relationship in their daily lives.¹¹⁷

In plural societies, individual members and the cultural groups they belong to, in both the dominant and non-dominant groups, must negotiate on how the acculturation will take place. There are four strategy options which John W. Berry outlines which are usually worked out through daily encounters with one another. For example, many of the Albanians in Greece and Italy had negative responses from the dominant cultural group due to the negative media representations about this non-dominant cultural group, which has caused the Albanians to try to become more like the dominant group. They want to fit in and make the lives of their children easier by changing their names and religion therefore they are the ones experiencing most of the changes. The strategy of 'assimilation' occurs when individuals do not maintain their cultural identity and adopt some or all aspects of the dominant culture. On the other

¹¹⁶ Redfield R., Linton R., and Herskovits M.J., "Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation", *American Anthropologist* 38, No. 1, (1936), 139.

¹¹⁷ Georgas et al. "Acculturation of Greek Family Values", *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 27, no. 3 (1996), 330; Berry, 7.

hand, when individuals value the maintenance of their original culture, and they avoid contact with other cultures, then this is defined as the 'separation' strategy. This was seen to occur with some of the Albanian communities in the United States at the beginning of the century; as well as with the Arbëresh, the older Albanian diapsora group, in Italy. The 'integration' strategy is employed when there is a degree of the original culture maintained, while at the same time there is active participation as an integral part of the dominant culture's society. Many of the Albanians in Canada stated they felt they had integrated and adjusted well to life in Canada. They have maintained their language and culture, but are fully functioning parts of their new social settings in Canada. The participants in this study believe that Canada's multiculturalism policy has assisted them in feeling welcome and treated fairly once in Canada. The final strategy option outlined by Berry is that of 'marginalization', in which there is little interest or possibility in cultural maintenance, primarily due to enforced cultural loss, and little interest in having contact with other cultures, primarily for reasons of exclusion or discrimination.¹¹⁸ Marginalization of Albanians has occurred on a large scale in Greece, although many Albanians are trying to assimilate into Greek culture.

These strategies have been laid out here assuming individuals can choose how they want to acculturate. However, the dominant group can enforce certain forms of acculturation. For example, some people may choose to 'separate' themselves from others, but when it is thrust upon them by the dominant group then the situation turns to one of 'segregation'. Another example is the 'integration' strategy which can only be successfully employed where the dominant society is open and inclusive towards cultural diversity, such as Canada and its

¹¹⁸ Berry, 9.

multiculturalism policy. This strategy option requires that non-dominant groups adopt the basic values of the larger society, while the dominant group needs to be able to adapt national institutions, such as education, health and labour, to be able to meet the needs of all groups living in a plural society. Integration can only be pursued in societies that are explicitly multicultural.¹¹⁹

In the society of settlement, whether it is Italy, Greece, the United States or Canada, there are a number of factors that carry weight. The general attitude towards immigration and pluralism is very important. Some countries have been built through immigration over centuries, and have deliberate immigration policies to continue this growth which corresponds with the 'integration' strategy.¹²⁰ The attitudes and history of the settlement society are important issues. Some societies wish to eliminate diversity through policies and programs of assimilation, and others attempt to segregate or marginalize diverse populations. Societies with positive multicultural ideologies, such as Canada, provide a more positive settlement experience for their immigrants. There are two reasons for this: "they are less likely to enforce cultural change (assimilation) or exclusion (segregation and marginalization) on immigrants; and they are more likely to provide social support both from the institutions of the larger society (e.g. culturally sensitive health care, and multicultural curricula in schools), and from the continuing and evolving ethnocultural communities that usually make up pluralistic societies".¹²¹

Literature on Albanian migration has been growing in recent years, with the focus

¹¹⁹ Berry, 10-11.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 16.

¹²¹ Georgas et al, 17.

being on the main destination countries in Europe, which are predominantly Greece and Italy. Most of the research has shown that the main purpose for the emigration is for economic reasons, followed by personal choice. Poverty, unemployment, insufficient income and lack of opportunity are the most commonly stated reasons.¹²² Because of the history of the Balkans immigration experiences differ depending on the country of origin, and even more so on the country of destination. This paper reviewed the migration of Albanian people, the reasons for migration and countries they chose to settle in were examined with a comparison of the primary destination countries in Europe, Greece, and Italy, to the somewhat newer destination countries in North America, the United States and Canada. Settlement and integration experiences appear to be negative for the most part in Europe, in the early years of immigration, but tend to increasingly become more successful as Albanians acculturate into their settlement societies.

The political context in the country of destination should be regarded as the most influential factor regarding the social incorporation of immigrants. In this regard, it is not only immigration policy which obviously determines the legal framework regarding requirements for admission, residence and employment, and may incorporate definitions of measures for the integration of immigrants in the institutions of the receiving society. This latter issue reveals another aspect of policy which is very important, which is welfare. The extension of welfare policies to include immigrants may very well be one of the most controversial problems that challenge destination countries.

Albanian diasporas in Europe have been discounted by the paradox that they are one of the best integrated migrant group at an individual level, yet they are one of the most

¹²² Barjaba (2004), 232; see also Germenji and Gedeshi, 6; King (2005), 146; Vullnetari, 46.

stigmatized and exploited groups at a collective level. The primary destination countries Greece and Italy's inclusion of Albanian migrants has been rather differential, in that Albanians are incorporated into the exploitative service sector, but excluded from other areas of society such as the welfare system, political participation and citizenship.¹²³

Greece and Italy have yet to incorporate policies of social inclusion for minority groups. Albanians have found themselves in a position of having to assimilate in order to successfully gain employment and accommodations. Also, they have succumbed to the mainstream language, religion and culture in many cases. This was not the case of the earlier diaspora groups of the Arbëresh and Arvanite, who were not vilified and stigmatized by the media upon their arrival centuries ago, as is the case of the more recent Albanian migrants.

The Albanian diasporas in the United States and Canada appear to have experienced a more positive settlement into their plural societies. Arriving in countries that are accustomed to and accepting of immigration usually means there are avenues of assistance in place for the expected immigrants, which assists the newcomer in adjusting and acculturating into their new society. The Albanians in North America have not had to deal with negative media representations, as those in Greece and Italy are faced with which has shaped public opinion on Albanians.

Albanians have entered North America over the last century in small but steady numbers until the late 1990s. Technology has eased travel over time, which essentially has shrunk the globe to make once distant lands more accessible. Due to the division of Albanian lands in the early twentieth century, Albanians were separated by borders of these newly

¹²³ Mai and Schwandner-Sievers (2003), 943; Mai, (2006), 545.

formed countries and found their ability to travel differed, which in turn created diasporas in some countries from a particular originating country.

The Albanian question – a question that ceases to be answered, yet still forms a part of the Great Powers' agenda - will continue to be an important pawn due to its geographic location and its precedent setting possibilities. Albanians have fostered an international diaspora with transnational ties to their countries of origin. Studies on Albanians are still in their infancy and this is an area of concern, an understanding of the Albanians' history and migration patterns can lend some insight in curbing possible future disasters in the Balkans.

APPENDICES

A. Methodology

To attempt a thorough examination of the immigration and settlement experiences of Albanian people in Europe and North America, this research paper was designed to incorporate primary and secondary sources of information. It was necessary to explore secondary sources of information such as published peer-reviewed scholarly journals and books which outlines the migration history of Albanian people and their experiences in their countries of destination thus far. The majority of the works published to date have been on the primary countries of destination in Europe, which are Greece and Italy. There has also been historical and chronological stories of migration published in the USA, primarily in the Boston, Massachusetts area. The existing literature on this matter indicates that there is a gap in previous research with respect to the immigration and settlement experiences of Albanian people in Canada.

To ascertain the necessary information to address this gap in literature, primary research was conducted in the form of individual interviews. A random sampling method was utilized to select participants for this study. The goal was to interview ten individuals from each of the following countries: Albania, Kosova, and Macedonia. The participants were people who have legally immigrated from Albania, Kosova, or Macedonia and were willing to retell their immigration stories and settlement experiences in Canada. The participants were all adults at the time of the interviews and reside in the GTA.

Recruitment of participants was achieved primarily through snowball sampling. Once prospective participants voluntarily contacted the principal investigator, the purpose of the study was disclosed and the reason they were asked to participate was explained, and even

translated for some participants into Albanian by the principal investigator. This process of disclosing the purpose of the study included a disclosing of the principal investigator's positionality. The principal investigator is a Canadian citizen by birth, and a part of the Albanian community via Albanian parents who immigrated to Canada. The principal investigator is also a Citizenship and Immigration Officer with the department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). After fully understanding the goal of the study and the position of principal investigator a consent agreement was signed by each participant upon meeting at a mutually agreed upon place and time to conduct the interviews.

A total of thirty interviews were conducted which included an equal representation of males and females of various ages from Albania, Kosova and Macedonia. Specifically, there were five males and five females from each of the three countries. The participants were all people who have legally immigrated to Canada, so that there would be no conflicts between the principal investigator's professional position as a CIC officer and the interviewing of the participants. The interviews were conducted between July 3 2009 and July 31 2009. Some of the questions that guided the research included: why, how and when Albanians came to Canada; what their immigration experience was like; what the settlement experience has been like thus far; what their initial intentions were with regards to temporary versus permanent immigration, and if that has changed since their arrival; and how these Albanians identify themselves now in Canada. Participants were selected to participate through the use of the snowballing method. This is a non-representative sample, therefore given its size and scope, any quantitative generalization is not possible. However, ethnographic analysis, such as the interviews conducted in this study, can bring to light some interesting qualitative elements which apply to the whole Albanian community, when compared to the existing literature.

The interview method was preferred, so that the participants would be able to respond to open-ended questions with some probes and prompts. None of the interviews were recorded, as notes were typed directly onto a laptop and saved under a password secured file. The questions were not of a sensitive nature however the participants were fully aware that they may choose not to answer any questions if they did not feel comfortable talking about a particular issue. This situation did not arise during the study.

The empirical findings of the interview sample can be discussed in comparison with other relevant studies about Albanian immigrants' experiences in other receiving countries. These are discussed in relation to Italy, Greece and the USA. There are a variety of benefits that arise from this study, as the purpose of the study is to fill a gap in the research regarding Albanian people's experiences in Canada. This primary research can act as a stepping stone to further studies on the Albanian diaspora in Canada. The Balkan region has been a hot topic for the last two decades due to the wars that have occurred and the remapping of borders. Research on the people of the Balkans is important for an understanding of past and present conflicts of the key actors, and the powers that ultimately control these actors.

B. Citizenship & Immigration Canada Statistics

Year	Mother Tongue Albanian
1991	1
1992	24
1993	206
1994	109
1995	104
1996	125
1997	358
1998	747
1999	1,621
2000	5,380
2001	3,271
2002	1,408
2003	1,117
2004	1,690
2005	1,485
2006	1,126
2007	1,024
2008	803
Total =	20,599

Richard Carlton, Citizenship and Immigration Canada Statistics, Ottawa. Received through email on July 8, 2009.

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