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Mediated tensions: Italian newspapers and the legal
recognition of *de facto unions*

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Abstract

The recognition of rights to couples outside the institution of marriage has been, and still is, a contentious issue in Italian Politics. Normative notions of family and kinship perpetuate the exclusion of those who do not conform to the heterosexual norm. At the same time the increased visibility of kinship arrangements that evade the heterosexual script and their claims for legal recognition, expose the fragility and the constructedness of heteronorms. During the Prodi II Government (2006-2008) the possibility of a law recognising legal status to *de facto unions* stirred a major controversy in which the conservative political forces and the Catholic hierarchies opposed any form of recognition, with particular acrimony shown toward same sex couples. *Corriere della Sera* and *la Repubblica*, the two newspapers with the highest circulation in Italy, covered at length the disputes that ensued from the proposal. This thesis focuses on the analysis of the two newspapers and uncovers the ways in which they produced narratives that both sustained the exclusion of those who do not conform and potentially fostered a space for its disruption. In so doing the thesis aims to add a further dimension to the body of work investigating the politics of sexuality in contemporary Italy. A systematic reading of the press coverage reveals how the newsworthiness of the conflicts enhanced the visibility of those who opposed the law in turn sustaining the construction of it as a contentious issue. The close analysis of a selection of texts reveals the media ambivalence in displacing conservative notions of family and kinship and their contribution in fostering narratives that sustain exclusion.

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Introduction

In November 2012, the journal *Modern Italy* published a special issue, 'The Politics of Sexuality in Contemporary Italy' (Crowhurst and Bertone, 2012). The editors, Isabel Crowhurst and Chiara Bertone, announced that the special issue aimed to engage 'in a rigorous debate and analysis of the contested and shifting politics of sexuality in contemporary Italian political, cultural and social life' (2012: 414). A series of events and debates in the 2000s inspired their endeavour. The authors divided their attention into three broad areas: the first included 'the attempts made to change policies and laws addressing and regulating sexual and intimate life and practices'; the second involved 'episodes of extreme violence against racialized and gendered sexually minoritised groups'; the third consisted of the 're-evaluation of the meaning and importance of sexuality in shaping the dynamics between politics and power in the country' which followed the many sexual scandals involving Silvio Berlusconi (Crowhurst and Bertone, 2012: 413).

As this special issue shows, contemporary Italy is a rich site to analyse the multifaceted ways in which normativity and resistance are produced, shedding light on the relevance of both political and religious actors in maintaining the conservative notions at the core of Italian sexual politics (see among others Moscati, 2010; Donà, 2009; Bernini, 2008; Garelli, 2007a, 2007b) and counter-hegemonic movements in disrupting the status quo (see Benini, 2012; Galetto et al., 2009; Ross, 2008, 2009). In this context it has been suggested that a mutually constitutive relationship is produced (Plummer, 2003). Danna defines this as the 'Italian paradox', where the de-traditionalisation of Italian society is met by conservative reactions that:

... try to drag [society] backwards, speaking of things that are very much present in society, like homosexual unions, children born or growing up with homosexual parents, new technologies to help procreation, as something they would be able to stop by decree (Danna, 2005: 2).

Similar to many other national contexts (see Santos, 2013; Calvo and Pichardo, 2011; Fassin, 2001) contemporary Italy is characterised by multilayered tensions emerging from, in Ken Plummer's terms, the 'moral conflicts of our time' (2003: 34). These conflicts revolve around the regulation of sexualities, intimacies and kinship practices. They can be witnessed particularly in moments of intense debate, where attempts to change policies and laws that regulate kinship, sexualities and intimacies are indicative

of societal negotiations of norms and cultural values (see Halsaa, Roseneil and Sümer, 2012; Roseneil, 2000, 2010; Roseneil et al., 2008; Plummer, 2003; Fassin, 2001). Analysis of instances of intense clashes have revealed how seemingly polarised positions over policy changes can contribute to the obscuring of the complexities at the core of contentious negotiations, limiting the disruptive potential intrinsic in moments of transformation (Santos, 2013; Crowhurst and Bertone, 2012; Butler, 2008; Adam, 2003). In this vein, recent contributions from interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives push the paradoxes and tensions that characterise contemporary Italy to the forefront of the analysis in order to unveil both the regulative forces that perpetuate the exclusion from citizenship rights of those who do not conform (see, for example, Bertone, 2013; Billotta, 2013; Bonini Baraldi, 2008; Poidimani, 2007a) as well as the means through which conservative notions and heteronorms can be and have been challenged (see for example Lalli, 2011; Pedote and Poidimani, 2007).

This thesis makes an intervention in these lively interdisciplinary and international conversations. It advocates for the analysis of the role of news media in contributing to the representing, foregrounding and/or downplaying of the complexities that emerge from moments of intense negotiation (Jowett and Peel, 2010; Crabb and Augoustinos, 2008; Trappolin, 2007; Riggs, 2005). I focus on a particular moment in Italy's recent past, when attempts were made to provide legal recognition to relationships outside marriage (at the moment of writing, the institution of marriage is accessible only to heterosexual couples). These relationships are commonly defined by the media and the political actors involved in the debate as *coppie/unioni di fatto (de facto unions/couples)* (Bernini, 2010). The very notion of *de facto unions*, commentators argue, can be interpreted as facilitating the silencing of the experiences of same-sex couples, ultimately preserving the construction of the family as inherently heterosexual (Billotta, 2013; Bonini Baraldi, 2008).

Between 2006 and 2008, during the Prodi II Government, two different bills reached the parliamentary vote in less than six months. In February 2007, the then Minister of the Family, Rosy Bindi, and the Minister for Equal Opportunities, Barbara Pollastrini, presented a bill titled DICO (*Diritti e doveri delle persone stabilmente conviventi* — rights and responsibilities of stable cohabiting persons). The DICO bill was supposed to 'regulate' the relationship between two cohabiting adults, defining reciprocal duties of care and economic and moral support. The DICO bill stated explicitly that beneficiaries of the law could be 'two persons of age and not

incapacitated, also of the same sex, united by reciprocal affective ties, who cohabit stably and exchange assistance and moral and material solidarity' (translation by Bonini Baraldi, 2008: 185-186).

The bill was fiercely opposed by representatives of the Italian Catholic Church (Garbagnoli, 2013; Moscati, 2010; Donà, 2009; Bernini, 2008) as well as by conservative politicians from across the political spectrum who were chasing the support of Vatican officials (Ross, 2009). The strongest opposition focused on the inclusion of same-sex couples among those who could benefit from the law. The legal recognition of same-sex couples was framed by those who opposed it as a threat to the 'natural' family (see Moscati, 2010; Donà, 2009; Bernini, 2008). At the same time, LGBT rights advocates criticised the law for being grossly inadequate in its recognition of rights (Lalli, 2008; Billotta, 2008), and that by placing emphasis on mutual solidarity it aimed at distancing same-sex couples from the realm of conjugality and hence the family (Bonini Baraldi, 2008). The unsuccessful DICO Bill was followed a few months later, in July 2007, by another unsuccessful bill called CUS (*Contratti di Unione Solidale* — Contracts for solidarity-based unions). Despite the unsuccessful outcome, these two bills became crucial signposts in the battle for the recognition of rights, as signalled by the work of many scholars (see for example Donà, 2009; Billotta, 2008; Bernini, 2008) and activists (see Hofer and Ragazzi, 2007).

The tensions that surrounded the proposal, drafting and failure of both bills can be interpreted as a 'culture war' (Plummer, 2003; Smith and Windes, 2000; Hunter, 1991). This culture war exposed the tension in contemporary Italy around notions of family, sexuality and kinship (Bonini Baraldi, 2008). Similar tensions are still present today, not only in relation to the legal recognition of same-sex couples but also with issues including legal abortion, reproductive technologies, women's self-determination, societal homophobia and transphobia (see Garbagnoli, 2014; Hanafin, 2007, 2013; Dolcini, 2012; Ross, 2008). These tensions speak to the fundamental pillars that organise sexual (Sabsay, 2012; Richardson, 2004; Lister, 2003; Bell and Binnie, 2000; Weeks, 1998) and intimate citizenship rights (Roseneil, 2010, 2013; Roseneil et al., 2012; Roseneil et al., 2008; Plummer, 1995, 2001, 2003.).

Through the paradigm of 'culture war', the news media provide one of the many arenas in which culture wars unfold (Hunter, 1991). However, in this thesis, I extend this assumption by drawing on insights generated by critical approaches to the news media and its role in relation to power and hegemony (Macdonald, 2003; Vavrus, 2002;

Meyers, 1994; Hall et al., 1978) and on the body of work that emphasises the partisanship of Italian news media (Mancini, 2013; Cepernich, 2009; Hanretty, 2010; Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Mazzoleni and Schultz, 1999). Hence, I view the news media as actors involved in the same culture war on which they report (Trappolin, 2007, 2009). I suggest that the news media can be investigated as one of the sites in which circulating notions and norms are reproduced and/or challenged.

To advance this argument, I question in particular the role played by the two best-selling newspapers, *Corriere della Sera* and *la Repubblica*, during the second Prodi government between 2006 and 2008 in relation to attempts to get the DICO and the CUS bills passed. While I am aware of the limitation of this focus, in particular vis-à-vis the relative loss of circulation of the press in Italy in compared to television (as discussed in chapter three as well as in the conclusion of this thesis), I contend that the analysis of this particular media coverage can shed further light on the ways in which binaries of inclusion/exclusion at the core of Italian sexual politics are maintained and/or disrupted.

Thesis structure

The thesis is divided into eight chapters:

Chapter one provides a narrative of the context in which the tensions unfolded around the possibility of the legal recognition of *de facto unions* and same-sex couples. This serves to historically, socially, politically and culturally contextualise the specific timeframe I consider in my thesis. The chapter traces the way in which non-conforming identities have been routinely silenced and how the heterosexual ‘natural’ family has been routinely upheld as a regulatory sign. I discuss the historical role of the state and the Italian Catholic Church in regulating sexualities, but I also highlight the role played by the Italian feminist and LGBT movements in attempting to disrupt the patriarchal order. Finally I reflect on the crucial role of the European Union in fostering a politics of inclusion and in providing a platform for the implementation of local and national emancipatory policies.

Chapter two elaborates on the extent to which a consideration of the existing academic literature both corroborates and sustains the focus of my analysis. I draw attention to the ways in which structural constraints in contemporary Italy appear to reinforce ‘the bundle of values’ that sustain the exclusion of those who do not conform. In this respect, notions of sexual and intimate citizenship have been influential in problematizing further the notions of inclusion/exclusion (Bonini Baraldi, 2008). By

incorporating insights drawn from media and cultural studies, I provide the rationale for the analysis of two newspapers, *la Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera*, in order to further understand how the status quo can be disrupted or sustained.

Chapter three investigates the literature that influenced my approach to the news texts. I discuss how different discourse analytical traditions inspired my approach and informed the questions I posed to the text. I then explain the ways in which I collected the relevant news items and organised my analysis by first approaching the overall media coverage (discussed in chapter four), before focusing on a selection of articles illustrative of three key moments in the period considered (discussed in chapters five, six and seven). While tracing the different steps followed during my work I also discuss how the analysis of the chosen texts raised the question of translation from Italian into English, and I reflect on the strengths and the limitations of my focus.

Chapter four presents a broad analysis of the media coverage by questioning the news texts collected in order to reveal the ways in which the different actors involved in the debate (politicians, representatives of the Italian Catholic Church and the Vatican and representatives of Italian LGBT movements) were represented and the different space they were granted. In doing so I investigate the ways in which newsworthiness operates to privilege certain voices over others and how this sustains or disrupts exclusionary discourses. The analysis also serves to emphasise the link between the broader context and the key critical moments analysed in chapters five, six and seven.

Chapter five focuses on the first of the key moments analysed: media coverage of the broadcasting of the film *Il Padre delle Spose* (*Father of the Brides*). In this chapter I integrate scrutiny of the newspapers' coverage with an analysis of the representation at the core of the film. The film tells the story of a father finding out that his daughter is married to a flamenco teacher and mother in Barcelona and coming to terms with his daughter's homosexuality. The film was broadcast for the first time in November 2006, at the height of the political debate. I explore the debate the film elicited and how the film's narrative both opened a space that granted visibility to same-sex unions, and reinforced and reproduced heteronormative representations of same-sex couples and lesbian and gay parenting.

Chapter six builds on the insights developed in chapter five, moving on to examine how the news media negotiated the representation of lesbian and gay victims of anti-homosexual violence. I argue that the media relayed an ambivalent

representation of the events that, while unveiling the vociferous anti-homosexual sentiments that permeated the debate, still prevented an engagement with questions of structural heterosexism that characterised and still characterises contemporary Italy.

Chapter seven analyses news coverage of three popular demonstrations to illustrate how the media produced and reinforced the opposition between two groups: secular and Catholic. The presentation of the demonstrations, respectively for and against the legal recognition of *de facto unions* and same-sex couples that took place in 2007, when taken together with the representation of violence, highlights how media discourses are implicated in the perpetuation of the understanding of the debate as revolving around unquestioned binaries such as religious/secular and natural families/constructed unions.

Chapter eight brings together the key critical moments already discussed in order to reflect on how my analysis can enhance understanding of the ways in which normative notions around family and kinship are perpetuated. By examining the years since 2008 I aim also to reflect on the limits of my thesis while also highlighting how it aims to contribute to the ongoing international conversations about the Italian politics of sexuality.

Chapter One. Politics, Family, and the Church in Italy

Confronted with questions about the transformation of the family, Stefania Bernini argues that ‘the nature of some of the shadows hanging over contemporary Italian society’ can be explained through an analysis of the relationship between politics, the family and the Catholic Church (2010: 74). Bernini’s approach resonates with a growing body of literature investigating Italian politics of sexualities (see among others Garbagnoli, 2013, 2014; Bertone, 2013; Hanafin, 2013, 2007; Crowhurst and Bertone, 2012).

In this chapter, I use Bernini’s triad as a useful compass to navigate the flourishing body of literature that aims to unravel the roots of the conservatism that characterises contemporary Italy. I start by exploring the post-unification period and the Fascist dictatorship in order to unveil the role of nationalist ideologies as well as the roots of the power of the Italian Catholic Church in regulating sexuality. I then investigate how the dominance of the Christian Democrat party (DC) shaped family and welfare politics after the Second World War. I discuss how in the late 1960s and 1970s the feminist and LGBT social movements troubled this very patriarchal society before moving on to consider how the political changes that characterised the Italian party system in the 1990s repositioned the family at the core of the political debate (Bernini, 2008, 2010). Finally I emphasise the role of the European Union as the institution whose inclusive programmes influenced Italian policymaking at both national and local level (Roseneil et al., 2013a; Lombardo and Del Giorgio, 2013; Halsaa, Roseneil and Sümer, 2011; Caielli and Santostefano, 2010; Donà, 2009; Waaldijk and Bonini Baraldi, 2006).

The purpose of this chapter is twofold: first, it emphasises the complicated interconnections that shaped and are shaping Italian politics of sexuality. Second, it delineates the background against which the events discussed in this thesis emerged, became intelligible and were both supported and opposed.

Prior to accepting Bernini’s invitation to grapple with the shadows of contemporary Italian politics, however, it is necessary to clarify some of the terms I have been using so far and that will recur in the thesis. As I explain in more detail in chapter three, a critical questioning of words and their meanings is a continuous endeavour in this thesis, in particular in relation to the translation of media texts from Italian to English. Here I wish to start by unravelling the meaning of the terms ‘*de facto*

unions' and 'the Church'. In doing so, I aim to signal the ambivalence of their meanings and demonstrate how they will be both further examined and problematised throughout the work.

As already hinted at in the Introduction, the term *unioni di fatto (de facto unions)* has become common currency to define both same-sex and heterosexual couples whose unions are not recognised by the state. I use it here, and in the title to this thesis, to emphasise the relevance it has acquired and to reflect on its pervasiveness. However, as I discuss in the last section of this chapter, its use has been taken to indicate the unwillingness of the Italian legislature to address the lack of rights possessed by LGBT individuals (Billotta, 2013; Bonini Baraldi, 2008). Billotta argues, for instance, that the use of the term '*de facto unions*' as well as that of 'civil partnership' can be interpreted on one hand as a recognition of forms of union that fall outside heterosexual conjugal norms (2013). On the other hand, however, its use appears instrumental to sustaining a hierarchy of acceptance and ensuring that the conjugal space is maintained as heterosexual. These ambivalences will be further discussed in the last section of this chapter and in chapter two.

Equally important is to clarify the use of the term 'church', which appears often in the literature as well as in the Italian media that I analyse. As a shorthand, the term defines a plethora of institutions and realities (Melloni, 2007). Melloni, in discussing the CEI's (*Conferenza Episcopale Italiana* — Italian Episcopal Conference) political strategy under John Paul II, highlights the multiple meanings of the term:

We used to say church, for instance, to describe the magisterium of the pontiff or, without particular distinction, of his Curia¹, and recently we have said church when we were talking about dioceses, or Catholic institutions, the episcopate, or even, in the past twenty years, to designate the president of CEI. (...) We can say that even today there persists an Italian mindset for which the term "church" implies above all "the Vatican" (2007: 60-61).

'Church' can conflate Catholic institutions, the CEI, or the Vatican and often all these different institutions together. Following Melloni, I wish to draw attention to how this use 'conceals preconceptions that can be anything but innocuous' (Melloni, 2007: 61). Its use reinforces the representation of the Italian Catholic Church as a homogeneous, internally coherent institution. In chapters four and seven I will discuss how such

¹ Curia is a term that encompasses the congregations, tribunals, and offices through which the Pope governs the Roman Catholic Church.

representation can be interpreted as instrumental to silencing the voices within the Italian Catholic Church, and the broader community of worshippers, that do not agree or fit in with, in particular, the anti-homosexual crusade of the Vatican hierarchies (see Bertone and Franchi, 2014; Quaranta, 2008; Geraci, 2007). Later in this chapter, I highlight how dissenting voices are nonetheless becoming increasingly audible alongside an increasing pluralisation of religious practices (Garelli, 2010, 2011). However ‘church,’ with its multiple signifiers, also encapsulates the multifaceted world of religious institutions and their relevance in Italy, as well as the influence of the Vatican state, with its geographical proximity both to the Italian Catholic Church and the Italian state.² The term ‘church’ hence highlights the pervasiveness on Italian politics of various institutions whose boundaries are porous and difficult to define (see among others Moscati 2010; Donà 2009; Diamanti and Ceccarini 2007; Hanafin 2007; Pedote 2007; Poidimani 2007a).

The realm of morality and the regulation of sexualities

I start by delineating the complex interconnections characterising Italian sexual politics, reflecting in particular on the ways in which the Italian state has monopolised discourses of morality and family. This section does not intend to be exhaustive of a complex body of literature, but instead identifies the ways in which the discursive construction of sexually moral/immoral and acceptable/non acceptable have been intertwined with the discursive construction of the nation’s borders (see Puar, 2007; Puri, 2004; Alexander, 1994; Mosse, 1985). In Italy, as elsewhere, the immoral ‘other’ has been instrumental for the construction of the internally moral/pure nation, which is itself gendered (see Kim-Puri, 2005; Pryke, 1998; Yuval-Davies, 1997) and to support projects of nation-building (see Alexander, 1994). In this section I wish to draw attention in particular to the ‘repressive tolerance’ that characterised the Italian state (Dall’Orto, 1988, 1994). The legislative system never contemplated laws explicitly punishing homosexual acts, but the silence and morality enforced by the Catholic Church marginalised non-conforming gender and sexual identities, which were routinely pushed outside the law and society (Bertone, 2009; Miletta and Passerini, 2007; Dall’Orto, 1988). Understanding the ways in which the regulation of gender and sexualities have been articulated helps to draw attention to the centrality of the family

² For a historical overview of the relationship between the post-unification Italian state and the Vatican, see Donovan, 2003.

and the role of the Italian Catholic Church and paves the way for questions regarding sexual and intimate citizenship, which are addressed in the next chapter (Roseneil, 2010; Roseneil et al., 2008; Plummer, 2003; Bell and Binnie, 2000; Weeks, 1998; Richardson 1998). Indeed, silence and denial remain central to the heterosexist construction of rights that characterise contemporary Italy (Garbagnoli, 2013; Bertone, 2009; Billotta, 2008; Bonini Baraldi, 2008; Bernini, 2008).

The post-unification period

Before unification in 1861, the Italian territory was subject to different penal codes. In 1889 the Zanardelli Code unified the Kingdom of Italy under its first penal code. This code decriminalised homosexual acts between consenting adults across the entire Italian territory. The erasure of homosexual acts from the law balanced out seemingly opposing necessities, because although homosexual acts were decriminalised, acts that created a public scandal could still be prosecuted (Dall'Orto, 1988; Rossi Barilli, 1999: 4). Indeed, Zanardelli argued that while it was necessary on one hand to repress all those instances from which 'evident and great damage can derive for families or those that are against public decency', it was 'equally necessary that the legislator not invade the realm of morality' (Zanardelli, quoted in Dall'Orto, 1988, my translation).

A few years after the Labouchere Amendment (1885) made gross indecency a crime in the UK (Weeks, 1977: 11-15), the Italian legislators in 1889 felt that sexuality was a matter better discussed through the category of morality rather than crime. In this construction, it is possible to see how the family was positioned as a central concern of the legislator and in need of protection, while the regulation of sexual behaviour was defined as a realm outside the reach of law. As a result, while laws forbade those acts deemed to have created offence to *public* morality, *private* acts between consenting adults were not regulated by the codes (Beccalossi, 2012: 36-37).

As Giovanni Dall'Orto argues, this was possible because of the presence in Italy of a further powerful agent of control: the Catholic Church. It was this institution that the legislators deemed most suitable to regulate sexuality (1988). Following the work of Herbert Marcuse (1969) and clearly drawing on a method of analysis akin to the one employed by Foucault in *History of Sexuality* (1978), Dall'Orto defines such a way of policing sexuality as 'repressive tolerance', that is, an attitude characterised by transferring control of sexuality from the state to religious authorities.

The absence of a law similar to the Labouchere Amendment ought not to be interpreted as tolerance of acts deviating from heterosexual norms and bourgeois morality. Instead, oppression was intended to operate through an enforced silence and denial mitigated by ‘a certain degree of practical lenience towards the weakness of the flesh’ (Rossi Barilli, 1999: 33, my translation; see also Nardi, 1998). Homosexual behaviours were tolerated as long as they only took place in private and did not create public scandal.

Dall’Orto is particularly keen on defining the decriminalisation of homosexual acts as a tacit compromise that, he argues, lasted until the 1970s, whereby:

The State offer[ed] to homosexuals a relative impunity ... but in exchange demand[ed] that homosexuals never question[ed], either with their attitudes or their discourses, the supremacy of the heterosexual and patriarchal way of life (Dall’Orto, 1988: para 5, my translation).

The Italian legislator welcomed the silencing of acts against nature as an efficient way of avoiding upsetting public morality while enforcing control. This trade-off has often been interpreted as a forceful way to relegate homosexuality to the private sphere, a question that will be explored in the next chapter in relation to citizenship rights (Richardson, 2000; Bell and Binnie, 2000; Weeks, 1998).

The notion of ‘repressive tolerance’, while useful for understanding the role of silence and morality in the regulation of sexuality in Italy, still requires a degree of caution in its application, as some of the critiques of Dall’Orto’s work highlight. In particular, with its focus on male homosexuality, Dall’Orto’s work appears to erase the ways in which ‘repressive tolerance’ operated in a specific gendered way at the intersection between nation, sexuality and race (Poidimani, 2007, 2009). Dall’Orto’s work seems to maintain the silencing of women’s experiences now being uncovered in a growing body of work (Milletti and Passerini, 2007; Milletti, 2007; Polezzi and Ross, 2007; Danna, 2005). The analysis of the post-unification, interwar and Fascist periods reveals how the legislator, tolerant with those bodies that conformed was less so with those that did not, and in particular with those women who refuse to comply with their role as carrier of the nation (Poidimani, 2007; Polezzi and Ross, 2007), as discussed in the next section.

A further critique of Dall’Orto’s position concerns the way in which the notion of ‘repressive tolerance’, with its emphasis on the permissiveness of the state (and the church) with regard to homosexual acts, might on one hand preclude the possibility of

reading silence as a violent act. On the other hand it also runs the risk of overshadowing the hostility and violence that operated against non-conforming individuals. The absence of laws against homosexual acts under Fascism did not equate with an absence of physical violence perpetrated in the name of moral control (Poidimani, 2007; Benadusi, 2005; Bellasai, 2005). The notion of ‘repressive tolerance’ should therefore not be interpreted as a blanket term encompassing the experiences of all individuals but ought to be integrated with a consideration of the mechanisms through which gendered oppression has been and is reproduced (Poidimani, 2007: 235; Miletta, 2007b) and with an awareness of the moments of resistance and disruption that characterise both the past and the present (Rossi Barilli, 1999).

Its limits notwithstanding, Dall’Orto’s work fruitfully points to the regulating role of silence. It unravels the negotiation of control of deviance from the heterosexual norms between the Catholic Church and the state and also allows a tracing of continuity between the past and the present. Such synergy can also be traced in the Fascist *Ventennio* (the twenty years of the Fascist regime). While the role of the Catholic Church in supporting the Fascist regime is still at the core of a heated debate, it is impossible to ignore how church and state converged in the construction of the notion of the prolific family (Willson, 2004).³

The Fascist Ventennio (1922-1943)

During the Fascist Ventennio, the borders of the nation were defined by racial and sexual politics that identified the ‘other’ to the regime (Poidimani, 2007; Polezzi and Ross, 2007; Yuval Davis, 1997). Internally the nation was defined by the fascist heterosexual man, whose construction was predicated upon the rejection of weakness and, by extension, homosexuality (Benadusi, 2004, 2005; Mosse, 1982), and through the prolific body of the fascist woman (Polezzi and Ross, 2007; De Grazia, 1992). These constructions of men and women were located within the rhetoric of the Italian family, which was expected to provide children to be educated in the Fascist regime (Willson, 2004, 2010). By addressing the ways in which Fascism constructed a national rhetoric infused with the notions of virile man and prolific woman, I aim to highlight how the patriarchal construction of the nation resisted the fall of the regime and

³ The Catholic Church and the Papacy were condemned for their tentative positions with regard to the Regime’s anti-Semitic policies (Ganapini 2007).

emerged relatively unchallenged as a pillar of the post-war Italian Republic (Hanafin, 2007, 2009; Poidimani, 2007).

In the Fascist regime it is possible to trace the ongoing ‘repressive tolerance’ explored above. While neither the Rocco Code⁴ (the penal code that emerged during the Fascist Regime) nor the public security laws actually criminalised homosexuality (Dall’Orto, 1994: 140), the fascist regime was characterised by strong hostility toward and repression of homosexuality (Benadusi, 2004, 2005; Ebner, 2004: 141; Rossi Barilli, 1999). Accusations of homosexuality were deployed ‘as a kind of easily legible shorthand to denigrate cultural figures considered degenerate by virtue of their foreignness, Jewishness, or in the case of Italians, modernity’ (Duncan, 2006: 45; see also Biagini, 2007). Paradoxically, as Benadusi argues, a person attracted to someone of the same sex, appeared to be largely ignored since ‘(a) sedentary middle class man, an English dandy or an elegant refined Parisian represented negative symbols of manhood more than a brawny *squadrista* attracted to boys’ (2004: 186; see also Bellasai, 2005).

The absence of specific laws prosecuting homosexual acts, however, relegated non-normative sexualities to non-existence, and the displacement of unwanted or unsuitable bodies operated officially through accusation of unlawful political activity; once again, denial and silence operated in lieu of repressive laws. For instance, oppression operated through the institution of the *confino*. When suspicion of immoral conduct arose, *confino* could be used to force suspects, even without trial, to relocate to a different place, usually a small village or remote island where they could be more easily monitored by local authorities (Dall’Orto, 1994). *The confino* proved much more difficult for women to endure because of the difficulty of supporting themselves when displaced from their social and familial network (Biagini, 2007; Milletti, 2007a).

As recent works by feminist and lesbian historians reveal (Milletti, 2007; Poidimani, 2007), fascist policies operated as a concentrated attack of ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ (Rich, 1980); unmarried or independent women were deemed dangerous, as they did not live up to the role assigned to them by Fascist propaganda

⁴ An early draft of the Rocco Code actually contained an article that punished ‘libidinous acts on a person of the same sex’ when those acts resulted in public scandal (Ebner, 2004: 141; Dall’Orto, 1988). However, the article disappeared from the final version of the code, as the legislators explained that ‘the provision for this crime is not at all necessary because, fortunately for Italy, and to its credit, the abominable vice is not sufficiently widespread among us to justify the intervention of the legislator’ (cited in Ebner, 2004: 141; see also Benadusi, 2004: 176 and Dall’Orto, 1988). Again, the censorship and silencing of homosexuality identified by Dall’Orto as characteristic of the Zanardelli Code (1988) can be found here.

(Biagini, 2007; Milletti, 2007a; Poidimani, 2007; Peterson, 1999). In the 1930s, the Rocco Code defined abortion, as well as the use of contraception, as crimes against ‘the health of the stock’ (Hanafin, 2007). Fascist rhetoric glorified the prolific woman and condemned as anti-patriotic those women who did not have children. At the intersection between the racial and sexual politics of the Fascist regime, Nicoletta Poidimani argues, women’s sexuality was regulated in order to preserve the Italian race from corruption resulting from miscegenation (Poidimani, 2007: 205).

A thorough analysis of the relationship between the regime and the upper hierarchies of the Italian Catholic Church as well as the Vatican reveals a complicated interaction that appears to converge on the construction of the prolific Italian family (Willson, 2004). At the same time as the Rocco Code criminalised abortion and contraception, the papal encyclical *Casti Connubii* sustained the regime’s pronatalist policies by proclaiming that the primary purpose of Catholic marriage was to conceive children (Willson, 2004: 7). In the hands of religious confessors, the encyclical was used to reinforce control over sexuality, to endorse heterosexual family life, and condemn what were understood as deviations from appropriate behaviour (Miletti, 2007c: 140).

In 1945 *liberazione* freed Italy from dictatorship. However, the centrality of the family in national identity, the construction of hegemonic masculinity that lay at the core of Fascist ideology, and the construction of homosexuality as a weakness have all continued to exert a crucial influence (Poidimani, 2007: 237; Hanafin, 2007). In the aftermath of the war, the legacy of the Fascist regime operated through selective acts of memory that excluded homosexuals and transsexuals from public commemoration of the regime’s victims. The inconsistent and problematic negotiation with the Fascist past is at the core of a thriving academic debate revolving around post-war and contemporary politics of memory (Fogu, 2006; Mammone, 2006).⁵ In Italy, as elsewhere, revisionist ideologies have drawn a veil over the ways in which the regime oppressed people of non-conforming sexualities and have shifted the paradigms of oppression (Storchi, 2007). In the years following the demise of the Fascist regime, the negotiation of memory became one of the means through which the oppression of deviant sexualities was perpetuated (Pini, 2011; Milletti, 2007a; Rossi Barilli, 1999).

⁵ This is a fundamental work of scholarship that reveals the construction of the myth of the *Italiani Brava Gente* (Italians, good people) and works to prevent forgetting the role of the regime in the deportation of Jews as well as in the violent oppression of dissidents; it is a poignant and relevant work in this period of ongoing revisionist politics (Storchi, 2007).

Cinematic and literary productions started to use the stereotype of the degenerate pederast to represent Fascist and Nazis persecutors, ‘to stress the decay implicit in those regimes’ (Prono, 2001: 334). In neo-realist movies considered ‘acts of remembrance and commemoration’, such as *Roma città aperta* (Rossellini, 1945) and *Cronache di poveri amanti* (Lizzani, 1945), the homosexual, the victim of the Fascist and Nazi regimes, was transformed into the Nazi and Fascist oppressor (Prono, 2001: 335; Forgacs, 1999).⁶ Homosexuality that during Fascism became the marker of the enemy of the regime metamorphosed, after the end of World War II, into an attribute of the former oppressor; once again homosexuality was removed from national identity that was in the process of reconstructing itself.

The ‘othering’ rhetoric adopted after the war to denigrate the Nazi and Fascist regimes is still, decades later, being deployed to justify the Italian approach of including/excluding same-sex couples (Dines and Rigoletto, 2012; Moscati, 2010).

In this section I have investigated the roots of the synergy between the Catholic Church and the Italian state in regulating sexuality. The relevance of this exploration of the past lies in the light it sheds on the present, and in particular in foregrounding the issues of sexual and intimate citizenship discussed in chapter two. Analysing the extent to which same-sex sexual orientation has been ignored by Italian law makes it possible to trace an inclination towards denial, in which the experience of LGBT individuals is routinely marginalised (Bertone, 2009).

The definition of the family: the post-war parties and the destabilising force of social movements

Unlike other Mediterranean countries, such as Spain and Portugal (Santos, 2013; Calvo and Pichardo, 2011), after World War II Italy transitioned to a relatively stable democracy,⁷ joined the founders of the EU and experienced an economic growth that,

⁶ Only *Una giornata particolare* (*A special day*) (1977), directed by Ettore Scola, reveals what happened to men who were labelled as non-conforming to hegemonic masculinity. The movie narrates the encounter between Antonietta (Sophia Loren) and Gabriele (Marcello Mastroianni); the former a mother of six, the latter a former radio announcer about to be sent to the *confino* for his anti-Fascist position and his homosexuality. In what Peter Bondanella defines as ‘a refreshing change’, the homosexual is the anti-Fascist and no longer the despised oppressor: ‘Thrown together, the two characters discover that their marginal space in Italian society is not dissimilar (...) Both figures are tragically destroyed by the Fascist myth of virility’ that framed Gabriele as a traitor and confined Antonietta to the role of mere child bearer (2001: 367-368).

⁷ A popular referendum was called in 1946 at the end of World War II. Voters were asked to decide to remain with the ruling monarchy or become a Republic. It was on this occasion that women

while uneven, did propel the modernisation of the country (Bull and Rhodes, 2007: 658). However, as Bull and Rhodes argue, the democratisation of the peninsula was thwarted by the continuance of strong regional identities, the divide between the North and the South of Italy and the effective domination of a single party, the Christian Democrats (DC), which led the country for 50 years (2007). One way of unravelling the central role of the DC and the influence of the doctrine of the Catholic Church is by focusing on the Italian Constitution and in particular on those articles referring to the family (Articles 29 and 37).

The family that characterised the nationalist policies of the Fascist regime became one of the pillars of the Republican Constitution drafted in the post war period (Hanafin, 2007: 16-22; Bernini, 2008). Analysis of the ways in which, in the Constitution, the family is routinely naturalised, heterosexualised and placed at the core of the nation can shed further light on the organisation of gender and sexuality. Family ideals have been routinely deployed to sustain the sexual division of labour that confined women to being carers in the private sphere (Hill Collins, 1998). Similarly, family ideology sustains the marginalisation of lesbian and gay identities (Rich, 1980; Witting, 1992) and functions to provide support to social institutions and social policies (Hill Collins, 1998; Stacey, 1996; Naldini, 2003). Therefore an exploration of how the family has been positioned at the core of the Italian Republic will provide a platform to question the ways in which its naturalisation is still rearticulated for the purpose of sustaining exclusionary and discriminatory policies. At the same time it is also important to acknowledge how the family became the target of the contestations of feminist and LGBT movements that operated against the grain of a strong patriarchal tradition (Passerini, 1996: 144-145). I review here the emergence of particular movements in the 1970s and how the changes that traversed the Italian Republic deeply affected the dominance of the ideal of the patriarchal family. In doing so, I join Bernini in an attempt to unravel the extent to which, even in moments of contestation, the family was a ubiquitous sign defended by all political parties across the spectrum (2008; 2010). This helps to shed light on the ideology that framed the Constitution; secondly,

acquired the right to vote. As a consequence of the referendum, Italy became a Republic and a Constituent Assembly (called to draft the Constitution) was elected.

the articles discussed below constitute the very articles to which new laws (including any new law recognising *de facto unions* and same-sex couples) have to conform.⁸

In particular, Article 29 of the Constitution states:

The Republic recognises the rights of the family as a natural society founded on marriage.

Marriage is based on the moral and legal equality of the spouses within the limits laid down by law to guarantee the unity of the family.⁹

Interpretation of Article 29 is an ongoing debate among legal scholars; some interpret the family founded on marriage as one of the pillars of the Constitution and, by extension, of the Republic. While '(m)ost scholars interpret this Article as preventing equal treatment of those couples who do not want or cannot marry (Bonini Baraldi, 2008: 176), others investigate the possibility of extending the notion of society employed by the article to same-sex relations, and in doing so open the way to grant same-sex couples legal recognition and protection (Dal Canto, 2008: 209). These conflicting interpretations demonstrate that, aside from its use to either assimilate or reject the claims of those who cannot or do not want to marry, the family certainly remains a core sign against which kinship arrangements are defined.

Article 29 opens the Title II of the Constitution (ethical and social rights and duties). Bin draws attention to the oxymoron 'natural society' and argues that it refers to 'that concept of family which derives from the past, of which culture is imbued and which certainly does not ignore the value of Catholic religion' (Bin, 2000: 1067, translation from Bonini Baraldi, 2008: 176). The representation of the family as a natural unit was rooted in, and sustained, traditional notions of femininity and motherhood (Bimbi, 1999: 74), notions that became key sites of contestation of the feminist movement. The work of the Constituent Assembly was saturated with patriarchal notions of women's roles; while the Constitution recognised equality between men and women, and granted women equal rights in the labour market, it still vigorously upheld motherhood as women's fundamental role.

⁸ The Italian Constitution is characterised by its rigidity. As Salerno explains, 'This concept implies the necessity that any modifications to the constitutional text be implemented (...) in line with an appropriate legislative procedure — one that is at once not only different and more complex and difficult than the normal legislative procedure, but also directly disciplined and, therefore, guaranteed by the Constitution itself' (2011: 114-115).

⁹ This version of the articles is from the official English translation of the Italian Constitution (1947), retrieved from the Italian Senate website on December 2013

The endorsement of motherhood as key to women's role in society is at the core of Article 37 of the Constitution. Women are said to hold the same rights as men and entitled to equal payment, however it is also stated that:

Working conditions must allow women to fulfil their essential role in the family and ensure appropriate protection for the mother and child.

The emphasis placed on the family as the natural unit of society and on motherhood as the primary role of women has been interpreted as signalling the influence of Catholic doctrine in the Constitution of the new Republic (Bimbi, 1999; Hanafin, 2007: 19). The centrality of the family has been incorporated into the organisation of policies and the welfare regime (Naldini, 2003). The protection of the working mother and the definition of formal equality confined women to the private sphere, thus re-entrenching patriarchal society (Saraceno, 1994; Bimbi, 1999). Paradoxically, however, while the family had been placed at the core of the Constitution and its protection had been entrusted to the state, actual support of the family was overshadowed by the rejection of pro-natalist policies reminiscent of the unacceptable intrusion of the Fascist regime into the private lives of individuals (Bimbi, 1999; Saraceno, 1994; Naldini, 2003).

However, as Bernini contends, it is difficult to attribute the pervasiveness of the sign of the family to the work of one single party (2008). The *Partito Comunista Italiano* (PCI- Italian Communist Party), afraid of 'being accused of acting as an enemy of traditional family life' (Bernini, 2008: 319) was inconsistent in its representation of women and their role in the newly born Republic. The PCI supported women's rights as workers but never contested the priority of motherhood or the centrality of the family (see also Bimbi, 1999). The agreement between the PCI and DC also extended to the realm of sexuality. Italian left-wing tradition is in fact profoundly influenced by conservative sexual politics. The PCI never challenged the construction of homosexuality as a degeneration that had trickled down from the Fascist *Ventennio* and permeated post-war ideology. Instead, the silencing and condemnation of homosexuality became part of the party's doctrine that attacked homosexuality as a 'bourgeois degeneration' (Rossi Barilli, 1999: 24; Prono, 2001; Pini, 2011). For instance, in 1949, writer and director Pier Paolo Pasolini was expelled from his local branch of the PCI because of '*indegnità morale*' (moral indignity); accused of committing '*atti impuri*' (impure acts) with young men, he was given a three-month sentence, lost his job and was forced to leave his province (Pini, 2011: 16). The PCI doctrine on sexuality was therefore aligned with Catholic doctrine and sustained the

dominance of Catholic doctrine in the realm of morality (Rossi Barilli, 1999: 22-23). In the position of the PCI in relation to gender and sexuality it is possible to trace the seeds of the ongoing ambivalence of Italian left-wing parties in relation to the rights of LGBT individuals (Bonini Baraldi, 2008).

The decade after the end of World War II was also characterised by women's increased participation in the paid labour market and by an improved level of education. Intense migration from the South to the North of the country and from rural to urban areas substantially reshaped the structure of kinship ties, which became less like the rural model of extended familial arrangements and moved toward models more similar to the nuclear family (Barbagli, Castiglioni and Dalla Zuanna, 2003; Barbagli and Saraceno, 1998). These changes in the fabric of Italian society paved the way for the emergence of the feminist, lesbian and gay movements in the late 1960s and 1970s.

Similar to the experience of other European countries, in Italy the feminist and gay and lesbian social movements became increasingly active in the public sphere, forcefully critiquing the patriarchal structure of society. They also contested the divide between the public and the private and challenged the oppressive construction of sexual roles (De Clementi, 2002; Beccalli, 1994; Rossi Barilli, 1999; Nardi, 1998). At the core of the movements' critiques were the patriarchal family and the construction of gender roles within it. The conservative construction of the family was revealed as built on an oppressive sexual morality that in turn reinforced the subordination of women in the private sphere (Lonzi, 1982; De Clementi, 2002).

The Italian feminist movement profoundly challenged the notion of the patriarchal family as a site of care, unmasking it as a site of power and oppression (Bertone, 2004: 292). The feminist movement was (albeit not consistently) supported by the burgeoning Italian gay and lesbian movement. While the former unravelled patriarchal oppression, the latter started to contest the structure of the patriarchal Italian society that excluded them. The homosexual movements and the feminist movements shared certain aims and practices, such as the practice of *autocoscienza* (self-consciousness),¹⁰ the organisation of collectives, and the awareness that 'the personal is political' (Passerini, 1996: 148; Rossi Barilli, 1999: 66). In the 1970s in urban areas such as Milan, the influence of the international debate on gay and lesbian rights

¹⁰ In *Elementi di critica omosessuale*, radical dissident activist and one of the founders of the FUORI!, Mieli, elucidates how the practices of *autocoscienza* (self-consciousness) enabled an understanding of the processes through which society oppressed and marginalised non-normative sexualities (2002: 15).

prompted the creation of collective experiments such as FUORI!¹¹ (Rossi Barilli, 1999: 48; Nardi, 1998: 580; see also Pini, 2011: 57-58). Central to the gay and lesbian movement's politics was a critique of the construction within medical and religious discourse of homosexuality as a perversion.¹²

It was in this climate of social and cultural dynamism that changes in family law profoundly redefined the patriarchal family and the role of women within it. The feminist and homosexual movements, not without internal schism and disagreement, joined together in the battle against the repeal of divorce (1974) and for abortion.¹³ The overwhelming victory of those who supported the retention of divorce signalled the increasing distance between the official position of the Vatican and the Catholic-inspired DC, and the base of practising Catholics (Donovan, 2003; Diamanti and Ceccarini, 2007). Indeed, Catholic feminist groups as well as practising Catholic men and women opposed the repeal that the DC continued to campaign for (Bimbi, 1999: 77). These were regarded as significant moments, where the law was seen to be catching up with society. However, as Saraceno contends, instead of crystallising the discussion around a hunt for causes, a more fruitful approach would be to consider these reforms 'as much the consequences of changed behaviours as they were the cause of further cultural and behavioural changes' (2004: 48).

The failed repeal of the divorce law was followed by a revolution in family law (Lusanna, 2012: 67; Caldwell, 1991). In 1975 the dowry was abolished and the *patria potestas* that defined the husband/father's absolute authority in relation to family matters became the *potestas* of both parents in relation to their children (Bimbi, 1999; Andall, 1994). In 1978 the Italian parliament approved Law 194 which, while it did not

¹¹ FUORI! is the acronym of *Fronte Unitario Omosessuale Rivoluzionario Italiano* (Italian Homosexual Revolutionary United Front). In the name of the movement it is possible to trace the connection with other emerging movements in Europe, such as the Gay Liberation Front, the Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire in France, and the Mouvement Homosexuelle d'Action Révolutionnaire in Belgium (Rossi Barilli, 1999: 48). Indeed, one of the founders of the movement, Mario Mieli, lived in London between 1970 and 1972 and participated in the heyday of the Gay Liberation Front (Mieli, 1980).

¹² Commentators identify in 1972 the 'Italian Stonewall' (Rossi Barilli, 1999: 54; Danna, 2007a; Cucco, 2012) when the *Centro Italiano di Sessuologia* (Italian Centre of Sexology), a Catholic-inspired organisation, organised in Sanremo their first international conference titled *Comportamenti devianti della sessualità umana* (Deviant behaviours in human sexuality) aiming at discussing a plethora of reparative therapies. A group of representatives of FUORI! and activists from organisations across Europe staged a demonstration that received attention from the media, as did subsequent demonstrations as well as the publications that FUORI! organised.

¹³ In 1970 the Italian Parliament approved the so-called *law Fortuna-Baslini* that rendered divorce legal. In the aftermath of the approval of the law, the DC started a campaign for a referendum aimed at overturning Parliament's decision. However, the referendum in 1974 confirmed the law.

decriminalise abortion, ‘established a number of conditions under which legal abortions were permitted’ (Calloni, 2001: 188). The battle for the decriminalisation of abortion generated profound divisions, however, not only within the feminist movement itself but also within the gay and lesbian movement (Calloni, 2001: 186-188; Rossi Barilli, 1999: 67).

A few years after the foundation of FUORI!, Italian gay and lesbian movements were already facing the challenges of schisms between the revolutionary front (guided by Mario Mieli,¹⁴ among others), which was less prone to compromise with political parties, and a plethora of other groups, some of whom found a place to participate in political debates within the ranks of the Italian Radical Party (Rizzo, 2006). The first section of Arcigay opened in Palermo in the 1980s, (Rossi Barilli, 1999: 134). In 1994 the name changed to Arcigay-Arcilesbica to emphasise the role of lesbians. In 1996 Arcilesbica became a separate association following internal disagreements and the lack of space in a male-dominated institution. Divisions persist to this day between groups that work closely with political parties and those that take a radical stance. This is epitomised in their different positions on the recognition of relationship rights. To fight for recognition of same-sex couples is criticised as a deeply conservative move, a valorisation of the traditional couple over queer relationships (Ross, 2008: 253). As Ross suggests, it is possible to trace in these positions the critiques that emerged from many LGBT movements in the West (2009: 210). Requests for the legal recognition of same-sex couples, whether in the form of gay marriage or same-sex partnership, have been criticised as upholding values that not only hinder the critique of heteronormativity (Butler, 2004; Duggan, 2002; Warner, 1999) but more importantly replicate the discursive structures that reified the heterosexual family and kinship (Butler, 2002: 21). The legal recognition of same-sex couples as well as the debate on gay marriage are here framed as shifting the boundaries of acceptance to the stable monogamous couple, reaffirming the exclusion of queer sexualities (Butler, 2002: 17; Bell and Binnie, 2000).

Critical positions in relation to the legal recognition of same-sex relationships are shared, in particular, within the Italian lesbian and trans movements and frequently

¹⁴ In 1977 Mieli published *Elementi di critica omosessuale* (published in English in 1980 under the title *Homosexuality and Liberation — Elements of a gay critique*). Appropriating the work of Sigmund Freud, Mieli constructed a revolutionary theory that envisaged transexuality as the true disrupting and liberating concept and as the entry point for dismantling the capitalist order. A powerful critique of patriarchal masculinity, Mieli’s work contained a condemnation of the PCI’s conservative position as well as the mainstream gay movement that no longer, according to Mieli, appeared to have the disruptive potential to dismantle the patriarchal oppressive order.

also within feminist groups (Fantone, 2007). Lesbian activists in particular criticised ‘asking the state/symbolic father for a law that would ratify our love’ (Giansiracusa, 2005: 21, my translation). Others, while recognising the validity of the above criticisms, still maintain that the recognition of such rights makes it possible not only to alleviate the problems faced daily by LGBT couples but also to destabilise a discriminatory situation and grant visibility to communities that are excluded from the public sphere (Giansiracusa, 2005; Grillini, 2005a). These different positions inform questions about sexual and intimate citizenship that will be discussed in chapter two.

First, however, it is important to explore how the early 1990s in Italy were characterised by sweeping changes in the party system that led to the demise of the DC. The dissolution of the Christian Democratic party (DC) forced the Vatican and the Italian Catholic Church to pursue a more overt and public role in Italian politics (Diamanti and Ceccarini, 2007). The increased participation of the Italian Catholic Church in Italian politics was matched by the political parties’ relentless pursuit of former DC voters. The demise of the DC is also linked with the rise of Berlusconi’s political career and *Berlusconismo*, and its role in the consolidation of a misogynist and sexist ideology (Ginsborg, 2004; Ross, 2009). By exploring an intricate matrix of events, most significantly the dissolution of the DC in the early 1990s, I aim to emphasise the conditions that allowed the *family* to be brought again to the centre of the political stage.

The definition of the family: the rise of the ‘influential minority’

The DC dominated Italian politics for almost 50 years after the end of World War II. The Italian Catholic Church and the Vatican considered the DC their ‘spoke[s]-party’ (Diamanti and Ceccarini, 2007). The party’s Christian Catholic tradition had considerable influence on the Italian Constitution, as explored in the previous section. The dominance of a single party was based on a *conventio ad excludendum*, in which the DC and its allies tacitly agreed to permanently exclude the PCI from government due to its anti-system, pro-Soviet stance (Newell and Bull, 1997: 82). Newell and Bull define the *conventio ad escludendum* and the dominance of a single party as causes of both the disaffection of the electorate and the consolidation of clientelistic practices that often turn into corruption (1997: 82-84).

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 set in motion the radical changes that affected the PCI and broader changes in the Italian political party structure. In 1991 the Italian Communist Party became the *Partito Democratico della Sinistra* (PDS — the

Democratic Party of the Left), losing in the process a group of dissidents who disagreed with dropping the Communist and pro-Soviet stance of the PCI and who founded the *Rifondazione Comunista* (RC — Communist Refoundation Party). The PDS thus lost its anti-system stance, undermining the DC anti-Communist position in the process. At the same time a legal inquest started in Milan in 1992 and then spread to other Italian cities, uncovering the illicit financing of political parties and bribes in exchange for public work contracts. The magnitude of the investigation revealed the pervasiveness of corruption and generated mistrust in the political elites, leading to an anti-corruption drive that resulted in a loss of votes for parties belonging to the old system, such as the DC (Newell and Bull, 1997: 83-85).

The demise of the DC increased the participation of the Vatican and the Italian Catholic Church in public debate. The Vatican and the *Conferenza Episcopale Italiana* (CEI — Italian Episcopal Conference) could no longer count on the DC acting as their political mouthpiece and frequently intervened directly in political and social issues to maintain their dominance and visibility (Newell, 2009: 25). At the same time, Catholic MPs spread into both left-wing and right-wing parties, losing the chance of forming a majority but acquiring great influence across the political spectrum with their power to veto policies deemed in conflict with Catholic ideology (Diamanti and Ceccarini, 2007). At the same time, the appeal of Catholic voters increased for many different parties. Catholics hence became what Diamanti and Ceccarini define as the ‘influential minority’ (2007).

The visibility of both the CEI and Catholic groups grew in the Italian public sphere (Garelli, 2007a: 3). The CEI and the papacy in particular established their dominance as the relevant actors in the debate on the family, while conservative and reactionary forces routinely deployed the family and sexuality as political propaganda (Bernini, 2008: 306). The centrality of the sign of the family that had characterised the immediate post-war era returned as a relevant feature of political debate from the late 1990s onwards.

The changes that affected the party system in the early 1990s have had further consequences, and in particular have been important for the rise of new parties such as *Lega Nord* (Northern League) and Berlusconi’s *Forza Italia* (see Panara, 2011). As Albertazzi and Rothenberg say in their introduction to the edited collection *Resisting the Tide*, it is ‘difficult to overstate the influence of Silvio Berlusconi in contemporary Italian society’ (2009:1). Berlusconi’s political career was long, and his economic and

media empire provided him with a level of support unprecedented for a Western political leader. His media empire has been thoroughly scrutinised in relation to the sexist and misogynistic hegemony that they fostered; the objectification of women's bodies became a trademark of his television shows (Ginsborg, 2004; Ross, 2010a). At the same time his political career pitched alternatively between his image as a 'ladies' man' (Galletto et al., 2009) and a guardian of family values (Donà, 2009), despite his divorces and the sex scandals.

His government's policies had a profound impact on Italian women. His employment policies increased insecurity in the workplace, which led to particularly negative consequences for women, and his governments repeatedly attacked Italian women's self-determination (Galletto et al., 2007; Fantone, 2007). The unlikely alliance between Berlusconi and the Catholic hierarchies produced a form of deeply reactionary politics. In 2004, under the Berlusconi government, Law 40 regarding the regulation of assisted procreation came into force, preventing access to assisted fertilisation to unmarried non-heterosexual couples and forbidding research on embryos (Hanafin, 2009, 2013). In 2005 a referendum was held to vote on repealing the law, but the low turnout made the referendum void and the law remained in place until 2014, when the Italian Constitutional Court declared it unconstitutional.¹⁵ With regard to LGBT rights, Berlusconi has been described by several Italian LGBT activists as a 'canny opportunist,' with alliances with both the CEI and extreme right-wing, nationalist and homophobic parties like *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN — National Alliance) and the Northern League (Ross, 2009). Ironically, at the same time, the Berlusconi government approved a law (Decree 216/2003) against sexual discrimination in the workplace (Ross, 2009: 206-207). Decree 216 has, however, been defined as grossly inadequate by LGBT organisations, which judged it to be a compromise between Berlusconi's government and the Catholic Church (Ross, 2009).

The rise of the 'influential minority', however, also generated increasingly widespread resistance to the participation of religious institutions in shaping government policy (Garelli and Scallon, 2011). This resistance can be linked to the increasingly difficult relationship between the Vatican and grassroots religious communities, and to the fluctuation of people's religious practices and identification

¹⁵ The failure of the referendum has been blamed on a lack of coverage of the issue by mainstream media, while politicians from across the spectrum as well as representatives of the Catholic Church called for voters to abstain (Ross, 2009: 208; Galletto et al., 2009; Giuliani, 2007: 118; Danna, 2005).

(Garelli, 2007b). For example, dissenting members of the clergy have recently become increasingly visible. In the northern city of Genoa, for instance, the late Don Andrea Gallo made reference to the Christian gospels in framing his uncompromising acceptance of marginalised identities. His controversial positions and his alliances with extraparliamentary Communist groups singled him out as an outsider against the conservative positions of the Vatican (Gallo, 2012). Despite frequent disagreements with the CEI, Don Gallo neither left the clergy nor was removed from his position despite his high media visibility and his popularity, unlike Don Franco Barbero, who in 2003 was defrocked by the Vatican. The core of the contention between Don Barbero and the Church was his attitude to same-sex unions. The priest, in open defiance of the Vatican, was known to perform religious ceremonies blessing same-sex unions (Pini, 2011: 43).

A further threat to the hegemony of the Italian Catholic Church is the presence of other Christian denominations that adopt different attitudes towards sexuality. Grassroots groups operating within Protestant confessions, such as the Waldesian Church, are particularly active in the North (Garelli, Guzzardi and Pace, 2003). Within these groups discourses of acceptance of non-heterosexual sexual orientations are at the core of practices welcoming LGBT individuals and couples (Quaranta, 2008). At the same time, moments of intense public critique (Garelli and Scalon 2011) are traversing the Catholic Church as an institution, including the paedophilia scandal and the debate over the privileged tax status of the institution's properties and assets (Newell, 2009).

The role played by institutionalised religion in Italy is constantly changing.¹⁶ The majority of Italians would still define themselves as Catholic, are baptised, and mark relevant moments of their and their families' lives through religious ceremony (Garelli, 2011: 77). Wedding ceremonies are likely to be held in churches and, while a steady decline is traceable, in 2007 75.3 per cent of those who got married had a religious wedding (Istat, 2012). However, as research demonstrates, there is an increasing individualism in the way those who define themselves as Catholics adhere to the precepts of the Catholic Church, particularly in the realm of sexuality (Garelli, 2011). The distance between the precepts of the Catholic Church and the practices of individuals reflects the contradictions causing the current tension between changes in

¹⁶ A change that is by no means unidirectional; in particular, the current papacy and the anti-privilege attitude of Pope Francis are proving a strong catalyst, with consequences that will be discussed in the conclusion of this work.

Italian society and a conservative backlash. It is within this tension that the demands of LGBT groups in the last decades have acquired visibility. In order to continue examining the social, cultural and political context in which such demands emerged, it is important to look at the wider context of the European Union and its role in fostering inclusive policies.

The role of the European Union between national and local governments

Similar to recent occurrences in Spain (Calvo and Pichardo, 2011) and Portugal (Santos, 2013), the European Union has played a key role in pushing Italy ‘to institutionalise equalities previously less developed or ignored such as sexual orientation or ethnicity’ (Lombardo and Del Giorgio, 2013: 13). As Lombardo and Del Giorgio highlight, however, EU non-discriminatory policies have rarely, if ever, had significant impact at the national level (2013). This is because national governments have not moved any EU non-discriminatory policies beyond mere declaration of intent. This is the result of the larger and more systemic cultural and political contexts in Italy that have been examined in this chapter. Despite this, however, the EU does play a crucial role in setting political agendas that seek to address existing discriminatory structures. In this section I will explore how EU policy has found more influence at the level of local and regional governments than at the national level (Caielli and Santostefano, 2010; Bertone and Gusmano, 2011; Bertone and Cappellato, 2006). It is, in fact, at the local level that it is possible to trace the impact of ‘a new legal norm of ‘homotolerance’ that is characterising EU policies and influencing national governance (Roseneil et al., 2013a).

Focusing on a number of anti-discrimination policies relating to gender as well as race and sexual orientation, Lombardo and Del Giorgio discuss how EU anti-discriminatory directives have been fundamental in encouraging otherwise unwilling Italian institutions to address discrimination (2013). The implementation of EU directives, however, especially in relation to sexual orientation, has been fraught with difficulty and has produced a series of unintended consequences. In examining the incorporation of the 2000/78/EC directive on equal treatment in employment during the Berlusconi government in 2003, Lombardo and Del Giorgio note how the content of the directive was altered to the disadvantage of LGBT workers, producing discrimination

where ‘previously the lack of legislation was de facto enabling access for homosexuals’ (2013: 17-18).¹⁷

The dissonance between EU policies and Italian national politics can also be examined in relation to the creation of agencies and commissions dedicated to the implementation of equality. In 2003 the National Office against Racial Discrimination (UNAR) was established as part of the Ministry for Equal Opportunities, in response to EU directive 2000/43/EC against racial and ethnic discrimination. In recent years the UNAR has explicitly extended its remit following recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5, through which the European Committee of Ministers sought to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity (UNAR 2013). However, the work of UNAR is made difficult by the ongoing lack of funding but also, more importantly, by a lack of independence from political parties.¹⁸ For instance, in 2014 a campaign instigated by Catholic groups blocked the implementation of the educational strategy addressing sexual and gender discrimination in schools, which formed part of the national strategy against homophobia and transphobia. Lombardo and Del Giorgio’s (2013) assessment resonates with Bernini’s (2008) and Donà’s (2009) in the way it highlights the unease of the major political parties at taking a stance that could be interpreted as challenging normative notions of family and intimacy.

However it is important to underline how national agencies like UNAR find at the local (regional and provincial) level a space to interact closely with LGBT associations as well as with various stakeholders and create productive synergies (Bertone and Gusmano, 2011; Caielli and Santostefano, 2010; Bertone and Cappellato, 2006). Local and regional governments have been at the forefront of implementing inclusive, non-discriminatory good practice, as well as creating a space for action and advocacy. This innovative role for local government has been linked to the role of the

¹⁷ Drawing on the expert opinions of LGBT associations, Lombardi and del Giorgio argue that the implementation of 2000/78/EC incorporated through the 216/2003 decree is problematic in three fundamental ways: ‘the attribution of the burden of the proof upon the discriminated person, and not, as stated in the directive, upon the employer (DL 216/2003, art.4.4); the extension also to sexual orientation of the qualification criteria to consider in order to select personnel for the army, police, fire brigades, prison officers, and emergency services, which enables discrimination against homosexuals for this type of work (the directive only refers to age and disability as qualification criteria to consider that could allow reasonable discrimination in the selection of personnel for the mentioned positions), while previous Italian legislation did not preclude access for homosexuals (DL 216/2003, art.3, 2-3); and the restriction of the possibility of acting with regard to discrimination only to trade unions, whereas the directive included also the possibility for civil society associations to intervene’.

¹⁸ In contrast with the EU directive 2000/43/EC that requested the creation of independent agencies, the UNAR is part of the Department for Equal Opportunities and its director is nominated by the Prime Minister.

EU and the ways in which some of the power to implement non-discriminatory policies has been transferred from the national to the regional level (Caielli and Santostefano, 2010: 243). Undoubtedly some of the constraints present at the national level still persist at the local level, and local anti-discriminatory policies rarely become regional laws, which means they remain subject to the financial approval of changing national governments. However, injections of EU funds allow both the creation of projects and the implementation of research. This is coordinated by local and national LGBT advocacy groups, often with the support of international organisations (see Bertone and Gusmano, 2011). The European Union has also provided a platform that fostered connections between different LGBT organisations (Nardi, 1998).¹⁹ International associations such as ILGA have been crucial in lobbying and influencing European policies since the 1990s (Roseneil et al., 2013a: 173) as well as in empowering national LGBT associations (Paternotte and Kollman, 2013).

The successful interaction of different stakeholders at the local level also fostered the creation, in recent years, of cohabitation registries that granted some recognition to forms of unions outside the conjugal couple. In over a hundred local governments in Italy, cohabitation registries are open to both heterosexual and same-sex couples. With no effect at the national level and outside the borders of the constituencies that approve them, local registries may grant access to housing benefits and to services that are locally regulated, such as childcare and health care.

It is therefore at the level of local government in Italy where the normalisation of same-sex sexualities that increasingly characterises EU policy is implemented. Overall, this contributes to the displacement of legal heteronormativity, as Roseneil et al. argue:

The establishment of legal tolerance of homosexual sexual activity set in train a process of radical transformation in heteronormativity. This has involved the struggle for, and achievement of, formal legal protection against discrimination and violence for lesbians and gay men, and less completely, the opening up of the possibility of recognition of their couple and parenting relationships, the full achievement of which might be understood as legal ‘homonormalisation’, that is, the formal legal inclusion of lesbian and gay men as full and equal citizens (Roseneil et al., 2013a: 186).

¹⁹ In 1998, analysing the globalisation of the gay and lesbian movement, Peter Nardi suggested that the rising role of the EU in promoting equality and the role of international associations such as the ILGA (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex association) could account for the growth of the Italian LGBT movement in a nation which, given ‘its roots in the Roman Catholic Church and its strong emphasis on traditional gender roles and ideologies of the patriarchal family’, could be thought to embody ‘the concept of heterosexual hegemony’ (1998: 576).

By invoking the term ‘homonormalisation’, Roseneil et al. (2013a) point to the incompleteness of a process that is fostering the displacement of the normative regulation of sexualities and intimacies, yet at the same time continues to maintain the dominance of the couple over other forms of intimacy. The term powerfully addresses some of the complexities and contradictions at the core of the legal recognition of same-sex unions. I take up these complexities in the following chapter, where I explore literature regarding sexual and intimate citizenship, and the tensions between normativity and resistance that underpin these citizenship formations.

The regulation of cohabitation in Italy and the erasure of the same-sex couple

The above analysis regarding the influence of the EU at the local level in Italy demonstrates the ways in which changes in the regulation of the practices of intimacy are taking place across a number of scales. At the same time, it reveals yet again the persistent unwillingness of politicians to confront the issue of legal recognition for same-sex unions. As Donà contends:

In political debate in Italy, the issue of homosexual partnerships tends not to be discussed explicitly, but rather, to be subsumed within the more general issue of co-habitation, thereby encouraging vague definitions of terms and situations, even in the texts of bills (2009: 336).

The emergence in public and political debate of the figure of the *de facto union* can hence be interpreted as aiming to overshadow same-sex relationships. A similar position is held by the legal scholar Billotta, who contends that the term (and the minimal recognition of rights it symbolises) grants the perpetuation of ‘the heterosexual paradigm of family and marriage’ by deleting the experiences of non-normative intimacies (2013: 47). Billotta’s assessment resonates powerfully with the tacit compromise at the core of the state’s ‘repressive tolerance’ whereby, Dall’Orto argues, in exchange for relative impunity, ‘homosexuals’ were required ‘to never question (...) the supremacy of the heterosexual and patriarchal way of life’ (Dall’Orto, 1988: para 5, my translation). The silencing at the core of ‘repressive tolerance’ is traced in subsequent bills (all unsuccessful). In this final section of the chapter, I discuss how subsuming same-sex partnerships within more general issues of cohabitation and/or reciprocal help is a significant component of the legal debate that characterised the DICO and CUS bills (Bonini Baraldi, 2008).

The first bill proposing the possibility of the legal recognition of *de facto unions* was presented to the Italian Parliament in 1998. The proponents of the bill were members of the Socialist Party, the Socialist-Democratic Party, and the Liberal Party (Rossi Barilli, 1999: 177). Reactionary forces responded forcefully to the proposal and the bill was filed and forgotten (Rossi Barilli, 1999: 177-178). Rossi Barilli highlights how the text of the bill contained the gender-blind definition *convivenza tra persone* (people's cohabitation) and argues that it was an intentional move to grant access to same-sex couples (Rossi Barilli, 1999: 177). Since 1998, other proposals for the legal recognition of cohabitation attempted to reach Parliament rather unsuccessfully. In 2002 On Franco Grillini²⁰ presented to the Chambers of Deputies a bill titled *Regulation of civil and de facto partnership* (Atto Camera 3296) (Donà, 2009: 336; Rotelli, 2008: 247). This was also known as the PACS law. As Donà reports, the text envisaged a new regime aimed at regulating the rights and duties emanating from 'an agreement between two persons, of the same or of different sex' (2009, 366-367). A conservative response to Grillini's proposal came from Francesco Rutelli,²¹ asking to substitute civil partnership with 'united cohabitation agreements'. While Grillini's original text aimed at defining rights and duties within the couple and against third parties, Rutelli's amendment cut out any third party obligation 'including those of the state towards the contracting parties' (Donà, 2009: 337). In this move it is possible to trace the way in which non-conjugal non-heterosexual relationships are strictly confined to a contractual dimension that is also deprived of public recognition.

The 2002 draft of the law became known as the PACS law, given the resonance with the *Pact Civile de Solidarité* or PACS which was approved in France in 1999. In legal terms, the French PACS is a contract between two individuals aimed at regulating reciprocal help and moral support (Pastore, 2008: 140); however, the modalities of that help and support are established by the participants (Pastore, 2008: 141). As chapter four demonstrates, the media coverage analysed referred so often to PACS that the acronym was taken to signify a regulation of cohabiting arrangements (Ross, 2008: 242). Especially in the first month of the Prodi II government, PACS occupied the

²⁰ Franco Grillini was the first petitioner of the bill, so he is then referred to when the law is discussed. Grillini, a figurehead of the Italian gay movement and honorary president of the national association Arcigay, was elected to the Italian Parliament in 2001 for the *Democratici di Sinistra* (Democrats of the left).

²¹ Francesco Rutelli was the representative of *Margherita* (Daisy), a Catholic-inspired party founded in 2002 by former members of the DC.

media coverage as a short term that granted an immediate intelligibility of the boundaries of the claim. However, it also became the symbol of the instability of a government unable to agree on the form that the legal recognition of cohabiting couples should take. The term PACS was substituted in February 2007 with DICO: the acronym of the bill presented by the Minister for Family Policies and the Minister for Equal Opportunities (*Diritti e doveri delle coppie stabilmente conviventi* — Rights and responsibilities of stable, cohabiting persons).

The draft of the law centred on the recognition of cohabiting arrangements between two people, ‘also of the same sex, united by reciprocal affective ties, who cohabit stably and exchange assistance and moral solidarity’.²² Certain rights, however, could only be granted after a certain amount of time had passed from the moment in which the cohabitation was officially registered (Donà, 2009: 341).²³ The emphasis on solidarity and the recognition of rights as predicated on the length of the cohabitation were criticised for being a weak recognition of rights by representatives of LGBT organisations.

Bonini Baraldi analyses the text of the law and places it in the larger context of the recognition of same-sex relationships. He argues that the formulation of DICO reflected the reluctance of both politicians and legislators to approach the issue of same-sex couples other than by diluting same-sex relationships ‘into broader issues concerning all sorts of cohabiting arrangements based on solidarity or, as they called [it], ‘reciprocal help’ (2008: 176). The reference to ‘reciprocal affective ties’ is hence interpreted as a censoring act that works to silence same-sex couples (Bonini Baraldi, 2008). The refusal to recognise non-normative practices of intimacies was stretched to a point that public ceremonies were not contemplated (Moscati, 2010). The draft of the law, the lack of public ceremonies and the debate that ensued from the law proposal, led Bonini Baraldi to advance a ‘reductionist hypothesis’, in which the paradigm of mutual care and reciprocal help functions to detach gay and lesbian couples from any definition of them as a family (2008). The same-sex couple is repositioned endlessly as the *other* to the heterosexual ‘natural’ family, seen above as the core of the Italian Constitution and the main pillar of the welfare regime (Naldini, 2003). Most importantly, Bonini Baraldi’s analysis (2008) points to how necessary it is to rethink the division between

²² Text approved by the Council of Ministers on 8 February 2007 (unofficial translation from Bonini Baraldi, 2008: 185-186).

²³ The DICO bill recognised reciprocal rights in relation to health, welfare, tenancy agreements but excluded certain inheritance rights (see Donà, 2009: 341).

the progressive left that promoted the bill and the reactionary conservative society that opposed it, reiterating the analysis of the political spectrum presented throughout the chapter and further complicating the narrative of the events that continue to characterise the Italian politics of sexuality.

Conclusion

Following the suggestion of Bernini (2008), I investigated the significant themes that characterise the contemporary politics of sexuality in Italy through a triadic lens: the family, politics and the Catholic Church. In doing so I have revealed the complex relationships generated by exclusionary practices that routinely silence and marginalise non-normative practices of sexuality and intimacies. This constitutes the setting in which emancipatory movements have emerged, as well as ongoing practices of resistance against conservative forces. With this uneven political terrain in mind, in the next chapter I turn to the literature that shaped my characterisation of the political, legal and ideological tensions generated from the possibility of the legal recognition of same-sex couples in Italy. I will examine how destabilising practices and discourses are moving from the political margins to the centre. Although they bring with them generative potential, they also perpetuate conservative responses that aim at maintaining the status quo (Roseneil, 2000; Plummer, 2003).

I characterise the tensions between destabilising practices and the conservative responses they generate as ‘culture wars’ (Plummer, 2003; Smith and Windes, 2000; Hunter 1991). Drawing on critical media studies literature (Macdonald, 2003; Vavrus, 2002; Hall et al., 1978) and on the literature on Italian news media (Mancini 2013; Cepernich, 2009; Trappolin, 2007, 2009; Mazzoleni and Schultz, 1999) I invite consideration of the role of two particular newspapers, *Corriere della Sera* and *la Repubblica*, in reproducing, sustaining or challenging destabilising discourses and conservative responses.

Chapter Two. ‘Culture wars’ and the legal recognition of *de facto unions*: a site for analysis

A growing body of literature focuses on the tensions that characterise Italy’s politics of sexuality. Scholars from diverse backgrounds have investigated the roots of the centrality of the ‘family’ in Italy, the reluctance of successive governments to legally recognise same-sex partnerships, as well as the constant threat of a conservative backlash against abortion laws and access to reproductive techniques (Garbagnoli, 2014; Bertone, 2013; Donà, 2009; Bernini, 2008; Billotta, 2008; Giuliani, 2007; Fantone, 2007; Danna, 2005). This interdisciplinary body of work demonstrates the ways in which primarily Anglophone scholarship has been taken up by Italian scholars, but it also shows the ways in which the Italian case can generate productive insights for international scholarship on the politics of sexuality more broadly (Ross, 2010).²⁴

This thesis contributes to these ongoing dialogues, and in this chapter I locate my argument at the intersection of the different theoretical perspectives that inform the architecture of my thesis. I begin with a critique of the literature that places transformation of intimacies at the core of late modernity (Giddens, 1991, 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Chambers, 2001; Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), in order to draw attention to the fact that in Italy, as elsewhere, it is possible to trace concurrent, and at times conflicting, narratives of the present (Plummer, 2003; Roseneil, 2000, 2002). While transformations of intimacies can be interpreted as limited by structural constraints that reinforce and maintain the heteronorms (Bertone, 2005, 2013; Abatecola, 2005; Naldini, 2003) it is also important to assess the ways in which, against this background, ‘queer tendencies’ (Roseneil, 2000, 2002) increasingly contribute to dismantling the homosexual/heterosexual binary that regulates the inclusion/exclusion of sexual identities.

I extend the analysis by drawing on the literature that critically examines notions of sexual and intimate citizenship (Roseneil et al., 2013; Roseneil, 2008, 2013; Sabsay, 2012; Halsaa et al., 2011, 2012; Ryan-Flood, 2009; Roseneil et al., 2008; Richardson, 2000a, 2005; Plummer, 1996, 2001, 2003; Lister, 2003; Bell and Binnie, 2000; Stychin,

²⁴ In assessing the status of gender and sexuality studies in contemporary Italian society, Charlotte Ross emphasises the lack of available translations of Anglophone publications in the field. This gap is partly filled by the fact that more and more Italian scholars have been educated and/or are connected with Anglophone institutions, where they encounter critical works published outside Italy (2010).

1998, 2003; Weeks, 1998). This strand of literature will allow me to further question the binaries of inclusion/exclusion and assimilation/radicalisation that emerge in questions of the legal recognition of *de facto unions* and same-sex couples.

However, the emergence of claims for legal recognition of same-sex couples and *de facto unions* cannot be understood without paying attention to the ways in which such claims generate tensions and clashes between different visions of the world. I interpret these clashes as ‘culture wars’ that characterise postmodern societies (Plummer, 2003). In the final section of the chapter I therefore explore how news media not only can be ascribed among those arenas where the ‘cultural wars’ unfold (Hunter, 1991:160; Plummer, 2003: 76), but can also be interpreted as actors participating in the debate that they represent (Meyer, 1994; Trappolin, 2007, 2009, 2011; Jowett and Peel, 2010). Drawing on media and cultural studies, I suggest that an analysis of news media informed by notions of power and hegemony (Hall et al., 1978; Meyer, 1994; Trappolin, 2007) can enhance our understanding of the ways in which complex debates might be crystallised, simplified and often trivialised. This will shed further light on the means through which conservative notions of gender and sexuality continuously inform Italian politics of sexuality.

The transformation of intimacy: de-traditionalisation in Italy

The increasing participation of women and gay men in the public arena, changes in practices of intimacies, the growing instability of marriage, and the influence of reproductive technologies have all opened up questions about the displacement of normative understandings of sexuality, family and kinship (Halsaa et al., 2011; Roseneil et al., 2011, 2012; Roseneil, 2000; Williams, 2004; Castells, 1997). Within a sociological framework, theories of de-traditionalisation and transformations of intimacies such as Giddens’ (1992), Beck’s (1992), and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim’s (1995), placed great emphasis on the way in which late modernity is characterised by a displacement of traditional ties and an emphasis on individual choice. This literature focuses on the ways in which technologies and societal changes have reshaped the links between sexuality, procreation, family and heterosexuality and thereby produced an array of alternatives. It therefore emphasises the emergence of a sexual self as a ‘reflexive project’ that displaces the dominant and normative understanding of relationships, thus fundamentally reshaping the societal landscape (Castells, 1997; Beck and Beck Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1992). In this understanding, gay men and lesbian women have been defined as pioneers of ‘pure relationships’, which individuals enter

on equal terms and which might end when those individuals' needs are no longer met (Giddens, 1992). Relationships between people, the market and the welfare state are thereby understood as increasingly characterised by individualisation (Beck, 2002).

However, as Roseneil describes (2000, 2007, 2007a), these positions have been met with scepticism by many scholars. On the one hand, theories of detraditionalisation and individualisation appear to overlook the ways in which the gendered politics of care continue to generate constraints (see Skeggs, 2004; Smart and Neale, 1999). On the other hand the theories do not take into account the ways in which gender (see Jamieson 1998) class (see Skeggs, 2004) sexuality and ethnicity (see Hey, 2005) are still powerful determinants in the possibilities of the self as a 'reflexive project'. In a similar vein, I will unravel some of the complexities that characterise contemporary Italy, where marriage and the family retain a high symbolic value (Rosina and Viazzo, 2008: 7; Ruspini, 2005; Barbagli, Castiglioni and Dalla Zuanna, 2003: 121; Barbagli, 1990), and where the hegemonic norm of the nuclear family remains incredibly strong (Bertone, 2009b; Ruspini, 2009; Bertone, 2008a: 58). In doing so I incorporate the warnings of Italian scholars against reifying a linear narrative of progress that, in placing Italy as lagging behind the changes that are transforming Europe, does not account for the specificities of the context in which these changes are taking place (Rosina and Viazzo, 2008; Bertone, 2005). I therefore call into question the ways in which institutional structures constrain the organisation of intimate lives and more so in the current economic climate (Bertone, 2013; Fantone, 2007). In particular, it is crucial to reflect on the specificities of the Italian welfare regime, which is infused with a 'familialism' whose roots are in the multifaceted context explored in the previous chapter.

Welfare regimes provide crucial sources of information to help understand the extent of the changes affecting familial relationships and the possibilities (or lack thereof) these changes open up for individuals (Le Feuvre and Roseneil, 2014; Saraceno, 2008; Saraceno and Naldini, 2008). As with other South European welfare²⁵ regimes, Italy's is characterised by a strong 'dualistic protection' that grants benefits to those who are regularly employed but does not provide benefits for casual workers and those at the margins of the labour force (Ferrera, 1996: 19-20, 2005; Naldini, 2003; Saraceno, 2003). Policies supporting the family are minimal and supported by minimal

²⁵ Ferrera (1996) moves beyond a definition of southern European regimes (Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece) as 'rudimentary' when compared to northern European countries (Liebfried, 1992; Espin-Andersen, 1990) in order to emphasise the crucial characteristics of these systems and the challenges they face.

state expenditure (Ferrera, 1996). Scholars have highlighted the specificities and hence the consequences of the Italian welfare model and in particular its gendered effects (Trifletti, 1999; Saraceno, 1994). Emanuela Naldini (2003), introducing a gender and intergenerational perspective in the analysis of Italian and Spanish welfare regimes, argues that, notwithstanding differences, the welfare regimes in both countries are characterised by a ‘family/kinship solidarity model’ that expands the definition of the family to include larger kinship networks (2003). The presence of extended familial networks are hence assumed in the welfare system as a ‘safety net’ for the most vulnerable (Naldini and Saraceno, 2008; Ferrera, 2005, Naldini, 2003). This role of the extended family, however, sustains strong intergenerational dependence, and it is heavily predicated on an asymmetrical division of work in which caring responsibilities are assumed to be undertaken by women (Naldini and Jurado, 2009; Naldini, 2003; Bimbi, 1999; Trifletti, 1999; Saraceno, 1994).

In interrogating the inability of the Italian welfare regime and family policies to respond to the increased participation of women in the paid labour market and the ageing population, Naldini and Saraceno point to ‘the lack of shared consensus on priorities, together with a high degree of political and ideological divisiveness with regard to issues concerning the family, sexuality and equal opportunities’ (2008: 734). Furthermore, they argue, the increasing participation of the Italian Catholic Church in the political debate since the late 1990s (explored in chapter one) has prevented the possibility of effective reforms (2008: 734). Welfare regulations and family policies, heavily influenced by a Catholic doctrine, emphasise dependence and uphold the notion of the heteronormative family based on marriage at the core of Italy’s contemporary social fabric (Bertone, 2013; Saraceno, 2008; Poidimani, 2007; Bimbi, 1999).

The role of structural constraints becomes even more evident following the erosion of rights and protections that, in the current economic conditions, are increasingly pushing women to the margins of the Italian economy (Fantone, 2007). The precarious work contracts that characterise the current market economy also constrain the possibilities of younger generations, thus reconsolidating intergenerational dependence (Bertone, 2013; Trifletti, 2011). Younger generations in Italy tend to live in the parental home longer than their European counterparts, and after moving out, they tend to remain close to their parents and extended family (Naldini and Jurado, 2013: 44-45; Dalla Zuanna, Michielin and Bordignon, 2008; Viazzi and Zanotelli, 2008). Bertone builds on these insights to reflect on how younger generations’ dependence on

support from their families limits their possibilities: ‘children tend to avoid choices that would meet their parents’ disapproval and jeopardise their crucial support’ (2013: 989). In reinforcing inter- and intra-generational obligations largely based on the assumption of the extended family in taking care of those in need, the Italian welfare regime consolidates the dependence of younger generations on their families as well as the marginalisation of those who live outside a familial network (Saraceno, 2004).

Structural constraints become crucial when thinking about those who cannot or do not want to marry or those seeking to form alternative relations of intimacies and support (Le Feuvre and Roseneil, 2014) such as those that are becoming increasingly viable in other parts of Europe (Roseneil and Budgeon, 2004; Roseneil, 2004; Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan, 2001). Economic and welfare structures accompanied by the evasiveness of the state and the influence of the Catholic Church point to a reinforcement of a ‘bundle of values’ that replicate the exclusion of those ‘who do not conform to the dominant (heterosexual) norm’ (Bonini Baraldi, 2008: 175; Bernini, 2008; Donà, 2009; Bertone, 2009). However, in Italy, as elsewhere, changes in the organisation of intimacies are increasingly visible. Focusing on those changes allows the ongoing challenges they pose to heteronormativity and to the naturalness of heterosexuality to be recognised (Roseneil, 2000, 2002).

‘Queer tendencies’ in contemporary Italy

Notwithstanding the critiques highlighted above, theories of de-traditionalisation and transformation of intimacies open a space for questioning the shapes and consequences of contemporary social changes (Roseneil, 2000: para 3.7). Theories of de-traditionalisation point to the ways in which individuals are increasingly seeking alternative organisations of intimacies and disrupting the dominant meanings of kinship. As Roseneil (2000) suggests, in this it is possible to seek further understanding of the ways in which the organisation of sexuality is undergoing changes that might promote the erosion of the heterosexual/homosexual binary. This is a governing binary that contributes to the regulation of ‘inside’ ‘outside’ and that is increasingly questioned in its immutability (Fuss, 1991). The scrutiny of the changes that occur at the margins reveals, Roseneil suggests, the ongoing decentring of heterorelations and illuminates the processes that corrode the centrality of heterosexuality: those processes that affect the centre from the margins are fostered by the increased participation of gays and lesbians as well as by an increased valorisation of the queer in the public sphere (2000).

In the introduction to the seminal work *Inside/Out*, Fuss reveals the homosexual/heterosexual opposition as the proxy of the related opposition inside/outside. This is a binary that ‘designate[s] the structure of exclusion, oppression and repudiation’ and which limits the possibility of thinking of that which evades the terms inside/outside (1991: 1-2). Through the exclusion of ‘abject’ homosexuality, heterosexuality is secured and institutionalised (Fuss, 1991:2).²⁶ It is in the exclusion that a hierarchy is produced: this is the same hierarchy that, Roseneil argues, is challenged by a series of “queer tendencies” at work, and play, in the postmodern world’ (2000: para. 3.8). In examining the social, political and cultural changes traversing contemporary British society, Roseneil (2000, 2002) contends that the hierarchical configuration of inside/outside that regulates the binary relationship between homosexuality and heterosexuality is challenged by a number of ‘queer tendencies’. Roseneil identifies ‘queer tendencies’ in the loss of the hegemonic position of the conjugal heterosexual couple, in the cultural valorisation of the queer and in an increased heteroreflexivity, whereby the hegemonic position of heterosexuality is no longer taken for granted (2000, 2002). Uncovering these tendencies, which are by no means fixed and are opposed by a series of countervailing tendencies, exposes the ongoing challenges posed to heteronormative exclusionary practices (Roseneil 2000: para 4.1).

‘Queer tendencies’ signal the potential for disruption of the heterosexual/homosexual binary that regulates the inclusion/exclusion of sexual identities (Roseneil, 2000). Since ‘heteronormative practices and assumptions are manifested in diverse ways according to the cultural context in which they occur’, it is important to acknowledge how challenges ‘to heteronormativity take different forms in different contexts’ (Ryan-Flood, 2005: 200). By emphasising how challenges are taking place in contemporary Italy, I wish to draw attention to a possible ‘Italian way’ of approaching the disruption of regulatory binaries. In the light of the structural constraints explored above, this exercise in translation raises questions about the difficulties of displacing the central sign of the ‘family’.

²⁶ Fuss’ argument is reminiscent of early works in lesbian and gay studies. Mary McIntosh’s work, for instance, published in 1968, was crucial to the understanding of the homosexual as a social construction that is functional to society: the homosexual is constructed as deviant, she argues, in order to keep society pure. The production of the homosexual as a stable and fully defined subject serves the function of making him/her recognisable, which thus makes his/her segregation possible. The homosexual hence becomes the ‘other’ that keeps society pure.

The lack of legal recognition of forms of kinship outside the family based on marriage (Saraceno, 2008) makes it difficult to displace the ongoing relevance of marriage as an institution.²⁷ Cohabitation among heterosexual couples appears as a choice that eventually leads to marriage. This is especially true at the moment of planning, or as a consequence of the birth of, a child, or when divorcees cohabit with new partners while in the process of divorcing the old (Saraceno, 2004; Rosina and Fraboni, 2004). Although at a much lower rate than has been witnessed in other (mainly northern) European countries, the numbers of divorces, births outside marriage, and women who choose to remain childless are on the rise in Italy (Bertone, 2005).²⁸

At the same time, in recent decades, sociological studies concerned with non-heterosexual identities have emerged.²⁹ These studies seek to illuminate the lives of Italian gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual subjects (Bertone, 2009). The first nationwide research on the experiences of Italian LGBT individuals (Barbagli and Colombo, 2001) was conducted during the late 1990s. It combined a questionnaire survey of 3,502 respondents with an interview-based analysis of the accounts of 136 people in the Italian gay and lesbian community. In 2001 a similar study was conducted in Turin with a focus on the gendered dimensions of the experience and construction of sexual identities (Saraceno, 2003).

These studies highlight how it is increasingly possible for new generations of LGBT people to 'come out' to their families and continue to receive emotional and financial support (Barbagli and Colombo, 2001; Saraceno, 2003; Bertone and Franchi, 2008). While Italian young gay men and lesbians are described as leaving their family home earlier than the national average, the bond of intergenerational ties and the structural constraints described above lead Bertone to conclude that 'lesbian and gay men tend to form personal communities from within rather than as an alternative to their families of origin' (2005: 989). Consequently the loss of the hegemonic position of the

²⁷ In 2007 the ratio of marriages in Italy was registered as 4.2 per 100 inhabitants with a range from 3.7 in the North to 4.9 in the south (ISTAT, 2012)

²⁸ In 2000 the percentage of births where the mother's status was other than married was 9.7% in Italy, compared to 27.3% in the EU (28 countries). The percentage in Italy increased to 21.5% in 2010 and to 28% in 2012. The crude divorce rate in Italy (the ratio of number of divorces during the year to the average population in that year) was 0.7 in 2000 (compared to 1.8 in the EU-28) and increased to 0.9 in 2011 (European Commission, 2014)

²⁹ The lack of research exploring the experience of Italian LGBT individuals is due not only to the difficulties of working with a still-stigmatised group of people (who are not always willing to identify themselves) but also to the biases that permeated the scientific community until very recently (Trappolin, 2008; Barbagli and Colombo, 2001:9).

heterosexual couple and heterosexuality seems to happen from within the family and appears to hold onto traditional family ties and forms of cohabitation (Bertone, 2013).

This is also reflected in contemporary Italian popular culture in representations that, while relying on family ties, increasingly host the queer individual member or couple (Malici, 2011). Although not without significant reactions, gay and lesbian characters are increasingly represented in a number of Italian sitcoms; however, these characters are rendered less disruptive by narratives that tend to privilege a desexualised representation (Salerno Seghini and Tramontana, 2008; Dines and Rigoletto, 2012). Representations of living arrangements and relationships of care based on friendship, such as those Roseneil positions as a sign of the social decentering of heterorelations (2000: para 3.12), come to Italy through the broadcasting of American series such as *Friends* and *Will and Grace*.³⁰ Non-heterosexual relationships therefore increasingly find space within Italian popular culture. However, a question arises about whether we are witnessing a queering of the family or instead a familiarisation of the queer that maintains the private/public binary that reproduces exclusion, fostering 'a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption' (Duggan, 2003: 50).

Investigating the narratives of parents of parents of gay and lesbian youth in Italy, Bertone reveals how structural constraints and intergenerational ties can reinforce hegemonic heteronormative notions (2013). The dependence of younger generations on their parents can allow the parents to define the limits of acceptance. Notions of gender conformity, respectability and safe sexual behaviours are thereby reinforced and replicated, leaving the hierarchical configuration of the heterosexual/homosexual binary intact (Bertone, 2013: 996). However, Bertone contends, the increased visibility of younger generations of gays and lesbians within their families of origin can also potentially challenge the hierarchies of acceptability (2013: 996). Gays' and lesbians' coming out within their families of origin challenges notions of heteronormative respectability and increasingly questions the binaries of inclusion/exclusion from citizenship rights.

³⁰ The process of dubbing international series, however, often operates as a powerful censoring tool that deprives narratives of their destabilising elements. Emblematic is the censoring of Willow coming out in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. The episode featuring Willow coming out was not broadcast by the Mediaset Channel ITALIA1, allegedly because the TV series was shown in prime time (Bianchi, 2008).

Citizenship and normativity

In order to foreground questions of inclusion and exclusion it is useful to draw on notions of intimate (Plummer, 1996, 2001, 2003; Roseneil et al., 2008; Roseneil, 2010; Roseneil et al., 2012) and sexual citizenship (Weeks, 1998; Stychin, 2003; Bell and Binnie, 2000; Lister, 2003, Sabsay, 2012). Notions of sexual and intimate citizenship grew out of the emergence of identity movements that put forward new and constantly developing claims for recognition (Roseneil, Crowhurst et al., 2012; Plummer, 2003). Indeed, intimate and sexual citizenship resonate with the crucial feminist claim that the personal is political (Plummer, 2001: 69; Halsaa, Roseneil et al., 2012; Lombardo and Verloo, 2009). These ideas also highlight the necessity of overcoming the private/public binary whereby citizenship (a concept related to the public sphere) is set in opposition to intimacy (a concept related to the private) (Plummer, 2003: 68). In this regard, a crucial aspect of both intimate and sexual citizenship, as they have developed in the literature, is how they function as both aspirational and analytical concepts that work to expose exclusion and foster change (Roseneil, Halsaa et al., 2012).

Traditional notions of citizenship, in the formulation of Marshall (1950), have indeed been exposed as gendered (Lister, 2003; Walby, 1994) as well as racialised (Alexander, 1994) and sexualised (Richardson, 1998; 2000; 2000a; Weeks, 1998; Evans, 1993). In these works, citizenship is revealed as constructed through the assumption of a male white heterosexual citizen (Richardson, 2000: 75; 1998; Phelan, 1995; Phillips, 1991), a construction that becomes meaningful only by referring to the subjects that fall outside it (Roseneil, 2013).

By developing the notion of the ‘sexual citizen’, Weeks points to the constraints and exclusions that traditional notions of citizenship produce by putting forward the need to foreground not only issues of gender, class and race but also of the heteronormativity of contemporary societies and the challenges posed by ‘sexual minorities’ (Weeks, 1998: 39). Requests for recognition of parenting, partnership and inclusion in the welfare state, as well as protection against homophobia, have been defined as ‘moments of citizenship’ (Weeks, 1998: 37) where, within western gay and lesbian movements, claims for recognition of ways of being outside the hetero-norm intersect with claims to re-definition of belonging to the community of citizens (Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan, 2001; Weeks, 1998: 37; Cooper, 1994). In this way, concepts such as intimate and sexual citizenship are particularly useful in revealing the

limitations of traditional notions of citizenship while at the same time exposing ‘the occlusion and hesitation of contemporary debates’ (Weeks 1998: 37). In particular, with Roseneil, notions of intimate citizenship allow the consideration of:

the freedom and ability to construct and live selfhood and close relationships—sexual/love relationships, friendships, parental and kin relations—safely, securely and according to personal choice, in their dynamic changing forms, with respect, recognition and support from state and civil society (Roseneil, 2010: 82).

It is important at this stage to acknowledge how the notion of citizenship appears to carry an intrinsic suggestion of an ‘other’ that is excluded in order to define the ones who belong (Isin, 2000). Recent changes in the recognition of lesbian and gay rights reveal how, while heterosexuality might in specific instances no longer be a *sine qua non* requirement for the recognition of rights, ‘heterosexuality has not yet been displaced as the reference point for “equality” and ”normality”’ (Richardson and Monro, 2012: 65). Heterosexuality is hence maintained as the norm that polices the boundaries of belonging and exclusion (Richardson, 2000: 75).

Whether citizenship is defined as a set of civil, political and social rights or as social membership of a nation-state or a community, its enjoyment is predicated on adherence to heteronorms (Richardson, 2000: 75-85; 2000a: 107). Most importantly, Richardson highlights how the inclusion and reception of recent gay and lesbian rights claims (most notably the lowering of the age of consent and the decriminalisation of consensual sex in the UK) has been predicated on the construction of lesbian women and gay men as a minority group ‘different and less than the norm, but who can’t help “being that way” and therefore should not be discriminated against on that basis’ (Richardson, 2000: 76). This construction, she argues, is entrenched in notions of tolerance and assimilation whereby the right is granted to be tolerated on condition that lesbians and gay men ‘remain in the private sphere and do not seek public recognition or membership in the political community’ (Richardson, 2000: 77). The confinement of lesbian and gay citizenship to the private sphere, however, carries with it an intrinsic tension:

Whilst lesbian and gay men are banished from the public to the private realm, they are, in many senses, simultaneously excluded from the private where this is conflated with ‘the family’ (Richardson, 2000: 78).

Richardson’s analysis evokes notions of silencing and censoring that sustain the idea of ‘repressive tolerance’ explored in the introduction (Dall’Orto, 1988). Silence and

censorship as explanatory categories inform the ongoing work on politics of sexuality (see Bertone, 2009; Poidimani, 2007) and intimate and sexual citizenship (Bertone, 2013; Bonini Baraldi, 2008; Billotta, 2008) in contemporary Italy. Analysing the legal frameworks for the recognition of forms of cohabitation proposed by the Prodi II Government (2006-2008), Bonini Baraldi argues that both the DICO and the CUS bills aimed at positioning same-sex unions as of less worth than the heterosexual family (2008). He contends that ‘the censoring temptations which have always contributed to the disappearance of same-sex couples or to their (self) portrayal as something different and less worthy’ spring from the legislature’s intention of perpetuating the exclusion of non-heterosexual unions and identities from the public sphere (Bonini Baraldi, 2008: 176).

Moral conflicts and culture war

The legal recognition of same-sex couples, access to assisted conception and reproductive technologies as well as homosexual parenting are among the issues that, Plummer contends, typify the ‘moral conflicts of our time’ (2003: 34). Drawing on theories of de-traditionalisation (Giddens, 1991, 1992; Castells, 1995; Beck, 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995), Plummer emphasises how late modernity is characterised by the collapse of what he terms ‘the grand narrative of intimacy’ (2003: 18). Societies have always contained plurality, variability, and change; however, ‘overarching cultural paradigms that seemed to plausibly hold together the world and its history’ were previously framed through religious narratives (Plummer, 2003:18). Late modernity, by contrast, is characterised by the ongoing displacement of these regulatory narratives. Yet, as Plummer emphasises, it is precisely ‘the very fragility of these traditions (...) [that] ironically lead them to adopt stronger positions (...) generating a powerful sense of tribal fundamentalism over lives’ (2003: 18). This fundamentalism is traceable in the ways in which changes in private practices around intimacies provoke heated public reaction (Weeks, 2007; Roseneil, 2010). Fundamentalism therefore produces conflicts, where new claims and the rise of reactionary positions that attempt to limit those changes routinely generate each other (Plummer, 2003: 37).

Understanding this aspect of political conflict as Plummer (1995, 2003) and Smith and Windes (1997) is important because their positions account for the ways in which different sides in debates can influence each other’s claims (see also Hunter, 1991). Smith and Windes (1997), in their analysis of debates on the recognition of LGBT rights in the US, draw on James Hunter’s (1991) analysis of ‘culture wars’. With

Hunter, they argue that differing positions carry with them identity categories that are formed both within communities and as a consequence of conflicting discourses (1997: 32). The strategies of mainstream LGBT groups are here read as a result of the interaction with opponents and the necessity to acquire widespread consensus. However, Smith and Windes suggest that in framing pro-gay and anti-gay positions as internally coherent and stable, Hunter (1991) disregards the continuous work and internal schisms between communities (1997: 31).

Mutually constitutive positions

In the introduction, I discussed the notion of ‘repressive tolerance’ and emphasised how sexuality has been framed as pertaining to the realm of morality, with control delegated to the Catholic Church (Dall’Orto, 1988). In order to understand the official position of the Catholic Church in the timeframe considered, it is necessary to turn to the official doctrine of the Catholic Church. The official Catechism³¹ distinguishes between homosexual tendencies, considered as ‘objectively disordered’ and the fruit of an immature sexuality, and homosexual acts, defined as ‘intrinsically disordered’ since they are contrary to the law of nature (Catechism: 2357-2358). This distinction can be traced back to the Second Vatican Council, where the rhetoric of condemnation of both the act and the actor was replaced by the moral rhetoric of condemnation of the homosexual act and the pastoral rhetoric of the salvation of the homosexual (Westerfelhaus, 1998: 269). The position of the Second Vatican Council was elaborated further in the *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons* (1986) written by then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. The letter states that support ought to be given to those who express disordered tendencies, but pastoral care should not in any way undermine the position of the Magisterium with regard to homosexuality. In other words, it must always be stated that homosexual acts are immoral (1986: 15). At the crossroads of these two rhetorics lies the position of the Catholic Church regarding violence against LGBT individuals; defined as deplorable, such acts are, however, partly condoned as the result of the increased public ‘ostentation of homosexuality’. Disorderly acts generate disordered violence (Fassin, 2010: 8).

³¹ I refer here to the Official Catechism, defined as ‘the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, as regards both faith and morals’ whose sources are traced in the Sacred Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, the Liturgy and the Church’s Magisterium (Catechism of the Catholic Church: 11).

Official Church doctrine fiercely rejects any arrangement that differs from heterosexual marriage, which should happen only once in the lifetime of an individual and should be aimed at procreation.³² Any form of union outside heterosexual marriage is therefore intrinsically and ontologically fallacious and weak, since it is based on a lack of commitment and/or unwillingness to procreate and hence is unable to fulfil the role of the couple within the whole community (Pontifical Council for the Family, 2000). This position acquires a more heated tone when the discussion moves to the topic of same-sex couples, whose recognition is defined as ‘much more grave’ (Pontifical Council for the Family, 2000) than that of heterosexual couples. The ideology of the Catholic Church then feeds the discourse of conservative politicians and groups that oppose the recognition of same-sex couples.

The construction of same-sex unions as fallacious and sterile is opposed by mainstream LGBT groups and their allies through the use of the language of the family and stable sexual identity categories (Bertone, 2013; Bertone and Franchi, 2014).

Drawing on Smith and Windes’ argument, it is possible to read essentialist notions of sexual orientations as a response to the representation of anti-gay groups (1997). Looking at the US, Smith and Windes explore how essentialist notions of sexual orientation allow LGBT activists to reproduce a civil rights discourse that in the US characterises the struggles of ethnic minorities (1997). These can be opposed to the discourse of sexuality as choice. And it is this discourse of choice that is deployed by US anti-gay groups to gain consensus around practices aimed at censoring representation of same-sex desires. Mainstream LGBT groups in Italy, however, by focusing on the legal recognition of same-sex relationships, aim to make an intervention in the public sphere and participate trying to transform the meaning of the signifier ‘family’.

The tensions described here generate an apparent paradox, whereby the claims made by LGBT groups for recognition of stable/monogamous unions are denied by the very system that once stigmatised (particularly following the HIV-Aids crisis) non-heterosexual sexualities as promiscuous (Poidimani, 2007: 29). In his analysis of the

³² The Catholic Church does not recognise civil law divorce. Religious marriage can be rendered null only by religious tribunals under very strict circumstances. A marriage can be declared null (i.e. legally void) by the Roman Rota—the tribunal of the Roman Catholic Church—only on grounds ‘as defect of form or lack of consent or owing to the existence of a diriment impediment which is undisposed’ (Jones, 2011: 108) or can be dissolved ‘when ratified but not consummated’ (Jones, 2011: 56).

PACS debate in France, Eric Fassin explores this apparent paradox to demonstrate how the issue of LGBT claims revealed a tension around the borders of the nation and the construction of the ‘other’ that does not belong (2001). The conflict at the core of PACS, Fassin argues, was the shift from toleration to recognition of non-heterosexual unions. Once recognised, the couple outside the heterosexual script could exert a disruptive force:

The problem, which was accurately perceived by the conservative progressives, was that once engaged in such logic, there was no reason not to continue. Why not proceed beyond couples to families? Why stop at domestic partnerships without including reproductive rights? (2001: 225)

Fassin’s analysis reconnects to the ways in which the fierce defence of the status quo in the name of the ‘natural family’ carries with it the desire to maintain as unquestioned the categories of gender, sex and sexuality that serve to control the borders of the nation, as discussed in the previous chapter. Judith Butler takes Fassin’s argument further to expose how the issue contributes to the ongoing discursive production that aims at maintaining heteronorms (2002). Her analysis of the tensions at the core of the French debate on filiation as well the debates on gay marriage (traversing both the US and EU) points to the ways in which claims for legitimisation fail to destabilise heteronormative understanding of bodies, kinship and subjective positions. The process of legitimisation is in the state’s own terms and agreeing to it requires abiding with its lexicon and norms. More specifically, the terms of legitimisation are possible only through ‘producing and intensifying regions of illegitimacy’ (Butler 2002: 17). The forms of kinship that remain unnamed or do not respond to the possibility of legitimisation become in turn unintelligible (Butler, 2000, 2002). The ways in which pro- and anti- positions in relation to the recognition of same-sex relationships are framed solidify the inside/outside binary, suggesting the necessity of troubling precisely the claims that generate tensions and evoke reactions (Butler, 2002, 2008).

In the previous chapter I emphasised how the history of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the party system makes it difficult to position within the traditional political spectrum those who hold an anti-gay or indeed a pro-gay position (Bernini, 2010; Bonini Baraldi, 2008). The dissolution of the DC, the main Catholic party in the mid-1990s, meant that conservative Catholics MPs now belong to many different parties, both left and right, and constitute an ‘influential minority’ (Diamanti and Ceccarini, 2007). Similarly, as Bonini Baraldi argues, even so-called progressive

politics can contribute to the marginalisation of non-normative identities by framing same-sex relationships as unworthy compared to the heterosexual married couple (2008). To place an emphasis on conflicts does not negate those assumptions; on the contrary, it means to focus precisely on the meanings that sustain exclusion when dominant positions are shaken and their hegemony is placed under threat. Moral conflicts are crucial because of the way they open up possibilities for the emergence of new discourses in the public sphere. At the same time, conflicts demand that we scrutinise arenas such as the news media, in which debates unfold and that simplify and trivialise them (Hunter, 1991; Smith and Windes, 2000). In the process of media trivialisation of concerns regarding sexual rights, relations and subjectivities, it is possible to trace the ways in which the transformative power of conflict is contained.

Media coverage and news values

The analysis of the social, especially in late modernity, is saturated with the idea of the relevance of media. Lilie Chouliaraki argues that this needs to be taken further to include ‘the crucial question of how mediated representations alter significantly the forms of knowledge, social relations and social subjects they articulate’ (2000: 295). The literature on culture wars and intimate citizenship investigated in this section points to the ways in which relationships and conflicts articulate and produce circulating meanings—meanings that are mutually constitutive and aim at gathering consensus around contentious issues. However, in the following I advocate a framework that recognises news media as a ‘set of institutional discursive practices which struggle for hegemony of meaning and representation’ (Chouliaraki, 2000: 295) and therefore participate in the ongoing culture war and in the production of circulating dominant discourses.

In her work on LGBT movements and intimate citizenship in Southern Europe, Santos highlights how, following the lobbying of activists, LGBT issues are increasingly considered newsworthy and are increasingly present in mainstream news media (2013: 132). At the same time, she unravels the complicated picture of the relationship between the media and LGBT groups by emphasising how the conservative media still contains homo/trans phobic representations. She also raises fundamental questions about the ways in which, when a less transphobic and homophobic representation is achieved, it appears to conflate with a ‘normalising’ one (2013:143) that corresponds to the unthreatening ‘good queer’ (Seidman, 2005). Drawing on feminist media studies (Carter et al., 1998; Alat, 2006) and analysis of news media

discourse (Fowler, 1991; Alwood, 1996), Santos defines the analysis of news media as central both to unravelling the ways in which heterosexism is maintained and to highlighting one of the technologies of change adopted by Portuguese LGBT activists. ‘[M]edia in general and the news in particular’, she argues, ‘are important instruments of resistance—but also of the dominant ideology’ (2013: 132).

Santos’ emphasis on the relevance of media, and news media in particular, resonates with Trappolin’s work on Italian newspapers that has strongly influenced my approach to news media. Trappolin analyses Italian newspaper coverage of protests surrounding the organisation of Padua Gay Pride in 2002 (2007, 2009a) as well as debates around same-sex partnership and homosexual parenting (2009, 2011), filling in a gap in the analysis of Italian news media in relation to LGBT claims. In focusing on newspaper coverage, Trappolin stresses how the mainstream newspapers he analyses participate in the negotiation of heated controversies, but he places most emphasis on the strategies they use to legitimise and consolidate their position in the debate (2009: 17). In investigating the news media framing of Padua Gay Pride Parade, Trappolin focuses on newspapers as actors that not only participate in the debate with their own agenda but are doing so in order to cement their relevance in the public sphere (2009). Trappolin’s position is not to suggest that news media misrepresent events, but rather that newspapers adopt a series of strategies, such as giving prominence to events that can potentially create tension or reinforcing pre-existing reasons for contrast, that enhance conflict and maintain it at the forefront of the public sphere. This in turn maintains the newspaper’s centrality in representing a newsworthy debate (2009:12).

Like Trappolin, in this thesis I focus on two mainstream newspapers, *la Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera*. In chapter three I discuss the strengths and limitations of the analysis of the press in light of the relevance of other media such as TV and the internet; however, I suggest the two newspapers are crucial to understanding the mechanisms through which events acquire relevance (Van Dijk, 1993; Bell, 1991; Hall et al., 1978) as well as the relationship between the media and politics (Mancini, 2013; Mazzoleni and Schultz, 1999; Schudson, 2002).

Since their inception, media and journalism studies have attempted to trace the patterns that regulate the newsroom’s decision-making processes and have conducted studies that aimed to reveal how events became news (Galtung and Ruge, 1965). These studies exposed both the criteria by which journalists appear to select newsworthy events, as well as how journalists contribute to reproducing/emphasising the

characteristics that make events newsworthy (Harcup and O’Neil, 2001). This body of research uncovered, for instance, how consonance with pre-existing images and existing frames of reference define an event as newsworthy as well as revealing how emphasis is often placed on the characteristics that justify news media’s ongoing attention (Harcup and O’Neil, 2001: 263).

The notion of newsworthiness becomes crucial in the analysis of the relationship between the media and politics. In the upholding and reinforcing of news values, Mazzoleni and Schultz trace one of the technologies of media power in relation to politics (1999). They argue:

News value criteria such as proximity, conflict, drama, and personalization not only determine what events come to the attention of the media and hence of the public through the news reports; these criteria also impose a systematic bias upon the media reality of politics because news reports typically accentuate the features that make an event newsworthy (1999: 251)

Politics, they argue, has therefore become increasingly mediatised. The concept of mediatisation spotlights the co-dependency between political actors and news media, in which the former have internalised the rules of newsworthiness to the extent that the media can be thought of as part of the governing process (Strömbäck, 2008: 240). News media in turn ‘make politics more newsworthy and conveniently formatted’ (Schultz, 2004: 89-90). In this vein, the debate on legal recognition of de-facto unions can be interpreted as a newsworthy event in which politicians participated in order to obtain visibility. News media consequently emphasised the characteristics that made the debate newsworthy, namely the conflict between opposing views, in order to further justify the debate’s relevance, and in so doing conveniently formatted it in a way that was easily understandable by those who were expected to consume that representation.

While this approach provides an interesting overview of the processes that regulate the relationship between news media and politics, the concept of newsworthiness alone appears to be a descriptive tool. It indicates how newsrooms’ decisions are taken, but it fails to address the fundamental question of why certain characteristics are defined as newsworthy and, crucially, to whose advantage (Hall et al., 1978). Only through unravelling this fundamental question is it possible to unveil the dynamics that make news media both a site of change and a site for the maintenance of dominant ideologies (Santos, 2013). Similarly, the notion of mediatisation needs to be further interrogated in order to unravel the relation between news media and the tensions that appear to characterise questions of sexual and intimate citizenship.

Block, in revising the concept of the mediatisation of politics, suggests that only a culturalist approach that integrates the notion of hegemony can account for the complex interconnections between news media, politics and the tensions that permeate society (2013: 260). Following Block, I argue that it is only through the integration of the notion of hegemony and its relationship to news media that it is possible to understand the complex and contrasting forces that characterise sexual politics in contemporary Italy, and the ‘censoring temptations’ with regard to the legal recognition of same-sex unions (Bonini Baraldi, 2008), and consequently shed light on the role news media play in the disruptive potential of the debate.

Hegemony and the limits of the debate

The notion of hegemony revolutionised the analysis of news media. As an analytical concept, it challenges the idea of news media as transparent bearers of meaning (Hall et al., 1978; Meyers, 1994; Vavrus, 2002; Alat, 2006; Gill, 2007) and points to their role in manufacturing the consensus necessary to maintain power (Hall et al., 1978). Hegemony can be understood as the process through which consensus is acquired without the use of violence (Gramsci, 1971). In engaging with the concept of hegemony, I define how its integration is particularly fruitful in my thesis since it points precisely to the contested nature of definition and meanings and their political and ideological consequences (Allen, 1999; Gill, 2007; Jowett and Peel, 2010).

In the 1930s, Italian political thinker Antonio Gramsci produced a series of reflections generated by the pressing question of where the proletariat went wrong in failing to revolutionise bourgeois society at a point of deep economic crisis. He demonstrated a growing dissatisfaction with the Marxist formulation of ideology as ‘false consciousness’, whereby the ruling class, owning the means of production, oppress the subaltern classes by exploiting their labour to produce wealth, thus maintaining their power. ‘False consciousness’ is understood as a by-product of capitalist ideology, a frame of thinking that is shared uncritically by the whole of society to justify oppression (to the point of making it invisible) in the eyes of the oppressed (Hawkes, 2003:114). Gramsci’s revision of the notion of ideology came from the need to include ‘consensus’ in his explanation and rethink the role that dominant ideologies play in co-opting the subaltern (Barrett, 1991: 54; Mouffe, 1979).

The notion of consensus at the level of civil society cannot be explained solely by the power of a coercive state. The coercive power of one group (class) over another is by its nature limited and needs to be reinforced by the inclusion in the leadership

project of the dominant group of those who are dominated (their co-optation) (Hall, 1996a: 426).³³ Ideology is hence understood as a discursive phenomenon involving an ongoing fight ‘often thought out on the terrain of fragmented and contradictory common sense’ (Gill, 2007: 56). Rather than fully formed ideas fighting for dominance the struggle ‘involves contestations over meaning and ownership of particular notions—like democracy, freedom or the nation’ (Gill, 2007: 56). Consensus is therefore acquired by regulating the limits of ‘common sense’ through which the dominant ideology is made invisible, made to appear instead ‘as the natural unpolitical state of things accepted by each and everyone’ (Van Zoonen, 1994: 24). News media are understood as one of the means through which people are encouraged ‘to accept as *natural, obvious* or *commonsensical* certain preferred ways of classifying reality’ (Allan, 2004: 80). It is precisely in this understanding that I envisage the possibility of recuperating Santos’s claim (2013:132) about the role of media in reproducing the dominant ideology that regulates sexual politics.

Analysis of news media unravels ‘the “fit” between dominant ideas, professional ideologies and practices’ (Hall, 1978: 57). In 1978, Hall et al.’s *Policing the crisis: mugging, the state and law and order* stressed the multiple connections that link different facets of the social. News media, in Hall et al.’s analysis, actively participate in the construction of the frame for interpreting events. Such an approach departs from the analysis of news values and their influence on the media coverage of events. It crucially adds to the analysis the fit of the representation with dominant ideologies. *Policing the crisis* unveils the ‘circuit between police, judges and magistrates, newspapers and politicians, reinforcing each other in defining a problem and demanding action to solve it’ (Barker and Beezer, 1992: 85). News media are, in Hall et al.’s work, crucial actors in defining the limits through which events can be interpreted and consequently constraining the range of possible reactions to them. Hall et al. unveiled the dominant power relations and their productive force that in turn define the boundaries of the effects of media in society at large and in the analysis of politics (1978). This framework moves beyond any conspiracy theory model of understanding media power to emphasise the connections between media coverage of events and ‘dominant ideas’ within a given society and unveil the complicated mechanisms that shape relationships

³³ Gramsci does not deny the force of the state, yet he encourages us not to focus solely on those instances in which coercion is visible (hence easily identifiable).

between the state, the law and public opinion (Hall et al., 1978, 1980; Barker and Beezer, 1992: 85).

A similar understanding of news media is at the core of the work of Meyers (1994). Adopting a discourse analytical approach, Meyers scrutinises news texts that appeared in the *Washington Post* between 30 December 1992 and 12 February 1993 in relation to the lifting of the ban on homosexuality in the U.S armed forces (1994: 326). Analysing the representation of the controversy that followed the repeal of the ban, Meyers reveals how ‘the news reflected the inherent homophobia of the dominant ideology’ (1994: 339). Meyers’ argument rests on the observation that while contrasting positions are accounted for in the news coverage, the most frequently reported opinions belong to the US Congress and US military, whereas voices from within the lesbian and gay communities are silenced or relegated to the margins (1994: 327). This imbalance, she argues, profoundly affects the terms of the debate; the issue of the repeal was hence framed as a problem of gay men and lesbians’ ‘military preparedness’ and rarely in terms of either fairness or the constitutionality of the ban (Meyers, 1994: 340).

In regulating the representation of the tension that occurred as a consequence of the repeal of the ban, the news media Meyer analysed contributed to the control over the limits of common sense, hence the maintenance of the dominant ideology. Similarly, analysis of *la Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera* in relation to the controversies around the legal recognition of *de facto unions* in Italy in 2006-2008 reveals the limits of common sense, and consequently the role of news media in maintaining the dominant ideology whilst at the same time revealing counter-hegemonic tendencies at work. In Gramsci’s analysis, hegemony does not pertain solely to the ruling class but rather to all groups; the aim of subordinates is to ensure that their hegemonic project is made understandable to other groups (Gramsci, 1971: 181). Given that hegemony is the organisation of consensus (Barrett, 1991: 54), and consensus needs to be attained and constantly regained in order to secure power, it is important to concentrate on the moments of tension within societies, especially tensions over meanings and definitions.

In their work on representation of same-sex civil partnerships, Jowett and Peel, following Meyers (1994), investigate the British press as a ‘major site for the contestation over meaning in society’ (2010: 207). In investigating the ways in which the British press represented civil partnerships and same-sex relationships in the aftermath of the approval of the law in the UK in 2005, Jowett and Peel demonstrate the presence of different representations in the newspapers analysed. The dominant

representation was of civil partnership as ‘same-sex marriage’: the newsworthiness of ‘gay marriage’ fostered the inclusion of the vocabulary of marriage (with the use of ‘groom’, ‘bride’, etc.), which shadowed the differences between the two institutions. The increasing presence of LGBT voices in UK media (and these voices’ newsworthiness) also made space for a different representation that emphasised the distinctions between civil partnership and marriage, and the inferior status of the former, while only a handful of articles problematised dominant heteronormative notions of marriage and partnership (2010: 208-209). In investigating the ideological and political implications of different representations of same-sex relationships and their hierarchy of presence, Jowett and Peel (2010) speak to the tension between assimilation and disruption discussed above.

The dominant representations of the institution of civil partnership can be read both in terms of assimilatory strategies that tend to shift the boundaries of the acceptable and as possibilities for disruption whereby, for instance, the inclusion of the ‘LG’ into marriage can modify the heterosexual connotation of the institution from within (Jowett and Peel, 2010: 211; Clarke and Kitzinger, 2005; Clarke, 2002). However, while both frames are open to different interpretations of their ideological and political consequences, they appear as constructed around the centrality of heterosexuality and heterosexual categories. The representation of heterosexual marriage as the institution against which same-sex civil partnership is measured arguably disrupts its relevance. Moreover the third thread of articles, invoking a critical reflection on notions of marriage and partnership, reveals the ways in which newsworthiness produces a hierarchy of interpretations that forecloses the possibility of allowing alternative views to shape the limits of common sense, and, effectively, to enter the frame of references of this particular issue.

This argument resonates with research conducted on debates about gay and lesbian parenting. Focusing on analysis of media coverage, critics have demonstrated how, in producing and reproducing heteronormative understandings of family, gender and sexuality, mainstream news media discourse reinforces a hierarchical construction of homosexuality and heterosexuality, in which the latter is routinely unquestioned as the norm (Landau, 2009; Crabb and Augoustinos, 2008; Riggs, 2005). Crabb and Augoustinos’ analysis of the British press demonstrates how news media discourses of genetics and biological heritage define the boundaries of true family ties and ‘position alternative family structures further outside the normative, acceptable constructions of

family' (2008: 311). The dominance of these accounts influences how alternatives to traditional forms of parenthood and family are constructed and help perpetuate the privileged position of heterosexuality (see also Wilcox, 2003). This conclusion resonates with Riggs (2005) who analyses the representation of gay and lesbian parenthood and stresses how circulating discourses that emphasise the similarities between gay and straight families work to erase the disruptive potential that kinship relations outside the heteronorm might have.³⁴

To read the relationship between media and politics through the notion of hegemony is therefore conducive to enriching our understanding of the disruptive force of the debate on the legal recognition of *de facto unions*. It helps to maintain a critical awareness of the ways in which circulating discourses operate to sustain the status quo while allowing us to think about possibilities for change. In particular, hegemony sheds further light on the ways in which regulating binaries such as heterosexual/homosexual, in/out, acceptable/unacceptable and lawful/unlawful are both maintained and disrupted. Indeed, as the research outlined above confirms, circulating discourses on same-sex families and alternative organisation of intimacies often maintain the privilege of heterosexuality whilst at the same time confirming, in the entrenching of normative discourses, the loss of the hegemonic position of heterosexuality (Roseneil, 2000).

In the investigation of the complicated tension that ensues from the ongoing fight for hegemony, news media cannot be interpreted solely as the mirror of what is happening, nor as the mere instrument of the elite. Neither can the logic of the organisation of news rely solely on the understanding of circulating news values. It is necessary to integrate the logic through which news media construct representations with a more nuanced understanding of the relationships of power and hegemony. The analysis of news media representations of contentious debates around LGBT rights helps to clarify how news media, in framing the limits of common sense, participate in the 'moral conflicts of our time' (Plummer, 2003).

The literature explored above emphasises the relationship between politics and news media, highlighting the close relationship between the internalisation of news values by political actors (Strömbäck, 2008: 240) and the role of the media in 'formatting' political debates (Schultz, 2004: 90). The integration of the notion of

³⁴ In chapter six I investigate these assumptions in relation to the representation of same sex relationships and lesbian motherhood in the film *Father of the Brides*, broadcast in November 2006 at the height of the political debate on the legal recognition of de facto unions.

hegemony acknowledges the ways in which the formatting of political tensions can be investigated in relation to the limits of commons sense. The analysis of news media hence consolidates understanding of the perpetuation of heteronormative notions (see Meyers, 1994) as well as enhancing the possibility of disruptive interventions that destabilise the status quo (Riggs, 2005; Jowett and Peel, 2010).

In framing their research questions around the impact of media coverage on the limits of common sense, the focus of these works is not the audience and the reception of the texts but rather the texts and their production as a technology of hegemony (Jowett and Peel, 2010: 208). This raises particularly interesting questions about Italian news media due to their strong ties with political parties and their relationship with state power (Hibberd, 2007, 2008; Mancini, 1993). In order to apply these frameworks to the analysis of media coverage of the contentious debate on legal recognition in Italy (2006-2008), the following sections discuss the specificity of the Italian media system and reconnect with the different bodies of literature investigated in this chapter that constitute the theoretical architecture of this thesis.

Italian media as the site for investigation

Italian news media are a significant site of analysis to understand what has been referred to as ‘one of the largest but also the most controversial [media systems] of its kind in mainland Europe’ (Hibberd, 2008:1). The Italian media system is characterised by strong state control, expressed both in the state-owned national broadcasting company (RAI) and in the fact that the state subsidises the national press (Mancini, 1993: 138; Rothenberg, 2009: 164). RAI is the national television broadcasting company and its board of directors are politically appointed; seven out of its nine members are appointed by the *Commissione Parlamentare di Vigilanza Rai* (Parliamentary Supervisory Commission of RAI, composed of members of the Chambers of Deputies and of the Senate), and two are nominated by the Treasury, which is the majority stakeholder (Cepernich, 2009: 35; Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 109; Padovani, 2005). This can be defined as an incomplete pluralism that reflects on the board of directors the influences of different political parties (Mancini, 2004). The composition of the board of directors, problematic as it is (Hanrietty, 2010), highlights the strong ties between political power and state television.

The strong ties became even more controversial in relation to the rise to power of Silvio Berlusconi, a media mogul and, since 1994, a dominant and highly controversial figure in the political debate (Cepernich, 2009: 42).³⁵ His companies control the three most-viewed commercial television channels in Italy (Italia 1, Rete 4 and Canale 5) alongside a series of digital channels. While in office, Berlusconi also benefited from the control of the state TV (Cepernich, 2009: 35). When Berlusconi was in power, the Italian media system was characterised by a concentration of the information apparatus in a single individual.

The picture is further complicated by the Italian press, which is characterised by a ‘strong degree of partisanship’ and ‘media-political elites integration’ (Mancini, 1993: 138). As Mancini argues, it is possible to trace a ‘strong professional interchange’ between the media and the political system; ‘professionals in the political world have often come from the world of journalism, and those in politics, in many cases, have successfully established themselves in journalism’ (1999: 138). These traits characterise the relationships between the Italian state, the political parties and the media (Hibberd, 2007, 2008). The long tradition of state control of the press, the role of the media in the political debates, and the power that one man exercised over the Italian media system, mean that Italy offers an interesting opportunity to think through the relationship between the press and politics; and the Italian press offers a fruitful site of analysis of the construction of common sense. Further, as discussed in chapter three, *Corriere della Sera* and *la Repubblica* are representative of two different political traditions: the former a liberal ‘moderately conservative’ elite (Rothenberg, 2009: 170), the latter drawing on a left wing tradition. The different traditions of the two newspapers allows a thorough examination of the complexities of contemporary Italian politics of sexuality and the difficult distinction between the conservative and the progressive sides of the political spectrum. As discussed in chapter one, the desire to please the Catholic ‘influential minority’ (Diamanti and Ceccarini, 2007) generated a conservative

³⁵ Berlusconi’s rise to power has been defined as the by-product of his media power, the social and political crisis following Tangentopoli, the corruption scandal that engulfed the political system in the early 1990s and the consequential demise of the DC and PCI, as well as the lack of strong opposition (Albertazzi and Rothenberg, 2009: 3-7; Mazzoleni, 2004; Hibberd, 2008). Both his political career and the role the media played in his success, as well as his cultural legacy, continue to attract the attention of a number of scholars (Ginsborg, 2004; Mazzoleni, 2004; Andrews, 2005; Campus, 2010; Allum, 2011; Fabbrini, 2013). Berlusconi’s empire is comprised of television channels, publishing companies and other businesses in a diverse range of sectors, including banking and football clubs (Cepernich, 2009: 33).

convergence of different parties on issues such as abortion, assisted conception and legal recognition of *de facto unions*.

Indeed, the Italian politics of sexuality, as discussed in the previous chapter, is characterised by an inclination towards denial (Bertone, 2009) fed by the strong presence of the Catholic Church and its role in governing discourses about family and sexuality (Bernini, 2009). Analysis of the recent past has revealed the constant marginalisation of non-normative sexualities and the construction of same-sex couples as less worthy than the Italian family (Bonini Baraldi, 2008). Importantly, it has been argued, the censoring temptation in relation to non-normative sexualities does not pertain solely to conservative right-wing parties and groups but permeates the entire political spectrum (Ross, 2008; Danna, 2005). The possibility of the legal recognition of *de facto unions* in Italy needs therefore to be approached with caution. It is necessary to put aside preconceived distinctions in order to better reveal where discourses of exclusion lie (Bonini Baraldi, 2008). Opposition to the legal recognition of *de facto unions* and in particular to the recognition of same-sex couples cannot be confined to specific parties, nor is the support for the law. This has been read, as suggested in chapter one, as related to the pervasive role of the Catholic Church and the reluctance of parties across the spectrum to challenge its positions on family and sexuality (Donà, 2009; Bernini, 2008).

In relation to media representation, this consideration opens interesting scenarios. Given the strong ties between media and politics, and considering the conservative sexual politics that appear to characterise contemporary Italy, how can different and disruptive understandings find a space in the debates investigated here? This seems particularly important given that Italian LGBT activists draw attention to their limited ability to impact mainstream news media and denounce the overwhelming presence of conservative politicians and clergy (Santos, 2013: 116; Trappolin, 2006). Meyers demonstrated how the presence/absence of different voices shapes the frame of a debate: in her analysis of the media coverage of the repeal of the ban on gay men and lesbian women serving in the US military, she explores how media discourse constantly reiterated the construction of the promiscuous homosexual dangerous to the fibre of the nation (1994: 340). In their ability to regulate the construction of subjective positions, the news media participate in the reproduction of exclusionary discourses that maintain and police the boundaries between in/out, us/them (Seidman, 2005; Richardson, 2001). How does this operate against a background characterised by a tendency to denial

(Bertone, 2009) and censorship (Bonini Baraldi, 2008) when at the core is precisely the recognition of those who have been routinely silenced?

Santos's claims, explored at the beginning of this section, resonate with the interesting stream of analysis on US and UK news media; research on news media coverage relating to the legal recognition of same-sex relations has been flourishing in the UK with regards to the approval of the Civil Partnership Act (Jowett and Peel, 2010), and in the US regarding the issue of the 'Don't Ask/Don't Tell' policy (Meyers, 1994).

Research has highlighted the relevance of news media in relation to debates on gay and lesbian parenting (Landau, 2009; Clarke, 2001; Crabb and Augoustinos, 2008). Meyers (1994), Crabb and Augoustinos (2008), Jowett and Peel (2010), as well as Anderssen and Hellesund (2009) in the context of Norway, and Trappolin in Italy (2006, 2007, 2009) convincingly demonstrate that the analysis of press media discourse reveals recurrent patterns around which debates are articulated. Hegemonic discourses and constructions are unveiled as dominating the media coverage and contributing to shaping the discursive space in which tensions are negotiated.

To conclude this chapter I present below a series of vignettes epitomising some of the crucial tensions so far discussed in relation to contemporary Italy. The reason for this focus is twofold: firstly, it demonstrates some of the heated reactions to 'the family'; secondly, it highlights the ongoing relevance of addressing a series of events that unfolded between 2006 and 2008, almost a decade ago.

Negotiating tensions around the Italian family

To advertise the opening of a new store in Catania, in spring 2011, the international furniture maker Ikea plastered the Sicilian city with billboards featuring two men holding hands and carrying the iconic yellow Ikea carrier bag (fig.1).³⁶

³⁶At the top of the image is a reproduction of the IKEA FAMILY CARD and the caption 'we are open to all families'.



Figure 1: Ikea advertisement

During a telephone interview on the TV show *Klauscondicio*,³⁷ the then *Sottosegretario*³⁸ for family policies, Carlo Giovanardi, declared that advertising implying that gay couples are families was against the Italian Constitution. Giovanardi's declarations were then reported by mainstream media such as *la Repubblica* (Anon, 23 April 2011) and *Corriere della Sera* (Salvia, 24 April 2011). Giovanardi was quoted in various news outlets as saying that IKEA was free to target the groups they see fit; however, 'the term 'families' is in contrast with our fundamental law defining the family as a natural society based on the marriage between a man and a woman' (my translation). According to Giovanardi, the Constitution had been 'violently attacked' by the IKEA image (Lorenzo, *Corriere della Sera*, 24 April 2011). In the following chapter I will reflect on how the media analysed generate both an echo effect for statements such as Giovanardi's as well as providing a platform for reactions to anti-homosexual sentiments. I will pay particular attention to the ways in which the media coverage analysed is punctuated with instances in which the media talk about each other (Macdonald 2003). Investigating those moments allows for a deeper engagement with the issue of newsworthiness and its implications.

³⁷ *Klauscondicio* is a YouTube channel where PR expert/journalist/opinionist Klaus Davi uploads short interviews to politicians and various celebrities.

³⁸ The *sottosegretario* (under-secretary) is nominated by government ministers to undertake a supporting role to ministers' activity. A *sottosegretario* can be either nominated vice-minister or can be delegated to a specific area of competences. During the Berlusconi IV Government (2008-2011), the Minister for Family Policies introduced by the Prodi II Government (2006-2008) was abolished. Berlusconi, nominated Prime Minister, retained the mandate for Family Policies. Giovanardi was nominated *Sottosegretario* and among his duties was assisting the government on family policies.

Giovanardi's comments provoked LGBT communities to organise sit-ins and demonstrations. On 1 May 2011, various groups organised flash-mobs in front of numerous IKEA stores across Italy. The MP's tirade was also picked up and reproduced in other advertisements: from EATALY (fig 2- We too are open to all families) to the EASYJET-Italy (fig 3- Hopefully Giovanardi will like this family).



Figure 2-EATALY campaign

The image from EATALY was praised by Paola Concia, *Partito Democratico PD* (Democratic Party) MP and member of the association GayLeft as the appropriate response to Giovanardi (Serao, *la Repubblica*, 1 May 2011) and by Aurelio Mancuso, President of the association Equality-Italia, as the symbol of the MP's moral defeat.³⁹



Figure 3- Easyjet-Italy campaign

While in 2011 IKEA and EATALY's marketing strategies played with the idea of shifting values, where 'families' can be potentially spelled in the plural, in 2013, Guido Barilla, president of the international food company, claimed in a radio interview

³⁹www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2011/04/30/foto/pubblitic_ikea_si_chiera_anche_equality-15562951/1/?ref=search

that Barilla's advertising would never portray a gay couple since the brand supported 'traditional family values'⁴⁰. Similar to Giovanardi's declarations, which migrated from one media format to another, Barilla's also echoed on different media outlets, prompting reactions, defences and apologies, all centred on the definition of the family. 'The family' has always been a trademark of the food company and is at the core of the company's advertising: '*Dove c'è Barilla, c'è casa*' (where Barilla is, home is) has been the company's motto in the past decades. It is therefore unsurprising that a Barilla campaign created one of the most famous families, one which after decades still occupies the semantic field (Hall, 1997: 38) of Italian culture: the Family of the White Mill.

In the 1990s, Il Mulino Bianco (Barilla's bakery brand) ran an advertising campaign that featured a series of TV commercials whose closing line was 'Eat healthily, go back to nature'.⁴¹ At the centre of these commercials was a family that became known as the Family of the White Mill (*la Famiglia del Mulino Bianco*-fig.4).



Figure 4-The family of the White Mill (source: <http://www.mulinobianco.it/storia-e-pubblicita/la-comunicazione/1990-99/la-famiglia-del-mulino>)

The first advertisement, broadcast in 1990, introduced the family to the public: the first shot is of a journalist stuck in traffic who introduces himself as 'the dad' (in subsequent advertisements his name is revealed as Federico) and declares that his dream is to live in the countryside. His two children, who introduce themselves in the following scene, share his dream: the smiling good-looking boy's name is Andrea,

⁴⁰http://bologna.repubblica.it/cronaca/2013/10/07/news/barilla_fa_pace_con_il_mondo_gay_inc_ontro_a_bologna_con_associazioni-68087730/.

⁴¹The Campaign was created by the Armando Testa advertising agency. (<http://www.armandotesta.com/main.jsp>). The official website of the Mulino Bianco campaign stated that some of the TV advertisements have been directed by award winner Giuseppe Tornatore. Oscar award winner Ennio Morricone wrote the soundtracks of some of the TV advertisements.

while his pretty blonde sister is Linda. They would love to have a puppy and live in the countryside. The fourth member of the family introduces himself as ‘Grandpa’ while trying unsuccessfully to cross a busy street while carrying a grandfather clock. He shares the family’s desire to live in the countryside. The fourth scene is set in an elementary school classroom where the sound of city traffic can be heard through an open window. The teacher introduces herself as ‘the mum’, while closing the window and declaring that (again) her dream is to live in the countryside. The family’s dream becomes reality in the following scenes, where they are seen moving into their new home, a large white mill in an idyllic countryside setting (fig. 5). ⁴²



Figure 5-The White Mill (source <http://www.mulinobianco.it/storia-e-pubblicita/la-comunicazione/1990-99/la-famiglia-del-mulino>)

The language and the images used in the advertisement for the White Mill ideologically guide the viewer towards a system of signifieds⁴³ that pertain to the connotation of nature, which in turn plays on the rhetoric of good traditional values in which the nuclear (happy) family plays a vital role. While drawing on these systems of signifieds, the advertisement itself soon became part of the system of references. The expression ‘the Family of the White Mill’ became common currency to define a family whose members are continuously happy, close to each other and individually successful; in a word, perfect. Too perfect to be true.

Twenty years after the creation of the Family of the White Mill, Barilla’s invocation of the traditional family provoked reactions on social media and quickly hit

⁴² The first advertisement, as well as subsequent episodes of the Family of the White Mill saga, is widely available on the internet. The advertisement described here can be retrieved at http://youtu.be/d_n5_ZpX1J0.

⁴³ In his famous *Course in General Linguistics*, Ferdinand De Saussure contended that signs are composed by a sound/image (signifier) that is rendered intelligible by a concept (signified). (2011: 67). It is in Barthes’ work *The Rhetoric of Image* (1977), however, that the influence of ideology is explored in its full force.

the mainstream news media. Calls to boycott the brand followed, and Barilla's competitors seized the opportunity for further publicity: Pasta Garofalo produced a banner saying, 'We don't care who you do it with, the important thing is that you do it *al dente*'(my translation) while Buitoni posted a message on their official Facebook page: 'At the home of Buitoni there is place for everyone'(my translation). In the wake of what *Corriere della Sera* called 'The Pasta War',⁴⁴ Barilla drafted an apology to the LGBT communities.⁴⁵ Others, however, defended Barilla's freedom to express his opinion and his alliance with 'Italian traditions'.

The day after Barilla's interview, *il Fatto Quotidiano*⁴⁶ published an article by lawyer Marcello Mazzola titled *Gay Rights and the White Mill Family* that opens with the author claiming that:

We are facing a paradox whereby everyone is entitled to freely (and rightfully) express their sexuality and identity, their (sexual) orientation, but no longer their thoughts. Freedom of thought is endangered and it is the target of unbelievable attacks hidden under the banner of equal opportunities. (my translation)⁴⁷

In the above extract, the position of those who criticised Barilla's statement is framed as censorship that endangers the freedom of expressing one's opinion.

The events above epitomise some of the crucial issues that I have considered in this chapter (and the preceding one) in relation to contemporary Italy. First, they show how the increasing space occupied by discourses of non-heterosexual intimacies, coupled with claims for the recognition of rights, provokes conservative reactions aimed at containing the possibility of change and defending the status quo. Secondly, they expose the ongoing 'culture war' (Plummer, 2003; Smith and Windes, 2000) around the family and how alternative discourses and the conservative reactions to them, which are traversing contemporary Italy, currently preoccupy mainstream media. Third, the family, as a sign, is particularly contentious and occupies centre stage in the culture war, its history and politics around the ways it is and can be constructed, regulates its use in powerful ways (Chambers, 2001). Moreover, the advertisements also speak to a particularly normative understanding of sexual identities and non-heterosexual couples:

⁴⁴ http://www.corriere.it/cronache/13_settembre_28/pasta-gay-barilla-concorrenti-garofalo-buitoni-misura_e6efa860-2840-11e3-a563-c8f4c40a4aa3.shtml

⁴⁵ http://bologna.repubblica.it/cronaca/2013/10/07/news/barilla_fa_pace_con_il_mondo_gay_inc_onto_a_bologna_con_associazioni-68087730/

⁴⁶ *Il Fatto Quotidiano* is a daily newspaper founded in 2009.

⁴⁷ <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2013/09/27/famiglia-del-mulino-bianco/725111/> (my translation)

accepted and recognised through their presentation as potential consumers of food, holidays or furniture (Duggan, 2003).

The reactions that the campaigns elicited raise interesting questions in relation to the specificity of contemporary Italy. The representation of a gay couple holding hands pushed a government under-secretary to declare the image unconstitutional, while the CEO of a food corporation defined the company's traditional values through a denial of the very possibility of that representation. It is therefore possible to trace a peculiar resistance to 'allowing discursive space even for a homonormative (Duggan, 2003), familised subject, despite the attempts made in this direction by LGBT movements' (Bertone and Gusmano, 2013: 261-262). Hence, can the inclusion of the familised LGBT subject be seen as an act of resistance? Or is it in the discursive reproduction of the centrality of the normative family that the construction of the LGBT individual as a 'family outlaw' unworthy of relationship rights is replicated? (Calhoun, 2000; Bonini Baraldi, 2008) If so, we might ask from where does such a construction emerge, since representation of LGBT couples increasingly occupies the Italian public sphere? In these questions are the multiple layers that characterise the tensions between assimilation and radicalization in contemporary Italy. 'Moments of citizenship' (Weeks, 1998) that typify contemporary Italy are at the crossroad of complex dynamics that reveal the presence of both traditional and disruptive notions of citizenship (Cappellato and Mangarella, 2014; Bertone, 2013).

The tension generated by attempts to recognise *de facto unions* and in particular same-sex unions in Italy can be read through the lens of the ongoing changes that are traversing the country. The recognition of forms of intimacies other than the married heterosexual couple can be perceived as disruptive of the socially constructed nature of sexual categories and their constraining forces. Such moments, however, generate reactions that, as shown in this last section, appear particularly intense when the Italian family is foregrounded.

In aiming to contribute to the literature that investigates how the entrenched positions that characterise contemporary politics of sexuality in Italy are both maintained and disrupted, I focus in the ensuing chapters on the ways in which two mainstream newspapers (*la Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera*) cover debates such as the one that unfolded during the Prodi II government. In order to do this it is necessary to take into consideration the news values that regulate the production of media texts and also the way in which those values contribute to maintaining hegemonic power.

This proposition raises some interesting epistemological questions, which I address in the following chapter.

Chapter Three. Analysis of news media texts: methodological issues and concerns

Moments of intense conflict between opposing views can generate discourses that can potentially unsettle the status quo. Organisational principles and regulating binaries such as in/out, heterosexual/homosexual are questioned, their construction revealed and their dominance threatened (Plummer, 2003; Fassin, 2001; Roseneil, 2000). The legal recognition of *de facto unions* and same-sex couples is hotly contested in contemporary Italy (Donà, 2009). In this thesis this debate has been taken to exemplify the growing tensions in contemporary Italian sexual politics. These tensions are characterised by a strengthening of hegemonic discriminatory positions and the resistance of counter-hegemonic movements. Heated disputes, however, generate a polarisation that simplifies the issues at stake and limits the challenging potential of moments of intense clashes (Crowhurst and Bertone, 2012; Plummer, 2003: 37). In this thesis I identify news media as one of the sites in which tensions between different positions unfold and trivialisation of the issues at stake may occur. I therefore raise questions about the role the news media plays in relation to issues of power and hegemony (Hall 1980; Hall et al. 1978) and in particular about Italian news media and Italian newspapers, given their particular position in relation to politics (Hibberd, 2008; Mancini, 2004).

In this chapter I discuss first how my approach to media texts has been inspired by different traditions of media discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003; Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999; Van Dijk, 1985, 1988, 1991, 2000). The insights generated from these discourse analysis traditions allow me to explore news media texts as a fruitful arena in which to investigate the role of Italian news media in moments of intense tension, such as that characterised by the Prodi II Government (2006-2008). I highlight how these approaches enhance the possibility of unravelling the work of dominant ideologies as discussed in the previous chapter, as well as investigating circulating discourses.

Then, drawing on Meyers (1994), Trappolin (2007, 2009) and Jowett and Peel (2010), among others, I discuss how I narrow my focus to newspaper texts, in particular to the two bestselling Italian newspapers *Corriere della Sera* and *la Repubblica*, envisaging an approach to the texts that allows both the scrutiny of a large selection of texts and the detailed investigation of a selected few. While this narrow focus entails

limitations, it also allows me to gather fruitful insights, due both to the role the two newspapers play in relation to political parties and the porous boundaries that separate different news media (Macdonald, 2003). In the last section I consider a key challenge that lies at the core of my research: that of language and the process of translating the texts analysed, going on to suggest how this issue can be transformed into a resource for my analysis.

The relevance of a focus on media texts

As an umbrella term, discourse analysis identifies a variety of different forms and approaches that hold at their core four central features: a concern with the discourse itself, a view of language as constructive and constructed, an emphasis on discourse as a form of action, and a belief in the rhetorical organisation of discourse (Gill, 2000: 174). In holding discourse as the focus of the analysis, discourse analysts refute the idea that texts are a window on reality and instead interrogate the text in its own right (Gill, 2000: 58).

In this section I discuss how I unite the analysis of discourse with the notion of hegemony explored in the previous chapter. Discourse analytic approaches to media are indebted to the notion of discourse developed by Foucault (2002). In Foucault's terms, discourses are 'the practices that systematically form the object of which they speak' (2002: 54). At the core of Foucault's understanding of discourse, however, lies his refutation of Marxist notions of ideology. Where Gramsci contested the notion of ideology as false consciousness because it overlook consensus, Foucault refuted it as a fallacious concept (1980: 118). Since, in Foucault's terms, discourse is the only viable way to apprehend reality, it is impossible to claim that a materiality is intelligible to us outside of discourse; the notion of ideology as false consciousness can only be interpreted as an alternative to the dominant ideology (Foucault, 1980: 118).⁴⁸ It is therefore important to unravel the ways in which I integrate the use of a discourse analytic approach into the analysis of news media as one of the means through which I intend to scrutinise how dominant ideology is both maintained and resisted.

As Macdonald (2003: 22) contends in relation to media, the Foucaultian notion of discourse implies a focus more on 'what is being communicated, and in whose interests' and less on the question of who is responsible for the production of the texts.

⁴⁸ Many commentators argue that Foucault rejection of *ideology as false consciousness* has not been always consistent. (Barrett 1991; Turner 2003; Hall 1980)

On one side, this epistemological position allows concentration on the pervasive operation of discourse, while on the other side, placing the formation of discourse as often beyond individual control risks detaching the individuals who produce the texts from their responsibility, thus limiting the possibility of intervention (Macdonald, 2003: 23). The richness of Foucault's work has influenced our ability to understand media, in particular to further understand 'shifting discursive constellations and the relation between these and sociocultural changes' (Macdonald, 2003: 24) that are crucial for the analysis of the tensions between change and resistance to change that I have previously traced in relation to contemporary sexual politics in Italy. As Macdonald argues, therefore, while Foucault's contribution cannot be overlooked, it is necessary to maintain the relevance of ideology in the analysis of power since

Resurrecting ideology's profile in media analysis also prompts alertness of the 'unsaid' of discourse that remains one of the most effective mechanisms of power (2003: 51)

It is in the understanding of power that it is possible to conjugate notions of discourse and hegemony. Power in Foucault's work is no longer the oppressive (visible) power of the state but goes beyond the limit of the state and is not (solely) related to economic interests (1979: 38). It is Foucault's analysis of power that allows for the framing of news media discourse as one of the technologies through which the status quo is maintained. Foucault's understanding of power resonates strongly with Gramsci's understanding of hegemony (1948: 197). As discussed in the previous chapter, power, for Gramsci, cannot be thought of solely as coercive but also as predicated on the construction of consent; further, Gramsci and Foucault share an understanding of power as pervasive and emanating from everywhere (see also Hall, 1997: 261).

The rejection of the notion of power as coming from a single structure helps to raise awareness of the multiple forms that power may take, as well as its role in constructing the individual through the reproduction of discourses (Brown, 2006: 67). In his approach to power, Foucault makes space for an analysis of media that is informed by a desire for change; Foucault's idea of power retains the possibility of resistance that 'is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power' and is immanent in the power network (Foucault, 1998: 93). The notion of resistance as ingrained in the notion of power opens up the possibility of investigating discourse as both sustaining the status

quo and opening space for change since, as Brown argues, ‘domination is never complete, never total, never fully saturating the social order’ (2006: 71).

In the work of Fairclough, notions of discourse, ideology and hegemony are brought together and a focus on media discourse is embedded in the analysis of the socio-cultural context in which the discourse arises (1995a: 18). Discourses are here understood as historically and socially situated and ‘in a dialectical relationship with other facets of the social (...) [they are] socially shaped, but [are] also socially shaping—or socially *constitutive*’ (Fairclough, 1995a: 54). Hence media discourses are not constituted as solid and unchangeable entities but are the product of frequent negotiation, while retaining the notion that negotiations generate a restricted set of meanings and ‘limit the possibilities of interpretation and privilege certain meanings above others’ (Van Zoonen, 1994: 31). As Chouliaraki argues:

The concept of discourse points to the fact that mediated language practices do not simply relay or talk about a reality that occurs ‘out there’, but that they actually constitute this reality (2000: 295).

Embracing such an approach therefore entails no longer thinking of language as a ‘transparent medium’ through which reality is apprehended (Gill, 2000: 58). Instead, texts should be approached beyond their apparent meaning to uncover the underlying assumptions that regulate them and to understand the premises upon which meanings are produced (Fairclough, 1995b: 14).

The discourse analysis tradition of research is distinctly focused on media texts. Similarly, the present work does not engage with audience studies or with an analysis of the reception of the debate. The reason for concentrating solely on the texts lies primarily in the core concerns of the present study and the research questions that are guiding it. Instances where claims for recognition emerge are characterised by intense clashes between positions that aim to change the status quo and forces that aim to contest changes (Plummer, 2003; Fassin, 2001). Different positions appear to generate each other (Plummer, 2003; Smith and Windes, 2000) while intense polarisation contributes to limiting the disruptive potential that moments of intense negotiation can generate (Crowhurst and Bertone, 2012; Roseneil, 2000). News media are here questioned in their own right as partially constitutive of hegemonic powers and investigated in order to understand their role in the potential disruption of dominant norms (Hall, 1980; Hall et al., 1978).

Defining the field of investigation

At the core of my thesis is an analysis of the role of news media in relation to the culture war unfolding in Italy, with a particular focus on the events that characterised the Prodi II Government. The discourse analysis concepts and approaches investigated above pointed at media texts as a site of fruitful investigation of the hegemonic operation of news media. In this section, by revisiting part of the argument developed in the previous chapter in relation to Italian news media, I justify how I intend to narrow the focus of my thesis to the two best-selling newspapers in Italy, *Corriere della Sera* and *la Repubblica*, and how I identified relevant texts to be analysed.

In the previous chapter I noted that the Italian news media system was characterised by a strong degree of political partisanship. Thinking in particular about issues of ownership and control, Italian newspapers represent an interesting site to analyse power, given their problematic relationship with the political establishment as well as their economic ties with the state (Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Mancini, 1993). To focus on newspapers does not imply that I am unaware of the importance of other news media; but despite the fact that, over the last decade, newspapers lost a significant proportion of their readership, they retain a crucial role in the political arena and are a significant part of the production and circulation of meaning (Trappolin, 2007, 2009). While acknowledging the focus on newspaper texts as a potential limitation to my work, in the following I argue that this does not undermine the relevance of my research.

It is important to recognise how the boundaries between different media texts are porous, with content, language and voices overlapping across different media (Macdonald, 2003). For instance, one can consider the relationship between newspapers and television. In newspapers, references to other newspapers and other media, such as TV, are frequently used to emphasise the relevance of events. As discussed in the previous chapter, in the construction of events as newsworthy it is possible to trace one of the technologies of media power in relation to politics (Mazzoleni and Schultz, 1999). In the analysis of newspaper texts it is hence possible to trace the operation through which events are made newsworthy across the spectrum of news media. The relationship between newspapers and television can further be traced in the way in which the language and the format of newspapers have been substantially shaped by TV (Antelmi, 2006: 33) in an attempt to counteract loss of readership and ensuing economic hardship (Fortunati, Taipale and Farinosi, 2014). Hence the focus and the language of

newspapers are increasingly mirroring the style of more successful media. In the investigation of the newspapers it is therefore possible to trace the work of ideology that shapes a language that is increasingly similar in different media (Antelmi, 2006: 34-35). The boundaries between different media are also porous for media professionals. In chapter two I discussed how professionals tend to travel between the news media and politics (Mancini, 2013: 340). Recently, Mancini notes, Italian news media are increasingly characterised by the participation of journalists themselves in the spectacularization of politics.

Reporters have become themselves central to the spectacle; they, like the politicians, become part of the dramatized duel in front of the television or the theatre audience (Mancini, 2013: 343)

Duels involve both television and print media journalists alike, hence facilitating an exchange of the discourses that are thereby produced. The analysis of newspaper texts, therefore, while not necessarily providing a basis for conclusions about news media in general, still provides a solid springboard for advancing arguments in relation to the role of news media and hegemony in Italy.

Further, newspapers occupy a peculiar position since, as Jowett and Pell (2010), following Conboy (2002), argue:

Compared to other media forms the press places itself in an interesting and contradictory position as it is owned and controlled by those with power and yet claims to represent and articulate the views of 'the people' (2010: 207).

This is particularly true in Italy, given the strong partisanship of newspapers that claim to represent the views of different political affiliations (Mancini, 2013). Daily newspapers are therefore still a relevant focus, as demonstrated by the ongoing research and publication in the field of media and discourse studies (Costelloe, 2014; Sarno, 2014; Greco Morasso, 2012; Andrews and Caren, 2010; Trappolin, 2009; Anderssen and Hellesund, 2009; Landau, 2009; Richardson, 2007; Alat, 2006). Coming from different discursive traditions as well as different multidisciplinary approaches, these studies demonstrate how the analysis of newspaper texts can produce fruitful insights into issues of power and hegemony. It is a field of investigation that the present work aims to enter into dialogue with.

The focus on newspapers texts, as I shall demonstrate in the next sections, allows me to examine a wide range of articles produced between the day the Prodi II Government came to power (17 May 2006) and the day it fell and a new election was

called (24 January 2008). While the accessing, retrieving and storing such a wide range of texts allowed me to gain an insight in the macrostructure of the media coverage, the focus on newspapers also allowed me to conduct an in-depth investigation into a selection of articles in order to analyse which notions and definitions were sustained and/or challenged in the texts (Talbot, 2010: 137).

The decision to scrutinise texts from the two best-selling newspapers in Italy, *Corriere della Sera* and *la Repubblica*, relates to the observation that the ‘most controversial media system in Europe’ (Hibberd, 2008) is characterised by a strong ‘media-political elite integration’ (Mancini, 1993). The two newspapers occupy different places in the political spectrum; while *la Repubblica* is aligned to left-wing tradition and politics, *Corriere della Sera* can be defined as ‘operating within the interpretative fames of the liberal and moderately conservative economic and political elites’ (Rothenberg, 2009: 170). Both, however, are characterised by a critical position towards Berlusconi (Cepernich, 2009: 41).

As discussed in chapters one and two, while the influence of Berlusconi’s politics and media in the cultural hegemony that characterise contemporary Italy cannot be overstated (Albertazzi and Rothenberg, 2009), it is also clear that the major political parties have not been particularly supportive of LGBT rights and have not been particularly active in combating heterosexism and homophobia (Ross, 2009; Bonini Baraldi, 2008). Different parties appear to routinely converge on conservative positions in relation to sexual politics and rarely openly challenge the hegemony of the Vatican position (Crowhurst and Bertone, 2012; Bernini, 2010). As Bonini Baraldi notes, even the seemingly progressive narratives that characterised the proposal for the legal recognition of *de facto unions* during the Prodi II government tended towards denial of non-heterosexual identities (2008; see also Bertone, 2009). Exploring these two newspapers, both clearly not under Berlusconi’s control, allows this line of investigation to be taken further and to keep questioning the pervasiveness of conservative discourse while at the same time investigating progressive rhetoric and its marginalising and exclusionary stance (Bell and Binnie, 2000: 1).

Hence in this thesis I advocate for a scrutiny of the role played by news media, in particular *la Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera*. Focusing on the tensions that characterised the Prodi II Government, when two bills (DICO and CUS) had been put forward, I ask:

- What events and representations are deemed newsworthy in the media coverage?
- Which definitions and notions are reproduced and sustained within the media coverage analysed?
- How do dominant notions and definitions relate to the tensions between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic positions?
- In what ways did *la Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera* negotiate the complexities of the legal recognition of *de facto unions*?

Having identified the two relevant newspapers, I started my data collection by going through each issue of the two newspapers published between 17 May 2006, when the Prodi II Government took power, and 24 January 2008 when, after losing a vote of confidence, a Government crisis arose and new elections were called. This task was performed first at my local library in Italy and then at the British Library in London, providing me with a broad picture of the media discourse circulating at the time. I was able to note how the issue of *de facto unions* had frequently been discussed outside the political pages of the newspapers, appearing as a floating signifier used to symbolise broader contentious issues. Reading the news items hence defined more clearly the criteria that ought to be applied to the selection of news items to be investigated. It was necessary to include not only those texts that openly addressed the political tensions around the drafting of the bills but also those dealing with it tangentially, even if only citing the bill, its drafting or the reactions it provoked. A further search of the online archives of both newspapers was hence performed in order to find this wider range of texts. The online archives were searched for all news items that contained references to PACS, DICO, CUS, *de facto unions* and legal recognition of same-sex unions. The search was extended to all the sections of both newspapers and not limited to political pages. As a result of this operation the corpus of data totalled over 800 texts. The texts collected were stored using Atlas.ti. This program allowed easy access to the texts and the possibility of investigating certain characteristics of the texts, such as the space granted to different actors, which I will explore further in chapter four.

Analysis of the media coverage

Carvalho describes the process of investigating a large corpus of data as a two-step method that requires both a comprehensive analysis of the selected period and a closer examination of some ‘critical discourse moments’ (2008: 166). In this section I discuss how I approached the analysis of the texts by drawing on the insights explored

above in relation to discourse analysis, as well as integrating the investigation with a more content-focused approach.

The first stage of analysis required a preliminary reading of all the texts to become familiar with them (Gill, 2000: 179). This preliminary reading allowed me to question the space allocated to different actors within the texts. Again, returning to the literature that informs my work, it is important to remember how Meyer places particular emphasis on the way news media privileges some voices at the expense of others (1994). I found it necessary, therefore, to investigate the overall dataset with this concern in mind. I therefore ran a series of queries through Atlas.ti in order to establish the number of times different actors are mentioned in the texts. This approach revealed, for instance, that representatives of the Italian Catholic Church and the Vatican appeared more often than LGBT activists and MPs.

A second reading of the entire dataset was then performed, paying particular attention to the headlines and first two paragraphs of each article (Carvalho, 2008: 166). I questioned the texts in order to highlight how the media coverage is structured, what controversies arise and, most importantly, what is silenced within it. This approach allowed me to trace some key characteristics of the overall media coverage; in particular, it enabled me to understand how newsworthiness operates. Following the literature explored in chapter two, it became evident that conflict and drama were key news values that regulated the media coverage during the Prodi II Government. I took this consideration further to consider the consequences of these news values (Hall et al., 1978). This allowed me to draw preliminary findings about the overall media coverage, findings which constitute the backbone of chapter four and proved fundamental in defining the boundaries of the context in which ‘critical discourse moments’ unfolded.

Critical discourse moments

Carvalho defines critical discourse moments as ‘periods that involve specific happenings, which may challenge the ‘established’ discursive positions’. She suggests that in order to identify such critical moments it is necessary to ask when the argument changed, and how and when new/alternative views arose (2008: 166). In Carvalho’s proposition I found a resonance with the literature explored in the previous chapter, in particular in my reading of Plummer’s work (2003). Plummer contends that in past decades the emergence of ‘a new culture of “variant sexuality issues”’ (2003: 36) has opened up a space in which issues of sexuality, sexual identity and sexual and intimate citizenship can be discussed (2003: 36). The emergence of these issues in Italy has been

met with resistance, and it is in the clash between opposing forces that the production of meaning takes place (2003: 37).

Plummer contends that 'certain key events and people appear that galvanise opinions and thus transform social worlds' (2003: 37). It is precisely in those moments that it is possible to explore the ways in which the two mainstream newspapers analysed negotiate the disruptive potential of the emergence of new claims for recognition. It is in those instances that is possible to scrutinise how the relational claims and the responses they meet with operate in the background and constitute the frame through which other events became politically charged (Greco Morasso, 2012).

The focus on the headlines and first two paragraphs of the articles collected allowed to uncover three critical discourse moments: the airing of Italian TV movie *Father of the Brides*, featuring a father whose estranged daughter married a woman in Spain; the suicide in April 2007 of a young boy who was the victim of homophobic bullying; and the Family Day in May 2007, a demonstration organised by conservative political forces to 'support the family' against the legal recognition of *de facto unions* and same-sex couples. All three events elicited reactions with regard to the ongoing political debate on *de facto unions* and allowed space for the argument to change and for new alternatives to arise.

Broadcast in November 2006, the TV movie *Father of the Brides* received great attention, as it narrated the story of a man whose estranged daughter was married to a woman in Spain. Importantly, the TV movie was broadcast on RAI2, one of the national television channels. The reaction from conservative forces to a story of lesbian marriage broadcast on prime-time national television was intense. Here, when the overarching political debate met with a discussion about the fictional representation of a lesbian couple, it is possible to see a shift in the media discourse on same-sex couples. While its detractors defined it as inappropriate in the light of the ongoing debate, its supporters presented it as an outlet to teach 'tolerance'. Focusing on this moment allowed me to examine circulating notions of appropriateness with regard to homosexuality as well as 'tolerance' for gay and lesbian people and same-sex couples. Crucially, this particular moment offers the possibility of thinking about the tensions that arise around the possibility of 'queering the family' while at the same time questioning the claims of disruptive/revolutionary representation. It is one of those moments in which a representation of the margins takes centre stage, allowing a further scrutiny of narratives

that emanate from seemingly progressive positions (Bell and Binnie, 2000; Roseneil, 2000; Bonini Baraldi, 2008).

On 13 May 2007, a Family Day took place in Rome, organised by conservative political forces and Catholic hierarchies. The Family Day was defined as a rally in support of the family against the perceived threat from *de facto unions* and same-sex couples. The organisation of this event elicited intense discussion from February 2007 onwards. The debate immediately became polarised, and media discourse focused on the stance of politicians as well as public personae involved; coverage of the event was characterised by increasing tensions between supposedly different positions. These tensions revolved around the sign of the family placed at the centre of the Family Day. The analysis of this moment allowed me to interrogate the construction of identity groups and to investigate the meanings that are central to the definition of the family, developing further some key issues that the analysis of *Father of the Brides* raised. The centrality of the Family Day is also confirmed by the way in which it is routinely cited within international literature, from analysis of contemporary Italian sexual politics (Garbagnoli, 2013; Donà, 2009; Bonini Baraldi, 2008; Bernini, 2008), to commentaries on the Italian LGBT movements (Gilbert, 2007; Ross, 2009) and explorations of the role that the Italian Catholic Church plays in relation to Italian politics (Holzhacker, 2012; Ceccarini, 2009).

The media coverage preceding the demonstration was characterised by growing tension and heated debates. It is within this context of heated debate that the news hit the press in April 2007 of the suicide of 16 year-old Matteo, allegedly as a consequence of homophobic bullying. Matteo's mother's accusation of negligence by his teachers sparked a debate on homophobia as well as on the consequences of the heated tone of the debate on the legal recognition of cohabiting couples. Including the texts covering Matteo's suicide in my research allowed me to investigate the way media discourse framed the issue of violence against LGBT individuals and posed questions about homophobic violence.

The collection of texts from *Corriere della Sera* and *la Repubblica*, however, ought not to be considered as a one-off action but as a continuous flow between my set of texts and the sources that generated those texts (Bell, 1991). A preliminary engagement with the texts relating to these three events also prompted me to rethink the limits of the data collected and to expand my analysis. Having identified these three moments, the need to approach the texts with an open mind (Macdonald, 2003: 2)

forced me eventually to include other texts, rather than limiting myself to the ones already selected. In order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the circulating media discourse, I returned to my dataset and looked beyond it. The analysis of the media coverage resulting from the broadcast of *Father of the Brides* was therefore enriched by an analysis of the film's narrative. The synergic analysis of both the film and the media coverage provided a richer understanding of the circulating definitions of same-sex unions and lesbian parenting and their disruptive potential (Hirsh and Newcomb, 2000; White, 1992). The analysis was further corroborated by the inclusion of media coverage of another instance in which a popular TV series *Un Medico in Famiglia (A Doctor in the Family)* broadcast by RAI came under scrutiny for its representation of a same-sex couple, the analysis of which is presented in chapter five.

The focus on media coverage of Matteo's suicide was supplemented with analysis of other texts dealing with instances of violence against gay and lesbian people. In particular, I focused on coverage of the rape of a lesbian woman in September 2006. Analysis of these events forms the core of chapter six.

Meanwhile, analysis of the Family Day was expanded to include analysis of all demonstrations that took place in the time frame considered, in particular the Pro-DICO demonstration held in March 2007 and a counter-demonstration to the Family Day organised by the Radical Party. The coverage of the three demonstrations is discussed in chapter seven.

A discourse analysis approach to the texts

The relevance of a discourse analysis approach to my research is directly related to the possibilities it opens up for the researcher. The critical questioning required by this method is relevant in the present research, as it allows me to denaturalise the apparently neutral patterns operating in the texts. It allows me to explore the links between the texts and the power structures embedded in society, focusing on the discursive practices that produced the texts (El-Hussari, 2010: 102). Exploring whether certain implicit propositions are working ideologically is one issue within a general set of questions that can be asked whenever one representation is selected over other available ones, or whenever identities or relations are constructed in one way rather than another.

In this research I aim to reveal what is taken for granted, to make the obvious strange, in order to highlight the ideology at the core of the media text (Gill, 2000: 178). News items are hence scrutinised in order to highlight their rhetorical organisation,

examining which notions and which definitions are assumed and which appear contested; how the events are presented; and which readings are dominant to the detriment of others (Talbot, 2010: 137). As suggested before, my approach to the texts has been influenced by different authors including Gill (1993, 1996), Macdonald (2003), Alat (2006), and their analyses of media texts. The engagement with these works and the research questions that informed my analysis defined the frame through which I approach the critical discourse moments highlighted above and that I delineate in the following.

I structured my analysis to investigate the content, the organisation and the function of the texts (Gill, 2000: 187). In the analysis of content, I ask ‘Who does the article mention? How are the actors represented?’ (Carvalho, 2008: 160). I paid particular attention to the way in which media discourse frames voices within the text. Here the analysis of the single event is connected to the quantitative investigation of the larger context. While scrutiny of the context allows me to investigate the relative presence of each social actor (the Catholic Church, the Government and the LGBT movement) the analysis of each event allows me to expose how the co-optation of powerful voices participates in the reproduction of dominant definitions (Hall, 1980: 65). As highlighted in the previous chapter, the Catholic Church continues to play an important role in political debate in Italy. In order to investigate the debate, it is crucial to address the question of which voices are included in the media discourse and which are overlooked. It is important to stress, however, that this task not only entails investigating whose opinions are openly supported within the media discourse, but also the very space that those voices occupy (Van Dijk, 1991: 40).

The focus on content also involves examining the way speech is reported (Richardson, 2007: 101). To ask whether the text includes direct quotation of free direct speech entails a scrutiny of the way in which news media reconstruct opinions for the purpose of ensuring the internal coherence of the text (Chouliaraki, 2000: 301). At the same time, silences are investigated, not only with regard to voices that are rarely heard in the debate but also how the texts silence possible interpretations of the events reported. At this stage, texts were scrutinised in relation to the language used and the rhetoric employed; I posed questions about vocabulary as well as writing style (Carvalho, 2008: 161). The use of active/passive verbs, nominalisations, synonyms and hyponyms are central features of ideological work on a text (Philo, 2007: 180; Antelmi, 2006). Attending to these features also constitutes one of the challenges of the present

research, namely the translation of the texts from Italian to English, as I will discuss in the last section of this chapter (Antelmi, 2006).

Considerations about language also pertain to the organisation of the text. Narrative structures, implicit content and presupposed ideas hidden within the text are a central concern of the discursive analysis of media texts (Macdonald, 2003: 47; Richardson, 2007: 64). This is part of the ‘common sense’ that allows the reader to construct the internal coherence of the text and in doing so reinforce its validity (Macdonald, 2003: 50). Again, such assumptions are predicated on the notion that media discourses do not solely represent a reality ‘out there’ but that in conveying a ‘reality’, media discourse actually affects it (Macdonald, 2003: 4). Carvalho suggests that particular attention ought to be paid to the ‘objects’ the text constructs: ‘The notion of objects’, she argues, ‘is close to topic or themes. However, the term “object” has the advantage of enhancing the idea that discourse constitutes rather than just “refers to” the realities at stake’ (2008: 167). But to what end? In assessing the function of the text, I investigated the way circulating discourses serve to sustain the powerful and maintain the relevance of dominant notions (Van Dijk, 2000). Particular attention was therefore given to the analysis of the way the media coverage is framed, constantly questioning the text and the context in order to expose how the media support dominant and hegemonic constructions of the status quo.

This position might, however, be open to criticism. At the beginning of this chapter, I highlighted how the concept of discourse, especially from a Foucaultian perspective, has been associated with a relativist stance (Habermas, 1987) and therefore might prove limiting. In her work *Relativism, Reflexivity and Politics: Interrogating Discourse Analysis from a Feminist Perspective* (1995), Gill considers the link between certain assumptions at the core of a discourse analysis approach and politics. In particular, Gill speculates on the commitment to relativism characterising some discourse analysis traditions that could be considered as antithetical to emancipatory projects such as feminism (1995: 165). In highlighting this theoretical antithesis between the relativist stance at the core of discourse analysis and the need to produce knowledge that can promote social change, Gill urges scholars to bypass the polarisation between relativism and realism and suggests that a ‘passionately interested inquiry’ is possible when analysing discourse (1995: 175).

Discourse analysts have been criticised in particular for working within an apparent paradox; in revealing the constructive force of discourse, they still rely on the

ability of the researcher to understand her role while being embedded in the same context she aims to analyse (Gill, 1995). Embedded in the same discourse that she seeks to analyse, the discourse analyst cannot properly perform her analysis. To this, Gill (1993, 2000) as well as other discourse analysts (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999; Van Dijk, 1984, 1985, 1988) have replied that discourse analysts are aware of their location within the discourse; while acknowledging it, they explicitly identify their position, along with the aims of the research and their political commitment (Gill, 1993). A reflexive process within discourse analysis research is key, in order to make the research position explicit. The researcher is hence made accountable for her work and is requested to reflect upon her role in order to remain accountable for both the analysis and the consequences of her interpretations (Gill, 1995: 179). This stance was important for my research. In the following section I will reflexively engage with the process of translation at the core of this work, a process which allowed me to unveil further my position with regard to the overall media discourse.

Reflecting on limitations: translating the texts and narrowing the focus

My location within two different academic environments is not an uncommon experience for a junior Italian scholar. Italian scholars are increasingly being trained abroad, and most of the time it is outside Italian academia that they encounter women's studies, feminist studies, gender studies and sexuality studies (Ross, 2010; Barazzetti and Di Cori, 2001). I find myself in a similar position. My postgraduate training took place within Anglophone academia, and it is there that I developed not only the skills but also the necessary awareness that prompted me to question the negotiation for meaning at the core of the culture war that is unfolding in Italy. This opens up questions about the trajectories of different disciplines (Ross, 2010; Bertone, 1999) within a cross-cultural perspective and also raises the issue of translation as composed of many different processes that is explored further here.

Through the lens of translation I question my position not solely in relation to the single Italian text but also to the overall research process. My investigation of the media discourse and the context in which it emerged is influenced by my experience of it (Finlay, 2002: 531). Such influence does not lie only in the awareness that prompted the investigation and the framing of key questions but also in the process of translating the debate for my readership. In the editorial for the special issue of the *Graduate Journal of Social Science*'s 'Interrogating Language Difference and Translation in Social Science Research: Toward a Critical and Interdisciplinary Approach', Pereira,

Marhia and Scharff vividly portray how the practice of translation is embedded in multiple stages of the research process, and therefore, they advocate, its epistemological premises should be investigated (Pereira, Marhia and Scharff, 2009: 2-3). Since the act of translation comes into play at various stages of the research process, it is more appropriate to think about multiple processes of translation, which involve not only the actual rendering of a text in a different language but also the framing of the context in which the text has been produced, in order to make the whole intelligible to the reader.

It is necessary to highlight the multiple stages in which the processes of translation came into play, how I became aware of their relevance, and their potential as a resource in my work. As discussed above, I collected the relevant texts for my analysis from two Italian newspapers, *la Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera*. I performed this analysis as an Italian native speaker on Italian texts produced by newspapers that I read on a daily basis. As will become clear in the following chapters, I frequently include relevant extracts from the texts analysed in order to substantiate my analysis. The selected extracts are marked through the use of a different font (Courier New) and identified by numbers: the first figure is the number of the chapter and the second is a progressive identificatory number. Headlines are reported in capital letters.

I translated only the extracts and headlines that I included in the relevant chapters. It is therefore necessary, as a matter of accountability in the process of knowledge production, to recognise that my translation itself ought to stand up to scrutiny, and this needs to be explicitly discussed (Temple and Yong, 2004). The difficulties I encountered were in part related to my linguistic ability; I am an Italian native speaker with limited knowledge of English, which hindered the process of translation. The task is further complicated by the nature of the language of media. Antelmi, in her discussion of language use in Italian newspapers, argues that it is characterised by an increasing conversationalisation, which erases the distance between written and spoken language (2006: 30). She draws attention to the fact that conversationalisation results in an increasing use of direct discourse, particularly in headlines (2006: 34). The use of direct discourse aims to render the text more accessible by mimicking a colloquial exchange. Equally, newspaper language frequently deploys metaphors and puns using homophone words and morphologic or phonic jokes (2006: 36). As discussed in the previous section, a close scrutiny of these features is one of the steps of the discourse analysis approach envisaged in this work (Carvalho, 2008; Philo, 2008). Conveying the multilayered meanings of the texts is therefore the first level of

challenge for me as a translator. Puns and jokes, in particular, rely on cultural references whose implications are difficult to render in a single, straightforward translation. Such features are, most importantly, strongly ideologically charged in the way that they rely on a shared system of signifiers and also define the assumptions that the reader is supposed to draw on to make sense of the texts (Antelmi, 2006: 36). These are the features that make it possible to investigate the power of the media to frame and constrain.

In discussing the task of translation, Ricoeur highlights three working units: words, sentences and texts (2000: 26). He contends that at the core of the translation process lie complicated relationships between the different meanings these working units acquire in relation to each other. Words have multiple meanings that are defined by the context in which they are uttered, a context that includes not only the sentence in which the word appears but also a series of hidden contexts and connotations that are not all intellectual, but affective, not all public, but peculiar to a circle, to a class (2000: 26). Moving from one unit to the other, all within a larger context, new possibilities of meanings are unveiled, new ambiguities in the process of translation are revealed and new challenges are posed (2000: 26-27). I discovered a similar sense of continuous destabilisation at the core of the process of translation that I undertook for this work. Moving from the word to the sentence to the context troubled the translation and revealed its contested nature. The case of metaphors, pun and wordplay jokes is just one example, and again it is at this stage that the role of the researcher becomes most apparent. The process of translation reveals itself as deeply linked to my position within the discourse and my desire to unveil its core assumptions. At the centre of the main challenge is the risk of a tautological reproduction of the meanings I am aiming to unveil through my analysis. As stated earlier, I translated texts I had already analysed, whose constructive and constitutive force I had already scrutinised. The move from the text to the sentence to the context is therefore heavily conditioned by my analysis, as well as by my positioning against the object of my research.

To further complicate this process, it is also necessary to consider the issue of time. The media texts were partly analysed while the political debate on the legal recognition of *de facto unions* and same-sex couples was unfolding and partly after the fall of the Prodi II Government and the consequent removal of the law from the government agenda. In the intervening years, I have been continuously exposed to events that shaped my perception and analysis of contemporary sexual politics in Italy.

The continuing attacks on women's self-determination, the increasing restriction of access to reproductive techniques, the constant refusal of and opposition to an anti-homophobia law characterised the context in which I carried out the analysis. This context was punctuated by repeated incidents of violence against women and LGBT individuals, but it also saw increasing visibility of gays and lesbians in the national media and an increasing number of local governments adopting more inclusive policies in the face of increasingly conservative national policies. The tensions and ambivalence discussed in the first chapters of this thesis are, at the moment of writing, still occupying political debate. All this represents a conundrum: knowledge of the intervening years affects my analysis of the texts by loading it both with pessimism generated by knowledge of the future and optimism derived from awareness of the counter-hegemonic drive that appears to permeate sections of Italian society. At the same time, it is precisely the knowledge of the intervening years that strengthened my decision to persevere with this analysis.

Questions still remain, however. How to account for the ways in which knowledge of the intervening years affects the analysis and translation of the texts? How can I can overcome the risk that my translation of news and headlines might reproduce my own position and reaction to those texts? I kept my translation as close as possible to the original text, even at the expense of the style and sometimes the fluency of the translated sentence. When necessary, the analysis explores the meaning of the original texts and words with reference to the translation and to the decisions that guided it. But sometimes, when a literal translation would have made the reading difficult, I included, in square brackets, words that would help the clarity of the sentence. This meant relinquishing my desire for the perfect translation (Ricoeur, 2000).

I also opened the process of translation to the scrutiny of others, firstly by reflecting on it in this chapter and secondly by submitting my work for evaluation by knowledgeable translators.⁴⁹ Being open with the reader about the processes that characterise the research allows the possibility of assessing the validity of the research (Gill, 2008:187). The openness is further reinforced by the inclusion, in the conclusion of this thesis, of considerations about the events that characterise the intervening years; in providing these I aim to be as open as possible about the information that shaped my

⁴⁹ I am particularly grateful to Dr Alessandro Castellini for sharing with me his extensive expertise in translation. When Dr Castellini engaged with the translation process involved in this research, he had not been yet exposed to my work; his insights therefore were not predicated on previous knowledge of my research and constituted an invaluable insight into my approach to the task.

analysis. Yet the process of translation from one language, and especially from one geopolitical context, to another might also be a point of strength. In fact, to be intelligible I need to distance myself from the debate and make the obvious strange. I need to deconstruct it and put forward what I think of as ‘given’ (Gill, 2000). As Roger Silverstone argued, it is important for a media scholar to defamiliarise herself with the media and acknowledge her position from within the media that she is trying to analyse:

It is difficult, probably impossible, for us, as analysts, to step out of media culture, our media culture. Indeed, our own texts, as analysts, are part of the process of mediation. In this we are like linguists trying to analyse their own language from within, but also from without (1999: 13).

In this quotation, the process of analysing the media culture one is within is paired with the analysis of one’s own language. Having to step out of the comfort zone of my own language helped me maintain a questioning stance towards the constant presence of a reader who would not be aware of the subtlety of the context and the debate, reinforcing my ability to unpack the issue at hand.

Conclusion

My analysis entailed a detailed scrutiny of a limited number of texts drawn from the many texts that were collected in the initial stage of the research (Carvalho, 2008; Fairclough, 1995a). The information gathered on the large data selection constitutes the backbone of chapter four as well as the background of the entire work.

In concluding this chapter, however, it is important to acknowledge again how the detailed approach to the selected texts might constitute a limitation of the present research. The thorough but narrow scrutiny that characterised my research might limit the possibility of intervening on current national and international debates. It is important to recognise that this narrow focus on a specific set of articles produced in a limited timeframe generates very contingent knowledge. At the same time, it is important to remember the premise upon which my approach is based, in which discourse is conceived as circumstantially generated. Consequently, the analyst’s aim is not to produce generalisable claims (Gill, 2000) but to lay the foundation for a critique of existing practices and circulating meanings (Howarth, 2000:19).

The knowledge that this work aims to produce, while circumstantial, can constitute a springboard from which to devote continuing attention to the mainstream press at a moment where its readership and position in Italy are in a state of transformation (Fortunati, Taipale and Farinosi, 2014). The present work aims therefore

to participate in ongoing international debate by demonstrating how powerful insights can be generated when one critically considers the role of the Italian press in relation to contemporary Italian sexual politics.

Chapter Four. Unstable government, the Catholic Church and the recognition of *de facto unions*: an overview

At the core of my thesis is an analysis of selected texts from two newspapers, *la Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera*. In examining these texts, I investigate how the newspapers' coverage negotiated the tensions that emerged in relation to the legal recognition of *de facto unions* while the Prodi II Government was in power. The chapter is structured as follows: I first present a timeline describing the key events that occupied the newspapers analysed, highlighting the emergence of critical discourse moments that constitute the focus of chapters five, six, and seven. Then I interrogate the representations of the actors that emerged in the newspapers: the coalition majority, the Vatican and the CEI (Italian Episcopal Conference), and the LGBT movements.

The relevance of these actors emerged from a first reading of each issue of both newspapers published between May 2006 (when the Prodi II Government took power) and January 2008 (when, after losing a no-confidence vote, Prodi resigned and a new election was called) and was corroborated by an analysis of the space they occupy (investigating the number of occurrences in the texts and headlines). Their relevance was corroborated by an analysis of the space they occupy, an analysis that investigated the number of occurrences in the texts and headlines).⁵⁰ This first approach to the texts revealed an imbalance between certain actors represented as central—the Vatican, the CEI and the Government—and those represented as marginal—the LGBT movements. This imbalance can be understood as a consequence of the newsworthiness of their positions.

However, I argue that while news values provide a useful starting point to analyse presences and absences within the media texts, such an approach needs to be integrated with considerations of the consequences of this representation in order to enrich our understanding of the role of these two newspapers in relation to sexual politics, and, in particular, dominant exclusionary discourses. I therefore performed a systematic reading of the headlines and first two paragraphs of each selected news item (Carvalho, 2008: 166). The aim of this approach was to allow the structure of the media

⁵⁰ The distribution across the 20 months analysed was uneven (see table 2). For example, more articles were published in relation to the drafting of the bill (from December 2006 to February 2007), while very few articles were published from September 2007 to December 2007 when drafts of the bills were no longer part of the government agenda.

coverage to emerge (Carvalho, 2008: 166). My reading was guided by questions about how the news items were structured, which topics were framed as central and which positions were presented as marginal (Carvalho, 2008: 166).

The legal recognition of *de facto unions*: A chronology of the media coverage

This section presents the corpus of data collected. As discussed in the previous chapter, the selection criteria comprised all the articles that mentioned, even tangentially, the issue of the legal recognition of *de facto unions*. In chapter one I addressed how contemporary interdisciplinary literature questioned the different legal proposals (Billotta, 2008, 2013; Bonini Baraldi, 2008) in the following instead I present a narrative of the media coverage analysed. Here I report how episodes, statements and events have been relayed in the news items analysed. In so doing I pave the way for a discussion about the ways in which news values impact on the construction of certain events as central while others are constructed as marginal (Mazzoleni and Schultz, 1999). References to newspaper articles are reported throughout the chapter; a complete list of the news items analysed in this and the following chapters is presented in Appendix A. For clarity, the timeframe is summarised in table 1 below. Table 2 provides information about the numbers of articles collected, divided by newspaper, and indicates the critical discourse moments discussed in chapters five, six and seven.

Table 1. Events reported by Corriere della Sera and la Repubblica between May 2006 and January 2008 and discussed as related to the issue of *de facto unions*.

May 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 17 May the Prodi II Government received Parliament's vote of confidence (XV parliamentary term) Rosy Bindi was appointed as Minister for Family Politics The newly elected president of the Camera (Chamber of Deputies) was reported to have criticised the Pope on his position on PACS Rosy Bindi was reported to be willing to grant legal recognition to <i>de facto unions</i>
June 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government created a working group on ethical issues with the aim of finding a common position between the coalition parties The local government of Apulia approved a register of <i>de facto unions</i> Tensions arose with regard to the participation of government representatives in the national Gay Pride march in Turin
July 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 14 July the newspapers reported that a ruling of the Italian Supreme Court of Appeal contained references to the need to recognise <i>de facto unions</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 19 July Rosy Bindi presented the programme of the Minister for Family Politics
August 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representatives of the governing majority contested the possibility of legal recognition of <i>de facto unions</i>
September 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A group of majority MPs lobbied for a law against homophobia following the sexual assault of a lesbian woman in Tuscany
October 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theodem⁵¹, a new interparty grouping of Catholics MPs, was formed
November 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The film <i>Father of the Brides</i> was broadcast on RAI1, provoking strong reactions from members of the Majority
December 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The municipality of Padua approved the creation of a register of <i>de facto unions</i> Budget proposals contained a clause on inheritance tax giving <i>de facto unions</i> the same status as married couples. Following opposition from Theodem, the clause was eventually withdrawn A law on the recognition of <i>de facto unions</i> was included in the government's agenda
January 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The municipality of Padua registered the first same-sex couple in their register of <i>de facto unions</i> On 31 January Pollastrini and Bindi's draft of the law was approved for presentation to Parliament on 9 February
February 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 6 February the editorial of the Catholic newspaper <i>Avvenire</i> launched a <i>non possumus</i> encouraging Catholic MPs to stand against the law on the recognition of <i>de facto unions</i> On 8 February the final draft of the DICO bill was presented to the Council of Ministers On 22 February, after losing a vote of no confidence Prime Minister Prodi resigned, but his resignation was not accepted by the President of the Republic Senator Bobba announced the organisation of a Family Day against the legal recognition of <i>de facto unions</i>
March 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prodi presented a revised Government's programme which no longer contained a law on the legal recognition of <i>de facto unions</i> 10 March - national LGBT associations organised a Pro-DICO demonstration in Rome The organisation of the Family Day (planned for May 2007) featured prominently in the media
April 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 5 April a young boy who was allegedly the victim of homophobic bullying committed suicide. The heated anti-homosexual tone of the debate was critiqued
May 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 13 May the Family Day demonstration against the

⁵¹ The term *Theodem* (it: *Teodem*) emulates the Theocon label used by news media to identify the Christian Right in the United States.

	<p>legal recognition of <i>de facto unions</i> took place in Rome. A million people attended the demonstration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rosy Bindi organised a conference on the family. She did not invite LGBT organisations except for AGEDO
June 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gay Pride marches are organised in various Italian cities
July 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On 13 July the draft of a new law providing a legal recognition for <i>de facto unions</i> was presented (CUS) • On 28 July a ruling of the Court of Cassation invited the legislature to provide legal protection to LGBT individuals
August 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On 28 August the regional tribunal of Veneto overruled the decision of the Padua council to create a register of cohabiting couples.
September 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The draft of the budget law divided again the majority
October 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mayor of Naples, Rosa Russo Iervolino, participated in a demonstration demanding a law against homophobia
November 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new edition of the <i>Encyclopaedia Treccani</i> included an entry on <i>de facto unions</i>
December 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government coalition was divided on the possibility of incorporating the Amsterdam treaty on the protection of LGBT people
January 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following a no-confidence vote, the government lost its majority and a new election was called

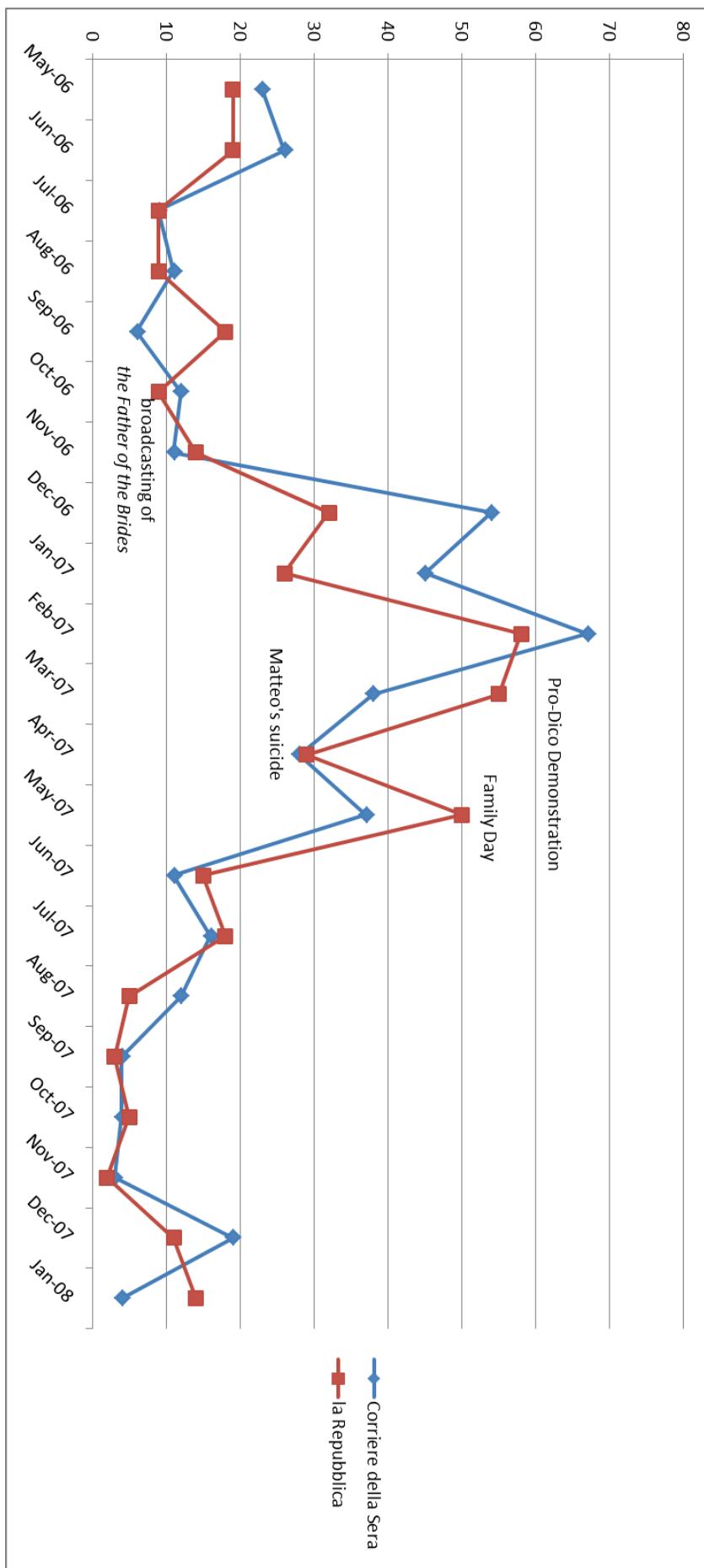


Table 2: Articles collected divided by newspaper

In April 2006, a general election was held in Italy. *Unione* (the Union), the centre-left coalition, gained 348 seats in the *Camera* (Chamber of Deputies) against the 281 seats won by the right-wing coalition, *Casa delle Libertà* (House of Freedom). The divide between the two coalitions narrowed in the Senate to a difference of just two seats (158 to the Union and 156 to the House of Freedom). Romano Prodi, leader of the Union, received the mandate to form a new government. Fausto Bertinotti (*Partito della Rifondazione Comunista* (Communist Refoundation Party) was elected as President of the Chamber of Deputies and Franco Marini (*Margherita*—Daisy) was elected President of the Senate. The council of ministers was hence formed: 26 new ministers were appointed (20 men and six women), among them Rosy Bindi (Daisy), who was appointed as Minister for Family Politics, and Barbara Pollastrini (*Democratici di Sinistra* (Left Democrats), who became Minister for Equal Opportunities. These two ministers played a crucial role in drafting the DICO bill presented to the *Camera* in February 2007.

On the same day that the government received the vote of confidence, *Corriere della Sera* published an article reporting a comment made by Fausto Bertinotti during the popular political talk show *Porta a Porta*⁵² (Garibaldi, *Corriere della Sera* 17 May 2006). The newly elected President of the Chamber of Deputies was reported to have criticized the Pope for his conservative position on PACS.⁵³ The following day, two articles appeared in the national politics section of *la Repubblica*, reporting the reactions of Ruini (president of the CEI) (Politi, 20 May 2006) and Senator Luigi Bobba (Daisy) (Rosso, 20 May 2006) to Bertinotti's statements. Both articles reported criticisms of what was framed as lack of respect towards the Pope, at the same time highlighting how the CEI and some Catholic MPs opposed any law recognising *de facto unions*. The Vatican's opposition to PACS occupied the front page again a few days later:

THE POPE'S ATTACK: NO TO PACS (Anon, *Corriere della Sera*, 21 May 2006).

In the same issue, *Corriere della Sera* reported an interview with Rosy Bindi entitled:

'RIGHTS, EVEN PUBLIC RIGHTS TO DE FACTO UNIONS' (Cazzullo, *Corriere della Sera*, 21 May 2006).

⁵² *Porta a Porta* is a popular political talk show, which has been shown on RAI1 since 1996. It has been allegedly been defined by Giulio Andreotti as 'the third Chamber of the Parliament'.

⁵³ As seen, the term PACS entered Italian political debate at the start of the year 2000 to define a series of proposals that emulated the French law approved in 1999. As I discuss in this chapter, the term was then dropped following the drafting of the DICO bill in February 2007.

The next day the front page of *Corriere della Sera* read:

DE FACTO UNIONS: DISAGREEMENTS OVER BINDI ['S STATEMENTS] (Anon, *Corriere della Sera*, 22 May 2006).

This headline refers to disagreement within the ruling majority in relation to Bindi's statement. Similarly, other articles referred to the majority's lack of common ground on issues like the legal recognition of *de facto unions* (Iossa, *Corriere della Sera*, 22 May) the regulation of abortion (Casadio, *la Repubblica* 23 May 2006; De Bac, *Corriere della Sera*, 23 May) and assisted reproduction (Battista, *Corriere della Sera*, 23 May). The disagreements were framed as involving the different factions that composed the ruling coalition, and Prime Minister Romano Prodi was reported as increasingly concerned about the stability of the government (Lopapa, *la Repubblica*, 24 May 2006; Verderami, *Corriere della Sera*, 24 May 2006).

On 7 June 2006, the media reported the creation of a working group whose aim was to delineate a common position between the different parties in the coalition majority on those issues (Casadio, *la Repubblica*, 7 June 2006). In July 2006 the media coverage focused again on the tensions within the majority that emerged as a response to a judgement of the Italian Supreme Court of Appeal, inviting the legislature to recognise new forms of solidarity (Anon, *la Repubblica*, 14 July 2006) and then again when Bindi presented the programme of the Minister for Family Politics, in which she reiterated the intention to recognise the legal right to form a *de facto union* (Reggio, *la Repubblica*, 19 July 2006). These reports emphasised how the possibility of recognition of same-sex couples in particular was generating discord within the government. Both newspapers dwelled frequently on a group of Catholic MPs, belonging to different parties within the coalition, vociferously manifesting their growing dissent against the Government and its politics on the legal recognition of *de facto unions*, women's right to self-determination and living wills. Paola Binetti (Daisy), in particular, stands out as a fierce defender of Catholic principles (Battistini, *Corriere della Sera*, 3 June 2006; Anon, *la Repubblica*, 21 August 2006). Binetti and other Catholic MPs formed a new interparty group, the Theodem, in October 2006, keen to foster alliances with the right-wing opposition against the government (Guerzoni, *Corriere della Sera*, 12 October 2006).

In November 2006 the Council of Ministers was again reported as divided on the possibility of legally recognising cohabiting couples, a discussion that was fuelled by a European directive on the free circulation of EU citizens and their partners (Anon, *la Repubblica*, 11 November 2006). The European directive was aimed at granting

uniformity of recognition to legally recognised unions across the EU. The directive would have meant that, for instance, two adults, *pacsé* under the French law, would also have their union recognised in Italy. In other words, the rights and duties placed upon the couple under French law (or married under Spanish law) would travel across the EU. On this front, the newspapers stated that Minister Rosy Bindi was against the ratification of the directive, on the basis that it clashed with the definition of family under Italian legislation, while Barbara Pollastrini, Minister for Equal Opportunities, was said to be working to ensure its inclusion in the Italian Codes (Anon, *la Repubblica*, 11 Nov 2006).

While the Council of Ministers was described as struggling to find common ground on the European directive, the media reported that the film *Father of the Brides* was soon to be broadcast on the national channel RAI1 during primetime (Polese, *Corriere della Sera*, 15 November 2006). The film tells the story of a father finding out that his daughter is married to a woman in Spain, and provoked a series of reactions from politicians (e. g. Fumarola, *la Repubblica*, 19 November; Franco, *Corriere della Sera*, 21 November) that I analyse in chapter five. The broadcast of *Father of the Brides* constitutes the first 'critical discourse moment' (Carvalho, 2008) encountered in the media coverage, where questions about the appropriateness of the representations of same-sex unions and lesbian parenting feature prominently in the texts analysed.

In December 2006 the *Finanziaria* (the 2007 budget) was described by the newspapers as creating further tensions within the coalition's majority; the preliminary draft contained a clause that put married couples and *de facto unions* on equal footing in regard to inheritance rights. This amendment was perceived by Theodem and part of the opposition as a way of recognising *de facto unions* and therefore fiercely opposed (Freda, *Corriere della Sera*, 8 December 2006). The newspapers reported that due to the reactions it generated, the clause on *de facto unions* was swiftly removed from the budget's text; whilst at the same time a law recognising *de facto unions* was put on the government agenda: a bill was to be presented to the Senate by the end of January 2007 (Calabro', *Corriere della Sera*, 8 December 2006). Again, the hypothesis of the law was discussed mainly in relation to the hostility of both the conservative component of the government and the right-wing opposition (Casadio, *la Repubblica*, 9 December 2006). Against this heavily charged background, Pollastrini and Bindi were asked by the government to come up with a joint proposal on the legal recognition of *de facto unions* to submit to the Council of Ministers for approval.

Both newspapers framed the work of Bindi and Pollastrini on the drafting of the bill as oscillating between cooperation (Anon, *Corriere della Sera*, 18 January 2007) and profound disagreement (Casadio, *la Repubblica*, 23 January 2007). Similarly the majority was framed as divided between those who supported the law (Salvia, *Corriere della Sera*, 28 January 2007) and those who threatened a government crisis (Giannini, *la Repubblica*, 30 January 2007). At the same time from the beginning of January 2007 both newspapers had reported frequent interventions of the Pope and the CEI against the possibility of the recognition of *de facto unions* (Calabro', *Corriere della Sera*, 9 January 2007; Arachi, *Corriere della Sera*, 12 January; Anon, *la Repubblica*, 28 January). The day before the draft was due to be presented to the government, both newspapers reported a statement made by the then President of the Republic, Giorgio Napolitano. During a state visit to Madrid, Napolitano addressed the issue of the legal recognition of *de facto unions* and urged the Italian government to take into account the position of the Catholic Church on the matter (Anon, *Corriere della Sera*, 30 January 2007; Anon, *la Repubblica*, 30 January 2007). Napolitano's statement sparked a series of reactions condemning the Church's intrusion into Italian politics (Bianchin, *la Repubblica*, 31 January; Alberti, *Corriere della Sera*, 31 January 2007, discussed below).

On 1 February, despite the difficulties that surrounded its creation, Bindi and Pollastrini's draft was presented to Parliament (Franco, *Corriere della Sera*, 1 February 2007; Lopapa, *la Repubblica*, 1 February 2007). The schedule was quite tight; the final draft had to be presented to the Council of Ministers by 9 February 2007 for the vote. At this juncture, both newspapers reported that on 6 February 2007 a *non possumus* was launched from the pages of the newspaper *Avvenire*.⁵⁴ *Non possumus* is a Latin expression used to define the impossibility of accepting an external imposition that is against the principle of Christianity. In this case, the *non possumus* meant the impossibility of accepting (and therefore voting on) a law on *de facto unions* by those MPs who defined themselves as Christian Catholics. The *non possumus* was reported in the front page of *la Repubblica* the following day (7 February 2007) and elicited a series of reactions both inside and outside the government majority (Anon, *la Repubblica*, 7 February 2007). In response to *Avvenire*'s attack, Prodi made headlines declaring that it was up to the government to decide about the legal recognition of *de facto unions*

⁵⁴ *Avvenire* is the newspaper of the CEI, based in Milan.

(Arachi, *Corriere della Sera*, 7 February 2007; Casadio, *la Repubblica*, 7 February 2007).

On 8 February the final draft of the bill was presented to the Council of Ministers. The DICO bill (*Diritti e doveri delle coppie stabilmente conviventi*—Rights and responsibilities of stable, cohabiting persons) proposed to regulate cohabitation arrangements between two people ‘also of the same sex, united by reciprocal affective ties, who cohabit stably and exchange assistance and moral solidarity’.⁵⁵ As discussed in chapter one, the draft contained only a weak recognition of rights. Even so, the text of the law was strongly criticised by the opposition as well as by conservative groups within the majority. The reactions against DICO preoccupied the two newspapers, and between 8 and 10 February they published 33 articles on the issue. The articles emphasised in particular how opposition to the bill was predicated mainly on the inclusion of same-sex couples among those that could have benefitted from the new law (Ceccarelli, *la Repubblica*, 10 February 2007; La Rocca, *la Repubblica*, 14 February 2007). Reactions were also reported from LGBT groups, which defined the law as too limited and far from their expectations (Bei, *la Repubblica*, 9 February 2007; Fregonara, *Corriere della Sera*, 9 February 2007). In this timeframe, the newspapers also reported the CEI and the Vatican reactions: DICO, and in particular the legal recognition of same-sex couples, was defined as particularly grave (Politi, *la Repubblica*, 10 February 2007; Accattoli, *Corriere della Sera*, 10 February 2007).

In the background of these heated reactions, the stability of the government came under attack, and on 22 February, the Prodi government did not achieve a majority for a bill on foreign policy.⁵⁶ Both newspapers highlighted the connection between the approval of the DICO bill and the way in which the foreign policy bill was used to overthrow the government (Accattoli, *Corriere della Sera*, 23 February 2007; Guerzoni, *Corriere della Sera*, 26 February; Lopapa, *la Repubblica*, 26 February 2007). Following the defeat of the government, PM Romano Prodi resigned.⁵⁷ After the President of the Republic rejected his resignation, Prodi was asked to present a new government programme to the Parliament. Both newspapers emphasised how the

⁵⁵ Text approved by the Council of Ministers on 8 February 2007 (unofficial translation in Bonini Baraldi, 2008: 185: 186)

⁵⁶ The government was due to approve a further injection of funds into the military mission in Afghanistan.

⁵⁷ The prime minister’s resignation started the government crisis. This resulted in a series of consultations among the parties that would usually lead to a new coalition.

redrafted programme presented to Parliament to obtain a vote of confidence (*la fiducia*) did not mention the legal recognition of cohabiting individuals (Salvia, *Corriere della Sera*, 24 February 2007; Casadio, *la Repubblica*, 24 February 2007).

The proposal that Bindi and Pollastrini drafted was at this stage submitted to the Senate Justice Commission that ought to act as a referral (Casadio, *la Repubblica*, 26 February 2007). On 6 March the Senate Justice Commission was due to deliberate on whether the proposal for legal recognition of cohabiting couples approved by the government would be submitted to parliamentary vote. In order to support the law on *de facto unions*, LGBT organisations called for a demonstration to be held in early March 2007 (Custodero, *la Repubblica*, 25 February 2007). At the same time, Theodem were reported to be organising a pro-family demonstration with the blessing of the Catholic Church (Casadio, *la Repubblica*, 26 February 2007). The organisation of the Family Day and the debate that followed occupied the media coverage, which frequently reported homophobic comments and strenuous condemnation of any recognition of unions outside the traditional family. The coverage of the Family Day and the pro-DICO demonstrations will be investigated in chapter seven, where I argue that the media coverage relied on, and reinforces, oppositional categories such as secular/Catholic that mirror other exclusionary binaries such as unions/family.

Within the heated debate that ensued from the organisation of the Family Day, the issue of homophobia was foregrounded and particular prominence was given to the case of the death of a young boy, Matteo, who committed suicide, allegedly as the result of homophobic bullying (Schiavazzi, *Corriere della Sera*, 5 April 2007). The coverage of Matteo's death constitutes the focus of chapter six. I read this event as a critical discourse moment, since it opened up space for criticism of the anti-homosexual tone that conservative forces and the Catholic Church in particular used daily and that was constantly propagated through the news media investigated (Iossa, *Corriere della Sera*, 7 April 2007; la Rocca, *la Repubblica*, 7 April 2007).

The grief for Matteo did not last long, however, and the tensions resumed on the dawn of the Family Day. On 13 May, the day on which the event was held, the media reported that over a million people gathered in Rome to celebrate the family and to vigorously oppose DICO or any other recognition of *de facto unions* (Caccia, *Corriere della Sera*, 13 May 2007). The demonstration was hailed as a success and seen as evidence of public opposition to any law that would recognise *de facto unions*.

Following the Family Day demonstration, the issue of *de facto unions* appeared to be

less central in both newspapers. The DICO bill at that stage was still under the scrutiny of the Senate Justice Commission. In July 2007, however, the Committee presented the CUS (*Contratti di unione solidale*—Contracts for solidarity-based unions). The bill was based on a draft presented by Senator Alfredo Biondi, member of Berlusconi's party *Forza Italia*. The new draft was still framed as divisive for the majority and strongly criticised by LGBT groups, and work on the text continued (Anon, *la Repubblica*, 13 July 2007; Polchi, *Corriere della Sera*, 13 July 2007). After the summer of 2007, however, the issue of DICO/CUS appeared rarely in the newspapers (see table 1). The work of the Commission proved unsuccessful, and in November 2007 the text was abandoned. The marginalisation of the issue of the legal recognition of *de facto unions* is reflected by the low number of news items published from August 2007 to January 2008, as shown in Table 1 and Table 2 above.

A second government crisis forced Prodi to resign and call an early election in January 2008. The crisis was brought about by Clemente Mastella, UDEUR (*Unione democratici per l'Europa*-Union of Democrats for Europe), after he was implicated in a corruption case; his wife was arrested, and allegations were made against him in relation to a case of bribery in the south of Italy. Blaming the government for not supporting him, Mastella withdrew the crucial support of his small party. Prodi was forced to ask for a further vote of confidence that this time did not reach the required majority. The failure of the government was also the end of the Justice Commission and its effort to draft a bill on *de facto unions*.

This lengthy rendition of the media coverage between May 2006 and January 2008 is intended to delineate the context of the textual analysis to follow. Some key patterns emerge in the coverage, in particular the opposition that drafts of the law appeared to generate as well as the centrality of some of the actors, in particular the representatives of the Catholic Church and of Catholic groups within the government majority. The following section draws from these considerations and explores them further in relation to the concept of news values and the mediatisation of politics.

A systematic reading of the texts

I present here the findings that emerged from a systematic reading of the texts collected. As discussed in chapter three, a first reading of the entire media coverage was followed by a focus on the headlines and first paragraphs of each news item collected. Following on from Carvalho, who draws upon on Gill (2000), the reading of the texts at this stage was informed by a scepticism aimed at rendering the familiar strange

(2008:166). Questions posed to the texts included ‘why do some things get said and others do not? How are things said and what are the possible implications of that? What is absent from a particular text? (Factual data, arguments, points of views, etc.)’ (Carvalho, 2008: 166).

In presenting the findings, I focus in particular on the analysis of the headlines and first paragraphs of the articles published in the first few days of the Prodi II Government. A focus on the first days of the media coverage allows me to highlight how some key features emerged while providing a platform for thinking about their evolution (Carvalho, 2008: 166). In the next chapters, analysis of the coverage of key events will reveal how marginal discourses can be traced throughout the timeframe. The focus on the tension between marginal and dominant discourses constitutes the key focus of the thesis, aiming at understanding the role of the two newspapers analysed here in dealing with this tension. The analysis of dominant and marginal discourses also includes a consideration of the space that different actors occupy in the news texts analysed. Therefore the analysis includes considerations of the space occupied by political actors, the Catholic Church and members of the LGBT communities. I discuss how presences and absences are a useful proxy to identify how media coverage legitimises certain actors while marginalising others.

Political actors occupy a large portion of the news items analysed. In the texts analysed, the three most-frequently mentioned individuals are Prime Minister Romano Prodi (644 times), Minister Rosy Bindi (586 times) and Minister Barbara Pollastrini (512 times). This is unsurprising: the possibility of the legal recognition of *de facto unions* was mainly covered in the political pages, and Bindi and Pollastrini drafted the DICO bill presented to the Chamber of Deputies in February 2007. The critical reading performed on the headline and lead of each article enabled further analysis and addressed questions about how the government was represented in the media coverage. I focus therefore firstly on the features that characterised the representation of the government and the majority highlighting how they are routinely represented as divided on the possibility of the legal recognition of *de facto unions*. I consider how such a representation can be discussed in relation to news values and in particular consider the newsworthiness of political conflicts (Mazzoleni and Schultz, 1999).

The focus on representation does not imply that the divisions that permeated the government were created by the news media but rather indicates the consequences of the emphasis granted to such representation. In the final section of this chapter I discuss

the implication of this representation in relation to the key questions at the core of this thesis. I argue in particular how the construction of the law as a difficult endeavour sustains ongoing discrimination against same-sex couples and renders plausible positions that grant only weak and/or partial recognitions of rights.

The representation of the majority

The new government, elected in April 2006, won a vote of confidence the following May. In the aftermath of the presentation of the government, *Corriere della Sera* published an interview with Bindi titled

(4. 1) 'RIGHTS, EVEN PUBLIC RIGHTS TO *DE FACTO UNIONS*' (Cazzullo, *Corriere della Sera*, 21 May 2006).

This article appeared in an issue whose front page was dominated by the headline:

(4. 2) THE POPE'S ATTACK: NO TO PACS (Anon, *Corriere della Sera*, 21 May 2006).

Over the headline:

(4. 3) [IT IS THE] THIRD INCITMENT ON ETHICAL ISSUES IN TEN DAYS. YESTERDAY THE MEETING WITH THE SPANISH AMBASSADOR [TOOK PLACE]

Under the headline a subheading linking to the interview to Rosy Bindi (extract

4. 1) reads:

(4. 4) ROSY BINDI REVIVES IDEAS ON *DE FACTO COUPLES*: ALSO PUBLIC RIGHTS.

The next day, reactions to Bindi's statement occupied the front page of *Corriere della Sera*:

(4. 5) *DE FACTO COUPLES: DISAGREEMENTS OVER BINDI* ['S STATEMENTS] (Anon, *Corriere della Sera*, 22 May 2006)

Over the headline:

(4. 6) THE INTERVIEW WITH THE MINISTER FOR FAMILY POLITICS ON CORRIERE GENERATED DISCUSSIONS. CATHOLICS ARE DIVIDED. ⁵⁸

The subheading reads:

(4. 7) POLLASTRINI (DS) [SAYS]: A PROVISION AT ONCE. THE CENTRE-RIGHT [SAYS]: NO TO PACS. ⁵⁹

⁵⁸ *It: Fa discutere l'intervista del Ministro della Famiglia al Corriere. Cattolici divisi.* Far discutere implies a generative action that creates a discussion. The definition of discussion retains at its core the notion of differing positions on a given topic.

⁵⁹ *It: Pollastrini (DS): subito un provvedimento. Il centrodestra: no ai Pacs.*

The issue contains five other articles reporting praises as well as condemnations of Bindi's statement,⁶⁰ as well as a letter written by Bindi herself to the director of *Corriere della Sera* headed:

(4. 8) I AM NOT COMMITTED TO PACS (Bindi, *Corriere della Sera*, 22 May 2006).

In the letter the Minister of the Family stated how, while the interview published the day before (4. 1) was faithful to her words, the reference on the front page (4. 4) gave a misleading representation of her intentions. She wrote:

(4. 9) Dear Director, the long conversation with Aldo Cazzullo about the formation of the government and the novelty of the Ministry for Family Politics, published yesterday in your newspaper, correctly reports my thoughts. Allow me, however, to note with regret that the content of the lead on the front page and the interview's headline do represent a stretching of my words. (Bindi, *Corriere della Sera*, 22 May 2006)

While news of the disagreement over Bindi's statement occupied the front page, her letter was published on page six and no reference to it was included in the headline on the front page (4. 5). Bindi's letter (4. 8) appeared side-by-side with an interview with Archbishop Pompedda headed:

(4. 10) 'PROTECTION [OF DE FACTO UNIONS] IS GOOD, ALTHOUGH GAY PEOPLE SHOULD BE EXCLUDED' (Accattoli, *Corriere della Sera*, 22 May 2006).

The headline (4. 10) emphasised the prelate's view that while the protection of the law could be granted to unions outside marriage, the law could not create an institution similar to marriage and, most importantly, gay couples were to be excluded. I will return to the question of how the position of representatives of the Catholic Church is frequently included in the media coverage and discuss the consequences of the Church's framing as a relevant actor within the political debate (Van Dijk, 1988). Here, however, I wish to highlight how *Corriere della Sera*, in covering the news of the meeting between the Pope and the Spanish ambassador alongside Bindi's statement, appeared to enhance the newsworthiness of both events by highlighting the conflict between the two positions. The inclusion of a quote from the Pope on the front page as well as an interview with an archbishop published in the national politics pages of the newspapers functioned to draw attention to conflicting positions. The relevance of the conflict was

⁶⁰ Accattoli, *Corriere della Sera* 22 May 2006; Bindi, *Corriere della Sera*, 22 May 2006; Cossiga, *Corriere della Sera*, 22 May 2006; Iossa, *Corriere della Sera*, 22 May 2006; Soglio, *Corriere della Sera*, 22 May 2006

maintained the following days through coverage of the attacks of *Osservatore Romano*,⁶¹ the Vatican's newspaper. On 23 May 2007 *la Repubblica* published the headline:

(4. 11) PACS, THE OSSERVATORE AGAINST BINDI. [SHE IS] INDEFENSIBLE, SHE HELPS GAY COUPLES (Anon, *la Repubblica*, 23 May 2006)

While *Corriere della Sera* published an article headed:

(4. 12) DE FACTO COUPLES. VATICAN CRITIQUES BINDI (Salvia, *Corriere della Sera*, 23 May 2006)

The subheading read:

(4. 13) OSSERVATORE ROMANO: HER [BINDI'S] OPENING [TO DE FACTO COUPLES] IS INDEFENSIBLE. MASTELLA: IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES I WILL FIGHT AGAINST PACS.

This line of coverage was emphasised on the front page of *Corriere della Sera*, where an article by Pierluigi Battista was headed:

(4. 14) THE THREE ZAPATERIAN AND PRODI'S GUIDE (Battista, *Corriere della Sera*, 23 May 2006)

under the caption:

(4. 15) BINDI, BONINO, TURCO AND THE CATHOLIC QUESTION

The article discussed Bindi's statement on the legal recognition of *de facto unions*, the position of the Minister of Health, Livia Turco, in relation to RU486,⁶² and Minister of European Affairs Emma Bonino's pronouncement in relation to the Catholic roots of the EU.⁶³ The positions of the three ministers were defined as 'Zapaterian', referring to José Zapatero, the Spanish Prime Minister, under whose government gay marriage had been approved in 2006. As will become clear in chapter five, references to Zapatero were frequently used in the media coverage analysed. Used as an adjective, Zapaterian meant not only breaking with Catholic tradition (portrayed either as a courageous move away from representatives of the left or a potential threat by conservative Catholics) but also a Copernican revolution in the realm of sexual politics. Spain was often invoked as

⁶¹ *Osservatore Romano* is the daily newspaper printed in Vatican City, considered the official voice of the Holy See.

⁶² RU486 was the experimental name for Mifeprostone, a pill used to induce abortion. The experimental protocol was opened in 2006 and supported by the Prodi government's Minister of Health Livia Turco (deBac, *Corriere della Sera*, 23 May 2006). The possibility of the introduction of a less invasive method than the surgical procedure for abortion was fiercely opposed by conservatives and the Catholic Church (see also Hanafin, 2007, 2009)

⁶³ Minister Emma Bonino (Radical Party) was reported to be critical of the inclusion of explicit reference to Catholicism as one of the roots of the European Union.

both being similar to Italy (Moscati, 2010) but also as the ‘other’: something to both aspire to and fear (Dines and Rigoletto, 2012). In headline 4.14, the reference to Zapatero is to be interpreted in the latter sense, symbolising a dangerous rupture with the Catholic positions.

Lengthy references to the *Osservatore Romano* as well as to the Vatican’s critiques enhance the sense of conflict and extend the battle lines to encompass other issues that were hence framed as all belonging to a critical space riddled with the disagreements between the government and the Church, and between members of the government itself. For the following two, days both newspapers maintained the two interweaving lines of coverage. On the one hand, newspapers discussed the criticism the Vatican voiced through the *Osservatore Romano* (Frenda, *Corriere della Sera*, 24 May 2006), on the other they placed emphasis on the divisions internal to the majority and in particular on Prodi’s disappointment with the behaviour of his ministers (Lopapa, *la Repubblica*, 24 May 2006; Verderami, *Corriere della Sera*, 24 May 2006; Lopapa, *la Repubblica*, 25 May 2006; Cazzullo, *Corriere della Sera*, 26 May 2006; Merlo, *la Repubblica*, 26 May 2006).

It is important to stress here how this should not be taken to imply that conflicts are created by the media coverage. Divisions over the issue of recognition of same-sex couples do cross the political spectrum; and, as I emphasised in the introduction to this thesis, Italian political parties have never promoted LGBT rights with particular emphasis. Ambivalent positions have been traced back to the parties’ unwillingness to oppose the hegemonic hold of the Catholic Church in relation to family and society (Donà, 2009; Bernini, 2010). However, the extracts above illuminate how the news media analysed tended to place emphasis on tensions and on the reasons for conflict. Conflict is in fact one of the news values that regulates the selection of the news (Mazzoleni and Schultz, 1999; Trappolin, 2007). In doing so, Trappolin argues, news media enhance their role and sustain their relevance in political disputes (2007). The question arises as to the consequences of this representation and of the enhancement of this particular news value. When addressing this question, it is useful not only to stress what the news texts emphasise but also which other events are sidelined.

In order to answer this question it is helpful to review the way in which Bindi’s position on legal recognition of *de facto unions* was represented. A closer look at the ways in which Bindi’s statement was framed (extract 4. 1) reveals that while Bindi’s interview was referred to on the front page on 21 May (extract 4. 4), the following day

the first page was occupied by the disagreements her statement generated with no mention (there) of her clarification. Bindi not only explained that the headlines (4. 1; 4. 4) did not match her words, but also re-emphasised that she did not intend to work for PACS but instead aimed to find different forms of recognition. This constitutes an interesting example of the operation of newsworthiness by highlighting what was framed as not newsworthy. Bindi's letter, clarifying both her priorities and those of the Ministry, can be seen as at odds with the conflict that occupied the front page of *Corriere della Sera*. Thus framed, the minister's position did not generate conflict but rather attempted to deflate it by downplaying the possibility of recognition. Bindi tackled precisely the binary (pro-PACS vs anti-PACS) that dominated the media coverage of those days, which meant that she could not have been included in the tensions that occupied the front page. By displacing PACS, she could be said to have tampered with the disagreement that was central to the conveying of tensions. Consequently her voice on 22 May (4. 8) appeared to be sidelined, in contrast with the centre-stage position she was granted the day before (4. 1; 4. 2).

The sidelining of Bindi's position is not only indicative of the ways in which certain positions are emphasised at the expense of other. The focus on tensions generates a discursive space characterised mainly by the representation of *de facto unions* as a dangerous endeavour for any government to undertake. This construction naturalised weak and partial recognition of rights to *de facto unions*.

The recognition of *de facto unions* as a divisive project

In relation to politics, Mazzoleni and Schultz argue that news values impose a bias on the representation of what they call 'the media reality of politics', since the features that respond to news values are routinely emphasised (1999: 251). Again, this should not be taken to signify that news items ought to be investigated in relation to their truthfulness but that emphasis should be placed on questioning the relationship between the discourses news media produce and their relationship to hegemony and power (Jowett and Peel, 2010; Riggs, 2005; Meyers, 1994). In the following I present a representative selection of headlines that typified both the tensions and the positions that characterised the coalition government:

(4. 16) BIOETHICS: THE CROSS-PARTY CATHOLIC LOBBY IS BACK (ANON, *Corriere Della Sera*, 9 June 2006)

(4. 17) LAW N. 40⁶⁴ IS NOT GOING TO CHANGE. PRODI [IS] BETWEEN STEM CELLS AND PACS (ANON, *La Repubblica*, 17 June 2006)

(4. 18) UDEUR ATTACKS DS 'THEY HAVE TO RESPECT THE (ELECTORAL) PROGRAMME' (ANON, *La Repubblica*, 18 June 2006)

(4. 19) DE FACTO COUPLES, VENDOLA'S LAW⁶⁵ HEATS UP THE TENSIONS WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT (De Luca, *La Repubblica* 9 September 2006)

(4. 20) BIOETHICS AND NEW FAMILIES. CATHOLICS ARE THE INTOLERANT ONES (De Marchis, *La Repubblica*, 14 September 2006)

(4. 21) 'ROMANO HAS TO HURRY UP. WE ARE TAKING THE PIAZZA SOON.'⁶⁶ (Roncone, *Corriere Della Sera*, 7 November 2006)

(4. 22) THEODEM [WROTE] A LETTER TO THE PROFESSOR⁶⁷. WE ARE BESIEGED. (Casadio, *La Repubblica*, 7 December 2006)

(4. 23) FASSINO: 'NO TO EUTHANASIA AND ADOPTION FOR GAY COUPLES' (ANON, *Corriere Della Sera* 15 December 2006)

(4. 24) MASTELLA WARNS: LET'S DEFEND THE FAMILY OR I WILL VOTE AGAINST [THE LAW ON DE FACTO UNIONS] (Martirano, *Corriere Della Sera*, 9 December 2006)

(4. 25) FASSINO: 'THE GOVERNMENT IS OUT OF BREATH AND ETHICAL QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN EXACERBATED' (Franco, *Corriere Della Sera*, 20 December 2006)

(4. 26) BINETTI [SAYS]: A REFERENDUM AGAINST PACS. AND FINOCCHIARO [SAYS]: IT WILL END UP LIKE THE [REFERENDUM ON] DIVORCE (Arachi, *Corriere Della Sera*, 26 January 2007)

(4. 27) WE, THE THEODEM, AGREED ON THE (ELECTORAL) PROGRAM BUT WE ARE NOT GOING TO GIVE ANYTHING MORE (Calabro', *Corriere Della Sera*, 1 February 2007)

(4. 28) THEODEM WARN ON PACS: OUR AGREEMENT IS NOT GRANTED (Verderami, *Corriere Della Sera*, 2 February 2007)

(4. 29) PACS: CONFLICT ON THE TEXT OF THE LAW (Casadio, *La Repubblica*, 3 February 2007)

(4. 30) DE FACTO COUPLES: CONFLICT BETWEEN FASSINO AND MASTELLA (Guerzoni, *Corriere Della Sera*, 29 January 2007)

⁶⁴ The controversial law on assisted reproduction discussed in chapter one.

⁶⁵ Niki Vendola was Governor of Puglia. His government approved a register for the recognition of de facto couples and extended regional welfare benefits to same-sex and heterosexual de facto couples. Puglia was one of the local governments that extended the recognition of rights at regional level to same-sex couples.

⁶⁶ The headline reports the declaration of Maria Antonietta Coscioni, president of the Radical Party. The Radical Party strongly supported the repeal of law 40 on assisted reproduction as well as the controversial issue of research on stem cells. They also advocated legal recognition of de facto unions.

⁶⁷ 'Professor' is Prodi's nickname. It refers to him being an economics professor at Bologna University.

These examples reflect the ways in which headlines appear to work as echo chambers for politicians' dissatisfaction with their party or with the coalition. In order to understand its relevance it is important to remember that the electoral law that governed the 2006 elections determined the construction of a coalition, the Union, that was internally quite diverse (Campus, 2009; De Sio, 2007). Within the Union, small political parties and groups soon acquired considerable lobbying power, given the narrow majority that the coalition won in the Senate (158 seats against the 156 of the House of Freedom). However, small political parties within the coalition were more likely to hold strong views in relation to PACS and a series of other issues and hence more likely to occupy the space of a 'drama-prone' media coverage (Mancini, 2013). The lobbying power of small parties seems to have impacted on the space they occupied in the media and helped to explain how strong claims could more easily find space in the headlines of newspapers. Indeed as Mancini argues, in the complex coalition system that governs Italian politics, politicians use news media as 'a place and the instrument through which to settle the differences of the various groups and reach the minimum threshold necessary for making policy decisions' (1993: 142). Mancini's analysis rests on the concept of mediatisation of contemporary politics. As discussed in chapter one, growing emphasis is placed on the way in which politicians have internalised the rules that regulate news values and increasingly use news media as part of the governing process (Strömbäck, 2008: 240).

Both the headlines and the news stories reveal how the representation of the tension within the majority coalition is discussed, not only in relation to PACS, but also alongside other 'divisive' issues, such as the introduction of the RU486 protocol, the regulation of assisted conception, and euthanasia (see 4. 16; 4. 17; 4. 20; 4. 21; 4. 23). Already during the electoral campaign that preceded the 2006 election it was clear that the various parties comprising the Union did not appear to agree on the form that the recognition should have taken (Campus, 2008, 2009; Donà, 2009). While the term 'PACS' was not used in the electoral programme, nor in the government programme, it was frequently used in the media coverage: it featured in 83 headlines, most of them published before the presentation of DICO in February 2007. The analysis of the headlines also reveals that, on the one hand, representatives of the government and the majority were routinely reported to routinely emphasise that PACS are not included in the programme, while on the other hand, in the media coverage, PACS became shorthand for any law that could potentially recognise *de facto unions*. The term PACS

was partially dropped in February when the first bill was presented and the tensions were directed towards the text of the DICO.

The use of PACS as an acronym merits further attention, because it is important to look at the different ways in which the possibility of a law has been labelled in media coverage (Jowett and Peel, 2010). The acronym was first used to identify the proposal presented by Grillini during the XIV government that preceded the Prodi II government. It undoubtedly references the French legislation introduced in 1999 that regulates unions outside marriage. The use of the term PACS can be read as predicated on the connections between European movements that shaped the agenda of the Italian LGBT movement. The term clearly identified the goals of the movement, at the same time separating it from 'marriage'. This separation has been interpreted as a clear political strategy of LGBT groups in Europe, as elsewhere, wishing to avoid giving conservative politicians (further) leverage for mobilisation while taking into account the critiques the movement voiced against the patriarchal structure of marriage (Adam, 2003: 273).

Other issues were also framed as divisive. The inability to find common ground within the coalition lead to the creation of a governmental intergroup with the sole purpose of addressing what became increasingly framed as ethical questions (Casadio, *la Repubblica*, 7 June 2006). *Corriere della Sera*, in particular, regularly used the captions *Etica e Diritti* (ethics and rights) and *Etica e Politica* (ethics and politics) in discussing PACS or questions around assisted conception and living wills between June 2006 and February 2007. The newsworthiness of the tensions that traversed the majority in 2006 seemed to attach, through repetition, the status of troublesome and divisive to questions like assisted reproduction, abortion, living wills, and the rights of *de facto unions* and same-sex couples. This trope permeates the entire media coverage punctuated by constant requests to address these questions with 'care'.

(4. 32) THIS WAY WE ARE GOING TO SCARE CATHOLICS AND THE DIALOGUE WILL BE MORE DIFFICULT (Casadio, *la Repubblica*, 18 June 2006)

The appeal to 'carefulness' became even more relevant in the aftermath of the first government crisis in February 2007 that came after the presentation of the DICO bill. Tensions, troubles and the need to be 'careful' regulated the semantic space in which PACS, DICO and then CUS were routinely presented. The media coverage drew a connection between the tensions and the necessity of diplomacy and care that in turn constructed a space where time was necessary and delays were to be expected. It is in this discursive space that continuous delays and postponements encountered by various

drafts of laws became naturalised. In other words, the media discourse analysed can be seen as operating to encourage as '*natural, obvious* or *commonsensical* certain preferred ways of classifying reality' (Allan, 2010: 98 emphasis in the original) that sustain the ongoing postponement of any questions that can be framed as dissonant with, especially, Catholic sensibility. The 'influential minority' (Diamanti and Ceccarini, 2007) is in fact positioned as routinely able to veto any law that is perceived as conflicting with Catholic doctrine. In turn, this grants conservative MPs both power and visibility vis-à-vis the political debate. However, in order to better understand the role of the 'influential minority', it is worth looking at the space occupied by representatives of the Catholic Church in the media coverage analysed.

The Catholic Church as influential actor

The reading of the entire data set revealed the presence of frequent references to representatives of the Catholic Church. The Pope is mentioned 538 times, Cardinal Ruini, CEI president until March 2007, is mentioned 291 times, and Cardinal Bagnasco, his successor, 183 times. References to the Catholic Church, the Vatican or the CEI appear in 103 headlines, while direct quotes from Pope Benedict XVI alone, appear in 60 of the headlines analysed. While these numbers are helpful in establishing the centrality of representatives of the Catholic Church in the media coverage, the representation is much more complex. Again, it is important to note a particular news item published in May 2006, soon after the Prodi government was formed, as an indicative example of the characteristics that occur throughout the timeframe analysed.

As discussed above, Bindi's statement

(4. 1) 'RIGHTS, EVEN PUBLIC RIGHTS TO DE FACTO UNIONS'
(Cazzullo, *Corriere della Sera*, 21 May 2006)

was presented as linked to the Pope's statement against PACS (4. 3):

(4. 3) THE POPE'S ATTACK: NO TO PACS (Anon, *Corriere della Sera*, 21 May 2006)

through positioning a reference to her statement in the subheading to the above headline:

(4. 4) ROSY BINDI REVIVES IDEAS ON DE FACTO COUPLES:
ALSO PUBLIC RIGHTS.

The headline (4. 3) refers to the Pope's meeting with the Spanish ambassador in Rome. However, *Corriere della Sera*, in placing Bindi's statement as a subheading of the Pope's, arguably blurs the connection between the two. The lead paragraph reads:

(4. 33) During the papal audience with the new Spanish ambassador, the Pope lunges⁶⁸ again against PACS and assisted reproduction. Benedetto XVI reiterated that the family should not be 'supplanted nor overshadowed' through the introduction of other forms of union and that 'the primeval right to life' ought to be defended 'from conception'. But Rosy Bindi, the new Minister for Family politics [declares herself] open to [discuss] de facto couples and she declares herself in favour of an amendment to the law on assisted reproduction. The Pope highlighted the most controversial themes pertaining to the relationship between the state and the Church: the legalisation of gay marriage, the introduction of 'quick divorce' [procedures] and the transformation of religious education into an optional school subject. (my emphasis)

The news schemata (van Dijk, 1998) reveal how two events (the Pope's meeting with the Spanish ambassador and Minister Bindi's declaration of intent) are presented as one episode. The conjunction 'but' (line 7) highlighted in the texts reinforces the link, already established in subheading 4. 4, between the comments of the Pope during the papal audience (lines 1-7) and Rosy Bindi's position in relation to de facto couples (lines 7-10). It not only stresses the temporal co-occurrence but hints at a divergence between the two events, allowing a reading of Bindi's statement as in contrast with the Pope's desiderata. Bindi's declaration of intent is then followed by another sentence focusing on the Pope's declaration (lines 10-15). The construction of the two events as a co-occurrence is sustained by the unclear reference to the state (line 12). 'The relationship between the state and the Church' can be interpreted as referring to the Italian state, implied in the previous sentence through the mention of the minister for family politics. But it can also be interpreted as referring to Spain, since the Pope is reported addressing the Spanish ambassador.

The construction of the connection between the two events can, as already established, be read through the notion of newsworthiness. Indeed, news values are not only indicative of the reasons behind the selection of news but also regulate the ways in which news reports emphasise characteristics that make events newsworthy (Mazzoleni and Schultz, 1999). The connection between the Pope and Bindi conveys a tension that, in responding to news values allows for the debate at centre stage while enhancing the

⁶⁸ As it will be evident in other examples, it is not uncommon for the media texts analysed to refer to events that happened before the text was written in the present tense. The translation maintains the original tense.

reasons for the conflict. Through the notion of newsworthiness it is therefore possible not only to read the relevance of the opposition of small parties in the media coverage but also the crucial platform granted to representatives of the Catholic Church.

This should not lead to the conclusion that the participation of the Vatican in Italian political debate was not challenged in the media coverage. Representatives of left-wing parties were quoted criticising the Vatican's and the CEI's position on the legal recognition of *de facto unions* and same sex couples, and space was granted to opinions critical of the role of the Church in Italian politics. For instance, during a state visit to Madrid in January 2007, the President of the Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, addressed the issue of PACS. Both *la Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera* reported Napolitano's statement on the front page:

(4. 34) NAPOLITANO: PACS, LISTEN TO THE POPE. 'TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE CHURCH'S FEAR'. NO AGREEMENT IN THE UNION (Anon, *Corriere della Sera*, 30 January 2007)

(4. 35) 'SYNTHESIS WITH THE CHURCH ['S POSITIONS] ON PACS' (Anon, *la Repubblica*, 30 January 2007)

Napolitano's statement generated a series of reactions against the Church's intrusion in Italian politics. On 31 January *la Repubblica* published an interview with the politician and philosopher Massimo Cacciari. The headline reads:

(4. 36) THE SECULAR STATE OUGHT TO TAKE ITS DECISIONS. THE CHURCH IS ENGAGING IN A BACKWARD BATTLE (Bianchin, *la Repubblica*, 31 January 2007)

The same issue included four more articles on the question of the Vatican and CEI participation in the Italian political debate.⁶⁹ *Corriere della Sera* gave the issue similar coverage with six articles dedicated to President Napolitano's comments in Madrid.⁷⁰ In similar vein, intense criticism was made of the tone of the interventions made by representatives of the Catholic Church in the aftermath of the news of a child's suicide in April 2007, allegedly caused by homophobic bullying. Yet although critiques of the Church's position punctuated the debate, the centrality of the Church's position never diminished. On the contrary, the critiques appeared to enhance the space occupied by CEI and Vatican's representatives, who were in turn granted further space to respond to the critiques. Their position never appeared to be jeopardised but was routinely

⁶⁹ Anon, *la Repubblica*, 31 January; Casadio, *la Repubblica*, 31 January; Ceccarelli, *la Repubblica*, 31 January; Lopapa, *la Repubblica*, 31 January

⁷⁰ Anon, *Corriere della Sera*, 31 January 2007; Accattoli, *Corriere della Sera*, 31 January 2007; Alberti, *Corriere della Sera*, 31 January 2007; Arachi, *Corriere della Sera*, 31 January 2007; Mastella, *Corriere della Sera*, 31 January 2007; Roncone, *Corriere della Sera*, 31 January 2007.

repositioned as central (Van Dijk, 1988). The frequent moral outcries of the Catholic hierarchy in conveying ‘drama’ and ‘conflict’ acquired the status of newsworthiness (Mazzoleni and Schultz, 1999: 251) that in turn reinforced their constant presence within the media discourse. The media reinforced the centrality of religious authorities, firstly through the words of politicians and their references to the Church, and secondly through articles constructed through the opposition of statements from CEI or Vatican representatives and Italian politicians, recreating a sort of dialogue between the two institutions, as in the example above (4. 33).

In their frequent interventions, the Vatican and the CEI found in the media a valid echo. Their positions were framed as ‘fear’ (4. 34), legitimate fear that however soon was used to define not only the Vatican but also all Catholics. The powerful voice of the Vatican was often framed as the voice of the Church and by default the voice of Catholics who ought not to be scared. The consequences of this construction are twofold: on the one hand, it sustains the construction of ‘Catholics’ as a homogenous group. On the other, it operates to eradicate all voices within the Catholic Church that do not conform to the central dictate of the Vatican. As established in chapter one, many representatives of the clergy challenged the Vatican position with regard to sexuality, and many more define themselves as Catholics whilst advocating for the legal recognition of *de facto unions*. As chapter seven will show, while groups of homosexual Catholics and representatives of the clergy supporting the recognition of same-sex and *de facto unions* featured in the media coverage, they never displaced the construction of Catholics as a homogenous group opposed to the DICO. Examples of how this operates and how the position of the Catholic Church in relation to PACS/DICO/CUS is reported include the following headlines:

- (4. 37) APPEAL FROM THE POPE: DO NOT HIT THE FAMILY (Accattoli, *Corriere della Sera*, 21 May 2006)
- (4. 38) PACS, THE ATTACK OF THE CHURCH: ‘THE GOVERNMENT IS ERADICATING THE FAMILY’ (Politi, *la Repubblica*, 10 December 2006)
- (4. 39) PACS, CARDINAL BERTONE ATTACKS: ‘THEY DISTORT THE CONCEPT OF THE FAMILY’ (Politi, *la Repubblica*, 31 December 2006)
- (4. 40) CATHOLICS OUGHT TO DEFEND THE FAMILY. THE CHURCH HAS THE DUTY TO MOBILISE THEM (Manzitti, *la Repubblica*, 5 March 2007)
- (4. 41) THE POPE TO CATHOLIC POLITICIANS: ‘DO NOT VOTE FOR LAWS AGAINST NATURE’ (Calabro’, *Corriere della Sera*, 14 March 2007)
- (4. 42) ‘[I SAY] NO TO THE DICO. THEY INJURE THE FAMILY’ (Accattoli, *Corriere della Sera*, 23 March 2007)

PACS and then later DICO/CUS were referred to by Vatican and CEI representatives as ‘laws against nature’ (Anon, *Corriere della Sera*, 14 March 2007). The headlines resonate with the construction of the recipients of PACS/DICO as the immoral other against the morality (and the sanctity) of the family; they contribute to the construction of a set of meanings that differentiate the good from the bad, ‘the sinner from the saved, the moral from the immoral’ (Weeks, 2003: 56). Again, it is important to stress how this is in line with the arguments outlined in chapter one and chapter two. The official position of the Catholic Church has always been to fiercely condemn legal recognition of same-sex unions in Italy and Europe alike (Fassin, 2010); an opposition predicated on the construction of the homosexual other as ‘deviant’ from the ‘natural’ norm. What is important to underline here is how this position routinely resonates in the media analysed. Despite being challenged, this set of meanings continued to circulate and to sustain the construction of the difference between the morally worthy family and the immoral (gay) couple.

These considerations can be taken further to include how this construction evokes the role of the Catholic Church discussed in chapter one. The Italian legislature positioned the Catholic Church as the guarantor of morality. The Catholic Church hence regulated the realm of sexuality through policing heterosexual relations and silencing homosexuality (Dall’Orto, 1988; Poidimani, 2007). The space that the voice of the Vatican and the CEI seems to have occupied in this media coverage appears to entrench and solidify that role. This construction can be taken further when analysing the link that Vatican and CEI representatives are reported to draw between the family and the nation.

(4. 42) ‘I do hope that Italy will remain faithful to the monogamous family, unique and heterosexual, and will remain extremely vigilant in defence of life from conception to the natural death’ (Accattoli, *Corriere della Sera*, 8 February 2007).

(4. 43) The SIR⁷¹ states that the draft [of the law on cohabiting couples—the DICO bill] ‘could be a big menace to our national society, on the juridical side and on the cultural side and the side of customs, as well as in the tangible consequences it might have for the lives of Italian families’ (Politi, *la Repubblica*, 10 February 2007).

⁷¹ S. I. R. stands for *Servizio di Informazione Religiosa* (Religious Information Service). It is the news agency of the Italian Episcopal Conference.

These quotations exemplify the way in which the rhetoric of the Catholic Church reinforces the construction of an imagined Italy (Anderson, 1991) whose culture, customs and roots are potentially under threat when the homosexual ‘other’ is allowed to be part of it. The family is placed at the centre of the rhetoric of the nation, and heterosexuality is again positioned as a necessary, albeit insufficient, condition to belong to the national community (Richardson, 2000: 73). In this context, the subject positions constructed within the religious frame are rearticulated within the nation, and morality is rearticulated as *mores*, the customs defining a nation. The CEI and the Vatican frame themselves as the gatekeeper of *mores*, more than of morals, and of an identity (the Catholic) that thus becomes collapsed into the national identity. It is precisely against this construction that it is interesting to explore the questions raised by Gusmano and Bertone (2013). They maintain that it is possible to trace a continuous opposition to the inclusion of the LGBT subject within the sign of the family (some of this resistance was traced in the previous chapter, in relation to the reactions that a series of advertisements generated). The discourse that emanates from the religious hierarchy and the relevance it acquired in the media coverage seems to be working to sustain that construction. Most importantly, that construction is rarely challenged, since few voices that could have disrupted that pattern were included in the media coverage. As I discuss in the following section, analysis of the representation of LGBT voices within the media coverage reveals how they struggled to set the tone of the debate mainly due to their marginalisation in the news items analysed (Meyers, 1994).

LGBT activists as the silenced minority

Within the Prodi II Government, four MPs who were also activists within the LGBT movements were elected: Franco Grillini, former president of the national association Arcigay; Titti De Simone (PRC—Communist Refoundation Party), former president of Arcilesbica; transgender MP Vladimir Luxuria (PRC), active within the Circolo Mario Mieli in Rome; and Gianpaolo Silvestri (Verdi—Green Party) one of the founding members of Arcigay. The analysis of the headlines and first paragraphs of the articles collected, however, revealed that the above MPs occupy a very different position from the one granted, for instance, to representatives of the Catholic Church discussed above. This prompted an investigation of the space LGBT activists and MPs occupy in the news texts analysed. The analysis confirmed the initial assumptions. Grillini appears in nine headlines, Luxuria in seven, whilst De Simone never appears at all (by contrast, the Pope was quoted in 60). Further, Grillini is mentioned in 136

articles, Vladimir Luxuria in 63, De Simone in 30, Silvestri in eight.⁷² The media coverage also included other representatives of the movements among them Anna Paola Concia (GayLeft), Aurelio Mancuso and Sergio Lo Giudice (Arcigay). Again, their presence in the texts analysed is limited: Mancuso is mentioned in 21 articles, Lo Giudice in 16 and Concia in four.

It is important to take the analysis further in order to understand the ways in which these voices are represented. The scrutiny of headlines and first paragraphs of the news media texts was conducted in order to reveal the characteristics of the representation of LGBT activists and MPs. The scrutiny revealed three distinct features. Firstly, LGBT activists were mainly included when challenging the position of the government or replying either to an intervention of the Catholic Church or to the opposition of conservative MPs. The newsworthiness of LGBT MPs and activists appears to be predicated on positioning them as part of the conflict. Secondly, similar to the representation of the Catholic Church explored above, the multifaceted universe of LGBT groups and activists is represented as monolithic and univocal, speaking mainly through the voice of Arcigay. Thirdly, this monolithic representation appears to emphasise the role of gay activists at the expense of lesbian, bisexual and transgender activists.

The analysis of the texts revealed how the newsworthiness of LGBT activists and MPs is predicated on their enhancing the tensions in relation to the legal recognition of *de facto unions*. Grillini, De Simone, Luxuria, De Simone and Silvestri were all part of the coalition majority. In the texts analysed, members of the coalition majority are often represented as arguing with with Theodem and conservative members of the coalition. They are often represented as ‘replying to’ or ‘critiquing’ either the opposition to the law or the general anti-homosexual tone that, especially in the wake of the Family Day, permeated the media texts. While they are granted a position to replicate, they are rarely given space to actively set the tone or the ‘object’ (in Carvalho’s term) of the media coverage. It derives, that the possibilities of setting or regulating the boundaries of the media coverage, as well as the possibility of influencing, through the news media, the commonsensical limits of the circulating discourse appear limited. A similar conclusion can be drawn in relation to the representation of LGBT activists: the

⁷² By contrast the Pope is mentioned in 182 articles, Cardinal Ruini in 122, and Cardinal Bagnasco in 66.

newsworthiness of their demands appears to be similarly predicated on their potential to enhance further the construction of the legal recognition of same-sex couples as a troublesome issue.

This is reflected in the few headlines that directly quote LGBT MPs, activists or associations, a selection of which I report here:

- (4. 44) ARCIGAY: THE SECRETARY ACCUSES FASSINO. HE DOES NOT WANT ADOPTION? THEN I RESIGN FROM THE DS (Anon, *Corriere della Sera*, 16 December 2006)
- (4. 45) GAYS MARCH AGAINST THE UNION: 'PRODI HAS TO INTERVENE ON RIGHTS' (Anon, *Corriere della Sera*, 18 December 2006)
- (4. 46) ARCIGAY: FASSINO SHOULD OVERCOME HIS FEAR AND JOIN OUR DEMONSTRATION (Anon, *la Repubblica*, 7 March 2007)
- (4. 47) ARCIGAY: NO ONE IS LISTENING TO US. WE ARE GOING TO DO A FISCAL OBJECTION (Lopapa, *la Repubblica*, 25 June 2007)

In the above headlines it is possible to see how LGBT associations' demands acquire relevance when in disagreement with the government.

It is important to place this first assessment of the representation of LBGT activists in relation to the coverage explored in previous sections. There I suggested that the legal recognition of *de facto unions* and same-sex couples has been constructed as a troublesome issue that required care and continuous negotiation with the Catholic component of the coalition. Tensions within the government appeared to be framed as related to the legal recognition of *de facto unions* and in particular of same-sex couples. The construction of a new institution proved to be the most contentious point. As discussed in chapter one, the draft of the DICO bill diluted the recognition of same-sex relationships; gay and lesbian couples were subsumed into the overarching paradigm of mutual support, in an effort, as Bonini Baraldi (2008) suggests, to censor the non-heterosexual couple. And indeed DICO appeared to be written with the intention of not recognising same-sex couples, to the disappointment of those who supported the law, which was defined by Chiara Lalli as 'an offensive attribution of rights' (2008: 10). However, as I suggest, the outcry of those who opposed the law routinely involved mentioning same-sex couples under the sign of PACS and later of DICO. The same-sex couple appeared to generate the most heated reaction, emphasising the tension in the government. Against the relative silence of LGBT voices, it is interesting to note the constant coming in and out of focus of the same-sex couple. The rage of those who opposed the law routinely called the same-sex couple into question, whereupon the government, eager to maintain its stability, ushered it away and cast it to the margins of

the political debate. The voices of representatives of LGBT groups and associations appear to be trapped in this space and unable to set the parameters for the recognition of the rights of *de facto unions*.

An exception to the relative silence of LGBT representatives is the media coverage explored in chapter six. The coverage of the rape of a lesbian woman in September 2006 and the suicide of a young boy in April 2007 enhanced a space in which LGBT activists and MPs reportedly demanded action from the government, in particular in relation to homophobic violence. In those cases, however, I discuss how the news reports tended to foreclose the possibility of the ongoing newsworthiness of these positions.

The headlines reported above (4. 44. to 4. 47) also highlight the second feature of the representation of LGBT activists and MPs that emerged from the analysis, namely the overwhelming presence of Arcigay at the expense of other groups within the LGBT movement. In previous chapters, I discussed how within Italian LGBT communities it is possible to find many different positions on the legal recognition of LGBT couples; those differences generate an ongoing intense and rich debate (Towanda!, n. 18 2005; Ross, 2008: 253). As elsewhere, within the Italian LGBT movement it is also possible to trace a tension between radical and assimilationist positions that do not seem to find space within the mainstream news media analysed in this work.

Arcigay represents a broadly assimilationist agenda (2009: 205). In dialogue mainly with the parties of the left, Arcigay appears to adopt a ‘trade union’ approach, in which the movement defines itself as independent of single political parties but in constant dialogue with political institutions (Lo Giudice, cited in Ross, 2009: 209). This could explain Arcigay’s national visibility. Further, Arcigay activists are and have been members of political parties. A case in point is the political career of Franco Grillini, former president of Arcigay and member of the PRC. Similarly, it is possible to argue that space is granted to Arcigay because of its national base, whereas most other LGBT organisations in Italy are locally focused. However both explanations fail to account for the marginal place granted, for example, to Titti de Simone, former president of Arcilesbica, also a national association, which merged with Arcigay before separating from it in 1996.

The marginalisation of lesbian activists and MPs is mirrored in the space the word ‘lesbian’ occupies in the texts analysed. Overall, ‘lesbian’ appears 80 times in the

texts analysed, whereas 'gay' appeared 995 times. The word *lesbica/lesbiche* was used most often in relation to the coverage of *Father of the Brides*, as part of the phrase 'gay and lesbian', or as an explanation of the L in LGBT. The absence of a lesbian voice or the absence of lesbians *tout court* from the media coverage resonates with the thesis that, in Italy, lesbian women are more 'invisible' than gay men (Ross, 2008, 2012). Drawing on Butler (1990; 2004) and relying on the analysis of interviews with Italian lesbian women and contemporary and historical texts, Ross contends that the relative invisibility has been routinely framed as doubled-edged. While in the short term it appears to grant relative protection from homophobic attack (Ross, 2008), it can also jeopardise the possibility of recognition and acknowledgment within a world that routinely fails to incorporate lesbians in media representations as well as in political debates (Ross, 2012a).

It is against the background of lesbian invisibility in the media coverage that the turmoil generated by the representation of a lesbian couple on national TV in November 2006 acquired the status of a crucial discourse moment. The tensions that ensued from the transmission of *Father of the Brides* breached the silence and pushed a lesbian couple onto the front pages. Equally, the silence around lesbians is scratched in the coverage of the case of Paola, analysed in chapter six. Both cases were deemed newsworthy and thus contributed, albeit in a circumscribed way, to a shift in visibility.

Similarly, newsworthiness can explain another moment when the word 'lesbian' reached the headlines. On 24 May 2006, right after the new government took power, both *la Repubblica* and the *Corriere della Sera* reported that during a talk show broadcast by a local TV channel, Senator Massimo Saia (Alleanza Nazionale-National Alliance) declared that Rosy Bindi was not suitable to be the Minister of Family Policies because he thought she was a lesbian.

(4. 48) 'BINDI [IS A] LESBIAN. SHE SHOULD NOT BE IN THE GOVERNMENT'. A.N. (Alleanza Nazionale-National Alliance) ATTACKS [SENATOR SAIA]. FINI DISSOCIATES HIMSELF [FROM THE SENATOR] (De Luca, *la Repubblica*, 24 May 2006)

(4. 49) 'BINDI [IS A] LESBIAN'. EVERYONE AGAINST THE SENATOR (Arachi, *Corriere della Sera*, 24 May 2006)

Senator Saia's comment provoked bipartisan reaction in defence of Rosy Bindi. His words were condemned by his party (AN) and by his party's leader, Gianfranco Fini. Nonetheless it is interesting to note, once again, how news value is attached to a statement made during a talk show that in its anti-lesbian sentiment reawakens the tension between the family and the non-heterosexual subject. A similar trope permeates

the attacks against *Father of the Brides*, prompting the question of how the news coverage negotiated the tension between the representation and the political debate.

The relative invisibility of lesbian women in the media coverage analysed in this chapter became total silence when it came to the representation of bisexual identities. The word ‘bisexual’ occurs five times in the media coverage analysed. It was used four times to complete the LGBT acronym and once to define Gianna Nannini, a popular singer who came out as bisexual a decade ago. The absence of bisexual voices in the representation appears to evoke its incommensurability in the political debate, where the bisexual subject, placed as occupying the middle ground between heterosexuality and homosexuality, is not allowed a voice but is routinely subsumed in one side or the other of the dyad (see Hemmings, 2002). Similarly, the word ‘transgender’ is only used to describe transgender MP Vladimir Luxuria.

The marginal position of LGBT MPs and activists dangerously evokes the censoring attitude that silences and censors those who do not conform (Bonini Baraldi, 2008) and promotes the inclination for denial (Bertone, 2009) that appears to characterise Italian sexual politics.

Conclusion

The relationship between the media and politics has been discussed with reference to concepts of news values and mediatisation. These two concepts, examined in chapter two, highlight the close links between politics and the media by emphasising how political actors have internalised the rules of news values and are increasingly able to influence news media’s agenda, while the news media, by ‘conveniently formatting’ political discourse, became part of the government process (Strömbäck, 2008). However, as this chapter aimed at demonstrating, a focus on this connection that does not take into account the consequences of particular representations, produces only a partial picture. Analysis of the overall media coverage, in particular the headlines published on the first few days of the Prodi II Government, highlighted how the representation of different positions and of the questions at the core of political tensions can be interpreted to sustain the hegemonic discourses that permeate Italian sexual politics. In particular, the representation of a divided majority and the space granted to the outbursts of ‘drama-prone’ representatives of the Catholic Church solidified the construction of the legal regulation of *de facto unions*, as well as other issues, such as the regulation of assisted reproduction and abortion, as dangerous projects. This construction rendered commonsensical and natural the appeals to a calm and careful

approach to the issue, in turn pre-empting any criticism of the lack of action that characterised the governments that followed Prodi II up to the Renzi Government in 2014.

Further the preliminary analysis presented in this chapter raises some of the questions that will be addressed in the following chapters, particularly the marginal construction of the lesbian couple (chapter five), the construction of the family as opposed to the gay couple (chapters five and six), the construction of the Catholic Church and Catholics as a homogenous group to be positioned against the homogenous LGBT community (chapter seven).

Chapter Five. (Un) representable unions: media and the same-sex couple

On 20 November 2006, RAI1, the main channel of Italian public service broadcaster RAI, broadcast the film *Il padre delle Spose* (*Father of the Brides*⁷³) during prime time. It was directed by Lodovico Gasparini and starring famous actor Lino Banfi,⁷⁴ who described *Father of the Brides*, in an interview published on 15 November in *Corriere della Sera*, as

(5. 1) A story that will make people talk. Here I am, a father from the south of Italy, who finds out that his daughter is lesbian and she's got married to another woman in Zapatero's Spain (Polese, *Corriere della Sera*, 15 November 2006).

In the film Banfi plays Riccardo, an olive oil expert and international quality judge, living in Puglia with his celibate sister, Lucia (Lucia Sardo). Riccardo is invited to judge a competition for olive oil producers in Barcelona, where his estranged daughter Aurora (played by Rosanna Banfi, Lino's daughter) lives. When she sees him, Aurora does not tell him she is married to Rosario (Mapi Galan), a Spanish flamenco teacher and mother of seven-year-old Itzi. The concealment does not last long and when Riccardo realises that Rosario and Aurora are a couple, married under Spanish law, he goes back to Italy, ashamed of his daughter. Aurora and her wife soon follow him; Rosario is being stalked by her ex-husband, Itzi's father, who has been released from prison and is hunting down Aurora's family. The couple and the child seek refuge in Riccardo's village. The couple pass as friends but are soon outed by Riccardo's business rival, which sparks a scandal in the small community. However, through Aurora's support, the village finds a way to thrive economically. The couple eventually gain the acceptance of both Riccardo and the villagers.

Both *la Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera* reported that the airing of the TV film generated heated reactions. On 22 November, *la Repubblica* stated:

⁷³ The title *Il padre delle sposi* appears to be a play on the title of a well-known comedy classic *Father of the Bride* (Dir. Minnelli, 1950), translated in Italian as *Il padre della Sposa*.

⁷⁴ The article analysed called Banfi, in his early 70s in 2006, 'un attore formato famiglia', an actor whose work is mostly defined as family entertainment. In the light of the forthcoming discussion, however, it is interesting to note Banfi's past career. In the early 1980s he was mostly known as an actor of B-grade soft-core comedies (Ferrero Regis 2009: 22). Banfi now frequently plays characters who cross the line between comedy and drama.

A similar controversy also occurred in February and March 2007, sparked by the inclusion of a same-sex couple in a popular Italian TV series. Indeed, a few months after the broadcast of *Father of the Brides*, Banfi found himself the subject of further criticism when he played the lead in *Un Medico in Famiglia (A Doctor in the Family)*. This TV series is an adaptation of the Spanish sitcom *Médico de familia* and tells the story of Lele, a surgeon and widowed father of three, who moves in with his father, Libero (Banfi), to benefit from his help with running the household. The episodes are split between the household and the local medical centre where Lele works. In the fifth season a secondary character, Oscar, a practitioner at the centre and father of a little girl, starts a relationship with a colleague, Max, the newly arrived paediatrician, and again both *la Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera* reported the heated reaction to this plot development.

Reaction to both productions was presented as intertwined with the debate on the legal recognition of cohabiting couples. References to both the film and the TV series appeared in the political sections of both newspapers representing critiques from the Vatican newspaper *Osservatore Romano* and conservative MPs as well as praises from the management of RAI and Banfi himself.

I view this as a critical discourse moment when 'established discursive positions' could potentially be disrupted (Carvalho, 2008: 168). The texts analysed appear to blur the line between the films, the reactions they generated, and the overall debate. Since the plots of both *Father of the Brides* and *A Doctor in the Family* contain same-sex relationships and representations of lesbian and gay parenting, discussion about the appropriateness of these representations entered the news media coverage. This chapter focuses on the analysis of 26 articles that discuss either *Father of the Brides*, *A Doctor in the Family*, or both. This focus increases understanding of the ways in which the newspapers both facilitated and represented the tensions that ensued from both broadcasts. It opens a space for considering how the news media coverage negotiated the disruptive potential of the queering of the Italian family discussed in chapter two.

⁷⁵ *It: La gay in famiglia divide la politica.* *La* is a feminine single definite article, so in order to maintain the feminine connotation that the title conveys to the word gay, I translated *la gay* as *the gay woman*.

Father of the Brides represents a particularly interesting case, since its plot creates a contrast with the media coverage analysed in chapter four. The analysis of 'voices' highlighted the extent to which within the debate certain subjects were constructed as central (for example the Catholic Church), while others, such as representatives of lesbian and gay communities, emerged as marginal. Closer analysis revealed that within the space occupied by lesbian and gay activists, lesbian women were relatively silent in comparison with gay men. This appears to resonate not only with the different position that lesbian associations occupy compared with gay associations in Italy, but also with the compulsory heterosexuality that polices women's bodies, explored in chapter one (Danna, 2009; Poidimani, 2007). Hence, in a context in which the relevant voices seem to be male, *Father of the Brides* stands out in its representation of a lesbian couple at the centre of the TV film's narrative.

Father of the Brides can be read as an example of what Plummer defines as sexual stories, the analysis of which can add up to our understanding of contemporary politics of sexuality in contemporary Italy (1995: 145). Riccardo's journey of acceptance follows an interesting narrative construction: discovery, in Barcelona; refusal, when he flees Barcelona; denial, when the couple arrives in the small village after Rosario's ex-husband is released from prison; and transformation, when Riccardo accepts his daughter's homosexuality. According to Beeler and DiProva (1999), this structure is common in narratives that recall the moment of coming out as told by parents, relatives, and friends of homosexuals. Therefore *Father of the Brides* might be read as both a coming-out story (Aurora's coming out to her father and then the couple's coming out to the community) and a finding-out story (both Riccardo's as well as his co-villagers').

I suggest here a synergic analysis of the TV film and the newspapers' texts to enhance our understanding of the negotiation of meanings that occupy the media analysed and to generate suggestions in relation to Italian politics of sexuality. Analysis of this set of articles shows how coverage of the political tensions that characterised the presentation of the DICO bill have been transferred to the discussion about a film broadcast on National Television. In this transfer it is possible to further scrutinise the negotiation of understandings of 'family', 'couple' and 'parenthood', but also 'rights' circulating in the overall media coverage.

Table 1. Texts analysed in chapter five

Date of Publication	Author /Headline	Newspaper
18. 08. 2006	Fumarola, S.(a) <i>Stavolta vado in tv per difendere i gay.</i>	la Repubblica
18. 08. 2006	Fumarola, S.(b) <i>L'imbarazzo è prenderlo a parolacce.</i>	la Repubblica
15. 11. 2006	Polese, R. <i>Banfi: torno al cinema e rifarò l'allenatore.</i>	Corriere della Sera
19. 11. 2006	Fumarola, S. <i>I cattolici sul web attaccano Banfi. Fermate la fiction sulle nozze gay.</i>	la Repubblica
22. 11. 2006	Volpe, M.(a) <i>Banfi: trattato come se avessi fatto un porno, ma non mi pento.</i>	Corriere della Sera
22. 11. 2006	Volpe, M.(b) <i>Fiction sulle nozze lesbo, elogi da sinistra L'affondo del Polo: è una RAI zapaterista.</i>	Corriere della Sera
22. 11. 2006	Dipollina, A. <i>Tanto rumore per una fiction leggera leggera.</i>	la Repubblica
22. 11. 2006	Franco, R. <i>La fiction con Banfi sulle nozze lesbiche divide anche l'Unione.</i>	Corriere della Sera
22. 11. 2006	Fumarola, S.(a) <i>Banfi: io, di centro-destra faccio litigare la sinistra.</i>	la Repubblica
22. 11. 2006	Fumarola, S.(b) <i>La gay in famiglia divide la politica.</i>	la Repubblica
22. 11. 2006	Grasso, A. <i>L'impegno di Banfi contro i pregiudizi.</i>	Corriere della Sera
23. 11. 2006	Anon. <i>Fiction Banfi, polemica Osservatore romano- Arcigay.</i>	la Repubblica
23. 11. 2006	Anon. <i>'Nozze omo in tv. Una polpetta'.</i>	Corriere della Sera
23. 11. 2006	Cazzullo, A. <i>Binetti: gli attacchi? Tengo alta la temperatura etica.</i>	Corriere della Sera
24. 11. 2006	Serra, M. <i>L'Amaca.</i>	la Repubblica
22. 01. 2007	Costantini, E. <i>Un medico in famiglia. Polemica sulla coppia gay.</i>	Corriere della Sera
11. 02. 2007	Cavalli, G. <i>Vaticano all'attacco di Nonno Libero: promuove le famiglie gay.</i>	Corriere della Sera
11. 02. 2007	Fumarola, S. <i>Sotto tiro le fiction filo-gay.</i>	la Repubblica:

	<i>Banfi: che miopia.</i>	
11. 02. 2007	Politi, M. <i>DICO, offensiva del Vaticano. Non tappate la bocca al Papa.</i>	la Repubblica
12. 02. 2007	Anon. <i>Sulla fiction di Banfi ossessione omofobica.</i>	la Repubblica
12. 02. 2007	Battista, P. <i>Se per la Chiesa cattolica Lino Banfi diventa il simbolo della sconfitta.</i>	Corriere della Sera
13. 02. 2007	Anon. <i>Banfi: Pressioni fortissime per cancellare quella fiction.</i>	la Repubblica
19. 02. 2007	Anon. <i>Banfi: Troppa rigidità oltretevere esagerando si ottiene il contrario.</i>	la Repubblica
13. 03. 2007	Costantini, E. <i>Nonno Libero sindaco si schiera sui DICO.</i>	Corriere della Sera
14. 03. 2007	Palestini, L. <i>Torna Un medico in famiglia e Lino Banfi diventa sindaco.</i>	la Repubblica
06. 07. 2007	Fumarola, S. <i>E Walter propone la sua pax televisiva Basta con il bipolarismo della fiction.</i>	la Repubblica

The airing of a TV film generated reactions

As Banfi predicted, the broadcast of *Father of the Brides* got people talking.

Here I present the chronology of the case study at the core of this chapter. In so doing I intend to stress further the relevance of zooming in on this set of articles in order to answer my research questions as well as to clarify how events unfolded in connection with the media coverage examined in chapter four. On 18 August 2006, *la Repubblica* published, in the entertainment section of the newspaper, an interview with Lino Banfi under the headline

(5. 3) THIS TIME I APPEAR ON TV IN DEFENCE OF GAYS
(Fumarola(a), *la Repubblica*, 18 August 2006)

The headline frames Banfi's project as an act in defence of 'gays'. The representation of the actor as a champion of gay rights will be explored further in the last section of the chapter with reference to the limits that such a defence appears to have, in particular in relation to gay parenting. In the interview on 18 August, Banfi discloses for the first time the content of the project. The film is presented with the provisional title of *Piccoli Padri* (Petty Little Fathers). The article starts with a vignette from the film. It is

followed by a reference to Gasparini, the director, and scriptwriters Paola Pascolini, Fabio Leoni and Giancarlo Russo. Banfi is then quoted as explaining how the idea of the film came to him while shooting *Un Difetto di Famiglia* (A Family Flaw) in 2002. Back then, he is quoted as saying, someone asked him how he would react to a sibling coming out. The question prompted him to reflect on issues of acceptance within the family, dwelling upon his possible reaction to his own daughter coming out, and pushed him to write the first synopsis for the film. The actor is quoted as saying that he was so attached to the idea behind the film that he decided to co-produce it. The journalist at this point asked,

(5. 4) Did you encounter any problems when you pitched the film to RAI?

'To be fair, I expected to have to overcome some hurdles, but instead they welcomed [the story] enthusiastically. After all, TV should tell stories about the ever-changing society. I hope the director of RAIFICTION, Mr Saccà, will decide to broadcast it soon'.

The article moves on to explain the rationale behind the title *Petty Little Father* and to discuss the actor's relationship with his daughter, who plays Aurora.⁷⁶ Towards the end of the article, the journalist asks:

(5. 5) Have you taken into account criticism by Catholics?

'The topic is a sensitive one. I pay attention to each nuance, to the words I use, because I don't want to be offensive to anyone: neither Catholics nor gays'.

But, the actor continues, he is sure that the public will understand:

(5. 6) 'After all, I am loved by both gays and Catholics.'⁷⁷

The article closes with the journalist asking:

(5. 7) Do you support PACS?

'Society has changed, PACS should also be available to two pensioners living together in order to get to the end of each month [to make ends meet]. Notaries, jurists and accountants should get together and find a solution to protect all kinds of couples. There is a scene in the film that still moves me when I think

⁷⁶ The interview with the leading actor is accompanied by an interview with Rosanna Banfi, Lino's daughter, who is reported to describe her role as leading actress in the film (Banfi's estranged daughter) and her personal and professional relationship with her father. Both interviews dwell on the plot and on the links with current political debates.

⁷⁷ It is interesting to note here the use of the categories 'gay' and 'Catholics' as discrete. In chapter seven the maintaining and construction of the binary gay/Catholics will be further explored.

about it; it is when my daughter is stabbed by her partner's ex-husband. In the resuscitation room, only one relative is allowed. I instinctively shout: 'I'll go in! I am her father!' Then I understand that Aurora wants to see Rosario and I draw back. It is an extreme act of love'.

[It sounds] beautiful.

(5. 8) Are you so open minded towards all kinds of novelties?

'Let me be straight, when I hear of gay couples adopting children then I freeze. I don't know. I have all kinds of doubts, even though kids are always experiencing things with ease. I understood it when Virginia, my granddaughter, saw some scenes from the film'.

In this article, it is possible to find some of the tropes that characterise the overall news coverage explored in this chapter: the dominance of Banfi's voice and the framing of the representation of a gay couple as a sensitive topic in relation to a Catholic audience. The trope of Catholic sensibility, explored in chapter four, reappears here to frame the possibility of critiques of the representation of a lesbian couple on prime-time television.

Despite the fears expressed by both the journalist and the actor, in the days following the publication of the interviews by *la Repubblica* neither of the two newspapers reported any reaction to Banfi's project nor to the prospect of the broadcast of the film. News about the film did not appear again in the newspapers analysed until November 2006, close to the transmission date of 20 November. The first article citing the film appeared on 15 November in *Corriere della Sera*. The headline reads:

(5. 9) BANFI [SAYS] I AM BACK IN CINEMAS. I WILL BE THE COACH⁷⁸ ONCE MORE (Polese, *Corriere della Sera*, 15 November 2006)

The article, in the entertainment section, focuses mainly on Banfi's decades-long career, his future artistic projects and his forthcoming autobiography. The text is composed of a series of direct quotes and free indirect speech that are reminiscent of an interview style. Halfway through the text a reference is made to the imminent broadcast of *Father of The Brides*. The actor is quoted as he briefly describes the plot of the film. His description is followed by reference to critiques that appeared on unspecified 'Catholic websites':

⁷⁸ The headline refers to a very popular B-film, *L'allenatore nel Pallone* (*Trainer on the Beach*) (1986), now considered a cult in Italian 1980s popular comedy.

(5. 10) [The broadcast of Father of the Brides] has already alarmed Catholic groups and websites that are afraid that the actor's popularity might propagandise gay marriages.⁷⁹ 'An episode of *Porta a Porta* will be dedicated to this topic,' Banfi continues 'I think it is necessary to discuss without prejudice, with understanding.'

The journalist then describes Banfi's ties with the Catholic Church, his meetings with John Paul II and Benedict XVI.⁸⁰ The article then moves on to discuss Banfi's autobiography and some key episodes of his career. Criticisms at this point (five days before the broadcast of the movie) are vaguely framed and reportedly confined to unspecified websites.

It was only on 19 November that *la Repubblica* published an article under a significant headline:

(5. 11) CATHOLICS ATTACK BANFI ON THE WEB. STOP THE TV FILM ON GAY MARRIAGE (Fumarola, *la Repubblica*, 19 November 2006)

The headline signals a change in status of the critiques. From being reported as a hypothesis in August and confined to a single sentence on 15 November, critiques to the film acquired the status of headline the day before the broadcast. This shift in the perceived relevance of the criticisms was accompanied by a shift in their representation. The article starts with a quote from Grillini (honorary president of Arcigay) and DS MP, who is also quoted in three other articles analysed) praising the TV film and then moves to the boycotting proposed by the website *Cultura Cattolica* (Catholic culture).

(5. 12) On the internet the controversy is in full swing; Catholics are rising up and are inviting to bombard RAI with emails of complaint: the website *culturacattolica.it* calls for a boycott of the TV film and asks for it to be broadcast in the late night slot.

Indeed, on 14 November the website *Cultura Cattolica* published a note in which one of its contributors, Nerella Buggio, strongly criticised the TV film.⁸¹ Despite

⁷⁹ *It: La cosa ha già messo in allarme in allarme siti e circoli cattolici, timorosi che la popolarità dell'attore dell'attore faccia propaganda ai matrimoni omosessuali.* The translation aimed at emphasising the use of the word 'propaganda' over a stylistically more appropriate translation like 'promote'.

⁸⁰ As I shall demonstrate in the last section of the chapter, Banfi's religious stance does constitute one of the core topics of this coverage, and it is interestingly juxtaposed to his position on gay rights.

⁸¹ Nerella Buggio wrote: 'After the initial refusal of this conservative father, the authors (of the TV film) guarantee a happy ending, because of course, after all, it is a marriage, isn't it? No. Two women

the two newspapers' mention of blogs and posts in the plural, Baggio's is the only blog they name and refer to as actively calling for a boycott.

On 20 November the film was broadcast on the national TV channel RAI1 and attracted an estimated seven million viewers (26.7% share) (Volpe (b), *Corriere della Sera*, 22 November 2006). Following the broadcast, newspapers' coverage changed. The eight articles published between 22 and 24 November focused almost exclusively on tensions and criticisms; *la Repubblica* kept all the articles in the entertainment session of the newspaper, while *Corriere della Sera* moved it to the central pages. Before the broadcast, the articles mainly quoted the leading actor (Banfi) and in one instance the director of Rai Fiction (Agostino Saccà) and MP Franco Grillini. In the aftermath of the broadcast (from 21 to 24 November) eight news items⁸² were published, comprising praise and criticism from a number of MPs and members of the RAI board of directors as well as quotes from accusatory articles that had appeared in the Vatican newspaper *Osservatore Romano*. The TV film, ignored when it had been announced in August, acquired a newsworthy status when, following its broadcast, the critiques voiced within the Catholic website *Cultura Cattolica* became part of the two newspapers' coverage and were sustained by the intervention of the Vatican newspaper.

Similar coverage appeared in January 2007, when *Corriere della Sera* published an article discussing the reactions to the addition of a gay couple in the fifth season of the popular sitcom *A Doctor in the Family*, containing comments from politicians as well as from Lino Banfi and the sitcom's scriptwriters. *A Doctor in the Family* shares with *Father of the Brides* the same actor as the leading character (Lino Banfi), as well as the same producer and scriptwriter. Another actor is also present in both productions. Rosanna Banfi plays a supporting role in *A Doctor in the Family* and plays Aurora,

are (just) a couple that lives together. It is not enough that a law says that, even though they are of the same sex, they can be declared "married"; marriage is something else. I am sorry, but words have their relevance and the commitments undertaken are different'. Refusing any accusation of racism, she emphasises how it is one thing 'to welcome a lesbian daughter but it is quite another to say that the marriage between two homosexuals and that between two heterosexuals is the same thing (...). Of course, they are not going to cancel the broadcast because of our protests, but making our voice heard, asking for it to be moved to a later slot and, maybe cancelling our TV licences, might be effective' (Culturacattolica. It, accessed 8 October 2009, *my translation*).

⁸² The eight news stories comprise two reviews of the film (Dipollina, *la Repubblica*, 22 November 2006; Grasso, *Corriere della Sera*, 22 November 2006), two interviews with Lino Banfi (Volpe, *Corriere della Sera*, 22 November 2006; Fumarola, *la Repubblica*, 22 November 2006), two news stories, including statements by members of the RAI board of directors (Volpe, *Corriere della Sera*, 22 November 2006; Fumarola, *la Repubblica*, 22 November 2006) two news stories discussing the attack of *Osservatore Romano* (Anon, *la Repubblica*, 23 November 2006; Anon, *Corriere della Sera*, 23 November 2006) one interview with Theodem MP, Paola Binetti (Cazzullo, *Corriere della Sera*, 23 November 2006) and one opinion piece (Serra, *la Repubblica*, 24 November 2006).

Riccardo's daughter in *Father of the Brides*. In the 2007 season, Oscar, one of the surgeons at the local medical centre, a longstanding character in the series and father of a little girl, falls in love with a newly arrived paediatrician, Max. The TV series again attracted media coverage when in February 2007 *la Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera* reported *Osservatore Romano*'s criticism of both *Father of the Brides* and *A Doctor in the Family*. The fifth season of the sitcom that was to be broadcast on RAI1 in March 2007 is discussed in six articles published between 11 – 13 February: three articles reported the critiques that *Osservatore Romano* moved to the fiction on 10 February (Cavalli, *Corriere della Sera*, 11 February, 2007; Politi, *la Repubblica*, 11 February 2009; Fumarola, *la Repubblica*, 11 February 2009); one opinion piece discussed the critiques of *Osservatore Romano* (Battista, *Corriere della Sera*, 12 February 2007); one news item reported an interview with Grillini; comments from Arcigay on the *Osservatore Romano*'s intervention in the debate (Anon, *la Repubblica*, 12 February 2007); and an interview with Banfi (Anon, *la Repubblica*, 13 February 2007). Another interview with Banfi appeared on 19 February (Anon, *la Repubblica*, 19 February 2007). The criticisms of the TV series' plot were discussed again prior to the broadcast of *A Doctor in the Family*'s first episode in March 2007 in two news stories that reiterated the connection between the political debate and the sitcom (Costantini, *Corriere della Sera*, 13 March 2007; Palestini, *la Repubblica*, 14 March 2007). Finally, the two productions were mentioned in July 2007 when *la Repubblica* published an article about Rai Fiction and the political debate its productions appear to cause (Fumarola, *la Repubblica*, 6 July 2007).

Coverage of the reactions to *Father of Brides* and *A Doctor in the Family* appears to differ slightly in term of the weight the newspapers give to the topic and the voices called to comment on both productions. Whereas in the case of *Father of the Brides* tension and criticism built up gradually, in the case of *A Doctor in the Family* tension and criticism were part of the story from the first announcement, in January 2007, of the addition of a gay couple in the sitcom's new season, to be broadcast in March 2007. While *A Doctor in the Family* was discussed mainly in the entertainment pages of both newspapers, six of the seven articles discussing *A Doctor in the Family* appeared in the politics section, with only one published in the entertainment section. The shift from entertainment to politics seems to indicate a change in the relevance of the topic in relation to the overall debate. Arguably, this change in relevance can be

associated with the events that characterised the ongoing coverage of the political debate on the legal recognition of *de facto unions* and same-sex couples.

Let me here briefly recap the main events discussed in the previous chapter. When *Father of the Brides* was broadcast in November 2006, the Minister for Equal Opportunities, Barbara Pollastrini, reportedly announced she was going to propose a bill for the legal recognition of *de facto unions*, a statement that was followed by heated reactions. After six months in office, the government already appeared divided and the ruling majority was portrayed as unable to agree on a number of issues, including the legal recognition of *de facto unions* and same-sex couples. In February 2007, when the fifth season of the TV series *A Doctor in the Family* was discussed in the newspapers, the DICO bill was officially presented to the Chamber of Deputies.⁸³ The newspapers analysed, reported resistance to the bill coming both from within the government majority and the opposition. Ample coverage was dedicated to the reaction of the Vatican and the CEI to the bill and it is at this juncture that *Osservatore Romano*'s attack shifted to Lino Banfi and his work.

The connection between the political moment and the newsworthiness of a sitcom can be also understood by looking at the fact that prior to *Father of the Brides* RAI had already produced other films involving a gay character and broadcast many more. Both *Father of the Brides* and *A Doctor in the Family* are products of Rai Fiction, a branch of RAI dedicated to sitcom and TV films. In 2002, Rai Cinema (a branch of RAI dedicated to projects for the big screen) produced *Un Difetto di Famiglia* (A Family Flaw) starring Lino Banfi and Nino Manfredi and in 2005 RAIFICTION produced the film *Mio Figlio* (My Son) starring Lino Buzzanca. The latter story revolved around a police officer investigating a murder; his son, also a police officer, hinders the investigation as it might out him as a gay man. In *A Family Flaw*, Banfi plays Nicola, a man forced to go on a road trip with his estranged gay brother Francesco to honour their mother's dying wish to be buried in her hometown, where the brothers grew up. This is the same town from which Francesco fled 40 years earlier when he decided to come out as a gay man. *A Family Flaw*, *My Son* and *Father of The Brides* appear to represent what Salerno, Seghini and Tramontana define as 'gay film[s] for a non-gay audience' whose function is defined as 'pedagogical', the aim being to educate people to practice 'tolerance' (2008: 11. 50). Salerno, Seghini and Tramontana define

⁸³ On 8 February 2007 Bindi and Pollastrini presented the new bill on the legal recognition of *de facto unions* that generated heated reactions.

this plot's structure typical of Italian productions mainly appealing to a family audience. A characteristic of this kind of story is that it is told from a point of view external to the gay or lesbian character and usually involves a heterosexual character coming to terms with the homosexual character's sexual orientation. The heterosexual character is usually a relative: a father in the case of *My Son and Father of the Brides*, a brother in *Family Flaw*. The homosexual character appears normalised in these narratives by being acceptable and accepted within the space of the heterosexual community, desexualised, in a long-term relationship, and performing conventional gender roles (Salerno, Seghini and Tramontana, 2008). The target of the family audience and the construction of the desexualised gay that allows the heterosexual to perform tolerance appear in line with Luca Malici's analysis of the censorship that, despite growing representation of non-heterosexual sexualities, still characterises Italian TV (Malici, 2011). Malici traces the reason for this censorship in the construction of the Italian audience by TV executives and producers according to a regime of compulsory heterosexuality. In this regime, decisions on what to broadcast and for whom rely on assumptions about a segment of viewers seemingly in need of 'protection' from the unease and discomfort that exposure to representations of 'queerness' might provoke⁸⁴ (Malici, 2011: 126; see also Porfido, 2009). And yet the increased availability of queer representations purposefully targeting a family audience that appears to characterise the last decade in Italy can be defined as crucial in challenging traditional and normative constructions of minoritized sexual identities (Malici, 2011, 2012). The tension between welcoming the representation of a lesbian couple and the unease this representation might provoke is part of the news media coverage. But if this tension is compared to the non-existent reaction that the announcement of *Father of the Brides* generated in August 2006, it seems that the

⁸⁴ Indicative of Malici's analysis is the episode that involved the television broadcast of *Brokeback Mountain*. In 2006 the award-winning film was released in Italy. Firstly rated PG14, it was subsequently cleared as suitable for all in 2007. Its broadcast stirred an interesting debate that also hit the foreign press. It was first due to appear on television on 8 December 2008. Gay and lesbian associations denounced the fact that the broadcast version was edited and that all scenes in which the two characters are physically close are missing. LGBT associations denounced the editing as a homophobic attack: the film, not due to be broadcast until after 11pm, was cleared as suitable for all, therefore there could be no justification for such editing. In the UK, the controversy was covered in *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2008/dec/11/ang-lee-television-italy-gay-scene-cut> and www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/italy/3704470/Italian-TV-shows-Brokeback-Mountain-without-gay-scenes.html). RAI, which broadcast the film apologised and claimed they put the wrong version on air. Soon after, it was reported in a RAI press release that the film was going to be shown again soon in its uncensored version. It was in fact broadcast again on 17 March 2009. Unfortunately, the analysis of *Brokeback Mountain* and the debate its transmission generated is beyond the scope of this chapter.

newsworthiness of the representation of gay couples on popular TV shows might be predicated on the tensions that characterise the moment in which they were broadcast (Malici, 2012; Dines and Rigoletto, 2012).

Stories... 'that will make people talk'

Lino Banfi, leading actor in both productions, is quoted in 11 of the articles analysed and interviewed four times. I will investigate his position in the last section of this chapter, where I suggest that in both his representation and his relevance we can trace the discursive construction of possible limits to the acceptance of same-sex couples and gay parenting. Here I wish to focus on how reactions to the film unfolded, paying particular attention to both the way in which voices were allocated different space in the media coverage (Carvalho, 2008; Meyers, 1994) and how this contributed to the 'construction of the object' that characterises the news coverage (Carvalho, 2008).

In the aftermath of the broadcast of the TV film *Father of the Brides*, *Corriere della Sera* published an article under the headline:

(5. 13) BANFI'S TV FILM ON LESBIAN MARRIAGE DIVIDES THE UNION (Franco, *Corriere della Sera*, November 22nd 2006)

The subheading reads:

(5. 14) BINETTI: INAPPROPRIATE. POLLASTRINI: A DEED FULL OF SENSITIVITY

The article starts with the telling lead:

(5. 16) Anyone who speaks about homosexuality on RAI1 is in trouble.

It describes the film synopsis and then reports the criticism of Giovanardi:

(5. 17) Carlo Giovanardi, UDC MP, starts by saying that he did not see the film, but he opposes it and reproaches: a TV film that depicts two lesbian women getting married conveys the idea of 'a parody of marriage' that threatens 'the future of our society'. Agostino Saccà, director of Rai Fiction, supports the choice: 'RAI is a considerable secular organisation; it can't be afraid of telling the truth and of trying to answer the questions that the country is asking. Within families there are conversations about PACS, same-sex unions; one cannot turn to other side'.

(5. 18) The controversy is a political one, and, as often happens, it cuts across [parties]. Paola Binetti, the Daisy senator, does not approve: 'A broadcast that touches upon a problem [same sex unions] that, as yet, has not been thoroughly

discussed and that, in any case, is not part of the government's agenda, is highly inappropriate'. Anna Paola Concia (DS, GayLeft) replies immediately:⁸⁵ 'Luckily RAI is not one of the parties of the government's majority, hence is not bound to the Union's program'.

(5. 19) On behalf of RAI's board, statements come from Rizzo Nervo, who is close to The Daisy - 'There aren't any issues that the public service can't address' - and Giovanna Bianchi Clerici, close to Lega Nord, [said]: 'Homosexuality is a problem that exists, and I believe that it causes many ordeals to families and hence should be discussed with sensitivity, intelligence and tastefulness'. Then she clarifies that *Father of the Brides* has not been approved by the board currently in charge.

(5. 20) Even Barbara Pollastrini, Minister for Equal Opportunity, [commented]: 'I will watch the film with great interest. I consider it an act of sensitivity, love and respect toward people'. (...) A round of applause for the TV film [came] from Sergio Lo Giudice (Arcigay): 'Viva RAI when it fulfills with bravery its public service role' and Beatriz Gimeno (Lesbian Gay Transexual Spanish Association): 'The fact that TV films like *Father of the Brides* are starting to be produced makes me happy, since in Spain they represented the beginning of the journey'. Cardinal Ersilio Tonini instead has no doubt [that] 'It is an educationally harmful and unhealthy piece of work'.

The following day, *Corriere della Sera* addressed the issue again:

(5. 21) LESBO-MARRIAGE FILM: PRAISE FROM THE LEFT. THRUST OF THE POLO: IT'S A ZAPATERIAN RAI (Volpe (b), *Corriere Della Sera*, 22 November 2006).

Here again, the article starts by discussing the controversy around the broadcast and then reports the praise coming from PRC and transgender MP Vladimir Luxuria:

(5. 22) 'A masterful example of public service, useful to understand difficult-to-address issues such as civil unions and the right to be a lesbian and a mother', (the film) has been so defined by Prc-SE MP Vladimir Luxuria.

(5. 23) But the Polo doesn't approve of the sitcom and attacks: 'It is okay to speak about homosexuality, although no one forces RAI to uncritically embrace the Zapaterian thesis, that is, to present marriage between same-sex partners and their chance to adopt children as a natural extension of individual rights', declared the president of the Parliamentary Vigilance Committee, Mario Landolfi.

⁸⁵ *It: le risponde a stretto giro di posta*. In English the expression is literally translated as 'by return post'.

(5. 24) And if these kinds of words could be expected from Landolfi, no one foresaw the division internal to the Daisy, between Paola Binetti's 'theodem' side (...) and the secular side, guided by Roberto Giacchetti. [Giacchetti] is furious with Senator [Binetti]: 'Binetti acts as the forerunner of the unease of millions of Italians and proclaims anathemas. Should we expect censorship?'

(5. 25) The Ulivo MP, Franco Grillini, takes a step forward and suggests that 'following the success of Banfi's film' RAI should dedicate a digital channel to the Italian gay community.

(5. 26) The answer from Luca Volonté, leader of UDC group, is quick: 'Grillini should give up: RAI should think about offering a public service, not about dedicating a digital channel to the Italian gay community'.

(5. 27) And Isabella Bertolini (Forza Italia) said: 'It is shameful, but unfortunately it is all part of a specific plan of the secular propaganda' (Volpe (b), *Corriere Della Sera* 22 November 2006)

The articles reported above seem to confirm the observation made by Chouliaraki that the representation of dialogues is a powerful tool through which statements can be reformulated and repositioned in order to construct and sustain the internal coherence of the news text (2000: 301). The recontextualisation of quotations/discourses creates a polarity between those in favour of and against the TV film, a polarity that seems to develop around the role of RAI as a public service broadcaster and in particular around the way in which the broadcast of the film came to symbolise the endorsement of same-sex couples by RAI.

This focus was at the core of the opinion pieces published in the aftermath of the broadcast. On 23 November both *la Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera* reported *Osservatore Romano*'s attack on the TV film, defined as '*una polpetta*'⁸⁶ (Anon, *Corriere della Sera*, 23 November 2006; Anon, *la Repubblica*, 23 November 2006). The coverage of the articles at this point appears to shift from RAI to the comments the film generated. In particular, the texts comment upon Paola Binetti's statement, reported in the article above, that originally appeared in *Corriere della Sera* on 21 November Senator Binetti is quoted as defining the TV film thus:

(5. 18) 'A broadcast that touches upon a problem that, as yet, has not been thoroughly discussed and that, in any case, is not part of the government's agenda is highly inappropriate' (Franco, *Corriere della Sera*, 21 November 2006).

⁸⁶ Literally 'a meatball', it is used to signify a shapeless, messy piece of work.

Binetti's statement provoked ridicule from most of the politicians involved. As seen above, she was reminded that RAI is not one of the political parties in the ruling majority and is therefore not obliged to follow the government agenda. Although ridiculed, Binetti's statement nonetheless acquired a newsworthy status that *Corriere della Sera* maintained by interviewing her, published on 23 November (Cazzullo, *Corriere della Sera*, 23 November 2006). The newsworthiness of the Senator's opinion was corroborated through references to articles that appeared in both *Unità* and *Europa* (the official newspaper of the Democrats of the Left and the official newspaper of the Daisy, Binetti's own party, respectively)⁸⁷. In the article Binetti is reported as rejecting the critiques she received and substantiating and articulating further her position. In adding newsworthiness to the attack she received, further space is granted to her condemnation of the film and consequently to her opinions on same-sex couples. After first declaring that she had not yet seen the film but had read the script, she states:

(5. 28) I do not understand why TV and cinema always offer an entirely positive representation of same-sex unions and an essentially negative one of marriage. Between them there are always delicate feelings, mutual support, an enlightened spirit of sacrifice. Between us, people I don't want to define as 'normal' - well, people like you and me - it is one big disaster, a workout of violence, unhappiness and of tearing [each other] apart. Why? (Cazzullo, *Corriere della Sera*, 23 November 2006)

What is singled out in Binetti's statement then is no longer the role of RAI; the subject of the media discourse became the lesbian couple, and the inappropriateness of its representation.

As discussed in previous chapters, the space granted to different voices and the analysis of the subject that is generated in the media discourse, allows making some considerations around the sustained construction and perpetuation of common sense notions (Meyers, 1994). The texts analysed granted newsworthy status to those who praised the film as well as to those who critiqued it; hence, the representation that emerged from the analysis is of a tension around the broadcast. However, the focus on Binetti's statement and the space she is granted appear to me to potentially re-signify the conflict and make the lesbian couple emerge, discursively, from it. What seems to transpire from Binetti's statement is the threat that the lesbian couple poses. In their

⁸⁷ Here again it is possible to observe the ways in which the two newspapers frequently quoted other newspapers as well as other media outlets, which was explored in chapter four.

visibility, they threaten to become the alter ego of the failed heterosexual married couple: a threat that is immanent in their representation as loving and caring, and appears to me as functional to sustaining the binary that Binetti relies upon. The lesbian couple is in fact opposed to 'you and me' - in so doing the reader, the journalist and to some extent the viewer of the film are interpellated as occupying a position close to Binetti. This is a space evoked as 'normal' and subsumed in the heterosexual couple that is continuously 'misrepresented' as violent and unhappy. As a result of the mockery that Binetti's comments elicited, she was granted a space that became a forum for the reiteration of a well-worn binary, *us versus them*, as well as a space where somehow the discomfort of the heterosexual subject become visible. The discomfort Binetti seems to imply appears to be predicated on her unwillingness to 'extend' the semantic space of love and care to include the lesbian couple. Her quote evokes Ahmed's analysis of comfort and the way in which it operates to produce docile bodies that easily sink into a space that has been previously shaped and defined through norms, in particular through the heterosexual script (2004: 152). The approaching of the queer subject to this space of comfort can potentially disrupt the rules that regulate its shaping and hence maintain the reproduction of suitable bodies. Through Ahmed's argument, I interpret Binetti's statement as a way of using discomfort to police the boundaries by discursively positioning *them* as the source of her/our/the reader's/the viewer's discomfort.

Similarly, in February 2007 it is the *Osservatore Romano* that acquires visibility in the news texts analysed in its policing the boundaries of the division between *us* and *them*. Attacking both *Father of the Brides* and *A Doctor in the Family*, the Vatican newspaper is reported to define the representation they convey as an 'ambiguous parody of the family' (Cavalli, *Corriere della Sera*, 11 February 2007; Fumarola, *la Repubblica*, 11 February 2007; Politi, *la Repubblica*, 11 February 2007). A parody is both a 'work in which the style of an author or work is closely imitated for comic effect or in ridicule' and 'a feeble or ridiculous imitation'.⁸⁸ 'Parody of the family' therefore conveys a very particular meaning that stresses on the one hand its distance from the supposed 'original family' while on the other defines the outcome as ridiculous/laughable. The representation of same-sex couples at the core of both TV films is singled out as a deceitful representation and poor imitation of a *real family*, which is known to be the heterosexual family. This judgement is heavily predicated on the fact that the parodies

⁸⁸ Definition from Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, 10th ed. The same definition applies to the Italian *parodia*.

also involve a child. In *Father of the Brides*, Rosario has a daughter from a previous marriage, while in *A Doctor in the Family* the gay doctor Max is the father of a little girl whose mother is Max's colleague. Again, while both newspapers appear to report critiques of both the tone and the heat of the attacks against these TV shows, it is also evident that the space that Binetti and the *Osservatore Romano* occupy contributes to the circulation and regulation of notions of family and couples. In the film, the representation of Rosario, Aurora and Itzi opens a space for questioning the univocal definition of the family, but in the newspaper coverage this possibility is partially foreclosed.

The texts analysed seem to maintain a definition of the family that is either under attack from the mocking homosexual or is the designated recipient of the non-harming representation of a couple. Indeed the family is the one that Banfi, Saccà and others are reported to define as the space where 'the problem' of homosexuality might arise or can potentially be discussed (5. 17; 5. 19). In the representation of those who support the broadcast of the film, the family remains the counterpart to the same-sex couple, defined as 'people like you and me', the heterosexuals and hence 'the normal'.

Further, the representation of Binetti's position acquires relevance in relation to the limited space that openly lesbian commentators occupy in the news coverage. Paola Concia (representative of the political group GayLeft) is quoted only once. While limited space is granted to Aurelio Mancuso (Arcigay) and Franco Grillini, the texts analysed do not report any comments from the National Lesbian Organisation (Arcilesbica), thus limiting further the space occupied by alternative meanings.

Juxtaposing the space occupied by Binetti with that occupied by lesbian women delineates the ambivalence that characterises the media coverage. The newsworthiness of *Father of the Brides* can be read both as disruptive in its opening a space for discussion of same-sex couples and gay parenting and as reproducing a normative understanding of family, sexuality and kinship. The lesbian couple remain silent in the media coverage analysed, and its presence in the film's narrative appears secondary to the heterosexual person's journey.

A father from the south of Italy who discovers that his daughter is a lesbian...

The articles analysed are punctuated with descriptions of the film's plot, both in the critiques and praise it received and in the reviews of the film that the newspapers published. To analyse the ways in which the film is described highlights circulating definitions and notions around the representation of same-sex couples, reactions to

one's child coming out and of same-sex parenting. These are key passages of the narrative of *Father of the Brides* as well as, to some extent, of *A Doctor in the Family*. In order to foreground the analysis of the articles, in this section I also discuss the narrative of *Father of the Brides*. In the literature chapter I highlighted the extent to which news media are places where meanings are negotiated (Jowett and Peel, 2010). In a similar vein, TV films can also be scrutinised as a forum where contentious issues are discussed (White, 1992) and questions about the status quo are also raised (Hirsch and Newcomb, 2000). A synergic analysis of both *Father of the Brides* and the newspapers' coverage allows the ways in which circulating definitions and notions are troubled, sustained or made dominant to be mapped. In particular, it makes it possible to understand how acceptance is framed and how it relates to larger issues concerning the politics of sexuality in contemporary Italy. In chapter two I explored the relevance of intergenerational ties in the construction of intimate and sexual citizenship in Italy (Bertone, 2013). Similarly, in the narrative of *Father of the Brides*, the centrality of next of kin emerges in shaping narratives of inclusion and acceptance that then resonates in the media coverage in Lino Banfi's statements.

As highlighted above Banfi describes the film for the first time in the interview released on 18 August 2006. The film is presented under the provisional title of *Petty Little Father*, which Banfi explained:

(5. 29) Often fathers turn petty when they don't understand their children, even though Riccardo, the character I play, in his journey of discovery will reveal himself to be a 'great petty little father'. Only once he really knows his daughter will he discover what love is (Fumarola(a), *la Repubblica*, 18 August 2006).

In the articles analysed, descriptions of the film's plot refer frequently to the figure of the father who is described as 'A southern patriarchal father, widow, truly Apulian, who is bewildered when he meets his daughter again in Barcelona' (Fumarola, *la Repubblica*, 19 November 2006); 'a man from the south' (Grasso, *Corriere della Sera*, 22 November 2006); or 'a bewildered but devoted father', 'the father that accepts love' (Palestini, *la Repubblica*, 13 March 2007). Banfi/Riccardo's 'journey of discovery' (Fumarola (a), *la Repubblica*, 18 August 2006) constitutes the main plot of the film, since it is through his point of view that the narrative unfolds (Salerno, Seghini and Tramontana, 2008)

Riccardo lives in a small rural village in Apulia with his sister, and from the beginning of the film it is obvious that the village, with its rules and social control,

plays an important part in the narrative. *Father of the Brides* plays on the stereotype of the backward village against the vibrant modern Barcelona where Aurora lives (Dines and Rigoletto, 2012). Afraid of a scandal in the village, Riccardo insists that Aurora and Rosario pass themselves off as friends. The narrative structure of *Father of the Brides* appears to deal with a broader notion of modernity in which tradition, symbolised by the little village, struggles to integrate. The narrative raises, and attempts to resolve, issues of acceptance, with both the plot and the many subplots of the narrative functioning as forums in which contentious issues can be negotiated (White, 1992: 73; Hirsch and Newcomb, 2000). At the core of the narrative lies not only the issue of homosexuality and same-sex unions but also issues relating to the integration of migrants from Eastern Europe (in the form of a young caretaker who is in love with a villager), of the exploitation of natural resources (olive trees) and the consequent annihilation of traditional methods by modern machinery.⁸⁹

A key moment in the narrative is when Rosario's violent ex-husband stabs Aurora during a fight, and she is taken to the hospital. Rosario is not allowed to see her, as Riccardo, supported by hospital authorities, forbids her from doing so. Provoked by the impossibility of seeing her wife, Rosario breaks down in tears and, walking along the hospital's wards, shouts: 'Retrograde, reactionary! That is what you all are! Retrograde. I'll sue you and I will take her home to Spain, to our home' (minute 88). Tension therefore arises between the loving wife, who wants to take care of her partner but cannot do so under the Italian law that does not recognise their union, and the loving father, the only one who can legally make decisions and be near Aurora in the hospital. This turn in the narrative is highlighted in one of the interviews with Banfi as seen above:

(5. 7) There is a scene in the film that still moves me when I think about it; it is when my daughter is stabbed by her partner's ex-husband. In the resuscitation room, only one relative is allowed. I instinctively shout: 'I'll go in! I am her father! Then I understand that Aurora wants to see Rosario and I draw back. It is an extreme act of love (Fumarola(a), *la Repubblica*, 18 August 2006).

⁸⁹ This last subplot generates the 'common enemy', Nicola Loi, a corrupt oil producer, against whom the village comes together. He is not only the symbol of law-breaking but also of a 'modern' way of production that displaces traditional methods. Loi's oil is produced using modern machinery not the traditional old olive-mill. In resolving this tension, the plot promotes the importance of community (an extended family that determines who you are), that in turn will take part in the process of acceptance and opening to 'new' members: the migrant, the lesbian (see also Dines and Rigoletto (2012) and Salerno, Seghini and Tramontana (2008) on this).

Here, the film touches a particularly contentious issue, that of assistance in hospital. The film exposes the pain that has often been recounted elsewhere. MP Franco Grillini, for instance, collected a series of life stories in an exposé highlighting the struggles that characterise relationships that are not legally recognised (Grillini and Bolognini, 2005). One of the recurrent issues in these stories is assistance in sickness. Within the Italian healthcare system, only the patient's next of kin are allowed to help them in hospital or to make decisions on behalf of an incapacitated patient.

In exposing this issue through the pain of Rosario, the film posits it as central and makes a connection between the discussion about the legal recognition of same-sex unions and the consequences that its absence has on the lives of individuals. The reference to Spain, where Rosario would be allowed to be with Aurora, functions as a reminder that their relationship is recognised by the law in other countries. In the film, the power to recognise is held by the father. It is Riccardo's benevolence that allows Rosario to assist Aurora. This choice is framed in the above extract 'as an extreme act of love' (5. 7 line 7). 'Love', in Banfi's statement and in the representation of Riccardo, evokes the unconditional love that permeates the 'finding-out' stories of family members of gay and lesbian youth in Italy: 'their accounts constitute narratives of acceptance, based on displaying family ties as defined by unconditional love and solidarity, unbreakable even by the discovery of homosexuality' (Bertone, 2013: 990; Bertone and Franchi, 2008). This moral absolute is often presented in opposition to stories of rejection that are framed as incompatible with the very definition of family (Bertone, 2013: 990). Similarly, in *Father of the Brides*, acceptance is framed through the sign of love that not only heals the relationship between Riccardo and Aurora but also resolves the tension between legislation and the right of two people to assist each other. Riccardo's unconditional love is what eventually allows him to openly defy the rumours that his business rival (who outed Aurora and Rosario as a couple) spreads in the village and walk in the piazza with the two women at his side. The message is clear: they are his family and he is going to protect them. The family becomes the first space for acceptance and facilitates acceptance within the community: outed by Riccardo's rival and ostracised by the community, the couple are eventually accepted by the villagers. This education to 'tolerance' that Salerno, Seghini and Tramontana (2010) traced as a distinct trait of the *Father of Brides* narrative is made possible through deployment of the sign of familial love. In the following section I highlight how, similar to the narratives analysed by Bertone (2013), the acceptance of Riccardo (and, as I will

discuss, of Banfi) appears to be predicated on the representation of Aurora and Rosario as ‘normal gay’ (Seidman, 2005).

...‘and she is married to another woman in Zapatero’s Spain’

On the RAI website, there is a synopsis of the film. This was possibly the information that circulated in newsrooms to advertise the film. Aurora and Rosario are referred to as married only once, in order to define what generated Riccardo’s reaction against them. After that, there is no mention of them as a couple.⁹⁰ The definitions used in the synopsis routinely fail to acknowledge the relationship between the two women. With this in mind it is interesting to analyse how they and their relationship are represented in the news coverage, keeping in mind both the conservative potentials of the narrative as well as the space it appears to open for a disruption of heteronorms.

Rosanna Banfi is quoted in an interview in *la Repubblica* on 18 August 2006 describing her role:

(5. 30) ‘We dealt with this love story as a funny comedy, (...) and we debunk some commonplace assumptions, even that according to which homosexual women have a masculine appearance: in *Petty Little Fathers*⁹¹ neither Mapi nor I are masculine’ (Fumarola(b), *la Repubblica*, 18 August 2006).

Indeed Rosario in the film is a thin, brunette flamenco teacher who always wears skirts and dresses. Salerno, Seghini and Tramontana (2008) identify the use of what they define as counter-stereotyping (such as the feminine lesbian) as characteristic of the ‘gay fiction for a non-gay audience’. Counter-stereotypes, they argue, function to place the homosexual character as ‘normalised’ in terms of gender conventions and facilitate the ‘normalising’ narrative of acceptance (see also Dines and Rigoletto, 2012: 9). The feminine flamenco teacher however can also potentially be read as disrupting the matrix that imposes to desires to be visible, wearable signs on the surface of the

⁹⁰ Although it might be argued that their relationship should be taken for granted, this decision might acquire a different meaning reading the following passages:

‘Suddenly one day Aurora Rosario and Itzi arrive in Riccardo’s village. They are in danger; Rosario’s husband has been released from prison and is threatening his ex-wife and his daughter. Aurora’s aunt allows the trio to stay in her trullo’.

‘In the meantime, Rosario’s husband arrives at the women’s house and, during a fight, seriously hurts Aurora’.

The two fragments are particularly insightful. Reading them literally, Rosario is here defined as still married to her husband. At the end of the first sentence, the couple and the little girl are defined as a trio. This definition does not imply or convey any further meaning than three people, although it might suggest that there is some sort of bond between them. This narrative again seems to avoid any emphasis on the lesbian couple.

⁹¹ As noted above, *Petty Little Fathers* was the provisional title of *Father of the Brides*.

body (Butler, 1990; 1993). By not complying with the stereotype of the masculine lesbian, Rosario refuses to be easily categorised and can be interpreted as retaining her potential to be disruptive of the dominant discourse. She not only gets 'closer to the spaces defined by heteronormativity', hence potentially destabilising it (Ahmed, 2004: 152) but does so *in the guise of a feminine woman*.

This queer reading of Rosario however is partially tempered by analysis of the couple's interaction: they rarely display affection towards each other. In the film, the two women rarely kiss. They kiss for the first time at minute 14⁹² in Rosario's dance classroom in Barcelona. The Spanish setting and the Spanish partner play an essential role in conveying meaning. It is widely known in Italy that Spain allows homosexual marriage. The kiss can be interpreted as functional to emphasise the message. Their second kiss is again functional as part of the narrative, since it is what triggers Riccardo's reaction: Riccardo sees it and, after insulting Aurora, leaves Barcelona. It is clear throughout the film that every display of intimacy between the two women is omitted unless strictly necessary for the narrative. The desexualisation of the couple appears to be an aspect of the film about which the lead actor is very conscious. The day after the broadcast, Banfi was interviewed in the *Corriere della Sera*. The actor listed all the criticisms he received prior to the broadcast, which he dismissed as nonsense.

Among them he quoted an unspecified person saying:

(5. 31) 'I will never allow my children to see two women making love'. How could they ever contemplate the idea that I would do something like that, especially on national television? (Volpe (a), *Corriere Della Sera*, 22 November 2006).

The desexualisation of the couple also functions to separate the narrative from any possibility of reinforcement of the stereotype of the homosexual character as sexually hyperactive (Salerno, Seghini and Tramontana, 2008) as well as to protect the audience from the discomfort of the representation of queer sexualities (Malici, 2011). If we are to understand the desexualisation of the character as necessary for the father's journey of acceptance, then it appears evident how acceptance reinforces the division between the good homosexual, who is desexualised and settled in a relationship, and the bad

⁹² Aurora drops her wedding ring; the two women joke about the fact that Aurora seems to find every excuse not to respect her vows; they laugh and they kiss. The viewer understands through the symbol of the ring and the dialogue between the two women that they are a married couple.

queer, who is sexually promiscuous and incapable of commitment (Seidman, 2005; Salerno, Seghini and Tramontana, 2008).

In Banfi's position, and in the frequent reiterations of the 'safe/family-friendly' representation of the couple, one can trace the erasure of the disruptive potential that the representation of Aurora and Rosario carries with it. Aurora and Rosario are represented, in Seidman's words, as 'normal gay' (2005). In reviewing the representation of homosexuality, Seidman highlights how since the 1970s, with the emergence of the LGBT movement, Hollywood's representation of homosexuality has been characterised as deviant and 'polluted', something that could potentially corrupt heterosexuals. This construction allowed the reinforcement of heterosexual privilege by denigrating the homosexual character (2005: 40-44). However, since the 1990s the 'polluted homosexual' who constituted a threat to the moral fibre of heterosexual society slowly gave way to a different representation of homosexuality: the normal gay 'presented as fully human, as the psychological and moral equal of the heterosexual' (2005: 45). However, as shown in the discussion above, the 'normal gay' ought to comply with a set of narrowly defined limits in order to be granted integration:

... the normal gay is expected to be gender conventional, link sex to love and a marriage-like relationship, defend family values, personify economic individualism, and display national pride (Seidman, 2005: 45).

The representation of Aurora and Rosario appears to fully embrace the narrative of the 'normal gay' posited by Seidman. Aurora is the mastermind behind the creation of a cooperative of small olive oil producers that allows the villagers to defeat the monopoly of Riccardo's business rival. As Dines and Rigoletto argue in their analysis of the film:

With this happy, desexualised but economically productive lesbian family, *Il Padre delle Spose* arguably makes its demands for equality wholly within not only the exclusive norms of heterosexual coupling and intimacy, but also through a neoliberal outlook (2012: 487).

Such a representation places the homosexual subject within the heterosexual community without fear that the heterosexual norm might be disrupted; indeed, the homosexual subject here is only tolerated in so far as that subject complies with those limits (Seidman, 2005: 47; Duggan, 2003).

Normativity is further safeguarded through the representation of the couple as dutifully married, a sign that is possible to apply only through the displacement of the

narrative to Spain. The Spanish setting, and the emphasis on this characteristic of the narrative, is functional to the necessity of depicting the two women as being involved in a long-term relationship, which reassures the viewer and counters a reading of same-sex relationships as unstable. The marriage is used to establish and to render more plausible the idea of them being a family, but at the same time it is what provokes criticism. Pascolini, scriptwriter for both *Father of the Brides* and *A Doctor in the Family*, is reported to have said:

(5. 32) 'The father accepts [their] love, regardless of the fact that the two women are married', the screenwriter points out; 'it would have been hypocritical not to mention the fact that in Spain, two steps away from us, same-sex marriage is legal' (Fumarola, *la Repubblica*, 19 November 2006).

Spain hence becomes that space of otherness (Hall, 1997) where the negotiation of meanings can safely takes place. The relocation to Spain of the point of proximity between the heterosexual and the homosexual couple (Ahmed, 2004) can be interpreted as both a move that queers the space as well as a move that limits the possibility for the queering to become effective. The possibility of a queer family is both displayed and kept at bay through its construction as an 'other' to the Italian southern province.

As Dines and Rigoletto argue, in *Father of the Brides* Spain stands for the 'ambivalent double of Italy' representing both loss and the possibility of social change (2012: 480). Despite frequently drawn comparisons between the two countries in terms of their Catholic culture and the supposedly similar relevance of the family within national values (Moscati, 2010), Spain has long positioned as lagging behind Italy's wealth and economic power, but it has recently become the potential destination of a journey away from the backward Italian province towards an open, welcoming society where LGBT individuals are granted the right to marry and adopt children (Dines and Rigoletto, 2012: 482). The broadcast of the film can be said to represent a space where same-sex marriage can be discussed as possible and gay parenting becomes visible, but this potential for the approximation of the disruptive queer to the heterosexual norm is tempered by the discourse produced by the media coverage.

Overlapping narratives: how the father defines the limits of the acceptable

Throughout the debate analysed, Banfi as the lead actor of *Father of the Brides*, was a strenuous advocate for the film. Analysis of the articles revealed how Banfi acquired a central role within the media debate. His statements appeared in virtually all

the articles analysed, and his position in relation to both the TV film and the issue of lesbian and gay rights is frequently reported. More than once, in the texts analysed, Banfi declared himself in favour of a law that would legally recognise lesbian and gay couples (see extract 5. 7) at the same time as he was being framed an outstanding example of ‘family values’. In the light of the discussion so far, I ask, if Banfi is constructed as a champion of lesbian and gay rights, what does being a champion of lesbian and gay rights entail? And further, which rights are being championed? In the articles analysed, Banfi is defined as a family man, married to the same woman for over 45 years (Volpe (a), *Corriere della Sera*, 22 November 2006; Cavalli, *Corriere della Sera*, 11 February 2007). Reference was also made to the fact that Banfi is an ambassador for UNICEF, heralding not only his morality and integrity but also highlighting his support for the cause of children’s wellbeing. He is a good Catholic who met both John Paul II and Benedict XVI (Polese, *Corriere della Sera*, 15 November 2006; Anon, *Corriere della Sera*, 13 February 2007). More than one text reported his participation in the Fifth World Meeting of Families (WMF) a Catholic gathering held in Valencia in 2006.

These constructions are recurrent in particular in opposition to the criticism he received routinely defined as surprising as well as hurtful to his Catholic sensibility. In the structure of a ‘gay films for non-gay audiences’ Riccardo is the character that conveys the pedagogical function of the narrative, which is reinforced through the representation of Banfi’s life and endeavours in the newspapers. In one of the articles analysed, Banfi is reported to have said that the chairman of RAI complimented him on his work:

(5. 33) He thanked me on behalf of RAI. He said that it was a really brave TV film, that it would not have been possible to make it without someone like me, who is so credible (Volpe (a), *Corriere della Sera*, 22 November 2006).

Banfi’s credibility is repeatedly framed as linked to the fact that he has been married for 45 years and is a practising Catholic. His family values and his moral rigour (as defined by him and by the press) are used to construct him both as a ‘rightful’ man and as a ‘diversity champion’: as a straight married man who is ‘defending gays’ (extract 5. 3). This construction is reinforced by the frequent overlap between his ‘real’ life and his ‘fictional’ life. He plays, in both *Father of the Brides* and *A Doctor in the Family*, a man from Puglia, where he is actually from, and a devout Catholic.

Banfi's representation can be interpreted as opening up a space for disrupting the homogeneous representation of Catholics as being against the legal recognition of same-sex unions discussed in chapter four. Such a disruption can be traced also in the narrative of *Father of the Brides*, where the local priest plays a key role in Riccardo's journey of discovery. In one of the final scenes, the priest reminds Riccardo of the unconditional nature of parental love. While the priest carefully never mentions Aurora's sexual orientation, he nonetheless pushes Riccardo to consider how love towards one's child should go beyond the realisation that the child does not fully conform to parental expectation. In this scene, a negotiation between the official position of Catholic doctrine and the daily experience of the religious communities seems to be mirrored.

Recent research demonstrates the increasing gap between the Catholic Church's official positions and the experience of individuals in grassroots communities (Garelli, 2007; 2011). A recent survey investigating the experience of parents of gay and lesbian youth revealed this crucial gap (Bertone and Franchi, 2014). The unconditional love that is positioned as central in the construction of the family is irreconcilable with the official position of the Catholic Church (Quaranta, 2008; Geraci, 2007). Practising Catholics who are parents of gays and lesbians negotiate this conundrum by invoking the Christian iconography of love and compassion (Bertone and Franchi, 2014). This position, as well as that of the increasing number of lesbian and gay Christian communities in Italy, is rarely acknowledged in the news media analysed (as I discuss in chapter seven). In the newspapers, it is possible to see an entrenchment of the binary Catholics versus gay that marginalises possible alternative representations. In this panorama, *Father of the Brides* and the representation of its leading actor represent a potential moment of change.

However, the position of Banfi in relation to gay rights and his positioning as a devout Catholic also seem to be used to lend credibility to the limitations he poses to the recognition of intimate and citizenship rights. First of all, Banfi is reported to support a legal recognition of same-sex couples that subsumed in the circulating definitions of solidarity (see extract 5. 7) evokes the erasure of the specificity of the same-sex couple criticised by many commentators of the DICO bill (Billotta, 2013; Bonini Baraldi, 2008). Further, Banfi's endorsement has explicit limitations with regard to same-sex parenting (see extract 5. 8). In both *Father of the Brides* and in *A Doctor in the Family*, a homosexual character was portrayed as a parent (a father in *A Doctor in the Family*

and a mother in *Father of the Brides*). In both cases the child was conceived in a heterosexual relationship. Banfi is keen to emphasise this:

(5. 34) 'I am sure that the public will eventually understand [my choice of playing the father of a lesbian woman]. I am [playing] a father who eventually chooses, according to his parental love, to accept his lesbian daughter. The couple have a daughter themselves, born within Rosario's previous relationship... If she had been adopted by the two lesbians I wouldn't have played that role' (Fumarola, *la Repubblica*, 19 November 2006).

He had expressed the same position when he presented the film in August 2006 (see extract 5. 8). In an article reporting the outrage in response to the representation of a gay couple in *A Doctor in the Family*, Banfi stated:

(5. 35) 'I don't think there is any transgressive intention [in the portrayal of a gay man and his relationship]. The character of Oscar, even if he is homosexual, is an affectionate father who has no intention to share his parental role with his male partner' (Costantini, *Corriere della Sera*, 13 March 2007).

In both extracts it is possible to see how the actor addresses the public's presumed unease (on 19 November *Father of the Brides* had not yet been broadcast). He does so by shifting the limits of the unease that for the actor rests on two women adopting a child or two men sharing parental duties.

In the economy of this analysis it is important to note how his position (as well as the audience he speaks to) is never challenged in the media coverage: his unease and discomfort appear as a given. While Binetti's discomfort was mocked, Banfi's wasn't. Positioning him as connected to gay and lesbian leaders⁹³ (see also extract 5. 6) and reiterating his pro-gay-rights stance, his position on same-sex parenting remains unchallenged. Same-sex parenting is framed in the news items analysed as a plausible limitation to the extension of rights. This position mirrors national research conducted by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat) on attitudes towards homosexuality in Italy (2012). The survey, conducted partly through face-to-face interviews and partly via questionnaire, revealed that the majority of respondents were in favour of a legal recognition of same-sex couples. The Istat report shows that 62.8% of respondents

⁹³ In an interview in *Corriere della Sera* after the release of the film, he claims to have spoken to Grillini (the left-wing MP and former president of Arcigay) and suggested to him how to deal with the battle for rights (Volpe, *Corriere della Sera*, 22 November 2006).

agreed with the statement that cohabiting same-sex couples should have the same rights as a married couple, and only 24.6% disagreed (Istat, 2012: 8). The result of the survey can be read as in line with the tensions and shifts that are characterising contemporary Italy, as discussed in chapter one and two. However, the data showed that only 21.9% of men and 25% of women agreed with the statement that a lesbian couple should be able to adopt a child. The percentages dropped to 17% and 21.7% when asked whether a gay couple should be able to adopt a child.

The newsworthiness of Banfi's position therefore needs to be read against the anxiety around non-heterosexual parenting that, Bertone argues, characterises Italian public discourse (Bertone, 2009a: 91). Such anxiety is not restricted to the Italian context (see also Butler, 2002, Fassin, 2001). It is evoked through the discursive trope of the wellbeing of the child (Saraceno, 2012; Lalli, 2011; Bertone, 2005, 2009a; Danna, 1998, 1999, 2007, 2009a). The wellbeing of the child is perceived as tempered by the absence of complementary gender roles in the parental couple (Saraceno, 2012: 107, Bertone 2009a: 91). Danna highlights an alternative trope. In her analysis of the public debate on lesbian parenting, she notes how the child is framed as the potential target of non-acceptance by a society that does not welcome deviance from the norm (2009a). These two discursive strategies are also traced by Trappolin (2011) in his analysis of the news media representation of the debate on same-sex parenting.

Trappolin bases his analysis on items published in *Corriere della Sera* over a period of seven years (1999 – 2005). The analysis reveals how the tropes above saturate the media space granted to the question of same sex parenting while rarely affording space to the concrete experience of gays and lesbians and the effect of the lack of recognition of their parental role (Trappolin, 2011).

Analysis of circulating discourses on same-sex parenting reveals how parenthood appears to be the last entrenchment of the boundary between homosexuality and heterosexuality. Similarly, in the coverage analysed, the recognition of gay and lesbian rights, heralded by rights champion Lino Banfi, is characterised by limitations on gay and lesbian parental rights. Such limitations are framed as plausible in the coverage and their assumptions are never questioned. The prominence of Banfi's statements sustains the centrality of the 'anxiety' that the queer subject provokes, anxiety that is further reinforced by his 'credibility'.

Conclusion

The media coverage of *Father of the Brides* and the narrative at the core of the film appear to replicate some of the tensions explored in chapters one and two. The selection of a man heralded for his heterosexuality as the champion of lesbian and gay rights resonates with the relevance of intergenerational ties in negotiating access to citizenship rights (Bertone, 2013) and the ways in which they maintain a hierarchy of sexualities in which it is the heterosexual person who vouchsafes the legitimacy of lesbian love. This privileged position permits the establishment of the limits of acceptance. Such privilege is maintained in the texts analysed both through the space occupied by leading actor Lino Banfi and the relative silence of lesbian activists. Acceptance and inclusion appear to be predicated on the desexualisation of the lesbian subject. However, further analysis reveals that even the desexualised, monogamous, productive, ‘normal’ gay encounters fierce resistance when claiming visibility and rights (Gusmano and Bertone, 2013).

The space granted to the critiques of the film by conservative politicians as well as in the *Osservatore Romano* appears to perpetuate the trope of a Catholic sensibility that should not be upset. However, at the same time, the representation of Lino Banfi as a devout Catholic works to disrupt the construction of Catholicism as a homogeneous category opposed to the legal recognition of *de facto unions* and same-sex couples. In the narratives at play in the media texts it is possible to see the ambivalence of the media texts analysed that both open a space for disrupting hegemonic circulating notions and perpetuate exclusionary discourses.

Salerno, Seghini and Tramontana (2008) define *Father of the Brides* as ‘a gay film for a non-gay audience’ that, broadcast on a national TV channel, is intended to have a pedagogical function, to teach ‘tolerance’ (2008). As Wendy Brown (2006: 2) argues, tolerance has lately become a synonym for acceptance. However, this may hide a particularly dangerous political discourse that maintains and reinforces positions of subordination while reifying notions of irreconcilable differences (Brown 2006: 6). Tolerance, Brown argues, involves ‘the marking of the subject of tolerance as inferior, deviant, or marginal vis-à-vis those practicing tolerance’ (2006: 13). In reinforcing the hierarchy there is also the reinforcing of differences, and a discourse of ‘tolerance’ prevents the examination and highlighting of this hierarchy as a social construct (Brown 2006: 16). One can take this conclusion even further. The ‘tolerance’ of the father and the community in the film, by preventing the full unmasking of the heterosexism of

society, can be interpreted as precluding full engagement with its homophobia (Hantzis and Lehr, 1994). The attempt to downplay the violence that heterosexism perpetrates on the queer subject will be explored in the following chapter, where media discourse around instances of violence against lesbians and gay men will be examined.

Chapter Six. The unrecognisable victim: reports on violence against gays and lesbians

[HIS] SCHOOLMATES [SAID]: 'YOU'RE GAY'. AND HE KILLS HIMSELF (*Schiavazzi, Corriere della Sera*, April 5th 2007).

On 5 April 2007 *Corriere della Sera* reported that Matteo, a 16-year-old boy from Turin had committed suicide, allegedly as a consequence of being subjected to homophobic bullying at school. The sad circumstances of a young boy who took his own life, the references to his peers' remarks, and the criticism his mother directed at his school's teachers caught the attention of the national media and provoked a fierce reaction from the Italian LGBT communities (Ross, 2008: 257). The national association Arcigay eventually dedicated the Turin PRIDE 2007 festival to the boy (Anon., *la Repubblica*, 12 April 2007). For 15 days, gay and gay-friendly associations' websites gave their websites' banners black borders as a sign of mourning (Ponte, *la Repubblica*, 6 April 2007). The issue occupied the newspapers' national pages for five days; the event was still being discussed 10 days later in the local pages of the Turin province. The disheartening event generated responses from public figures and expressions of grief from the public that incorporated condemnations of society's blatant homophobia and of the heated anti-homosexual statements made by politicians and clergy (Passalacqua, *la Repubblica*, 4 April 2007; Jacomela, *Corriere della Sera*, 4 April 2007). Particular reference was made to the organisation of the Family Day (Iossa, *Corriere della Sera*, 7 April 2007; La Rocca, *la Repubblica*, 7 April 2007)⁹⁴.

In the timeframe under consideration, other instances of violence against LGBT individuals had been reported and discussed in relation to the systemic dimension of homophobia. While no other event occupied a similar space to Matteo's suicide, 13 other articles recalled acts of violence by people motivated by homophobia. On 2 September 2006, *la Repubblica* reported that Paola, a 32-year-old lesbian, informed the press that several weeks previously, she had been raped in Torre del Lago, a costal town in Versilia, an holiday destination with a highly visible gay and lesbian community. A

⁹⁴ As I shall discuss at length in the following chapter, between February and May 2007 much discussion revolved around the Family Day, a demonstration that took place in Rome in May 2007, organised by a federation of Catholic organisations. It was overtly presented as pro-family, although it soon became clear that the main reason behind the demonstration was to express disapproval of the law on cohabiting couples and in particular the legal recognition of same-sex couples. The organisation of the demonstration soon became a platform for anti-homosexual statements.

few days later, on 8 September 2006, *la Repubblica* reported that a gay couple had been assaulted in Bologna, near Il Cassero, the city's queer cultural centre⁹⁵ (Casella (a), 8 September 2006). In July 2007 another student from the south of Italy was reported to have suffered homophobic attacks from his peers and from one of his teachers (Palazzolo, *la Repubblica*, 27 July 2007).

I see these as critical discourse moments that seemed to open up a space where the violence of the political debate could be uncovered and discussed; the connection between the frequent anti-homosexual statements that circulated in the public sphere and the suffering of LGBT individuals was tentatively elaborated, in particular with regard to Matteo's suicide. In this chapter, therefore, I expand on one of the issues raised in the conclusion of the previous chapter. In *Father of the Brides*, the representation of the father who eventually welcomes the couple and the community that eventually includes them can be interpreted as sidelining the structural heterosexism and homophobia experienced by many gays and lesbians in Italy (Saraceno, 2003; Barbagli and Colombo, 2007). By focusing on instances in which the news media engaged with violence perpetrated against LGBT individuals, I ask how *Corriere della Sera* and *la Repubblica* negotiated the connections between the tone of the political debate, structural and societal homophobia and anti-homosexual crime.

The focus on news media engaging with instances of homophobic violence continues to be particularly relevant. Since the early 2000s, the growing presence in public debate of openly anti-homosexual right-wing parties and political figures, empowered by the alliance with Berlusconi's centre-right party, created a climate 'in which it seemed possible to express homophobic feelings with a greater impunity than before' (Ross, 2009: 207). The impunity that Ross refers to is epitomised by the failure to pass a law criminalising anti-homosexual hate speech and to include homophobia and transphobia in the aggravating factors of a crime (and therefore lengthen prison sentences). Legal scholar Dolcini has defined this systematic opposition to the inclusion of anti-homosexual motives among aggravating factors as the new homophobic entrenchment. Homophobia, Dolcini argues, operates at the institutional level through a constant questioning of the legislative conformity of bills, by calling bills unconstitutional, even by defining the notion of 'sexual orientation' (used in the bills) as

⁹⁵ The centre also hosts the local chapter of Arcigay. In the early 1980s, the Cassero was one of the first homosexual cultural centres in Italy.

too broad a term to be legally effective (Dolcini, 2012: 8).⁹⁶ This position, Dolcini argues, is a sign of the desire to privilege the ongoing expression of homophobic positions (Dolcini, 2012: 9).

At the time of writing, opposition to anti-homophobia laws has taken the form of protests by groups of people who call themselves *le sentinelles in piedi* (standing sentinels) and are linked with the French movement *La Manif Pour Tous*. In the wake of the legalisation of same-sex marriage in France, the group *La Manif Pour Tous* organised a series of demonstrations (manif). Their objective is stated on their website as:

to address loud and clear messages to the nation's elected representatives and to the citizens. These messages *express the refusal of same-sex marriage, adoption for all, PMA (medically assisted procreation) for all, GPA (surrogacy), and the enacting of gender theory*. They also concern the *opposition to all forms of homophobia*. Finally, they involve *defending democracy* by calling on the head of state, the government and the parliamentarians to hear the French people on this law. (<http://www.lamanifpourtous.fr/en/who-are-we/our-ethics> emphasis in the original)

Similarly, the Italian branch of the movement presents itself as opposing any law against homophobia because it would threaten the right to speak out against same-sex marriage and same-sex parenting. In 2014, the news media granted increased visibility to the demonstrations organised by these groups (Garbagnoli, 2014). It therefore appears particularly relevant to reflect on the role of the news media in relation to the construction of homophobia and homophobic crime.

Before embarking on the analysis of the media coverage it is important to acknowledge that the term homophobia is a controversial one. In the introduction to *Retheorizing Homophobias*, a special issue of *Sexualities*, editors Bryant and Vidal-Ortiz argue that 'homophobia' has been used as a conceptual tool and a discursive resource for individuals and collectives to name and respond to their oppression (2008: 387). The use of the term 'homophobia' to define violence against homosexuals is at the heart of academic critiques (Bryant and Vidal-Ortiz, 2008). The term homophobia was

⁹⁶ Dolcini reports that in 2011 the Chamber of Deputies declared that the bills presented, (Soro e altri 'Norme per la tutela delle vittime di reati per motivi di omofobia e transphobia'—AC2802/AC2807), proposing the inclusion of homophobia as an aggravating factor, had been rejected because they lacked terminological precision (invoking ex.art 25 comma 2 of the Italian Constitution). The ruling stated that 'sexual orientation' was too vague a definition to be included in the law. To this opinion, Dolcini responded by pointing out how the term 'sexual orientation' is widely used in international treaties such as the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

coined by Weinberg in the early 1970s in the context of his work *Society and the Healthy Homosexual* (1975). Weinberg coined the term in order to define not only the violent reactions heterosexual men were reported to have against homosexual men but also the self-loathing attitude that homosexual men experienced in the process of coming out. Homophobia's penetration in the English language—and, more fundamentally, the widespread acceptance of the idea that hostility against gay people is a phenomenon that warrants attention—represented a significant advance for the cause of gay and lesbian human rights (Herek, 2004: 9). Homophobia (*It: omofobia*) is also widely used by Italian LGBT associations to draw attention to the violence they are likely to experience. For instance, it was used in 2009 in the campaign below:



Source: ETICHETTE NEGATIVE Campaign 2009

The caption reads: 'Let's help him. It is possible to be cured. Homophobia is a really dangerous disease for society'.

There are two main critiques of the use of the term homophobia. Scholars such as Plummer focus on the individualistic meaning of the term. Herek argues that Weinberg, by employing the suffix -phobia, did not intend to stress the individualistic nature of anti-homosexual attitudes. Instead he wanted to stress its irrationality (as phobias are labelled in medical terms) as well as the feelings of hatred that, according to psychiatry, phobias frequently mask (2004: 10). Nonetheless, according to Plummer, homophobia appears to overshadow the role of society in reinforcing anti-homosexual feelings (1981: 61-62; see also Adam, 1998). This construction is relevant, because its consequences affect the possibility of developing effective policies that recognise its pervasive nature.

The deployment of the term 'homophobia' has also been criticised for reproducing the medicalised discourse that constructed homosexuality as a mental

illness (Herek and Berrill, 1992; Plummer, 1981). The campaign reported above can be seen as an example of this. It plays with the trope of medicalised language: this might be read as an act of resistance against its employment to stigmatise the LGBT population. The trope of a possible cure for homosexuality, as well as the warning against the spread of homosexuality, is used here against the perpetrator of the violence. It does not allow a full detachment of the medicalised discourse from discourses of marginal sexual identities, however. Feminist academics and lesbian activists have suggested a further critique: the word ‘homophobia’ appears to convey the representation of hostile attitudes of heterosexual men towards gay men while excluding the experience of lesbian women from the discourse (Herek, 2002; Kitzinger, 1987). Terms such as ‘lesbophobia’, ‘biphobia’ and ‘transphobia’ that are currently used within an academic context, however, do not appear to have the same currency in the public debate as the term ‘homophobia’.

To discuss the above is important, because the ambivalence of the term and the critiques it has provoked inform my analysis of the newspaper coverage.

This chapter focuses on the analysis of 41 articles, with particular emphasis on the cases of Matteo and Paola. Matteo’s case acquired great visibility in the news coverage. The discussion of his suicide met with critiques of the heated tones that characterised the organisation of the Family Day, opening a space for questioning them. Paola’s case acquired less visibility and allows me to investigate further the marginalisation of the lesbian subject within the media discourse. Lesbians appear, in the texts analysed so far, to have been either silenced, as discussed in chapter four, or desexualised and regulated, as revealed in the analysis of chapter five. In this chapter I build on those threads to discuss Paola’s construction as a newsworthy victim. In order to avoid conflating Paola’s and Matteo’s experiences, and to maintain at the forefront the specificities that characterise both cases I will analyse their cases separately. The articles analysed here allow me to think through the overall question about the disruptive force of public discourses on sexual citizenship rights and the role the two newspapers analysed play in it. Examining the construction of news values and newsworthiness then will lead to further consideration of the purpose the news media serves in negotiating dominant hegemonic notions.

Table 1: Texts analysed in chapter six

Date of Publication	Author /Headline	Newspaper
02. 09. 2006	Anon. <i>Violenza a Viareggio. Mi hanno stuprata perché omosessuale.</i>	la Repubblica
02. 09. 2006	Selvatici, F. 'Violentata perché omosessuale'.	la Repubblica
02. 09. 2006	Fumarola, S.(a) 'Per quel ricordo non dormo più' è stato uno stupro carico d'odio'.	la Repubblica
02. 09. 2006	Fumarola, S.(b) 'Fermiamo il clima ostile e di intolleranza'.	la Repubblica
02. 09. 2006	Palombelli, B. <i>Dalla parte del Sindaco.</i>	la Repubblica
02. 09. 2006	Anon. 'Mi hanno violentata perché sono omosessuale'.	Corriere della Sera
08. 09. 2006	Cascella, P.(a) 'Picchiati perché omosessuali'.	la Repubblica
08. 09. 2006	Cascella, P.(b) 'No agli assalti, ma la violenza è cugina della trasgressione'.	la Repubblica
08. 09. 2006	Cascella, P.(c) 'Rispettiamo le differenze sennò sarà lotta permanente'.	la Repubblica
09. 09. 2006	Anon. 'Violenze sui gay, pene più severe' <i>Delegazione di deputati da Amato.</i>	Corriere della Sera
05. 04. 2007	Schiavazzi, V. <i>I compagni di scuola: 'Sei Gay'. E lui si uccide.</i>	Corriere della Sera
06. 04. 2007	Schiavazzi, V. <i>Inchiesta sulla morte di Matteo La madre: ora chiedo giustizia.</i>	Corriere della Sera
06. 04. 2007	Rodotà, M. <i>L'intolleranza non è una ragazzata.</i>	Corriere della Sera
06. 04. 2007	Jacomela, G. <i>Il ministro: 'Provo dolore'. Ma Grillini protesta.</i>	Corriere della Sera
06. 04. 2007	Ponte, M. <i>'Sei gay', studente si uccide. Ed è polemica.</i>	la Repubblica:
06. 04. 2007	Anon. <i>Vattimo: in Italia omofobia aberrante.</i>	la Repubblica
06. 04. 2007	Crosetti, M. <i>E la madre accusa la scuola 'La preside sapeva tutto'.</i>	la Repubblica
06. 04. 2007	Cravero, F. <i>Passaparola poi tutti al rosario 'Matteo suicida, è incredibile'.</i>	la Repubblica

07. 04. 2007	La Rocca, O. <i>E Liberazione attacca l'Avvenire. Campagne d' odio.</i>	la Repubblica
07. 04. 2007	Ponte, M. <i>Studente suicida, ispettori a scuola.</i>	la Repubblica
07. 04. 2007	Iossa, M. <i>'Mi oppongo ai Dico, non ai gay. Il Vaticano non fa campagne omofobiche'.</i>	Corriere della Sera
07. 04. 2007	Iossa, M. <i>Ragazzo suicida, scontro sul Family Day.</i>	Corriere della Sera
08. 04. 2007	Mottola, G. M. <i>'Sono Jonathan, voglio incontrare quei ragazzi'.</i>	Corriere della Sera
08. 04. 2007	Mori, C. <i>'E ora cerca di non perdonarci Siamo sbagliati, incapaci di ribellione'.</i>	Corriere della Sera
08. 04. 2007	Mangiarotti, A. <i>Matteo, l'addio dei compagni. 'Chi ti ha ferito la pagherà'</i>	Corriere della Sera
08. 04. 2007	Mangiarotti, A. <i>La storia di Corrado: anch' io volevo morire. Ho accettato la mia diversità grazie alla prof.</i>	Corriere della Sera
11. 04. 2007	De Luca, M. N. <i>Il dolore di scoprirsi gay adolescenti, il 60% si rifiuta.</i>	la Repubblica
11. 04. 2007	Anon. <i>Matteo voleva vivere col padre.</i>	la Repubblica
11. 04. 2007	Schiavazzi, V. <i>Matteo, interrogati i compagni 'Scherzi, non persecuzione'.</i>	Corriere della Sera
12. 04. 2007	Anon. <i>Torino pride dedicato a Matteo, dai pm il padre del ragazzo.</i>	la Repubblica
18. 04. 2007	Schiavazzi, V. <i>Ragazzo suicida Trovati gli sms con le minacce.</i>	Corriere della Sera
27. 04. 2007	Ponte, M. <i>Matteo, un caso europeo.</i>	la Repubblica
27. 07. 2007	Palazzolo, S. <i>Diciassetene denuncia la prof 'Mi disse: vattene a casa, sei gay'.</i>	la Repubblica
28. 07. 2007	Sciacca, A. <i>'Studente discriminato'. L'ispettore sigilla i registri di classe.</i>	la Repubblica

PAOLA, ‘raped for being homosexual’

On 2 September 2006, both *Corriere della Sera* and *la Repubblica* reported that Paola,⁹⁷ a 35-year-old lesbian living in Versilia,⁹⁸ had been raped two weeks earlier in a forest, not far from a lesbian bar. Both newspapers reported the event on the front page (Anon., *Corriere della Sera*, 2 September 2006; Anon., *la Repubblica*, 2 September 2006) *Corriere della Sera* then reported the events in one article (Gasparetti, *Corriere della Sera*, 2 September 2006) accompanied by a feature article on violence against women (Palombelli, *Corriere della Sera*, 2 September 2006). *La Repubblica* ran a news report, an interview and a feature article discussing the reactions of LGBT activists (Selvatici, *la Repubblica*, 2 September 2006; Fumarola (a), *la Repubblica*, 2 September 2006; Fumarola (b), *la Repubblica*, 2 September 2006). *Corriere della Sera* would mention Paola again in a further news article on 9 September (Anon., *Corriere della Sera*, 9 September 2006). The following sections analyse the two newspapers separately in order to expose the different trajectories they took in the coverage of the attack. For each newspaper I pay attention to the background against which the event is set, the way in which Paola is described and the rhetoric used to define the violence she was subjected to. In reviewing Barak (1994), as well as other critical media theorists (Cohen and Young, 1973; Hall et al., 1978), Meyers argues that news stories ‘act as morality tales that delineate appropriate behaviours and the consequences of violation’ (1997: 23). At this stage a question arises: what happens when the victim’s identity carries in itself a ‘violation of the rules’—in this case the violation of compulsory heterosexuality? (Rich, 1980). How can the news media fulfil their ‘moral’ function when the victim in the morality tale is otherwise perceived as ‘deviant’?

My approach is informed by feminist scholarship on media reporting of violence against women. The relevance of the analysis of news representation of violent crimes and in particular of rape against women has been amply addressed in feminist media studies (Benedict, 1992; Meyers, 1997; Byerly, 1999; Byerly and Ross, 2006). At the core of such a concern is the role played by the news media in supporting the patriarchal social structure. In *Virgin or Vamp*, Benedict provides an insightful analysis of US press

⁹⁷ In the articles collected, the survivor is referred to as Paola. There is no mention of her surname, and the only information about her that appears in the press is her age (35) and her origins (she is from Versilia). According to *la Repubblica*, ‘Paola’ is not the woman’s real name.

⁹⁸ As mentioned in the introduction, Versilia is an area in Tuscany in the province of Lucca (Versilia is the name of the river that runs through the area). The area is well known for its tourist industry.

coverage of notorious sex crimes (1992). Her work unveiled the bias and stereotypes in the media coverage of sex crimes, but more importantly revealed the policing nature of the dominant narrative structures of crime reports of violence against women (1992).

News of violence against women operates as a form of social control:

News reports of women as victims of sexist violence act as both a warning to women and as a form of social control that outlines the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and the forms of retribution they can expect for transgression (Meyers, 1997: 8).

The way such representations operate, as well as the contradictions they generate, can be traced through different cultural contexts, provided that different specificities are taken into account (Naylor, 2011). Drawing on both Meyers (1997) and Benedict (1992), for example, Alat (2006) analyses the press coverage of violence against women in Turkish media and provides an interesting link between the way media coverage is constructed and the condition of women in Turkey. In her analysis, Alat demonstrates that the way the Turkish media report cases of violence against women mirrors the patriarchal structure of Turkish society (2006). Similarly, the present analysis aims at enhancing understanding of the Italian case.

‘Raped for being homosexual’: hate crimes on *la Repubblica*

On 2 September 2006, *la Repubblica* reported the news of Paola’s rape in three different articles. The headline is in inverted commas and reads:

(6. 2) ‘RAPED FOR BEING HOMOSEXUAL’ (Selvatici, *la Repubblica*, 2 September, 2006).

The subheadings read:

(6. 3) The assault [happened] in Versilia. The US consul in Florence: [girls] do not go out on your own
(6. 4) The victim: ‘They shouted: now it’s your turn, lesbian!’ A warning [is issued] to female American students after 2 attempted rapes in a few days (Selvatici, *la Repubblica*, 2 September 2006).

The first part of each subheading refers to the event itself, while the second part refers to violence against young foreign students in Florence, the regional capital of Tuscany. While the main heading (6.2) and the first subheading (6. 3) forcefully state the idea of violence committed for homophobic reasons, in the second subheading (6. 4) a further element is introduced, namely references to a group of women who experienced ‘attempted rape’ (as violence against women is labelled in the text). As in previous chapters, I wish to focus on an analysis of headlines. Headlines not only serve

the function of attracting readers (Bell, 1991: 189) but also provide them with a sense of the necessary background against which the news ought to be read. In particular, headlines have the function of activating ‘the relevant knowledge the reader needs to understand the report’ (Van Dijk, 1991: 50; see also Clark, 1992). In other words, headlines provide the context in which the event is placed. In this article, therefore, Paola’s rape is set against the background of other instances of violence against women that happened in the same region, and a similar structure is replicated in the main body of the article.

(6. 5) Yesterday, Paola, – the name is not her real one – 35 years old, with a pretty, intelligent face, decided to make public the violence she suffered (Selvatici, *la Repubblica*, 2 September 2006).

Paola’s case is followed by a list of events that are framed as cause of a growing concern about the spread of sexual violence against women. The focus then shifts to the American Consul in Florence and her warning to all American female students in Italy, broadcast on TV news channel Sky24, to pay particular attention when walking alone at night. Here the discursive trope of the ‘dangerous stranger’ is recognisable. Framing its source as outside the known, violence is constructed as unpredictable. This polices women’s bodies and attitudes by making them responsible for their own safety (Marhia, 2008: 39; Giomi, 2010). As Gill contends, public understanding of violence against women is still ‘replete with contradictions’ between condemnations of violence and ‘a pervasive belief in the idea that women are in some way guilty or responsible if they are raped’ (Gill, 2000: 137). The dangerous stranger trope forcefully enters the narrative of Paola’s case and, as I shall demonstrate in the following, it becomes dominant in the coverage of *Corriere della Sera*. Extract 6. 5 is from halfway through the article; the text returns to the event in question:

(6. 6) Against this background of crisis, the case of Torre del Lago⁹⁹ introduces a further element: homophobia (Selvatici, *la Repubblica*, 2 September 2006).

⁹⁹ Torre del Lago is the centre of Friendly Versilia. ‘Friendly Versilia’ is a project started in 1998 with the aim of giving visibility to the large but still hidden LGBT community in Torre del Lago, a quaint town between the sea and Lake Massaciuccoli, between Viareggio and Pisa. The project was created by the LGBT local switchboard, supported by the local municipality and sponsored by gay and gay-friendly business. Regardless of the difficulties and the hard times, Friendly Versilia today attracts over 100,000 homosexuals, both men and women, from throughout Europe, from the last week of April until the first week of September (from <http://www.friendlyversilia.it/en/about-us.html>).

This sentence marks the point in the article where the discussion on violence against women is closed and the report of the press conference called by the local LGBT associations in support of Paola's accusation is opened. National LGBT associations are described as having denounced the increase in homophobic crime and calling for a law that specifically recognizes the homophobic motivation behind criminal acts. In particular it stresses how MPs Titti De Simone, Franco Grillini and Vladimir Luxuria presented an official question to the Minister of Home Affairs, Giuliano Amato. At the core of their interrogation was the increase in violent attacks motived by homophobic hate. It is here that the second narrative trope, that of the homophobic crime, takes centre stage. In support of the lesbian and gay movement's claim, the article then lists a series of incidents of gay-bashing that have happened in the region. Homophobia and the necessity of a law against hate crime and hate speech are at the centre of a feature article published alongside the news report discussed above.

Under the title:

(6. 7) LET'S PUT AN END TO THE HOSTILE AND INTOLERANT STATE OF AFFAIRS (*Selvatici, la Repubblica*, 2 September 2006)

the article focuses predominantly on Titti De Simone, MP and former president of Arcilesbica¹⁰⁰, and her statements during the press conference. The article generally quotes her directly, interspersed with the journalist's comments, which make extensive use of free indirect speech. The article starts with a direct quotation where Paola is praised for her courage in openly denouncing the violence she has been subjected to, since, the quote continues, for a lesbian woman to denounce sexual violence entails a 'double somersault' as she has to reveal both the violence and her sexual identity. At the end of the quote, Titti De Simone is mentioned and placed in the context of the press conference where Paola's rape has been denounced. De Simone is then quoted as forcefully denouncing Paola's rape as a homophobic crime and putting forward three requests:

(6. 8) 'This attack' - she stresses - 'has a further aggravating circumstance: to the sexual nature of the violence it has been added the will to target a lesbian woman. There was undoubtedly a will to harm a lesbian woman'.

¹⁰⁰ It is interesting to note however how, in the article, De Simone is defined instead as *segretaria nazionale di Arcigay* (National Secretary of Arcigay). Arcilesbica established itself as autonomous from the Arcigay association in 1996. Once again the national lesbian association is not mentioned in the press

(6. 9) 'So, we are here to say a few things. First: we want investigations to tighten up, we want a further boost. Second we want to know the extent of those crimes in Italy. Third: we have been denouncing the hostility and intolerance towards homosexuality. We have been denouncing a tangible campaign coming from the extreme right that is targeting gay communities. It seems to us that there cannot not be a link¹⁰¹ between that campaign and the violence endured by gay men and lesbian women' (*Selvatici, la Repubblica*, 2 September 2006)

The above extract contains two quotes. The first one (6. 8) is followed by a full stop, the second one (6. 9) starts immediately after with the vague conjunction *Allora, siamo qui per dire alcune cose* (so, we are here to say a few things). As seen in previous chapters, it is important to address the representation of discourse in order to understand the underlying intention of the news coverage (Chouliaraki, 2000: 301). Extracts 6.8 and 6.9 appear to mimic a verbatim report of De Simone's speech overshadowing the involvement of the journalist in its representation for the purpose of constructing a coherent narrative. The emphasis is here on the requests that De Simone made: starting with the list reported above to then move to an official questioning of the Minister of Home Affairs, Giuliano Amato, and to a plan to put forward a request for a law against homophobic crime. The article than closes with a reference to figures released by the UK Home Office on the underreporting of homophobic crime, followed by a further quote from De Simone:

(6. 10) 'We need to break the silence', says Titti De Simone, 'a deafening silence'. To those who don't speak up either for fear or desperation, Florentine gay women open up their website (...) to press charges. (*Selvatici, la Repubblica*, 2 September 2006)

In this article, the trope of homophobic violence discussed by De Simone dominates the text and links it with request for new policies from the lesbian MP. It appears therefore that *la Repubblica*, in negotiating Paola's newsworthiness, sustained both the trope of sexual violence committed by a 'dangerous stranger' as well as that of sexual violence as homophobic violence. The latter is made newsworthy through the direct involvement of the MP, and particular emphasis is given to her requests for new laws and answers from the government. The newsworthiness of De Simone's speech lies in being part of a political dialogue; it did not generate any response, however, and

¹⁰¹ It. *Non può non esserci un collegamento*. The translation aims at emphasising the double negation in the Italian text.

the following day it disappeared from national news. Despite the limited space occupied, the event opened a dialogue for questioning the role of institutions in relation to violence.

The newsworthiness of De Simone's speech lies also in the way in which she is reported to name the potential perpetrators of homophobic crime (6. 9). The references to extra-parliamentary extreme right groups can also be seen as circumscribing the sources of potential threats, however. The focus on extremist groups as well as the trope of the 'dangerous stranger' places the source of violence at the edge of society and, most of all, outside political discourse. The case of Paola is tainted here by a sense of extraordinariness that deeply informs *Corriere della Sera*'s coverage.

Paola's 'double torment': *Corriere della Sera* and the stranger myth

The two tropes highlighted in the coverage of *la Repubblica* are also traceable in *Corriere della Sera*'s news coverage. The news is reported in one article. The headline reads:

(6. 11) HOMOSEXUAL [WOMAN] RAPED¹⁰² 'IT WAS A HATE RAPE' (Gasperetti, *Corriere della Sera*, 2 September 2006).

While the subheadings read:

(6. 12) THE CASE AT TORRE DEL LAGO. LUXURIA¹⁰³ AND GRILLINI: [IT] SHOULD BE PUNISHED AS A RACIST CRIME.

(6. 13) THE ACCUSATION: 'THEY WERE TWO, IT WAS AN AMBUSH' (Gasperetti, *Corriere della Sera*, 2 September 2006).

Again, as noted in the analysis of *la Repubblica*'s coverage, the article's headline (6. 11) acknowledges the fact that the victim is a homosexual woman, thus opening up a reflection on the homophobic motivation as well as the sexist motivation behind the violence. The article opens with the following quote:

(6. 13) FLORENCE-She recounts how she suffered a double torment in the same place and at the same time: 'they raped me twice. As a woman and as a lesbian' (Gasperetti, *Corriere della Sera*, 2 September 2006).

102 The original version reads *Omosessuale violentata*, in which the victim's gender is expressed by the use of the feminine form of the past participle of the verb violentare (to rape). In Italian, therefore, 'raped' is declined in the feminine form. The word 'woman' in the English translation has been added to convey the gendered connotation present in the original text.

103 As reported earlier, Vladimir Luxuria is the first female-to-male transgender person elected to the Italian Parliament.

Extract 6. 13 is followed by a sentence in which the journalist places the event in the past (two weeks before) and then explains that this is a report of a press conference. The section concludes with the juxtaposition of the event with another ‘attempted rape’ (whose victim was an unnamed lesbian woman) that was reported to the police a few days earlier, an attack on a homosexual chef, and ‘other episodes that are still unknown’. Further elements to establish where the event unfold are given:

(6. 14) It happens at Torre del Lago, the city of Puccini and of the Festival Lirico, but also the home of homosexual tourism, with about ten gay establishments and a big fair (in August) (Gasperetti, *Corriere della Sera*, 2 September 2006).

The article ends with references to an unnamed Romanian girl raped in Rome few days before. The article provides further elements for framing the news of Paola’s rape through the use of captions¹⁰⁴ that, given their prominence on the page, can be analysed as headlines through their cognitive function as they highlight relevant information and shape readers’ expectations. The captions on the page refer to a Romanian girl raped in Rome and report further data on the number of rapes that occurred in Milan in 2007.

In the same issue, under the caption ‘women and rapes’, a feature article is published. The article focuses particularly on the measures Milan’s municipal government suggested in order to fight violence against women perpetrated by strangers. The article titled

(6. 15) AT THE MAYOR’S SIDE
(Palombelli, *Corriere della Sera*, 2 September 2006)

is written by Barbara Palombelli, a famous TV journalist. Palombelli’s article focuses on what she defines as an alliance between two women, the Mayor of Milan, Letizia Moratti, and the Minister for Equal Opportunities, Barbara Pollastrini. Otherwise opposed on the political spectrum (the former elected with the support of Berlusconi’s party; the latter part of Prodi’s left-wing government) the two women, Palombelli continues, put aside their differences to tackle the issue of violence against women. The article then lists the policies that have been envisaged by the city administration: more street lighting, more policing in the most dangerous city’s central area. Palombelli,

¹⁰⁴ Captions report part of the articles: they usually appear at the side of the main article and are written in bold and a larger font.

praising the effort of the city's government and the support of the government minister, then asks:

(6. 16) so far so good, at least in principle? No. For Communist Refoundation Party's newspaper *Liberazione*, this is 'a trap' contrived by Moratti and Pollastrini to harm militant feminism. Help! Let's try to read why switching on the city's street lights, using new technologies and asking for the help of national and metropolitan police officers, means attempting an assault on women's autonomy¹⁰⁵.

Palombelli then quotes extracts from an article from *Liberazione* written by Angela Azzano:

(6. 17) In her editorial, Angela Azzano writes: 'Women are used, once again, to justify a society becoming closer, asphytic, punitive and racist. Now, more than ever, it is vital not to fall into the trap of security as answer to the conflict with men. It is important to claim freedom. Even daily-life freedom.' Difficult to understand. If there is a danger-and the news reports that the danger is real-why shall we wait, as *Liberazione* writes, for 'the Copernican revolution of the masculine'?

Extract 6. 16 establishes the rhetoric that governs the reading of extract 6. 17. Azzano is placed in the discursive space of a left-wing newspaper (radically opposed to *Corriere*) and 'militant feminism'. This is a discursive move that evokes uncompromising and radicalised positions (Ahmed, 2010; Scharff, 2012), and is followed by a re-enactment of the initial disbelief that this time co-opts readers and invites them to follow the hunt for clues. 'Let's try to read' announces something complicated that might be difficult to grasp. The quote from Azzano's piece is indeed quite formal in tone compared to Palombelli's own writing. Hence, the effort to read is quickly dropped ('difficult to understand') and a more sensible, direct course of action is suggested. The focus on Paola's rape and the discussion of hate crime in the previous article is here put aside to concentrate on what is framed as militant feminists grumbling. The position of Azzano is labelled as counterintuitive, allowing Palombelli to maintain the 'dangerous stranger' character at the core of the discussion and hence displace the main threat to the outskirts of society (the unlit streets of a big metropolis like Milan).

¹⁰⁵ It. *Proviamo a leggere perché mai accendendo le luci di una città (...) si dovrebbe compiere un attentato all'autonomia femminile.* The translation aimed at maintaining Palombelli's invitation to figuratively read with her Azzano's article.

This shift in the coverage of *Corriere della Sera* is particularly relevant and demands further investigation, since it is indicative of the construction of a ‘moral panic’ and of a hierarchy of victimhood. In his work on media and criminology, Barak argues that the news is a form of social control that reiterates and reproduces the notions of crime, the criminal and victims, adapting them to the current socio-political and economic settings (1994: 3). Drawing on Christie (1986) and Carrabine et al. (2004), Greer elaborates on how news media contribute to the construction of a hierarchy of victimisation that draws on and simultaneously feeds public discourse (2003; 2007). The hierarchy of victimisation is described as:

the differential status of particular types and categories of crime victim in media and official discourses, including ideal victims (for example, some child murder victims) at the top of the hierarchy, and non-deserving victims (for example, habitually violent youths injured in a drunken fight) near the bottom. (Greer, 2007: 23)

The ‘ideal victim’ attracts media attention. Conversely, ‘undeserving’ ones receive little or no media attention. The construction of the hierarchy of victimisation is highly dependent on contingent news values and hence on what crimes are deemed newsworthy; and news values, in turn, are predicated on and affect the shared values of any given society (Jewkes, 2010; Greer, 2003, 2007; Hall et al., 1978). News media participate in the negotiation and elaboration of notions of victimhood that, as Greer argues, are profoundly intertwined with ‘social division including class, race, ethnicity, gender, age and sexuality’ (2007: 21).

Greer’s work resonates with the analysis of what has been defined as a wave of moral panic in the Italian media in the years 2006-2008 that particularly focused on cases of gendered violence (Peroni, 2014; Giomi and Tonello, 2013; Giomi, 2010). Giomi and Tonello’s analysis of TV media coverage of cases of feminicides from 2006 to 2008 argues that the emphasis that was given to violence against women should be read in conjunction with a racist and anti-immigration rhetoric that sustained the ensuing restrictive and securitarian government policies in 2008 (2013: 1-3). Giomi and Tonello investigate the construction of the victims and highlight the dominance of three rhetorical constructions: the victim as ‘daddy’s girl’, as a ‘mother’ or as the ‘angelic woman’ (2013: 15). These constructions served the purpose, they contend, of emphasising the cruelty of the murderer(s) and make their story more newsworthy.

Giomi and Tonello’s work resonates with Peroni’s (2014); while the former place more emphasis on highlighting the gap between the media reports and reality, the

latter is, more constructively, focused on deconstructing the division between good and bad victims and the purpose this division serves. She argues:

The distinction between a good and a bad victim (accused), beyond identifying communities to which the victim belongs, is also used to define what being one of 'our' women means, and to say how a legitimate victim must behave to be qualified as a woman to defend. The respectable victim (...) is used to define the behaviours which a decent women [sic] has to stick to in order to be recognized by society as a victim. (Peroni 2014:4)

The distinction between good and bad victim, both Giomi and Tonello and Peroni argue, is predicated on the emphasis on the stranger rhetoric and in particular the stranger as a migrant, whereby the danger for (our) women comes from without, which allows us to displace fear and anxiety towards the outside of (our) society and in turn feed anti-immigration discourse. Their analysis appears to explain further the newsworthiness of Paola's case and the fact that it was front-page news for both newspapers since it emerged at the beginning of what they identify as a wave of moral panic.

However, it is important to stress the way in which these discursive constructions, as Bertone (2013a) aptly argues in her commentary on Giomi and Tonello's work, also function to radicalise the marginalisation of certain identities. Bertone's critique appears to me to reconnect us to the questions posed at the beginning of this section, when, following Meyers' (1997) analysis, I asked how mainstream media function in relation to a victim who is marginalised elsewhere. Drawing on Pitch (2013) and Crowhurst (2012), Bertone advocates for a focus on how the constructions of binaries of respectable/unrespectable and legal/criminal contribute to the marginalisation of the migrant, the sex worker and those who do not conform. The issue of newsworthiness, and the ways in which the media contribute to a hierarchy of victimisation (Greer, 2003), ought therefore to be integrated with reflections about the ways in which such representations serve the purpose of marginalisation. The article analysed above (6. 11 to 6. 13) mentions the rape of an unnamed Romanian girl by an Italian man. Her case occupies only one short paragraph (4 lines) that describes in few lines the violence without comments. Her migrant status prevents the use of the 'us versus them' rhetorical construction (Peroni, 2014), so she is denied newsworthy victim status. To an extent, this is also true for Paola: in her case, however, her sexuality makes her a difficult fit for the respectable/unrespectable binary. Her case, which became

newsworthy through the involvement of politicians like Grillini and De Simone, was dropped and attention shifted to another city (Milan).

Going back to the texts analysed, the ambivalence towards Paola as a victim can also be seen in some significant features that appear to undermine both her testimony and her status. In the text, the word 'rape' appears twice: once in the headline and once in the text. The act is described as 'almost an ambush', 'an ambush' and an 'event'. Although one could interpret the use of 'ambush' as a way to highlight the premeditation of the crime, in the text analysed the continuous use of synonyms to define the rape appears to dilute the violence to which Paola was subjected. As discussed above, only five articles were written about Paola, and her status as a newsworthy victim lasted only one day. Despite the newsworthiness of the violence in relation to the moral panic and the political debate, coverage of the violence done to her did not enhance the discussion and hence was quickly dropped. She did not reach full newsworthy victim status.

The coverage of Matteo's death was very different. My analysis of this crime expands further on the notion of newsworthiness and further demonstrates how media discourse both opens and closes down possible interpretations of violence against LGBT individuals.

MATTEO 'You're gay' and he kills himself

On 5 April 2007, *Corriere della Sera* was the first newspaper to report Matteo's death. As reported earlier, the headline reads:

(6. 18) HIS SCHOOLMATES [SAID]: 'YOU'RE GAY'. AND HE KILLS HIMSELF (Schiavazzi, *Corriere della Sera*, April 5th 2007).

The article reported the suicide using a false name, referring to him instead as Marco, while his mother Priscilla is referred to as Luisa:

(6. 19) Marco's mother, Luisa (...) arrived in Italy from the Philippines more than twenty years ago (Schiavazzi, *Corriere della Sera*, April 5th 2007).

Perhaps the use of a false name was due to Matteo's young age, in an effort to protect his family, particularly the identity of his siblings, who were both minors. The next day, however, when the news was reported in *la Repubblica*, Matteo's identity, as

well as that of his family members, was revealed.¹⁰⁶ The direct quotation ‘You’re gay’, allegedly uttered by Matteo’s schoolmates, was also used as the headline for the first article that appeared in *la Repubblica* on the issue.

(6. 20) ‘YOU’RE GAY’, STUDENT KILLS HIMSELF. AND A CONTROVERSY ENSUES (Ponte, *la Repubblica*, 6 April 2007).

As in the case of Paola, it is important to focus on headlines in order to understand the background against which Matteo’s death ought to be read. Both headlines place the event in the discursive realm of school bullying. ‘You’re gay’ is placed within quotation marks and serves to identify the kind of harassment to which Matteo was subjected. Direct quotations in headlines is reminiscent of an interview, resonating with opinions expressed ‘on the spot’ in the immediate aftermath of the event. In mimicking the spoken language, they convey a sense of personalisation and proximity (Antelmi, 2006: 34). However, a closer analysis of the texts reveals that it is unclear who uttered the sentence that allegedly triggered Matteo’s death; only *Corriere della Sera* (6. 18) preceded the quotation mark with a subject, but it is a vague one: ‘his schoolmates’. As in the case of Paola, I first analyse the representation of Matteo as it is conveyed in the texts. I then move to question the ways in which different entities are made accountable for his death in order to understand how the newspapers deal with the social dimension of anti- homosexual attitudes.

‘A well-educated boy... maybe a shy one’

In the newspapers analysed I found 36 sentences that describe Matteo.¹⁰⁷ In the following I discuss how news reports dwell on the descriptions offered by Matteo’s peers and teachers:

(6. 21) ‘...My son was sweet and sensitive; he never raised his voice, never took part in certain games, and never argued with anyone...’ (Schiavazzi, *Corriere della Sera*, 5 April 2007).

(6. 22) The school headmistress distinctly remembers that skinny, quiet and hard-working boy. ‘Marco was a good student. He had a seven or an eight in all subjects¹⁰⁸ and 10 [out of 10] in *condotta*.¹⁰⁹ Thinking

¹⁰⁶ No explanation is provided for this change by the newspapers. There were a few remarks that underline how Matteo ‘is his real name’.

¹⁰⁷ Ten are comments made by the author of the articles; the others are quotes from various people. Among them seven are by Matteo’s mother, four by Matteo’s teachers and three by the school headmistress.

¹⁰⁸ Marks in Italian high schools are on a ten-point basis. Six is a pass and eight is a distinction.

about it now, his sensitivity might well have been hiding his frailty, but here at school [his sensitivity] translated into hard work and respect for the rules' (Schiavazzi, *Corriere della Sera*, 5 April 2007).

(6. 23) 'Matteo was always smiling, he sure wasn't gay but he was quite elegant, I mean he distinguished himself from the others' (Crosetti, *la Repubblica*, 6 April 2007).

(6. 24) 'Please state it clearly; the portrayal of Matteo that emerges from the media is not faithful; he was the best student in his class, willing to help his classmates, and there is no element to suggest that he might be gay' (Mangiarotti, *Corriere della Sera*, 8 April 2007).

As in the case of Paola, it is important to note how throughout the entire coverage there is indirect free speech and blurred direct speech. Analysis reveals an intention to focus on Matteo's alleged 'sensitivity'. The adults quoted, including Matteo's parents and teachers, are reported as being particularly keen to describe Matteo as a clever yet emotional student. Defining him as sensitive, a hard-working student unwilling to take part in 'certain games' resonates with a polarisation of gender roles that relegates the expression of sensitivity to women (Ruspini, 2004: 54, 2007). While recent research on Italian teenagers demonstrates that some gender stereotypes are undergoing continuing challenges among younger generations, others maintain their place in the socialisation of gender roles (Ruspini, 2004: 61; Leccardi, 2002).

In the spirit of tracing both 'what is said' and 'what could be said' (Camargo Heck, 1980) it is notable how Matteo's suicide is placed on a continuum of peer group pressure to conform, as well as violence that can be experienced within the group. In *la Repubblica* in particular, Matteo's suicide is juxtaposed to other events deemed 'similar' and therefore requiring the same frame to be read. On 6 April 2007, under the caption 'Precedents', *la Repubblica* lists three teenage suicides: one in 2005 and two in 2006. The first, Marco (13 years old), is presented as the result of bullying, allegedly due to the boy's Chinese origins; the second, Giacomo, was held to be a consequence of *nonnismo*,¹¹⁰ while the third is the case of an unnamed 17-year-old girl who killed

¹⁰⁹ Students in their termly assessments also receive a mark for their behaviour (*condotta*) in class. Unlike marks for school subjects, a seven or a six means that the student will face disciplinary procedure. Usually if a six is given the student must sit exams for all the subjects in early September and she/he is likely to repeat the whole school year.

¹¹⁰ *Nonnismo* can be translated as 'hazing'. *Nonnismo* is usually used in relation to the military, and it defines the privileges of the older soldiers that can result in acts of abuse and violence towards the

herself after a night out. Her friends were later investigated for ‘incitement to commit suicide’.¹¹¹

Comparing Matteo’s suicide with other teenage suicides whose motivations are presented as unrelated to the victims’ sexual orientation (assumed or declared) not only shifts the focus from the specificity of Matteo’s circumstances, but also prevents readers from questioning whether sexual orientation might have been at stake in the other cases. Suicide is a thought likely to cross an adolescent’s mind in the process of ‘coming out’ (Dorais and Lajeunesse, 2004). Further, the focus on the teenagers’ struggle to conform pre-empts the possibility of thinking about the systemic dimension of what is an increasingly worrying phenomenon.

Levels of bullying in Italy are reported to be higher than in other European countries, with over 30% of children in primary school (aged six to 10) and 22% of middle school students (aged 11 to 13) defining themselves as having been victims of bullying (Menesini, 2008: 253). Adolescence and early adulthood is often defined as a ‘risk moment’ in which the thought of killing oneself is more likely to happen (Saraceno, 2003; Barbagli and Colombo, 2001, 2007).¹¹² The International Gay and Lesbian Youth Association (IGLYO) and the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) frequently promote research to map the wellbeing of homosexual youth in Europe. The ILGA and IGLYO factsheet on homophobic bullying reports that youth who are bullied experience humiliation, fear, frustration, social isolation and loss of self-esteem which can result in absenteeism from school, poor or deteriorating schoolwork, personality changes, illness, depression and even suicide (2007). The ILGA/IGLYO working paper *Schools for the 21st Century* reports how bullying, exclusion and stigmatization impact profoundly on young people’s mental health,

younger members of the military. Giacomo, however, was not part of the military, nor of any groups or gangs for which the term nonnismo can be applied.

¹¹¹ Incitement to commit suicide (It: *istigazione al suicidio*) is a crime listed in the Italian Penal code (art.580). It is defined as both those actions that might determine someone’s decision to commit suicide or indeed support or reinforce someone’s decision to take his/her own life. It is punished with a five-year prison sentence. The crime is then dealt with as homicide, or manslaughter if the victim is less than 14 years old or declared mentally or legally incompetent. As I discuss later in the chapter, Matteo’s peers were also questioned in order to verify whether this could be considered a case of incitement to commit suicide.

¹¹² Both the research conducted by Saraceno and her team in Turin province (2003) and that conducted by Barbagli and Colombo at the national level (2001; 2007) corroborate these data. The survey conducted of the LGBT community of Turin showed that 27% of male participants and 16% of female participants had thought about killing themselves (Saraceno 2003: 196). Similar results are traceable in the survey conducted at the national level (32% of men and 24% of women) (Barbagli and Colombo 2001; 2007).

therefore increasing the risk of depression, self-harm and suicide. It is important to note how the document is keen to go beyond definitions:

It should be noted that homophobic bullying is not just experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people. It can also affect any child, young person or teacher who does not conform to ways of behaving that are traditionally associated with being ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’. Anyone seen as ‘different’ or as having characteristics perceived as belonging to LGBT people can suffer from homophobic bullying (ILGA and IGLYO, 2007: 3).

As seen above, the descriptions of Matteo trace the picture of a boy who did not conform to gender norms. Matteo’s character traits are frequently highlighted and positioned in the discourse as a possible explanation of how and why Matteo was thought to be gay (6. 23). To be sensitive then becomes a mask (6. 22) and to dress smartly (6. 23), to be nice and cooperative (6. 24) are characteristics that are taken to signify unease and confusion, both of Matteo and potentially of the bullies. The latter (always vaguely identified as his schoolmates or peers) are fiercely condemned, while the heteronormative matrix (Butler, 1990) that characterises Matteo’s representation is never questioned.

In the texts analysed, another relevant actor emerges: Matteo’s mother. The headline of an article in *la Repubblica* that appeared on 6 April read:

(6. 25) MATTEO’S MOTHER ACCUSES THE SCHOOL: ‘THE HEADMISTRESS KNEW EVERYTHING (Crosetti, *la Repubblica*, 6 April 2007).

It is important to focus on her representation in order to understand the assumptions that underpin the media coverage of Matteo’s suicide. After the news was first reported, it was relayed that Priscilla Moreno was from the Philippines (6. 19) and that she was a cleaner.¹¹³ This information often precedes or follows another piece of information, which concerns the neighbourhood in which she lived.

(6. 26) Matteo’s house is a nice, elegant building, five minutes away from the school, a residential area, one of those areas that seems to be made for concealment (Crosetti, *la Repubblica*, 6 April 2007).

¹¹³ Schiavazzi, *Corriere della Sera*, 5 April 2007; Crosetti, *la Repubblica*, 6 April 2007; Cravero, *la Repubblica*, 6 April 2007; Ponte, *la Repubblica*, 6 April 2007; Schiavazzi, *Corriere della Sera*, 6 April 2007; Ponte, *la Repubblica* 7 April 2007; Mangiarotti, *Corriere della Sera*, 8 April 2007; Anon, *la Repubblica*, 12 April 2007; Ponte, *la Repubblica*, 27 April 2007.

Matteo was in fact enrolled in a famous high school in Turin, but all the information about his mother and the emphasis on her origins as well as her occupation works to contradict the assumption that he might have been a boy with a wealthy background. The texts analysed reported that a year before Matteo's death his mother Priscilla had a meeting with the school headmistress in order to report Matteo's complaints about his peers. He had frequently been the target of bullying, and allegedly all those instances involved homophobic remarks. Priscilla Moreno's accusations are often juxtaposed with the comments made by the headmistress and the teaching staff.

(6. 27) 'He was the best student in his class, I'd say (he was) almost perfect, the son that every mother would dream of', comments the legal studies teacher (Crossetti, *la Repubblica*, 6 April 2007).

(6. 28) Professor Donatella Magliano was Matteo's French teacher. She says, in tears, 'he got all 9s¹¹⁴ in my subject, he was very good, and I never realised he had any uneasiness while he was in class, incidentally IIB is a good group of students' (Crossetti, *la Repubblica*, 6 April 2007).

(6. 29) 'I believe what his mother says, certainly he gave vent to his feelings to her, but in the letter he left behind there is no reference to homosexuality; what emerges is the image of an introverted student, as is [also] confirmed by his teachers' (Cravero, *la Repubblica*, 6 April 2007).

(6. 30) 'We never had episodes of bullying, therefore one should be particularly cautious (before saying that this is one). Maybe the boy had other problems; beware of blaming anyone' (Cravero, *la Repubblica*, 6 April 2007).

Matteo's teachers are quoted in the texts analysed as being very distressed, and their statements convey a particular attachment to Matteo (6. 27, 6. 28). At the same time, however, they also reinforce the idea that Matteo's death could not have been foreseen. In the texts, the headmistress in particular is reported to assume the role of the one who defends the school's reputation. She is quoted as not only denying the school's responsibility but most of all undermining Matteo's mother's claims of homophobic bullying (6. 29, 6. 30). On the one hand she does so by considering the possibility that he was 'just' a particularly difficult adolescent, while on the other she questions the issue of Matteo's sexual orientation. The voice of Matteo's mother (repeatedly identified by her status as a 'poor immigrant') is hence juxtaposed with the expert

¹¹⁴ Please refer to footnotes 110-111.

voices of the teaching staff (meaning the highly educated teachers of a well-regarded high school).

Alongside the teachers quoted above, the parents of Matteo's schoolmates are reported similarly endorsing the process of shifting the responsibility of Matteo's unhappiness from the school to elsewhere.

(6. 31) A mother hits out: 'Lies¹¹⁵ have been told about our children, this is not what really happened. Jokes were made at school as they are made everywhere else. From what I was told he was a lonely boy, maybe he had other problems' (Cravero, *la Repubblica*, 6 April 2007).

Unlike the comments made by the headmistress, this quote is articulated by an unidentified 'mother'. There is an assumption that 'jokes were made'; however, the passive form conceals the perpetrator(s) of the joke. The quote also refers to other problems that soon started to occupy the news coverage, Matteo's other problems.

'Jokes happen': Who is accountable?

The analysis of the structure of the articles as well as the reported quotes lead me to conclude that the discussion of Matteo's suicide develops in two distinct narratives: that I identify as a public and a private one. The public dimension focuses on the anti-gay feelings that dominated the political debate and how those could have affected a young boy's self-perception. The 'private' dimension of the debate involved a process of 'personalisation' (Bell, 1991: 158) that sustains the newsworthiness of Matteo's case through a focus on his life and his family, in particular on what is framed as the painful separation of his parents. In the following I examine both narratives in relation to the context of the wider debate on the legal recognition of the facto unions and in particular the organisation of the Family Day, as well as in relation to each other.

'The Church should now question its attitude'

Following the headlines reported earlier (6. 18, 6. 20) both newspapers focus on the question of homophobia in their coverage of Matteo's case. In *Corriere della Sera*, the question is openly raised in the front page editorial by Maria Laura Rodotà on 6 April headlined:

(6. 32) DO NOT CALL IT A PRANK.

¹¹⁵ It: *ingiustizie*. In the original quote the word injustices is used to convey that not only was the depiction of Matteo's peers wrong but the blame was also unjust.

(6. 33) Was [Matteo's death] caused by bullying or by a homophobia which has never disappeared and which is even stronger nowadays following the dispute around DICO? Should the school that is unable to control its students be made more responsible or some parents who can't educate their children to respect others? And what is more: not at any time in the last few decades has the importance of the family been discussed at such length. But not even now is anyone seriously talking about what a family (and a school and a group of peers) could/should do when a boy or a girl behaves in a way that is analysed and labelled as, maybe, homosexual? Or when (even now, it takes courage to do so) they say they are gay. The story of the 16-years-old boy from Turin who killed himself after two years of torment at school provides a lot of food for thought, and, at the moment, few solutions. (Rodotà, *Corriere della Sera*, 6 April 2007).

Neither the education system nor families nor the political leadership, she continues, appear to have a solution: the school because of its lack of resources and the constant intrusion of religious authority; families since they do not have adequate resources to draw upon when dealing with a son or a daughter's coming out as gay or lesbian; and politicians, who perceive homosexuals 'as a nuisance'. She concludes her editorial thus:

(6. 34) Surely the current climate is not helping people feel normal if they are gay or lesbian. It is not helping anyone feel they are not alone in their family/school/village or city. At the moment, for instance, many schools actively work to raise awareness about eating habits, but in no school is there a programme that educates about sexual tolerance, [because] that would generate protests and anathemas from archbishops. However, it would help to prevent the suffering of many people to teach how to behave in a wholly civilised way. It would also help those families, those families with children and built on matrimony that everyone wants to defend, to stay united and to live happily along with gay and straight children. Is it too much to ask? Maybe it is; however, one might start with suspending, with failing those students who bully their classmates. And one might answer back to those adults, maybe to those prominent politicians that are bullying homosexual citizens, and call them 'sick' with huge resonance in the press. Without waiting for another young person to commit suicide, please. (Rodotà, *Corriere della Sera*, 6 April 2007).

Rodotà positions Matteo's suicide in the current political climate but also emphasises the shared responsibility of a series of institutions (family/church/school) and thus traces the structural dimension of anti-gay feeling.

A similar position is also presented in *la Repubblica* in a short interview with internationally renowned philosopher Gianni Vattimo headed:

(6. 35) VATTIMO: ABERRANT HOMOPHOBIA IN ITALY (Anon. , *la Repubblica*, 6 April 2007)

The interviewer posed the question:

(6. 36) Professor Vattimo, what does Matteo's suicide teach us? (Anon., *la Repubblica*, 6 April 2007)

He replied:

(6. 37) 'That Italian homophobia is aberrant. Maybe [Matteo] felt guilty for the fact of being gay and maybe he thought of himself as a paedophile and incestuous, like cardinals and archbishops keep saying. That is enough to be overwhelmed by a sense of guilt' (Anon., *la Repubblica*, 6 April 2007).

In the short piece, Vattimo denounced the intimidating climate and claimed that homophobia among young people had reached worryingly high levels. A further article in *la Repubblica* reported that an MP from the Green Party had described the causes of Matteo's death as intrinsic to the homophobia of Italian society, while an MP from the PDCI¹¹⁶ party was reported to make a connection between the debate on DICO and Matteo's tragic death:

(6. 38) 'Those who have exacerbated, quite often instrumentally, the debate on DICO should now meditate on their actions: shall the death of this poor child be a warning for the issue of civil rights to be addressed in a less ideological and more concrete way?' (Ponte, *la Repubblica*, 6 April 2007).

The space opened up by the newsworthiness of Matteo's suicide granted space granted to elaborate a critique that placed Matteo's discomfort in relation to the tone of the political debate. Vattimo's and Rodotà's critiques emphasise how in the name of opposing DICO,¹¹⁷ an atmosphere was created that permitted openly homophobic remarks. Elsewhere, resonance was given to the heated debate that surrounded the organisation of the Family Day. Family Day was criticised as an outlet for the expression of anti-homosexual sentiments. Both the gay and lesbian community and some high school student associations were reported to have condemned the homophobic statements coming from the Catholic Church (Ponte, *la Repubblica*, 6

¹¹⁶ *Partito dei Comunisti Italiani* is a minor party that at the time supported the Prodi government.

¹¹⁷ As discussed in chapter three, the first draft of the law, presented in February 2007, was named DICO (*Diritti e Doveri dei Conviventi*, or Rights and Duties of Cohabiting Individuals).

April 2007). Associations of high school students and activists from LGBT communities were reported to demand the cancellation of the Family Day (Iossa, *Corriere della Sera*, 7 April 2007).

Again, in the case of Matteo it is possible to trace how the sustained newsworthiness of the event is predicated on the strength of the reactions it can elicit. In turn, however, reactions and tensions are placed centre stage and the polarisation of opinions is emphasised in the texts analysed. This conclusion appears paradoxical: in the articles cited above, at the core of the coverage of Matteo's death is a critique of the frequent clashes and the heated atmosphere that surrounded the approval of DICO. However, as the analysis of the media coverage showed, the tensions and the most heated anti-gay feelings were deemed newsworthy and granted much space in the news media in their continuous quest for a dramatisation of the political debate (Mancini, 2013).

The conservative parties, as well as the Catholic Church, were forced at this juncture to defend themselves against the accusation of being responsible for the boy's death. On 7 April *la Repubblica* reported that the editorials of both *Liberazione* (the newspaper of the Communist Refoundation Party¹¹⁸) and *il Riformista*¹¹⁹ contained strong accusations against *l'Avvenire* (the CEI's official newspaper) of having fuelled hatred. According to the article:

(6. 39) *Il Riformista* urges 'the organisers of the Family Day to send their expressions of sympathy to the boy's family to distance themselves from [any form of] homophobia'

(...)

(6. 40) Rifondazione's newspaper critiques, in particular, a recent article by Professor Carlo Cardia in which the eminent scholar, in order to demonstrate the absurdity of the civil unions contemplated within DICO, wrote that 'the law would tell to young people that heterosexuality and homosexuality are the same thing' (La Rocca, *la Repubblica*, 7 April 2007).

The CEI's official newspaper was accused of having published a homophobic article about DICO written by Professor Carlo Cardia, a Catholic lawyer and a jurist. Quotes from the article that appeared in *Liberazione* are reported (6. 39, 6. 40). Piero

¹¹⁸ Please note that the *Partito dei Comunisti Italiani* (PDCI) and *Partito della Rifondazione Comunista* (PRC) are two different parties; however, they both emerged from the former Italian Communist Party.

¹¹⁹ *Il Riformista* is a relatively young newspaper among the Italian daily broadsheets. It was founded in 2000 and its perspective is left-wing, although it does not align itself with any particular party.

Sansonetti, director of *Liberazione*, is reported to have compared Cardia's editorial to the articles fuelling racism that appeared in the press at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The debate was also reported in the *Corriere della Sera* in an article that presented the accusations levelled against Cardia as well as quotes from people endorsing the Professor's position (Iossa, *Corriere della Sera*, 7 April 2007). Alongside it, *Corriere della Sera* published an interview with Professor Cardia himself. The interview is headed,

(6. 41) 'I AM OPPOSED TO DICO, NOT TO GAYS. THE VATICAN DOES NOT LEAD HOMOPHOBIC CAMPAIGNS' (Iossa, *Corriere della Sera*, 7 April 2007).

Although the debate is presented by *Corriere della Sera* as a dialogue between two contrasting positions, allegedly equally relevant, the space (a full article) as well as the construction of the speaker (an eminent scholar who is therefore granted the status of expert), provides Professor Cardia with a more prominent position, reinforcing his legitimacy to take part in the debate¹²⁰ (van Dijk, 1991; Bell, 1991). It is in the space granted to different voices within the debate that is possible to trace the ambivalence that characterises the representation of Matteo's case.

The 'public' debate around Matteo's suicide opened up the possibility of a discussion about the role of the ruling political class and the inherent homophobia that fuelled the debate on the legal recognition of cohabiting couples. However, in the articles analysed it is possible to trace a dynamic already highlighted in chapter four, namely a substantial difference in the space granted to the different actors within the debate. While LGBT activists and MPs, who anxiously highlight the rise in homophobic bullying and of violence against LGBT people,¹²¹ are given voice in the discussion about Matteo's case, the right to answer that is granted to the Catholic Church in order to defend itself from these accusations appears greater. The difference in space granted to those involved limited the possibility of a shift in the discursive positions that started with the article by Rodotà and the interview with Gianni Vattimo analysed above. The focus of the news coverage became the accusations, and the rejection of the accusations,

¹²⁰ The imbalance between the space allowed for those who are critical of the pro-family demonstration Family Day and those who endorse the demonstration's claims resonates with the conclusion of the following chapter. The analysis of the media coverage of the Family Day demonstrates that more space was occupied by those who supported it at the expense of all manifestations of dissent.

¹²¹ On 7 April, *Corriere della Sera* reported in a short article that a gay bookshop in Milan had been vandalised (Cirillo, *Corriere della Sera*, 7 April 2007).

of homophobia, rather than the homophobia that exists within Italian society. In those exchanges, Matteo's name is rarely used. Instead, he becomes a symbol, referred to as 'the boy from Turin who committed suicide'. The articles that featured heated critiques against the Catholic Church and framed the debate around how DICO and the Family Day fostered a dangerous climate of anti-gay feelings appear to be sidelined after the first few days of media coverage. The *Corriere della Sera* in particular focuses on public figures' reactions to Matteo's death, including a letter from actress Claudia Mori (Mori, *Corriere della Sera*, 8 April 2007), and an interview with a former contestant on the reality show *Big Brother* (Mottola, *Corriere della Sera*, 8 April 2007), both of whom comment on the homophobic bullying Matteo endured from his schoolmates. After 7 April, the two newspapers appear to focus more on the 'private' narrative around the causes of Matteo's death, focusing predominantly on Matteo's family.

'Maybe he had other problems'

The private narrative of Matteo's coverage was made apparent in the quotes analysed above (6. 29, 6. 30, 6. 31). This discourse hinted that the causes at the core of Matteo's discomfort were not homophobia. Those causes became central after 7 April, in particular in the coverage of the boy's funeral, and took the shape of his parents' divorce. On 8 April *la Repubblica* reported on the boy's funeral, describing the attitude of his parents towards each other in great detail. They were reported as sitting far away from each other:

(6. 42) She sits on the front bench with her sons (...) her husband remains in the fourth row (Ponte, *la Repubblica*, 8 April 2007).

This description is preceded by the report of a speech given during the ceremony by Minda Peves, the founder of the Filipino Community in Turin. She is not quoted directly:

(6. 43) And it was indeed a peculiar service yesterday, as Minda Peves, founder of the Filipino Community in Turin, recalled from the altar the painful story of Priscilla Moreno, married to Ferruccio Maritano, a farmer from Buttigliera,¹²² through a wedding agency, who then fled to Turin with her three children (Ponte, *la Repubblica*, 8 April 2007).

Matteo's father is quoted to respond to Minda Peves:

¹²² Buttigliera D'Asti is a small rural village in the hills on the outskirts of Turin.

(6. 44) 'Those are all false accusations, my wife preferred a life in the city to the countryside. Had Matteo stayed there he would probably still be alive...' (Ponte, *la Repubblica*, 8 April 2007).

The article concludes by reporting a further comment (not quoted) by Minda Peves:

(6. 45) According to Minda Peves, however, that separation was Matteo's first painful experience: his peers' jokes added to that (Ponte, *la Repubblica*, 8 April 2007).

The last sentence seems to put an end to the speculations as to what triggered Matteo's decision to commit suicide. Matteo's schoolmates were indeed 'just making jokes' (6. 31), as was hinted from the start of the reports of his suicide—the implication being that jokes added anxiety to a mind already distressed by the grief of a broken family. After the funeral, the school inspector continued the investigation.

(6. 46) Matteo appears to have said to some of his peers that he wanted to go to and live with his father (Anon., *la Repubblica*, 11 April 2007).

On 27 April *la Repubblica*, in the local pages on Turin, reported its final remarks on the case. The closing statements were made by a former teacher of Matteo, who defined him as

(6. 47) 'a well-educated boy, maybe a shy one, whose attitude might have been misinterpreted' (Ponte, *la Repubblica*, 27 April 2007).

Matteo, in the final articles, is no longer the victim of an anti-homosexual society but he becomes the victim of the failure of his family—the same kind of nuclear family that was soon going to be celebrated during the Family Day, as analysed in chapter seven. The media dedicates more space as well as more emotional investment to coverage of his estranged parents, thereby shifting attention away from the homophobic bullying he was subjected to. Only two articles eschew the private dimension (Mangiarotti, *Corriere della Sera*, 8 April 2007; De Luca, *la Repubblica*, 11 April 2007) to focus on internalised homophobia and private struggles with coming out. Personal narratives are central in the articles, which fail to include questions about societal heterosexism and homophobia. The private debate on what might have prompted Matteo's decision eventually forecloses any other possible discussion that involves impersonal entities such as 'the social' and 'the political' but places an emphasis on the 'personal'. A 'personal' story is indeed more newsworthy than 'a concept, a process, the generalised or the mass' (Bell, 1991: 158). At the same time a

‘personal’ story allows a distancing from the social dimension of homophobia, and from troublesome questions about the problematic prevalence of anti-homosexual statements from representatives of the Catholic Church and conservative politicians. Similarly, the possibility of meaningful engagement on the issue of bullying within Italian schools was also limited.

Conclusion

This chapter started with a desire to interrogate the ways in which the two newspapers dealt with events of violence against LGBT people. In order to do so I used the issue of newsworthiness to explore how it affects the construction of both victims and crimes. What emerged is that the construction of newsworthy victims and crimes coincided with a degree of distancing from the exploration of the structural causes of anti-homosexual discourses and in particular from an engagement with institutional responsibility in fostering such discourses. As in the coverage of Paola’s rape, the representation of Matteo’s suicide provides an example of the news media’s ambivalence in addressing the inherent homophobia of Italian society. As a consequence, the possibility for a society to address an issue that is harmful to its citizens is restricted. This resonates with the conclusions drawn in the previous chapter and confirms the operation of the circulating media coverage to open a space for the rejection of anti-gay positions as well as a powerful tool for the entrenchment of the very notions that sustain them.

At the core of the following chapter is the analysis of the coverage of the Family Day and the debate generated from the organisation of the demonstration that was interrogated in this chapter. By analysing the way in which the media represented the debate around the Family Day as well as around other popular demonstrations in support or against the legal recognition of cohabiting couples, I aim to demonstrate not only the power of the media to grant space to different voices, to construct strategic spaces of silence and to define the newsworthiness of different renditions of events, but also to create different social categories for those taking part in these events.

Chapter Seven. DICO standing between two *piazze* – media reports on popular demonstrations

On 26 February 2007, *la Repubblica* published an interview with Senator Bobba (a Theodem, senator for The Daisy and former president of the ACLI¹²³). The headline read:

(7. 1) AND WE ARE GOING TO DO BATTLE WITH THE FAMILY DAY¹²⁴ (Casadio, *la Repubblica*, 26 February 2007).

The article was featured under the caption ‘the Theodem’ and focused mainly on how and why, from within the government coalition, the Theodem had been opposing the DICO bill on the legal recognition of cohabiting couples. At the end of the article, Senator Bobba was asked:

(7. 2) Will Catholics take to the piazza¹²⁵ against DICO?

‘There is no protest planned, but maybe a Family Day’ (Casadio, *la Repubblica*, 26 February 2007).

The Family Day finally took place on 12 May 2007. Under the motto ‘What is good for the family is good for the country’, one million people (according to the organisers) gathered in Rome to demonstrate their support for the family and their disapproval of the possibility of a legal recognition of *de facto unions* and same-sex couples. The Family Day was seen by many commentators as a key moment of the Prodi II Government (Holzhacker, 2012; Ceccarini, 2009; Donà, 2009; Bonini Baraldi, 2008; Bernini, 2008; Rotelli, 2008). The success of the demonstration is often defined as a turning point in the political debate on the legal recognition of *de facto unions*. On the one hand, it was argued that it further emphasised the instability of the government: while its ministers aimed at drafting a law on the legal recognition of *de facto unions* and same sex couples, members of the coalition majority organised a demonstration against it (Donà, 2009). On the other hand, the success of the Family Day is often defined as a symbol of the power of the Catholic Church to influence Italian politics

¹²³ ACLI: *Associazioni Cristiane Lavoratori* (Christian Association of Italian Workers).

¹²⁴ Family Day was the event’s original title.

¹²⁵ *It: I cattolici scenderanno in piazza contro i Dico? Scendere in piazza* can be translated as ‘take to the street’. I use the expression ‘to take to the piazza’ to maintain a literal translation of the Italian *scendere in piazza*. This decision is not only predicated on the blueprint for translation set in the methodological chapter. It is also due to the necessity of maintaining, as in the original, the piazza at the core of the discussion. Piazza was frequently used as a metonym in the article analysed, defining the different demonstrations that took place between March and May 2007.

(Holzhacker, 2012; Bernini, 2008; Gilbert, 2007). The analysis of the media coverage resonates with these findings and confirms the Family Day as a critical discourse moment where the focus of the media coverage shifted from parliamentary tensions to the organisation of a popular demonstration that in turn heated up the political debate.

The present chapter, therefore, focuses on the articles published between 25 February, when the pro-DICO rally was discussed in the press (see extract 7.3), and 13 May 2007, the day after the Family Day. Within this timeframe other demonstrations had been organised in relation to the DICO bill: the pro-DICO Rally (10 March), and the anti-Family Day demonstration *Coraggio Laico* (Secular Courage) (12 May). All demonstrations took place in Rome. The data analysed comprises 140 news items in total: while this chapter relies on a larger set of texts,¹²⁶ the approach to the news items is consistent with that of the two previous chapters. The texts have been scrutinised to examine the representation of the actors involved as well as the construction of the different events. Questions have been posed regarding the function of those representations in relation to both the overarching debate and the hegemonic notions that characterise Italian sexual politics.

A focus on the media coverage of the different demonstrations enables an investigation of how opposing groups are constructed and deepens understanding of how tensions between the different groups are conveyed. This chapter therefore draws on, and develops further, some of the key issues raised in chapter four. It expands on the ways in which news coverage relies on easily understandable categories and fosters a representation of clear divisions between different groups. In this chapter, however, a further element enters the analysis: the sign of the family.

The representation of the different demonstrations also shows how the news coverage frames the different groups' agendas and their construction of the 'other' against whom the demonstrations are held. A key feature of this construction appears to be the way in which otherness is constructed through the sign of the family. To investigate this moment of the debate can illuminate further the way the news media analysed negotiated the multiple definitions of the term 'family'.

In chapter five I explained how the representation of a lesbian couple was the centre of a heated debate. The representation of a lesbian couple was seen as a 'parody of the family', a family that was assumed to be a natural or essentialist institution in its

¹²⁶ The list of the articles analysed in this chapter can be found in Appendix B.

heterosexual form. Reacting to the critiques, and supporting the broadcasting of and praise for the TV movie, the hetero norm was also enforced by those who discursively regulated the possibility of acceptance of a queer family (in this case strongly attached to notions of kinship and filiation). Taking these conclusions further in this chapter, I discuss how the media coverage negotiates the representation of the key issues the demonstrations raised. In the following sections I analyse closely the texts that relate to or discuss the three public demonstrations. Starting with the pro-DICO rally in Piazza Farnese, I will move on to the Family Day and its counter-demonstration, Secular Courage. In order to better comprehend the forthcoming analysis I begin by looking back at the chronology discussed in chapter four, and explain at which juncture of the debate these events happened.

It is time for... demonstrations

On 21 February 2007, the government presented guidelines on foreign policy for a vote in the Senate (a particular emphasis was placed on the role of the Italian army in the NATO mission in Afghanistan). With a very small majority in the Senate, one senator (Andreotti) failing to vote proved to be fatal for the stability of the government. The failure to obtain a majority for the foreign policy bill was frequently referred to in the media analysed as a ‘warning’ from those who opposed the DICO bill on the legal recognition of cohabiting couples.¹²⁷ After the defeat, Prime Minister Prodi presented his resignation to the President of the Republic. In the meantime, the DICO bill drafted by the Minister of the Family and the Minister of Equal Opportunities came up for review by the Senate Justice Commission and was to be discussed again on 6 March 2007.

Following a series of consultations, the president of the republic eventually rejected the prime minister’s resignation, and the government went through a vote of confidence (first in the Senate and then in the Chamber of Deputies). But the newly drafted coalition programme, submitted to a vote of confidence, no longer featured the legal recognition of *de facto unions*. This omission was met with strong criticism from those who supported the bill and led LGBT groups to call for a demonstration in support of a legal recognition of *de facto unions* to be held on 10 March in Rome.

¹²⁷ On 31 January 2007, following the approval of the *Camera dei deputati* (Chamber of Deputies) the government presented a bill to parliament regarding the legal recognition of cohabiting couples. On 8 February 2007, the *Consiglio dei Ministri* approved the bill proposed by Minister Pollastrini and Minister Bindi.

On 25 February 2007 *la Repubblica* published the article:

(7. 3) ON THE PIAZZA FOR DICO. BUT A LOW NUMBER OF PLEDGES TO PARTICIPATE IS FEARED (Custodero, *la Repubblica*, 25 February 2007).

The article included comments from Aurelio Mancuso, secretary of Arcigay. Mancuso is quoted as being hopeful for a large turnout; the law was in the hands of the Senate Justice Commission, so it was no longer a proposal of the Prodi II Government. This, Mancuso argued, might allow for greater support from the opposition and from right-wing MPs who did not wish to publicly support any law proposed by the Prodi II Government. However, the article continues:

(7. 4) Following the removal of DICO from the Prodi government's agenda, a number of defections are feared. (Custodero, *la Repubblica*, 25 February 2007)

The day after, an interview with Senator Bobba appeared in *la Repubblica*.

(7. 1) AND WE ARE GOING TO DO BATTLE WITH THE FAMILY DAY (Casadio, *la Repubblica*, 26 February 2007).

As already discussed, headlines highlight the relevant information for reading the text and in doing so establish the ranking of the facts contained in the text (Van Dijk, 1988: 226). In both articles, the headlines placed an emphasis on comments that appear either at the end of the article (7.1) or in the middle of it (7.3). The Family Day was deemed to be the most relevant information in Senator Bobba's interview (7.1; 7.2), while the possibility of failure was the crucial piece of information in the case of the pro-DICO demonstrations (7.3; 7.4). The latter resonates with the representation of the support for DICO as weak, as discussed in chapter four. The former paved the way for the appearance of the Family Day in the media coverage.

In fact, three months passed between the pro-DICO rally (10 March 2007) and the Family Day (13 May 2007). However, from 26 February to 10 March the two events were often discussed together. The pro-DICO demonstration in Piazza Farnese was discussed in 37 articles published between 25 February and 11 March; 17 of those also mentioned the Family Day. In the aftermath of the demonstration on 10 March, however, the media coverage was dominated by the Family Day; the demonstration was mentioned in 104 articles published between 25 February and 31 May 2007.

The media coverage dwelt on the list of participants in the Family Day, as well as on the celebrities who accepted invitations to perform on the stage in Piazza San Giovanni where the Family Day was to be held. The discussion around the organisation of the Family Day raised the temperature of the political debate and, as discussed in the

previous chapter, the debate anti-gay tone came under attack in the aftermath of Matteo's suicide at the beginning of April 2007. On 29 April a counter-demonstration was announced. Under the caption

(7. 5) THE INITIATIVE OF THE ROSE IN THE FIST.

The headline:

(7. 6) FAMILY DAY, THE COUNTER-DEMONSTRATION GOES AHEAD. ON THE PIAZZA FOR SECULAR COURAGE. CEI [SAYS] THE FUTURE IS MARRIAGE (Accattoli, *Corriere della Sera*, 29 April 2007)

The counter-demonstration exacerbated the clashes between those who pledged support for the Family Day and those who endorsed the counter-demonstration, Secular Courage. Great emphasis was placed on the fact that both camps expected the participation of members of the government majority. The counter-demonstration announced on 29 April was discussed in 20 articles published between 29 April and 13 May. The declining numbers give a sense of the different amount of space these events occupied in the media coverage. A further difference can be observed in the way in which the events were covered by other media: the pro-DICO rally was broadcast live on RAI3 (which, although it has a national reach, is dedicated to local and regional broadcasting). The Family Day, in comparison, was covered by RAI1, the flagship national channel of RAI.

In this section I introduced my data set, located it in the broader chronology of the media coverage examined in chapter four, and began to consider how the pro-DICO, Family Day and Secular Courage demonstrations were the object of different degrees of media attention. In the next sections I highlight further differences in the way the demonstrations were represented. The first event analysed is the pro-DICO gathering, organised by part of the LGBT movement, which took place in Piazza Farnese.

Piazza Farnese

As seen above, the pro-DICO demonstration was discussed in the media following the removal of the DICO bill from the government agenda. I focus here in particular on the 44 news items that mention the pro-DICO demonstration that took place in Piazza Farnese, from when it first appeared in the news in February 2007 (7.3) to when the demonstration actually took place on 10 March.

Following the article reported above (7.3 and 7.4), on 1 March *Corriere della Sera* published an article headlined:

(7. 7) THE UPRISING OF GAY PEOPLE: 50,000 ON THE PIAZZA: 'WE HAVE BEEN SOLD OFF TO THE NEW MAJORITY'
(Arachi, *Corriere della Sera*, 1 March 2007)

The article's lead reads:

(7. 8) To fight for the rights of de facto couples, now homosexuals are loading their guns. But gay communities are not on their own. 'Anything but', promises Aurelio Mancuso, national secretary of Arcigay and promoter of the demonstration that will be held on 10 March in Rome. Mancuso explains: 'one just needs to go to the website www.dirittiora.it to see how many we are, I promise'. And if one opens that website, aside from the plethora of associations and groups, one finds that subscribing to the demonstration asking for rights for de facto couples now are also lots of left-wing parties, starting with DS and Communist Refoundation (...) 'And now it is precisely those leftwing parties that we are asking, loud and clear, what do you intend to do? We ask it now, after Prodi de facto broke his pledge to the electorate with his speech'. To say that Aurelio Mancuso is furious is an understatement. In fact he adds: 'We want to understand if [Prodi's] speech¹²⁸ means we have been sold out as the new majority is forming'.

The article goes on to mention the municipality of Rome's support for the march and how this support had been criticised by the local centre-right party. The article closes with more references to the website. As the article shows, as of 1 March the pro-DICO demonstration did not seem to have a clear name. Those who supported the demonstration were grouped under the banner of *Diritti Ora* (Rights Now). The banner *Diritti Ora*, however, was not used as a clear identifier of the pro-DICO demonstration. The March gathering in the articles analysed was alternately referred to as the 'gay rally' (see Isman, *la Repubblica*, 1 March 2007), the 'gay demonstration' (see Custodero, *la Repubblica*, 4 March 2007), the 'gay piazza', the 'secular demonstration', the 'pro-DICO rally' (see Anon., *Corriere della Sera*, 6 March 2007), or simply as 'Piazza Farnese' (see Politi, *la Repubblica*, 9 March 2007), in reference to the location where the demonstration took place. The lack of a defining label created many definitions, so that in the media coverage the gathering appeared to lack a clear identification (in opposition to the catchy label Family Day); I see this as the first crucial characteristic of the coverage of the demonstration held on 10 March. Lack of a

¹²⁸ Here Mancuso refers to Prodi's speech to Parliament where he presented the government's new agenda. As seen above, the legal recognition of de facto unions was not part of the new programme.

clear identificatory name can be read alongside a wider tendency in the days leading up to the demonstration to focus on the tensions that ensued after the discussion of the DICO bill in the Justice Commission, or the pledges by different politicians to participate in the demonstration. This appeared to blur the representation of the demonstration and the claims the organisers aimed to put forward.

The organisation of the demonstration coincided with the discussion of DICO by the Justice Commission, which was supposed to evaluate the government's proposal and present it to the Senate's vote. The work of the Justice Commission was supposed to start on 6 March. Below, I report a selection of the headlines that characterised the coverage of the days before 6 March.

(7. 9) DICO, ANDREOTTI AND JESUITS [LAUNCH] AN OFFENSIVE STRATEGY. (*Politi, la Repubblica*, 2 March 2007).

(7. 10) 'GAY COUPLES? I DON'T LIKE THEM'. REVOLT AGAINST ANDREOTTI (*Fregonara, Corriere della Sera*, 2 March 2007).

(7. 11) 'DICO WILL NOT PASS [THE APPROVAL OF] THE SENATE' (*Casadio, la Repubblica*, 4 March 2007).

(7. 12) RUTELLI [SAYS]: DICO IS NOT A PRIORITY WITHIN THE UNION ATTACKS ON THE THEODEM (*Casadio, la Repubblica*, 5 March 2007).

The headlines show how newsworthiness is routinely granted to the opposition to the law; the opposition from within the majority and from the Catholic Church conveyed tension, conflict and drama and acquired the status of newsworthiness, which enhanced their positions as well as the space they occupied. Again, it is important to ask what the implications are, both of the failure to grant a name to the Pro-DICO demonstration and of the greater newsworthiness granted to the opposition to the legal recognition of *de facto unions* and same-sex couples.

Alongside not granting a proper name to the pro-DICO demonstration, the newsworthiness of the voices against it also constructs those who support the law as an indecisive minority, as discussed in chapter four. In a moment during the political debate in which the DICO bill was at a turning-point, space was routinely given to those who loudly and clearly opposed it, while the pro-DICO demonstration appeared at this juncture to be granted media coverage in relation to the tensions it elicited, rather than for the claims it aimed to make. One event in particular acquired newsworthiness and was represented as potentially fuelling the tensions within the majority coalition: a dispute between Grillini (PRC and honorary president of Arcigay) and the Theodem Binetti, both MPs in the coalition's majority.

On 4 March 2007 this dispute was reported in both *Corriere della Sera* and *la Repubblica*:

(7. 13) BINETTI ON TV: THE CILICE? IT IS LIKE WEARING HIGH HEELS. AND THEN ABOUT HOMOSEXUALS: 'IT'S DEVIANT'. GRILLINI REVOLTS (*Salvia, Corriere della Sera*, 4 March 2007)¹²⁹

(7. 14) 'HOMOSEXUALITY: A DEVIANCE' BINETTI INFLAMES THE GAY MEETING (*Custodero, la Repubblica*, 4 March 2007)

As the articles report, on 3 March Paola Binetti and Franco Grillini were both guests on the TV show *Tetris*¹³⁰. Part of the conversation during the show, as it was reported in the press, focused on how, in an interview to a magazine published a few days before, Binetti had disclosed that she wears a cilice.¹³¹ The talk show involved a quiz, and Binetti was asked: 'is homosexuality a deviance of the personality or a characteristic of the personality?' Binetti replied that it was the former. The two articles place different emphasis on Binetti's statement. While in *Corriere della Sera* it occupies only one sentence in the whole article, *la Repubblica* dedicates a large part of the news item to it. Binetti is quoted explaining her answer by saying that:

(7. 15) to be gay is '[to adopt] a behaviour [that is] very different from the norm [that is] inscribed in a morphological, genetic, endocrinological and behavioural codes' (*Custodero, la Repubblica*, 4 March 2007).

The article dedicated two paragraphs to reporting the exchanges during the TV show before linking the episode to the demonstration in Piazza Farnese. Binetti's reply, the article continued, upset Franco Grillini. The quotation 'is deviant' is placed in both of the articles' headlines (7.14; 7.15), but both articles fail to mention that it was not a statement in itself but a reply to a question. It is not my intention to justify Binetti's choice of words, although it is important to highlight that only a careful reading of the

¹²⁹ It is interesting to note the use of the verb *insorgere* (revolt/rebel) in the headline. This reinforced the underlying implication that both Grillini and Binetti belonged to the Government majority and were soon to be part of the same party (after the fusion of the DS and the Daisy to become the PD-Partito Democratico- Democratic Party). Again, the internal division between the coalition is there reinforced.

¹³⁰ *Tetris* was a political talk show conducted by Luca Telesio on the TV channel la7 (a national commercial channel). The programme website stated that the talk show broke the mould of conventional political programmes and highlighted the inextricable ties between politics and television and the image society.

¹³¹ In an interview in the *Corriere della Sera* magazine Binetti declared that she used the cilice during her prayers as a practice to elevate the spirit through suffering. Wearing a cilice is one of the practices of affiliates of Opus Dei that is most frequently referred to in representations of the movement and its affiliates (for example, one of the characters in Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* is represented as using it as part of his mortification practice).

articles provides the reader with the context in which the words were uttered (Van Dijk, 1988: 226). With their potential to elicit strong reactions, Binetti's reply acquired a newsworthiness that in turn granted her considerable visibility, a visibility that continued in the coverage of the day of the demonstration that referred to banners mocking Binetti's position against homosexuality as well as her cilice (*Caccia, Corriere della Sera*, 11 March).

Similarly, on 6 March, relevance was given to the news that, while delivering a guest lecture at Bocconi University, Senator Andreotti was publicly challenged on his position on same-sex couples, expressed a few days before (Fubini, *Corriere della Sera*, 6 March) (see 7.10). Visibility was also given to a new anathema from the Vatican against the recognition of *de facto unions* on the day the DICO bill was due to be discussed in the Senate.

(7. 16) DICO IS A BATTLE OVER THE TIMELINE [FOR APPROVAL]. NEW ANATHEMA FROM THE VATICAN (Buzzanca, *la Repubblica*, 6 March).

(7.17) DICO, THE TEXT LANDS AT THE SENATE. THE CHURCH (SAYS) CATHOLICS, STOP IT. (Piccolillo, 6 March 2007).

Again, we can see here how the news values that regulate the media coverage seemed to give more space to the opposers of the law than to those who supported it, consequently overshadowing the claims that the demonstration aimed to put forward.

Declaration of locations

A further feature of the media coverage from the days preceding the pro-DICO demonstration is the space granted to the pledges made by politicians to participate in the demonstration. On 6 March 2007 *la Repubblica*, under the caption 'The demonstration', published an article headed:

(7. 18) CRISTICCHI¹³² AMONG THE SUPPORTERS AT THE RALLY FOR CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS (Custodero, *la Repubblica*, 6 March 2007).

The article featured a list of public figures reported to be supporting the pro-DICO demonstration. Among them were Nobel Laureate for Literature Dario Fo and his wife, Franca Rame, both quoted attacking the Catholic Church on the grounds of its homophobia:

¹³² Simone Cristicchi is an Italian singer who, in February 2007, won the Festival of Sanremo, the most famous national annual singing contest.

(7. 19) 'The demonstration is more than welcome! This is Dario Fo's blessing – since the attitude of the Church is no longer Catholic but rather, filled with racism¹³³ against the gay world' (Custodero, *la Repubblica* 6 March 2007).

From 6 March the media coverage became the main outlet through which invitations were sent and replies were given; politicians were publicly asked to take a stance and publicly declared their affiliation.

For instance, on 7 March in *la Repubblica* a few lines appeared under the caption 'The appeal'. The news item opened with a statement from Aurelio Mancuso, secretary of Arcigay, publicly inviting Piero Fassino (the national secretary of the DS — the left-wing party in the government coalition) to be in the piazza with the gay associations on the day of the demonstration:

(7. 20) 'FASSINO SHOULD COME WITH US TO THE PIAZZA; THAT WOULD BE PROOF OF HIS GOOD WILL' (Anon., *la Repubblica*, 7 March 2007).

Mancuso is quoted as having said:

(7. 21) 'We urge Fassino to make up his mind. If he doesn't come to the piazza, we are going to take it as an explicit political signal: it will be obvious that he fears the Family Day, that the demonstration and everything behind it, frightens him' (Anon., *la Repubblica*, 7 March 2007).

The quote from Mancuso is followed by the reply from Piero Fassino:

(7. 22) 'The party supports [the demonstration]. On Saturday I'm going to be busy in Tuscany and in Emilia Romagna with the [party's] congresses, [I am] keeping to a schedule that was laid down a long time ago' (Anon., *la Repubblica*, 7 March 2007).

The article closes with a further appeal from Mancuso to the prime minister, whom he asks to be respectful of demonstration, even if he has decided not to take part in it. On 9 March, the day before the pro-DICO demonstration at Piazza Farnese, *Corriere della Sera* read:

(7. 23) PRO-DICO OR FAMILY DAY? SIRCANA: LET THE MINISTERS DECIDE. CATHOLICS TAKE TO THE PIAZZA, CEI APPROVES (Fregonara, *Corriere della Sera*, 9 March 2007).

¹³³ It: *razzismo*. The translation remained close to the original.

In the article, government spokesperson Silvio Sircana was reported as stating that both the Family Day as well as the pro-DICO demonstration were promoted by representatives of the government, so it was up to individual MPs to decide which demonstration they would attend. The article then closes with a list of statements in quotation marks from various government representatives.

(7. 24) FERRERO: 'Tomorrow I will go to the pro-DICO demonstration'.

POLLASTRINI: 'The pro-DICO rally is right, I will try to be there'.

BINDI: 'I won't go, it is up to Parliament now to think about DICO'.

FIORONI: 'The family is central, and I am ready to defend it'.

MELANDRI: 'Everyone has the right to take to the piazza. But I am not going'.

PECORARO: 'I will obviously go tomorrow. It is a debate'.

MASTELLA: 'I now feel free to go to the Family Day'. (Fregonara, *Corriere della Sera*, 9 March 2007).

These *declarations of location* became one of the dominant patterns of the media coverage; politicians were either asked or reported to have declared where they would be. Both in *la Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera*, articles reported statements about endorsements of the pro-DICO demonstration and also declarations against it (usually followed by praise and pledges to the Family Day), frequently using a mix of direct and indirect speech:

(7. 25) If 'my colleagues' are going to take to the piazza with Arcigay, then 'I am going to take part in the Family Day' (Casadio, *la Repubblica*, 9 March 2007).

Again, the media texts in these cases appear to function (as seen in previous chapters) as a space used by politicians to communicate within the coalition (Mancini, 1993); at the same time, however, it is important to highlight how these *declarations of location* appear to blur the space and time between the two demonstrations, granting further visibility to the Family Day while constructing delineating two clearly defined opposing groups. Two groups do indeed start emerging in the media coverage: the one that was going to be in Piazza Farnese on 10 March and the one that was not. The former includes pro-DICO LGBT organisations and 'gays' (7.3, 7.7, 7.14, 7.23); the latter is composed of the 'Catholics' who were going to be summoned by the Theodem (7.1, 7.29). This distinction, as we shall see, was further perpetuated in the media texts discussing the Family Day.

Given the dichotomic construction of these two opposing groups, it becomes all the more important to flag one instance where the media texts analysed appear to relinquish this construction and allow a space in which this binary might be disrupted. On 9 March, *la Repubblica* published an article under the caption ‘the case’:

(7. 26) GROUPS OF RELIGIOUS HOMOSEXUALS: ‘WE ARE GOING TO BE AT PIAZZA FARNESE’

(7. 27) They are dozens [across] Italy, an almost unknown phenomenon; who are they and what do they think of [the] DICO and gay protests? (Politi, *la Repubblica*, 9 March 2007).

The importance of this case and of the fact that being gay and Catholic is treated as an oddity will become clearer later when discussing the predominance of the trope of the anti-clerical critique during the demonstration. However, it is necessary to delineate here how this trope appeared to reinforce the discursive creation of two groups: the Catholic and the secular, where the latter became synonymous with a pro-DICO stance and the former with an anti-DICO stance. Against this division, ‘religious homosexuals’ are framed as ‘an exception’. In fact, groups of homosexuals who define themselves as belonging to a Christian community have existed at least since the early 1980s (Rossi Barilli, 1999: 154). In 1980 the Italian Waldesian Evangelical Church organised in Turin one of the first seminars on homosexuality and faith, and since then religious homosexuals have organised groups such as *Guado* in Milan, *Davide e Gionata* in Turin and the Collective for Pastoral Care of Homosexuals and Transsexuals in Padua (Rossi Barilli, 1999: 155). In 2010, seventeen different Italian groups gathered in the first Forum of Homosexual Christians, organised in Italy as part of the European Forum of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Christian Groups. The focus on this ‘case’, however, did not seem to impact on the coverage of the demonstrations that followed. In fact the all-encompassing term ‘Catholic’, as it shall be made clear, was routinely used in the media to define a pre-established position in the debate against the legal recognition of *de facto unions* and same-sex couples.

The emphasis placed on who was going to participate in which demonstrations again overshadowed the claims and the agenda of the pro-DICO demonstration. The claims of the organisers were briefly referred to in a few articles, and the demonstration was always opposed to the Family Day.

(7. 28) The one in Piazza Farnese ‘will be’, in the words of its organiser Alessandro Zan, ‘a demonstration for rights and not against the family, quite the opposite of the Family Day [that will take place] in

May, organised by Catholic movements against DICO' (Custodero, *la Repubblica*, 6 March 2007).

The relevance of the May demonstration is further emphasised by the coverage that characterised the day prior to the pro-DICO demonstration. The day before the pro-DICO rally, *la Repubblica* published this article:

(7. 29) 'THE CATHOLIC FORUM ATTACKS 'MANIFESTO AGAINST CIVIL UNIONS'

(7. 30) The temptation to turn it into a test of muscular strength against Prodi (harboured by some clerical fringes) has been put aside; a more sophisticated line has emerged, but aimed with even greater resolution at the final dismissal of any public recognition of de facto couples. (Politi, *la Repubblica*, 9 March 2007).

The article appears to be a further attempt to galvanise the tension between the two demonstrations and enhance the already heated debate; however, in this final move it is possible to see again how the newsworthiness of the conflict worked in favour of the Family Day, granting it more space against a demonstration where the agenda had been constantly overshadowed in favour of loud homophobic remarks. From the unclear name, to the space granted to the opposition to DICO on the dawn of the demonstration, the representation of the pro-DICO rally appears to serve more as a platform to enhance the Family Day than to represent support for the law.

The day of Piazza Farnese

On the day, the demonstration in Piazza Farnese was discussed on the front pages of *Corriere della Sera* and *la Repubblica*. One of the headlines on *la Repubblica*'s front page reads:

(7. 31) A CHALLENGE ON THE PIAZZA FOR CIVIL UNIONS (Anon, *la Repubblica*, 10 March 2007).

The *Corriere della Sera*'s headline reads:

(7. 32) TENSIONS FOR DICO ON THE DAY OF THE PIAZZA (Anon, *Corriere della Sera*, 10 March 2007).

Here, piazza is clearly a metonym for the demonstration. The demonstration is referred to by the location in which it is going to take place. Before discussing the relevance of such a construction, I shall scrutinise closely the coverage of the demonstration in Piazza Farnese in order to understand how particular texts represented the demonstration. In the following section, this analysis will be compared to the representation of the Family Day.

A close analysis was performed on texts from both *la Repubblica* and the *Corriere della Sera* which discussed the pro-DICO demonstration on 11 March 2007. Both newspapers reported how Romano Prodi criticised ministers who participated in the demonstration.

(7. 33) PRODI CRITICISES THE MINISTERS ON THE STAGE [OF THE DEMONSTRATION]. [HE IS] PERPLEXED; THERE IS NEED FOR GREATER COHESION (Marozzi, *la Repubblica*, 11 March 2007).

(7. 34) PRODI: MINISTERS IN THE PIAZZA LEAVE ME PERPLEXED (Alberti, *Corriere della Sera*, 11 March 2007)

The prime minister, as reported in *la Repubblica*, was disappointed with the lack of agreed intent among his ministers. Again, this seems an appealing topic for the media texts analysed. As discussed in chapter four, the theme of the tensions internal to the majority permeates the coverage. *La Repubblica* also published interviews with two government ministers. The first was with the Minister of Welfare, Paolo Ferrero, who explained his reasons for going to the pro-DICO demonstration:

(7. 35) FERRERO: I WAS THERE [AT THE DEMONSTRATION] AND I DO NOT REGRET IT. THOSE PEOPLE DESERVED TO BE LISTENED TO (Milella, *la Repubblica*, 11 March 2007).

The second interview was with the Minister of Education, Giuseppe Fioroni, and was headed:

(7. 36) FIORONI: I'LL GO TO THE FAMILY DAY. DO NOT THINK OF IT AS A RIGHT-WING DEMONSTRATION (Casadio, *la Repubblica*, 11 March 2007).

This emphasis on the internal disagreements that ran through the coalition government was also, as we will see in the next section, a recurrent feature of the media coverage in the days approaching the Family Day. In these headlines, the government was again presented as weak and divided around the issues that occupied the centre stage of the news media. The internal divisions and the *declaration of locations* were some of the tropes around which coverage of the demonstrations was organised.

A third trope placed great emphasis on the slogans used by participants. Those included references to the Vatican and its homophobic policies: 'No Vat' (as in NO VATICAN) was the most widely reported slogan in the articles and headlines analysed.

(7. 37) 'NO-VAT' AND 'SAINT ZAPATERO'. IT IS THE WAKE-UP CALL OF THE GAY COMMUNITY (De Gregorio, *la Repubblica*, 11 March 2007).

The ‘gay piazza’ was hence characterised mainly through its opposition to the Church and through its critique of those MPs opposing the new law, framed by demonstrators as influenced by the *longa manus* (the powerful long arm) of the Vatican. The message of the piazza was presented as mainly concerned with depicting the Catholic Church as the fiercest opponent to DICO and as the fiercest mouthpiece of anti-gay messages. The emphasis on the anti-clerical sentiments of the piazza again features prominently at the expense of the requests for legal recognitions of *de facto unions* and claims for equal rights at the core of the demonstration that were granted relatively less space within the media coverage.

The opposition of religion to rights is taken further by the *Corriere della Sera*. In almost every article that appeared in the 11 March edition of the newspaper there are references to the Church and its reaction to the demonstration. One of the articles that covered the demonstration on Piazza Farnese opened with the following vignette:

(7. 38) Rome - On Piazza Farnese, as soon as the sit-in begins, the nuns of Santa Brigida barricade themselves in the convent. ‘We are with the Pope’, one of the nuns remarks curtly before closing the heavy gate behind her. ‘We don’t want to get involved with those people’. The small Church of Santa Brigida directly faces the stage erected by homosexual organisations and some of the banners held by the demonstrators (‘Better Gay than Opus Dei’, ‘Cilices and Binetti: perfect afflictions’) are quite disturbing to the sensitivity of Italian Catholics (Caccia, *Corriere della Sera*, 11 March 2007).

This lead paragraph framed the demonstration directly in term of its location being disruptive for ‘Catholics’, troubling ‘Catholics’ sensitivity’. The trope of the discomfort caused by the approaching queer (Ahmed, 2004) analysed in chapter five returns in the images used to define the ‘gay gathering’. A similar structure to that of the extract above has been traced in all the articles analysed. It revolves around a threefold construction: first comes the critique of the Church by the gathering in the piazza; second, a brief reference to what ‘the piazza’ is fighting against (mainly the Church) or for (approval of DICO); and third, the Church’s critique of the piazza.

This construction seems to confirm once more how the media coverage enforced a discursive structure, in which the Catholic Church was routinely positioned as the voice to respond to whether to critique it or to sustain it. The vociferous attacks on DICO and consequently on gay couples regulated the discourse that circulated in the media coverage. At the same time, as suggested above, Catholics and LGBT activists were treated as distinct categories whose intrinsic characteristics are assumed to be

implicit in the text and are supposed to appeal to the reader's common sense (Talbot, 2007: 49). As discussed in chapter four, this fails to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of the Italian LGBT movement and also fails to grant space to the various political stances that coalesced within the group referred to as 'Catholics'. In order to construct the internal coherence of the text, the reader needs to draw on the concept of two internally homogenous categories that oppose one another. In the following section I take this conclusion forward to examine an instance of critique against the Catholic Church. I will also dedicate attention to the symbol of the piazza that appears to dominate the media coverage of the demonstration; once unpacked this may grant further insights into the construction of the opposition explored above.

DICO standing between two piazze

The first page of *la Repubblica* on 8 March 2007 features an editorial headlined

(7. 39) DICO BETWEEN TWO PIAZZE
(Merlo, *la Repubblica*, 8 March 2007).

The following excerpts give a flavour of Merlo's editorial:

(7. 40) One piazza for gays and the other for priests, a colourful carnival and a black counter-carnival. It never happened before (...)

(7. 40a) So, on Saturday on Piazza Farnese, extravagances and diversity will parade under Arcigay's flag and then probably, at the end of March, on Piazza San Giovanni, we are going to see the commonplaces' parade under the flags, or better, under the liturgical vestments of Ruini.

(7. 40b) Generally speaking we don't like [the idea of] the piazza. But, more specifically, a Catholic rally against homosexuals reminds us of another piazza that was stirred against Christ while he struggled under the weight of the cross to reach Calvary. No organiser of demonstrations, no Ruini, will ever be able to take away from us [the image of] that humble Christ who was mocked on the piazza precisely because he was different. It is possible to be homosexual and not be with Christ, but no one can possibly imagine Christ demonstrating against homosexuals (Merlo, *la Repubblica*, 8 March 2007).

This editorial was very critical of the Catholic Church's decision to organise the Family Day as a demonstration against the legal recognition of same-sex unions. In his article, after the first paragraph (7.40) Merlo defines the decision to hold the Family Day as a decision that does not fit with the attitude of the Italian Catholic Church, which had

never been involved in the organisation of a public demonstration before. Merlo further emphasises his position at the end of this long piece (7.40b) by invoking the iconography of Christ to convey notions of acceptance and non-judgement, and by setting it against the unwelcoming attitude of the organisers of the Family Day. This discursive strategy resonates with what Yip traced in the narratives of gay Christians in the UK (1997), a strategy that also characterises the narratives of Italian Catholic parents of gay and lesbian youth (Bertone and Franchi, 2014). By appropriating the iconography of the Gospels, the stigma against gays and lesbians is shown to contradict Christian principles (Yip, 1997: 118).

The editorial is a further example of the criticism directed against the Italian Catholic Church and the Vatican's influence in political debates in Italy. As seen in chapter four, the media coverage is punctuated by these criticisms, which open a space for de-naturalising the intrusion of religious authorities in the public debate. As discussed in chapter six, such criticisms were central in the media coverage that followed Matteo's death. Critiques powerfully labelled some of the statements that characterised the intervention of religious authorities as homophobic and aggressive. However, in those instances as well as here, criticisms, while questioning the attitude of the CEI and the Vatican, do not undermine their central position in the media coverage. Instead the newsworthiness of the voices that routinely condemn any legal recognition of same-sex couples is constantly reiterated; this was even more pronounced in the months leading up to the Family Day.

Merlo's editorial is not only an example of the critiques against the Catholic Church but also aptly encompasses the importance of the piazza as a symbol within the discursive construction of the opposing demonstrations. The piazza quickly became the signifier of both demonstrations. 'Piazza' was used frequently in the headlines (see quotes 7.3, 7.6, 7.7, 7.18, 7.21), becoming a metonym that defined one or the other movement. On the one hand, metonyms are often used alongside constructive discursive strategies to disguise those who are accountable for the narrated actions; on the other, they are used to emphasise those aspects that are shared by a group of people (Wodak, 1999: 43). Concealing a diverse set of individuals and collective groups under the name of the piazza in which they were going to gather worked to maintain an image of sameness within the groups and foreclosed the possibility of dwelling on the peculiarities that separated them.

As discussed earlier, Piazza Farnese was used often to refer to the pro-DICO demonstration on 10 March. Piazza San Giovanni was where those who opposed DICO gathered for the Family Day. The piazza, a space present in cities as well in small villages, is not only an architectural device but also a space understood to encompass social functions (Canniffe, 2008). The piazza signifies the centre of social life in Italy.¹³⁴ It is the space where social interactions take place,¹³⁵ as well as where political reactions become public (Lombardi Satriani, 1998). This is aptly symbolised by the expression *scendere in piazza* (to take to the piazza), as seen at the beginning of this chapter, whose meaning is ‘to demonstrate’ or ‘to organise a public demonstration’, usually against something. The piazza therefore symbolises not only the urban space but also the codes and signs to which symbols and images are attached (Storchi, 2007). Popular talk shows use the prop of the piazza to convey familiarity as well as social interaction (Lombardi Satriani, 1998: 26). The news coverage of the demonstrations dwelt on the symbolic meanings attached to the piazze that were chosen to host the gatherings of 12 May 2007. Piazza San Giovanni is where the traditional Labour Day concert is held.¹³⁶ The occupation of Piazza San Giovanni was framed as an act of appropriation on the part of the groups that organised the Family Day of a space that is historically significant for the Italian Left (Lopapa, *la Repubblica*, 9 May 2007).

However, it is the date that carries the significant meaning on which the media dwelled. Piazza Navona, where the counter-demonstration was held, hosted a famous gathering of supporters of the divorce law in 1974. Waiting for the result of the appeal referendum on divorce,¹³⁷ those who supported the NO option gathered there: the victory of the NO vote prevented the divorce law from being repealed, and the Church and the Catholic parties who had bitterly campaigned against divorce experienced an overwhelming and unexpected defeat. The date of the referendum was 12 May 1974.

¹³⁴ Different piazze have been theatres of crucial events in the history of Italy. Piazza Fontana in Milan, where a bomb exploded in the Banca Nazionale dell’Agricoltura in 1969, killing 17 people and wounding 88, and Piazza della Loggia in Brescia, where a bomb exploded during an anti-fascist rally in 1972, killing 8 people and wounding 102, are symbols of controversial and unresolved episodes that still cause controversy in the public opinion.

¹³⁵ It is also where social recognition takes place. In the TV film *Father of the Brides* discussed in chapter four, Riccardo, after coming to terms with his daughter’s marriage to another woman, publicly displayed his acceptance by taking a stroll in the village piazza with the two women at his side.

¹³⁶ The Labour Day concert is an annual gathering hosted by the three workers’ unions: CGIL (the Italian General Labour Confederation), CISL (the Italian Confederation of Trades Unions) and UIL (the Italian Labour Union).

¹³⁷ In Italy referendums can only be *abrogativo*, that is to say that they can only cancel a law. Therefore, the victory of the no vote implies that the law, already approved in Parliament, was confirmed by voters.

The choice of 12 May 2007 to organise the Family Day was therefore perceived as an attempt by the Church to take revenge for that still-burning defeat. This was clearly acknowledged by *la Repubblica* as soon as the date of the Family Day was announced in March:

(7. 41) AND THE CHURCH SEEKS ITS REVENGE ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE DIVORCE [REFERENDUM].

The subheading reads:

(7. 42) ON THAT SUNDAY 33 YEARS AGO THE REFERENDUM TORE ITALY APART (Ceccarelli, *la Repubblica*, 20 March 2007).

The Family Day

On 20 March, the definitive date and the manifesto for the Family Day were revealed to the media. From that very moment another series of *declarations of locations* began to take place via the media.

(7. 43) FAMILY DAY: THE RACE TO PARTICIPATE, TWO MINISTERS AT THE RALLY. YES FROM THE POLO¹³⁸ (Calabro', *Corriere della Sera*, 21 March 2007).

The Catholic hierarchy was portrayed as firstly not involved in the organisation, then as 'blessing it' without taking part in the actual demonstration:

(7. 44) BISHOPS: APPROVAL FOR THE FAMILY DAY; BUT WE WILL NOT BE ON THE PIAZZA (Anon., *Corriere della Sera*, 20 March 2007)

Regardless of this clarification, the Catholic Church was firmly placed at the centre of the representation of the Family Day and yet again more than one article appeared in the media featuring Catholic groups who strongly criticised the organisation of the Family Day (La Rocca, *la Repubblica*, 28 February 2007). Alongside the above article presenting the 'dissonant voices' of homosexual Catholics, on 14 March *la Repubblica* published a short article headlined:

(7. 45) PRIESTS-WORKERS' SUBSCRIPTION 'RIGHTS ALSO FOR GAY AND COHABITING COUPLES' (Anon., *la Repubblica*, 14 March 2007)

The article referred to events that happened in Palermo, Sicily, where, as the article begins:

(7. 46) Priests at the frontiers open up to DICO and de facto couples.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ The Polo is a party in opposition to the government coalition, whose leader at the time was Silvio Berlusconi.

Again, even in this case and similar to what happened to religious homosexuals, the insights that such a position might bring to the construction of the debate were quickly dismissed and ‘Catholics’ continued to represent solely those who opposed DICO.

The constant reiteration of this use of the term ‘Catholics’ might be read as one of the ambivalences characterising the media coverage. While certain texts might be said to open up a space for narratives that are perceived as non conforming, the disruption of the dominant category ‘Catholics’ was routinely pre-empted. It can be argued that this is due to the necessity to simplify the tensions represented, and to produce a clear representation of opposition. Trappolin (2009) argues that the media reinforce an ‘antagonistic narrative’ when recounting debates in order to enhance a narrative that can be easily understood by those who consume it; they do this either by introducing events that create tension or by reinforcing pre-existing reasons for contrast (Trappolin, 2009: 12). As observed, the construction of the Family Day in opposition to the pro-DICO demonstration generated the positioning of ‘Catholics’ against homosexual/secular individuals. This opposition is one of the leading themes I identified in this moment of the media discourse.

The media discourse has been based on the premise that the ‘Catholics’ organised the Family Day as a reaction to a pro-DICO demonstration labelled as secular. As a consequence, the Catholic Family Day was further opposed by the counter-demonstration in Piazza Navona. To keep the internal narrative coherent, it is necessary that whoever falls outside the categories recognised as valid is framed in such a way that their incoherence becomes the most relevant feature. This is particularly relevant with regard to the discursive construction of the Catholics as a homogenous group, not only in terms of their religious identity but also with regard to their position on the legal recognition of cohabiting couples.

As seen above, the day before the pro-DICO rally in March, the news media reported the organisation of a think-tank whose mission was to draft the Family Day manifesto:

(7. 29) THE CATHOLIC FORUM ATTACKS ‘MANIFESTO AGAINST CIVIL UNIONS’ (Politi, *la Repubblica*, 9 March 2007).

¹³⁹ The frontiers here are not national borders. To be someone or something at the frontier is usually used to identify those people or areas that are near the boundaries of legality or illegality or that have to deal with marginalised communities. Palermo in particular is defined as a city of frontiers where organised crime controls the economy and people are deprived of their rights.

The core of the manifesto was revealed on 19 March:

(7. 47) FAMILY DAY, THE CATHOLIC MANIFESTO: 'THERE IS ONLY ONE FAMILY AND IT IS UNTOUCHABLE' (Casadio, *la Repubblica*, 19 March 2007)

The points of contention were the DICO bill (and as a consequence, also cohabiting couples) and 'the family' framed as the sole untouchable model. 'The family', therefore, was crucially placed at the core of the label Family Day that identified the demonstration, its organisers' agenda and it was framed as an ideal to be defended. I wish to read this last point against the larger media coverage analysed so far, because it may provide a broader view of the relevance of such a construction.

'The family' had appeared in many of the headlines that reported quotes from either the Pope or a representative of the CEI, a selection of which I report below:

(7. 48) PACS, THE POPE ATTACKS: 'THEY ARE A MENACE FOR THE FAMILY' (Anon., *Corriere della Sera*, 9 January 2007).

(7. 49) 'ON THE FRONT LINE TO DEFEND LIFE AND FAMILY' (Calabro', *Corriere della Sera*, 8 March 2007).

(7. 50) 'NO TO DICO, THEY ARE A WOUND TO THE FAMILY' (Accattoli, *Corriere della Sera*, 23 March 2007).

(7. 51) DIVORCE AND CIVIL UNIONS: THE THRUST OF THE POPE. THEY ARE WOUNDS [INFILCTED] ON SOCIETY (Accattoli, *Corriere della Sera*, 12 May 2007).

(7. 52) RATZINGER: CIVIL UNIONS A WOUND. THE HOLINESS OF THE FAMILY IS ATTACKED (Politi, *la Repubblica*, 12 May 2007).

As discussed in chapter four, it is precisely the sense of conflict and drama that emanates from the Vatican's anathemas that partially explains the newsworthiness they are granted and their frequent placement on the front pages of the newspapers analysed here. However, once again, it is important to take the analysis further and question how conflict and drama are reinforced by a vocabulary of wars and battles. On the one hand, the notions of wounds and defence powerfully evoke a sense of a painful attack against a defenceless body. The quotes above therefore sound a call to the 'Catholics' to come to the forefront to defend what they hold most dear: life and family. A war, however, is by definition against an enemy, and the enemy envisaged by the Church is the one that is attacking the family by demanding DICO, i.e. the LGBT couple. Conveying the opposition between the two groups through the vocabulary of war and battle reinforces the construction of the homosexual subject as 'the family outlaw' (Calhoun, 2000). The 'Catholics' defend a family that not only cannot be a same-sex family but also forces homosexuals to the margins.

13 May 2007 — the day after

The day after the demonstrations in Piazza San Giovanni and Piazza Farnese, both newspapers focused on the coverage of the demonstrations and the reactions they generated. In this section I focus on the 21 articles that were published on 13 May 2007 (10 in *Corriere della Sera* and 11 in *la Repubblica*). The aim of this focus is not only to scrutinise the media coverage of what many considered the final blow against the DICO bill (Holzhacker, 2012; Donà, 2009; Bernini, 2008; Gilbert, 2007), but also to consider the implications of the representation of the two demonstrations. Again, the analysis is regulated by questions regarding space and dominant narratives as well as about the function of the representation.

The demonstrations featured on the front pages of both newspapers:

(7. 53) THE PEOPLE OF THE FAMILY DAY (Anon., *la Repubblica*, 13 May 2007).

The subheading reads:

(7. 54) WE ARE OVER A MILLION.

Meanwhile, the front page headline of the *Corriere della Sera* reads:

(7. 55) THE FAMILY DAY'S PIAZZA 'OVER A MILLION (PEOPLE)' (Anon., *Corriere Della Sera*, 13 May 2007)

Both newspapers dedicated a central place to the Family Day. Both mention the number circulated by the organisers: over a million. The use of the figures in the headlines conveys a powerful effect, especially when no reference is made to the number of participants on the other piazza. A really high turnout had been predicted. An article published in *la Repubblica* on 12 April was headlined:

(7. 56) A HUNDRED THOUSAND AT THE FAMILY DAY. MAYBE VESPA WILL ALSO BE THERE. (Anon., *la Repubblica* 12 April 2007)

This headline reiterated the centrality of the demonstration and worked to sustain its relevance. In May, in the aftermath of the demonstration, this sounds like a certainty. The attendance figure appears to have grown drastically, from a hundred thousand to a million. The texts of the articles analysed, however, appear to rectify those figures. In *la Repubblica*, two articles mentioned that while the organisers claimed that the Family Day gathered one to one and a half million participants, the Rome police declared that the event was attended by a maximum of 200,000 to 240,000 participants (Lopapa, *la Repubblica*, 13 May 2007; Anon., *la Repubblica*, 13 May 2007; Caccia, *Corriere della Sera*, 13 May 2007). While in both newspapers is acknowledged the fact

that the organisers overestimated the participation, the organisers' voice still occupied the front pages of *la Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera*. Starting from here it is interesting to see how the articles investigated discussed both piazze, both in terms of the representation the two newspapers conveyed and the commentaries that were published.

Describing the Piazze

Of the 21 news items published on 13 May, 11 articles described the demonstrations at length: Ceccarelli, *la Repubblica*; Bei, *la Repubblica*; Caporeale, *la Repubblica*; De Gregorio, *la Repubblica*; Lopapa, *la Repubblica*; Cazzullo, *Corriere della Sera*; Caccia, *Corriere della Sera*; Roncone, *Corriere della Sera*; Capponi, *Corriere della Sera*; Frenda, *Corriere della Sera*; Vassallo, *Corriere della Sera*. Two articles focused on Romano Prodi's reaction to the demonstrations (Marozzi, *la Repubblica*; Alberti, *Corriere della Sera*). Further coverage consisted of one interview with Rosy Bindi (De Luca, *la Repubblica*); two news items on Berlusconi's participation in the Family Day (Di Caro, *Corriere della Sera*; Tito, *Corriere della Sera*); one interview with Pierferdinando Casini of the UDC (Casadio, *la Repubblica*), one with Cicchitto from Forza Italia (Calabro', *Corriere della Sera*); one with Fioroni from the Daisy (Zuccolini, *Corriere della Sera*); and two commentary pieces (Scalfari, *la Repubblica*; Diamanti, *la Repubblica*).

On the front page of *la Repubblica* under the headline

(7. 57) THOSE TWO PIAZZE, BETWEEN FLAGS AND TOURISTS
(Ceccarelli, *la Repubblica*, 13 May 2007)

Fabrizio Ceccarelli wrote:

(7. 58) On [Piazza] San Giovanni, under a scorching sun, it is hard to make your way through the encampment of families with pushchairs, tents, beach towels and picnics. On Piazza Navona, tourists are comfortably seated under the cafes' parasols, eating ice creams and looking at the show of secular courage, tilted, ironic and a bit dull. The Catholic masses wear colourful hats; the anticlericals are hatless. Tambourines, dances and bell-collars on one side; simple hand-clapping on the other.

(7. 59) On both piazze liturgies are staged that ask for consent without [giving] too much explanation. In the long run, the family and DICO represent at the same time an excuse and an identity claim. Until yesterday, 'Catholics' and 'laics' were two vague adjectives, vast and rather harmless. From tomorrow the polarisation is clear, exclusive and possibly even

dangerous. This is not a religious war. But surely on this Saturday afternoon, in this heated *reductio* to two [sides], the two formations demonstrated and evaluated each other (*Ceccarelli, la Repubblica*, 13 May 2007).

Ceccarelli's article continues in a similar vein, juxtaposing the two piazze. His tone, and the way he describes the two piazze, are also traceable in the other articles analysed. Piazza San Giovanni is described as colourful, incoherent but harmless. Piazza Navona is less loud, more serious, populated by intellectuals and (therefore?) humourless. The slogans in the secular piazza are described as anticlerical, similar to those described in the 'gay piazza' in March (see extract 7.40). And in the same vein, Piazza Navona is positioned as 'anti', failing to be propositive and to produce positive claims. This echoes the questions raised in chapter four in relation to the space occupied by representatives of the LGBT communities and LGBT politicians. There, it was evident that constraints were placed on LGBT voices by the conservative drama-prone voices of representatives of the Catholic Church. Here, the inability to put forward an agenda is replicated in the silence imposed on the piazza and in the framing of the laics as a response to the religious piazza.

The religious piazza is not only colourful and full of sounds but also full of families and children. The centrality of families in the description of the Family Day is highly significant. The piazza was reported to be full of young families and even equipped with nurseries. The binary 'family' versus DICO became solidified (7. 59). This distinction between the two piazze and the presence/absence of families appears crucial if read as the final point of a year-long media coverage that routinely used the sign of the family as a way of defining what the LGBT individual was not.

Again, to interpret the relevance of these constructions it is necessary to refer to the notion of hegemony. Here I wish to draw attention to the ways in which the claims of the piazza are predicated on the use of the sign of the 'family', which assumes the role of an empty signifier (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Laclau, 1994; 2006). An empty signifier is that to which no signified is attached (Laclau, 1994: 187). Intrinsic in the empty signifier is therefore the impossibility of signification.

That is, the limits of signification can only announce themselves as the impossibility of realising what is within those limits — if the limits could be signified in a direct way, they would be internal to signification and, ergo, would not be limits at all (Laclau, 1994: 168).

The family is a concept that groups together different identities and subsumes them in an operation that defines their similarities and makes them coincide with the whole (Laclau, 2006: 106). In political discourse, the construction of identities and demands as equivalent is understood as the basic site of the hegemonic operation (Laclau, 2007). It is precisely this logic of sameness and/or difference that pervaded the media discourse I analysed. Differences and universals therefore constitute the basis for constructing (opposing) identities, inclusions, exclusions and boundaries within the social worlds:

The process of setting boundaries often reveals strong patriarchal, racialising, nationalising, and heterosexist elements, drawing boundaries that tacitly (and sometimes not so tacitly) exclude others on grounds of gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality and so forth (...) the issue is really not just the existence of these boundaries (probably a social necessity) but the nature of these boundaries (Plummer, 2003: 55).

In the media discourse regarding the legal recognition of cohabiting couples, the boundaries are carefully policed. The ‘family’ and ‘same-sex unions’ are routinely constructed as opposites and the heterosexual and the homosexual carefully differentiated. It appears that a failure to maintain the difference between the heterosexual and the homosexual subject within the debate would have caused the demise of the ‘other’. The construction of an ‘other’ appears necessary and intrinsic both in discourse about the production of norms and in the discursive construction of citizenship. Indeed, the ‘other’, constructed through an emphasis on the lack of common ground, appears to be functional to the norm, as it demonstrates its regulatory necessity and its validity (Weeks, 2003: 76). ‘Othering’ is the basis of the traditional construction of citizenship (Marshall, 1950), since ‘to be a citizen implies “the other” who is not a citizen’ (Plummer, 2003: 53). The ‘other’ in the media discourse is constructed through the rhetoric of ‘us versus them’, in which the reader is always assumed to be heterosexual and not implicated in the issue of the legal recognition of cohabiting couples.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the media coverage of the demonstrations that either supported or opposed the DICO bill. The media coverage focused mainly on the internal schisms within the government majority. Representatives of the government were constantly asked which demonstration they would be attending. These declarations, as I

have shown, were usually reported in the media in the shape of dialogues in which every statement appears as a reply to someone else's. This is part of what I have labelled the 'rhetoric of war', which creates two opposing groups and is reinforced by a vocabulary typical of wars and battle.

In this construction, two groups are discursively created in order to narrate the antagonism within the ruling majority. The media discourse, therefore, appears to rely on one characteristic of the actors of the debates: their supposed adherence or otherwise to the position of the Catholic Church on the legal recognition of cohabiting couples. A war, besides contenders, also needs a prize to be fought over, and through deeper analysis I noted how the family stands at the centre of the battlefield throughout the media coverage explored in the thesis. In exploring the sign of the family it is clear how representative of the Catholic hierarchies are those who appear to define what a family is. In the texts analysed, the task of defining appears to be attached entirely to them; in other words, the family is not only at the forefront of the debate, it is a particular definition of 'family' that seems to prevail. Against it, other voices rarely appear in the debate, either to challenge that definition or to displace the family sign entirely.

Conclusion

On 20 November 2014, the economics section of *Corriere della Sera* contained the headline:

U-TURN ON GAYS AND MINORITIES, BARILLA SETS AN EXAMPLE IN THE USA¹⁴⁰ (De Cesare, *Corriere della Sera* 20 November 2014).

The article discusses the *Washington Post*'s report on the dramatic changes that the pasta company Barilla experienced following the boycott of its product in the US in 2013. The news of Barilla's CEO 'ban' on gay couples in company advertising campaigns, discussed in chapter two, spread across social media and was picked up by many Anglophone news outlets. In the US, the article reports, the boycott was endorsed by public figures such as Chirlane McCray in New York. Harvard University withdrew Barilla's products from its cafeterias. In the wake of the unexpected consumer reaction, and the drop in US sales, Barilla undertook a full rebranding, cooperating with US LGBT organisations and eventually ranking 100/100 on the Corporate Equality Index of the Human Rights Campaign in 2014.

While the economics section of *Corriere della Sera* focused on Barilla's increase in revenue, *la Repubblica* focused on the political reactions. The online edition of the province of Parma supplement, where the Barilla headquarters are based, gave prominence to a tweet by the Vice-president of the Senate Maurizio Gasparri (Forza Italia) following the news of Barilla's rebranding. Gasparri incited a boycott of the company, maintaining that Guido Barilla had relinquished traditional family values due to what he termed Barilla's subordination to the 'gay lobby'.

This episode seems a fitting vignette with which to open the concluding chapter of this thesis. It speaks of ongoing changes (the change in attitude by Barilla), but also of recurring patterns (the anti-gay entrenchment of a representative of the political institutions). It is also a reminder of the questions I raised in the methodology chapter both in relation to time and to the narrowness of my focus. While discussing the potential pitfalls of my analysis in chapter three, I emphasised how both my reading and my perception of the media coverage I analysed could be influenced by the events in Italian sexual politics that characterised the intervening years. Similarly, I considered

¹⁴⁰ *It: Svolta su Gay e Minoranze, Barilla fa scuola negli USA.* The Italian expression *fare scuola* (literally: to school) implies a teaching that generates followers. In the translation I chose to emphasise the idea of setting the example, in line with the tone of the article.

the ways in which the ongoing changes that permeate the news media might affect my focus on two mainstream newspapers. In the last few years the mainstream press (and the two newspapers analysed are no exception) have granted more space to insights coming from social and new media, potentially reshaping the ways in which newsworthiness operates. In this chapter, therefore, I address these concerns; first by thinking through some of the events that have characterised the intervening years between 2008 and the time of writing, then reconsidering the tensions that still characterise the Italian culture war. This exercise aims not only to explore the limits of my research but also to advocate for the ongoing validity of my analysis, looking ahead to implications for future research.

The thesis began with the assumption that contemporary Italy is characterised by ongoing tension between conservative powers and counter-hegemonic movements aiming to disrupt the status quo. The strong hold of normative notions of family, sexuality and kinship was explored, both in relation to structural characteristics such as the ‘family paradigm’ that regulates the welfare state and with regard to the centrality of the Catholic Church as a political actor (Bertone, 2013; Donà, 2009; Saraceno, 2008; Bimbi, 1999). These conditions appear to reinforce the ‘bundle of values’ predicated on the immutability of the heterosexual/homosexual binary that perpetuates the exclusion of those who do not conform to the heterosexual norm (Bonini Baraldi, 2008: 175; Fuss, 1991). At the same time, it is possible to observe a series of ‘queer tendencies’ that are working towards the disruption of regulative binaries (Roseneil, 2000) and to expose the ongoing displacement of regulatory narratives (Plummer, 2003). The growing demand for recognition of relationships other than the heterosexual married couple exposes the fragility and the constructedness of heteronorms and their effects on individuals’ lives. This increasingly jeopardises the hegemonic hold of conservative norms. It is however, precisely the desire to defend conservative norms that drives the heated reactions of the Catholic Church’s representatives and conservative politicians.

In this thesis, I investigated the moment in which this intricate vortex of reactions was generated by demands for the legal recognition of *de facto unions*. Drawing on the concept of culture war I emphasised how moments of tension can be analysed as generative processes that both produce and transform circulating meanings regarding family, sexuality, kinship and rights, and in which different narratives fight to gain consensus (Plummer, 2003). One of the arenas that the literature identifies as crucial for the unfolding of these tensions is the media (Plummer, 2003; Smith and

Windes, 1997; Hunter, 1991). I proposed, however, to think beyond the notion of media as an arena, and to consider the news media as explicitly participating in the culture wars they report. This framework emerged from the analysis of the status of the Italian news media and their relation to power and political parties.

The literature analysed suggests that the Italian news media are characterised by strong partisanship and professional interchange between the media and the political system (Mancini, 1999). In this thesis I integrated insights from journalism studies and the emphasis they place on news values using an analysis of news that considers issues of power and hegemony. Examining issues of power allows scholars to become conscious of the manipulative role of news media (Mazzoleni and Schultz, 1999) and the ways in which politics has become increasingly mediatised (Strömbäck, 2008; Schultz, 2004), while examining issues of hegemony draws attention to how the news media operate as a technology through which oppression and exclusion are maintained (Hall et al., 1978; Meyers, 1994; Alat, 2006).

Using this framework I analysed news texts in *la Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera* between May 2006 and January 2008, posing questions about the ways in which the news texts represented and negotiated the tensions between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic tendencies, in particular exploring how the media generated, sustained or disrupted discourses that maintain the ongoing exclusion of those who do not conform to the compulsory heterosexuality that characterises Italian sexual politics.

My analysis of the media texts started in chapter four, where I suggest that the tensions that characterised the Prodi II Government in relation to the legal recognition of *de facto unions* had been deemed newsworthy and constituted a constant focus of the media coverage. In sustaining this position I do not intend to argue that the media constructed the opposition to and the disagreements within the government in relation to the law. These oppositions are grounded in the history of the different parties and are entrenched in the inclination for denial that characterises Italian politics in relation to sexual citizenship, which I explored in the first two chapters of the thesis (Bertone, 2009; Bonini Baraldi, 2008). Instead, I contend that attention should be paid to the ways in which the news media texts discursively maintained and fostered the connections between the instability of the ruling government and the issue of *de facto unions*.

The texts sustained the representation, first of PACS and then of DICO, as troublesome issues that generated clashes and threatened the government. This discursive trope seemed to solidify into a background against which other events had

been naturalised and rendered plausible, such as the continuous delays that characterised the institutional passages of the law as well as the minimal recognition of rights in the first draft of DICO (Bonini Baraldi, 2008; Lalli, 2008). The endless negotiations and the government's representatives' appeals for calm, subdued attitude of the claimants also came to seem natural and plausible.

The construction of the recognition of rights as a troublesome issue was sustained through the space granted to opposition that came, in particular, from representatives of the Catholic Church and conservative politicians. Analysis of the media coverage confirmed the influence of the Catholic Church, which many scholars have identified as a characteristic feature of contemporary Italian sexual politics; a feature that explains inequalities and exclusion from sexual citizenship rights for LGBT individuals as well as the backlash against the de-traditionalisation of Italian society (Bertone and Crowhurst, 2012; Moscati, 2010; Bernini, 2010; Donà, 2009; Poidimani, 2007; Danna, 2005). In particular, Bernini argues that the influence of the Catholic Church can be observed in the paradox whereby the family occupies the centre stage of Italian politics but politics has so far been unable to address the complex ways in which Italian families have changed (2008: 306). My analysis adds to these considerations by investigating one of the technologies through which the Catholic Church's privileged position is maintained; scrutiny of the texts revealed that by granting it space, the news media also granted the Catholic Church the power to set the tone and the terms of the media coverage (Meyers, 1994). Other actors are represented as responding to, contrasting with and critiquing, or simply agreeing with the Catholic Church position, hence abiding with the terms set by it. A similar visibility did not seem to be granted to LGBT activists or to those openly gay and lesbian MPS who lobbied for a law. The privileged position of the Catholic Church has been connected to the visibility of the construction of *de facto unions*, and in particular same-sex unions, as a threat to what they persist in referring to as the "natural" family. The trope of the family under threat discursively sustains the idealisation of the family and the circulating norm of compulsory heterosexuality (Ahmed, 2004: 144). Whether embraced by those who opposed the law, or refused by those who supported it, the binary of family/same-sex couple seemed to crystallise in the media coverage to sustain the notion of the same-sex couple being outside the definition of the family (Calhoun, 2000). This construction, I suggest, appears to uphold the peculiar resistance to the production of a discursive space for the familised LGBT subject that Bertone and Gusmano argue characterises

contemporary debates on LGBT relational claims (2013). This resistance also operates against those processes of homonormalisation that predicate the acceptance of the non-heterosexual subject on the condition of their being productive citizens, active consumers and abiding with monogamous coupledom (Roseneil et al., 2013a; Seidman, 2005).

However, the news media analysis also opened up spaces in which the dominant discourses could be challenged. The media coverage is punctuated by critical discourse moments, where the dominant notions and constructions that regulate it appeared to be momentarily disrupted, allowing the potential for different discourses to emerge (Carvalho, 2008). Two of the three critical discourse moments I analysed did not emerge from within the political debate but rather from outside it; they then travelled back into the political pages of the newspapers scrutinised, fostering the possibility for change in the organisation of the media narratives analysed.

In chapter five I investigated the media coverage of the reaction to the broadcasting of the TV movies *Father of the Brides* and *A Doctor in the Family*. The attacks became newsworthy because both films had been closely tied to the political disagreements over the legal recognition of *de facto unions*; and yet it was precisely in the outcry that accompanied in particular the broadcasting of *Father of the Brides*, and in the voices that supported and praised both productions, that a space was opened in which alternative definitions of families started to circulate.

Similarly, news coverage of the suicide of a young boy due to alleged homophobic bullying, discussed in chapter six, opened and regulated a space in which the heated tones that characterised the political debate, as well as the frequent intervention of representatives of the Catholic Church, could be addressed through the frame of structural homophobia; a framework that also characterised part of the coverage of Paola's rape. As seen, Paola's case elicited further coverage of the requests made by LGBT organisations for laws that would frame homophobia as a hate crime. In those instances, however, I observed ambivalence in the media coverage. It was possible to map out the possibility of including alternative readings and reconsidering the categories that permeated the media coverage. But it also became evident how the coverage operated routinely to contain those potential changes and hence the disruptive charge they might have carried with them.

In the case of *Father of the Brides*, synchronic analysis of both the movie and the newspapers' texts revealed how a space was opened up in the media coverage for

the lesbian couple, as well as the lesbian subject, which was not granted space in the overall coverage. However, it was also clear how the hierarchy of news values policed the limits of acceptance of same-sex couples through the naturalisation of feelings of unease in relation to same-sex parenting. Unease and discomfort were maintained as plausible in relation to the representation of a lesbian couple as parents, which detracted from the support for the legal recognition of same-sex couples. Parenthood, therefore, was placed to guard the boundaries between heterosexuality and homosexuality and to preserve the construction of the “other” that sustained those boundaries (Plummer, 2003). It appeared that the shift of the limit of acceptance worked to secure the privilege of heterosexuality, by constructing who is in control of the definition or representation of “the family” and who is the other through which this definition is maintained.

A similar curtailing of possibilities for the disruption of regulative norms and notions was traced in the media coverage of Matteo’s suicide. The personalisation of Matteo’s story, which focused on his family and his parents’ divorce as a possible cause for his discomfort, granted visibility to the event and sustained its newsworthiness. However, it also overshadowed the initial framework that critiqued the heated tone of the political debate hence preventing a deep engagement with the responsibilities of politicians and representatives of the Catholic Church by foreclosing a space in which to reflect on hate speech and institutionalised anti-homosexual attitudes. This foreclosure becomes even more relevant because of the strenuous opposition to any law against homophobia and hate speech by representatives of the Catholic Church and conservative politicians (see Dolcini, 2012).

Maintaining the status quo was also discussed in chapter seven in relation to the coverage of a series of demonstrations for and against DICO. The prominence given to the Family Day and the construction of it as a momentous event reinforced the visibility of the opposition to the law. Indeed, the prominence of the opposition to the legal recognition of *de facto unions* has been seen throughout the entire coverage; the newsworthiness granted to the most anti-gay conservative statements somehow corralled those who supported the law and fostered a representation that amplified the reasons of the opposition.

6 years on: between change and entrenchment

As I pointed out in the Introduction, the national legal system in Italy still lacks recognition for forms of union other than heterosexual marriage. For a long time after the demise of the Prodi II Government, the issue of *de facto unions* was kept off the

political agenda. Following the election in 2008, Berlusconi gained power and held it until 2011. In September 2008, his government drafted a further proposal. The bill was entitled *Disciplina dei diritti e dei doveri di reciprocità dei conviventi* (DidoRe — ‘Regulation of the rights and duties of reciprocity on the part of co-habitees’) but never passed the barrier of the Justice Commission of the Chambers of Deputies (Donà, 2009: 343-344). Following the resignation of Berlusconi in 2011, a technocratic (unelected) government took power and removed the issue of *de facto unions* from its agenda (Crowhurst and Bertone, 2012: 416). Subsequent governments framed sexual citizenship rights as less of a priority in view of the ongoing economic crisis (Crowhurst and Bertone, 2012: 416).

The Renzi administration, in power since February 2014, appeared to be willing to reopen the discussion. The question of sexual citizenship rights, however, rarely reached the centre of the political debate, overshadowed by ongoing social unrest as a consequence of the government’s neoliberal policies. Only in March 2015 did the media report that the Justice Commission of the Senate had reached a final agreement on a text on civil unions aiming at legally recognising forms of cohabitation including same-sex couples and step-child adoption. The text of the bill, at the moment of writing, is yet to be discussed in either chamber of Parliament. As it stands, the text has been fiercely criticised by LGBT advocacy groups for its limited recognition of rights, and also by sections of the Italian LGBT movement that are increasingly visible in lobbying for equal marriage.

Further to this point, Italy still lacks a law that recognises homophobia as an aggravating circumstance in hate crimes. This is an issue that has recurred often in recent years. Incidents of violence against homosexuals and suicide motivated by homophobic bullying and self-hatred routinely punctuate the media coverage (Lignardi, 2007). In every instance, LGBT associations raised the alarm and demanded action. A draft of a law has been in progress since May 2013 and is still being revised by the Justice Commission of the Senate. The draft has been strongly criticised by representatives of LGBT groups, who question its efficacy in tackling institutional homophobia and the impunity of politicians and religious representatives (Ross, 2009). In particular, the draft includes an amendment proposed by Gregorio Gitti (PD) which states that the definition of hate speech cannot be applied to opinions expressed within political parties or religious, cultural and educational institutions.

The mere possibility of this law being passed generated the indignation of representatives of the Catholic Church, who denounced it as an act against free speech and framed it as an attack on the Catholic Church itself. A series of demonstrations were organised against the law by the group *Sentinelle in Piedi* (Standing Sentinels) linked to the French *La Manif pour Tous* and supported by the same associations that were behind the organisation of the Family Day, discussed in chapters six and seven (Garbagnoli, 2014: 259). The group recently attained high visibility in the mainstream media following a demonstration that took place in Bologna on 5 October 2014. Left-wing activists and LGBT groups organised a counter-demonstration, and the ‘happening’ turned violent; the clashes between the two groups reached the national press. The newsworthiness of the clashes granted space on the front pages of the major national newspapers to a group of Conservative Catholics whose manifesto is centred on the defence of the “natural family”. In turn, the claims of the Standing Sentinels and their political agenda acquired national visibility.

In the first chapter of this thesis I was inspired by Bernini’s suggestion to read the current status of the inequalities that characterise Italian sexual politics through the lens of the intersection of church, family and politics (2010). Similarly, I wish to end this concluding chapter with consideration of a particular moment that seems to characterise the Catholic Church and its interventions in Italian sexual politics.

On 28 February 2013, Pope Benedict XIV resigned from the papacy and Pope Francis was elected as his successor. The new papacy appears to be characterised by an attitude of openness towards difference and consistent attention to the poor and the oppressed. This emerged, in particular, in the organisation of the Synod of Bishops held in Rome in October 2014. At the core of the Synod were questions about changes to the notion of the family. The Synod appeared open to a renewal of the Church’s attitude to divorced couples (currently banned from the sacraments) and a space was also opened up to consider the Church’s attitude to homosexuality and same-sex unions. Yet, as many commentators pointed out, this openness did not translate into radical change: the CEI (Italian Episcopal Conference), for instance, appears to be ever more entrenched in fundamentalist notions of family and sexuality (Garbagnoli, 2014).

On 11 November 2014, *Corriere della Sera* published an article titled:

‘GAY MARRIAGE? A TROJAN HORSE’

The headline is a quote from the president of CEI, Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco.

The subheading reads:

ASSISI, THE PRESIDENT OF BISHOPS ON CIVIL UNIONS (SAYS): THEY NEGATE THE FUNDAMENTAL CORE OF THE PERSON AND OF HUMANITY. DESPITE THE OPENING OF THE SYNOD, WITHIN CEI, RUINI'S POSITION AGAINST THE DICO IS STILL VALID. (Vecchi, *Corriere della Sera*, 11 November 2014).

The position of Bagnasco and CEI does not surprise those who have been mapping the discourse of the Catholic Church in past decade (Pedote, 2007; Poidimani, 2007; Fassin, 2010; Garbagnoli, 2014). In 2003, the *Lexicon of ambiguous and controversial terms on family life and ethical issues* targeted precisely the questions of homosexuality and same sex unions discussed earlier in the thesis. Most importantly, it was in this document that the attack against the concept of gender was launched. The relevance of discussing the position of the Catholic Church in relation to gender rests in the visibility that this position is acquiring in mainstream media.

The *Lexicon* contains an attack on the concept of gender as a social construction. (Mis)quoting Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) as an example of academic discourse, the document attacks the 'toleration for homosexual orientations and identities' that, it argues, is implied in the concept of gender (Pontifical Council for the Family, 2003). The *Lexicon* proposes 'a version' of gender that does not 'trouble' the social order and rests on natural sexual differences — where nature, as Fassin suggests, is identified with God (2010: 10). Similarly, in *Letter to the Bishops* (2004), Ratzinger, albeit not openly quoting Butler's work, discusses his position in relation to question of gender and sexuality.¹⁴¹ This attack on feminist and gender theory has until recently been confined to official documents, but since 2013 it has acquired general visibility due to its usage by the *Manif pour Tous* in France and the Standing Sentinels in Italy (Garbagnoli, 2014). Garbagnoli traces the increased presence in the Italian public sphere of discourse attacking *l'ideologia del gender* (the ideology of gender) and *la teoria del gender* (the theory of gender) (2014: 256-257).¹⁴² As Garbagnoli stresses, these positions are increasingly entering the public arena through the intervention of mainstream media, which routinely grants media space to public demonstrations and gatherings organised by the groups mentioned above, a visibility that echoes the Vatican's representation of 'the ideology of gender' (2014: 260).

¹⁴¹ Butler responded to the Pope's position in the afterword to *Bodily Citations* (2013).

¹⁴² It is already evident in the labelling that is routinely used; the peculiar appropriation of elaborated theories that, for once, are not spelled in the singular.

The terms ‘ideology of gender’/‘theory of gender’ are used to label educational programmes that aim to eradicate gender stereotypes and teach inclusion and diversity (Selmi, 2015). As Selmi discusses in her poignant analysis of recent public debates, public spaces are increasingly occupied by conservative Catholic associations accusing schools of teaching ‘inappropriate’ sexual education, encouraging children to choose their sexual and gender identity, and ultimately teaching them how to be homosexuals (2015: 226). These accusations so far managed to hinder numerous state-funded equal opportunity projects, and created a situation whereby any intervention on equality and diversity is increasingly proscribed in state schools.

This appropriation of semantic space goes mostly unchallenged in mainstream media. Critiques from feminist academics and activists are not deemed newsworthy and hence do not occupy a similar space from which to challenge the inaccurate interpretation of a complex and multifaceted body of scholarly work. In line with Selmi, Garbagnoli and others,¹⁴³ I consider it vital to question the political and ideological implications of this emerging discussion about gender, in particular the entrenching of conservative normative positions that academic disciplines as well as activists’ work aspire to question. Again I advocate an investigation that considers the role of the media in shaping and regulating the space granted to the entrenchment of the Vatican in this new front of the culture war.¹⁴⁴

Now, as seven years ago, this culture war is characterised by resistance to the more entrenched positions against change. In the Introduction I discussed the role of local governments in providing platforms for the recognition of forms of union outside marriage. The number of municipalities and local governments creating registers for cohabiting couples is constantly increasing. In March 2015 the regional government of Sicily approved the institution of a regional register of same-sex and heterosexual civil unions. The inclusion in the register grants access to housing benefits as well as the possibility of assisting and making health related decisions for an incapacitated partner.

¹⁴³ On May 2014 the Libre Université de Bruxelles organised the two day conference ‘Habemus Gender-Deconstruction of a religious counter-attack’ with the aim of tracing the boundaries of this emerging discourse as well as its consequences.

¹⁴⁴ The issue of the ‘ideology of gender’ reached new heights in the first few months of 2015, forcing the intervention of the Italian Psychological Association (AIP). In March 2015 the AIP drafted a short document affirming ‘the scientific inconsistency of the *ideology of gender*’ and the relevance of the anti-sexist and anti-homophobic contributions of Gender Studies, Women’s Studies and Lesbian and Gay Studies.

Municipalities and regional governments are at the forefront of cultural change, particularly in recent years, not only through their implementation of European policies for equality but by openly challenging the inaction of national governments. In October 2014, a group of mayors of Italian cities (including Rome, Napoli, Udine, Empoli and Bologna) decided to transcribe in their local registers same-sex marriages celebrated abroad by Italian citizens. This stirred up a heated political controversy and again put the question of rights at the forefront of the political debate. The Minister of Home Affairs, Angelino Alfano (*Nuovo Centro Destra* — NCD New Centre Right),¹⁴⁵ wrote to all Prefects of the Republic to urge them to declare the act void and delete the transcriptions from the municipalities' registries. The majority of mayors, however, refused to abide by the Alfano directive; instead, more mayors followed suit and added to their registers details of same-sex marriages contracted abroad.

The visibility of the requests for recognition of same-sex relationships is constantly growing as real and fictional stories of same-sex unions occupy the news as well as the entertainment media. In February 2013, on stage during the opening night of the most popular national song contest, the Sanremo Festival hosted Federico Novaro and his partner Stefano Olivari, who silently, through the use of 60 sentences printed on paper, declared to the audience that the following day they would get married in New York, because 'the Italian state does not allow us'. The same popular contest that, four years earlier, had included among its entries a song on reparative therapy,¹⁴⁶ welcomed in 2013 an open critique by a gay couple of their lack of legal recognition by the Italian state.

Changes have also permeated the realm of television and fictional representation. After *Father of the Brides* and *A Doctor in the Family*, other productions by RAIFICTION included non-heterosexual characters; however, these did not seem to generate the same reaction that the two TV movies analysed in this thesis experienced. In 2008 the TV series *Tutti Pazzi per Amore* (*All Crazy for Love*) revolved around the relationship between a widowed father of a teenager and a divorced mother of two whose ex-husband came out as gay. The series involved a lesbian character who was central to the storyline. Despite the fact that the sitcom, broadcast on national TV (RAI2), contained more than one character that evaded heterosexual norms, its

¹⁴⁵ Italy is in a peculiar political situation in 2015, with a non-elected government formed by representatives of both left- and right-wing parties.

¹⁴⁶ In 2009 the singer Povia participated in the contest with a song entitled *Luca was gay*.

broadcast did not generate critiques deemed as newsworthy by the newspapers investigated in this thesis.

Similarly, in 2013, a lesbian couple with a daughter became a regular feature of the TV series *Una mamma imperfetta* (*An imperfect mother*). Devised as a web series that was available on the *Corriere della Sera* website, following its success, it was then broadcast on RAI2 in May 2013. Each episode, lasting between eight and 10 minutes, was broadcast during prime time immediately before the evening news. The series, awarded numerous prizes, did not seem to attract critiques worthy of coverage in the two national newspapers. I speculate that the different reaction is due to the absence of political debate about the legal recognition of *de facto unions*. The two sitcoms were broadcast at a time when the debate had been sidelined. While this prevented national coverage, it might also have opened up a space for negotiation of the representation of non-heterosexual identities and same-sex families free from the dramatization that characterised the debate surrounding *Father of the Brides*. This would have enhanced the potential of both productions to open a space for the negotiation of alternative notions that may be disruptive of the conservative status quo.

Further questions and limitations

The discussion so far has aimed at demonstrating the ongoing relevance of my thesis in relation to contemporary Italian sexual politics. The tensions that characterised the political debate from 2006 to 2008 are still present years later and still appear to maintain the exclusion from citizenship rights of those who do not conform to heterosexual norms. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of my work, in particular in relation to ongoing change in the news media. My focus on the mainstream press, and on two newspapers in particular, limits the possibility of applying my results to the news media in general. In the methodology chapter I addressed this conundrum by pointing out that the purpose of my work is not to provide a picture of the Italian news media but to question its role. Such questioning had necessarily to be limited to a selection of outlets. However, the narrow focus allowed me to interrogate the texts in relation to power and hegemony both at the level of the overall media coverage and at the level of the representation conveyed in the texts.

It is nonetheless important to take into account how both newspapers have reinforced their online presence in recent years. Both *la Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera* have reshaped their structure to include online television channels; most importantly, however, they are increasingly interacting with social media platforms, in

particular with Twitter. It can be argued that such interaction is shaping notions of newsworthiness that can be now influenced by other outlets, where consumers or audiences that have not been investigated in this work may be more active (Hermida, 2010). As Strömbäck argues, however, when thinking about the relationship between politics, the news media and the internet, the crucial question becomes

whether the Internet makes the media more or less (in-)dependent of political institutions, media content more or less governed by political versus media logic, and political actors more or less governed by political versus media logic (2008: 243).

It is indeed possible to argue that the interaction with other outlets opens up spaces where the relationship between media and politics is tempered. This relationship hence becomes permeable to the intervention of other actors that can potentially introduce alternative and possibly disruptive discourses. At the same time, it is crucial to recognise the mainstream press's ability to reframe and disseminate what happens in other outlets.

This conundrum can be addressed only within specific contexts, so it is important to consider again the peculiarity of the Italian political and media system. Political debate in Italy is increasingly characterised by the dramatized polarisation of political discourse, which commentators contend is routinely abiding by the rules of mainstream media and news values (Mancini, 2013; Mazzoleni and Sfardini, 2009). Political discourse is hence becoming increasingly mediatised and self-referential, and the influence of new media appears to be that of an 'echo chamber effect', as Mancini contends; an effect that reinforces the polarisation that characterises old media (2013: 338). The changes that are occurring within Italian media are exacerbating partisanship and nurturing even stronger and tighter connections between the mainstream media and politics (Mancini, 2013): through their newly acquired television channels and increased online visibility, the mainstream press is actively participating in the culture war in a desire to secure its role in the political arena. These changes in the media, however, prompt further questions about the future of the research, as well as the contribution of this thesis.

As Carvalho contends, 'most public issues have a significantly long "life"', which is tied to representations in the media'; a long life that ought to be constantly scrutinised in order to examine the evolution of discourses and changes that traverse the construction of the limits of common sense (2008: 164). This thesis, while abiding by Carvalho's suggestion of investigating a relatively long time span (2006 to 2008), can

perhaps constitute a springboard for future research that might incorporate the ongoing changes experienced by Italian news media. This thesis also contributes to the work of Italian Studies scholars in its analysis of the different dynamics that sustain the conservative stance of the Italian politics of sexuality. In particular, the questions raised here allow for the consideration of one of the technologies through which the power of the Catholic Church is not only maintained but also enhanced, while critically approaching the news media not as the passive echo chamber of political debate but as one of the actors that frame and mould circulating discourses. The analysis also attempted to question the centrality of “the family” as a sign that regulates the Italian political and cultural realm. By pointing to its constructed nature, the thesis aimed at displacing it as a sign that claims unconditional defence as the constituent site of Italian culture; a sign that, in its heteronormative manifestation routinely contributes to the exclusion of those who do not conform.

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Appendix A

Articles analysed, chronological order

May 2006

17.05.2006. Garibaldi, A. *Bertinotti Contro Il Papa “Sbaglia Su Pacs E Gay”* Corriere della Sera

18.05.2006. Cazzullo, A. *Fioroni, All' Istruzione Il Ruiniano Che Trattò Sui Transfughi Del Polo* Corriere della Sera

18.05.2006. Garibaldi, A. *I Vescovi Contro Bertinotti: Pretende Di Dare Lezioni Al Papa* Corriere della Sera

18.05.2006. Mafai, M. *Madri, Part-Time E Altre Coppie* la Repubblica

18.05.2006. Marro, E. *Ferrero, Comunista-Valdese: No Alla Sfilata Bene Fausto, Ratzinger Accetti Le Opinioni* Corriere della Sera

19.05.2006. Accattoli, L. *Il Papa: Nessuna Ingerenza Con La Laicità Dello Stato* Corriere della Sera

19.05.2006. Lopapa, C. *Dalla A Di Authority Alla T Di Tagli Gli Argomenti Principali Del Nuovo Premier a Palazzo Madama* la Repubblica

19.05.2006. Politi, M. *La Chiesa, La Laicità Dello Stato È Intatta Se Si Difendono Principi Etici* la Repubblica

20.05.2006. Accattoli, L. *Ruini: Sì All' Amnistia. Bene Il Governo Sulla Famiglia* Corriere della Sera

20.05.2006. Politi, M. *Bertinotti Lasci Stare Il Papa* la Repubblica

20.05.2006. Rosso, U. *Bobba: Libertà Di Critica Ma Rispetto Tra Istituzioni* la Repubblica

21.05.2006. Anon. *L' Offensiva Del Papa: No Ai Pacs* Corriere della Sera

21.05.2006. Anon. *No a Pacs E Aborto Il Papa Contro Zapatero* la Repubblica

21.05.2006. Accattoli, L. *Richiamo Del Papa: Non Colpite La Famiglia* Corriere della Sera

21.05.2006. Cazzullo, A. *“Diritti Alle Coppie Di Fatto, Anche Pubblici”* Corriere della Sera

22.05.2006. Anon. *Coppie Di Fatto, Scontro Sulla Bindi* Corriere della Sera

22.05.2006. Accattoli, L. *“Bene La Tutela, Ma Vanno Esclusi I Gay”* Corriere della Sera

22.05.2006. Bindi, R. *“Il Mio Impegno Non È Per I Pacs”* Corriere della Sera

22.05.2006. Cossiga, F. *La Cei Si Pronunci E Valuti Il «Male Minore»* Corriere della Sera

22.05.2006. Iossa, M. *Diritti Alle Coppie Di Fatto Divide Il Sì Della Bindi* Corriere della Sera

22.05.2006. Soglio, E. *La Moratti: “No Ai Pacs, Sì Alla Famiglia”* Corriere della Sera

23.05.2006. Arachi, A. *Da Stefania Craxi a Chiara Moroni: Se Fanno Una Buona Legge La Voteremo* Corriere della Sera

23.05.2006. Anon. *Pacs, L'Osservatore Contro La Bindi. Indifendibile, Aiuta Le Coppie Gay* la Repubblica

23.05.2006. Battista, P. *Le Tre Zapatera E La Regia Di Prodi* Corriere della Sera

23.05.2006. Calabro', M. A. *"Anche Questo Metodo Provoca Dolore, Non Va Imposto"* Corriere della Sera

23.05.2006. Casadio, G. *Binetti: Manica Larga Così Non Tutela Le Donne* la Repubblica

23.05.2006. Debac, M. *Pillola Abortiva, Via Libera Della Turco* Corriere della Sera

23.05.2006. Salvia, L. *Coppie Di Fatto, Il Vaticano Critica La Bindi* Corriere della Sera

24.05.2006. Arachi, A. *Storage: Io Attacco Rosy, Ma La Rispetto in Politica La Volgarità Non Deve Entrare* Corriere della Sera

24.05.2006. De Luca, M. N. *"Bindi Lesbica, Non Governi". An Attacca, Fini Si Dissocia* la Repubblica

24.05.2006. Frenda, A. *Nuova Bocciatura Dall'Osservatore Romano "Da Lei, Turco E Buffo Femminismo Inutile"* Corriere della Sera

24.05.2006. Lopapa, C. *Basta Col Carnevale Degli Annunci* la Repubblica

24.05.2006. Verderami, F. *Malumori Tra I Colleghi Su Rosy E Livia Timori Di Una "Guerra" Con Il Vaticano* Corriere della Sera

24.05.2006 Serra, M. *Il Livello Dello Scontro* la Repubblica

24.05.2006 Arachi, A. *"Bindi Lesbica". Tutti Contro Il Senatore Di An* Corriere della Sera

25.05.2006. Lopapa, C. *Rutelli: Pacs Non Previsti Ci Atterremo Al Programma* la Repubblica

25.05.2006. Politi, M. *I Rapporti Tra Stato E Chiesa E La Religione Dell'obbligo* la Repubblica

26.05.2006. Cazzullo, A. *Melandri: Anch' Io «Zapatera» No Ai Pregiudizi Di Moretti* Corriere della Sera

26.05.2006. Merlo, F. *Le Risse Comari Del Centrosinistra* la Repubblica

28.05.2006. Casadio, G. *Ma Mantovano: Giusto, È La Vecchia Idea Di An* la Repubblica

31.05.2006. Anon. *Bindi Sulle Unioni. Non Faro' I Pacs* la Repubblica

June 2006

03.06.2006. Battistini, F. *Polito Firma Con La Binetti: Il Compromesso Non È Da Codardi* Corriere della Sera

03.06.2006 Scaraffia, L. *Scontro Di Civiltà E Libertà Sessuale* Corriere della Sera

04.06.2006 Michilli, L. *Bonino: Laicità, Dallo Sdi Critiche Pretestuose* Corriere della Sera

05.06.2006. Michilli, L. *Franceschini: Quella Legge Non È Tabù, Sì a Modifiche* Corriere della Sera

05.06.2006. Michilli, L. *Matrimoni Gay, Capezzone «Moderato».* «*Se Ne Parli, Ma Noi Siamo Per I Pacs»* Corriere della Sera

07.06.2006. Accattoli, L. *Critiche a Sinistra E Grillini: Così Cadono Nel Ridicolo* Corriere della Sera

07.06.2006. Accattoli, L. «*Pacs E Fecondazione Assistita, È L'Eclissi Di Dio»* Corriere della Sera

07.06.2006. Casadio, G. *Bioetica, Amato Fissa I Paletti Si Resta Nel Solco Del Programma la Repubblica*

07.06.2006. Conti, P. “*Nozze Gay? Ridicole, Ha Ragione Il Papa Fate Come Me: Ho Adottato Due Figli Adulti*” Corriere della Sera

07.06.2006. Franco, M. *L'Unione Nella Strettoia Tra America E Vaticano* Corriere della Sera

07.06.2006. Orazio, L. R. *Pacs, Aborto E Fecondazione: Eclissi Di Dio.* La Repubblica

07.06.2006. Rodotà, S. *Il Dolore E La Politica* la Repubblica

07.06.2006. Zuccolini, R. *Bioetica, Mussi E Bindi Vogliono Sedere Al Tavolo* Corriere della Sera

08.06.2006. Anon. *Vaticano, Bertinotti: La Politica Sia Autonima* la Repubblica

09.06.2006. Anon. *Cattolici, Una Rete in Parlamento* la Repubblica

09.06.2006. Cascella, P. *Scontro Sui Gay Aggrediti a Bologna Sotto Accusa Le Parole Del Vescovo* la Repubblica

09.06.2006. Zuccolini, R. *Bioetica, Torna La Lobby Trasversale Cattolica* Corriere della Sera

10.06.2006. Guerzoni, M. *Lite Tra Ministri. Ferrero Fa Arrabbiare Bindi, Pollastrini E Melandri* Corriere della Sera

11.06.2006. Casadio, G. *Niente Moratoria Sui Temi Etici I Ds Non Siano Monolitici* la Repubblica

11.06.2006. Diamanti, I. *Se La Chiesa Sta All'opposizione* la Repubblica

11.06.2006. Rosso, U. *Partito Democratico, Si Ma Senza Fretta* la Repubblica

13.06.2006. Politi, M. *Prodi a Cena Con Il Teologo Schoenborn Vaticano Preoccupato Per Staminali Ed Ue* la Repubblica

13.06.2006. Battista, P. *La Disunione Etica* Corriere della Sera

14.06.2006. La Rocca, O. *I Politici Credenti Ricordino Che Sulla Vita Non Si Negozia* la Repubblica

15.06.2006. Vecchi, G. G. *Gay Pride, Sì Di Bertinotti E Bonino. Proteste Cattoliche* Corriere della Sera

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Appendix B

Texts analysed in Chapter Seven

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