SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS AND WOMEN WHO LIVE AS MEN IN NORTHERN ALBANIA

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This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

PREFACE

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

ABSTRACT

Social Representations and Women Who Live As Men in Northern Albania

Ellen Robertson Martinez

In some rural, northern communities of Albania there is a centuries-old tradition whereby it is socially acceptable for women to live as men. Despite strict gender norms and heteronormativity under general circumstances, these *burrnesha* are accepted by their communities and often highly respected and admired. By contrast, LGBT+ communities, who also represent some form of gender non-conformity, are subject to disproportionate stigma, discrimination, and violence. This dissertation research uses Social Representations Theory to investigate the construction of burrnesha social identity and the role of this representation in Albanian society. I conducted interviews with 48 average Albanian citizens from three regions of the country. These regions included: 1) the region where burrnesha are most common, 2) the country's capital Tirana, and 3) a town that represents a cultural and geographical intermediate between the other two regions. I also conducted ten interviews with burrnesha themselves from various regions of the country.

Using thematic analysis, I evaluated the most general representation that emerged from the data, as well as variations of that representation that appeared less frequentl. In my first analysis, I found that nearly all respondents at some point in the interview engaged in a representation that justified the tradition of burrnesha. In this representation, living as a man served to preserve masculine leadership. The assumption of asexuality and external motivation to live as a man served to assure respondents that burrnesha did not conflict with heteronormativity. This representation revolved around themes of gender essentialism, utility, sacrifice, family collectivism, obligation, and hardship in order to reflect and reproduce patriarchal norms. In my second analysis, I found that during parts of the interviews respondents sometimes used other representations. These other representations reflected differences in respondents' social position in relation to burrneshas' communities. These social positions impelled respondents to construct social distance or proximity, which influenced and was influenced by changes to the structure of the burrnesha representation. Third, I compared responses from burrnesha themselves to their non-burrnesha counterparts. The two groups relied on many of the same themes. However,

burrnesha saw their masculinity as an inherent part of who they were whereas community respondents positioned masculinity as the result of adverse circumstances.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface 3

Acknowledgements 5

Abstract 5

List of Figures 13

Chapter 1: Dissertation Introduction 1

Chapter 1 Introduction 1

Brief Background 2

Summary, Research Questions, and Goals 4

Vocabulary 6

Chapter 1 Conclusion 7

Chapter 2: Background 9

Chapter 2 Introduction 9

Albania 9

Basic Information and History 9

The Kanun and Blood Feuds 13

Cultural Values 14

Attitudes towards LGBT+ Communities 18

Burrnesha 19

Origins of the Custom 19

"Burrneshe" and Other Terms 21

Women Who Live as Men 23

Chapter 2 Conclusion 32

Chapter 3: Theory and Research Questions 33

Chapter 3 Introduction 33

Social Representations Theory 33

General Background 34

Social Identity 44
Power and Social Positioning 46
Gender 50
Final Research Questions 52
Chapter 3 Conclusion 53
Chapter 4: Methods and Data Collection 55
Chapter 4 Introduction 55
Methodology 55
Research Materials 57
Interview Protocol 63
Data Collection 64
Respondent Selection 64
Funding 70
Analytic Methods 70
Reflexivity 74
Quality Management and Limitations 78
Ethics 81
Chapter 4 Conclusion 82
Chapter 5: Analysis: The Dominant Representation of Burrnesha 83
Chapter 5 Introduction 83
Essentialism and Gender 85
Female Essence 86
Male Performance 90
Virtue and Exceptionalism 94
Cognitive Polyphasia and Productive Ambiguity 106
Context and Utility 112
Need, Utility, and Obligation 112
Obligation, Agency, and Virtue 117

Discussion 121
Chapter 5 Conclusion 127
Chapter 6: Analysis: Pluralism and Positioning 129
Chapter 6 Introduction 129
Pluralism 130
Family Collectivism Representation 131
Unnecessary Oppression Representation 132
Agency Representation 137
Summary of Representations 142
Positioning of Social Identity 144
Place Identity and Burrnesha 144
Positioning 155
Space, Time, and Place Identity 157
Albanian Place Identities 159
Discussion 164
Summary 164
Themata 166
Chapter 6 Conclusion 171
Chapter 7: Analysis: Burrnesha's Representations and Comparison 173
Chapter 7 Introduction 173
Respondents and Interviews 174
Themes 181
Motivation 181
Decisiveness and Commitment 188
Virtue 190
Comparison and Analysis 192
Lessons from Attribution Theory 194
General Functions 196
Specific Functions 199
Discussion 201

Chapter 7 Conclusion 202
Chapter 8: General Discussion 203
Chapter 8 Introduction 203
Recapitulation 204
Implications of findings 205
Evaluation and Directions for the Future 207
Research Goals and Questions 207
Quality Management Criteria 208
Directions for the Future 209
Chapter 8 Conclusion 211
Appendices 212
Appendix A: Information Sheet 212
Appendix B: Consent Form 214
Appendix C: Interview Protocol 216
Appendix D: Community Respondent Interview Guide 217
Appendix E: Burrnesha Interview Guide 218
Appendix F: Debrief Form 220
Appendix G: List of Codes from Community Respondent Data 222
Appendix H: List of Codes from Burrnesha Data 224
Works Cited 227

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Relief map of Albania. Edited from Google Maps 10
Figure 2: Photograph of northern mountain roads taken during fieldwork 11
Figure 3: Photograph of a northern, mountain villagetaken during fieldwork 11
Figure 4: A burrneshe Respondent, taken in 2016 during fieldwork..... 24
Figure 5: Burrneshe Respondent before starting to live as a man (left and right) and after (center) 25
Figure 6: Model of Sociogenesis (Wagner, et al., 1999, p. 98) 39
Figure 7: Triad Model (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999, p. 170) 41
Figure 8: Toblerone Model (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999, p. 171)..... 42
Figure 9: Wind Rose Model (Bauer & Gaskell, 2008, p. 346) 42
Figure 10: Interview Photo 1 61
Figure 11: Interview photo 2..... 62
Figure 12: Essentialism, Utility, and Patriarchy Themata 85
Figure 13: Internal functions..... 107
Figure 14: Map of orienting values..... 123
Figure 15: Correspondence of burrnesha characterstics to orienting values 124
Figure 16: Relationships between central themata 125
Figure 17: Central themata as dyadic pairs..... 126
Figure 18: All themata 130
Figure 19: Positioing in the Family Collectivism Representation 132
Figure 20: positioning in the Unnecessary Oppresion representation 137
Figure 21: positioning in the agency representation 142
Figure 22: Association between burrnesha, the rural north, hardship, and patriarchy ... 147
Figure 23: All the most relevant themata and their general functions..... 168
Figure 24: thema activation network for Family Collectivism representation 169
Figure 25: Thema activation network for Unnecessary Oppression representation 170
Figure 26: thema activation for agency representation..... 171
Figure 27: Photo of respondent..... 175
Figure 28: Photo of respondent (Farthest Left) and Family 176

Figure 29: Photo of respondent 176
Figure 30: Photo of respondent 177
Figure 31: Photo of respondent 177
Figure 32: Photo of respondent 178
Figure 33: Photo of respondent 178
Figure 34: Photo of respondent 179
Figure 35: Photo of respondent 179
Figure 36: Burrnesha's representation of their motivation and traits 197
Figure 37: Community Respondents' Representation of Burrnesha's Motivation and Traits 197

CHAPTER 1: DISSERTATION INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2013, a portrait series appeared on my Facebook newsfeed that caught my attention. The portraits featured rural Albanian women who were dressed exactly like men. Upon a brief investigation, I learned that these people, *burrnesha* (singular *burrneshe),* followed a centuries-old custom which sanctioned this gender non-conformity under specific circumstances. Given the polemical discourse surrounding gender non-conformity in Western Europe and the United States, I had many questions about the custom. I saw this as an opportunity to learn about gender development, LGBT+ discrimination, and stereotypes in general. With this in mind, I applied to the University of Cambridge Department of Psychology MPhil program and a year later to the PhD program in order to study this custom. This dissertation represents a portion of the research I have carried out on this topic during my PhD.

To my knowledge, no psychological research has been carried out on the custom of burrnesha. Research that exists is usually anthropological or sociological. These works usually describe the tradition with little focus on the construction of burrnesha identity or related social dynamics. I have yet to find other research comparable to the present project that analyzes the construction of burrnesha identity. Due to this dearth of prior research, I have treated this project as exploratory. My goals have been a) to evaluate the role of burrnesha in Albanian society, especially in relation to shifting gender dynamics and general societal change in the country; b) to evaluate the suitability of Social Representations Theory for studying this topic; and c) to provide the groundwork for future research.

I have approached this topic with qualitative research. Due to the plurality of methods available in qualitative research, the structure of writing tends to be less standardized (Gilgun, 2014). I have aimed to structure this dissertation to be easiest for the reader to follow, while considering works such as Gilgun (2014) and Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2014). In chapter 2 I describe Albanian society generally as well as burrnesha specifically. This background is important as my analysis includes an examination of the relationship between the custom and its context. Chapter 3 builds on this background to outline the research questions within the

framework of Social Representations Theory. I move on to discuss qualitative methodology, specific methods, data collection, and quality management in Chapter 4. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 consist of the analyses of the data. I end the dissertation with a general discussion chapter. A review of relevant theoretical work is distributed throughout Chapters 3, 5, 6, and 7. Chapter 3 reviews the theoretical framework that is necessary for the reader to understand the research questions and design. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 integrate other theoretical work into a discussion of corresponding data as I present it. In the present chapter I will very briefly introduce each of these topics. I will also discuss some of the key terms used throughout the dissertation.

BRIEF BACKGROUND

Albania is a small, mountainous country in the western Balkans with under 3 million inhabitants. For 500 years the territory was occupied by the Ottoman Empire. After independence in the early 20th century, a communist dictator rose to power and governed one of the most violent and isolationist communist regimes in the world for 36 years. For many reasons, including political and geographical isolation, Albania has been and continues to be relatively economically underdeveloped. In this historical setting, various cultural values flourished that created the conditions for the custom of burrnesha (Albania, 2015; Elsie, 2015).

The custom of burrnesha developed primarily in the northernmost regions of the country[1], which have always been the most economically depressed and isolated. Purportedly, the original purpose of burrnesha was to provide a male family member in cases where there was none. Perhaps the father had died, and no sons had been born, for example. In this case, one of

[1] Burrnesha have also existed in some of the countries surrounding Albania, such as Montenegro and Croatia. However, the vast majority have been from Northern Albania (Young, 2001).

the daughters would be raised as a man so that she could fill the typical male roles and ensure inheritance. Given the strict patriarchal values of these communities, it would have been unthinkable for a woman to take on the full male role without first dressing and behaving as a man (Durham, 1910; Young, 2001).

In order to take on the role of men, women would dress, cut their hair, speak, and generally behave as men. They could smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, and even spit in the street. Not only would they begin to do men's work, they would also be granted privileges normally afforded only to men. For example, they could enter bars usually reserved only for men, attend meetings of (male) village elders, and so on. These changes indicated a rise in social status congruent with their new male role in a patriarchal society (Durham, 1910; Young, 2001).

In practice, there have been burrnesha in families where there was no lack of males. In these cases, the women's motivations included avoiding an undesirable arranged marriage, going to war, or simply wanting to live as a man. Any of these motivations were sufficient for granting them increased status and privileges in their community, as long as they looked and acted the part. However, it was unacceptable for them to have any kind of sexual relations. Given evidence that their motivation was sexual, they would be discredited as burrnesha and possibly considered to be homosexual. Albanian culture is highly heteronormative, so burrnesha would be exposed to considerable stigma if they were considered homosexual (Young, 2001).

There is relatively little academic research on burrnesha, and I have found none in psychology. Academic works that do exist are usually in anthropological or sociological journals. I have found three non-fiction books that describe the custom and three novels. The majority of media coverage has been journalistic. Even more scarce is literature by Albanian authors. Albanian authors account for one of the non-fiction books, one of the novels, and very few academic or journalistic articles that I have encountered. There is a higher representation of authors from other Balkan countries, particularly Serbo-Croatian language authors. Other media that I have encountered is primarily Western European and some is American. Due to this relative dearth of background literature, my research has been largely exploratory.

Much of our understanding of the custom pre-Communism comes from travel writers, including Edith Durham (1910; 1928), Jan and Cora Turner Gordon (1927), Bernard Newman

(1936) and Edward Lear (1988) (Young & Twigg, 2009). Today there are occasional reports on burrnesha in mainstream media (Bilefsky, 2008; Malfatto & Prtoric, 2014; Geographic, 2007). The depiction of burrnesha through these media is fairly uniform and descriptive, explaining that burrnesha live as men, cannot get married, and that the custom is a response to the patriarchal structures of the community. Some journalistic reports are sensationalized, using phrases such as "startling transgender transformation" and "bizarre custom" (Z TV, 2014).

SUMMARY, RESEARCH QUESTIONS, AND GOALS

In this section I will describe how I developed my research design. Details on my theoretical framework and research questions are in Chapter 3 while a description of my methodology and methods are in Chapter 4. Later in this section I will introduce my analyses, which can be found in Chapters 5, 6, and 7.

My PhD work consisted of two field trips to Albania. In the first of these, I conducted interviews with ten burrnesha throughout Albania. At this stage, these interviews used Alice Eagly's Social Role Theory as a framework. During this field trip, I realized that this framework was not applicable to the case of burrnesha (see Chapter 3). Nevertheless, I was still able to use the responses within a different theoretical framework. As this revelation brought up new research questions, I decided to return to Albania the following summer to interview non-burrnesha Albanians, who I will refer to as community respondents.

I was particularly interested in the incongruity between burrneshas' own narratives and the public's perceptions of them. During my first PhD field trip, burrnesha usually said they had lived as boys as long as they could remember, and out of personal desire. By contrast, background literature, acquaintances, and respondents from my master's research described burrneshas' decision as an altruistic sacrifice made to support the family. In order to address this discrepancy, I framed my research within Social Representations Theory (SRT). SRT focuses on the ways that social groups construct knowledge as a reflection and reproduction of broad ideologies, social power dynamics, and context. As a constructionist, context-oriented paradigm, SRT is compatible with qualitative methodology (Flick, Foster, & Caillaud, 2015). Therefore, I

chose to evaluate the following research questions within an SRT framework via qualitative analysis:

1. What is the content and structure of the dominant social representation of burrnesha among community members?
2. How does the dominant representation of burrnesha compare to other salient representations of burrnesha? How do differences between them reflect social positioning processes?
3. What is burrnesha's social representation of themselves and how does it compare to the dominant social representation held by community respondents as per research question 1? How do differences between these representations reflect social positioning processes?

These specific research questions were situated within the general goals of the research: a) to evaluate the role of burrnesha in Albanian society; b) to evaluate the suitability of Social Representations Theory for studying this topic; and c) to provide groundwork for future research.

To evaluate these research questions, I conducted interviews with 48 community respondents and ten burrnesha respondents. I targeted community respondents from three regions of Albania: Tropoja (the northernmost region), Tirana (the capital), and Shkoder (an intermediate region). I selected any burrnesha respondents who would agree to an interview, regardless of region. I audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded the interviews for thematic analysis. This led to two analyses of community respondent data and one of burrnesha respondent data.

The first of these (Chapter 5) consisted of a description of respondents' dominant representation of burrnesha. First, I aimed to describe the content of this representation. Secondly, I evaluated the functions that each of its elements had in supporting that structure and in reproducing overall cultural values. My primary finding was that each element of the burrnesha representation served to reinforce patriarchal values, directly or indirectly via other highly endorsed values. In the second analysis (Chapter 6), I evaluated the different representations that emerged from the data. Apart from describing these representations, I also analyzed how these differences reflected social power dynamics in Albanian society. I found that elaborations of space and time were central to this process. Representations of space, time, and burrnesha reflected the tension between Albanian nationalism and Eurocentrism. In Chapter 7, I

analyzed the data from burrnesha respondents and compared it primarily to findings from Chapter 5. I evaluated how the respondent groups used different types of attributions, dispositional versus situational, in order to avoid stigma associated with gender non-conformity.

VOCABULARY

In order to communicate this research, I use some terms that I would like to clarify here. For many of these terms, controversy arises in that they only make sense within a binary conception of sex/gender (e.g., "other gender" or "opposite gender"). Evidence from across social sciences and medicine demonstrates that a binary structure does not adequately represent the realities of sex or gender (Hines, 2004; Valdes, 1996). Furthermore, some of the terms I use indicate a normative stance of specific social behaviors (e.g., "deviance"). I use these terms in order to effectively represent my interpretation of respondents' views. In other words, in calling gender non-conformity "deviant" I attempt to reflect respondents' view that dressing as the "opposite" gender is wrong. I do not endorse these specific normative views myself and hold many of them to be inaccurate and unethical.

My final note pertains to pronouns. In my experience, Albanians use feminine pronouns in reference to burrnesha regardless of their personal relationship to burrnesha or their opinion of them. Dickerson's (In press) work found that burrnesha themselves often use a mix of feminine and masculine pronouns (and adjectives, as adjectives are gendered in Albanian), although they use feminine pronouns more frequently. I chose not to use gender neutral pronouns (e.g. "they/them") because Albanian language does not have any equivalent for this, and I will refer extensively to translations of data from Albanian. I have chosen to use masculine (he/him/his) pronouns when referring to specific burrnesha because all burrnesha accept being referred to with masculine pronouns but not all accept feminine pronouns. You will notice that when respondents referred to burrnesha they usually used feminine pronouns. I have transcribed and translated data excerpts as the respondents spoke them, using the pronouns they used.

CHAPTER 1 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have attempted to orient the reader as they continue reading this dissertation. This included a brief overview of the dissertation's content, a summary of the research carried out, and clarification of terms used. Following, you will find details on the background, research design, analyses, and discussion of the present research.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND

CHAPTER 2 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, my goal is to convey why the custom of burrnesha was a logical solution to particular problems, as seen from the perspective of rural northern Albanian communities. In order to understand this, the custom cannot be extracted from historical conditions and cultural values. In the first part of this chapter, I will briefly describe the societal and historical context of Albania, including geography and politics. I will go on to explain several of the fundamental cultural values and norms that underpin burrnesha as a custom. I will also briefly discuss Albanian LGBT+ communities. In the second part of the chapter, I will show how the living conditions and cultural values pervasive in Albania led to the custom of burrnesha. I will begin with burrneshas' presence in the kanun and go on to describe their behavior and lifestyle.

Future chapters will focus on analyzing the nuances of community members' knowledge of burrnesha. By contrast, in this chapter I will take descriptions of the custom at face value. This background is based on the kanun, previous literature, and what has become "common knowledge". By "common knowledge" I refer to Albanians' and foreigners' most frequent descriptions and explanations for burrnesha. While this portrayal of burrnesha in literature, media, and hearsay is relatively uniform and concrete, in future chapters I will juxtapose this to analyses of the data I collected in speaking with various Albanian social groups.

ALBANIA

BASIC INFORMATION AND HISTORY

This section will present some basic information about Albania, including its geography, history, and social issues. The purpose of this is to convey a) general context; b) the roots of some of the cultural values that led to the custom of burrnesha; and c) an understanding of specific elements of the data that I will describe in later chapters.

Albania is a relatively small country on the Balkan Peninsula, situated across the Adriatic and Ionian Seas from Italy's "heel". Its size in both area (28,748 sq. km) and population (about 3

million) is comparable to that of Wales (Elsie, 2015; Wales, 2021). While the coast marks its western border, Greece is to the south and the former Yugoslavian countries of Montenegro, Kosovo, and North Macedonia are at its northern and eastern borders (Albania, 2015; Elsie, 2015). The Albanian diaspora of 3 million people is primarily concentrated in these bordering countries, although it extends across the globe (Elsie, 2015).

FIGURE 1: RELIEF MAP OF ALBANIA. EDITED FROM GOOGLE MAPS

FIGURE 2: PHOTOGRAPH OF NORTHERN MOUNTAIN ROADS TAKEN DURING FIELDWORK

The landscape throughout the country is dominated by mountains. The northern mountain range has especially challenging terrain and harsh climate. These conditions limit agriculture and industry. The extreme lack of infrastructure, even today, isolates the region's residents from hospitals, schools, and commerce.

The Albanian territory was at the crossroads of many of Eurasia's significant civilizations (Dervishi, 2014; Elsie, 2015). It was the seat of the Illyrian civilization before becoming part of the Roman and then Ottoman Empires (Albania, 2015; Bjork, 2010; Clayer, 2010; Elsie, 2015; Everett-Heath, 2014; Muco, 1998). After World War II, the communist dictator Enver Hoxha (pronounced "Hodja") rose to power (Albania, 2015; Muço, 2001). From 1945 until his death in 1985, he prevailed over what many claim has been the harshest communist regime the world has ever seen. Albania became the world's most isolated nation, comparable to today's North Korea (Elsie, 2015; Free but unfair. Albanian elections., 1991; Hargitai, 2016; Likmeta, 2014; Muço, 2001; Vullnetari & King, 2015). Despite Hoxha's death, his regime continued until democratization in 1992 (Albania, 2015), at which point it gave way to a parliamentary republic (Jazexhi, Nielsen, Akgönül, Alibašić, & Račius, 2014).

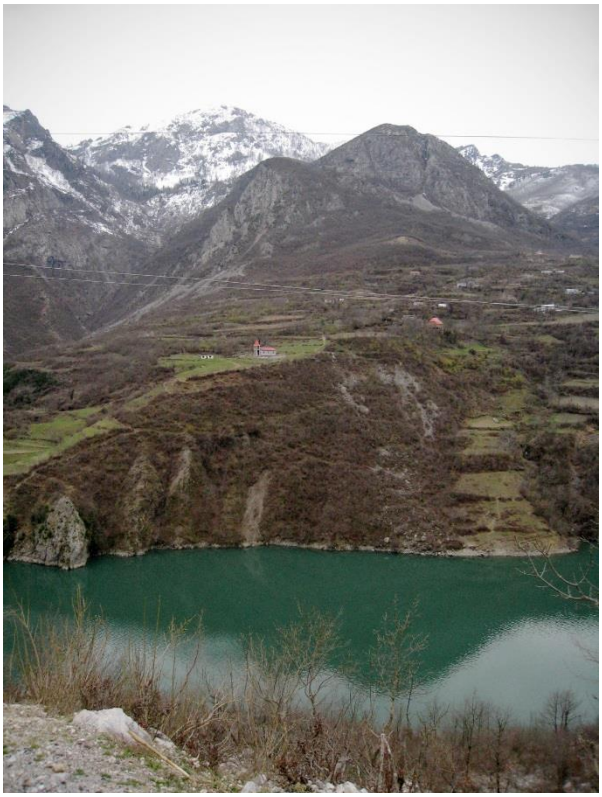

FIGURE 3: PHOTOGRAPH OF A NORTHERN, MOUNTAIN VILLAGETAKEN DURING FIELDWORK

Hoxha's goal of agricultural and industrial self-sufficiency was limited, if not

unattainable, by the country's small area, challenging terrain, and low population (Muço, 2001). Consequently, political isolationism only exacerbated the geographical isolation that had depressed Albanian development for centuries. Although isolation might have helped to preserve Albania's unique language and culture, it created particular challenges for the economy. Poor administration by the Ottomans had done little to mitigate these issues (Elsie, 2015), while Hoxha's regime led to adverse economic impacts that would long outlive his government.

Since democratization, Albania's economy has been growing steadily (Albania, 2018; Muço, 2001). Today, Albania enjoys many political freedoms and economic assets that were not available 30 years ago. However, with an agriculture-based economy and sub-standard industry (Albania, 2015), Albania remains one of the poorest countries on the European continent (Betti, Bici, Neri, Sohnesen, & Thomo, 2018). Albania's 2017 GNI per capita was $4,320, about one tenth of the UK's $40,530 (Albania, 2018). As recently as 2015, renowned Albanologist Robert Elsie called it "by far the poorest and most underdeveloped country in Europe" (Elsie, 2015, location 68). Muço (2001) described some of the impediments to Albanian development during its transition to democracy:

> A chain of problems still impedes transition [to a developed economy], including unprecedented restructuring, delayed privatization, significant corruption, a large, informal economy that is relatively closed and dependent on imports and remittances, a chaotic labour market and high unemployment, the dearth of market institutions and financial markets, no active civil society and poor governance. This chain is endogenously determined by internal political instability. War in the neighborhood, fragile public order and security and very weak implementation of the rule of law also influence Albania's economic development. (p. 119)

Although Muço referred to the first decade after democratization, many of these issues persist today.

Albania's overall rate of poverty (14.3%) is carried largely by the northern region of the country, specifically the Kukes Prefecture that is especially relevant to this dissertation project (Betti, Bici, Neri, Sohnesen, & Thomo, 2018; Dávalos & Thomo, 2016). As mentioned, this is the most geographically isolated and challenging terrain of the country. Foreign relief efforts during democratization invested almost exclusively in the capital Tirana, neglecting already less developed parts such as the northern mountain regions (Tabaku, 2004). By 2012, the World

Bank and Instat (Albania's governmental statistics body) estimated the Kukes Prefecture poverty rate (22%) and monthly per capita consumption (7,126 Albanian lek, less than $70 by 2012 exchange rates) to be the most extreme in the country. Within this prefecture, the commune of Tropoja, where part of my data was collected, had a poverty rate of over 28% (Dávalos & Thomo, 2016).

While these statistics are relatively recent, poverty and underdevelopment have dominated these regions for centuries. Durham (1910) described many scenes of poverty, harsh living conditions, and political neglect that she witnessed throughout her travels in the north. Following is one such example:

> The first woman we met [in the village] asked us in to [her cottage] at once -- a most miserable hovel, windowless, pitch-dark in the corners; a sheep was penned in one and a pig wandered loose. She began to blow up the ashes and make coffee. Life was hard, she said -- maize dreadfully dear. You had to drive ten [goat] kids all the way to [Shkoder] and sell them to get as much maize as you could carry back. (location 1752)

Durham explicitly distinguished northern Albania from the rest of the country in that "... the conditions that prevail in [North Albania] are very different from those in South Albania, and it is with the wildest parts of [North] Albania alone that this book deals" (location 69).

In summary, Albanians faced considerable challenges due to isolation, political neglect, and a weak economy. These challenges, particularly salient in the rural north, called for Albanians to develop norms that would best facilitate their survival. Following, I will discuss those norms that are most relevant to burrnesha.

The Kanun and Blood Feuds

Due to isolation, it was difficult if not impossible for state authorities to establish their presence and rule of law in North Albania. This was especially true during Ottoman rule, which is when we have the first evidence of the *kanun* around the 15th century. The kanun was a set of local laws and norms passed down orally, providing structure where it was lacking. There were several versions of the kanun and it was used in many parts of the country but especially in the north. Some modern Albanians dismiss the kanun as antiquated and primitive and its use is

diminishing. Nevertheless, it continues to be practiced by some communities today (Whitaker, 1981; Young, 2001). The kanun is relevant because burrnesha are mentioned in it and respondents sometimes noted this. Furthermore, the kanun has been an influential institution in Northern Albanian unique society, simultaneously reflecting and reproducing general cultural values. However, I am more interested in people's understanding of burrnesha than their mention in the kanun, so an in-depth analysis of the kanun will not be necessary.

I will also make some reference throughout this thesis to blood feuds, a practice detailed in the kanun (Gjecovi, 2010; Ilia, 1993; Young, 2001). The word for this in Albanian is *gjakmarrja*, which literally means "blood-taking". When a man, and by extension his family, is insulted, he can take revenge on the offender by killing him or *another man* of his family. For communities practicing the kanun this was not only permissible, it was considered his responsibility in order to defend his honor. However, the original offender would then need to avenge this murder by killing someone in the other family, resulting in a vicious circle of killing that could last generations and cost each family dozens of lives (Petrusich, 2017; Young, 2001).

At the time of her travels, Durham (1910) observed that blood vengeance was "the most important fact in North Albania [and] [it was] spread throughout the land. All else [was] subservient to it." (location 540). This tradition persists today, albeit at a considerably smaller scale, and is often associated with the north (Petrusich, 2017). In some cases, this association contributes to stereotypes of the north that portray it as backwards and uncivilized (Nixon, 2009).

As with the kanun, I introduce blood feuds here because they are connected to general cultural values and are referenced in the data. Furthermore, because only men participate in them, I discuss this later in the chapter as a possible motivation for women to become burrnesha.

CULTURAL VALUES

In this section, I will focus on four cultural values that are particularly relevant to burrnesha: patriarchy, family collectivism, honor, and sexual conservativism. Here, I will reference the kanun insofar as it is helpful in understanding how some of these values were

conceptualized. Overall, my goal is to show how the custom of burrnesha makes sense within their communities' general worldview.

Backer (1979) wrote that "the 'Albanian tribal society' is usually described as one of the most patriarchal in the world" (p. 147). Men were the uncontested leaders of the family and the community. The kanun explicitly distinguished men's social roles from women's. Men occupied the most important position in the family as head of the household, effectively the family's leader and representative (Young, 2001). Throughout the kanun it is clear that women's position relative to men in general was subordinate and functional (Durham, 1910; Whitaker, 1981; Young, 2001). For instance, the kanun states that, "A woman is known as a sack made to endure as long as she lives in her husband's house. Her parents do not interfere in her affairs, but they bear the responsibility for her and must answer for anything dishonorable that she does" (Young, 2001, p. 20).

Women's inferior status was also evident through patterns of inheritance. These communities considered that only blood passed through the male line signified familial relatedness. Therefore, children were considered to be exclusively of their father's descent without relation to their mother's family, always taking the father's surname (Durham, 1910; Rapper, 2000; Young, 2001). Since land and property were conceptually connected to blood, it was impossible for a woman to inherit property (Rapper, 2000). The kanun states that, "the Albanian woman does not receive any inheritance from her parents, neither things nor house, -- the kanun takes as a given that a woman is superfluous in the home" (Gjecovi, 2010). All of this contributed to a strong son preference, as sons would ensure the continuity of the family and its possessions. Women's position improved somewhat due to political changes over the last century, primarily in aspects of the public sphere. However, a patriarchal structure and significant status differences persisted regardless of political regime (Van Hook, Haxhiymeri, & Gjermeni, 2000; Vullnetari & King, 2015).

Patriarchy is highly evident in the family context (Danermark, Soydan, Pashko, & Vejsiu, 1989). Vullnetari & King (2015) described some of the key features of the patriarchal structure of the traditional family:

> First, patriarchal hierarchy confers status, privilege and omnipotence to age and male gender. Second, sons are exalted over daughters. Third, unmarried females are first 'owned' by their fathers before being passed into the 'possession' of the husbands upon marriage. As in other societies, *care duties* are usually shouldered by women. Unlike many other societies, however, marriage switches the direction of female responsibility to care for the husband's family (notably his parents) and not her own parents, who would be looked after by their sons and more specifically by those sons' wives. (p. 201).

This excerpt portrays women as disproportionately undervalued compared to men, objectified, and arguably exploited.

Post (1998) shared the following testimony of a woman who had been married through arrangement at the age of 13 to a man 22 years older than her. The respondent portrayed how these patriarchal structures in the family manifested in women's lived experiences. Although this interview was conducted in the middle of the 20th century, it is thought to be representative of long-standing customs and the typical experience of rural northern women (Young, 2001):

> ...a marriage was arranged for me when I was thirteen years of age to a man who was twenty-two years older than I … I had not yet reached puberty and could not yet sleep with my husband … for two years …
>
> My husband helped me to grow up, but he beat me when I played with other girls my own age...He told me not to raise my head up while walking to the field or going to the mountain to cut wood. I had to look down and fix my gaze on the tips of my shoes...Ours was a typical patriarchal family. We (the women of the family) never had the right to speak to our husbands in front of others. It was considered to be shameful to do that. The women in our house never entered a room where the men were gathered to talk, drink coffee, or eat lunch. It was the duty of the women to prepare and bring coffee, food, etc., to the room -- to the door of the room. We had to work and bear children.
>
> When our daughters grew up and the time to marry them came, only my husband had the right to decide on such a problem. I was not asked at all to give my opinion about my daughter's marriage. (p. 236)

This interview not only described the expectations this woman faced, but also demonstrated the status difference which excluded her from men's spaces and discourse.

The expression of patriarchy through family structure is significant because the most important social unit in traditional Albanian society is the family. Given its inherently patriarchal structure, the traditional family was almost always led by the *burre i shpis*: literally "man of the house", or the head of the household. The oldest male, he represented the family and had the last

word in all decision-making (Vullnetari & King, 2015; Young, 2001). He had special roles and responsibilities that other males did not, including attending village meetings, choosing spouses for his children, administering the family property, escorting and protecting guests[2], and defending the family honor in violent disputes such as blood feuds (Gjecovi, 2010; Ilia, 1993; Young, 2001).

The family is an essential part of the Albanian system of honor (*ndera)*, as the honor of an individual is highly connected to the honor of their family. The family's honor is a reflection of its status, generational longevity, and the respectability of the head of household (Rapper, 2000). The family was such an important element in people's lives that many self-sacrifices were made for its sake, including committing murder, risking death, and becoming a burrneshe (Rapper, 2000; Young, 2001). Honor is a complex and specific term in the Albanian value system. There are many elements to it, including keeping one's word (*besa*), hospitality, strength in the face of adversity, and even masculinity in and of itself (Gjecovi, 2010; Ilia, 1993; Young, 2001).

One of the many facets of honor is virginity. This is, as in many societies, particularly important for women. Women were expected to be virgins until marriage. If they engaged in sexual activity before then, they and their sexual partner could be severely punished, potentially by death. Women victims might be punished this way even in cases of rape. In fact, upon moving into a new family and bearing children, a woman could be looked upon with less value than she had before seeing as she had lost her virginity. This could occur despite the expectation that she bears children. Post's (1998) respondent, mentioned previously, continued her interview to describe her experience of pregnancy and childbearing specifically:

[2] Hospitality, expressed in actions such as hosting, escorting, and defending guests, is a significant component of the Albanian honor system (Ilia, 1993; Young, 2001).

> I gave birth to a total of eleven children...the first eight were born one and a half years apart...When I was pregnant I had to keep my pregnancy secret from the people in the house and from my husband...It was considered shameful to be pregnant. I... returned to work just three days after the birth of each child… (p. 236)

ATTITUDES TOWARDS LGBT+ COMMUNITIES

As I will explain in Chapter 4, this study does not directly address burrneshas' actual sexuality or core gender identity; I did not ask burrnesha questions related to these aspects of their life as it would have been considered highly invasive, inappropriate, and offensive. They also did not volunteer any of this information. Other journalists and researchers have asked such questions, evoking highly negative reactions. Young (2001) did not ask these questions during her own research for that reason, especially as she carried out her work early in the democratization process. However, she discussed the topic in her book. She explained that in the occasions that burrnesha were suspected of having sexual relations with a woman, they ceased to have the honorable title of "burrneshe" among their communities and were shamed. The proximity of these communities might have likely been too great to allow secrecy in this (Young, 2001).

Even though the present study is not concerned with burrneshas' actual sexual orientation or core gender identity, representations of LGBT+ groups are relevant to this research. This is because gender non-conformity in the context of burrnesha seems to be widely accepted in Albania, whereas homosexuality and transgender (arguably also expressions of gender non-conformity) are highly stigmatized. That burrnesha are in general *not* seen as homosexual or transgender indicates the content of their social representations. We will see this in instances where respondents directly contrasted burrnesha with homosexual or transgender people. For this reason, I will briefly discuss general attitudes towards LGBT+ groups in Albania.

Homosexuality was a criminal offense in communist Albania, decriminalized in 1995. Same-sex marriage and changing one's legal gender remain impossible today. Despite some laws to protect LGBT+ groups, discrimination and violence towards them are still prevalent (Ciocca et al, 2017; ILGA, 2015; USAID, 2017). Exact statistics on incidents of discrimination and violence are difficult to measure, as fear of homophobia discourages many victims from

reporting them (UNDP, USAID, & UN, 2017). However, one poll by the National Democratic Institute in 2015 did measure various aspects of discrimination against LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and intersex) people in Albania. This poll found that 48% of the general public believed LGBTI to be a sickness. Only 6% of families would have supported an LGBTI person; the rest would have tried to hide that fact and/or cut off contact with this relative. 60% of the general public believed that LGBTI people should hide their sexual orientation or gender identity, except among family and friends where the percent rose to 75. 36% of the general public believed that LGBTI people experience psychological violence, however the percent of LGBTI people who reported experiencing it was actually 76 (National Democratic Institute, 2015). Besides the above statistics, a common slang term for "gay" is *pederaste*, which was coined during communism to mean both homosexual and pedophile (UNDP, USAID, & UN, 2017). The fact that this word is in common use today may show that its users continue to view the two sexual behaviors as morally equivalent.

BURRNESHA

ORIGINS OF THE CUSTOM

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when and how burrnesha appeared in the Western Balkans. They are described in a version of the kanun attributed to the national hero Skanderbeg who lived around the beginning of the 15th century. Therefore, we can reasonably suppose that this custom has existed at least since then. Specifically, they are mentioned in the *Inheritance* section of the kanun, suggesting that burrnesha might have provided a solution to passing on a family's inheritance in cases where there were no sons. Following is a translation of their mention in Skanderbeg's kanun (in this case, burrnesha are referred to as *vigjineshe*, plural *virgjinesha*, explained in more detail in the "Burrnesha" and Other Terms section):

- A virgjineshe is a girl who remains unmarried and lives with her own parents.
- Virgjinesha usually dress as men and cut their hair.
- Vigjinesha sit with the men in the village meetings, but in the court meetings they don't have a voice.
- In their own homes vigjinesha sit at the seat of the head of the household next to the fireplace at the dining table when her home doesn't have any men.

- Girls usually become vigjinesha for these reasons: 1) for desire; 2) when she has elderly relatives in the house and a mother and father who don't have a son at the hearth; 3) when the sons of the family are all underage; 4) when for whatever reason she doesn't want to take that man for whom her engagement was arranged and won't marry ever again in order that their family doesn't enter into a blood feud.
- A girl who for various physical or mental health problems doesn't get married is not called a vigjineshe and doesn't dress as a man, but remains as a girl.
- When a girl wants to become a virgjineshe she informs the parents and her tribe, and at the moment she has their approval she starts to dress as a man, cut her hair and walk among men.
- Just as it is impossible to require a girl to get married, it is impossible to require her to become a vigjineshe.
- When a girl tells her parents that she has decided to become a vigjineshe her parents give her advice. They tell her she should behave and she shouldn't shame herself and her family, and there are cases that they evaluate her will until they are convinced that she really means it.
- The girl that becomes a vigjineshe usually doesn't get married in the future even when the reasons for which she was impelled to become a vigjineshe have disappeared. If she gets married she will be faced with nothing but contempt.
- For all other work, besides being the head of the household, the virgjineshe is like any other girl or woman of the family. (Ilia, 1993, p. 76)

This excerpt described some of the roles of burrnesha, including refraining from marriage, dressing as men, attending village meetings, and sitting at the head of household seat. It did not explicitly say that their status increases, however this may be sufficiently implied by those listed roles. The kanun also listed several acceptable motivations for a woman to become a burrneshe, including lack of adult males in the family, avoiding an arranged marriage, and, perhaps surprisingly, the personal desire to do so. This excerpt arguably leaves many questions unanswered and potentially conflicts with other norms of Albanian society. Therefore, I will not treat the kanun's account as fact but rather consider its potential contribution to representations of burrnesha.

Skanderbeg's kanun did not directly state why this custom developed overall. Young (2001) suggested that it was a response to a context where it was disproportionately likely for families to lack men, not only due to wars and general adversity but also due to blood feuds. With the high value placed on masculinity and patriarchal systems, the lack of men would present challenges for the family. I will categorize these concerns into material well-being and symbolic well-being in order to refer more easily to these issues in the future. Men contributed to the family's material well-being through specific work roles that were considered only acceptable for a man to carry out. For example, sheep and goat herding required the shepherd to walk far from home alone, which would be considered dangerous and/or indecent for a woman to do. Furthermore, men were the leaders and decision-makers of the family, organizing its needs and functions. Finally, only men could bear arms and protect the family. By symbolic well-being, on the other hand, I refer to the ways in which men contributed to the family's social status. First, a family's status is positively correlated with the number of men in the family: the more sons, the greater the status and honor of the family. Second, men were required to take on specific symbolic and social roles, such as ensuring inheritance, hosting guests, taking revenge in a blood feud, and representing the family as its leader. Men alone represented not only social status but even family identity. Therefore, a family without men could not honorably, or even acceptably, carry out normal work-related, social, or symbolic functions and virtually ceased to exist (Rapper, 2000; Young, 2001). For this reason, allowing a daughter to become a social man in families with no sons could help the families to address these material and symbolic needs.

It is difficult to confirm whether the custom was prompted by a lack of men in society overall, as the kanun is the only original, early record we have of the development of this custom (Young, 2001). Nevertheless, it is reasonable to suppose that general patriarchal attitudes and structures played a significant role in the origin of burrnesha. Being a man was desirable in and of itself, and a burrneshe would contribute to the material and symbolic well-being of her family regardless of the proportion of men to women.

"BURRNESHE" AND OTHER TERMS

Thus far I have mostly referred to these women as *burrnesha.* However, there are a variety of terms that can be used. This variety is not inconsequential: the terms can tell us about how the custom is perceived and can help the reader to navigate other literature on the topic. Therefore, I will describe some of the terms here and my reasons for using *burrneshe*.

When translated into foreign languages, burrnesha are usually referred to with a local translation of *sworn virgins* (e.g., *vergine gjurata* in Italian). This reflects the common understanding that women take an oath of virginity upon becoming burrnesha (see Women Who Live as Men section). This is similar to the term used in the kanun, *virgjinesha* meaning "virgins", or *Albanian virgins* used by Durham (1910). However, these terms differ in meaning from the term *burrneshe*, which is the most commonly used term in Albanian today. *Burrneshe* (plural: *burrnesha*) is literally the word for "man" (*burre*) with a feminine ending *eshe/esha,* in the same way that "waitress" is the word "waiter" with a feminine ending "ess".

Another term that is sometimes used is *sokoleshe,* which is similar to burrneshe in a) its overall meaning and many of its connotations; and b) that it is semantically a highly masculine word made grammatically feminine by a suffix. The difference is that the word's stem *sokol* literally means "falcon" and figuratively means a man who is especially strong and brave. There are no words in English that can accurately represent terms such as *burrneshe* and *sokoleshe,* so I have chosen not to translate them.

I have chosen to use the term *burrneshe* due to its connotations and its frequency of use. However, *burrneshe* has several other uses besides this specific custom. In the north of Albania, the word can also be used for a typically feminine woman to describe her as strong, brave, and as having overcome hardship. In this context it conveys great respect towards that woman. This use in and of itself is relevant for the present study and potentially indicative of how women who live as men are perceived. That being said, this second meaning can lead to some confusion for this study. I aimed to address this potential confusion explicitly in the interviews themselves (see Chapter 4).

A third common use of the word *burrneshe* is as an interjection, also used primarily in the north. In colloquial speech a person may refer to the woman they are speaking to as a burrneshe to add emphasis to what they are saying. In this case, it does not mean that the speaker

necessarily believes the listener has any special, admirable, or masculine traits, it is merely an idiomatic expression. Because this usage is as an interjection, to add emphasis only, it does not relate directly to my research or its conclusion. However, many respondents did refer to this usage.

WOMEN WHO LIVE AS MEN

> Here we found one of the Albanian virgins who wear male attire. While we halted to water the horses she came up -- a lean, wiry, active woman of forty-seven, clad in very ragged garments, breeches and coat. She was highly amused at being photographed, and the men chaffed her about her "beauty". Had dressed as a boy, she said, ever since she was quite a child because she had wanted to, and her father had let her. Of matrimony she was very derisive -- all her sisters were married, but she had known better. Her brother, with whom she lived -- a delicate-looking fellow, much younger than she -- came up to see what was happening. She treated me with the contempt she appeared to think all petticoats deserved -- turned her back on me, and exchanged cigarettes with the men, with whom she was hail-fellow-well-met. In a land where each man wears a moustache, her little, hairless, wizened face looked very odd above masculine garb, as did also the fact that she was unarmed. (Durham, 1910, location 1266)

The "Albanian virgin" that Durham (1910) described in this excerpt is just one of the many burrnesha she met during her travels. Through her and other writers' portrayals, we can imagine what the burrnesha were like throughout the 20th century. This section will begin by describing burrneshas' appearance and social roles in general. Then I will discuss several specific topics, including sworn virginity, women's motivations for becoming burrnesha, and gender identity.

Once having decided to live as a man, burrneshas' lives change significantly. Usually, the most visible signifier of their new lifestyle is their use of men's clothing and hairstyles. Whether traditional or modern, their clothes and accessories are those that would never be worn by a woman. Traditionally, burrneshas' clothing would include trousers, vests, belts, and sometimes the iconic *qeleshe* (a white felt skull cap worn exclusively by men [and burrnesha]). Modern burrnesha often wear polo shirts, men's trousers, big watches, and sometimes a men's-styled bag with a cross-body strap. You will not see burrnesha wearing feminine garments or accessories, such as aprons, headscarves, skirts, dresses, leggings, jewelry, or make-up (Young, 2001).

Burrnesha also style their hair according to the norms for men in their community, although they do not have the option to style their facial hair. While today's northern Albanian men are usually clean-shaven, during the Ottoman time it was the norm to have a mustache. In the excerpt from Durham (1910) used above we saw how a burrneshe's bare face could be conspicuous and give away her identity: "In a land where each man wears a moustache, her little, hairless, wizened face looked very odd above masculine garb [...]." (location 1266).

FIGURE 4: A BURRNESHE RESPONDENT, TAKEN IN 2016 DURING FIELDWORK

FIGURE 5: BURRNESHE RESPONDENT BEFORE STARTING TO LIVE AS A MAN (LEFT AND RIGHT) AND AFTER (CENTER)

In Figures 4 and 5 I include photos of two of the burrnesha respondents that I interviewed in 2016. Figure 4 shows the burrnesha at our interview. You can see how his hair is cut in a masculine style, he is wearing a men's-styled button-down shirt, athletic jumper and trousers, and men's-style shoes. Figure 5 is a photograph of other photos of a different respondent. This particular burrneshe started to live as a man at the age of 21. Comparing the three framed photos, you can see how differently he dressed, groomed himself, and overall appeared before (leftmost and rightmost photos) and after (center photo) becoming a burrneshe. Before, he wore a dress or other feminine clothing, had long hair, and used makeup and jewelry. After, you can see him without makeup or jewelry, with short hair, and a masculine top.

Although dress and hairstyle are arguably the most immediately visible markers of burrneshas' social identity, their masculine appearance extends to their behavior. They tend to adopt habits common among men but considered unacceptable for women, such as smoking,

drinking alcohol, and even spitting in public, and usually adopt masculine mannerisms and posture (Durham, 1910; Young, 2001). Young (2001) described meeting the same burrneshe at two different points in time: the first time soon after he started to live as a man, and the second time several years later. Young noticed that his behavior had become significantly more masculine by the time of their second meeting, evident in his carriage, perceived confidence, dress, and tendency to spit on the street.

Male appearance is not a trivial part of being considered and treated as a burrneshe. Young (2001) emphasized the symbolic role of dress in expressing social identities: "Clothing acts as a signifier in a society where dress is distinctively prescribed by gender" (p. 98). Sensitized to the possible importance of appearance, I probed this topic during my PhD interviews, the results of which I will present in later chapters.

In general, burrnesha enjoy high social status and extended privileges. As Durham's (1910) Albanian travel companion explained, "only if a woman were sworn to virginity [would I] allow her equal rights with a man" (location 999). Whether their status is universally equal to men's is a matter of debate. It may be that respondents perceive burrnesha as having higher status than they actually experience because they are comparing them to other women.

Regardless of how their status compares to men's, we can see that burrneshas' status does improve in ways that lead to concrete changes in their lifestyle. They are allowed access to activities and venues from which they had been prohibited as women; they are not only admitted to village meetings between heads of households, but also social locales such as cafes and barbershops. Their occupations shift to male-typical tasks. For example, in rural areas burrnesha may do fieldwork or shepherding, while in urban areas they may work in truck driving or manufacturing. It is uncommon even today for typical women to work in these roles. Burrnesha usually take on male roles in ceremonies, and are allowed to bear arms and participate in blood feuds (Durham, 1910; Young, 2001). Finally, the kanun specifically allows them to be the head of their household, which would give them numerous privileges and responsibilities. They would not only sit at the most honored seat in the men's sitting room (Ilia, 1993), they could also have special ceremonial roles, escort and defend their guests, and have the final say in household decision-making.

Burrneshas' high status and social respect is reflected in the fact that their families usually accept a woman's decision to become one; she is rarely prevented from doing so. The kanun encourages taking this decision seriously and thoroughly discussing it with her relatives. However, it is generally seen as presenting an advantage to the family. This is not universally the case, and some women are prohibited.

Burrnesha live the life of men in nearly all ways except in terms of sexual behavior and marriage: they are celibate and single. As mentioned, the common international term for burrnesha is *sworn virgin* in response to depictions of burrnesha taking a formal, public oath of virginity. For example, in the fictional film *Vergine Giurata*, based on the book by the same name (Dones, 2007) there is a scene where the main character cuts her hair and takes this oath in front of the village elders, swearing to maintain a male social identity and her virginity for the rest of her life (Bispuri, 2015). In reality, it is rare for a burrneshe to make such an oath in public, however this does not mean that they take their commitment lightly.

This commitment to virginity is a consistent part of the common-knowledge definition of burrnesha. It is also part of their commitment to live as a man overall. This reflects one of the elements of Albanian honor: *besa*, which means faithfulness to one's word (in general, not only regarding virginity). For a burrneshe to break her commitment, be it an internal decision or public oath, would be unthinkable and dishonorable. As a reminder, the kanun states that: "The girl that becomes a vigjineshe usually doesn't get married in the future even when the reasons for which she was impelled to become a vigjineshe have disappeared. If she gets married, she will be faced with nothing but contempt" (Ilia, 1993, p. 76). This is an explicit statement that a burrneshas' commitment cannot be reversed.

The kanun and firsthand reports listed various socially acceptable motivations for a woman to become a burrneshe. In practice, women's motivations are often more nuanced and complex. I will describe the more specific and concrete motivations a woman might have, including supporting her family by taking the male role, staying with her birth family, and avoiding an arranged marriage are interconnected. Then, I will briefly discuss the motivation of personal desire. Before doing so I would like to reiterate that these motivations are largely set within a traditional northern Albanian context. Communities and individuals that continue to live

within these norms are decreasing in number with economic development and cultural westernization of the country.

In the section Origins of the Custom, I mentioned two different types of support that burrnesha provide to their families: material and symbolic. The culture of family collectivism meant that women are especially impelled to provide this support to their families, especially in cases where the family well-being is threatened by adverse circumstances. In terms of material support, burrnesha contribute to work and decision-making. They can also travel long distances alone safely, protect the family, participate in war, and participate in blood feuds. Burrneshas' contributions to the family's symbolic well-being include increasing the family's status by increasing its number of males but also by representing the family and filling ceremonial and social roles. Meanwhile, despite the culture's family collectivism, burrnesha might be motivated to take on male roles for more self-interested reasons, to enjoy the greater status, freedom, and comfort of life as a man (Young, 2001).

Although burrnesha are often described as coming from families with no males, even in the kanun (Ilia, 1993), the reality is not so strict. They can still benefit their family in a male role in the same ways listed above. In other cases, it could be that their brothers are too young or otherwise incapable of taking on the role of head of household. For example, the burrneshe Lule had a brother, furthermore an *older* brother. But the family considered the brother incompetent and Lule a natural-born leader, so they were satisfied at his taking on the role of head of household as a burrneshe (Young, 2001).

In cases where they have brothers, a burrnesha may become the head of household while the family property will eventually be passed on to their brother's children. In the absence of brothers burrnesha historically enjoyed the right to inheritance. The fact that burrnesha were described in the *Inheritance* section of the kanun suggests that this custom was a solution to providing an heir in the absence of sons. The kanun did not mention this purpose explicitly, however other reports demonstrated that burrnesha could effectively inherit family property (Durham, 1910; Young, 2001).

Another important reason to become a burrneshe is to continue to live with the birth family. Seeing as under typical traditional circumstances women are expected to move out of

their birth family's home to live with their husbands, becoming a burrneshe is often the only socially acceptable way to continue to live with their birth family. In some cases, this meant that they had never been engaged; in other cases, they would break off an arranged engagement. Either of these cases would threaten the honor of the family and potentially instigate a blood feud unless the woman became a burrneshe (Durham, 1910; Young, 2001). Durham described the complexity of this issue:

> The girl may -- but it requires much courage on her part -- refuse to marry the man. In that case she must swear before witnesses to remain a virgin all her life. Should she break this vow, endless bloodshed is caused. If her father sells[3] her to another it entails two bloods -- blood between her family and her first betrothed's, and blood between her husband's and her betrothed's. Should she make a run-away match there is triple blood, as her family is at blood also with her husband's. In such cases the woman is furiously blamed. "She knew the laws, and the amount of blood that must be shed.
>
> The most singular part of the business is the readiness with which most youths accept the girl bought for them. I never heard of one refusing, though I met several "Albanian virgins," girls who had sworn virginity to escape their betrothed. (location 597)

According to Durham (1910), breaking off an engagement can result in blood feuds between multiple families. The responsibility falls on the woman to avoid such an outcome by either accepting betrothal or becoming a burrneshe.

Blood feuds in general are also sometimes cited as a motivation for becoming a burrneshe (Z TV, 2014). Only men were permitted to participate in blood feuds, or perhaps it is more accurate to say that only men "counted" in blood feuds; killing a female family member would not be considered part of the blood feud. This makes blood feuds relevant to the custom of burrnesha for two reasons. First, a long-standing feud could result in families with few or no male members. This could impel a woman to live as a man in order to fill the roles of those that

[3] Typically, the bride's family accepted a dowry given by the groom's family. For this reason, Durham (1910) frequently uses the word "sells" in describing marriage arrangement.

had died. Second, a woman may decide to live as a man in order to participate in a blood feud and take revenge herself.

Finally, the kanun permitted women to become burrnesha with no other motivation than their desire to do so (Ilia, 1993). This point is left ambiguous. It is unclear whether "desire" reflects one of the more specific motivations mentioned above, or if it could refer to the desire to live as a man for its own sake. Regardless, the generality of this point potentially puts no limits on women's decision. Durham (1910) met one burrneshe that "[h]ad dressed as a boy, she said, ever since she was quite a child because she had wanted to, and her father had let her" (location 1266).

This brings us to my final topic of this section: gender identity. Gender identity can be viewed as having two aspects. The first is a person's social gender identity, or the gender category that the public perceive the person to belong to. The second is a person's personal gender identity, or her/his internal sense of gender identification.

Following their change in status, some researchers question whether burrnesha remain within a binary gender system or occupy a "third gender" category. As we can see in Young's (2001) descriptions, burrnesha often take on both women's and men's roles, and there seems to be variation on a case-by-case basis. She described several burrnesha as being fully integrated as men in their communities, to the point that some neighbors did not know that they were physiologically female. Even institutions have recognized them as men; some have been imprisoned in male prisons or participated in all-male armies. By contrast, other burrnesha have been denied some of the status and rights of men. For example, Stana, a burrneshe described by Young (2001), was not allowed to buy guns despite being the best marksman in his town.

Rapper (2000) argued that burrnesha occupy an intermediate position between male and female, as they retain the body of a woman while adopting the behavior, roles, and status of a man. Furthermore, some of the central traditional roles of women include marriage and childbirth; rejecting these responsibilities further separates burrnesha from their female identity. Littlewood (2002) acknowledged burrneshas' mixed roles, however he argued that they ultimately reinforce the gender binary structure of their community: "*Virgjinesha* are always described in terms of male or female attributes: never in terms of anything altogether 'other' (as

with multiple gender)" (p. 47). In other words, they are seen as crossing categories (perhaps back and forth?) in a binary system and in this way ultimately reinforcing the binary system itself. In this context, variations in the binary structure are subsumed under one of the two dominant categories.

Rapper's (2000) and Littlewood's (2002) papers tended towards the theoretical in nature. In contrast, Dickerson's (In press) research took an empirical, sociolinguistic approach to analyzing primary data on this issue. Her data included five semi-structured, sociolinguistic style interviews with burrnesha and seven Albanian-language newspaper articles. Using these data, she coded every syntactic unit that displayed gender (e.g., pronouns and adjectives) and was used in reference to a burrneshe. She performed a multiple regression analysis with these codes to compare (among other things) the rates at which burrnesha, their family, their friends, and unacquainted informants used masculine versus feminine syntactic units in reference to burrnesha. She found that burrneshas' use of masculine units was the highest, at 37%, while unacquainted informants' was 13.8% and family/friends' was 10-11%. In noting that "[m]ost informants produce both masculine and feminine forms in their language use" (p. 84), Dickerson argued that,

> [...] this reveals a certain degree of gender code-switching which may be employed strategically to evoke images of masculinity and strength. In fact, even the feminine grammatical gender can be used for this purpose. That male identity is not strictly tied to masculine grammatical forms indicates that language is only one facet of a much more complex social understanding of gender. In particular, it appears that one's actions and position in society are strong factors in determining gender. (p 84)

Dickerson's (In press) work indicated that burrneshas' social gender identity may be an issue that surpasses the limits of a "binary" versus "third gender" debate.

This interpretation may also apply to Dickerson's (In press) findings on burrneshas' own language use, and what this might indicate about their personal gender identity. 37%/63% use of male/female words may indicate an ambiguous personal gender identity, or it may reflect different social responses to varying contexts. Some burrnesha accept being referred to with female pronouns and adjectives, while others find this strange and even offensive. In either case, Young (2001) contended that none of them would be satisfied with being referred to as transgender, or of a "third gender".

Burrneshas' personal gender identity is difficult to ascertain from a Western research approach. First, Western LGBT+ and gender studies communities have developed a specific vocabulary with which to understand and communicate one's core gender identity, often in the context of the transgender experience. While parts of Albania may have developed an equivalent vocabulary, it is unlikely that this has been done in burrneshas' more traditional communities which distance themselves from LGBT+ discourse. Without such shared vocabulary, it would be difficult for a foreign researcher, such as myself, to understand burrneshas' experience of their own gender identity. Second of all, homophobic and transphobic attitudes make this conversation particularly delicate. Burrnesha, like others in their communities, might feel vulnerable at the issue being raised or take offense to being associated with transgender. In part for these reasons, this research does not analyze burrneshas' personal gender identity. By contrast, burrneshas' *social* gender identity will play a part in my analyses.

CHAPTER 2 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I explored how some Albanian values evolved in response to unique and adverse living conditions in the country. These living conditions, in turn, were the consequence of the particular geographical, historical, and political environment in which the nation developed. I illustrated how the tradition of burrnesha made sense to the communities living in this context. I demonstrated how burrnesha appeared in the kanun and in other literature. I described how, while there is a variety of motivations for becoming a burrneshe, their lifestyle is fairly uniform in its masculinity.

An outsider encountering this custom may have many questions. What do burrnesha indicate about local gender dynamics? Is there a relationship between this custom and LGBT+ identities? What can we learn about gender construction overall? The following chapter will describe how some of these topics developed into the research questions that were chosen for the present study and the theoretical framework in which they have been placed.

CHAPTER 3: THEORY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 3 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter we saw how burrnesha live in and interact with their communities. While these communities do not usually regard the custom of burrnesha as remarkable, an outsider may have many questions. This chapter describes the development of the present study's general research questions and the theoretical framework in which they are situated. I explain my choice to use Serge Moscovici's Social Representations Theory as a framework based on my general questions. Then, I describe several of the most relevant aspects of this theory and end by presenting the final specific research questions.

SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS THEORY

In the summer of 2016, I carried out fieldwork in Albania to interview burrnesha. At that time, I intended to analyze burrnesha within the framework of Alice Eagly's Social Role Theory. Social Role Theory suggests that it is primarily the performance of social gender roles, not inherent physiological differences, that leads to gender differentiated psychological traits and behavior (Eagly & Wood, 1999; Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000; Wood & Eagly, 2012). With this in mind, I intended to evaluate whether enacting the roles of a man led burrnesha to have more masculine traits. However, in the process of interviewing I found that these respondents had started living as boys at a very young age, and because they had wanted to. In contrast to background information, they rarely mentioned external motivating factors. This meant that Social Role Theory was not appropriate since burrnesha are, in a sense, self-selecting and may inherently have masculine traits.

This also raised several new questions. I was particularly interested in how burrneshas' communities justified their gender non-conformity, given their motivations. During my MPhil research I had found that community members typically justified burrneshas' high status because they were seen as supporting the family (Robertson, 2015). Yet, the burrnesha I interviewed started living as boys before they were likely able to make such a conscientious decision. The

status, acceptance, and respect of burrnesha are particularly striking when juxtaposed with the stigma faced by LGBT+ Albanians, although from the Western perspective both these contexts are examples of gender non-conformity. So how, in the eyes of the Albanian community, do the implications of gender non-conformity differ by context? These new questions were ultimately related to the burrneshe identity as it was understood by society as a whole, or in other words, how it was constructed in Albanian society. This notion of the construction of social identity drove the subsequent search for an appropriate theoretical framework.

Social Representations Theory, as proposed by Serge Moscovici in his original formulation (2000), revolves around the construction of knowledge (Flick, 1994). It is considered by some to be one of the few truly social-psychological theories because it models a continual, mutual interaction between an individual's psychology and the representation of knowledge as a collective social process (Jovchelovitch, 1996). It accounts for both individual and group processes, not only in its original conceptualization but also in later developments of the theory (Abreu Lopes & Gaskell, 2015). Although this theory is not specialized to the context of gender as Social Role Theory is, it is well-suited to the study of gender. Furthermore, in some ways it treats gender as a special social category (see Gender section).

Following, I will describe the general background of Social Representations Theory (hereinafter referred to as SRT). As a thorough review or critique of the theory is beyond the scope of this project, this discussion will be limited to a description of the theory's most fundamental and relevant concepts. With each section I will briefly relate the issue to burrnesha.

General Background

In the preface to his compilation of Moscovici's foundational works, Duveen (2000) introduced SRT by discussing where people thought Vienna and Prague were on a map. Most placed Prague farther east than Vienna, whereas in reality the reverse is true. From the perspective of SRT, this is because Prague and Czechoslovakia are associated with Eastern European politics, culture, and history, whereas Vienna and Austria are associated with the West. Duveen demonstrated how each piece of knowledge we have is situated within a complex

network of other knowledge. In the words of Moloney and Walker (2007): “Never simply a description or duplication, knowledge is constructed through interaction, communication, and its significance to the individuals and groups who engage with it” (p. 3).

Social representations are manifestations of the knowledge that most people operate with on a daily basis. In the process of representing, we both neglect existing features of the target object and take illusions as fact (Moscovici, 2000). As Wagner et al. (1996) explained, “a social representation is the ensemble of thoughts and feelings being expressed in verbal and overt behavior of actors which constitutes an object for a social group” (p. 96). This indicates the purposes of social representations. Overall, they help us handle unfamiliarity by making “something unfamiliar, or unfamiliarity itself, familiar” (Moscovici, 2000, p. 37). When we are faced with a new object, be it an artifact, person, or event, we do not know how to respond to or interact with it without understanding it fully. In order to feel that we understand it quickly, we rely on comparing it to concepts that we are already familiar with. Thus, social representations simultaneously allow us to make sense of the world around us and enable communication between different members of the same social group by establishing a common vocabulary with consensual reference points (Wagner, et al., 1999).

Because of the consensual nature of social representations, the individual cannot be extracted from her social environment; in fact, SRT considers the distinction between individual and society to be constructed (Duveen & Lloyd, 1986; Farr, 1998; Jovchelovitch, 1996). In the words of Moloney & Walker (2007), “society is regarded not as a backdrop for the individual, but rather as an entity with the individual *sui generis*” (p. 3). Because of this, social groups can represent the same object in different ways. Those differences, in turn, lead to different behaviors and internal responses. This stance calls for SRT researchers to view knowledge as inevitably social and to include context (culture, history, politics, etc.) in their analyses. For this reason, SRT is seen as bridging psychology and sociology more symmetrically than other subfields of social psychology (Jovchelovitch, 1996). Some authors compare Moscovici’s social representations to Durkheim’s collective representations (Farr, 1998). Farr (1998) argues that Durkheim’s collective versus individual representations articulated a severe distinction between sociology and psychology (respectively). Moscovici’s social representations, by contrast, could

be characterized as being in the domain of social psychology seeing as they deal with the interaction between collective and individual processes (Farr, 1998).

SRT is less concerned "about semantic truth value and more about the pragmatic value of representations" (Bauer, 2015, p. 52). In other words, the study of social representations pays greater attention to how social relationships are communicated, negotiated, and transformed *by means of* social representations than how accurate social representations are. Therefore, SRT takes interest in a representation's content just as much as the processes and structures that help us to understand their dynamics (Bauer, 2015). Content is not treated as neutral or arbitrary because "the processes and content of social thinking are inevitably entwined" (Moloney & Walker, 2007, p. 3).

Communication is critical to the process of representing. Beyond the semantics of language, SRT takes interest in how the pragmatics of communication indicate individuals' relationships and understanding of the world (Moscovici, 1994). Through explicit and, perhaps more interestingly, implicit means of communication, social representations are transmitted throughout a social group much like a "virus" (Moscovici, 1983, p. 700). Given the implicit nature of much of pragmatic communication, we are often unaware of the contents of our representations until faced with a situation that counters our presuppositions (Moscovici, 1994).

One of the criticisms of SRT is that social representations are too similar to other psychological constructs, such as attitudes, to warrant special attention. The response to this is that SRT includes collective processes in its models much more than other psychological theories. While attitude theories tend to treat attitudes as the outcome of "information processing", social representations are the outcome of "interpersonal processes" (Abreu Lopes & Gaskell, 2015, p. 30). In this sense, social psychology's treatment of attitudes today is highly individualistic, at least following Allport's (1935) formulation of the construct. Moscovici saw social representations as very different from attitudes and rejected the reductionism of the latter. His focus was on those representations that could not be explained by individual processes alone. Again, this theoretical stance positioned his contributions at the intersection between sociology and psychology as traditional social sciences (Farr, 1998). Duveen and Lloyd (1990) expanded on this distinction between SRT and other psychological theories:

> Indeed, social representations can be contrasted with social psychological theories based on narrower definitions of psychological activity focussed on notions of attitudes or attribution. In such theories social cognition is viewed as cognitive processes in relation to social stimuli, but these 'social stimuli' are taken as given, since social life itself remains untheorised. The effect of this theoretical lacuna is to present a view of social cognition as the activity of individual minds confronting the social world. For social representations, on the other hand, attitudes and attributions arise as consequences of participation in social life; they form, as it were, the visible tip of an iceberg whose submerged portion comprises the very structures which enable the subject to construct meaningful attitudes and attributions. (p. 3)

This excerpt reiterates SRT's rejection of the distinction between individual and society.

The potential similarity between social representations and attitudes is not the only criticism the theory has faced. Authors such as Jahoda (1988) and Bauer and Gaskell (1999) were concerned that Moscovici's original proposal was too broad and abstract, leaving an overall "lack of conceptual clarity" (Sammut, Andreouli, Gaskell, & Valsiner, 2015, p. 1). This imprecision has led to debates on issues such as:

> […] the role of cognition (Parker, 1987), the notion of what is shared in social representations (Verheggen and Baerveldt, 2007), as well as the meaning of the term 'social' (Harre, 1988), […] the difference between social representations and attitudes, the difference between individual representations and social representations, the impact of diversity in contemporary public spheres, and the way to define social groups and communities. (Sammut, Andreouli, Gaskell, & Valsiner, 2015, p. 11).

Despite these concerns, Moscovici and others have defended SRT (see Jovchelovitch, 1996; Moscovici, 1988; and Sammut, et al., 2015). A detailed discussion of these defenses will not be included here. However, the overall criticism of imprecision is often presented by SRT scholars as an advantage rather than a shortcoming. They argue that it has given way to "both a theoretical and an empirical eclecticism […] over the years, and arguably this has enabled the theory to thrive and to address myriad social and psychological issues in its later developments" (Sammut, Andreouli, Gaskell, & Valsiner, 2015, p. 1). This "eclecticism" has manifested in a range of conceptual developments, addressing issues both broad and specific related to process, structure, and content (see Sammut, et al., 2015 for a review of these).

As per the research goals outlined in Chapter 1, I was primarily interested in describing local conceptions of burrnesha and how they reflected and reproduced broader social dynamics. SRT was very well-suited to this goal because of its emphasis on constructionism, context and societal change. Other advantages to using SRT stemmed from some of the theory's specific aspects, described in the following sections. I discuss the appropriateness of SRT for this project in greater details in the Final Research Questions section in order to reference those aspects.

The remainder of this section introduces several fundamental topics in the theory and those that are particularly relevant to the research at hand. These topics include the genesis and structure of social representations, social power, social identity, and gender. I will discuss issues more directly related to methodology in the following chapter. While a discussion of social representations of history (e.g., Liu & Lazlo, 2007) would be relevant and interesting to the present discussion, I unfortunately cannot do justice to this aspect of the field in the present work.

GENESIS

Duveen & Lloyd (1990) referred to SRT as a "genetic theory", "in the sense that the structure of any particular social representation is a construction and thus the outcome of some developmental process" (p. 4). In other words, the process of construction implies genesis, and by extension SRT's focus on construction makes it a genetic theory. Therefore, much research within an SRT framework has paid attention to the genetic processes of representations, which will be the focus of this sub-section.

As mentioned, the purpose of social representations is to "make something unfamiliar, or unfamiliarity itself, familiar" (Moscovici, 2000, p. 37). For this reason, they emerge from a social group when it is faced with something unfamiliar, such as an unexpected event or a new phenomenon. This novel object incites collective discourse in order to understand it and establish a relationship to it. The outcome of this process is the new social representation. This means that societal change is a key consideration in SRT. Following is a diagram by Wagner et al. (1999) depicting the life cycle of a social representation (Figure 6: Model of SociogenesisFigure 6).

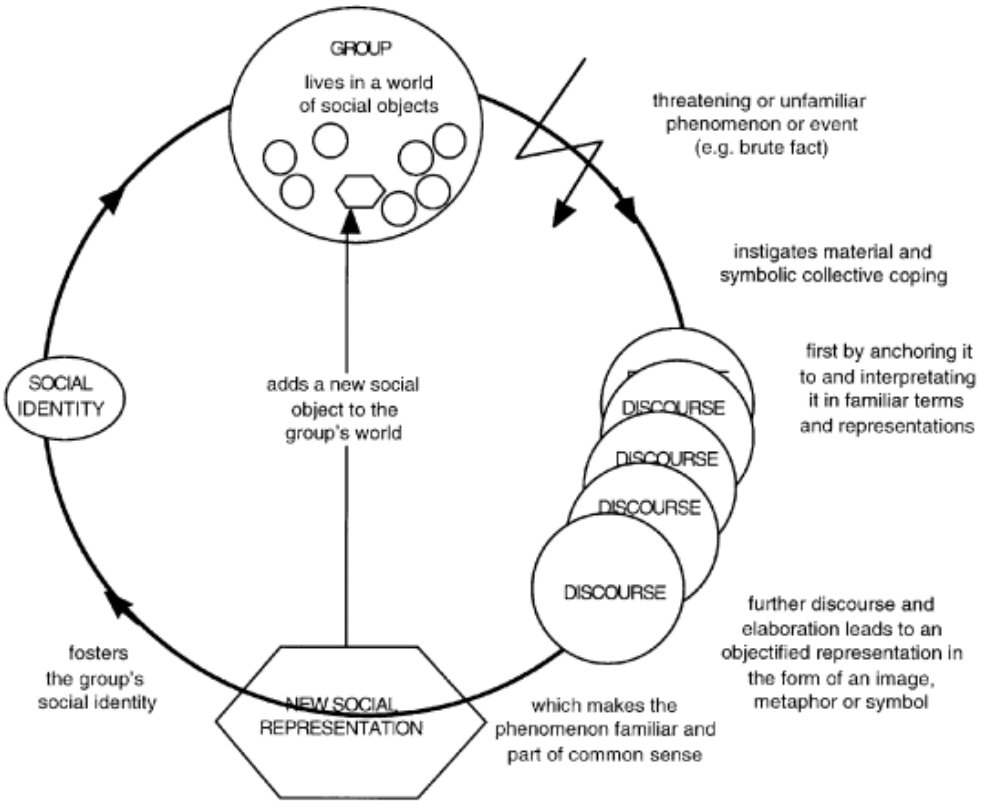

FIGURE 6: MODEL OF SOCIOGENESIS (WAGNER, ET AL., 1999, P. 98)

To read this diagram, start at the top right-hand corner and work your way around the circle clockwise. We can see how the emergence of an unfamiliar phenomenon leads to discourse, which then leads to the specification of a social representation. This social representation is then internalized by the social group, after which it can transform itself or contribute to the formation of future representations. On the left-hand side of the diagram the new social representation contributes to the social identity of in-group members: on the one hand, the social representation can be understood between members because of their shared understanding; on the other hand, this shared understanding facilitates in-group identification.

This diagram models *sociogenesis*, one of Moscovici's three levels of genesis along with *microgenesis* and *ontogenesis*. Sociogenesis refers to the ways society generates social representations at a collective level, while microgenesis deals with this process on a more individual scale through daily speech and conversation. Ontogenesis refers to the internal process

of generating social representations, and how an individual positions herself in relation to those representations.

Moscovici proposed two mechanisms which generate social representations, included in Wagner et al.'s (1999) diagram of sociogenesis: *anchoring* and *objectification*. In anchoring, the observer categorizes the observed object (the "new phenomenon") according to a seemingly suitable comparison. Objectification is the process by which an abstract concept is made concrete through its association with known images (Moscovici, 2000), icons, metaphors, or tropes (Wagner, et al., 1999).

Structure

The genesis of social representations demonstrates how SRT bridges the fields of psychology and sociology. It models a continual, mutual, and dynamic interaction between an individual's psychological processes and the collective process of the group (Jovchelovitch, 1996). We cannot separate genesis from structure in the SRT model, seeing as the structure of a representation emerges from the processes that construct it. This model is depicted as a triangle (Figure 5Figure 7), connecting the subject (the observer: S1 in Figure 7) with an object being represented (Object), and both of these with a second subject (S2), a social other (Marková, 2007; Moscovici, 2000). The inclusion of this third element, the social other (S2), is needed to convey that social representations are *social*: they are a product of collective social processes in which meaning "always implies the 'other'" (Sammut, Andreouli, Gaskell, & Valsiner, 2015, p. 6). This image, and its subsequent elaborations, help to illustrate the features of social representations and the points of interest for SRT:

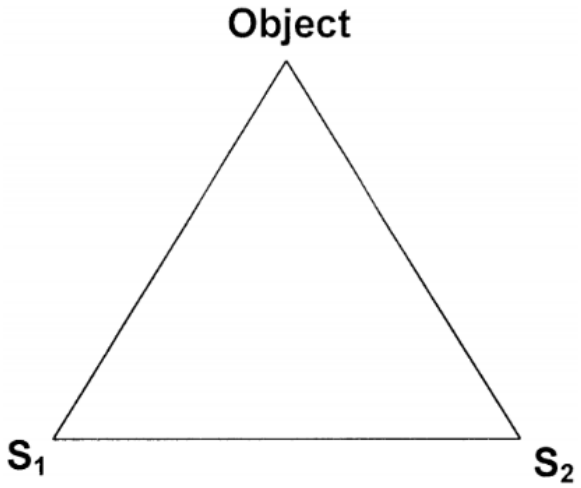

FIGURE 7: TRIAD MODEL (BAUER & GASKELL, 1999, P. 170)

Markova (2007) referred to this triad as "an epistemological unit in the theory of social representations" (p. 230). Bauer and Gaskell (1999) elaborated upon this triadic model to account for the changes in social representations over time (Figure 8). They proposed that this triangle was elongated, comparing it to a Toblerone chocolate bar. The length of the Toblerone bar represents time, and any cross-section of the bar leaves us with the social representation of that object at the corresponding point in time:

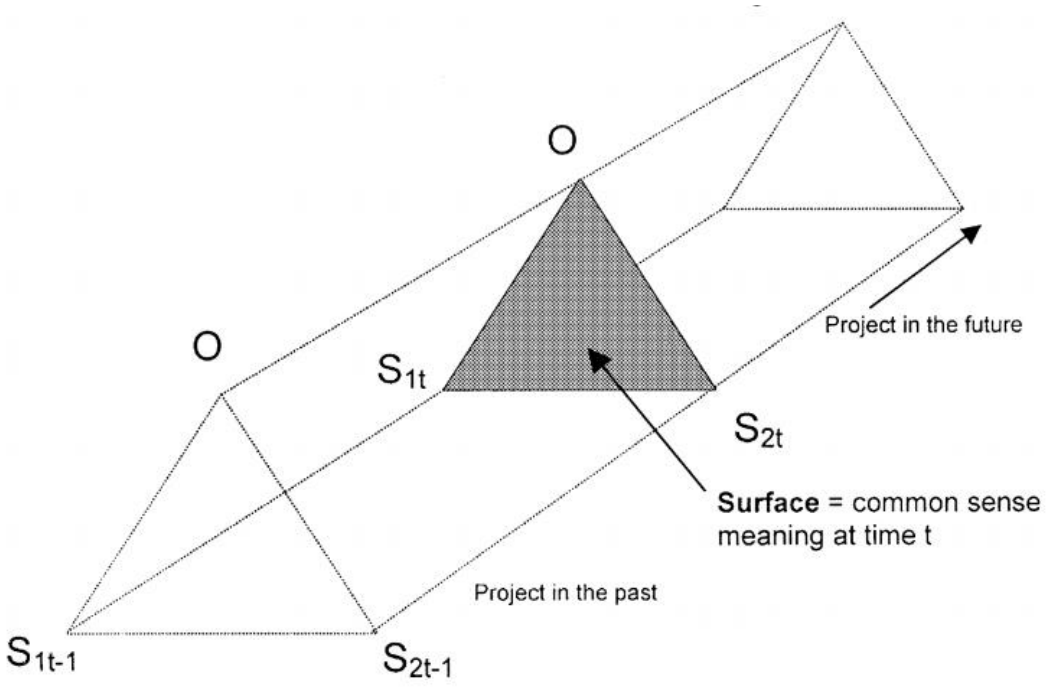

FIGURE 8: TOBLERONE MODEL (BAUER & GASKELL, 1999, P. 171)

However, there are multiple social representations corresponding to each object. This calls for us to imagine multiple Toblerone bars positioned around each other, sharing a common object at their epicenter. This *wind rose model* (Figure 9) demonstrates this plurality of social representations of a single object (Bauer & Gaskell, 2008):

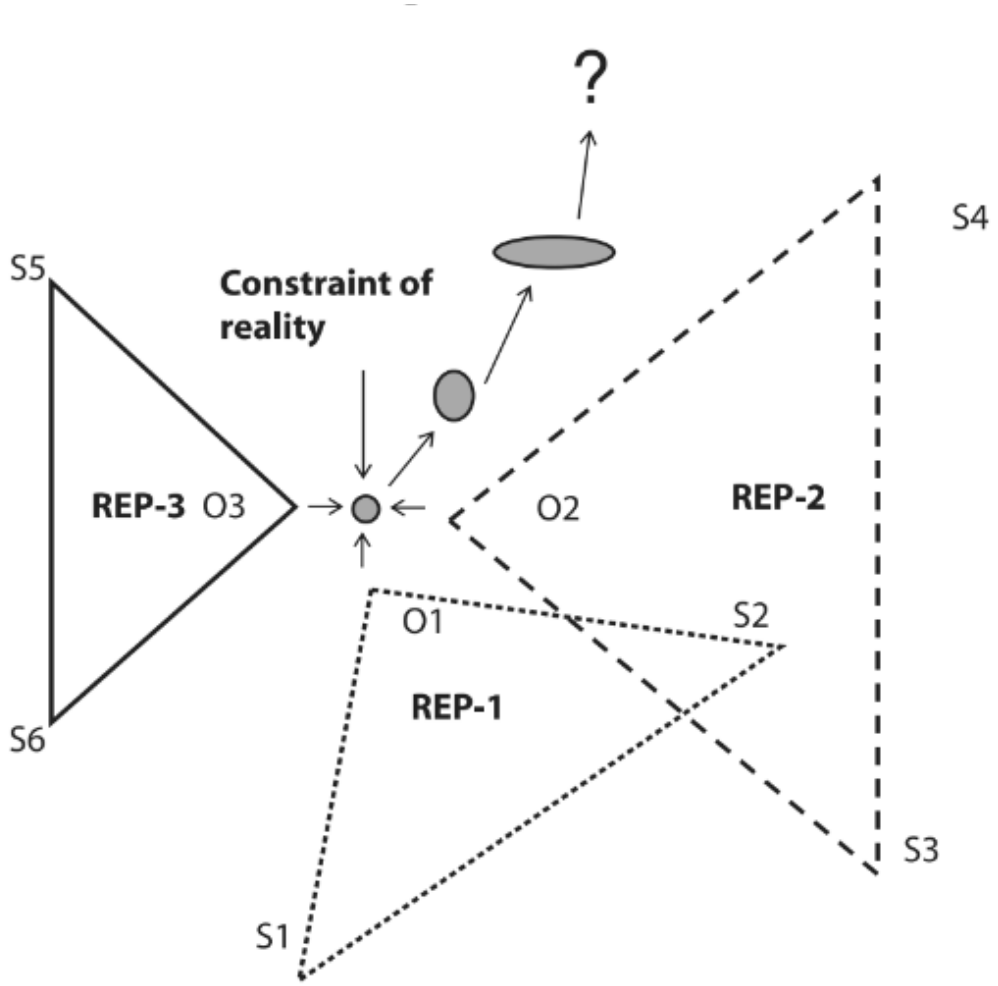

FIGURE 9: WIND ROSE MODEL (BAUER & GASKELL, 2008, P. 346)

The wind rose model depicts multiple representations of the same object in a pluralistic society. These representations are positioned in relation to each other and may in some cases partially overlap, sharing elements. This model also accounts for the influence of the object's reality on its representations ("Constraint of reality").

Although these models may give a sense of concreteness and stability to the structure of social representations, Jovchelovitch (1996) reminded us that genesis, process, and structure are inseparable in the SRT model. As such, the structure of representations is in constant transformation, interacting with other representations and society at large. For the visual metaphor, Bauer and Gaskell (2008) suggested the wind rose should be in constant motion, leaving us with the *waterwheel model* that we cannot depict on paper.

It is possible for a single individual to hold conflicting representations of a single object. Moscovici (2000) called this *cognitive polyphasia* and introduced it as an aspect of his formulation of SRT. The tension between these different conceptions is related to societal change: "States of cognitive polyphasia show that knowledge is incomplete because it is embedded in processes of social exchange and adaptation" (Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernández, 2015, p. 168). Different representations correspond to different aspects of an individual's identity or may be activated by different contexts. As such, cognitive polyphasia allows the individual to respond to diverse conceptual challenges. For this reason, analyzing cognitive polyphasia can be useful for understanding the structure and functions of social representations.

Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernandez (2015) noted the complexity of cognitive polyphasia, identifying three types: *selective prevalence*, *hybridization*, and *displacement*. In *selective prevalence*, individuals hold distinct representations in reference to an object. The authors compared this to a chest of drawers, where each drawer (representation) is used in response to a different social context. *Hybridization* indicates that conflicting modes of knowledge are integrated into a mixed representation. *Displacement* refers to power asymmetry expressed through the dominance of some representations over others (Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernández, 2015).

Researchers often use *themata* in order to understand social representations' genesis and function. The concept of themata in social representations research was introduced by Moscovici and developed by other prominent SRT scholars, such as Markova (2003; 2015a; 2015b). According to Markova (2015a), "a methodological (epistemological) thema is a guiding principle of the discipline, which organizes and directs the subjects of study along a specific perspective" (p. 1). Themata are concepts (e.g, self/other, equality/inequality, etc.) highly salient to a social

group that orient the content of the social representation (Markova, 2003). In this way, this concept helps us understand the functions of a social representation. Markova adds: "Themata are often implicit rather than explicitly stated: they are hardly ever observable; they are held unconsciously rather than reflectively deliberated" (p. 6). Therefore, it becomes the task of the researcher to evaluate the data deeply in order to identify and evaluate themata. SRT researchers often conceptualize themata as dyadic in nature, composed of two opposing poles such as self/other (Markova, 2003; Markova, 2015a; Staerkle et al (2011). This structure also helps us understand the representation's content, its relationship to other representations, and the observer's relationship to it.

Staerkle et al. (2011) further noted how this elaboration of content through themata is used to categorize social groups with implications for power relations in society. Themata such as moral/immoral or clean/unclean may underlie social representations in such a way that leads to systematically different treatment of those social objects or identities in society. As such, themata may be usefully applied to understanding social identity, positioning, and gender: the following three topics. In my analysis in later chapters, I will highlight themata in the data to clarify the functions of respondents' social representations of burrnesha.

SOCIAL IDENTITY

In the 1970's, Tajfel & Turner (1979) began developing their seminal Social Identity Theory to explore the ways in which people identify with others to form social groups. Social identity "consists […] of those aspects of an individual's self-image that derive from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging" (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 40). Tajfel & Turner (1979) noted that the process of identification goes beyond the recognition of similar characteristics between oneself and others. It requires that we see ourselves as "members of discrete and discontinuous categories – that is, 'groups'" (p. 39). As part of this process, it is not enough that a person is seen by others as belonging to a given social category, they must perceive themselves as such; they must *internalize* the social identity. The theory has paid particular attention to in-group/out-group dynamics, including competition and conflict. Their experimental findings led to the "minimal group" paradigm, which shows that people will form

an in-group identity based on any arbitrary commonality that is made salient between members. This in-group identity is also dependent on its opposition to one or more out-groups and leads to "in-group favoritism and discrimination against the out-group" (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 39).

While SRT and Social Identity Theory are pragmatically differentiated within the field of psychology, SRT tends to treat the two perspectives as highly compatible and in some cases mutually dependent. There is theoretical diversity in each paradigm, as well as some epistemological and terminological differences between them (Marková, 2007). However, both acknowledge and embrace the impact of context; social identity emerges from the interaction between the individual and the context in which she finds herself. People usually (if not always) have the potential to evoke multiple identities, and the one that is activated at any given time is in part the result of social context (Liu & László, 2007). The relationship between social representations and social identity is particularly salient in the context of microgenesis. In that process, social identity is dynamically negotiated as part of the pragmatic communication that occurs during interaction. Here, we can see the overlap between the two theoretical perspectives.

Considering this theoretical compatibility, many SRT researchers have explored in more detail the mechanisms connecting social representations and social identity. First of all, these authors have established the distinction between the two constructs. While social identities are a type of social representation, not all social representations are social identities (Marková, 2007). Meanwhile, we can hold a social representation about a social identity without internalizing the social identity itself. For that reason, a girl and a boy may share the same social representations of both "girl" and "boy", but hold different social identities (girl versus boy) based on the way that they position themselves (and are positioned by their social environment) in relation to those representations. Duveen & Lloyd (1990) succinctly described this:

> It is as social identities that social representations become psychologically active for individuals. Thus we can say that in expressing or asserting a social identity individuals draw on the resources made available through social representations. As this formulation implies, there is a distinction between social identities and social representations. Our own research on gender has shown that the same social representation can support distinct social identities. As we note in our chapter, in many respects boys and girls develop similar representations of gender, but they do not behave in similar ways. (p. 7)

Thus, social identities emerge from the representational field. In that sense, representations precede identities, and the nature of social identities is contingent upon the dynamics of representational field more generally (Duveen, 2001).

In their earlier work, Duveen & Lloyd (1986) noted that not all social representations are equally significant to children during development, and those that determine their social identity are among the more significant. Adopting a particular social identity allows the individual to understand their social position in relation to other social categories. On the one hand, adopting these social representations allows us to communicate effectively with others in our community. On the other hand, it allows us to meet others' expectations about our behavior, and thereby participate in the social life of our in-group. This knowledge includes an understanding of our social position relative to others around us (Duveen & Lloyd, 1986).

Howarth (2002) highlighted the ways in which members of a stigmatized social group strive for a more positive self-image by negotiating social representations. In her work, she evaluated focus groups of adolescents from Brixton, a highly stigmatized neighborhood of London. These interviews focused on adolescents' thoughts about Brixton itself. Howarth found that:

> In taking on the representations that others have of their group(s), and challenging these representations, adolescents re-evaluate representations of Brixton. In this way, they turn stigma into positive versions of where they live and who they are. The elaboration and rejection of particular representations is, therefore, a crucial part of the co-construction of positive social identities. (p. 156)

Howarth's work demonstrates social identity contruction is contingent upon a negotiation of social representations. This issue is relevant to the social representations of burrnesha because these are social identities.

Power and Social Positioning

Tajfel & Turner (1986) noted that "The aim of [social group] differentiation is to maintain or achieve superiority over an out-group on some dimensions" (p. 284). This means that power dynamics are inevitable in the articulation of social identity. Because of this, power

dynamics are highly relevant to SRT (Staerklé, Clémence, & Spini, 2011), to the extent that "as well as enabling individuals to sustain a stable sense of themselves and the world they inhabit, identities also project individuals into a social world marked by a complex set of relationships between social groups" (Duveen, 2001, p. 191). Elcheroth, Doise, & Reicher (2011) took this a step further and argued that "any theory about social representations is fundamentally a theory of social *conflict*" (Elcheroth, Doise, & Reicher, 2011, p. 746; emphasis in original). SRT allows us to evaluate how powerful social groups use and transform social representations to "mobilize ingroups and to delegitimize outgroups" (Staerklé, Clémence, & Spini, 2011, p. 762). This sub-section will discuss some of the ways we can observe and analyze power from an SRT perspective.

Beginning from a sociogenetic perspective, one of the ways in which Moscovici explored social power was by distinguishing between hegemonic, emancipated, polemical representations. Hegemonic representations, like Durkheim's collective representations, are widely shared by most of the members of the social group. "[U]niform and coercive" (Moscovici, 1988, p. 221), they allow no space for alternative representations (Gillespie, 2008). In contrast, emancipated representations emerge within subgroups, and can be shared and mutually elaborated between different groups. In other words, they easily come into contact and dialogue with alternative representations. This allows the subject to understand and engage with the multiple available representations in a pluralistic society without needing to subscribe to more than one at a time (Gillespie, 2008). Finally, polemical representations are characterized by controversy and social conflict. Unlike hegemonic representations, they are not shared by all members of the general population. The elaboration and negotiation of these representations reflect the conflict between the relevant social groups (Moscovici, 1988). Polemical representations use semantic barriers to limit the elaboration or adoption of alternative representations, usually focusing on one particular alternative representation in discourse. Representations can and do transform from one type to another (e.g., from hegemonic to polemical), and these transformations reveal the dynamic relationships between different factions of a society (Gillespie, 2008).

Moving from sociogenesis to microgenesis, social power is evident in individual interactions as well. Individuals strategically negotiate the multiple representations and social identities available to them over the course of a conversation. Because social representations are

inherently social, their construction and content include information about the relative social positions of the interlocutors.

Interest in the process of negotiating one's social identity led to the concept of social positioning, especially articulated by Gerard Duveen. This is not to be confused with Rom Harre's Social Positioning Theory. The two concepts are similar and related, but distinct. Duveen's conception considers how individuals situate their own identity in relation to social representations. This perspective focuses on the interaction between the construction of representations as a collective process and the negotiation of an individual's identity in relation to those representations (Andreouli, 2010). Duveen (2001) articulates the relevance of power in understanding social identity:

> […] to initiate the discussion of identity in the motivational drive to acquire a positive self- concept is to start from the wrong place. Before it becomes thematized as a struggle for the individual, an identity is first a social location, a space made available within the representational structures of the social world. It is this which gives categorizations their power, not categorizations which determine identities. The fundamental problem with social identity theory is that it offers a theory of the consequences of categorization, but is mute on the question of why individuals should categorize themselves in particular ways. Why is it that young children come to categorize themselves in terms of gender? The answer might seem to be extraordinarily obvious – gender is one of the central dimensions of power in our societies, and as such is articulated in a representational field which not merely surrounds the child from the moment of their birth, but can even predate their conception in the hopes, wishes, fears, and anxieties of their parents. But if we follow social identity theory we find there is no means for grasping this priority of representations over identities. To paraphrase a famous dictum of Sartre's we can say that representations precede identities. And just as in Sartre's analysis, essence is a projective work of experience, so we can say that identities take shape through the engagement of the individual in the world of representations. (p. 192)

Duveen demonstrates how social identities are situated in a rich representational field. As such, social power dynamics are an inevitable aspect of those identities as they activate a broad range of meaning. Consequently, "individuals […] come to have a sense of who they are through a recognition of their *position* within the symbolic space of their culture." (Duveen G. , 2001, p. 183; my emphasis).

Thus, positioning is intimately connected to social power, as individuals seek to communicate their status and relationship to social norms. We can see this in how children

simultaneously negotiate identities of gender and expertise. Both identity dimensions (gender and expertise) imply a power asymmetry whereby males and experts occupy a more powerful social position than females and novices, respectively. When the female is the expert in a topic that she is helping a male novice to understand, the power asymmetries "cancel each other out" so to speak, leaving the pair in a more balanced social position and facilitating learning. This example, called the *Fm (female expert-male novice) effect*, demonstrates how social identities emerge from social contexts rather than exist as fixed characteristics of an individual (Psaltis, 2015).

Howarth (2006) argued that social representations not only passively reflect power asymmetries, but they must also be understood as an integral aspect of social action. Here, she expands on the seriousness of the implications of social representations:

> I would argue that the reproduction of power relations depends on the continuous and creative (ab)use of representations that mystify, naturalize and legitimatize access to power. Social representations emobody and define the experience of reality, determining its boundaries, its significance and its relationships (Moscovici, 1990; Purkhardt, 1993). Different representations speak to different interests and so silence, or at least muffle, others. They both extend and limit possibilities. Representations therefore support existing institutionalized relationships and so maintain relations of power in the social order (Augoustinos & Walker, 1995). They are drawn on both to naturalize and legitimize exclusion and othering as well as to critique and challenge such stereotypes and marginalizing practices. To understand this fully we need to put the theory of social representations into an ideological framework. (p.79)

Howarth (2006) situated this discussion in a broader discourse about the role of SRT in problematizing the social order. She argued that while SRT is underdeveloped in this aspect, it is well-equipped to do so.

The pluralism of Albanian society (Dervishi, 2014) implies social and economic asymmetries throughout the country, especially as a consequence of democratization. Parts of the country, such as the capital Tirana, have undergone considerable economic development, paired with increased contact with Western culture. Other regions of the country, such as the North, have remained comparatively isolated and underdeveloped. I expected that these internal dynamics would reflect an asymmetry of power, based on the unequal distribution of political

and economic resources. I expected these economic and social asymmetries to be reflected in social representations of burrnesha between different Albanian regions.

GENDER

Among the social identities that are especially salient for individuals is gender. As we know, this topic is of particular relevance to the present research. Gender, as a social representation, has its own idiosyncrasies, many of which have been described by SRT research. This sub-section will discuss some of the special considerations of gender as a social representation by drawing on that research.

Past research may not be directly or wholly comparable to the present study, seeing as a) the present research is more concerned with the social representations of burrnesha rather than of women and men *per se*; and b) social (historical, political, cultural, etc.) context is integral to SRT analysis, but Albanian culture is not represented by the research I have found. Nevertheless, representations of gender are implicated in the representations of burrnesha, as a social group that contradicts gender norms. Despite differences in cultural contexts, there may be similarities in the ways that gender is represented even across contexts. Unequal gender status, affording males higher status than females, is close to a cultural universal (Ortner, 1972). The goal of the present research is not to evaluate this claim, however the possibility that it is true may indicate similarities between social representations across cultural contexts, or at least similarities in the way social representations of gender can be studied.

When treating gender as a special type of social representation and social identity, SRT means that "[a]mong the representations which structure children's lives, gender is central" (Wagner, et al., 1999, p. 101). As a semiotic system it is "one of the earliest conceptual systems to develop in children's understanding of the world" (Duveen & Lloyd, 1986, p. 223). It is one of the first social representations that children use to categorize the world around them, and to identify themselves; Wagner et al. (1999) cited research by Duveen & Shields (1985) and Rubin, Provenzano & Luria (1974), respectively, to support these claims. Duveen & Lloyd (1986) also noted that representations of gender have high significance for children's psycho-social

development. Gender is particularly apt to a discussion of social identity as a social representation because of the ubiquity of the categories, female-male binarism, the social obligation of adhering to these categories, and its function as a semiotic system (Duveen & Lloyd, 1986).

Lloyd & Duveen (1990) researched the social representations of gender among children. In their work, they treated the social representations of gender as a semiotic system wherein material culture and behavior function as signs that indicate gender category. During development, children gradually adopt these social representations in order to understand the signs in the world around them as well as reproduce them. Such signs are often linguistic, but not exclusively: they may also include toys and fashion. The authors noted that *signs*, as one type of signifier in a semiotic system, have a relatively arbitrary relationship to the concepts they signify (compared to other types of signifiers: *signals* and *symbols*). For example, the relationship between dolls (the sign) and femininity (the signified concept) is relatively arbitrary. The association between the two is learned with time, contributing to the individual's social representations of femininity overall. At first the association is context dependent, but gradually becomes decontextualized and, consequently, consensual within its respective social group. In this sense, this process fulfills the "function of social representations […] to transform the arbitrary into the consensual, thereby facilitating communication" (Lloyd & Duveen, 1990, p. 30).

The primary focus of the present research is not to describe the social representations of women, men, or gender *per se* in Albanian society. However, those representations are integral aspects of the social representations of burrnesha. The ways in which gender representations are strategically employed in the representations of burrnesha is connected to social positioning and power dynamics within the social group. In my analysis, I approached the elements of the representations as signs in a semiotic system. For example, how did certain artifacts (e.g., clothing), behaviors, or linguistic elements signify burrneshas' membership in a female or male social category?

FINAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

So far, I have outlined SRT in general and in several of its specific aspects. Although this description was far from exhaustive, I focused on those conceptual issues that were most fundamental to the theory and relevant to the present research.

In each sub-section, I connected the respective topic to the context of burrnesha. The purpose of this was to demonstrate through a collection of cases why SRT would be a useful framework to explore the custom of burrnesha. I did not intend to make premature analyses, as doing so could run the risk of reading expected results into the data during the final analysis. However, a degree of analysis is nearly inevitable in the process of evaluating the appropriateness of a given theory. For example, what elements, such as virginity, family collectivism, and patriarchy, constitute the content of representations of burrnesha? How did respondents use these mechanisms in such a way as to make gender non-conformity acceptable and even honorable in the context of burrnesha? Through this evaluation, I concluded that SRT would be an appropriate framework for this research.

Preliminary questions such as those above suggested advantages of using an SRT framework. Upon further exploration of the theory, I identified several other more general advantages. First is the impression that the burrneshas' communities perceive them in ways that systematically differ from their actual lived experiences. This fits with SRT's constructionist approach. Second, SRT is well-suited towards an analysis of phenomena that are undergoing change, which, as we have seen in Chapter 2, is applicable to burrnesha and Albanian society in general. Finally, SRT would allow me not only to compare social representations of burrnesha within different social groups but also to connect those differences to the distinctive elements of each social context in which they are embedded.

Once I determined that SRT was appropriate, the next step was to frame my general, preliminary questions within the SRT perspective. Below are the three specific research questions with which I carried out the rest of the present study:

1. What is the content and structure of the dominant social representation of burrnesha?

2. How does the dominant representation of burrnesha compare to other salient representations of burrnesha? How do differences between them reflect social positioning processes?
3. What is burrnesha's social representation of themselves and how does it compare to the dominant social representation held by community respondents as per research question 1? How do differences between these representations reflect social positioning processes?

Generally speaking, these questions called for a description of the content of social representations of burrnesha. The second and third questions also called for a comparison between different representations. The following chapter elaborates on how I designed the research to evaluate these questions.

I would like to reiterate several of the issues that I did *not* address in this research. I chose not to investigate highly sensitive topics, such as those related to sexual behavior or orientation, or other intimate information such as menstruation or breast-binding. I did not investigate core gender identity, partly because this could also be potentially sensitive but also because to do so would rely on a specific vocabulary and general worldview that I have reason to believe is not shared between the research team and the respondents (see Chapter 2).

CHAPTER 3 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I discussed the theoretical framework within which I situated the present research. Overall, I have attempted to demonstrate the connection between the content of the research and the appropriateness of the theory selected. I determined that Social Representations Theory (SRT) would provide the structure to explore these new questions. By focusing on knowledge as construction, it would allow me to evaluate multiple groups' perspectives of burrnesha. Meanwhile, SRT would allow me to investigate other aspects of representations of burrnesha, including structure, power, context, and identity. In this discussion, I also touched on the social representations of gender due to its distinctive characteristics and functions in social life.

SRT allowed me to determine the final research questions of the present study. These questions draw on the multiple conceptual issues that I discussed throughout this chapter. From this point, I will expand this theoretical discussion into a description of the methods I employed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4: METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION

CHAPTER 4 INTRODUCTION

Having presented my research questions in the previous chapter, I will now describe the methods I used and the data collection that I carried out. I will begin by explaining why I used qualitative methodology and interview methods. Then I will discuss the development of the interview guides before outlining the data collection I conducted during fieldwork. This will include a description of the respondent groups and selection process. I will describe the steps involved in analysis and end by discussing the project's quality management, limitations, and ethics approval.

METHODOLOGY

For this study I used qualitative methodology. There are three primary reasons for this. First, a qualitative approach was appropriate given the exploratory nature of this research. Because this research is novel, I would not be able to predict all the themes relevant to the representations of burrnesha. Specifically, this project benefited from the rich content and relatively flexible implementation of qualitative methodology. The rich content would allow me to identify unexpected themes; flexibility would allow me to explore those themes as they arose.

Second, the research questions are descriptive. I asked *how* respondents construct social representations of burrnesha. This type of question lends itself toward thick descriptions of respondents' views and their social contexts (Leavy, 2014). As Flick (1994) explains, research questions that ask, "'how' instead of 'how much' can be pursued and answered more appropriately by using qualitative methods aiming at descriptions instead of immediate explanation" (p. 188). Bion et al. (2000) expanded on the descriptive nature of qualitative research:

> The real purpose of qualitative research is not counting opinions or people but rather exploring the range of opinions, the different representations of the issue. Given a particular social milieu, for example the medical profession, what one is interested in

> finding out is the variety of views on the issue in question, for example homeopathy, and crucially what underlies and justifies these different viewpoints. (p. 43)

In the present case, my interest was in describing the range of representations of burrnesha. Given Flick's (1994) and Bion et al.'s (2000) views, qualitative research provided the means for achieving this goal.

Third, qualitative methodology is compatible with the theoretical framework of this project. In general, SRT presents some methodological considerations, although it does not demand specific methods. On the contrary, it views diversity of quantitative and qualitative methods as a strength. It is more important that the specific methods suit the research question at hand (Flick, Foster, & Caillaud, 2015). Nevertheless, SRT lends itself well to qualitative methodology, especially at the beginning stages of a project. This is in part because SRT places considerable emphasis on social context (Flick, 2000). In using SRT, I wanted to evaluate the relationship between representations of burrnesha and the broader social context in which they are situated. Furthermore, my research questions were situated within a constructivist epistemological framework, asking how respondents construct representations of burrnesha. Qualitative methodology is well-suited to SRT and constructivism as it provides the structure to systematically interpreting rich data.

In general, qualitative research treats the truth as "contingent, contextual, and multiple" (Leavy, 2014, p. 3). As such, qualitative analysis evaluates the meanings of behaviors and language as elements of subjective social experience. This calls for considerable interpretation on the part of the researcher, with implications for research methods, analysis, and conclusions. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research does not try to completely eliminate bias because it accepts that bias is inevitable. Instead, it includes an evaluation of bias as part of the research itself, interested in how reality is constructed within the context of the relationship between the researcher, respondents, and other aspects of the research. Academic rigor is achieved by "including and documenting multiple perspectives on the focus of the inquiry." (Spencer, Pryce, & Walsh, 2014, p. 83).

Among qualitative methods, I used semi-structured interviews. Interviews are useful for understanding respondents' worldview and connecting it to context (Bion, et al., 2000;

Brinkmann, 2014; Flick, 1994). As such, they are well-suited for descriptive research goals (Flick, Foster, & Caillaud, 2015). There are concerns about interviews constituting an artificial social context, removed from the arena in which social interaction occurs naturally. Respondents may omit or modify their responses if elements of their representation are stigmatized, unconscious, taken for granted, or difficult to express in words (Flick, Foster, & Caillaud, 2015). To account for the shortcomings of interviews, it is important to consider the research context in analysis, which I will do later in this chapter and in the analysis chapters. This will avoid taking interview data "as an unproblematic, direct, and universal source of knowledge" (Brinkmann, Jacobsen, & Kristiansen, 2014, p. 279). In the Discussion Chapter, I will discuss ways of mitigating the limitations of interviewing through future research.

RESEARCH MATERIALS

In this section I will describe how I developed the interview guides. The guides themselves can be found in Appendices D and E.

The purpose of the guide for semi-structured interviews is to help the researcher cover the topics of interest and follow a pre-determined transition between them. However, being semi-structured, the interviews were not strictly bound to the guides (Bion, et al., 2000). This flexibility was instrumental in a) probing relevant but unexpected topics that emerged; b) gradually developing the original guide to be more precise, in-depth, and relevant; c) facilitating a sense of a natural conversation; and d) ensuring respondents' psychological comfort.

There were four respondent groups in this study: one group of burrnesha, and three *community respondent groups* of adult women and men who were *not* burrnesha. I developed two interview guides: one for burrnesha, and one to be used for all three regional respondent groups. To develop these guides, I relied on the preparations listed in the previous section, background literature, discussion with academic experts and native Albanians, the SRT framework, and the episodic interview style. The episodic interview style is largely based on the principles of the narrative interview style. Therefore, I will describe the relevant elements of narrative interviewing before presenting the specific characteristics of episodic interviewing.

The narrative interview is based on the principle that people understand their experiences of the world by conforming them to story schemas, or narratives (Abell, et al., 2000; Bauer, et al., 2000; Esin, Fathi, & Squire, 2014). As a method, it fits well within a constructivist approach as it allows us to examine the ways in which people construct their reality, connecting various aspects of an issue within the structure of a story (Esin, Fathi, & Squire, 2014). There are various implications of this appraoch. First, it encourages the researcher to evoke narratives through their questions. It is important to limit interviewer prompting to allow the respondent to speak uninterrupted on the topic. This should allow the respondent to construct their narrative in its entire structure, including the "beginning, middle, and end" elements that characterize a story schema. All these elements in concert contribute to understanding the respondent's view of the topic. Only after the interviewer has sensed that the narrative has come to its end should questioning begin. These questions should aim to elaborate and clarify the events of the narrative using words and phrases used by the respondent herself. The purpose of this is to explore more deeply the respondent's conception of the issue as opposed to imposing the researcher's conception onto them (Abell, et al., 2000).

A second implication refers to the meanings conveyed by respondents. Bauer et al (2000) explained that people simultaneously negotiate the relationship between the experience and story internally and negotiate the telling of the story to the listener. This indicates that the respondent uses concepts that are relevant to both themselves and the listener. This is a consideration for analysis.

The episodic interview style is built on the narrative interview. However, it distinguishes between episodic and semantic knowledge. Episodic knowledge stems from memories of events and is comparatively specific and concrete. By contrast, semantic knowledge is about what concepts mean, usually in abstract or decontextualized terms. Therefore, the episodic interview encourages the respondent to use narratives to explore an issue through concrete everyday examples *and* overarching theoretical extrapolations (Flick, 2000).

Bauer et al. (2000) proposed a nine-phase episodic interview structure addressing this range of knowledge. The first and last phases do not take place during the interview but consist of preparation and analysis, respectively. The intermediate seven steps (2-8) are as follows: 2)

introduce the interview, orienting the respondent to the topic and setting their expectations; 3) explore the respondent's personal definition of the topic, and particularly salient encounters they have had with it; 4) probe the relevance of the topic to the respondent's everyday life in general, exploring what is typical for them in concrete terms; 5) explore the key issues based on the research questions; 6) expand to more general relevant issues; 7) evaluation of the interview itself, asking the respondent for feedback on their experience; and 8) documentation of the interview, including audio recording and note-taking that can happen in person but also transcription and later reflections that happen outside of the interview.

This structure is designed to evoke those two types of knowledge. Phase 3 asks the respondent to reveal their semantic knowledge on the topic before transitioning to their episodic knowledge by exploring events such as their first or most significant encounter. Here we also see narrative interviewing at play, encouraging the respondent to structure their response in a story schema. In phase 4 the focus is still on concrete, episodic knowledge, but transitions into more abstract, general questions. Probing here can also focus on the issues that are particularly relevant to the research questions. Phases 5 and 6 broaden the discussion to even more abstract and general aspects of the issues.

The present research was based on this structure but did not follow it strictly. I deviated from the structure in order to: a) prioritize particular topics of interest, since this is novel, exploratory research; b) avoid taking too much time, as respondents often had little time to spare; and c) respond to the idiosyncrasies of the topic. For example, I did not ask for respondents' definition of "burrneshe" until later in the interview than the episodic interview suggests. This is because "burrneshe" has multiple meanings, and not all women who live as men are considered burrnesha. Therefore, I wanted to probe respondents' responses to photos of women living as men before moving on to "burrnesha". As part of this process of interview development, I piloted the guides with members of my research group and with native Albanians, which I explain in more detail in the Reflexivity section. Below, I will describe the overall interview structure and how it was informed by theoretical considerations, such as the episodic interview style.

In 2016 I interviewed burrnesha. For this purpose, I developed an interview guide to evaluate social roles (according to Eagly's Social Role Theory; see Chapter 4) and how social roles influence the internalization of gender identity and other gendered attitudes (Appendix E). During data collection, however, I added questions related to respondents' social representations of burrnesha (e.g., *Do you consider yourself to be a burrneshe?)*. These questions, therefore, were asked to some but not all the respondents.

In 2017, I interviewed community respondents on their social representations of burrnesha. I began the interview by presenting the respondent with two photos of burrnesha. The use of visual aids is not uncommon in the initiation phase of narrative-based interviews (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). I had two primary reasons for doing this. The first was to clearly establish the topic of the interview, especially seeing as the word "burrnesha" has multiple definitions. The second purpose was to analyze respondents' reactions to seeing women living as men. I was interested in whether respondents could tell that they were burrnesha and what term they would spontaneously use to describe them. During data collection I found that the photos were useful in that they additionally stimulated discussion of related topics such as ceremony and poverty.

The photos I used for community respondent interviews are below (Figure 10 and Figure 11). Both are of deceased burrnesha and were taken by Young (2001) about 20 years ago during her own research fieldwork. The first photo is of Pashko (Figure 10). I will refer to this photo as Photo 1 in this and future chapters. In the photograph, Pashko is looking at the camera with a smile while raising a shot glass of raki, a strong, traditional liquor. You can see that he is seated at a table and there are other people behind him. He is dressed in a button-down shirt and has a cigarette behind his ear. Respondents usually correctly interpreted this scene as a wedding. The second photo (Photo 2; Figure 11) is of Sokol. He is sitting on a horse with a rough saddle. Standing next to the horse is a bearded middle-aged man. They are in a field. Compared to Photo 1, Sokol's clothing looks less formal and in poorer condition. He is also wearing a qeleshe, a traditional white cap worn only by men (or burrnesha).

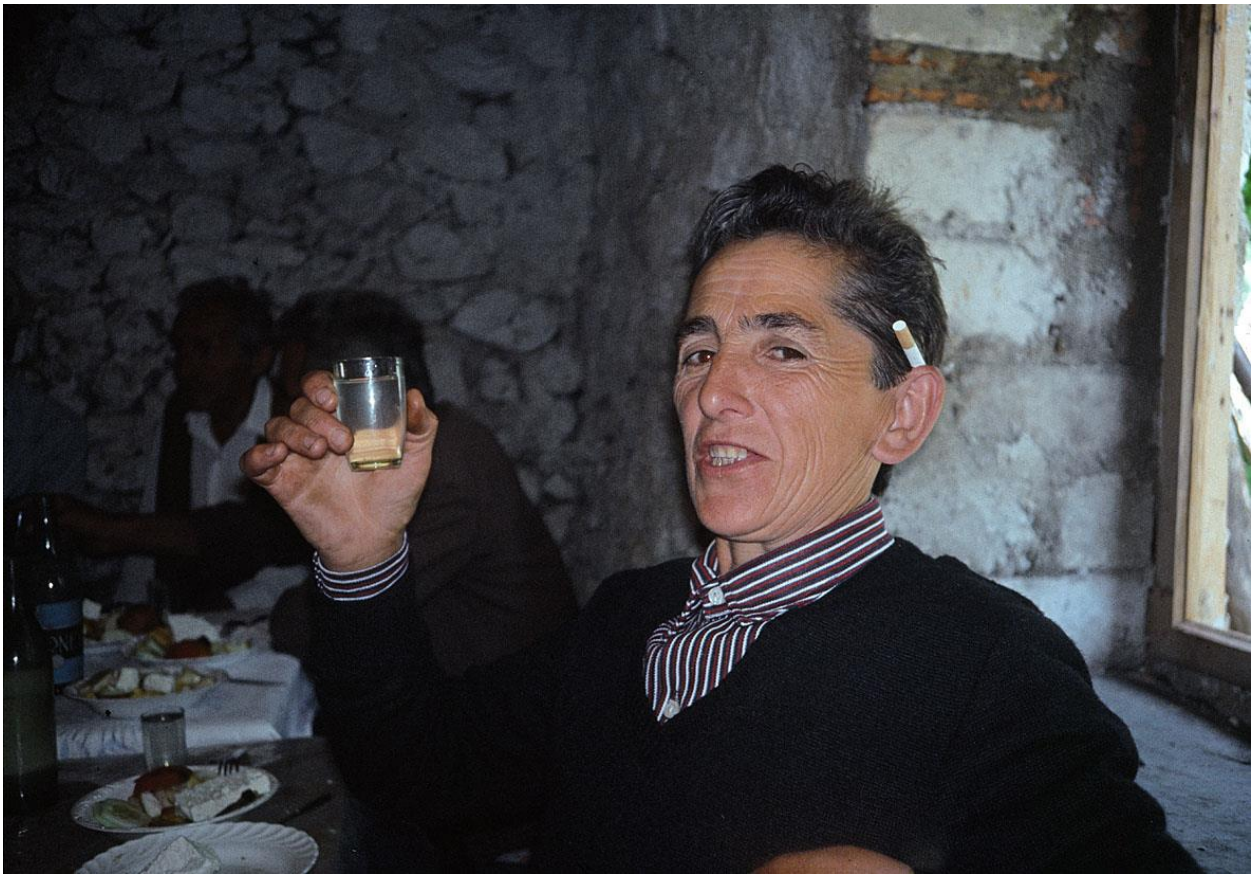

FIGURE 10: INTERVIEW PHOTO 1

FIGURE 11: INTERVIEW PHOTO 2

After asking respondents to discuss these photos, I asked a series of questions related to different aspects of the custom. These covered concrete events (e.g., *Have you ever met a person like this? Tell me about the first time you met*.) and more conceptual issues (e.g., *Who can become a burrneshe?*). The goal was to include episodic and semantic understanding of the custom, as per the episodic interview style. The interview guide is in Appendix D.

I did not ask respondents about burrneshas' sexual orientation or behavior. This would have been considered highly inappropriate and possibly offensive due to the heteronormativity and general sexual conservativism I described in Chapter 2. In the few cases when respondents brought up sexual topics, I relied on my Albanian guide's discretion to determine whether it would be appropriate to pursue the topic further. Quite often, the respondent seemed too uncomfortable to do so.

Although I targeted this guide towards people who had heard of the custom before, I was prepared for respondents who had not. I did not intend to exclude them. On the contrary, I thought it would be valuable to see how an Albanian responded to and interpreted the custom upon learning about it for the first time. There was only one respondent who had not heard of the custom. In that case, I explained that these women lived as men according to old, local custom. I then asked the respondent to imagine what their motivations for doing so could be and what they thought of such a custom.

At the end of the interviews, I asked respondents demographic questions; these can also be found in Appendices D and E.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

I conducted interviews with burrnesha either in their homes or at a café, according to their preference. In general, the burrneshe was alone except in one case where he expressed considerable discomfort with not having his sister and niece present in the same room. In analysing his interview, I considered whether or not this may have impacted his responses. I conducted all community respondent interviews with one respondent at a time and in public places such as cafes. Before the interview began, I briefed respondents (Appendix A) and asked for consent (Appendix B) according to ethics approval requirements. When requesting interviews and briefing respondents, I told them that we would be speaking about Albanian culture and gender norms generally. I did not tell them that it would be about burrnesha because I wanted to evaluate their reaction to the photos without setting their expectations. Furthermore, I did not want respondents to research burrnesha before the interview in an effort to "prepare".

I audio recorded all interviews, as all respondents gave their consent for it. I used this in order to help me focus on what was being said instead of taking notes during the interview (Bion, et al., 2000). Additionally, this facilitated the sense that the interview was more of a natural conversation by minimizing the notes I needed to take during the interview itself. In this way, all details were captured, even those that might not have seemed important at the time of interview. At the end of all interviews, I debriefed respondents (Appendix F) and offered financial

compensation for their participation. The interview protocol submitted for ethics approval can be found in Appendix C.

DATA COLLECTION

This section will discuss data collection. I will begin by describing the fieldwork I carried out before discussing respondent selection and funding.

In order to interview Albanian respondents, I took two field trips to Albania. The first took place over three months in the summer of 2016 during which I only interviewed burrnesha. The following took place over 4.5 months in the summer of 2017 during which I interviewed community respondents. In order to manage the practical, linguistic, and cultural challenges of this project, I employed a research assistant, Mr. Ardit Zaja, during fieldwork. His primary role was to translate and/or facilitate interviews in person and help manage practical aspects of fieldwork. Besides that, he supported this project in numerous other ways which I describe in the Reflexivity section.

RESPONDENT SELECTION

This sub-section will focus on the respondents included in this study. After presenting theoretical considerations in selection criteria, I will go on to describe the selection process and respondent groups in greater detail.

Both SRT and qualitative methodology present considerations for respondent selection. SRT is concerned with the ways a social group gives rise to social representations. Meanwhile, qualitative research explores the range of different opinions on a topic. Therefore, my goal was to identify social groups that represented the range of representations of burrnesha. Although much psychological research selects and organizes respondents based on demographic background, "[a]n alternative way of thinking about segmentation is to use 'natural' rather than statistical or taxonomic groups." (Bion, et al., 2000, p. 42). Consensual social representations may correspond to these natural groups more so than demographic categories. Therefore, I was

interested in identifying and selecting from such natural groups. For burrnesha respondents, this was relatively straightforward: there are few in existence and I aimed to speak with as many as I could contact who would be willing to provide an interview.

As for the community respondents, I targeted three groups based on region. I considered some demographic variables for the regional groups; however, the primary selection criterion was region of origin. I describe each respondent group in the following sub-sections. Having identified community respondent groups, I could then use corpus construction to guide respondent selection. The corpus is the body of data to be used. The number of respondents depends on reaching saturation, meaning that full range of representations has been approximated in the corpus (Bauer & Aarts, 2000; Gaskell & Bauer, 2000). I aimed to interview 15-20 respondents from each region, determining that such a range would likely reach saturation while being feasible within the practical constraints of the study.

The three community respondent regions were Tropoja, Shkoder, and Tirana. I chose these because of their range in economic development and their different relationships to the custom of burrnesha. Although demographic variables were not primary selection criteria, I aimed to approximately match the respondent groups for age and gender. Other demographic factors (e.g., economic status, profession, education, and religion) differ systematically between these regions so I did not attempt to match them, although I did take note of them for each respondent.

During my second field trip, I began data collection in Tropoja because, as the smallest respondent region, selection would be most limited. This would make it difficult to match this group to a more diverse group from Tirana, for example. I selected a group that was balanced for gender and represented as wide an age range as possible.

For all three community respondent groups, I selected respondents by asking acquaintances to recommend individuals who would be willing and able to provide an interview. As needed, I then asked those respondents to recommend further respondents, similar to snowball sampling. Although risking bias, this approach helped me establish trust and rapport with respondents. The Albanians I consulted on this matter did not believe that a more random technique, such as approaching strangers on the street, would have been culturally acceptable. I

attempted to mitigate potential bias by asking for respondent recommendations from diverse acquaintances. For example, I approached staff at my hostel, my guide's mother, journalists, and so on. Although a bias might remain, qualitative research accepts that some degree of bias in general is inevitable and resolves to evaluate it rather than claim to remove it completely (Cho & Trent, 2014).

Following, I will describe each of the respondent groups, with details on the selection process and, in the case of the community respondents, their regions. The purpose of this is to convey not only the region's relationship to the burrnesha custom but also the general context in which respondents' narratives are situated. I will also describe the respondents selected in terms of number, age range, and gender.

BURRNESHA

My selection criteria for the burrnesha respondents was that the person was a physiological woman living according to masculine norms who had been interviewed in the past as a burrneshe by a researcher or journalist. Some native Albanians have questioned whether some of the respondents I interviewed could be considered burrnesha. I did not see this as invalidating the data, but rather of theoretical interest. The distinction that some respondents made between burrnesha and women living as men who they did not consider burrnesha will be made clear in analysis.

Selection was challenging as burrnesha are scarce, live in remote areas, and often do not want to be interviewed due to age, illness, privacy, or negative past interview experiences. Through journalists, researchers, and Albanian acquaintances, I came to hear of 24 burrnesha. Of these, I was able to contact 16. 10 of these agreed to an interview. Of these 10, 6 had been recommended by one journalist. Two researchers put me in contact with one and two burrnesha, respectively. Finally, Mr. Zaja was in contact with another burrneshe that I interviewed. Any burrneshe who agreed to an interview was selected.

After 5 interviews I understood that a reconceptualization of the study's theoretical framework would be in order (see Chapter 4). Although this led to some inconsistency in the

questions I asked, I found that I still had a rich source of data across all respondents for understanding many aspects of their social representations. The following table (Table 1) demonstrates the burrnesha respondents age at interview, region, and age of transition associated with codes instead of their names.

Code	Age at interview	General Region	Age of transition
Af	87	Urban, central	~30 y. o.
B	60	Rural, northern	Childhood
D	62	Urban, central	Childhood
Gj	51	Rural, northern	Childhood
H	80	Rural, northern	Childhood
Il	37	Rural, northern	Childhood
M	50	Rural, central	Childhood
Li	67	Urban, northern	Childhood
Lu	51	Urban, northern	Childhood
Sh	82	Rural/urban, northern	Childhood

TABLE 1: BURRNESHA RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

BAJRAM CURRI AND TROPOJA

One of my community respondent groups was from Bajram Curri. Bajram Curri is the capital of the Tropoja Municipality of the Kukes Prefecture. It is in this region that the kanun and the custom of burrnesha have had been most active historically and today, although they are now diminishing. This region was important to include as it would provide the most "native" perspective on burrnesha. Respondents would be most likely to have heard of the tradition and to have met burrnesha.

As mentioned in previous chapters, the kanun was developed as a response to the adversity and lack of state structure in Albania's northernmost regions. As of 2012, the Kukes Prefecture had the highest poverty rates in the country (Betti, Bici, Neri, Sohnesen, & Thomo, 2018), likely in large part due to the regions isolation. Instat listed the average monthly

consumption of a typical household (two adults with children[4]) at 54,851 Albanian lek in 2015 (approximately £274[5]) (Instat, 2018).

In this region, I selected respondents in the town of Bajram Curri. With approximately 5,000 inhabitants as of 2011 (Bajram Curri (town), 2018), it is the most developed town of the region. The rest of the region is dominated by small villages where homes are sparse and means of communication are limited. As such, it would have been challenging to coordinate interviews within a short timeframe. Despite selecting respondents in Bajram Curri, many of them were from neighboring villages, so I refer to this group as *Tropoja*.

The final respondent group from Tropoja consisted of 15 respondents: 7 women and 8 men ranging from 26 to 61 years old. Although my upper target was 20 respondents, I stopped at 15 because I found that the last two respondents had heard through word of mouth what the topic of the interview was prior to meeting. I did not realize until partway through each of the two interviews that this was the case. I finished the interviews and chose to include them in my analysis with a note as to this issue so that I would consider their bias during analysis. I did not continue selecting respondents in Tropoja after this; Bajram Curri is a very small community where word of mouth spreads quickly. I was concerned that more villagers would find out about the nature of the project and compromise the research design.

SHKODER

Shkoder is a medium-sized Albanian city, with a population of 135,612 (Shkodër, 2019). Although it is in the north, it is not in the mountains. Consequently, it has greater access to social

[4] Instat does not specify how many children.
[5] Equivalent to approximately €384.

services and commerce. The population of Shkoder has contact both with less developed northern mountain regions and with more developed regions farther south, such as Tirana. On the one hand, many people come to Shkoder from rural areas (including Tropoja) for education or work. On the other hand, many Shkodrane go to Tirana for education or work. Instat lists the average monthly consumption of a typical household at 77,033 lek in 2015 (approximately £385[6]) (Instat, 2018).

Because of Shkoder's mixed population and level of development, it represents an intermediate social group between Tropoja and Tirana. Furthermore, while there are women who live as men in Shkoder, the custom is not as active as it is in Tropoja.

The final respondent group from Shkoder consisted of 16 respondents total, including 9 women and 7 men with an age range of 28 to 66 years old.

TIRANA

I included a respondent group from Tirana because this city is as removed as possible from the tradition of burrnesha while still being native Albanian. Tirana is the capital of Albania. With 1 million inhabitants (Instat, 2018), this city alone is home to about 1/3 of the country's total population. Although poor compared to other European capitals, it is the most economically developed place in Albania. Tirana's inhabitants have more contact with Western European culture than does the rest of the country. Instat lists the average monthly consumption of a typical household at 89,595 lek in 2015 (approximately £448[7]) (Instat, 2018).

[6] Equivalent to approximately €539
[7] Equivalent to approximately €627

The Tirana group consisted of 17 respondents, including 9 women and 8 men within an age range of 24 to 75 years old. The following table (Table 2) presents some basic information about each of the community respondent groups:

Region	Total N	N women	N men	Age range	Percent higher education	Religion
BC	15	7	8	26-61	28.6%	86.7% Muslim, 13.3% other
Shkoder	16	9	7	28-66	38.5%	81.3% Muslim, 18.7% Catholic
Tirana	17	9	8	24-75	57.1%	47% Muslim, 23.5% Catholic, 29.5% other

TABLE 2: COMMUNITY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

FUNDING

The financial costs of this research included: respondent compensation, research assistant compensation, Albanian language lessons, and practical support during fieldwork, such as transportation and accommodation. These costs were funded by several sources at the University of Cambridge, including the ESRC Discretionary Fund, the Department of Psychology Fieldwork Fund, the Murray Edwards College Rosemary Murray Academic Needs Fund, and the Murray Edwards College Research Grant.

ANALYTIC METHODS

With the data collected, the next step was analysis. In qualitative research, the broad aim of the analysis is to look for meanings and understanding. What is actually said is the data, but the analysis should go beyond accepting this at face value. The quest is for common content themes and the functions of these themes. (Bion, et al., 2000, p. 53)

As such, qualitative analysis requires an in-depth interpretation of what the respondents said, how they said it, and how their responses relate to broader social issues. Within the constructivist epistemological framework of this research, qualitative analysis allowed me to treat data as a co-construction between researcher and respondent (Roulston, 2013) that the

researcher may interpret according to the goals of the project (Trent & Cho, 2014). This approach implies that there can be multiple, and possibly conflicting, interpretations of data. However, some interpretations may be more "reasonable, convincing, and informative" (Trent & Cho, 2014, p. 641) than others. The value of interpretation lies in that "[i]t is only through interpretation that the researcher, as collaborator with unavoidable subjectivities, is able to construct unique, contextualized meaning. Interpretation then, in this sense, is knowledge construction" (Trent & Cho, 2014, p. 641). Understanding qualitative research as an interpretive process is relevant for evaluating all of the steps of analysis carried out in the present project: transcription, coding, and analysis through writing.

Transcription of audio data into text may seem like a more straightforward process than other aspects of qualitative analysis. However, even here we find considerable interpretation on the part of the researcher. Audio data is rich in meanings beyond the respondent's and researcher's choice of words. This can include intonation, volume, pauses, and more subtle expressions of emotion. Furthermore, audio data does not convey visual aspects of the interview, such as context or gestures, facial expressions, and other behavior. The researcher may use her discretion as to her treatment of non-verbal communication in transcription and analysis (Trent & Cho, 2014; Kowal & O'Connell, 2013). In my own work, I did not intend to include a fine-grained analysis of non-verbal communication. I did not believe that this was necessary given the specific goals, theoretical framework, and exploratory nature of this project. My transcriptions focused on accurately representing the words used by respondents. Nevertheless, I included notes on non-verbal cues that significantly influenced my interpretation of the words used. I have reported those cues where relevant in my written analyses.

From transcription, I moved on to the coding process. Coding in qualitative research involves representing the meaning of each expression (which may correspond to a sentence, phrase or in some cases paragraph) by a word or short phrase. These codes can later be organized according to categories and themes. The organization and relationships of codes become part of the overall analysis. The purpose of coding is to reduce, classify, and manage large volumes of data (Roulston, 2013; Saldaña, 2014). How codes are determined relies largely on the research questions, theoretical framework, and analytic technique of the research project.

In coding and analyzing the data, I drew on thematic analysis as a technique. I chose this technique because it is flexible, adaptable to different theoretical frameworks, and relatively straightforward for someone of my experience level to execute (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Flexibility was important due to the novelty of the research and the richness of the data collected; as I describe below, this allowed me to combine different types of codes (data-driven, theory-driven, semantic, and latent) in the interest of achieving an accurate description of respondent narratives that could be understood within the context of my specific research questions. The technique's theoretical adaptability meant that it would be compatible within my overall SRT framework. More generally speaking, thematic analysis was appropriate seeing as the research revolved around describing the content of social representations of burrnesha and respondent relationships to those representations, goals which thematic analysis is well positioned to achieve (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As interpretive processes, these decisions should be guided by the research goals and theoretical framework.

Some qualitative analysts, such as Schreier (2013), suggest piloting an initial coding frame before coding all of the interviews. Schreier (2013) outlined how to develop this frame based on parts of the corpus and urged the researcher not to alter this frame during the main coding phase. In discussing this with academic staff, I decided that doing so would make it difficult to incorporate unexpected themes into the final coding frame. Since this research is exploratory and includes a wide range of respondents, I wanted to be able to represent the diversity of themes that would emerge; representing such diversity is particularly important in qualitative research (Flick, 2011). Furthermore, I included a combination of data-driven and theory-driven, and semantic and latent codes, again to maximize sensitivity to unexpected themes within a relatively structured framework. I based theory-driven codes on previous research on burrnesha, including my own (Robertson, 2015) (e.g., *clothing*), or my specific SRT-based questions (e.g., *burrnesha are men*). Semantic codes described utterances at face value (e.g., *smoke cigarettes*) whereas in other instances I used codes to identify latent content (e.g., *female essence*). I did develop an initial coding frame through multiple readings of 9 interviews, three from each region chosen at random. Although I coded the remaining interviews using this frame, I added codes if needed to adequately represent their content. I redacted the coding of the initial interviews after coding all the other interviews ensure uniformity. The final lists of codes

are in Appendices G (for community respondents) and H (for burrnesha respondents). For the community respondents, I ended with 194 codes, which I organized into 32 subthemes and 15 themes. I used the same coding frame for both phases of analysis of these interviews, comparing the different ways and places in the interviews that themes emerged. For the burrnesha respondents, I ended with 213 codes, organized into 40 subthemes and 15 themes.

The next step of interview analysis consists in interpreting the data (now organized into codes, subthemes, and themes) through writing (Denzin, 2013; Roulston, 2013). In writing, "researchers consider assertions and propositions in light of prior research and theory in order to develop arguments. Researchers develop stories that convey the main ideas developed in data analysis and present data excerpts or stories to support assertions" (Roulston, 2013, p. 308). In the present case, the writing consists of the analysis chapters: 5, 6, and 7. I directed my interpretation of the data in consideration of the theoretical framework and the specific research questions at hand. In the first analysis, I identified the content and structure of the dominant social representation of burrnesha. In the second analysis, I shifted my attention to evaluating deviation from that dominant social representation. This included an analysis of social positioning processes enacted through the elaboration of different representations of burrnesha. In the third analysis, I identified burrnesha's representation of themselves and compared it to community respondents' dominant representation of burrnesha.

I will end this section with some brief notes on more practical considerations of my analytic methods. To transcribe the interviews from audio to text, I used NCH transcription software. Although I transcribed and checked the interviews myself, Mr. Zaja also checked and corrected all the transcriptions to ensure accuracy. I took notes regarding meaning conveyed by tone and ambiguous phrasing, as recommended by authors such as Roulston (2013). To code the transcripts, I used Atlas.ti software, which facilitates data management and evaluation. For all steps of analysis, I used the Albanian responses and mostly Albanian codes. I did this in order to preserve respondents' original meaning as much as possible (Roulston, 2013). I only translated sections of the data that would be reported. In translating excerpts to report, I aimed to strike a balance between conveying the respondents' overall meaning and preserving the use of relevant, individual words. Consequently, these translations may not always sound like natural speech.

The data analysis constitutes the following three chapters in which I present the dominant representation of burrnesha across community respondent interviews (Chapter 5), compare different representations among community respondents (Chapter 6), and compare community respondents' dominant representation to burrnesha's representation of themselves (Chapter 7).

REFLEXIVITY

As a cross-cultural study conducted on site, this project presented various practical and theoretical challenges. In this section, I reflect on the preparations I made in order to maximize the quality of this project.

For my MPhil at Cambridge (Robertson, 2015), I carried out one month of field work in Albania. During this time, I travelled in Tirana, Shkoder, and throughout the north. I carried out 17 individual and group interviews and gathered about 280 questionnaire responses among the Albanian public. This experience introduced me to the local infrastructure, geography, culture, and language. This preparation helped me to formulate the research questions and determine the theoretical framework for my PhD work. Furthermore, I developed a local social network that would later help me select respondents and explore theoretical issues.

Language was an important aspect of this project, both for theoretical and practical reasons. Qualitative research in general notes the role of language in constructing our reality (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008) and by extension the importance of analyzing the specific use of language (Bion, et al., 2000). This applies even to studies conducted in the researchers' native language; in fact, the specificity of the local language is a methodological shortcoming of interviewing in general (Becker & Geer, 1957). By the time I took my first PhD field trip, I had

been studying Albanian language (both standard and Geg dialects[8]) for two years. I did this to a) conduct interviews directly (without interpretation) as much as possible; b) analyze interviews in the original language; c) facilitate practical issues during fieldwork; and d) have greater access to Albanian-language resources. By the time of my second field trip in 2017 my proficiency was high enough that I could conduct the interviews myself in Albanian. However, an Mr. Zaja was always present during interviews and consulted during transcription, coding, and analysis (see Data Collection).

Before designing the interview guide and planning data collection, I conducted informational interviews with ten journalists and researchers who had worked with burrnesha. These interviews helped me identify multiple theoretical and practical issues relevant to my research design and analysis. For example, I identified topics that could offend burrnesha respondents and therefore should be avoided.

Once I had drafted an interview guide for the community respondents, I piloted it in English with two members of my research group. Based on insights and feedback from this, I made changes and piloted it again in Albanian with two native Albanians. These pilot interviews contributed to improving phrasing, transitions, and cultural relevance.

To interpret interviews and help me with practical issues during fieldwork, I employed Ardit Zaja as a local research assistant during both field trips. Mr. Zaja had professional experience in guiding and interpretation, as well as an academic background (BA and MA) in psychology. Furthermore, he was from the north (Shkoder). Consequently, he had knowledge of northern customs, access to local social networks, and fluency in both Geg and standard dialects. His primary role was to facilitate interviews in person. In 2016, he simultaneously interpreted the

[8] The north primarily uses the Geg dialect.

interviews. In 2017, although I conducted the interviews directly in Albanian, I understood that there would be limitations to my language proficiency. Therefore, Mr. Zaja was present during all interviews, prepared to correct misunderstandings and interpret if needed. He supported the project in other ways as well. He helped contact respondents, organize transportation, and translate ethics forms. In later stages of the project, he discussed transcription, coding, and analysis as needed. His input helped ensure linguistic as well as cultural and contextual accuracy. In accordance with my ethics approval, he signed a non-disclosure agreement in order to protect the data and he was compensated for his work.

I had considerable support from other native Albanians as well. These included friends, acquaintances, and academic contacts. I discussed linguistic, cultural, and theoretical issues with them. These discussions stimulated my ideas and developed my overall understanding of the concepts involved in this research. These contacts also helped me with aspects of data collection and fieldwork, such as design, piloting, and respondent selection. This improved the diversity of perspectives on my research, as opposed to relying solely on insight from Mr. Zaja. It would be impossible and unnecessary to list all these contacts and conversations. However, I would like to acknowledge the significant contributions they made to this project.

I end this section by acknowledging potential biases due to research design and how I hoped to mitigate them. First, the social stigma surrounding sexuality, LGBT+ communities, and homophobia might have made respondents wary of broaching these topics. For example, some respondents used indirect phrasing to connect burrnesha to homosexuality. They used phrases such as “They have the feelings of men”, which Mr. Zaja agreed was an allusion to same-sex sexual interest. That they avoided using terms such as *gay, lesbian, homosexual,* or *transgender* may have indicated their discomfort. Conversely, some respondents also seemed wary of appearing homophobic, using phrases such as “I don’t judge anyone, it’s none of my business” after alluding to same-sex sexual interest. Those respondents were primarily from Tirana, where pro-LGBT+ campaigns may have contributed to a stigma of homophobia. Consequently, these issues may be missing from the data even if they play a role in respondents’ social representations.

The presence of two interviewers (myself and Mr. Zaja) may have aggravated stigma and other issues. Respondents may have wanted to negotiate different stigmas that they assumed each of us, as a foreigner and an Albanian, had. Furthermore, the interviews may have lacked the intimacy of a one-on-one exchange (Brinkmann, 2014). However, I found notable advantages to having both of us present. During interviews in general, respondents may omit relevant information if they take it for granted or find it difficult to articulate (Becker & Geer, 1957). On the one hand, my presence encouraged respondents to elaborate issues that they might have taken for granted if they had been speaking to an Albanian. For example, many explained the role of the kanun in traditional culture. This likely would have seemed too obvious if they were speaking to an Albanian alone. On the other hand, sometimes respondents looked to Mr. Zaja to articulate issues that they found particularly difficult to communicate. Mr. Zaja was able to use his understanding of native concepts, assumptions, history, and expressions to interpret their meaning to me during the interview. This immediate feedback allowed me to avoid misunderstanding and direct the interview appropriately.

The last bias to evaluate is mine as the researcher. Qualitative methodology recognizes that the researcher cannot be extracted from the research itself (Leavy, 2014). This may include unintentionally modulating aspects of the study according to expectations, research goals, personal interests, worldview, and social power position. Therefore, the researcher reflexively evaluates these in order to understand her impact throughout the study (Leavy, 2014; Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008). Relevant aspects of my worldview may include a positive opinion of gender equality, which may have contributed to the salience of themes such as *patriarchy* in my analyses. My Western, middle-class upbringing may have made it difficult for me to understand the full significance of themes surrounding poverty and adversity. Additionally, this social position may have contributed to a power asymmetry between me and respondents. This may have influenced both of our engagement in the interview. In fact, this potential power asymmetry forms a significant aspect of my analysis in Chapter 6.

My bias can be mitigated by "including and documenting multiple perspectives on the focus of the inquiry." (Spencer, Pryce, & Walsh, 2014, p. 83). Throughout this chapter I have shown how I have benefitted from the insights of Albanologists, journalists and native

Albanians. This being a PhD dissertation, I have also been in discussion with numerous academic staff at the University of Cambridge and, at times, other universities.

Quality Management and Limitations

Throughout this chapter, I have mentioned some specific limitations of this research. These included interviewing as a non-natural research context; foreign culture and language, mitigated by consultation with native Albanians; selection bias, mitigated by diversifying the people to contact respondents; and establishing trust with respondents through mutual contacts and avoiding sensitive topics. This section will discuss further limitations and quality management strategies.

Evaluation of quality tends to be less standardized in qualitative than quantitative research (Gaskell & Bauer, 2000; Flick, 2011). Flick (2011) noted that this is in large part due to the diversity of methods in qualitative research. Therefore, he suggested that rigid checklists or standardized evaluation of specific methods may not be appropriate ways to evaluate quality. Instead, it may be more effective to use strategies that manage general issues. Evaluation of specific elements is still important. However, it may be most effective when tailored to the idiosyncrasies of the project at hand, rather than standardized across methods (Cho & Trent, 2014). In this section, I would like to consider the general strategies for quality management provided by Gaskell & Bauer (2000) before evaluating the more specific issues of the present research.

Gaskell & Bauer (2000) suggested that measurements of quality of quantitative research (validity, reliability, and representativeness) are not fully applicable to qualitative research. Instead, they proposed that *confidence* and *relevance* are appropriate equivalents. *Confidence* refers to the degree to which the research represents reality. *Relevance* is a consideration of the research's utility and importance. The authors recommended six specific criteria that reflect one or both of these dimensions: triangulation and reflexivity (confidence), transparency and procedural clarity (confidence), corpus construction (confidence and relevance), thick description (confidence and relevance), local surprise (relevance), and communicative validation

(relevance). Below, I present these six criteria as they apply to this project. In the Discussion Chapter, I will further explore those issues that will be easier for the reader to understand after having read the analyses.

Gaskell & Bauer (2000) present triangulation and reflexivity as interconnected processes: triangulation exposes inconsistencies that must be addressed through reflection. Flick (2011) outlined various types of triangulation, all that allow "an issue of research [to be] considered […] from at least two points" (p 42). According to his work, my research included *data triangulation* through multiple respondent groups, and *investigator triangulation* through collaboration with native Albanians. I will evaluate the value of these techniques in the Discussion Chapter after presenting the analyses. In future work, it may be worthwhile to include other types of triangulation, for example, by using multiple methods. This, however, was outside of the scope of the present project. In terms of reflexivity, I have included a section on Reflexivity in this chapter and integrated reflexive notes into my analysis in later chapters.

Naturally, transparency and procedural clarity facilitate the evaluation of research quality (Flick, 2011). This has been the focus of this chapter: I have aimed to provide a detailed account of the interview guide, respondent selection, and analytic methods, among other relevant issues. I have included original materials in the appendices. I have also aimed to report methodological considerations where relevant in my analyses and discussion.

Qualitative methods do not provide quantifiable markers of representativeness. Instead, we may evaluate saturation in the corpus construction (Gaskell & Bauer, 2000). Considering the present research goals, I reached saturation in terms of identifying a dominant representation of burrnesha and several secondary representations. Because the research goals of this project were relatively broad, the corpus construction was sufficient. Future research addressing more specific research questions may require a return to the field.

Thick description can be achieved by providing the reader with ample selections of data text and relevant contextual information (Gaskell & Bauer, 2000). In the analysis chapters, I have aimed to provide ample excerpts from the data. As for contextual information, I have provided this at multiple points in this dissertation. I presented a general background of Albanian society in Chapter 2. I have described the demographic profile of the present respondents in this

chapter (Respondent Selection). I will integrate other relevant contextual information into my analyses.

Gaskell & Bauer's (2000) fifth point suggested that relevance can be evaluated in part by the surprise that the research evokes in the reader. This surprise may be in relation to theoretical or common-sense expectations. The authors proposed that "In order to avoid the use of qualitative interviewing or text analysis as generators of citations that can be used to support preconceived ideas, any research needs to document the evidence with an account of confirmed and disconfirmed expectations" (p. 350). I will evaluate the application of this criterion to the present research in the Discussion Chapter, as I will rely on the reader's familiarity with the analyses.

These authors' final criterion is communicative validation. This refers to including respondents in the interpretation process. Doing so can improve the researcher's understanding the data. Respondents were reluctant to review the interview just after it had ended. Doing so seemed unnatural to them and they were often impatient to get on with their day. Contacting them at a later time would have been inappropriate and invasive, according to my Albanian acquaintances. Instead, I relied extensively on consulting Ardit and other acquaintances to help me design the project and interpret the data. In doing so, I am confident that this project was culturally appropriate and that my analyses represent a reasonable interpretation of the data. I have demonstrated this throughout this chapter and have been transparent about where and how I have relied on their help in interpretation in the analyses.

Gaskell & Bauer's (2000) formulation provides some general considerations of research quality. As I mentioned, qualitative researchers are generally encouraged to further consider quality within the scope of their specific research projects as well (Cho & Trent, 2014).

I will end with a note about general limitations of this research. As a qualitative study, I will not be able to make empirically based causal inferences or generalize the findings. These, however, are not the goals. The goal is to explore a range of social representations of burrnesha in Albanian society with reference to the research questions discussed in the previous chapter.

The issues discussed in this section will be considered throughout the analysis process. In the Discussion Chapter, I will address how the limitations of the current study may be mitigated through future research.

ETHICS

Ethics approval was provided by the Cambridge Psychology Research Ethics Committee. Some of the ethics measures taken included: orally briefing and debriefing respondents on the nature and purpose of the research; providing respondents with hard copies of an information sheet (Appendix A) and consent form (Appendix B) in Albanian detailing the nature and purpose of the research and compensation; avoiding topics that caused respondents any psychological discomfort; ensuring confidentiality by replacing names with codes in reports of the data; and having Mr. Zaja sign a non-disclosure agreement.

I relied on consultation with native Albanians and burrnesha researchers in making the above and more general ethics decisions. I decided that offering monetary compensation to respondents was important in consideration of the time and effort they took to share their stories with us. The compensation amount was agreed on in conversation with academic staff, native Albanians, burrnesha researchers, and the Ethics Committee.

Although snowball recruitment presents potential bias, this too was an ethical decision. In Albania, approaching strangers for interviews like mine is not common and would likely lead to feelings of discomfort and distrust. Therefore, recruiting respondents via mutual contacts was an important step in ensuring their feelings of safety in the interview context. As mentioned, I hoped to mitigate bias by diversifying the mutual contacts I used to recruit respondents.

As a final note on the ethical decisions made, I reiterate that I avoided topics during the interview that are known to cause some respondents discomfort. These included topics around homosexuality and transgender, and for burrnesha included questions about their sexual behavior or any questions related to their own body. Again, these topics were determined in conversation with academic staff, native Albanians, burrnesha researchers, and the Ethics Committee.

CHAPTER 4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I described the methods used and data collection conducted for this project. This included descriptions of respondents and data as well as a discussion of theoretical considerations and research limitations. I included a discussion of analytic methods and quality management. In the following two chapters I will describe these analyses and the findings in detail.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS: THE DOMINANT REPRESENTATION OF BURRNESHA

CHAPTER 5 INTRODUCTION

I identified several representations of burrnesha in analysis. Despite the diversity of respondents included in this study, one of these representations was relatively uniform across community groups. Due to the salience of this representation, I will dedicate the present chapter to describing and analyzing it. In doing so, I address research question 1: What is the content and structure of the dominant social representation of burrnesha among community members? The following chapter will present two other representations to compare to this one. Below is a table (Table 3) listing the three different community respondent representations, their functions, and their presence in the data. I present this chart here to orient the reader as they move forward:

Representation	**Function of burrnesha within narrative**	**Function of the representation itself**	**Frequency in Data**	**Group membership**
Family Collectivism	• Practical and symbolic • Family as beneficiary	• Avoid stigma through justification and victimhood • Reproduce patriarchal norms (see Chapter 5)	Very frequent	In between in-group and out-group
Unnecessary Oppression	• No practical or symbolic function • Burrneshe as victim	• Avoid stigma through "othering" • Reproduce patriarchal norms through gender essentialism	Very frequent	Out-group
Agency	• Practical and symbolic • Burrneshe as beneficiary	• Positive self-identity through agency • Reproduce patriarchal norms through association between burrnesha, masculinity, and agency	Infrequent	In-group, self

TABLE 3: COMPARISON OF REPRESENTATIONS OF BURRNESHA

On the surface, this dominant representation conformed to depictions of burrnesha we have discussed until now: respondents saw them as virginal women who adopted male appearance and roles usually due to a lack of men in their family. In this chapter we will inspect

the interviews to find greater complexity in each of these aspects of the representation. Furthermore, I will show how these aspects corresponded to respondents' general worldview.

The present discussion revolves largely around how burrneshas' gender non-conformity is justified in a society where strict gender conformity is the norm. The acceptance of burrnesha stands out in comparison to the stigma that LGBT+ groups face. Rather than fully embracing the burrnesha custom, respondents' attitudes were usually ambivalent. While I will elaborate this more in the following chapter, it will be evident as I describe the dominant representation. This dominant representation was characterized by the co-presence of multiple, sometimes conflicting elements. On the one hand, this cognitive polyphasia was functional. On the other hand, respondents' discourse reflected a dynamic tension between justifying and condemning burrneshas' gender transgression, marked by admiration, pity, and discomfort.

My primary finding from this chapter's analysis was that burrneshas' gender non-conformity was relatively acceptable as long as it cohered to three most prominent themata: 1) gender essentialism; 2) utility; and 3) patriarchy. Throughout this chapter I will argue that gender essentialism and utility themselves reinforced patriarchy. Utility and patriarchy also appeared in contexts independent of either of the other two criteria. While essentialism arguably always served patriarchy, it was a highly salient theme. For these reasons, I have highlighted these values above other relevant ones. To orient the reader, the following diagram represents the relationships between these themata, which I will return to to explore in greater detail in the discussion section of this chapter:

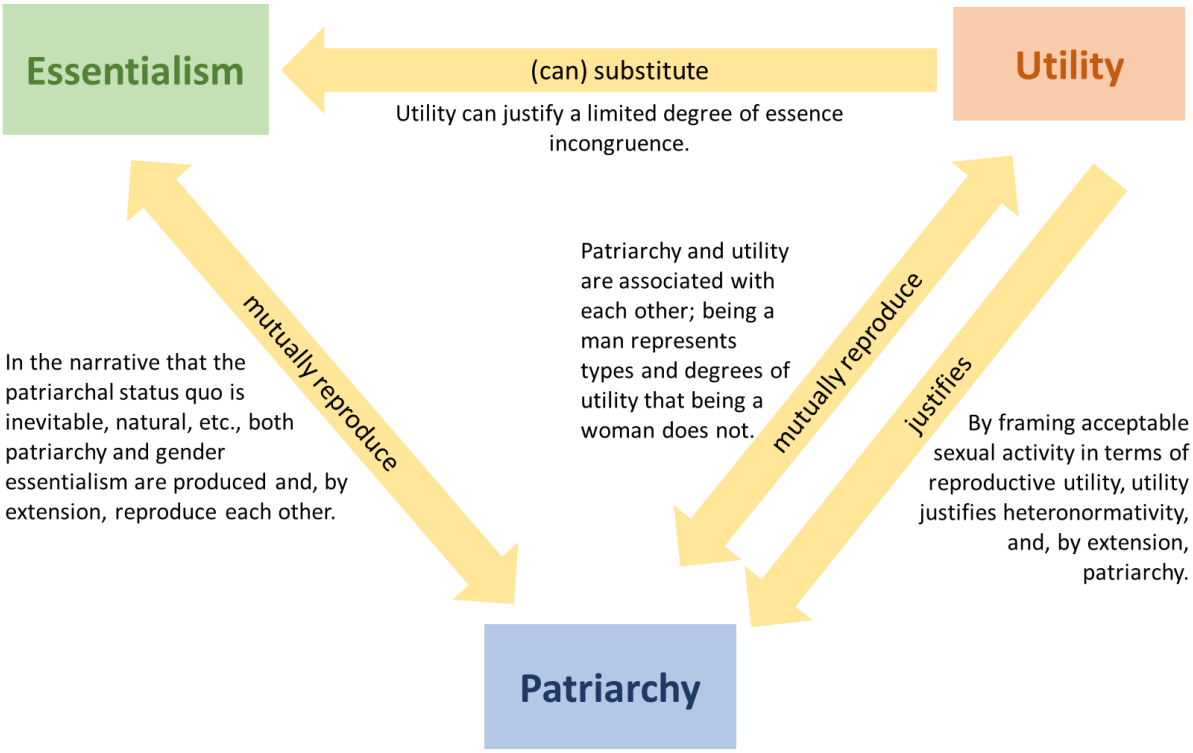

FIGURE 12: ESSENTIALISM, UTILITY, AND PATRIARCHY THEMATA

I will begin this chapter by discussing essentialism in the representation of burrnesha. The subsequent section discusses respondents' elaborations of contextual factors to indicate the utility of living as a man. I will end with a discussion section that aims to situate the structure of the burrnesha representation within a conceptual map of broader cultural values in Albanian society.

ESSENTIALISM AND GENDER

Descriptions of burrnesha almost exclusively referenced gender: respondents compared specific characteristics to what was typical for women or men. Usually, a characteristic was described as *either* female *or* male, as opposed to neither or both. Upon analyzing the female or male descriptions, I found that female descriptions were characterized by essence: respondents described burrnesha as having female "essence", "nature", "biology", etc. In contrast, male descriptions revolved around performance: appearance, dress, speech, "taking the role of a man", etc. The notable exception to this female-essence/male-performance structure was descriptions of

burrneshas' virtue. Respondents described virtue as both masculine and essentialized. I suggest that there are important differences in how essence is conceptualized in each of these cases, ultimately making their co-presence compatible.

Based on these findings, the structure of the burrnesha representation revolved around those three elements: female essence, male performance, and virtue. In this section, I will describe each of these categories based on the data. This will include a discussion of the functions of each of these categories relative to each other and for reproducing overarching cultural values. Ultimately, I will argue that these elements interacted to preserve the integrity of the gender essence, and by extension patriarchal gender norms. I will end the section by exploring the functions of cognitive polyphasia.

FEMALE ESSENCE

As mentioned, I found that female descriptions were characterized by essence: respondents described burrnesha as having female "essence", "nature", "biology", etc. Respondents used essentialist reasoning specifically as they described burrnesha as biologically female, *despite* masculine behavior and appearance. We can see this in the following excerpt. Here, this female respondent from Tirana had mentioned societal problems and I asked her to elaborate:

DATA EXCERPT 1

ER: Problems? … Is that what you said, or…. ?

R: I thi—no, I think that [there are problems] almost in general for society, not just burrnesha. But even they have [problems]. If you focus on the regions where they live—not just the problems that are faced by all—all of Albanian society, but they have other problems. So…

ER: For example?

R: For example. They behave as men whereas they're genetically female. Sexual needs, they can't… enjoy at all. On the other hand, they remove that… desire, or… eh… not only desire, but… we can say, that natural part of becoming a mother. They can't become [a mother], no matter what, and when you look around there are many things that they deny themselves.

This respondent contrasted female essence and male performance, saying "They behave as men whereas they're genetically female". The use of the term "whereas" directly contrasted these two characteristics, indicating 1) that their co-presence was unexpected, and 2) that behavior does not change one's essence. She anchored the female essence in sexual needs and motherhood, framing their absence as "problems" and self-denial. Essentialism as a concept suggests that essence congruence is normative, and incongruence is deviant. Therefore, although this was part of a narrative that justifies burrnesha, a negative attitude towards this specific aspect of burrnesha is expected. This excerpt first showed how respondents' mentions of female essence, biological mechanisms (including genes and hormones), and nature all reference a common element in the representation of burrnesha, which I call *essence*. Secondly, it reinforced the understanding that that female essence is seen as immutable, *despite* burrneshas' masculine dress, behavior, and role.

In this way, respondents made sense of burrneshas' female essence in part by contrasting it to male performance (see Male Performance). They added to this contrast by framing male performance as an act of *sacrifice*. This conveyed that acting against one's essence was unpleasant, effortful, and unnatural. Sacrifice was often unspecified when mentioned (see Obligation, Agency, and Virtue). However, when it was, respondents often said that burrnesha sacrificed their female nature. They said this not in the sense that burrnesha ceased to have a female essence but in the sense that they had to act against it. We saw this in the negative tone of excerpt 1. It is more evident in the following excerpt from a woman's interview in Tropoja:

DATA EXCERPT 2

AZ: How do you see the tradition personally? What are your personal thoughts about it?

R: I feel pity for them, because they abandon the laws of nature. They abandon the pleasures of life, in every aspect. Because life gives you some beautiful options, they choose the unluckiest option. They do the hardest physical labor, they don't go out, they don't spend time with friends—friends are very important for a normal person. If I were a burrneshe I wouldn't go out with you [laughs]

In living as a man, a burrneshe "abandon[s] the laws of nature", drawing on essentialist assumptions of gender. The respondent's negative tone is clear in her expression of "pity" and her description of burrneshas' life as "the unluckiest option". The use of sacrifice in this way emphasized the power that the gender essence was presumed to have over behaviors, abilities, and desires, and that burrnesha acted against their own nature by living as men.

Researchers throughout the field of psychology have explored essentialism as a psychological construct. Essentialist beliefs frame social categories as emerging from "fixed, underlying, and identity-determining essences" (Bastian & Haslam, 2006, p. 229). While essentialist beliefs can be used as a cognitive tool for making inferences in social contexts (Gelman, Taylor, & Nguyen, 2004; Mahalingam, 2003), they can also lead to restrictive stereotypes (Bem, 1993; Gaunt, 2006; Haslam, Rothschild, & Ernst, 2000; Levy, Stroessner, & Dweck, 1998; Wagner, Raudsepp, Maaris, Holtz, & Sen, 2017). This is largely due to the belief that essences *cause* the group's characteristics and cannot be changed (Bem, 1993; Bleier, 1984; Fausto-Sterling, 1985; Bastian & Haslam, 2006; Russett, 1989; Sayers, 1982; Wagner, Raudsepp, Maaris, Holtz, & Sen, 2017). Wagner, Raudsepp, Maaris, Holtz, & Sen (2017) discussed this in their chapter on essentialism and identity construction. They described the relationships between concepts of essence, biology, naturalness, and immutability: "…attributing an essence is coextensive with being natural. The perceived meaning of 'natural' in this case is close to a 'biological given', that is a state that resists change of the deep-seated characteristics" (Wagner, Raudsepp, Maaris, Holtz, & Sen, 2017, p. 52).

The results from my MPhil research showed a higher endorsement of essentialist beliefs in Albania compared to the UK. Furthermore, this endorsement is higher in Tropoja than in Tirana (Robertson, 2015; both of these results were statistically significant). Although I did not directly address essentialism in the present interviews, I have shown how this theme arose continually throughout the data. Especially when referring to a burrneshe's female essence, respondents often used biology-related terms such as "biology", "genes", and "hormones". They also used a phrase *ana gjinore.* This literally means "the gender side" but refers to physiological sex, which is the translation I will use. Respondents also referred to God-assigned gender categories in similar ways. For example, one respondent equated "what people are" with "what God gave them". Other research (e.g., Diesendruck & Haber, 2009; Robinson & Smetana, 2019)

has found that religious beliefs correlate with essentialist beliefs about social categories, so I have included such statements from respondents in this category.

The negative valence of burrneshas' essence transgression, demonstrated in Data Excerpt 2, leads us to the function of essentialism. Wagner, Raudsepp, Maaris, Holtz, & Sen (2017) and Wagner et al (2009) have shown the relevance of essentialism research for the study of social representations by discussing its role in identity construction. From the authors' perspective, essentialist beliefs about social groups can be used for different purposes. Among these, they can justify the status quo in terms of cultural norms, such as patriarchy. In other words, individuals may use essentialist reasoning to justify unequal social power positions because those positions are the result of essential characteristics of the group that cannot be changed: "… the degree of attributed essence – read: naturalisation – will determine how easily or not a minority will be able to manage stereotyped characteristics and change their identity in the eyes of the majority." (Wagner, Raudsepp, Maaris, Holtz, & Sen, 2017, p. 61). This excerpt highlights the difficulty of changing attitudes towards social categories when people believe that social groups' characteristics are inherently biological.

Some research has applied this to the context of gender specifically. Smiler & Gelman (2008) found that, according to essentialist reasoning, "differences between males and females are stable, unchanging, fixed at birth, and due to biological differences rather than environmental factors" (Smiler & Gelman, 2008). Wagner, Raudsepp, Maaris, Holtz, & Sen (2017) discussed these implications in greater detail:

> [Feminism] faces a traditional commonsense representation where men and women are perceived as different not only biologically but also in mentality, tastes and behaviour, constituting a natural kind of man and a natural kind of woman. As this representation refers to a natural basis of sexual differences, it engages the strongest version of essence, that is, of an immutable natural endowment of men and a different one of women. This representation is often perceived as standing in gross opposition to granting both sexes equal spaces and chances" (Wagner, Raudsepp, Maaris, Holtz, & Sen, 2017, p. 58).

In this way, we see how gender essentialism contributes to gender inequality. Thus, it reproduces patriarchal ideology and serves those who benefit from it.

By highlighting the contradiction between essence and performance in burrnesha, and framing this contradiction as a sacrifice, respondents reasserted the role of essences in

determining gendered behavior. In doing so they preserved the justification of general gender norms in society. The following two elements will help us to understand why breaching their female essence was acceptable in the case of burrnesha.

MALE PERFORMANCE

In contrast to the female essence, masculine descriptions of burrnesha were characterized by performance. These included dress and appearance, speech, manner, and "taking the role of a man". I have chosen to use the word performance because it reflects respondents' distinction between who the actor *is* and what she *does*. In a literal sense, the stage actor dresses, reads her lines, and moves about the stage because that is what her character is meant to do, not necessarily what she would do under general circumstances. From the perspective of the respondents, this is the case with burrnesha. They take on a man's dress, speech, and behaviors while still being a woman. This female respondent from Tirana explains how burrnesha adopt male dress and performance:

DATA EXCERPT 3

ER: In a community, when a woman, eh, decides to dress as a man, if the people of the community know she's a woman then what is the importance of men's clothing?

R: They don't always know, and I emphasize this. […] Not everyone knows. Nevertheless, the part that does know, eh… knows why she decided to do this. Why she decided, and surely they "respect" that decision, in quotation marks. This has become just a custom that someone who is dressed like this has had a history. Has had a reason why she went to that point and they get used to it.

ER: How does her way of dressing affect the behavior of the community?

R: It's not only the way of dressing. […]. Women don't drink raki in Albania. Except for in the south where they might drink one glass. Eh, they don't drink raki in Albania. Especially in the north or in the middle, women don't have this custom. Eh, we start with a custom.

ER: I'm sorry?

R: With a masculine custom. Masculine tradition. […] There are several typical masculine customs, it's not only about dress. Also behavior. They have a glass of raki. They didn't accept the opinions of women. Eh, smoking, it's not like today you see women smoking often, endlessly, it's unhealthy. Ethically it doesn't matter if it looks

> good or not because it's unhealthy. And they [burrnesha] were typically masculine. Smoking, mostly rolled cigarettes, I don't know if it's rolled or not [indicating Photo 1], but it's—smoking is typical of men. The dress is definitely masculine and, eh, I don't know what role they had in weddings. I don't know because men, for example, in Albanian weddings open the wedding. They start them with their songs, like isopoliphonic songs. […] It was a type of song. […]. Or they also had, eh… what else can I say… Men were the ones who, we say, raised toasts, they did cheers, eh? At- at the weddings. These [raising toasts] are some characteristics, details that tell us their [burrneshas'] behavior is totally masculine. In the house they can feel like women. And biologically they are women.

Throughout this excerpt male performance is anchored not only in male dress but also in behaviors such as drinking, smoking, and raising toasts. The respondent may have highlighted these specific behaviors because of their visibility in Photo 1. She described drinking as an almost exclusively male behavior ("Women don't drink in Albania"), contrasting burrnesha to other women. At the end of this excerpt, the respondent directly contrasted burrneshas' "totally masculine" behavior with their female biology. She conveyed performance in that burrnesha could behave as women when they were "in the house" and out of the eye of the public. The implication here was that masculine behavior was performed for the purpose of being seen in public spaces. Earlier, she had indicated that the burrneshe's community will accept her, although she said "respect […] in quotation marks", as if to indicate ambivalent feelings. This may reflect the ambivalence present through the representation of burrnesha, particularly in discussions highlighting the contrast between their feminine and masculine aspects.

By framing male behavior as a performance, respondents protected the female essence by limiting the scope of gender non-conformity. Non-conformity could encompass a range of behaviors, as long as the female essence was intact. Another function of this element was in reasserting patriarchal norms. Through this performance, respondents and burrnesha co-constructed the social representation of masculinity (Wagner, 2017). This included associating leadership with masculinity, expressing the desirability of masculinity, and anchoring virtue in masculinity (see Virtue). Respondents did this as they described burrneshas' motivations and their specific roles.

DRESS

In excerpt 3, the respondent framed dress as a symbol indicating that the burrneshe had a justifiable reason for living as a man: "This has become just a custom, that someone who is dressed like this has had a history". Although that respondent indicated that burrneshas' masculinity was not only about dress, she indicated the important symbolic role of dress. I asked most respondents if a woman could do the work of a man without wearing men's clothes. Many respondents said that yes, they could. I then asked why burrnesha dressed as men, if they could do the same things in women's clothing. Most responses conveyed that dressing as a man allowed burrnesha to more fully take on the role of a man, as this female respondent from Tirana explained:

DATA EXCERPT 4

ER: What was the importance of dressing as a man in order to be unmarried?

R: … Why is it important [quietly to self] … Well maybe at that time, eh—We should consider that it's not that they [women in general] were dressed extravagantly as we see girls and women, women in general, on the streets that dress as they like. I mean, even just that look of *xhubletat*[9] or of characteristic clothes of their region might have been enticing for the male sex. […]. Meanwhile at the moment that she dressed like this [indicating photos], that [enticing] was avoided. On the other hand, eh, it gave her more seriousness, it put her more in the role of the man. With the clothes, with the hat, with the vest, with whatever they had at that time. Based on their culture.

The respondent characterized women's clothing as "enticing for the male sex", implying sexual appeal. She contrasted this with the "seriousness" of men's clothes. She explicitly connected men's clothes to male behavior, saying that dressing as a man "put [the burrneshe] more in the role of the man". The sexual aspect of feminine clothing, likely evoked in that

[9] *Xhubleta* is a traditional dress for women, typical of specific regions of the north of Albania.

excerpt by my specific question on marriage, added a dimension to the role of dress. The respondent seemed to imply that by *not* using feminine (i.e. "enticing") clothing, burrnesha removed themselves as potential candidates for marriage.

The importance of male dress in adopting male social role was again emphasized in the following interview with a man from Tirana:

DATA EXCERPT 5

ER: How is decision-making different between men and women?

R: In Albania—you're right to ask. We're talking about Albanian customs, even though parts of it vary. In the past, a woman never spoke in front of a man. It was the man's role to make decisions. Especially in a group of people, women didn't speak ever. She could speak but only with her husband. And for that reason, a woman never spoke in front of a man. And the role of a burrneshe should change her status.

ER: [not hearing] It should change what?

R: To change her status. To change her word, to speak like a man, to speak first, to decide for the house! In a situation where, for example, her niece has to get married. Her niece. She should go… should direct the family. Lead the family. Like, to be or in the role of the [paternal][10] uncle, or the role of the [maternal] uncle. That's it. Burrnesha should make decisions. Again, to decide in the place of a man, in the absence of a man, the burrneshe decides. If there's no man in the house.

ER: What's the connection between men's clothes and the role of decision-making?

R: Yes! There's a lot of connection. I say that there's a connection because… em, it will make her more serious. Eh, the word of a woman dressed as a man. And- and what sense would it make to be a burrneshe in woman's clothing? Her word would not make sense. That's why burrnesha dress in men's clothes, to be more man. Because there would not be sense in her word, her decision-making, her leadership of the house as a burrneshe

[10] In Albanian there are different words for the paternal and the maternal uncles, each of whom has a different role and significance in the family structure.

> when she dressed in women's clothes. It wouldn't work. That's why she should dress in men's clothes. That's it.

The respondent connected speech, decision-making, status, leadership, and men's clothing. Male appearance allowed the burrneshe to "be more man". It seems that he took for granted the association between these aspects of identity so much that it was difficult for him to articulate a logical connection between them. Instead, he asked, "What sense would it make to be a burrneshe in woman's clothing?", as if a woman who dressed like a woman but acted like a man was absurd.

To understand the role of dress in representations of burrnesha, we can look to Lloyd & Duveen's (1990) work on gender as a semiotic system. They argued that objects have *social markings* that indicate them as pertaining to women or to men:

> On the one hand, social representations of gender are objectified in the markings of toys as suitable for girls or for boys; while, on the other hand, the comprehension of these markings is made possible through social representations of gender. These are really two sides of the same coin. Social representations establish a common semiotic code for both the marking of objects and the mediation of cognitive processes. (p. 28)

Although these authors' discussion focused largely on children's toys, this is the case for clothing as well. Research by Owyong (2009) noted that clothing, as a semiotic system, must be embedded within the broader framework of other semiotic systems (in this case, gender) to be used and interpreted effectively between wearer and observer. This means that the representation of men can be objectified in men's typical clothing. Thus, dress can have a substantial role in the representation of men, because objectification "realizes […] a different level of reality", making the representation "physical and accessible" (Moscovici, 2000, p. 49). In the present data, respondents saw male clothing as a significant element in burrneshas' adoption of male social identity. Taking on male appearance was necessary in order to more fully take on the role of a man.

VIRTUE AND EXCEPTIONALISM

The last descriptive element in representations of burrnesha was their character. Respondents described them as having an exceptional, virtuous character that was directly or indirectly associated with masculinity. Common descriptors of burrneshas' character included strong, brave, and resilient in the face of hardship. In some cases, respondents explicitly described this virtuous character as masculine, such as this male respondent from Tropoja:

DATA EXCERPT 6

ER: What does "burrneshe" mean?

R: With a manly character, a strong character, of a man, with traditions that are special, specific, that the highlanders had… The characteristics were, like the highlanders, faithful, honor their word, hospitable, characteristics that without a doubt convey the highlands [culture]… I mean, a lot of characteristics… They didn't break their word. In today's time this is gone. There's no more, no more… Now it's just business, money, and goodbye.

Here, the respondent described burrneshas' character as simultaneously masculine and virtuous. He drew on specific virtues, such as faithfulness and hospitality, and explicitly called burrnesha "manly". He contrasted those virtues with "today's" culture, which is all about "business" at the expense of those virtues. In doing so, he positioned burrnesha in the past, while he explicitly positioned them in the rural north ("highlands").

In addition, burrneshas' virtuous character was essentialized. I asked respondents "who can become a burrneshe?". Respondents often expressed that it should be a woman who *by nature* has a masculine character. This description was not unlike some of the descriptions of burrneshas' female essence. Respondents essentialized character by saying that an individual woman had her personality "by nature", implying that it was inherent to the individual and difficult to change. A different male respondent from Tropoja demonstrated how this feature of burrnesha was connected to the representation as a whole:

DATA EXCERPT 7:

ER: Who can become a burrneshe?

R: At that time or now?

ER: In general.

R: Hah, who can become [to self]. Eh, any kind of woman can become a burrneshe who was raised in a culture, or in a family… eh, that is, we can say in quotation marks, "patriarchal". There's impact from- impact from the way they're raised socially, their culture… The way they're raised socially, the way, eh, I mean, the social life they had in the family, in the society, cultural misfortunes, life misfortunes… Any kind of woman at that time could become [a burrneshe] only in cases that have to do with those things I mentioned earlier. Cases related to the family, related to the nation, when there are no men, no men in the house… These are, those that are called [burrnesha]. But anyone can do it! It just depends on the family, on her life, on society, how she's raised. At that time anyone could do it. […] Then… no, in fact, upon thinking about it not everyone because… Eh, you should be where it's a custom, but you should also have in your female nature, you should have a bit of—courage. A bit of, eh, strength, of… So, the combination of customs and the person herself, the nature of the person can make it possible to go there [to become a burrneshe].

ER: So, if a woman decides to become a burrneshe just because she wants to live as a man, is this a burrneshe? Can we call her a burrneshe, or…?

R: Look, now, look. Eh, she doesn't give herself the title "burrneshe". The title "burrneshe" is given by the society, especially the society of men. If you want to become a burrneshe you should earn this *award*, having heart, having courage, having a reason for doing this. For example, if… someone just wants to become a burrneshe, they can consider her a burrneshe. They can consider, but you should have some qualities so that the society accepts you. You can't just say "I'm a burrneshe" and that's it. You should be accepted [as a burrneshe] by the others.

ER: Right. And their characteristics are… the most important [factor]?

R: The characteristics are their very nature from birth. Their—how do I explain. You should have some, eh, skill, you should have some element of strength, physical strength… The very nature of the person is different from other women. You should have yourself. Because you can want to become a burrneshe and put on the *qeleshe*[11]… but then maybe the society doesn't accept you. You should have some characteristics, as a person.

ER: And skills, what—

[11] White, felt skullcap worn exclusively by men (and some burrnesha, such as the subject of Photo 2)

R: The skills could be physical skills, speech, skills of strength, skills… psychological skills… In the very nature. The nature of the person.

In this excerpt we see the evolution of the respondent's thought process. At first, he asserted that burrnesha were wholly a product of their environment ("any kind of woman can become a burrneshe who was raised in a culture"). Then, he expressed that a woman should *additionally* have certain personal characteristics "by nature", indicating inherence. He provided a relatively broad list of these characteristics, including courage, strength, psychological skills, and speech. He depicted the title "burrneshe" as one that must be earned, indicating that it conveyed significant status and respect. This thought was echoed in many interviews. The admirable and *inherent* characteristics of the burrneshe were integral to earning this title.

Based on this data, I can summarize three functions of virtue in the representation of burrnesha. The first was in reinforcing cultural values, specifically patriarchy. By anchoring virtue in masculinity, masculinity became a virtue in and of itself. This supported the entire structure of patriarchal values around which northern Albanian culture is organized. Some research noted the gendered aspects of honor and shame as fundamental values in traditional Albanian culture. According to these works, "honor" was associated with men while "shame" was associated with women (Danermark, Soydan, Pashko, & Vejsiu, 1989; Nixon, 2009; Peristiany, 1966), an arrangement that contributed to the subordination of women (Nixon, 2009). Especially in excerpt 6, we saw burrnesha associated with multiple honor-related virtues. Young & Twigg (2009) contextualized this in burrneshas' motivation to live as a man because "to be a man is honourable, whereas to be a woman is sub-human" (p 122).

The second function of virtue was that it was connected to other themes, such as sacrifice, to justify the custom of burrnesha. I explain this in more detail with data later in the chapter. In summary, respondents presented burrneshas' choice as a sacrifice made for the sake of the family. This signified virtue through altruism. Sacrifice also signified external motivation by implying that burrnesha did not have personal desire to live as a man. As we will see, external motivation was used to justify burrneshas' gender non-conformity. Mediated by sacrifice, virtue

reflected external motivation. This helped respondents explain how burrnesha "earned" their superior status in society.

The third function of virtue emerged from the fact that respondents essentialized it. At first, assigning burrnesha female and male essences simultaneously appears incompatible, as it violates the meaning of essence. However, I propose that female biology and male character are different types of essence that can co-exist and depend on each other. Respondents described both types of essence using the word "nature". The female essence was conceptualized as biological (e.g., Data Excerpt 1), whereas burrneshas' male essence was not. Meanwhile, respondents often referred to the male essence, but not the female essence, as "character" or "characteristics" (e.g., Data Excerpts 6 and 7). By referencing gendered biology, respondents situated the burrneshe as a member of a social group, i.e., women. As a group, we may not see female biology as changing significantly, if at all, between individuals. In other words, we perceive all women as having female organs, the ability to bear children, female hormones, etc. It is easier for us to perceive character, on the other hand, as variable within any given group. While we can reasonably presume that all the women we know menstruate, we readily perceive differences between those women in terms of temperament, personality, behavior, preferences, etc. Within this range of character, we can compare individuals to stereotypes we hold about typical female or male characters.

Researchers often treat essentialism as composed of specific and semi-independent beliefs. These beliefs can have different roles in different contexts, even among the same respondents (Bastian & Haslam, 2006; Haslam, Rothschild, & Ernst, 2000; Delgado-Acosta, Betancor, Rodríguez-Pérez, & Delgado, 2016). For example, Bastian & Haslam (2006) reported correlations between stereotype endorsement and the following four essentialist beliefs: immutability (.21), biological basis (.22), discreteness (.20), and informativeness (.20). From this example we can see that each belief has a different level of salience according to context. My own data does not provide an opportunity to rigorously investigate this further. However, I suggest that different essentialist beliefs may dominate the conceptualization of burrneshas' female essence versus male character. For example, *biological basis* is likely to be more active in the former than the latter.

Constructing biology and character as two different types of essence was respondents' first step to compatibility between them. The second step was emphasizing that burrnesha were exceptional women. While a female essence could co-exist with a masculine character, this was the exception rather than the norm. Many respondents made it clear that not all women could become a burrneshe. A burrneshe must "by nature" have a character that, within the spectrum of individual variation, was more similar to a man's than her peers. The consequence of this framing was that the concept of a female essence was protected. By emphasizing that burrnesha were exceptional by nature, respondents preserved the normalcy of female-typical behavior arising from female biology.

Virginity and Heteronormativity

Since the tradition of burrnesha indicated strict sexual abstinence, we might expect virginity and sexual behavior to have been frequent themes in the representation of burrnesha. However, they were less frequent than I, at least, had expected. There are various possible reasons for this (Gervais, Morant, & Penn, 1999); I am hesitant to accept that sexuality simply was not an important part of the representation seeing as burrnesha have been entirely discredited when found to have engaged in sexual relations (Young, 2001). In the present case, I believe this low freqnecy was due to the stigma of the topic in combination with reduced awareness of its role in the representation. By reduced awareness I mean that sexual behavior may not have come to mind when the respondent thought of burrnesha unless this specific issue was directly challenged, for example by implying that a burrneshe has had sex. As discussed in Chapter 3, even the most important elements of a representation are not always explicit until the subject is surprised by a contradiction (Markova, 2003). Avoiding terms explicitly related to sexuality likely also indicated respondents' discomfort with the topic. Less frequently, respondents referred directly to sexual behavior. In these cases, neither sexuality nor virginity were among the first characteristics used to describe burrnesha.

In this section I will discuss the ways in which sexuality *was* expressed in the interviews. I will show how respondents used evidence of sexuality to discredit individuals' "right" to the title *burrneshe*, indicating the role of virginity in burrneshas' virtue. I will compare attitudes

towards burrnesha and LGBT+ individuals. Finally, I will show how respondents relied on context to infer burrnesha sexuality.

Several respondents alluded to sexual behavior in order to discredit a person's status as a burrneshe. During this interview with a man from Tropoja, the discussion turned to a specific woman living as a man who the respondent knew in passing, but did not have a personal relationship with:

DATA EXCERPT 8

ER: What is burrneshas' role in society today?

R: I don't know if there are burrnesha today. Today there aren't burrnesha, there aren't! You are asking a difficult question.

ER: I understood that there were one or two in Bajram Curri?

R: I say no, I say no. I would say they are in Kernaje[12]. […] There's one, she moves around with a car, but burrnesha were different before. I've witnessed this, it was shared with me, it's not that I wanted myself. They should be around men, not with women. Burrnesha should stay with men. You call a burrneshe someone who doesn't stay with women "haha, heehee" [as if imitating laughter]. I, on the other hand, know this stuff since I was a child, I'm 45 now. I know, I know the hierarchy from nothing to here.

ER: So, the burrneshe that drives the car isn't a burrneshe?

R: How can you say "burrneshe"? You can follow her yourself. It's not a grand philosophy. We can follow her together. We can sit in the car. Let her go in front. Watch her actions. Burrnesha is something else. Burrnesha is a different thing. I don't what meaning burrneshe has when… There are many reasons. I'm under statute not to talk about it [laughing].

AZ: So, we've actually seen—

[12] A small village about 13 km from Bajram Curri.

R: I know, my man. There's no other answer for this topic because I'm not allowed to talk about it because I'm under a statute.

The respondent said that this specific person was not a burrneshe, saying that if we were to follow her throughout the day, we would see why. Although it was difficult for me to understand what the respondent referred to, Mr. Zaja confidently interpreted this as an allusion to sexual behavior. The respondent may have indicated this in saying "They should be around men, not with women". He made it very clear that we could not pursue the topic further, saying he was under a "statute" that prohibited him from speaking about it. It seems that he witnessed a specific event involving the burrneshe and promised someone not to speak of it. The respondent made it clear that what he witnessed precluded that person from the category of burrnesha: "burrnesha is a different thing".

The incompatibility of burrnesha with sexuality was also evident in that respondents clearly distinguished burrnesha from LGBT+ individuals. This was evident in part in the language respondents used to describe each of these groups. They expressed no discomfort in discussing burrnesha in general. They described burrnesha characteristics directly and often expressed respect or admiration for specific burrnesha or burrnesha in general. By contrast, mentions of LGBT+ groups were rare. When respondents did mention them, they usually did so in indirect ways, not using terms explicitly connected to LGBT+ groups such as "homosexual", "gay", or "transgender". Furthermore, respondents sometimes used negative terms to refer to women living as men who were not burrnesha. For example, they said that the women had "mental problems", "social problems", or "illness". Respondents did not always directly relate such terms to LGBT+ groups, and further research would be necessary to confirm whether or not this was implied. Given homophobic attitudes, the association is likely. In either case, the use of such terms conveyed overall negative attitudes towards women living as men who are not burrnesha. Finally, respondents sometimes directly contrasted burrnesha to LGBT+ groups. These features of discourse will be evident in excerpts from the data used throughout this section.

The following excerpt demonstrates the respondent's clear conceptual distinction between a burrneshe and a homosexual person. During the course of the interview, this male respondent from Tirana discussed two women dressed as men, both of whom he had seen on television. The first (person 1) he considered a burrneshe, and he had seen her on a program about burrnesha. The second (person 2) was a young woman in Tirana who had been featured in a news program that presented her as lesbian. In this excerpt, I asked him how the second woman was different from the first:

DATA EXCERPT 9

R: No, no, [person 2 was] different from the woman dressed as a man. She [person 1] dressed just as a man, with the hat, smoked cigarettes, wore pants, if you looked at her like that…

ER: But… she was different from the other one?

R: Whereas this other one [person 2], she does it for extreme reasons. She does it for extreme reasons.

AZ: For sexual desires?

R: Sexual desires, yes! […] Out of curiosity we placed bets on whether she was, eh, a girl or a man. But she was a girl. Gay, as we say.

By saying that he and his friends placed bets, the respondent communicated how fully person 2 looked the male part. Then, he equated her cross-gender appearance with homosexuality by calling the girl "gay" to explain why she looked so much like a man. As with other interviews, the respondent did not use terms directly related to sexuality until prompted, instead using the phrase "extreme reasons". This was one of the few times that Mr. Zaja felt that probing the issue would be appropriate. In doing so, the respondent confirmed that he had referred to homosexuality. The respondent's avoidance of explicit terms, and the negative implications of the word "extreme", indicated his discomfort with homosexuality. Thus, he conflated gender (male appearance) with sexual orientation ("gay"), including negative associations with homosexuality. The respondent's explicit distinction between burrnesha and lesbians was evident with the word "whereas".

The following excerpt is from an interview in Shkoder when we were discussing acceptable motivations for living as a man. We can see how the respondent again explicitly contrasted LGBT+ groups from burrnesha. In this case, we also see how she expressed considerable discomfort with the topic of LGBT+:

DATA EXCERPT 10

ER: What's the importance of a person's motivation for being called a "burrneshe"? So, what's the importance of knowing what motivation a person had to be able to call that person burrneshe, or is it not important? Maybe dressing [as a man] is enough?

[…]

R: No, no, she is pushed by a motive. Something pushes her to, like, because without a motive she doesn't manage to become… If she was born normal. If she was born… wasn't born normal…

ER: In what sense normal?

R: If she was born as a normal female, and manages to become a man, with- with characteristics, with… then a motive has pushed her. Ah, if she was born like we've been seeing recently these… half like this, half like that. [AZ, in English to me while she continues: Ah, ok. So she's referring to homosexuals.], in that case there's no motive! […] But if she was born normal, like normal people, normal females, a motive pushed her in this task. Because without a motive there's no way to become a man. For example, her brother died and she wants to replace him, or she doesn't have a father, doesn't have brothers, they're all females, she wants to play the role in the family. If she's normal. If she's not normal, half female and half male. [chuckle]

ER: Eh, I didn't understand, half female, half--?

R [speaking to AZ]: Explain it to her, like these…

At this point, Mr. Zaja reiterated to me that she was referring to homosexual people. We can see the respondent's indication of stigma in that she refrained from using any term directly related to homosexuality, instead saying "half female, half male". Her discomfort was so great she asked Mr. Zaja to clarify to me what she meant. In doing so, she relied on her shared culture with Mr. Zaja to assume that he understood her true meaning. Meanwhile, she assumed that the greater personal familiarity and cross-cultural understanding between Mr. Zaja and myself meant

that elaborating the issue would be appropriate between us in a way that would not have been between me and her. While she avoided referring to LGBT+ groups directly, she did frame them negatively, calling them “not normal”. She directly contrasted “normal” females, who live as men due to external motivation, from “not normal” females, who live as men without any motivation.

This excerpt showed how LGBT+ themes reinforced the contextual elements of the representation. The respondent made it clear that external motivation (e.g., “her brother died and she wanted to replace him”) was important in determining the normalcy of the woman living as a man. She framed “not normal” (i.e., homosexual) women as a modern phenomenon (“if she was born like we’ve been seeing *recently* these… half like this, half like that”), again emphasizing the importance of context as we saw earlier in the chapter.

Meanwhile, she used sex/gender descriptions to indicate normalcy. On the one hand, “normal” women are “females” who can “become men” because they have a motive, and “without a motive there’s no way to become a man”. On the other hand, while “not normal” women cannot become men due to their lack of motive, they are “half male”. She described both “normal” and “not normal” women as combining female and male characteristics, yet with opposite results. I believe that underlying essentialist beliefs can explain the difference. By describing “not normal” women as “half female, half male”, she indicated an aberration of their gender essence. The “half-half” framing put female-ness and male-ness in the same category as each other, as opposed to different categories such as in the female-essence/male-performance structure. As I have proposed previously, gender transgression within a single category is more problematic than transgression across categories. We can see here that she referred to the essence category in the phrases “born not normal” and “born half like this, half like that”. Being “born” a certain way conveyed the inherence and immutability that describe essences. We can also suppose that she referred to essence in that she contrasted “half-half”-ness to the female-ness of “normal” women (living as men), who, as we have seen previously, are generally assumed to have a female essence.

Based on the entire excerpt, the respondent’s reference to the “female half” of the lesbian woman was her physiological sex, whereas her “male half” was sexual attraction to women.

Perhaps ironically, the intact nature of "normal" women's female essence was necessary for them to be able to "become a man". By framing "becoming a man" as something that a woman can or cannot "manage" to do, the respondent indicated the difficulty in achieving it. The combination of difficulty and positive valence ("normal") indicated virtue. To add to this, this particular respondent expressed a strong positive attitude towards the tradition of burrnesha throughout the interview.

Given a high stigma of sexuality, virginity added to the overall depiction of burrneshas' virtue (Nielsen, Nielsen, Butler, & Lazarus, 2012) (also see Chapter 2). However, based on the data presented, we can see a more nuanced role of virginity in the representation of burrnesha. Respondents' aversion of LGBT+ (also discussed in Chapter 2) pointed to a general culture of heteronormativity, which is defined as:

> The assumption that normal and natural expressions of sexuality in society are heterosexual in nature. A heteronormative society is structured morally, socially, and legally to position other forms of sexuality as deviant and to discriminate against non-heterosexuals. Rogers, A., Castree, N., & Kitchin, R. (2013). (Heteronormativity, n.d.)

Respondents primarily referenced sexual activity, whether with a woman or a man, in order to discredit a woman as a burrneshe. I argue that this was because any expression of sexuality in burrnesha conflicted with heteronormativity in Albanian culture, and by extension with patriarchal ideology. Burrnesha sexuality conflicted with both essentialism and utility, which are integral to heteronormativity. Consequently, burrneshas' asexuality served to preserve the integrity of the representation as a whole.

Duveen (1993) noted that social representations of gender revolve around a "figurative nucleus of bipolar opposites" (p. 5). Although this bipolarity is evident in all expressions of gender, it is exemplified in sexuality: "In sexuality, or more precisely heterosexuality, difference is both asserted because it depends on the presence of bipolar opposites, and also overcome at the same time through the union of these opposites." (Duveen, 1993, p. 5). The bipolar structure of sexuality calls for the presence of femininity and masculinity, embodied in physiological sex and gender role simultaneously. From this, it follows that lesbianism is not only about a woman being attracted to women. It is about her expressing the *male sexual role* through her sexual behavior with women. As Valdes (1996) noted, sexual orientation is the sexual aspect of gender.

We saw in excerpt 9 in that the respondent supposed the girl to be lesbian by virtue of her masculine appearance. This indicates that any expression of sexuality in burrnesha is inevitably homosexual, either due to her physiological sex (in relation to women) or her gender role (in relation to men).

Thus, we can understand that virginity was important to representations of burrnesha because any kind of sexuality was on some level homosexual. Duveen's (1993) argument demonstrates how heteronormativity ultimately reinforces patriarchal social structure by maintaining clearly delineated gender roles. In summary, my analysis of burrnesha (a)sexuality is consistent with the essence-utility-patriarchy criteria of acceptable gender non-conformity through essentialism and heteronormativity.

Cognitive Polyphasia and Productive Ambiguity

The following diagram (Figure 13) represents the internal functions of the above elements of the burrnesha representation:

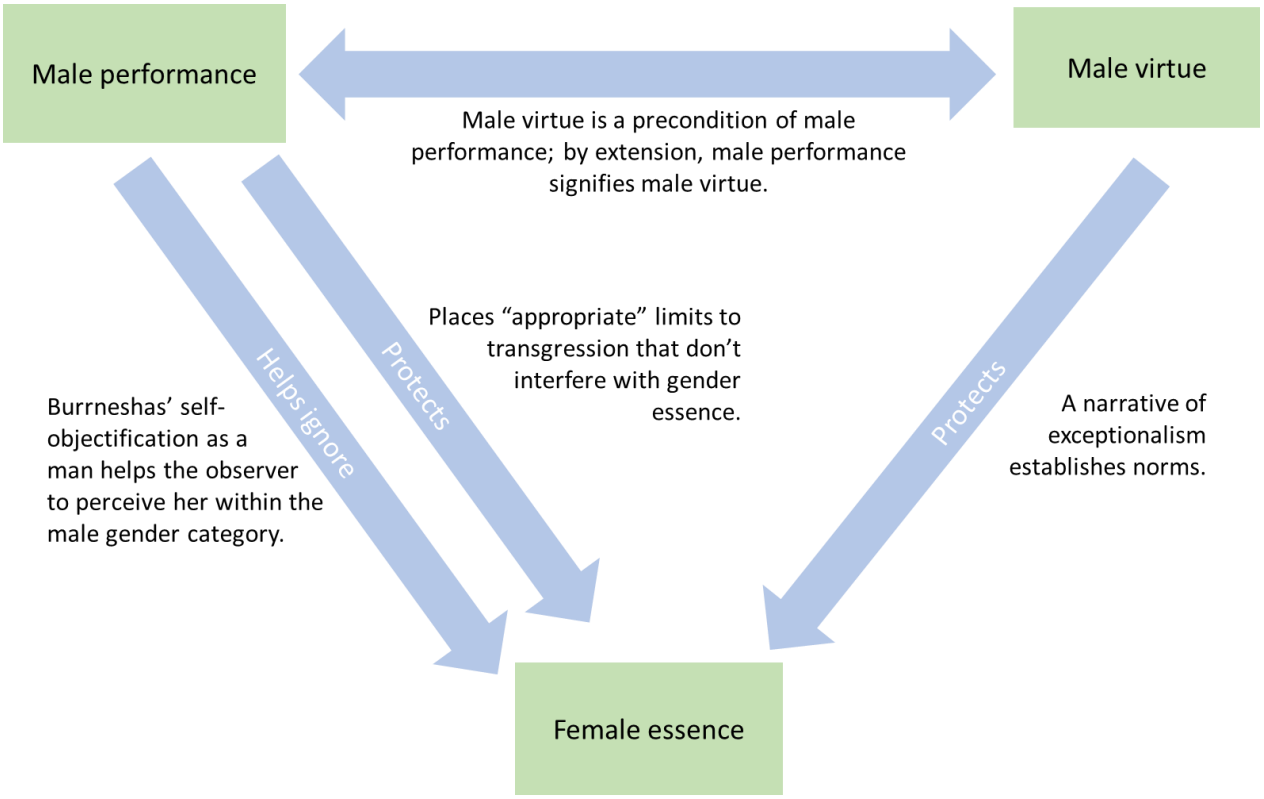

FIGURE 13: INTERNAL FUNCTIONS

This highlights that the structure of these three elements ultimately functioned to preserve the gender essence, despite incongruent behavior. However, non-conformity nevertheless conflicted with essentialist reasoning. Burrneshas' overall social gender identity was anchored in both female and male representations. The co-presence of these opposing representations indicates cognitive polyphasia (Provencher, Arthi, & Wagner, 2012) (see chapter 4). Specifically, this appears to be the *hybridization* type of cognitive polyphasia described by Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernandez (2015). This type of cognitive polyphasia suggests that conflicting concepts are integrated into a single representation (Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernández, 2015). In this section I will discuss respondents' dynamic negotiation of burrneshas' gender identity and the functions of this cognitive polyphasia.

Respondents generally described burrneshas' role as being exclusively male. However, some said that they were "both the man and the woman" in the family. In these cases, respondents elicited burrneshas' gender ambiguity as an explanation of how burrnesha could most effectively meet various needs taking on multiple roles. This was often framed as an advantage to the burrneshe and/or the family. Respondents expressed this in greatest detail in the context of burrneshas' movement through space, evident in the following excerpt. In this interview with a man from Tropoja, I had asked if burrnesha must take an oath and, if so, what they said. From there, the conversation transitioned to a discussion of other aspects of burrneshas' life:

DATA EXCERPT 11

ER: For example? What does she say [in the oath]?

R: Well, she might tell the reasons and… I doubt there's some other formula. Just that it was a really hard decision. A hard decision.

ER: A hard decision?

R: Yes, of course. At least, it was.

ER: Hard in what sense?

R: It's hard because… there are problems to keep that commitment, as they say. It's hard to keep it, because it's hard for a woman to become a man, in my opinion. For many

things. Besides their sex everything else, good behavior, way of speaking… It's not that there's any problem if they are around women.

ER: I'm sorry?

R: They can even be around women. At one time there was a room for women, the hearth of the men, and the room just for women. And they had a… an ADVANTAGE[13] because they could sit with the women without any problem. […] No problem. It's just that they had something… more. Because knowing that in terms of sex she's a woman it's not a problem for her to sit with the women. It's not that I've asked a lot. Because these are things that you just kind of know even though… I don't think people ask about this stuff much, but you can ask about the reasons. Why she became [a burrneshe]. What is a commitment like this like.

In reflecting on the oath that a burrneshe might take, the respondent noted that theirs is a "hard decision". Hardship revolved around the incongruence between essence and behavior that I discussed earlier ("it's hard for a woman to become a man"). Without prompting, he then framed burrneshas' ability to be in women's spaces as an "ADVANTAGE". This ability stemmed from the assumption that, as a physiological female, there was no sexual threat in the burrneshe being around other physiological females. This excerpt highlighted how burrneshas' ambiguous gender identity could be framed as adverse at one moment and as advantageous in the next.

The above excerpt (11) framed crossing gendered spaces as an advantage to burrnesha themselves. Respondents interpreted this to their own advantage as well. We can see this in the following interview with a man from Tropoja. The respondent mentioned that burrnesha could sit in the men's sitting room and I asked him to expand. In this excerpt, L is a burrneshe acquaintance of the respondent:

[13] Words in caps lock were emphasized by the respondent.

DATA EXCERPT 12

ER: A burrneshe could be around the men?

R: No one drew attention to it. Those that knew couldn't bring it up. Once, we were going on a boat […], on a boat trip, from Fierz to Kukes. A 100-seat boat. I was an adult, and I recognized L, I knew for sure it was her. All of the seats were occupied, there weren't free seats. There were women, two women on either side [of a free seat]. I was a man and couldn't sit there, I said L, go sit with the women. The boat attendant knew me, I told him, 'L will sit with these two because she won't harass them. Don't worry.' The women looked at L uncomfortably because it was impossible to tell [she was a woman]. And she smoked, and she smoked cigarettes, and no one could tell she was a woman.

The respondent dynamically negotiated L's female and male identities. Because the respondent knew L was biologically female, he was confident that L would not "harass" the women on either side of her. This confidence likely stemmed from his belief in L's female essence; given heteronormativity, there is no sexual threat in the proximity of two females. However, the respondent highlighted L's male performance in her appearance and behavior (e.g., "she smoked" as an explanation for why "no one could tell she was a woman"). This performance was so convincing that the respondent noticed the women's discomfort and had to assure the boat attendant that the decision was appropriate. On the one hand, this narrative showed how burrneshas' male performance generally allowed them to move through their social world fully as men. On the other hand, it showed how implying the burrneshe's body through sexuality allowed the respondent to override the burrneshe's male identity.

The logic connecting sexuality, the body, and space was evident in the above narrative and determined the appropriateness of the respondent's decision. The relationship between these concepts showed how polyphasia contributes to cohesiveness within the representation. We can contrast this with a narrative from another male respondent from Tropoja in which a burrneshe's female identity was elicited outside of an appropriate context. Here, we asked him to elaborate on the personal relationship that he had with a burrneshe whom he had known his whole life:

DATA EXCERPT 13

AZ: What was your relationship like with her? In general?

R: When we were kids, we would tease her [the burrneshe]. And when I grew up I had a completely different… relationship with her, I mean, eh… we smoked, we drank coffee together. And when we were children, we teased her.

AZ: As you would normally stay with a man, it seems?

R: Yes, yes, yes. […] I mean, at weddings, at funerals, she was like a man, I mean, exactly.

ER: And when you were young you teased her? Do you remember exactly what you said?

R: Just with her name, I mean we called her Fatime instead of Fatmire.

ER: When you were young did this burrnesha seem… unusual?

R: Yes.

…

AZ: In what sense?

R: A woman who becomes a man [laughs].

The respondent told us that as a child he had teased the burrneshe by referring to him by his legal female name "Fatime" instead of his preferred male name "Fatmire". He contrasted his behavior as a child and his behavior as an adult. While he teased the burrneshe as a child, as an adult he treated him as he would treat any other man in his community (e.g., smoking and drinking coffee together). Thus, he conveyed that it was "childish" to evoke the burrneshe's female identity without a productive reason to do so. He indicated that as a child, the burrneshe seemed unusual to him. This possibly explained his teasing, although we may consider that my question was leading. In explaining that it was unusual in the sense that "a woman becomes a man", he may have been drawing on essentialist reasoning, although less directly than in other examples we have seen.

Both of the above narratives (excerpts 12 and 13) indicated discomfort in bringing attention to a burrneshe's gender ambiguity. In the first (12) the respondent made an effort to

convey that his decision to evoke L's female identity was not trivial. To the contrary, it was due to exceptional circumstances: he noted that the trip was long, "from Fierz to Kukes", implying that it would have been uncomfortable to stand, and there "weren't free seats". By emphasizing his need to sit, the respondent communicated that he probably would not have drawn attention to the burrneshe's female identity under less extreme circumstances. His hesitation may have reflected a concern for offending the burrneshe and/or for confusing the other passengers on the boat. This concern was also evident in his need to justify his decision to the boat attendant. He mentioned that the boat attendant knew him, indicating that otherwise the attendant might not have trusted him to put an apparent man between two women. We are left with the impression that bringing attention to burrneshas' gender ambiguity could be uncomfortable despite being appropriate given the context.

The second narrative (excerpt 13) also indicated discomfort with gender ambiguity in that a) the children used it as an offense; and b) as an adult the respondent reiterated this offense by indicating that it was childish. Teasing was contrasted with the respondent's adult behavior wherein he treated the burrneshe just like the man she appeared to be. In both interviews discomfort seemed to reflect essentialism, seeing as conflicting gender characteristics were simultaneously evoked. I would argue that the discomfort was increased by implying inferior status of the burrneshe through association with femininity. In other words, the respondent may have been afraid of offending the burrneshe or of being seen as offending him by others present.

As discussed in Chapter 3, social identity theory postulates that different social identities of a person are activated according to context (Duveen & Lloyd, 1990; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The ambiguity of burrneshas' gender identity meant that respondents could accentuate one gender over the other according to their or the burrneshe's goals in a given situation. Instead of being internally inconsistent, this process highlighted coherence between the different elements of the representation (Provencher, Arthi, & Wagner, 2012). This productive ambiguity revolved around burrneshas' ability to take both female and male roles and for them to cross gender-segregated spaces. These features were depicted as useful to the burrneshe and/or the observer, and ultimately functioned to reinforce gender roles rather than contradict them.

One might be tempted to propose that physiological females taking on male roles is a sign of gender equality. However, in this case the selective evocation of gender identity according to context served to aggravate patriarchal norms. In evaluating different types of androgyny, Lorezi-Cioldi (1996) defined *co-presence* as alternation between feminine and masculine characteristics. Given the above descriptions of burrneshe gender identity, this is an appropriate category of androgyny for burrnesha. Lorenzi-Cioldi (1996) found that co-presence did not encourage gender equality, as the androgyne would ultimately take on the gender-specific role that was conventionally associated with a given context. We can see a similar situation with burrnesha. They take a male role when it comes to inheritance or family leadership but can draw on their female identity when it comes to female spaces. In this way, the burrnesha representation functioned to reinforce the status quo in terms of patriarchal gender norms. This conclusion concurs with the assertions of Pisker (2017) and Young & Twigg (2009). Pisker (2017) framed Montenegrin burrnesha as a reflection of an extreme son-preference, connecting the custom to selective abortion of female fetuses in Montenegro. Young & Twigg (2009) similarly argued that Albanian burrnesha reflect the association between leadership and masculinity, and the patriarchal structure of the family overall.

Context and Utility

In my discussion of cognitive polyphasia, I have shown respondents' discomfort with gender non-conformity. Sometimes respondents expressed their disapproval directly and strongly. I will discuss this further in the next chapter. Following, I will show how most respondents, even those that ultimately disapproved of the custom, sought to justify it by elaborating contextual pressures on the burrneshe.

Need, Utility, and Obligation

In community respondents' narratives, burrneshas' context primarily served three, interconnected functions: 1) to demonstrate the existence of material and symbolic needs of the burrneshe's family; 2) to demonstrate the utility of burrneshas' decision in meeting those needs;

and 3) to indicate that burrneshas' decision was, in some sense, an obligation. In this way, respondents conveyed the presence of external motivations (objective 1) that could be met by living as a man (objective 2) and the absence of internal motivation (objective 3). This three-part discourse demonstrated that burrnesha did *not* become burrnesha to satisfy a personal desire. This distinguished them from LGBT+ groups, shielding them from some level of stigma and making the custom more (if not completely) acceptable. This latter point I will discuss in the following section. Here, I will describe respondents' emphasis on need, utility, and obligation.

Many respondents described multiple contextual factors to convey that burrneshas' decision was needed, largely as a response to adversity. Take this explanation from a female respondent in Tirana:

DATA EXCERPT 14

ER: How would you explain burrnesha to a foreigner?

R: Let's see, how could I explain it. I would start with culture, with tradition, with the kanun. Telling what the situation had been like… What affected the making of this decision, or what's written in that part of the kanun. That… because of the needs of the family, at a particular time [in history], when there wasn't a male heir it was required that one of the women took the place of a man.

This excerpt accentuated the interconnection between multiple elements of a burrneshe's surroundings. These included culture, tradition, and the kanun. The respondent situated the burrneshe in a time in history where meeting the needs of the family was a priority and inheritance was strictly patriarchal. She also said that it was "*required* [my emphasis]" of the woman to live as man, indicating obligation. She said that she would start by explaining these factors, indicating their importance for the listener to understand the tradition.

Respondents frequently listed one or more of the following specific motivations for becoming a burrneshe: leading the family, staying with their birth family, participating in blood feud, inheritance, or giving the family leverage in property disputes. Other times the motivation was more general, such as "helping/supporting the family". Respondents often situated these motivations in contexts where there were no men in the family, though they noted that lack of men was not a requirement to become a burrneshe. These themes showed that a burrneshe could

mitigate various contextual problems through their role as a man. While conveying the value of utility, utility was also situated within the patriarchal structure of society that afforded greater rights to males and greater value to masculinity. Furthermore, these themes were family oriented. Given family collectivism, this added to the value of utility and to a sense of admirable altruism (Kagitcibasi, 2007; Triandis, 1995).

In the next excerpt from a woman from Shkoder, we can see how the association between geographical location, adversity, and utility are made explicit:

DATA EXCERPT 15

ER: Do you remember your reaction the first time you heard about burrnesha?

R: No, eh… I just think that for the time that they lived it was the best choice because they aren't considered to be women anymore. And in… I mean, the context in which they lived and in that culture it was just the need to protect the family as the most sacred thing. And that was the only way.

ER: Why was that the only way?

R: Because at that time, I mean, there was no other way for their word to be heard in the context where they lived. In my opinion.

The respondent referred to burrneshas' context in terms of time and culture. In doing so she defined the appropriate limits of the custom. Within those limits, becoming a burrneshe was "the only way" to protect the family. Needing to protect the family implied adversity while conveying the value through utility that burrnesha provided. The respondent conveyed how important this was by describing the family as "the most sacred thing".

Respondents first indicated external motivations by elaborating family need and the utility of becoming a man. They combined their discussion of need and utility with obligation. Through multiple sub-themes, *obligation* reiterated external motivation while implying that burrnesha made their decision against their own personal desire, indicating both virtue and the absence of internal motivation to live as a man.

In the following excerpt, I asked the male respondent from Tirana to expand on a previous comment. Although in general he justified burrnesha, he mentioned that *men* who live

as *women* are not normal because "God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Adam". Here, I asked him to apply this concept to burrnesha (although I misremembered his original phrasing):

DATA EXCERPT 16

> ER: Earlier you said that when a man dresses as a woman it's a problem because "God made Adam and Eve, not Eve and Eve". But if a woman lives as a man in the case of burrnesha, is this not as if God made Adam and Adam? Or maybe I haven't understood?
>
> R: Yes, yes. It's a completely different concept from what I was talking about, a man becoming a woman, it's completely different. From a woman becoming a burrneshe. A woman becomes a burrneshe because she is demanded by NEED[14]. Demanded by the HOME. Demanded by TRADITION. Demanded by CUSTOM. Demanded by public opinion. WHEREAS, a man who becomes a woman, what demands this of him? In other words, nothing demands this of him. Just out of desire! Or he is mentally unwell. Maybe. I don't know. I don't judge anyone.

This respondent listed several contextual factors that obligated a woman to become a burrneshe, including adversity ("NEED"), family ("HOME"), and culture ("TRADITION", "CUSTOM", and "public opinion"). The respondent directly contrasted ("completely different concept", "WHEREAS") those who transgressed gender due to the demands of their surroundings (burrnesha) and those who did so out of "desire" ("a man becoming a woman"). We were not speaking about specific individuals in this case. We were speaking about people generally who live as the "other" gender. This meant that the respondent inferred motivation based on the direction of gender non-conformity alone. This indicated that while living as a man had utility, the same was *not* true for living as a woman. The respondent expressed noticeably different attitudes towards each case. He suggested that, as if by default, the lack of utility of living as a woman indicated either desire or mental illness. As he did not distinguish between

[14] Words in all-caps were emphasized by the respondent.

these two possibilities, he may have equated them. By saying "I don't judge anyone", he indicated the stigma of male-to-female gender non-conformity through the implication that he *could* judge them. By saying that he did not, he may have simultaneously indicated his awareness of the stigma of homophobia.

By combining concepts of need, utility, and obligation, respondents conveyed burrneshas' lack of personal desire to live as a man. Desire to live as a man was problematic because it implied an aberration of the gender essence. In this next excerpt, the respondent not only polarized need/utility/obligation from desire, but also connected desire to essence:

DATA EXCERPT 17

ER: Who can become a burrneshe? For example?

[…]

R: […] I think anyone can become a burrneshe! It's a personal decision, I mean… I would say it's more of a decision than a feeling. Because in some way it's obligated. I see it as… as an obligation. Because they made a kind of sacrifice for the sake of the family or due to their surroundings--… It's not that they felt, I mean, had those genes or those hormones inside of themselves to take or to have a different disposition from- from what we're used to… That we have in respect to man and woman. So, in my opinion, within certain circumstances and in a certain moment anyone can become. It's not that a person should fill some criteria.

This respondent characterized becoming a burrneshe as simultaneously a "personal decision" *and* an "obligation", a juxtaposition that I will discuss presently. She characterized obligation as resulting from the needs of the family and the "surroundings". We see the conceptual relationship between obligation and sacrifice, indicated by the word "because": "I see it as an obligation [… b]ecause they made a kind of sacrifice". After describing the external motivations to become a burrneshe through obligation and sacrifice, the respondent contrasted this to having the desire to live as a man: "It's not that they felt, I mean, had those genes or those hormones inside of themselves to take or to have a different disposition from- from what we're used to…". Her reference to feelings ("felt", "disposition") indicated internal motivation, or the personal desire to live as a man. She marked desire as deviant ("different […] from what we're used to… That we have in respect to man and woman"). Meanwhile, she connected deviant

desire to a person's essence: "those genes or those hormones inside of themselves". Put concisely, a woman's personal desire to live as a man was the result of biological factors, and this was deviant by indicating essence incongruence.

An anatomical female who has male-typical hormones or genes presents an image of a person whose biological essence is inconsistent. As this conflict occurs within a single essence category (biology) it is highly problematic, unlike the discourse surrounding essentialized male virtue in burrnesha. Accepting this conflict would mean questioning the entire structure of gender norms around which society revolves, as per our discussion of essentialism earlier in this chapter. This demonstrates the role that utility has in protecting essentialism and, by extension, patriarchal values.

OBLIGATION, AGENCY, AND VIRTUE

Despite the importance of conveying obligation to negate personal desire, respondents did not want to indicate that burrnesha were literally forced against their will to live as men. Doing so would make the tradition harder to justify and would conflict with the representations of masculinity that burrnesha so successfully embody. To resolve this tension, two related sub-themes of *obligation* stood out due to their frequency and their interaction with other aspects of the representation.

One of these was *sacrifice*. Respondents often described burrnesha as having made a sacrifice in living as a man. They usually did not specify what exactly was being given up, even with prompting. However, sometimes they mentioned that they sacrificed female nature, motherhood, or family (in the sense of starting a new family). Like obligation, sacrifice let us know that burrnesha did not live as men out of personal desire. As mentioned previously, this concept conveyed that living as a man was unpleasant, effortful, and unnatural for burrnesha, as we can see from this man from Tirana:

DATA EXCERPT 18

ER: You said that the decision to become a burrneshe is a challenge, it's very hard

R: Yes.

ER: What's hard about the life of a burrneshe?

R: Because… I would say that they don't say "stop" to themselves as a female being.

ER: What do you mean, for example?

R: For example, they can't do the things that women do anymore. They should behave as- as men. ONLY as men. That's all. They DON'T get married. Absolutely not, they don't get married. They can't look at other men in any way. That's it. There are many factors that you have to be as strict as possible, as strong as possible to decide. That's why this decision is really, really, really a challenge. Very strong.

This respondent emphasized the difficulty of living as a burrnesha, calling it a "challenge" that one must be "very strong" to face. He specified this hardship as not getting married or being able to look at men "in any way", seeming to allude to sexual interest. His reasoning was based on essentialism in that burrnesha continue to be "female beings".

Unlike obligation, sacrifice also implied agency. In the following excerpt, the female respondent from Tropoja was remarking on the state of poverty in Photo 2 and discussing the hard life of burrnesha. I asked her to expand:

DATA EXCERPT 19

ER: What's the relationship between burrnesha and poverty?

R: Concretely, if a family is… If we look at it from today's standpoint, burrnesha are a thing of the past, of the past. Today you won't see a 20-year-old say I want to be like this. Eh… if, for example, a family has many children, some boys and some girls, eh, and the parents are able to take care of them, a sister says, "I will sacrifice, I will work my whole life for my brothers, my sisters, I'll organize. The years pass, they turn 40, turn 50 and… the laws of nature don't tolerate a change like this.

Although embedded in a discussion of poverty, this excerpt presented sacrifice as the choice of the burrneshe. The respondent did not refer to the burrneshe being asked to make the sacrifice. Even her use of the first person to describe the burrneshe's sacrifice ("I will sacrifice…") implied agency. We see her reference to essence incongruence in that "the laws of nature don't tolerate a change like this".

The dichotomy between obligation and agency stood out more so by the second frequent sub-theme: *zgjedhje e detyruar*, literally "forced decision". While this phrase implied agency through the word "decision" (*zgjedhje*), it simultaneously alluded to the external pressure that virtually forced (*e detyruar*) women to make their decision. Respondents sometimes used the exact phrase *zgjedhje e detyruar*. More often the two aspects of this single concept were distributed within and between interviews as respondents conveyed that burrneshas' life as a man was both "their own decision" and "obligated", as we presented above in several excerpts (e.g., data excerpts 14, 17, and 18).

The interaction of obligation, agency, and virtue was situated within the network of other values we have encountered so far, including family collectivism, essentialism, and patriarchy. We can see this in the following interview with a female respondent from Tirana:

DATA EXCERPT 20

ER: What motivations might a burrneshe have for living as a man?

R: Oh. This is definitely connected to the family culture and to family. Probably, I mean, the obligation might have been a family obligation, it wasn't a decision of that person, but probably even the desire to—out of respect for the parents, at least the ones I've heard about, and for the sake of the respect for the parents and to fulfill the desires of the parents, they are obligated to make a change in their life that is not easy at all, but just out of respect and for the parents and as I said, I mean, to fulfill the greatest desire they had: to have a male in the family.

This respondent began by framing the burrneshe's motivation as an obligation from her parents. However, she then spoke about the burrneshe's motivation to fulfill her parents' desires. We see that this obligation did not consist in her parents literally forcing her. Rather, the interaction of cultural norms ("family culture") and her family's desires ("the greatest desire they had: to have a male in the family") was so strong as to have the effect of obligation on her. This sense of obligation and her explicit statement ("it wasn't the decision of that person") made it clear that the burrneshe was not motivated by personal desire. Throughout, the respondent reinforced family as a priority and, at the end, patriarchy ("the greatest desire they had: to have a male in the family").

This network of values had a role in justifying burrnesha, evident in the following excerpt from this man from Tropoja:

DATA EXCERPT 21

ER: What's your personal opinion of burrnesha?

[…]

R: I don't blame them. Because at that time war was inevitable, people were inevitably at war all the time. […] And at that time, those girls, for example, those- those girls that sacrificed themselves to become burrnesha, some of them didn't do this out of- out of their own desire. They did it simply- both from hardship and from this… with time they accepted it. And this is, eh—in the past, but look now. We can look at it now. For the past, I don't blame many of them. But today it's… I think it's an exaggeration.

By beginning with the phrase "I don't blame them", the respondent indicated that burrnesha *could* be blamed, that the listener might suppose that their behavior was deviant. This conveyed his awareness of a degree of stigma surrounding burrnesha. Yet, he did *not* blame them. This was because burrnesha live as men not "out of their own desire" but because of "inevitable" circumstances characterized by "hardship". In this way, the respondent conveyed that if burrnesha had made the decision "out of their own desire", blame would be appropriate. He emphasized this point in his last statement, contrasting burrnesha of the past to today, referring to the latter as "an exaggeration". He indicated that today's lack of adversity relative to the past has removed the need for burrnesha and, by extension, their justification.

Although in some sense contradictory, the co-presence of both aspects of this concept were needed to justify burrnesha. On the one hand, living as a man had to be seen as an obligation in order to indicate that it was not a personal desire. Meanwhile, it was also important that living as a man was a choice that the burrneshe herself made of her own free will. By seeing this action as her decision, it reflected a) agency, and by extension masculinity; and b) virtue and, again, by extension masculinity. As we saw previously, virtue was a salient component in the representation of burrnesha which respondents used to justify the respect that they had for them. The expression of agency directly reinforced patriarchal values. Agency has been found to be a central component of representations of masculinity across cultures and contexts.

Researchers in social science have found that other elements of gender representations orient themselves towards the agent/object, or active/passive, paradigm (Altermatt, DeWall, & Leskinen, 2003; Martin, 1991; Ortner, 1972). In this way, describing burrnesha as active agents instead of passive victims functioned to reinforce the association between agency and masculinity.

While agency directly reproduced patriarchy, it was also required for seeing the burrneshe's decision as virtuous. Someone who is literally forced to help others is not given credit for that behavior. Virtue was valued in and of itself as well as through its association with masculinity, again reproducing patriarchal values. *Sacrifice* directly communicated the virtue of the burrneshe. We understand from the term that burrnesha altruistically gave something up for the good of another person or people. In this case, those other people were usually their birth family. Many respondents said that burrnesha lived as men "for the sake of" their family or "not to leave" them, in the sense of abandonment. Because of family collectivism, this made the sacrifice even more valued.

DISCUSSION

In my discussion so far, we can begin to see how the social representation of burrnesha is oriented towards broader cultural values. Patriarchal ideology was the primary orienting value to which representations of burrnesha had to conform; in other words, burrnesha were seen as acceptable insofar as they reproduced patriarchal norms. The process of orientation was sometimes indirect; other social representations may mediate the relationship between the two. Specifically, essentialism, heteronormativity, family collectivism, and utility stood out as social representations that mediated a) the role that burrnesha had in reproducing patriarchal norms, and b) the role that patriarchal norms had in determining the structure of the burrneshe representation. These themes served to orient the representation. It also appears that respondents were, for the most part, unaware of their presence. For these two reasons, we can treat these themes as themata (see Chapter 3).

Essentialism and heteronormativity are perhaps more obviously connected to patriarchy than family collectivism and utility. As discussed, essentialism is used to justify patriarchal ideology by presenting different gender norms as biologically based, immutable, and informative (Bastian & Haslam, 2006). Heteronormativity is based on this essentialist conflation while reproducing the bipolarity and status difference between women and men (Valdes, 1996).

If less obvious, family collectivism and utility also reinforce patriarchal ideology. In Albania, the normative family structure is strictly patriarchal (Nixon, 2009; Sado, Benassi, & Spaho, 2018; Danermark, Soydan, Pashko, & Vejsiu, 1989). Therefore, any consideration for the perceived well-being of the family should protect the integrity of that structure, and by extension patriarchal ideology (Danermark, Soydan, Pashko, & Vejsiu, 1989). We have seen how the value placed on masculinity led to a son preference, encouraging women to become burrnesha in order to increase the status of the family as an honorary son. Meanwhile, utility in the burrnesha representation served to protect patriarchal ideology in three ways: 1) as an antinomy to sexual desire, which conflicts with essentialism; 2) as a justification for forbidding sex with any gender partner, which conflicts with heteronormativity; and 3) in that masculinity was represented as more useful than femininity.

While they contribute to patriarchy, family collectivism and utility are likely additionally the products of adverse conditions present throughout Albanian history. First of all, adverse conditions necessitated social cooperation, encouraging family collectivism. Second of all, personal desire had to be sacrificed for survival needs, leading to a value of utility as an antinomy to desire. Family collectivism, then, oriented utility towards group projects and objectives (Kagitcibasi, 2007; Triandis, 1995). We saw this in respondents' justification of burrneshas' motivation to provide practical support to the family by living as men. The interaction of these themes encapsulates the family-orientation of utility, the utility value of masculinity, and the value of men in the family.

In the following diagram (Figure 14), I have visually depicted the conceptual relationship between these themata:

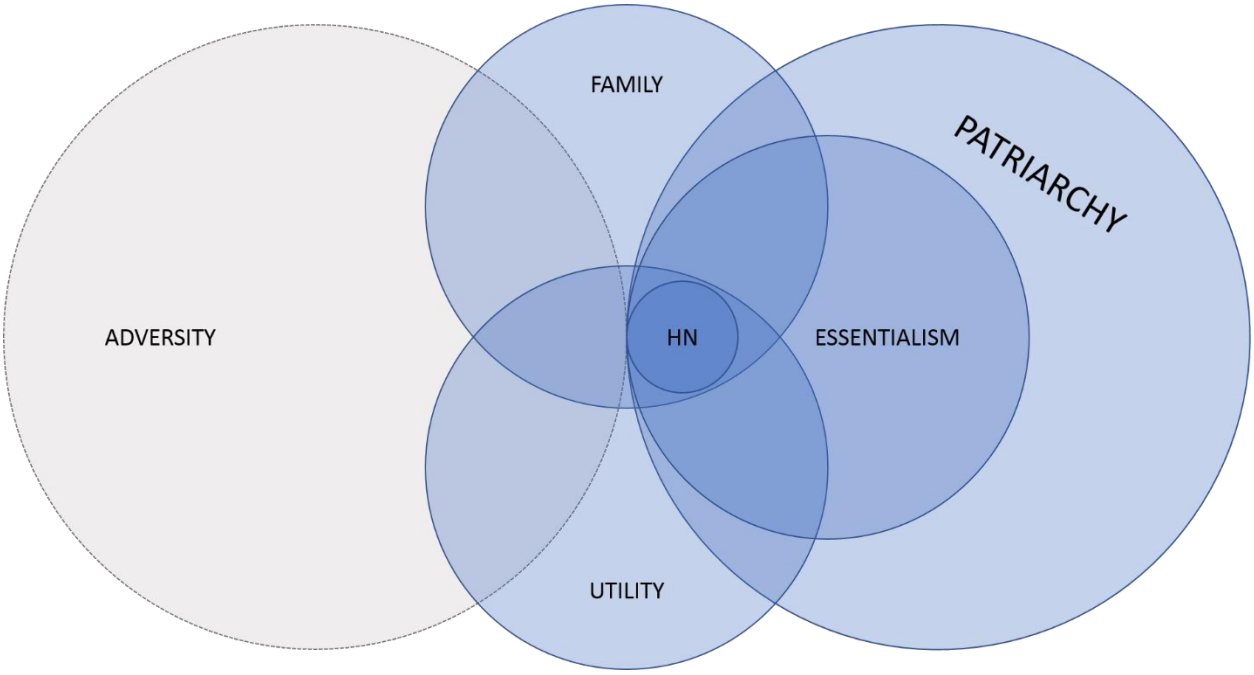

FIGURE 14: MAP OF ORIENTING VALUES

The blue circles with continuous outlines represent cultural values. I have also included adversity as a gray circle with a dotted outline. Although adversity is not a cultural value, it is a relevant condition. Specifically, adversity has encouraged the endorsement of family collectivism and utility, as indicated by the overlap of those respective circles. On the other side of the diagram is patriarchy, which is perhaps the dominant value in this context. Patriarchy interacts with family collectivism and utility. Meanwhile, gender essentialism serves to justify patriarchy. I have also indicated where heteronormativity (HN) lies at the intersection of patriarchy, essentialism, family collectivism, and utility.

In the next diagram (Figure 15), I have superimposed the burrnesha characteristics as they correspond to particular areas of this conceptual map:

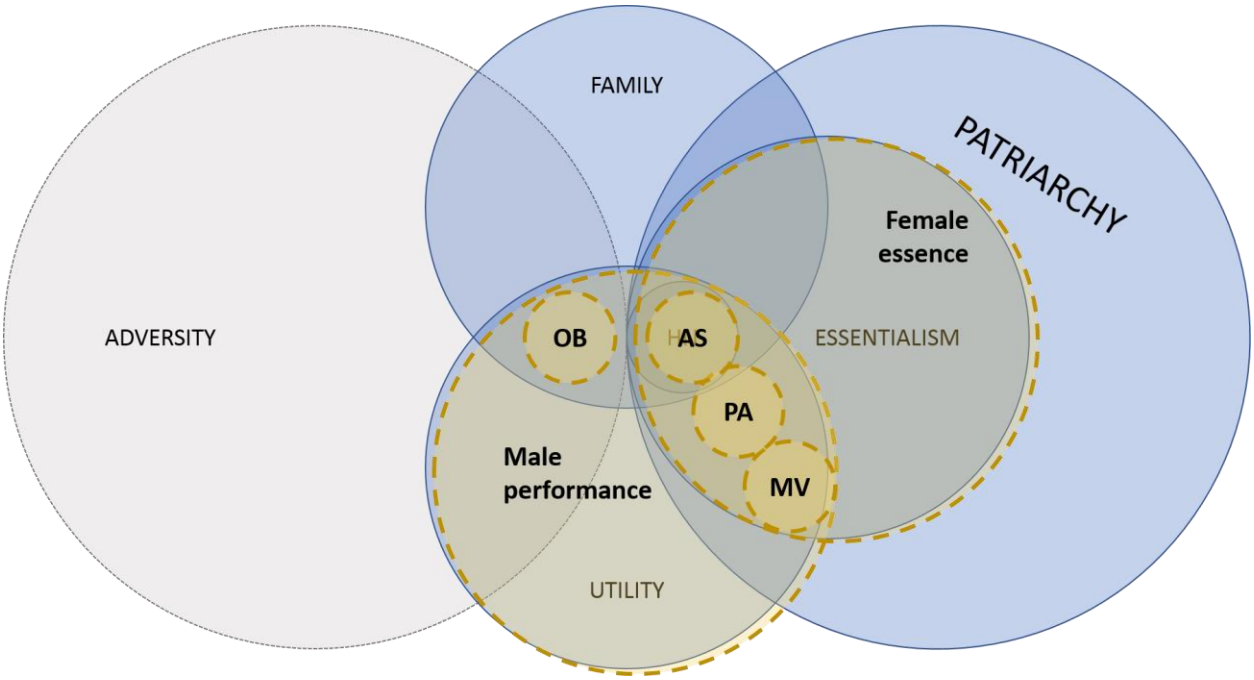

FIGURE 15: CORRESPONDENCE OF BURRNESHA CHARACTERSTICS TO ORIENTING VALUES

Circles representing burrnesha characteristics are in yellow with a thick dashed outline. We see that burrneshas' female essence reflects general gender essentialism. Male performance corresponds to utility within a patriarchal framework and is justified by adversity. At the intersection of female essence and male performance we first see male virtue (MV). While male virtue was essentialized, it served to explain burrneshas' male performance and the utility of masculinity. The position of obligation (OB) indicates how male performance was a useful response to the needs of the family brought on by adversity. Heteronormativity leads to the demand for burrneshas' asexuality (AS). Lastly, I have also indicated productive ambiguity (PA) at the intersection of female essence and male performance. This demonstrates the flexible gender category of burrnesha but also the negotiation between utility and essentialism brought about in activating different gender identities.

This diagram visually represents the central criteria for acceptable burrnesha behavior: essentialism, utility, and patriarchy. We can see here how these three issues are the most relevant criteria, while other values are present and interacting on the periphery. Finally, this diagram reiterates the notion that essentialism and utility themselves promote patriarchal values.

The previous diagrams demonstrated the relationship between all of the themata and the burrnesha representation. The subsequent two diagrams highlight only the most central themata in order to discuss the relationships between them and to prepare the reader for the next chapter's Discussion. In this next diagram (Figure 16), I demonstrate the functional relationships between the three central themata:

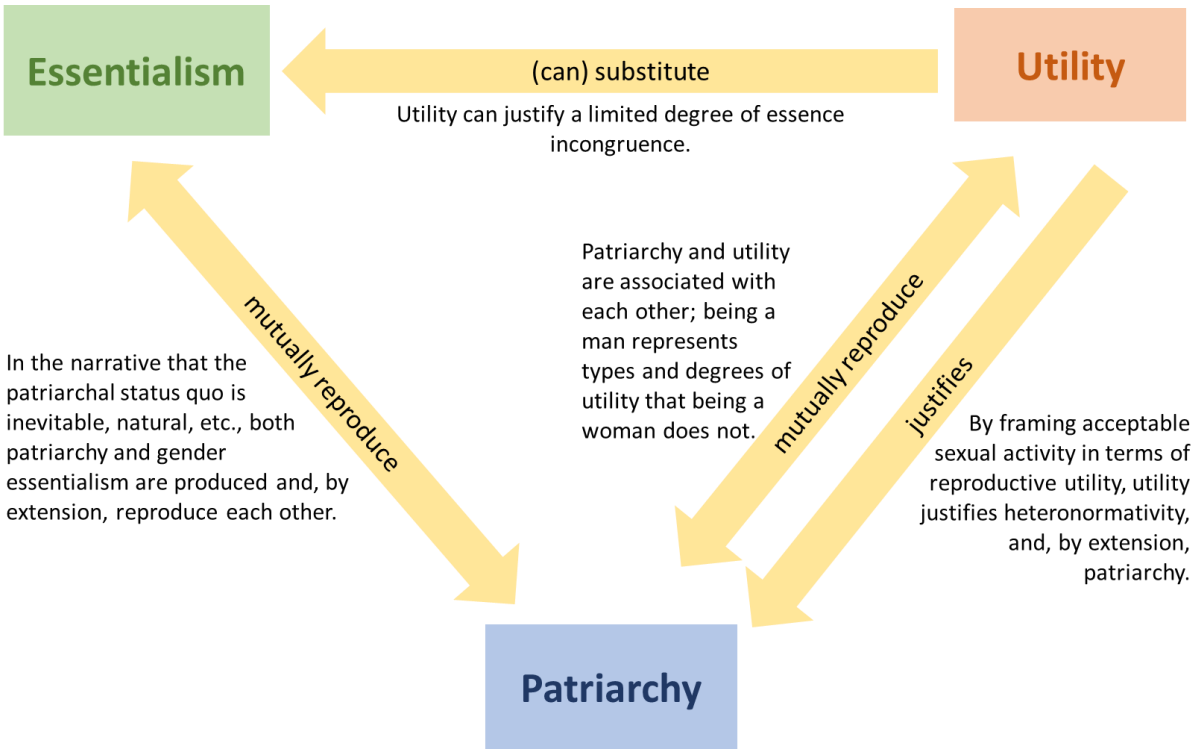

FIGURE 16: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CENTRAL THEMATA

Patriarchy and essentialism have a mutually productive relationship as parts of a narrative where the patriarchal status quo is inevitable and natural, and therefore normative. Patriarchy and utility interact so that being a man is perceived as more useful, and therefore more valuable, than being a woman. Utility supports patriarchy in other ways, such as by implying that sexual activity must lead to reproduction. This justifies heteronormativity which, in turn, reproduces patriarchy. In the case of burrnesha, we see that utility can "substitute" a limited degree of gender essence incongruence. In other words, burrneshas' partial essence incongruence is justified by appealing to utility. Utility is anchored in masculinity, thus reproducing patriarchy in the same moment.

As discussed in Chapter 3, themata often come in dyadic pairs (Markova, 2015a). The relationships and significance between opposite poles of a thema may be complex. In the present case, I suggest that respondents constructed male performance as the antinomy to the female essence and sexual desire as the antinomy to utility. Respondents did not elaborate an antinomy to patriarchy *per se*; they did not specify what the opposite of patriarchy might be besides the absence of patriarchy itself. For example, I cannot conjecture whether the antinomy would be matriarchy or gender equality. Therefore, I have presented patriarchy simply in contrast to non-patriarchy. Below (Figure 17), I demonstrate these themata as dyadic pairs in order to highlight other relationships between them and for its relevance in the next chapter:

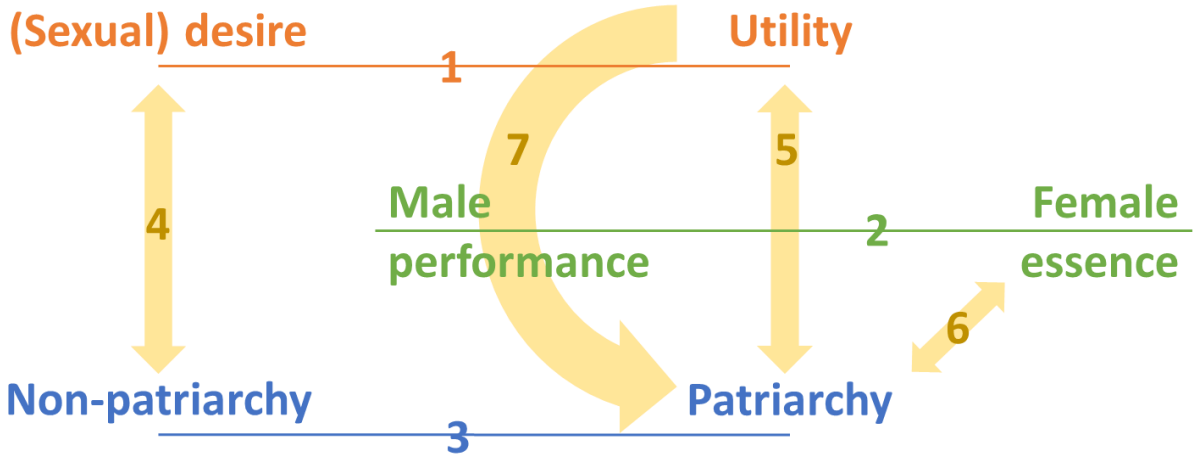

FIGURE 17: CENTRAL THEMATA AS DYADIC PAIRS

I have numbered the different elements to facilitate interpretation. Beginning at the top, 1 is the utility-sexual desire thema. 2 is the female essence-male performance thema. 3 is the patriarchy-non-patriarchy thema. Burrneshas' sexual desire conflicts with patriarchy (4). As in the previous diagram (Figure 16), I show how utility and the female essence correspond to patriarchy (5 and 6, respectively). Here, we also see how male performance, if presenting utility, can reproduce patriarchy (7). Because of this relationship, if burrnesha do not present any useful function, they contradict patriarchy. This is particularly true if we accept personal (sexual) desire as the antinomy to utility.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of this chapter was to present the dominant representation of burrnesha as evidenced in the data. I aimed not only to describe the structure of this representation but also to evaluate its functions. The construction of the burrnesha representation is determined primarily as a simultaneous consideration of essentialism, utility, and patriarchy (which are highly interconnected). The combination of these values determines a burrneshe's rights and duties in general and in specific contexts. With support from other themata such as family collectivism and heteronormativity, essentialism and utility serve ideological functions in reinforcing patriarchy. Utility also serves practical, non-ideological functions. The elaboration of sexuality in the burrnesha representation reflects the functions of this structure. Sexual activity between a burrneshe and any other person, female or male, lacks utility while conflicting with essentialism and patriarchy. Therefore, any sexual activity is forbidden. In the next chapter I will build on this discussion to present various representations of burrnesha.

CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS: PLURALISM AND POSITIONING

CHAPTER 6 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I described a relatively uniform representation of burrnesha that emerged from the data. While this representation dominated the first part of most interviews, it was not the only one to emerge. This pluralism was accompanied by a range of valence, expressed by enthusiastic admiration, pity, or strong dislike. Respondents also varied in their representations of space and time, and their use of these elements in discourse. Based on these observations, I have focused this analysis on how respondents drew on different representations, and elaborated space and time, in order to most positively represent themselves. In doing so, I will address research question 2: How does the dominant representation of burrnesha compare to other salient representations of burrnesha? How do differences between them reflect social positioning processes?

I begin this chapter by comparing three different representations of burrnesha that emerged from the data. I then highlight elaborations of space and time that were integral to those representations. I describe how these were used for the articulation and positioning of place identities. I then describe the relevant place identities available to Albanians and what they signified in historical and political context. Finally, I will compare all three representations of burrnesha and the themata underlying them. I identify six themata (other/self, eurocentrism/nationalism, patriarchy, utility, agency, and essentialism), three of which I discussed in the previous chapter, and demonstrate how movement along them leads to the unique narratives of each representation. The following diagram represents these themata which I will describe in detail after presenting the data and my analysis:

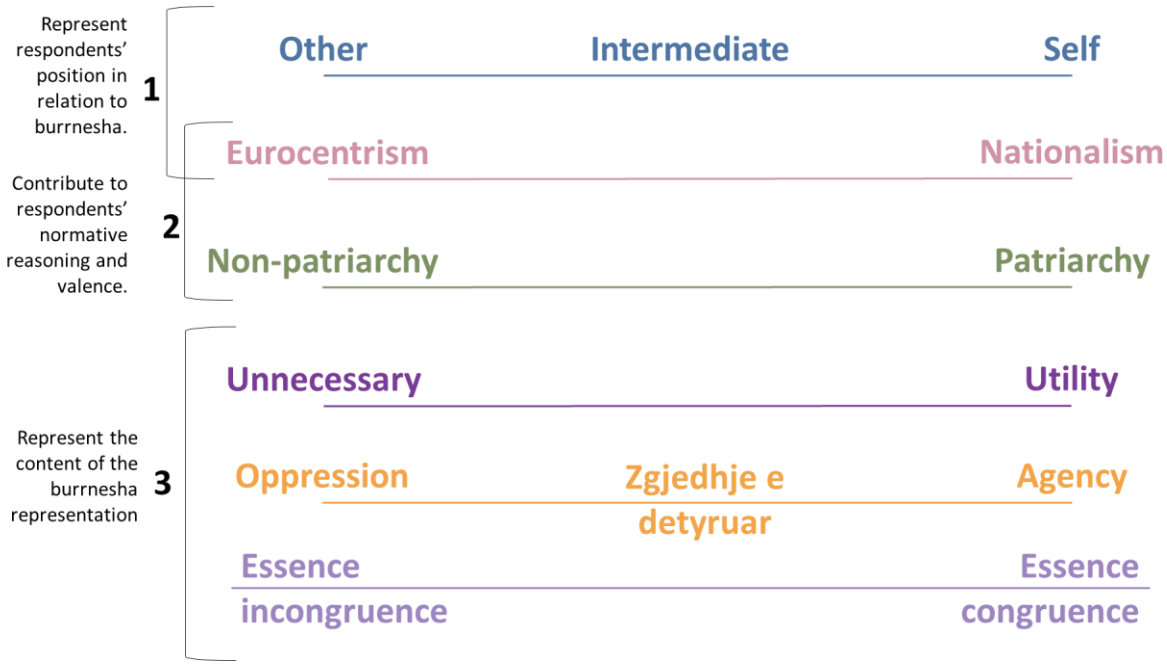

FIGURE 18: ALL THEMATA

PLURALISM

Nearly all respondents presented a justified representation of burrnesha during the first part of the interview. This was the focus of the previous chapter. However, later in the interviews, especially when I asked respondents to share their personal opinion about burrnesha, there was considerably more variation in responses. Most notably, some respondents expressed great respect and admiration while many others expressed dislike and discomfort.

Although multiple representations of burrnesha emerged from the data, I have chosen to focus on three at present, the first of which was the focus of the previous chapter. I have chosen to compare these three in part because each reflected a distinct social position between the respondent and burrnesha. In addition, together they demonstrate a range of valence. The Family Collectivism representation ambivalently justifies burrnesha. The Unnecessary Oppression representation constructs them as deviant. The Agency representation is highly positive. I will discuss other reasons for including each representation in their respective sections. Following, I

will describe each of these representations, highlighting salient themes, resultant changes in structure, and the overall function of the narrative in terms of positioning.

Family Collectivism Representation

Since this representation was the focal point of the last chapter, I will not spend too much time describing it here. In summary, burrnesha were presented as having made an altruistic sacrifice for the sake of their families by living as a man. This sacrifice was characterized both as a personal choice and as an obligation. This allowed the speaker to attribute virtue to the burrneshe while denying any personal desire to live as a man; personal desire might have indicated a transgression of the gender essence. This narrative revolved around the concept of the family and the goal of contributing positively to the family at any cost.

Most, if not almost all, respondents invoked this representation during the first part of the interview. As a reminder, I presented respondents with two photos of burrnesha and asked them to describe what they saw and then describe various aspects of the burrnesha custom. This format positioned the respondent as the "expert" on the topic of burrnesha by virtue of being Albanian, placing them as an in-group member with burrnesha compared to me (a foreigner). Some respondents engaged this narrative until the end of the interview, even when I asked for their personal opinion.

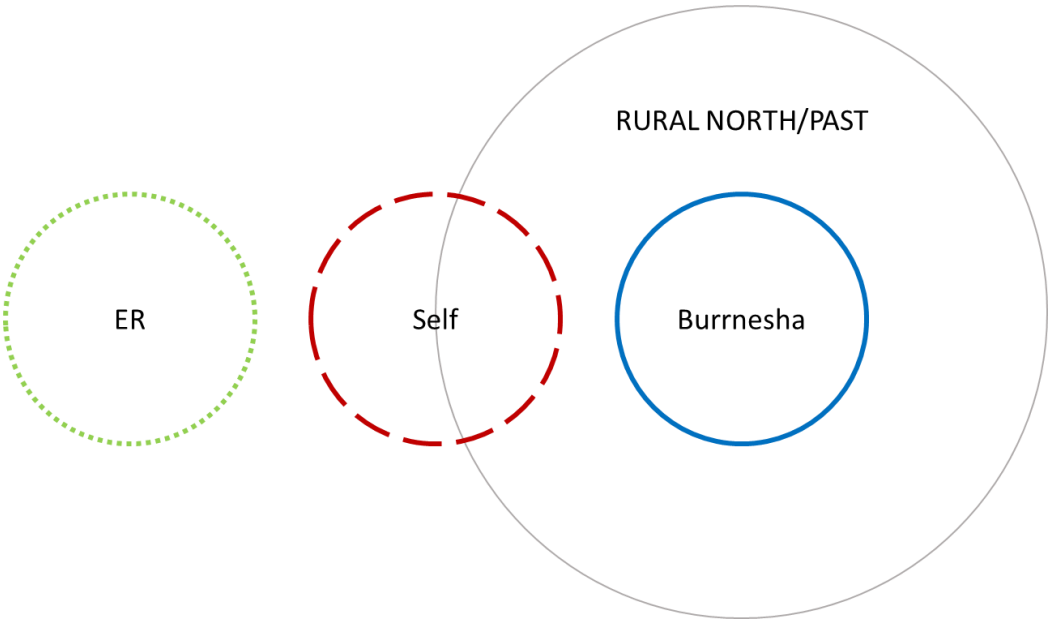

FIGURE 19: POSITIOING IN THE FAMILY COLLECTIVISM REPRESENTATION

The above diagram (Figure 19) shows how the respondent positioned burrnesha in the rural north and in the past. This was in relation to me (ER), the interviewer, who was in the burrneshe's out-group. I have represented the respondent (Self) as being only partially inside the burrneshe's in-group because they were positioned near burrnesha due to the interview context, not due to their initiative. While they justified burrnesha, they also positioned them in "other" places, *not* here and now. I believe that respondents' elaboration of place reflected some attempt to resist outside positioning and put burrnesha in the out-group. Meanwhile, justification of burrnesha reflected the awareness that an outsider might see them as an in-group member regardless.

UNNECESSARY OPPRESSION REPRESENTATION

Like the Family Collectivism one, this representation emphasized both *obligation* and *sacrifice*. However, *obligation* took on a new meaning, and *sacrifice* highlighted what was given

up rather than what was given to others. This narrative also focused on agency which, as we will see in the next sub-section, was also subject to different framing with ramifications for structure and valence. In summary, the message of the Unnecessary Oppression representation was that living as a burrneshe was oppressive and that in the modern world this oppression was unnecessary. This implied that adverse conditions may have made it necessary, however these conditions were a thing of the past.

In the following excerpt, I asked the female respondent from Tirana her opinion of burrnesha:

DATA EXCERPT 22

ER: What's your personal opinion of burrnesha?

R: I'm glad it's fading. That this tradition is disappearing. Because it's not necessary for a woman to restrict her life.

ER: Restrict?

R: I mean, that she CLOSES[15] her life—CLOSES her own life to prove herself masculine. When it's many times better when she can prove herself through her mental strength, and her mental abilities, that she's ready or that she's on the same level or higher than a man can be just because he's physiologically like that, that nature made him a man. And I, for this reason, am glad because of this thing that is implied and that I don't agree with. I mean, in a way I feel sorry for those women that closed their own life even before beginning because they were obligated and have made a—I think some type of farce. Make-believe. Because they don't feel like that! They're not comfortable, nature didn't make them this way. Whereas they're the circumstances of life that have obligated them. And because of this I'm glad and that's what I think. It's fading, it's becoming extinguished, but on the other hand we've achieved rights that we're equal to men and our word is listened to right away. We have more decision-making power than them [burrnesha]. At least in Albanian society. I don't say that it's the same across the whole territory because there are still deep zones where traditions remain, there are still zones

[15] Words in all-caps were emphasized by the respondent.

where they haven't achieved the right to sit in the room of the men, but in a part, some 70% of the whole Albanian territory we are… parallel, I mean, in this situation.

Here, we see themes related to *giving something up* ("restrict her life", "she CLOSES her life"). This theme was also used in the Family Collectivism representation as part of altruistic sacrifice. However, while in that case *giving something up* was used to communicate the degree of altruism, here it was used to communicate abnormality and oppression ("some type of farce"). Oppression was derived in part from gender essentialism: acting against one's gender essence was seen as oppressive, as if one must truly be forced to do so ("they don't feel like that! They're not comfortable, nature didn't make them this way. Whereas they're the circumstances of life that have obligated them"). This respondent advocated rights and equality, contrasted to the obligated burrnesha she "feels sorry for". Freedom and equality were normalized as they were anchored in the present time and in the majority of Albanian territory. The lack of rights was anchored in the "deep zones" (remote areas) that, by contrast to the present time and by the term "traditions", we understand to be anchored in the past.

The *unnecessary* aspect of this narrative hinged on the passage of time. This framed the conditions surrounding burrnesha as a thing of the past. This excerpt is from a woman from Shkoder:

DATA EXCERPT 23

E: You said that in the past there were more [burrnesha], but now there are less, or none, in Shkoder…

R: No.

E: How did this change happen? That there are fewer now than before?

R: Well, now life is more emancipated, freer. Jobs are more—you can work in anything, I mean, life is freer more—Going back and forth in the outside world, everything, so there's no need to- to become a burrneshe if you want to do something. That maybe a woman can't do. Today women and men work and live freely. Either a woman or a man. Whatever. So… Then, it's another thing just to change your gender. That's a different concept.

The respondent contrasted burrnesha with the *freedom* and *gender equality* aspects of *agency*. She implied that at a previous time becoming a burrneshe was necessary "if you want to do something", but today you could do those things even without living as a man. Freedom was anchored in the present, but also in other countries (exposure to "the outside world"). She contrasted burrnesha with transgender ("just to change your gender"), remarking that it was a "different concept". In the context of this excerpt, it seems that she may have positioned transgender in the present day as part of the contrast to burrnesha.

Associating the present with freedom and with the "outside world" was evident in other interviews as well, such as with this woman from Tirana:

DATA EXCERPT 24

> R: There is a big truth. At that time women looked just like men! It was a lack of money. Because they couldn't go to the hair salon, they couldn't buy different clothes, eh, it was a backward economy. So, clothes were very necessary to identify them. It was very necessary. Because in Albania, even today, I am Albanian myself, but I would say that I'm from Europe, I mean America, Europe, that's where I have my gaze. I see that… [in Albania] appearance is much more important than what you do. This is much more important and at that time it was more that that deep mental backwardness had much more importance. The way that you look and its relationship with what you thought, then women could speak their minds. Dressed as a man, behaving as a man, they would tell you their own opinions. Just like men. At the end of the day it was an achievement because you wouldn't be able to say anything. So, this was a pseudo-benefit, she had freedom of opinion. She had it CONDITIONED from what they discussed there. I mean from, eh—not so much from the ideas of the conversation, from that which she previously understood that she should say. Not what she wanted.

In this example, the respondent associated the past ("at that time") with poverty ("lack of money") and with superficiality ("appearance is much more important than what you do"), all characterized by "backwardness". She explicitly contrasted geographical positions and used these positions as part of her narrative. She distanced herself from burrnesha and the rural north. She positioned this constellation of the past, poverty, and superficiality in Albania (and in other parts of her interview, in the north specifically) and contrasted this with the West. By positioning herself in proximity to the West ("I'm from Europe"), she distanced herself from that "backwardness" of the *other*. The oppression associated with the other was solidified when she

implied that any agency associated with being a burrneshe was illusory: a burrneshe had "freedom of opinion", but in fact those opinions were what she "understood that she should say. Not what she wanted".

These narratives often referred to *gender equality* (e.g., "the *right* to sit in the room of the men" from excerpt 22). Gender equality was not usually, if ever, framed as burrneshas' right to live however they pleased. Instead, it was framed as the right for physiological females to live according to corresponding gender norms (e.g., "life is more emancipated, freer […] so there's no need to- to become a burrneshe if you want to do something" from excerpt 23). Respondents' emphasis on rights, equality, and freedom reflected *agency*. However, by taking for granted peoples' desire and natural tendency to adhere to gender norms, this representation effectively reproduced essentialism and the patriarchal status quo.

As we have seen, this representation depicted a fairly negative opinion of burrnesha. More specifically, respondents evoking this representation often said that they "pity" burrnesha or "feel sorry for them" (see excerpt 22). Pity, while conveying deviance, also expressed respondents' belief in burrneshas' obligation to live as they are, removing a degree of blame. Because of the relatively negative valence of burrnesha in this narrative, respondents positioned burrnesha and their communities as the other, differentiating their social groups. To do this, they relied on many of the functions of space and time that I will discuss later in this chapter. Respondents frequently positioned themselves in the city and/or in the south of the country. In doing so, they sometimes associated themselves with the West. Meanwhile, they positioned burrnesha in a different place, whether that place was characterized as rural, northern, or with other aspects of *other* places. Finally, respondents used temporal markers to communicate that burrnesha and their communities were outdated. As we have seen in this subsection, an elaboration of time was useful in communicating why oppression of burrnesha was not necessary; in today's modern world, the hardship of the past is avoidable. Meanwhile, the respondent positioned the burrneshe as the temporal *other*.

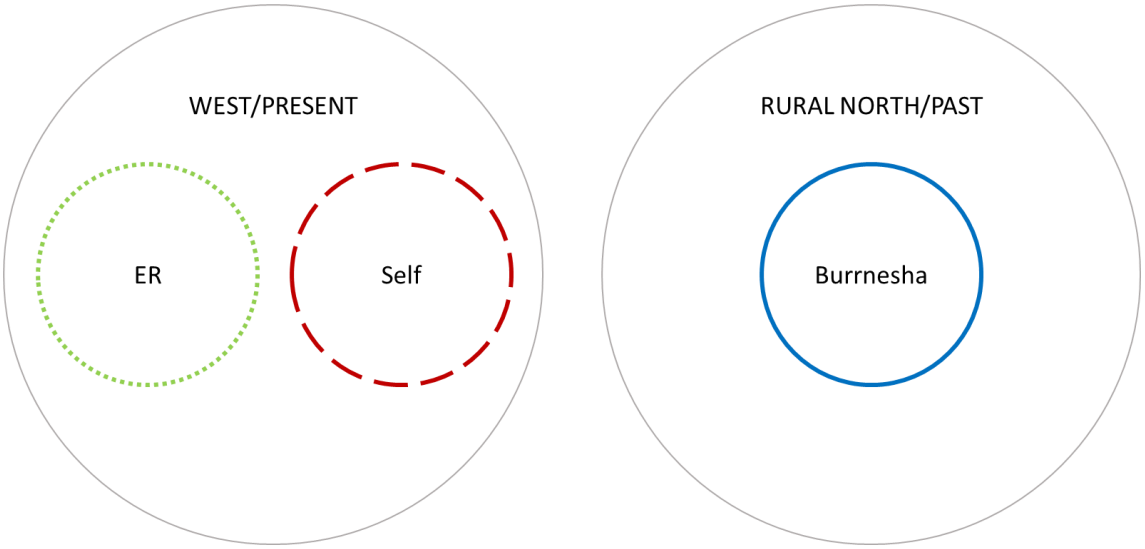

FIGURE 20: POSITIONING IN THE UNNECESSARY OPPRESION REPRESENTATION

In this case (Figure 20), the respondent positioned themselves in the present and often in the city and/or West. This was probably due to a combination of wanting to align themselves with the city or the West (as a normative and powerful representation) as well as to position themselves as an in-group member with me. Burrnesha, along with a matrix of negative associations, were positioned in the out-group.

AGENCY REPRESENTATION

The Agency Representation appeared rarely in the interviews. However, I think it is important to describe for three reasons. First, the respondent that most used this narrative was a middle-aged woman from Tropoja who had once come very close to becoming a burrneshe. Although she was not the only respondent who said that she would consider becoming one, she was the respondent for whom this reality had most materialized in her life. Second, the theme of *agency* was salient in her narrative, as it was in the previous one. However, her use of *agency* framed burrnesha as positive. This comparison shows how new combinations of the same elements can change the overall valence of a representation. Third, this representation was arguably the most positive and admiring I witnessed. As such, we can use it to evaluate a range of valence in regard to burrnesha.

The respondent (who I will refer to in this subsection as "R" since there is only one) recognized the burrneshe in Photo 2 as a personal acquaintance, noting that "she was a woman". Throughout her interview, R usually used the term *sokoleshe* instead of *burrneshe*, which has the same overall meaning (see Chapter 2). R's attitude towards burrnesha was positive throughout the entire interview, perhaps more so than any other interview. R described meeting the burrneshe from Photo 2 in person and in the following excerpt I asked if she had heard of burrnesha before that meeting:

DATA EXCERPT 25

ER: Had you heard [about burrnesha] previously?

R: I've heard about them since childhood. Because I have, eh, the wife of my brother from that village and they told, the family of the wife of my brother. This is what it is, she made this decision, it should be—she's a role model, she's to be thanked because she chose despite… how can we say, despite—She's not 100% male, but her heart is—like a warrior, she had a big heart, just like she was even ready for war!

"That village" was the village where the burrneshe from Photo 2 was from. The first thing to notice in this excerpt is that R saw becoming a burrneshe not only in a positive light ("she's a role model, she's to be thanked") but also described it as the decision of the burrneshe ("she made this decision"), attributing agency to her. Secondly, R framed the burrneshe as transgressing gender categories by saying that "she's not 100% male", and went on to say that she was "like a warrior" with "a big heart" *despite* this transgression. It seems that although R was aware of essentialist transgression, she did not think it was important considering the burrneshe's attributes.

R attributed agency not only due to the admirable decision to live as a burrneshe but also due to their functions as a burrneshe:

DATA EXCERPT 26

ER: What do you think about the life of a burrneshe, is it--?

R: The life of a burrneshe is—independent. Independent. It's independent because she-she doesn't have a partner, she doesn't have children, she only has one responsibility that

is how she can help as a man of the house, eh, to do great[16] work. Or serious work, that needs to be done. In the sense that I, eh, the great one of the family, I have to do some work at home, I build something at home, I have to meet with the men and take part in that… That's it.

Here, a burrneshe's lack of partner or children was not the source of isolation (as it was for many other respondents), but the source of independence. She integrated *independence* into the functions of a burrneshe in carrying out "great, "serious" work that "needs to be done".

Unlike the Unnecessary Oppression representation, R did not suggest that the burrneshe's choice was obligated at any point in the interview. She likewise gave little attention to external pressures that might have impelled this decision, unlike both other representations. This is not to say that personal desires (such as sexual desires) were valid motivations. However, instead of focusing on external motivators, she focused on the functions of being a burrneshe and lauded them as important and admirable. This highlighted the *decision-making* and *activity* aspects of *agency*. Like the Family Collectivism representation, these functions were admirable because they benefited the family:

DATA EXCERPT 27

ER: What is the importance of the burrneshe's motivation?

R: No no, she should have a strong motivation and had given something even before.

ER: What do you mean?

R: That she has given something for that home, I mean, she gave what's important… by being a burrneshe. In every aspect, we understand this in every aspect. Whether from… her words, from her actions, from her work, she is capable, you give her the title sokol. Sokol, or sokoleshe, or burrneshe, is she able to hold this [title]?

---

[16] "Great" in sense of "significant"

Here, R characterized the burrneshe's "words", "actions", and "work" as something "given", as if gifted, to the family (the "home") "by being a burrneshe". The title sokoleshe or burrneshe had to be earned ("is she able to hold this [title]?"), adding to the sense that her behavior was admirable. We might also interpret her use of the term *sokol* in addition to *sokoleshe* to imply that a burrneshe can surpass the feminized version of the title to become a "true" man.

Like the previous representation, here we see that agency is desirable. However, this respondent saw burrnesha as a realization of agency rather than a contradiction of it. The difference between these two representations was likely due, in large part, to differences in location combined with this respondent's experience as almost having become a burrneshe. The Unnecessary Oppression representation was most prevalent in Tirana and Shkoder (although also used in Tropoja). Many respondents from Tirana and Shkoder did not see any reason to transgress gender norms by living as a man. They perceived the burrnesha custom as inherently tied to external circumstances. Living outside of those circumstances, they saw them as avoidable given the economic development and Westernization in recent years. The present respondent was embedded in the conditions that are associated with the decision to become a burrneshe, and likely saw those conditions as less avoidable.

This aspect of R's relationship to burrnesha is probably the most influential in her particular narrative. Based on the data, we cannot deduce whether she considered becoming a burrneshe because she had a positive opinion of them previously, or if she developed her positive opinion due to a serious consideration of becoming one. Here is her description of almost becoming a burrneshe:

DATA EXCERPT 28

ER: If you can imagine being a burrneshe, what would it be good or bad?

R: No, good! Good. Good. I have, eh… in a situation of my life I wanted to make a decision like this… that I would become a burrneshe.

AZ: When was this? More or less?

R: Eh, yes, the period when I… when I … I had an abnormal marital life and I wanted to make this decision and become a sokolesh. Exactly, I told my parents I would become a sokolesh.

AZ: And?

R: And I wanted to make this decision, but things changed and life continued normally. Things changed, but almost—Because things changed life continued normally.

ER: What was your parents' reaction?

R: Very good, they reacted very well. They accepted me very well, with much pleasure… I would have gone to the places where there was war, I would have gone. I would have become a sokolesh. I was very ready. To go to the nations where there was war. I was very ready. Because the war in Kosovo still hadn't ended, at that time.

She represented the decision to become a burrneshe as her own initiative ("I wanted to make this decision"). Rather than experiencing external pressure, she informed her parents of her own decision and they received the news very positively. Her vision of becoming a burrneshe was action oriented, envisioning herself being "very ready" to go to war. Given R's role in this decision-making process, it is not surprising that she held an agency-oriented representation of burrnesha. Her representation was rooted in experiencing (or at least representing) the decision as her own.

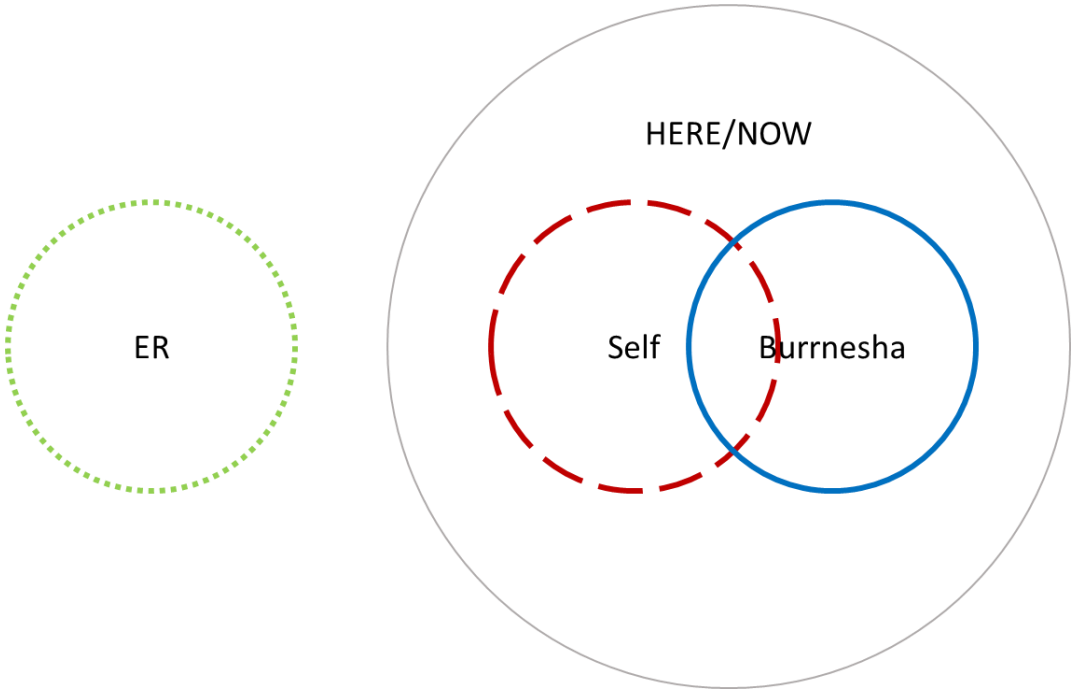

FIGURE 21: POSITIONING IN THE AGENCY REPRESENTATION

Here (Figure 21), the respondent was not only an in-group member with burrnesha; burrnesha were incorporated into her sense of self to a degree not usually seen in the other interviews because she so seriously considered becoming one. R did not elaborate context much, if at all. It is partly for that reason that I have positioned her and burrnesha in the "here/now". Her omission of contextual information may indicate that she took it for granted that burrnesha belong to the here and now. I have placed myself outside of this group because the respondent was in the position of explaining the tradition to me as an outsider.

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

In observing this plurality of representations, I return our discussion to cognitive polyphasia. In the previous chapter we discussed cognitive polyphasia within a coherent representation of burrnesha. Respondents negotiated masculine and feminine aspects of burrneshas' identity as well as positive and negative aspects of obligation and sacrifice. Here, I consider a different level of cognitive polyphasia where differences in framing led to differences in representational structure. Specifically, this corresponds to the *selective prevalence* type of

cognitive polyphasia described by Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernandez (2015) and introduced in Chapter 3. Selective prevalence suggests that conflicting representations are activated in response to different contexts (Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernández, 2015).

Moloney, Williams, & Blair (2012) described how cognitive polyphasia is the result of societal change and exposure to different "modes of knowledge":

> [I]nconsistencies are accommodated as each representation is argued to be locally consistent (Renedo & Jovchelovitch, 2007; Moscovici, 1961; Provencher, 2011; Wagner, Duveen, Themel & Verma, 1999). It is this latter assumption – that inconsistencies lie between ways of thinking rather than within ways of thinking, that is the focus of this paper. (Moloney, Williams, & Blair, 2012, p. 4.2)

In this chapter, pluralism reflects variation in context and the respondents' social identity. For this reason, we can see how each representation is "locally consistent", as Moloney, Williams, & Blair (2012) discussed.

In their study, Moloney, Williams, & Blair (2012) analyzed different representations of blood donation. They found that blood donors and non-donors held similar representations of blood donation. Yet, the salience of functional versus normative aspects of the representation was different between the two groups. Non-donors' emphasis was on negative, functional aspects that pertained to the self, such as *needles* and *anxiety*. Donors' focus was on positive, normative aspects that referenced the other, such as *helping* and *saving lives*. These authors related specific elements (e.g. *needles*) to a functional/normative thema that corresponded to a self/other thema. In doing so, they demonstrated how cognitive polyphasia 1) reflected the dynamics of general societal discourse, such as the media; and 2) led to very different outcomes in terms of donation behavior.

Other research, such as Guimelli (1998), also explored how different elements of a representation are activated. Guimelli (1998) found that "the degree of activation of the elements of the central core depends to a great extent on the relations that individuals maintain with the object considered" (p. 222). This indicates some of the functions of cognitive polyphasia. If activation depends on the individual's relationship with the object, then we would expect each of

the different social identities available to that individual to prescribe a different relationship to the object, leading to different patterns of activation. In line with this reasoning, Provencher (2011) found that "cognitive polyphasia allows for and explains the existence and the mobilisation of different adult rationalities within a same society, all of equal functional value because they are adapted to the particular context" (p 391).

POSITIONING OF SOCIAL IDENTITY

Given the salience of representations of space and time in positioning in this data, I will focus on respondents' negotiation of *place identities*. First, I will introduce this construct and its relevance. Then, I will show how burrnesha are anchored in specific place identities and discuss the functions of space and time in the data. Finally, I will describe the place identities that are generally available to Albanians and their overall significance.

PLACE IDENTITY AND BURRNESHA

Respondents' continual positioning of burrnesha in the rural north suggested that burrnesha were associated with that place as a social group. We can see the strength of this association in the following excerpt. This respondent was a man from Shkoder. Earlier in the interview we spoke about a specific woman living as a man ("L") in Shkoder who is widely known, and whose status as a burrneshe is debated by many respondents:

DATA EXCERPT 29

ER: When did you learn what burrneshe, as a tradition, means?

R: Well… it's mostly in, eh, the mountain areas. Highlanders have this tradition. Whereas this one [L] is just, I don't know the reason. And today I don't know—no one told me why this person dresses [as a man]. Whereas these… highlanders have—it's different, as a tradition, just—They don't have a man in the house, I would say, I don't know. And they take the leadership of the man of the family like… More than that, I don't know about the person we spoke about.

The respondent contrasted L from burrnesha based on L's residence, inferring that she had a different motivation for living as a man. As we saw in the previous chapter, motivation was instrumental to justifying burrneshas' behavior. As a signifier of specific motivations, location was so central to the respondent's representation of burrnesha that it was a necessary criterion. This excerpt demonstrated the embedded associations between place, identity, and motivation. Let us now integrate this observation with the following:

DATA EXCERPT 30

R: I don't- don't like this topic [of burrnesha] very much because it's not—I don't think it's representative, you know it's not… representative…

ER: Representative? In what sense?

R: Of our society, you know? I think it's rare and it's made out to be something very common. Usual! It's not usual.

This male respondent from Shkoder, throughout his interview, distanced himself from the custom by describing it as "not representative" of "[his] society". He positioned burrnesha in his out-group and was explicit in his dislike. Although few respondents were as extreme as he was, it was very common to associate burrnesha with negative aspects of "other" social groups. In the previous chapter, I discussed stigma in the burrnesha representation in the context of burrneshas' gender ambiguity. In this chapter, I will add that distancing reflected not only essentialist reasoning but also stigma associated with burrneshas' communities. The role of space and time in distancing reflected findings from other research mentioned previously where respondents protected themselves from potential risk through spatial and temporal distance (e.g., Smith, O'Connor, & Joffe, 2015).

Burrnesha were almost universally positioned in rural areas of the north of Albania. In Chapter 2, I showed that the northernmost regions are the most economically underdeveloped of the country. It was evident throughout the interviews that respondents held this belief. Their descriptions of the north were overwhelmingly characterized as poor, rural, and underdeveloped, an association that you will see throughout this section. Most respondents, regardless of region,

also tended to view the rural north as being especially patriarchal. While respondents frequently endorsed patriarchal norms indirectly (e.g., via endorsement of gender essentialism), their explicit treatment of patriarchy was that it was archaic and unjust. This was particularly evident in the Unnecessary Oppression representation. Respondents, such as this woman from Tirana, explicitly associated patriarchal structures with the rural north:

DATA EXCERPT 31

> ER: For these people [burrnesha], what is the importance of dressing as man? In order to make decisions as a man?
>
> R: Because this tradition was born since… a long time ago. Because a woman in those especially patriarchal Albanian families in the north of Albania, they would not allow a woman to sit at the hearth, together with the men. She wasn't allowed to speak in front of a man. She wasn't allowed to walk with a man.

The respondent characterized burrnesha as, at least in part, a *consequence* of patriarchal norms. Meanwhile, she associated patriarchy with the "north" and the past ("a long time ago"). I witnessed the association between the rural north, hardship, and patriarchy not only in the data but also very frequently in daily conversations with Albanians while living in Shkoder and Tirana.

The association between burrnesha and these negative connotations was exacerbated by the relevance of those specific connotations to the representation of burrnesha. Hardship and patriarchy in particular (as well as other themes, such as isolation) were cited as pressuring burrnesha into living as men, and are independently associated with the rural north. As we know, burrnesha are directly associated with these circumstances because they are viewed as supporting their families in the face of hardship. Therefore, burrnesha automatically imply those undesirable aspects of the rural north. This three part association between burrnesha, their place identity, and specific characteristics of the rural north resulted in a particularly strong association between these three aspects. The following diagram (22) demonstrates how burrnesha are associated with hardship and patriarchy not only directly through their assumed motivations, but also indirectly through their assumed location in the rural north and its characterization as adverse and patriarchal:

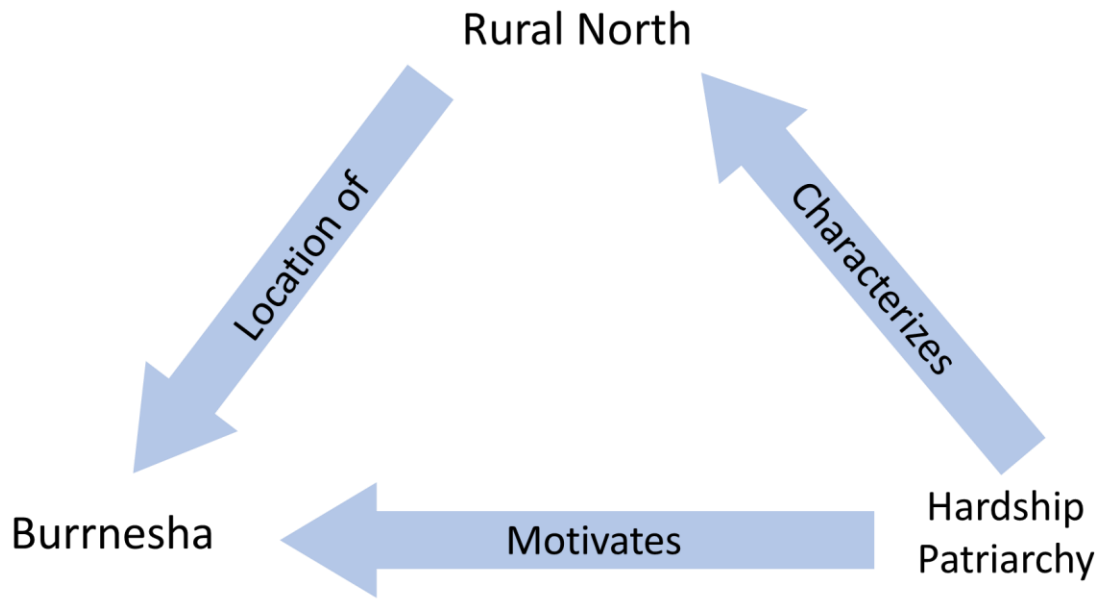

FIGURE 22: ASSOCIATION BETWEEN BURRNESHA, THE RURAL NORTH, HARDSHIP, AND PATRIARCHY

Although nearly all respondents positioned burrnesha in the rural north, the specific categories respondents used to classify their location often depended on the respondent's own place identity (see Differentiation). These discrepancies likely indicated that the respondent's desire to communicate their social position in relation to burrnesha superseded the desire to communicate an objectively accurate depiction of where burrnesha lived. That is not to say that their descriptions were inaccurate; evidence demonstrates that burrnesha are and historically have been most common in the rural north. However, patterns in respondents' selective elicitation of some place characteristics over others I believe to be a strategic act of positioning.

The fact that positioning was driven by elaborations of space and time indicated the salience of place identities. Tajfel (1981) indicated three functions of social identities: differentiation, causation, and justification. Breakwell (1993), however, suggested that this list was not comprehensive. I have found that the functions of space and time partially, but not completely, reflected Tajfel's conceptualization. In this data they were used to:

- Differentiate social groups
- Elaborate a causal relationship between groups' context and their stereotypical characteristics

- Differentiate group social status, primarily through the elaboration of temporal elements

In the next part of this section I will explore how elaborations of space and time contributed to each of these three functions as respondents positioned themselves in relation to burrnesha.

DIFFERENTIATION

Respondents referred to burrneshas' communities via specific northern cities/municipalities (e.g., "Theth" or "Malesia e Madhe"), the north as a general region, or rural zones (e.g., "rural", "mountains/highlanders", or "deep zones"). When respondents distanced themselves from burrnesha, they represented their own communities in specific towns ("Shkoder", "Tirana"), general regions ("south"), or urban zones ("city").

While both Tirana and Shkoder respondents distanced themselves from burrnesha using spatial indicators, each group tended to focus on different indicators. Namely, Tirana respondents emphasized a north/south dimension, whereby burrnesha were in the north and they themselves were in the south. Shkoder respondents, by contrast, referenced north/south far less. Instead, their emphasis was on the rural/urban distinction whereby burrnesha were in rural areas and they themselves were in the city (Shkoder). This difference between the two groups indicates 1) that many respondents from both groups attempted to distance themselves to some degree from burrnesha; and 2) the interaction between spatial representations, social representations, and identities. It would not be meaningful for Shkoder respondents to use the north/south dimension to distance themselves from burrnesha because Shkoder is seen as part of the north. This categorization is not only geographical but also linguistic, political, and historical. People from Shkoder generally view themselves as northerners. This means that in order to distinguish themselves from stigmatized elements of the north, they rely on the rural/urban dimension. This is similar to Dresler-Hawke's (2000) findings where German respondents evoked different levels of place identity in order to avoid risk.

Although respondents from Tirana relied on the north/south dimension, it was rare for them to explicitly position burrnesha in Shkoder. The following excerpt from a woman from Tirana is one of the exceptions:

DATA EXCERPT 32

ER: You saw burrnesha on television?

R: Yes.

ER: But not in—

R: No, no. I didn't meet any.

ER: Personally?

R: No. No. They are in the North. Shkoder. The mountain areas. So there's no reason why I would meet them. I just saw them on the [television] program.

The respondent used spatial distance almost as a metaphor for social distance, reasoning that since burrnesha live in a different part of the country there was "no reason why I would meet them". That part of the country is the north, in which she explicitly includes both Shkoder and the mountain regions. This was conspicuous in contrast to the many Shkoder respondents who pointedly differentiated between the mountain regions and Shkoder, such as in the following excerpt. Here, the female respondent from Shkoder was commenting on the photos before knowing that the interview was about burrnesha:

DATA EXCERPT 33

ER: We have two photographs and we're interested in your thoughts about them.

R: Hmm… This [Photo 2] is about the typical… northern man. Eh, the first thing that comes to mind is that there are still men like this that come mostly from the mountains. Less in the city, or they're highlanders who live in the city, but usually city-folk not, because they're civilized.

Although the respondent initially positioned the subject of Photo 2 in the north, she then based her distinction on a mountains/city dimension. She used "civilized" not only to differentiate between groups but also to present the subject's appearance as indicative of inferior

social status. Here, place identity was based on a person's place of origin more so than their current residence; people who were originally from the mountains maintained their social group distinction from city dwellers even if they currently lived in the city. Finally, the respondent was constructing a representation of rural northern communities, not of burrnesha. This reinforces my assertion that respondents were aware of stigma not only associated specifically with burrnesha (such as essence incongruence) but also with burrneshas' communities more generally.

Besides referencing specific towns or regions, respondents frequently used the phrase *zona te thelle*, which literally means "deep zones" and would normally be translated as "remote areas". Respondents from all three regional groups used this advantageously ambiguous term to convey that burrnesha are not from "here", they are from somewhere else (the "deep zones"). Here, a female respondent from Tropoja makes use of this term:

DATA EXCERPT 34

ER: How has the tradition of burrnesha changed in the past 5-10 years?

R: Well, before there were more. It's normal that the years go by and move towards modernization, as we say. But before maybe they were more valued. They were more valued. Whereas today someone might ask what a burrneshe is, I have the impression that they might not know. The generations are moving away, I think, and today there aren't any more [burrnesha], just the ones who had been before. Today I don't think there's anyone who becomes a burrneshe. Today. It's fading, this is the term, I think. It's my impression. At least here in Tropoja, as far as I know. Maybe in the deep zones it still exists, but I don't think so.

Tropoja was the most remote and rural area included in this study, with several burrnesha who were generally known there (including to this respondent). Nevertheless, this respondent positioned the tradition elsewhere by using the phrase "deep zones". At the same time, she contrasted those deep zones with modernization, associating the deep zones with underdevelopment and the past in the same way that respondents do using terms such as "rural", "north", and "mountain regions".

This association between place and negative valence was instrumental to the social positioning process. People may take spatial and temporal elements to be informative about the

social group's characteristics (Bayon, 2012). We can see this in the following interview with a woman from Shkoder:

DATA EXCERPT 35

ER: How has the tradition of burrnesha changed recently?

R: It's changed completely, especially in the deep zones, in comparison, I mean, rural zones compared with the city are completely different, even now. The city is completely, I mean, it's a completely different mentality… for these things. In the deep zones they still have those mentalities, like the word of the man is much more important [there] than in the city. It's more important. And the city is more liberal. Men and women are equal. […] As they were before, like a long time ago, the word of the man was much more important. And the parents, I mean, were much more important than they are today. It's still like this in the countryside, in the deep zones. Maybe a girl's father even arranged her marriage from her birth. The father said, I'll arrange her marriage and he arranged her marriage, I mean, the man's word was the most important. The deep zones aren't like the city.

The respondent made it clear that place-differentiated social groups were different in their "mentality". Typical of Shkoder respondents, she relied on the rural/urban distinction rather than the north/south distinction to distance herself from burrneshas' communities. She characterized the deep zones/countryside as maintaining past mentalities that she implied were patriarchal in that "the man's word was the most important". This stands in opposition to the city which was "more liberal" and where "men and women are equal". These associations were central to the Unnecessary Oppression representation.

CAUSATION

The functions of representations of space and time went beyond symbols of different groups. Space and time were used to infer a causal relationship between a person's place identity and their assumed or observed characteristics. In this case, I am not referring to respondents' reasoning on the causal relationship between environment and burrneshas' decision. Instead, I refer to the imagined causal relationship between environment and the characteristics of burrneshas' communities. De Rosa (2012) highlighted the rich content represented by places which can be used to make many inferences, such as causation, about the group:

> The sociocultural meanings associated with places are seen as the 'glue' that unites the groups with particular places. These places are no longer seen as simply functional and behavioural settings but as a combined product of individual–motivational aspects and shared aspects, both at the level of representational systems and at the level of action systems, intentionally guided by socially constructed goals. (de Rosa, 2012, p. 346)

Particularly when distancing, respondents reasoned that "backwardness" in burrneshas' communities was due to those communities' isolation, lack of education, and exposure to the kanun. All three of these factors were linked both to the rural north as a space and to the past.

Although the following respondent had lived in Tirana for many years, she was originally from a city far south in the country. In her interview, she repeatedly expressed identification with and pride for her southern town. Since she frequently compared northern and southern regions, I asked her here to relate these differences to burrnesha:

DATA EXCERPT 36

ER: How are differences between the north and the south related to burrnesha?

R: Because they're traditions from—eh, I think this tradition is from Lek Dukagjini? From the kanun. By contrast, the South had much more options for communication. I mean… opportunities to emigrate. And the most remote villages and a century ago people went to America, to Egypt, to Greece, they went to Turkey, where there are still residents. Whereas in the North they didn't move. They have been autochthonous. And it's not just that, if you go to the remote villages they haven't even gone for visits, they haven't gone to Italy, or Germany, or Serbia, because those zones are so deep and harsh. So, being that closed, whether you like it or not you'll be inducted in a kind of moral ethics and rules. Which is the kanun. A type of state. They didn't know the state. There are people who, I don't know, we're in this time, we live in this time, but no, they are more remote. They don't have any type of communication or anything.

She began by characterizing burrnesha as a tradition *from* the kanun, specifically the kanun of Lek Dukagjini which was practiced across the north. She contrasted the kanun with the south's "options for communication" and "opportunities to emigrate". This implied that the kanun, and by extension burrnesha, were the result of isolation. She expanded on this later when she spoke about how people from remote villages in the north do not leave the country. She indicated deviance first by calling the communities "closed" and "harsh", and indicating deprivation (lack of "communication", "opportunities to emigrate", and "state"). Second, she

contrasted them from the norm by saying that they have "a *kind of* [my emphasis] moral ethics and rules", and instead of living "in this time" as "we" do, they are "more remote". This discourse excluded these communities from the respondent's own "moral ethics and rules" as well as the present time in which she positioned herself. She also contrasted "this time", a temporal indicator, with "remoteness", a spatial indicator. In this way, she contributed to the association of specific spaces with time periods. Western countries (and, unusually for this data, Egypt, Turkey, and Serbia) represented normativity. Finally, we may remember from Chapter 2 that the kanun can carry negative connotations of senseless violence. For this reason, her reference to the kanun may have added to her depiction of a community whose rules were incompatible with modern, civilized society.

While the following excerpt is generally similar to the previous one, here we see a greater emphasis on lack of education. This respondent was a man from Shkoder:

DATA EXCERPT 37

ER: You say [burrnesha] are disappearing, how is this happening?

R: It's just that now… it's improved… At that time education was very limited. In the mountain regions. Information was very limited, pff, contact with the city was almost… 90% didn't have contact with the city. When someone went to the city it seemed really impressive. They were really backwards villages. And education influenced many things. Now there are more opportunities for school, university, like this, things are more developed, with new concepts. I would say [burrnesha] are disappearing. And old traditions have almost started to… disappear. The old traditions like the highlanders had. Because they were… backward traditions. It's just, those zones there had those traditions.

This respondent presented lack of education as a consequence of isolation ("didn't have contact with the city"); the lack of mobility of highlanders barred their exposure to education and information associated with the city. He associated isolation and lack of education with both a specific space ("mountain regions", *not* "the city") and time ("at that time", i.e., *not* now). As he contrasted this with today's societal development, he characterized old traditions, including burrnesha, as "backward".

These excerpts show that space and time are rich in content for respondents to construct a causal relationship between a social group's place and its characteristics. While this process is

central to group differentiation, it is also rich in normative meaning and status differentiation, which I discuss in the following subsection.

Social Status

We may remember from Chapter 3 that group differentiation is not a neutral process but articulates social status: "The aim of differentiation is to maintain or achieve superiority over an out-group on some dimensions" (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 284). The data excerpts provided so far indicate this: the rural north is frequently characterized as underdeveloped or "backward". In this subsection I will focus primarily on the role of representations of time in conveying social status. As mentioned, place identities depend on an elaboration of *both* space and time (de Rosa, 2012). As we have seen, there was a fairly reliable convergence of certain representations of space and certain representations of time. Specifically, burrneshas' communities, the rural north, were associated with the past while the south of Albania, the city (e.g., Shkoder), and/or the West were associated with the present. The addition of temporal elements to spatial ones communicated social status. Evoking the past had some force in conveying longevity and ethnic essentialism in the pan-Albanian identity (Doja, 2009) (see Albanian Place Identities). Yet, here respondents more often referred to the past to describe burrnesha and their communities as outdated and subject to the even greater hardships of the past. By contrast, the respondents who positioned themselves in the present associated themselves with the progress of modernity, embodied in urban and political development seen in the south, in cities, and in the West. From the respondent's position in the modern city, burrneshas' hardships appeared avoidable. This conflicted with *obligation* in the Family Collectivism representation. The following respondent was a man from Tropoja:

DATA EXCERPT 38

ER: What do burrnesha signify in today's society?

R: Today I would say it's excessive—I personally say it's really excessive, exaggerated, for today. But, if you look back, this phenomenon didn't appear by accident. Not deliberately, but the phenomenon appeared at a specific time when there was a lot of need for it.

Here, we see not only that burrnesha are anchored in the past, but also two functions of this temporal positioning. First, the respondent referenced the past to suggest that burrnesha were "excessive […] for today", implying that their existence was not necessary and, by extension, inappropriate. Then, he justified the tradition within "a specific time", saying that it was not only appropriate then but in fact "there was a lot of need for it".

The temporal element implicit in representations of burrnesha was taken so much for granted that respondents often used a woman's age to evaluate whether she was a burrneshe (older) or was living as a man for other reasons (younger). In the following excerpt, the male respondent from Shkoder had immediately recognized the subjects of the photos as burrnesha. He had briefly explained to me that they were women living as men before I asked him the following question:

DATA EXCERPT 39

ER: You're not surprised to see a woman dressed as a man?

R: No, eh, for her AGE, because she's over 50 years old, that's not—in the areas—in the countryside that's not strange at all. For young ages, under 40, it seems strange.

Here, age played a role in differentiation between burrnesha, who are "not strange at all", and other women living as men, who "seem strange". Age was frequently used for this differentiation, implying that older women became burrnesha at a time further in the past when it was an appropriate norm.

POSITIONING

I mentioned that cognitive polyphasia is thought to reflect differences in identity and context. These conclusions are highly compatible with the present findings. Here we see contextual changes on multiple levels (from the respondents' identities to framing during the interview) that could explain cognitive polyphasia. The most general shift was from Family Collectivism to Unnecessary Oppression. I believe we can attribute this shift to the implicit social positioning created by the context of the interview and the framing of the interview

questions. In the beginning of the interview I, a European-American studying at a British institution, approached Albanian nationals to ask them about burrnesha. The implication was that I was an out-group member from burrnesha and wanted "expert" advice from someone who I positioned as an in-group member with burrnesha. This evoked the respondent's Albanian national identity, as opposed to a local or European identity. Being positioned as an in-group member with burrnesha may have contributed to their efforts to justify burrneshas' transition and draw on a victimhood narrative. The victimhood narrative, which I will discuss more in Albanian Place Identities, draws on *sacrifice* and *obligation* to avoid blame for deviance.

Asking for respondents' personal opinion of burrnesha later in the interview repositioned the respondent. Doing so indicated that I did not take their relationship to burrnesha for granted. It created more flexibility for respondents to negotiate their position in relation to burrnesha and burrneshas' communities. My presence as a European-American may have encouraged them to establish greater distance from burrnesha and greater proximity to me, assuming a narrative of Eurocentrism that positions Europe as both superior to Albanian society and desirable (see Albanian Place Identities). This would explain the fact that the most prevalent secondary representation was negative. In this negative representation, respondents relied on lower-level identity categories to position themselves far from burrnesha, meanwhile dropping the victimhood narrative.

In Chapter 3, I discussed not only SRT but also its relationship to Social Identity Theory and social positioning. As a brief reminder of social positioning, I will refer to Andreouli's (2010) description of Duveen's approach:

> [Duveen's] main proposition is that social representations provide various possible identities which allow people to position themselves in a variety of ways in relation to the symbolic field of culture (Duveen, 1993). These identities, taken on and negotiated by individuals, help them structure their social world and orient themselves within this world. Thus, social representations provide both the meanings related to an object as well as the positions towards that object that are available for people; meanings and positions are the two components of social identities (Duveen & Lloyd, 1990). Within this perspective, social identities "reflect individuals' efforts to situate themselves in their societies in relation to the social representations of their societies" (Duveen & Lloyd, 1986, p. 220). (p. 14.2)

Andreouli (2010) summarized the relationship between social representations and social identities, and the functions of social positioning as a process. Given this understanding, I observed that respondents continually positioned themselves not only in relation to burrnesha themselves but also to burrneshas' communities. Within this framework, representations of space and time were instrumental in symbolically differentiating between social groups, explaining observed differences between groups, and, by extension, indicating social distance.

The below table (Table 4) again reiterates the differences between three representations of burrnesha:

Representation	**Function of burrnesha within narrative**	**Function of the representation itself**	**Frequency in Data**	**Group membership**
Family Collectivism	• Practical and symbolic • Family as beneficiary	• Avoid stigma through justification and victimhood • Reproduce patriarchal norms (see Chapter 5)	Very frequent	In between in-group and out-group
Unnecessary Oppression	• No practical or symbolic function • Burrneshe as victim	• Avoid stigma through "othering" • Reproduce patriarchal norms through gender essentialism	Very frequent	Out-group
Agency	• Practical and symbolic • Burrneshe as beneficiary	• Positive self-identity through agency • Reproduce patriarchal norms through association between burrnesha, masculinity, and agency	Infrequent	In-group, self

TABLE 4: COMPARISON OF REPRESENTATIONS OF BURRNESHA

SPACE, TIME, AND PLACE IDENTITY

Some research on social representations has found complex relationships between social identities and representations of space and time. This includes research demonstrating a) how social positioning processes shape the spatial and temporal features that are salient to respondents; b) how social distance is objectified in spatial and temporal distance; c) how respondents can evoke different levels of place identities in an effort to avoid risk; and d) how spatial and temporal elements, in combination with their positioning-function, culminate in place identities as types of social identities. In this section I will briefly review these findings for their relevance to the present study.

Some of this research has demonstrated how social identities shape the way people imagine, remember, and interact with environments (e.g., Bayon, 2012; Dias & Ramadier, 2018; Kitchin, 1994; Milgram & Jodelet, 1992). For example, Milgram and Jodelet (1992) analyzed respondents' mental maps of Paris. They found patterns in salient landmarks and physical configurations of the imagined city based on the respondent's social identity. Meanwhile, Dias & Ramadier (2018) studied the relationship between University of Strasbourg employee status and representations of the city. They found that "[t]he relationship to space of members of the lower social classes is instrumental, whereas that of the most economically and culturally privileged is symbolic/aesthetic" (p. 1). Such findings are particularly relevant to the present research when considering the different salience of geographical features based on respondents' location of origin (see Differentiation).

Other research, especially on risk, has found that respondents communicate social distance via spatial and temporal distance from a threatening object. Much of this research focuses on representations of risks, such as natural disasters or infectious disease, as something that occurs far away in physical space (e.g., Joffe, 2012; Smith, O'Connor, & Joffe, 2015; Spence, Poortinga, & and Pidgeon, 2012). In this way, the individual protects their own identity by imagining they are less susceptible to that risk. As we will see, respondents continually used spatial and temporal elements to distance themselves from burrneshas' communities.

Dresler-Hawke (2000) observed another technique whereby representations of space were used to avoid risk. They found that German citizens attempted to avoid the stigma of Nazism by avoiding identification with the national-level category, i.e., Germany. Instead, they associated themselves either with lower-level categories, such as their town, or higher-level categories, such as the European Union. This was effective because Nazism is specifically associated with Germany and the German identity, as opposed to individual towns or the European Union. This demonstrated not only that different levels of group membership are available to individuals but also that level-specific positioning may be useful in avoiding stigma. We saw that respondents relied on different categories of group membership in order to avoid risk: respondents from Shkoder tended to depend on a rural/urban distinction whereas respondents from Tirana depended on a North/South distinction (see Differentiation).

For some scholars, representations of space and time culminate in the specification of a type of social identity that incorporates spatial and temporal elements as well as positioning processes based on those elements. This type of social identity is often referred to as *place identity* (de Rosa, 2012; Proshansky, 1978). De Rosa (2012), who reviews this construct in-depth, defines place identity as follows:

> It can be described as a substructure of self-identity characterized by clusters of cognitions, memories and affects concerning places experienced by the individual. It is an active personal construction, deriving from day-to-day experience of the physical environment mediated by subjective meanings and social norms, and characterized by the formulation of hierarchically organized and structured cognitions of the physical–social settings experienced. Its structural properties vary dynamically in relation to the individual's social identity and lifestyle (Keller 1987; Korpela 1989, 1992; Massey 1994). (de Rosa, 2012, p 316)

The construction of place identities depends on the intersection of both space and time (de Rosa, 2012). In the present research, place identities, anchored in specific spaces and times, contribute to the elaboration of various identities accessible to respondents. Far from being static, neutral, or universal categories, place identity "becomes a resource for discursive action" that can "supersede the view of it as a medium for expressing place cognitions and attachments or for revealing self-categorization and differentiation, by disclosing the links between construction of place-identity and power relations […]" (de Rosa, 2012, p. 317).

For the present research, I have found that place identity is a useful construct for understanding the functions of space and time I described in this section: a) how place identity *as* a social identity impacts the salience of different spatial and temporal features; b) the role of space and time in social distancing; and c) the strategic evocation of different levels of place identities for positioning. I found that these specific functions interacted towards three more general functions I described previously: group differentiation, causation reasoning, and social status differentiation.

ALBANIAN PLACE IDENTITIES

Given the above evidence of place identities in representations of burrnesha, it is appropriate to consider the general content of those place identities. Below, I outline the content and relationships between three levels of place identities accessible to respondents.

Throughout history, while many factors were common to all the people of the Albanian territory, there was also considerable diversity of sub-culture. Some authors attributed this diversity to Albania's position at the "crossroads" of different, significant civilizations in combination with isolation due to difficult terrain and lack of infrastructure (Dervishi, 2014; Doja, 2009; Abazi & Doja, 2013). Differentiation was not only recognized but also facilitated by the kanun, which permitted its adherents to develop local customs and laws (Dervishi, 2014).

The consequence of this sub-cultural diversity was social identity differentiation along various dimensions. As we saw in previous sections, individuals could identify themselves with multiple levels (e.g., city, municipality, general region, nation) or types (e.g., urban/rural, mountains/coast) of place-based categorization. This differentiation is embodied in differences in Albanian dialect, customs such as folk arts, and cultural values (Dervishi, 2014), and reproduced in good-natured banter and stereotypes.

Despite the salience of local identities, Albanians in general also express a strong loyalty to a pan-Albanian identity stemming from nationalist discourse. Given sub-cultural diversity, the construction of this unified identity was not happenstance but the result of directed political discourse throughout the past century. Albanologists argue that modern Albanian nationalism began with the struggle for independence from the Ottoman Empire at the end of the 19th century (Abazi & Doja, 2013; Doja, 2009; Skendi, 1967). Influential writers and activists of the time, such as Naim Frasheri (Abazi & Doja, 2013) and Gjergj Fishta (Bujupaj, 2018), constructed a national identity that unified regions and religions by emphasizing common language and depicting a glorified history of heroism. The goal of this was to inspire Albanian speakers to unite in the interest of establishing an independent nation. At that time, the notion of a "Greater Albania" emerged: a nation that would include ethnic Albanian communities in today's Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Greece (Ardolic, 2009; Judah, 2001). The concept of the "Greater Albania" contributed to the formation of a pan-Albanian identity that was based on ancestry and language, as opposed to citizenship.

After Albanian independence from the Ottoman Empire, nationalism was reinforced through various political regimes and events of the 20th and early 21st century, such as Hoxha's Communist regime (Fevziu, 2011) and the Kosovar War of 1998-99 (Frontline, 2014; Kosovo War, 2019). Today, we still see a pan-Albanian identity based on shared ancestry and language above citizenship or local differences (Doja, 2009). This shared identity unites communities not only in the "Greater Albania" of the Balkans but in the Albanian diaspora around the world. Pustina (2016) described the pan-Albanian identity, noting the importance of language:

> The visual images are only part of the cultural identity of Albania, which is perceived as a set of elements consisting of traditions, customs, folk costumes, national symbols (the flag, the eagle, Skanderbeg – the national hero), virtues (hospitality and besa - promise or word of honor), oral traditions and expressions epic songs of warriors, myths, folk tales, traditional music, lifestyle, rituals, and beliefs. But "shqip" language, as Albanians call their language, is ranked first among Albanian identity elements. It is obvious that language is very important for determining the identity of many other nations and ethnicities. Wright states that: "Language is a robust marker of group membership ... It is one of the stronger markers of identity" (Wright, 225). (Pustina, 2016, p. 27)

Pustina (2016) clarified the role of various cultural artifacts in symbolizing Albanian identity, including customs, virtues, and lifestyle. As we have seen, burrnesha are one of these cultural artifacts, symbolizing both the rural north and Albania in general. Regional differences are subsumed under the unifying role of the Albanian language.

The pan-Albanian identity includes many positive elements such as heroism, uniqueness, and longevity. However, Albanians must also account for the material hardship that leads to lower socio-economic status compared to more affluent European nations. One strategy to protect the self from this stigma is to engage a narrative of victimhood. Victimhood has been found to be effective in fostering group differentiation (e.g. Andrighetto, Mari, Volpato, & Behluli, 2012; Feinstein & Bonikowski, 2019; Yildiz & Verkuyten, 2011), intragroup solidarity (e.g., Jasini, Delvaux, & Mesquita, 2017; Yildiz & Verkuyten, 2011); 3) and, perhaps most obviously, immunity to blame (e.g., Andrighetto, Mari, Volpato, & Behluli, 2012; Demirel & Eriksson, 2019; Essen & Allen, 2017; Rosland, 2009, although arguably most studies on victimhood discuss this). These functions are compatible with the Albanian nationalist discourse that emphasized a "continuing independence struggle" (Ingimundarson, 2007, p. 95), whether in the context of Ottoman occupation, Communist rhetoric, or the Kosovar War. The victimhood

narrative of nationalist discourse is in many ways similar to portrayals of burrnesha in the Family Collectivism representation. Both value sacrifice, altruism, and obligation positively, taking them as necessary for survival. I will return to this in the Discussion section.

Victimhood narratives are often marked by paradox (Rosland, 2009), and Albanian nationalism is no exception to this. On the one hand, victimhood has a protective function by removing Albanians' responsibility for their own state of deprivation. On the other hand, it requires the speaker to reaffirm that this deprivation is a fact. While victimhood avoids responsibility, it does not change the group's conditions to raise their status. The result is an attraction to and admiration of "the West", usually objectified as the European Union as the representation of status and opulence.

European identity is not only an aspiration, but also often portrayed as a social group that Albanians have the "right" to, or at least potential, membership in (unlike the United States, for example). In making this claim, Albanians may refer to their territory's history as part of the Roman or Byzantine Empires, its location on the European continent, or Albania's status as an EU member state candidate (De Munter, 2019). This leads to a tension between the pan-Albanian identity and the European one. Ingimundarson (2007) highlighted the nature of this tension:

> Since Kosovo became a UN protectorate following NATO's military intervention in 1999, the reconstruction of Albanian political identities has been characterized by two contradictory, if interrelated, strands. On the one hand, the ethno-nationalist discourse—widely shared and articulated by the Kosovar Albanian political elite—is strongly influenced by nineteenth-century notions of nation-state building. It includes the reification of the myth of an ancient past and of a continuing independence struggle, highlighting heroism, sacrifice, victimhood and trauma. On the other hand, Albanian nationalism has incorporated a postmodern civic vision based on the idea that an independent Kosovo should be firmly anchored in supranational collective bodies—dubbed "Euro-Atlantic structures"—that is, the European Union and NATO. (p 95)

Ingimundarson's (2007) work was on Kosovar Albanians. I have chosen this excerpt because it is a precise account of the nationalist/Eurocentric tension that is evident in Albania as well, and no doubt is related to the Kosovar case. In Albania specifically, this tension is demonstrated in my own research, in research such as Doja (2009), in the novels of Albania's most celebrated author, Ismail Kadare (Morgan, 2002; Morgan, 2008), and in Albanian academic textbooks (Sulstarova, 2017).

In this data, the West was represented as an idealized normative body. Here is one example of this reasoning from a male respondent from Tirana:

DATA EXCERPT 40

> R: I don't think there's any more youth there [in the rural north]. They've left. They've either gone to the main cities or they've gone to other countries. They've especially gone to Germany and bravo. They've improved economically, they've invested… And now they have a mentality, because years of suffering here don't make a person… They've become cultured. The other generations should, too.

Here, Germany represented not only economic growth but also cultural/ideological improvement. The respondent took a normative stance on these differences by congratulating emigrants ("bravo") and stating that "other generations *should* [my emphasis], too". We saw this in themes of geographical isolation in the Causation section.

Just as Albania is an EU member state *candidate*, Albania's conceptual inclusion in European identity is not secure. This insecurity may be exacerbated by negative representations of Albania in the Western gaze. Western media, especially the news, often focuses on issues of political corruption, mafia, drug trade, or human trafficking in Albania. Albania is often positioned in "Eastern Europe", facilitating the link to those issues via stereotypes of the broader region. For example, in the popular Hollywood film *Taken*, the antagonists are violent gang members from Albania (specifically, from Tropoja) (Hoarau, 2008). This alternative representation of themselves, as imagined from the Western perspective, excludes Albanians from the European identity. This is especially relevant to the present data given that my own presence represented the Western perspective in the interview context. The threat of stigma likely encouraged respondents to more actively negotiate a positive social identity for themselves.

Respondents very frequently, and spontaneously, remarked on the theme of "change over time". In doing so, they almost universally positioned burrnesha in the past. Research on social representations of history demonstrates that a society's myths about their collective past play an important role in the formation of national identity (Andreouli & Chryssochoou, 2015). As such,

they contribute to an understanding of a collective trajectory, mapping out not only the society's past but also their present and future.

Burrnesha's association with the past is so strong in the data that we may infer that the past is an element of their social representation. When burrnesha are evoked in a given context (e.g., when mentioned in conversation), respondents must position themselves in relation to their social identity. Liu & Sibley (2015) note that, "Out of the raw material of events and people, history provides symbolic materials for the construction of social identities and the mobilization of political agendas that imbue these identities with different purposes and different boundaries." (p. 271). This observation indicates the unique role of history in shaping social representations and relationships. It clarifies the importance of burrnesha's being positioned in the past in the context of respondents' attempts to establish their own identity. There is a substantial body of research into the social representations of history (e.g., Jovchelovitch, 2012; Liu & Hilton, 2005; Liu & Sibley, 2015). While an in-depth analysis of this would undoubtedly be fruitful for the present topic, I unfortunately cannot do justice to it within the scope of the present project.

Burrnesha's anchoring in the past is contingent upon the central role of the theme of hardship in their representation. As Andreouli & Chryssochoou (2015) note, "[i]dentities are strategic and future-oriented" (p. 313). If we apply this to the context of Albanian identity, we can see that Albanians seek to distance themselves from poverty and the past and orient themselves toward a more prosperous future.

DISCUSSION

SUMMARY

I return to the chart that summarizes the differences between three representations of burrnesha:

Representation	**Function of burrnesha within narrative**	**Function of the representation itself**	**Frequency in Data**	**Group membership**

Family Collectivism	• Practical and symbolic • Family as beneficiary	• Avoid stigma through justification and victimhood • Reproduce patriarchal norms (see Chapter 5)	Very frequent	In between in-group and out-group
Unnecessary Oppression	• No practical or symbolic function • Burrneshe as victim	• Avoid stigma through "othering" • Reproduce patriarchal norms through gender essentialism	Very frequent	Out-group
Agency	• Practical and symbolic • Burrneshe as beneficiary	• Positive self-identity through agency • Reproduce patriarchal norms through association between burrnesha, masculinity, and agency	Infrequent	In-group, self

TABLE 5: COMPARISON OF REPRESENTATIONS OF BURRNESHA

Being positioned as a burrneshe in-group member by the interview context tended to elicit the Family Collectivism representation that justified burrnesha. Although the interview positioned respondents as an in-group member, they maintained a degree of distance by positioning burrnesha in the rural north. However, while this positioning implied *othering*, the respondents' focus on context was less to differentiate themselves from burrnesha than it was to justify burrneshas' behavior. This drew on a victimhood narrative. The prevalence of victimhood in Albanian nationalist discourse may have made this narrative meaningful to respondents. If the respondent feared that I, as the interviewer, saw them as in-group members with burrnesha, then the victimhood narrative would be effective in combating some of the stigma of burrneshas' communities, seeing as they represent the stigma of Albania as a whole.

As the interview progressed, and especially when I asked for respondents' opinions, there was greater flexibility for respondents to adjust their social positioning. Although some respondents continued to elicit the Family Collectivism representation, many elicited the Unnecessary Oppression representation by evoking an outsider perspective. The outsider perspective framed burrneshas' behavior as outdated and unnecessary. This was communicated extensively through elaborations of space and time. In doing so, the respondents were better able to position themselves in the present time and the developed world. I believe that this representation was common burrnesha because it allowed respondents to reproduce Eurocentric norms.

The Agency representation was unique in that it emerged primarily from a respondent who had very nearly become a burrneshe herself. Here we are faced not so much with the

dynamics of place group membership as with membership specifically in the group of burrnesha. This was evidenced in the respondent's relatively little attention to space and time, whether for the purposes of positioning or justification. This gave the impression that the respondent took her place identity and the cultural assumptions that stemmed from it (such as patriarchy) for granted. As such, the respondent elaborated agency within the social context of burrneshas' communities as opposed to comparing different social contexts. Within burrneshas' social context, living as a man was the realization of agency. By contrast, in the Unnecessary Oppression representation the urban/Western perspective positioned agency as attainable only outside of burrneshas' social context. By avoiding elaboration of context, the Agency representation avoided evoking the stigma associated with context. Instead, the respondent focused most of her discourse on elaborating positive attributes of the burrnesha themselves. The respondent also avoided stigma associated with gender essence incongruence. Gender essentialism is incompatible with agency in that the former is deterministic and the latter assumes free will. If the respondent had elaborated essentialism, this would have conflicted with her focus on agency. This avoided evoking the deviance implied by essence incongruence. We might expect such discourse and overall positive representation from an individual who so seriously considered becoming a burrneshe herself.

THEMATA

As in the previous chapter, I would like to consider some of these themes as themata. As before, essentialism, utility, and patriarchy are underlying, often implicit themes that orient the representations. Based on this chapter, we can also add three other dyadic pairs of themata: other/self, Eurocentrism/nationalism, and oppression/agency.

In evaluating positioning through these different representations, we saw that the West consistently played the ideological role of a superior, normative body. This discourse was likely in large part a consequence of portrayals of the West in the media and activated by my own presence during the interviews. In this Eurocentric narrative, respondents usually ideologically aligned themselves with the West and its positive associations.

Patriarchy and essentialism were, as we saw in the previous chapter, present in this chapter. Here, their roles were complex. While most respondents explicitly condemned patriarchy and gender inequality, their discourse often endorsed patriarchy implicitly. The explicit condemnation usually served to criticize burrneshas' communities and/or added to the burrneshas' victimhood narrative. Meanwhile, respondents explicitly associated the West and the city with gender equality. This is not surprising considering the comparative emphasis of gender equality in Western media and in Western NGOs working in Albania. We saw this in the data in the Unnecessary Oppression and Causation sections. Implicit endorsement of patriarchy occurred either through the endorsement of essentialism, as in the Unnecessary Oppression representation, or by anchoring virtue and utility in masculinity in the Family Collectivism and Agency representations. I described these themes in detail in the previous chapter. Thus, while patriarchy has developed negative connotations, particularly as being incompatible with widely accepted egalitarian ideals anchored in the West, many patriarchal structures are taken so much for granted that respondents endorse them without apparent awareness.

In the previous chapter I presented a diagram of three pairs of themata of the Family Collectivism representation (Figure 17). To compare the representations and account for positioning, I have added the three other pairs of themata from this chapter: other/self, eurocentrism/nationalism, and oppression/agency. I have indicated an "intermediate" on the other/self dimension to reflect respondents' ambiguous position in the Family Collectivism representation. The oppression/agency dimension also has an intermediate thema called *zgjedhje e detyruar*, which means "forced choice" and was discussed in the previous chapter. I believe that most of the themata interact with most of the other themata in complex ways. The purpose of these diagrams is not to provide a comprehensive model of these relationships. Instead, I highlight only the most salient themata and relationships. In doing so, I hope the reader bears in mind that this is a simplification. I begin with a diagram that introduces all of the themata I will include in their general functions:

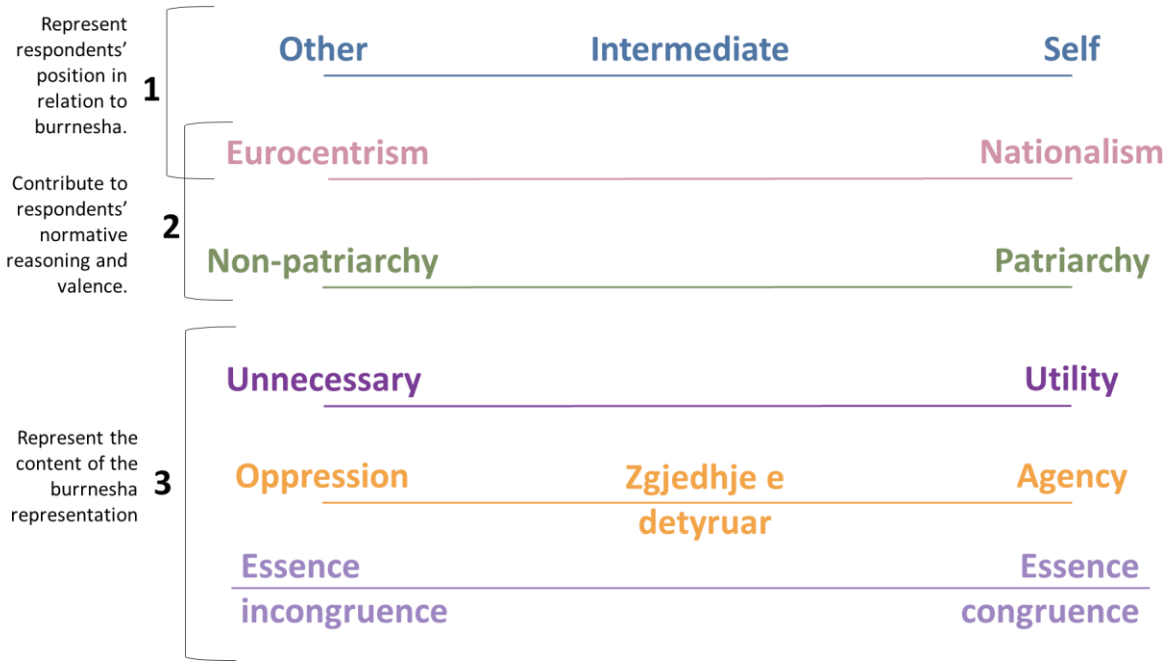

FIGURE 23: ALL THE MOST RELEVANT THEMATA AND THEIR GENERAL FUNCTIONS

Both the other/self and Eurocentrism/nationalism themata reflect respondents' positioning in relation to burrnesha (1). Both eurocentrism/nationalism and patriarchy guide respondents' normative reasoning and, by extension, the overall valence of the burrnesha representation (2). The last three dimensions more directly reflect the content of the burrnesha representation: utility, oppression/agency, and essentialism (3).

The next three diagrams represent the different patterns of themata activation in the three representations. I have rearranged the positions and sizes of the themata. Position and size *do not* reflect the relationships between them; I have indicated the relationships using numbered arrows explained in the text. I have simply positioned themata in such as a way that the arrows cross each other as little as possible to avoid confusion. The numbering is also unique for each diagram to avoid confusion. Themata that are *not* highly salient in the representation are in gray. First, we have the Family Collectivism representation:

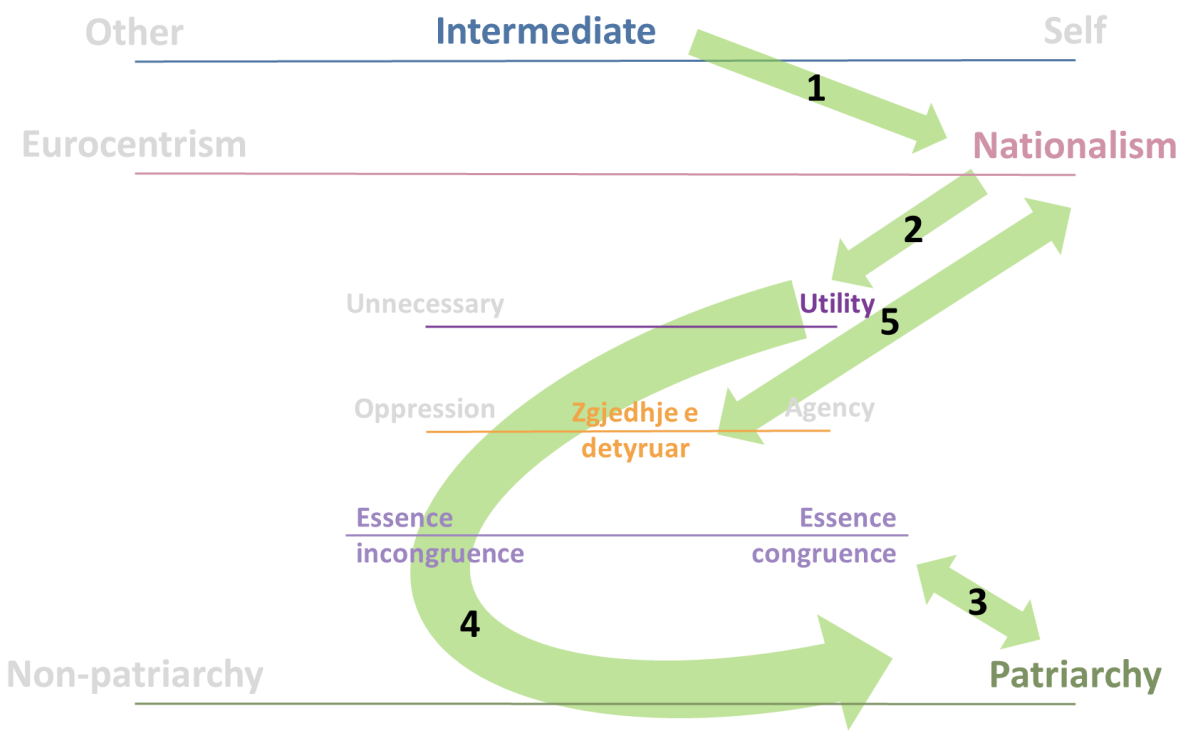

FIGURE 24: THEMA ACTIVATION NETWORK FOR FAMILY COLLECTIVISM REPRESENTATION

In this representation, utility, *zgjedhje e detyruar*, and both gender essence congruence and incongruence are salient. Burrnesha are seen as compatible with patriarchal norms. The respondent is in an intermediate group membership with burrnesha. Because they are partially in-group members, they can draw on a nationalist framework that unites them with burrnesha as "Albanians" (1). Within a nationalist framework (which draws on victimhood), adversity is taken for granted. Consequently, respondents highlighted the utility of burrnesha (2). Respondents elicited a dynamic tension between burrneshas' female essence and gender non-conformity. Elaborating the female essence had a mutually productive relationship with patriarchy, as we saw in Chapter 5 (3). While essence incongruence could conflict with patriarchy, its combination with utility made it acceptable. As such, essence incongruence was framed as male performance and ultimately reproduced patriarchal values (4). Respondents drew on both agency and oppression (or more exactly, obligation) in their elicitation of *zgjedhje e detyruar*. This incorporated multiple values that were instrumental to nationalist narratives and therefore meaningful to respondents (5). Those values are also tied to utility, essentialism, and patriarchy, although I have not indicated this in the diagram.

The next diagram represents the Unnecessary Oppression representation:

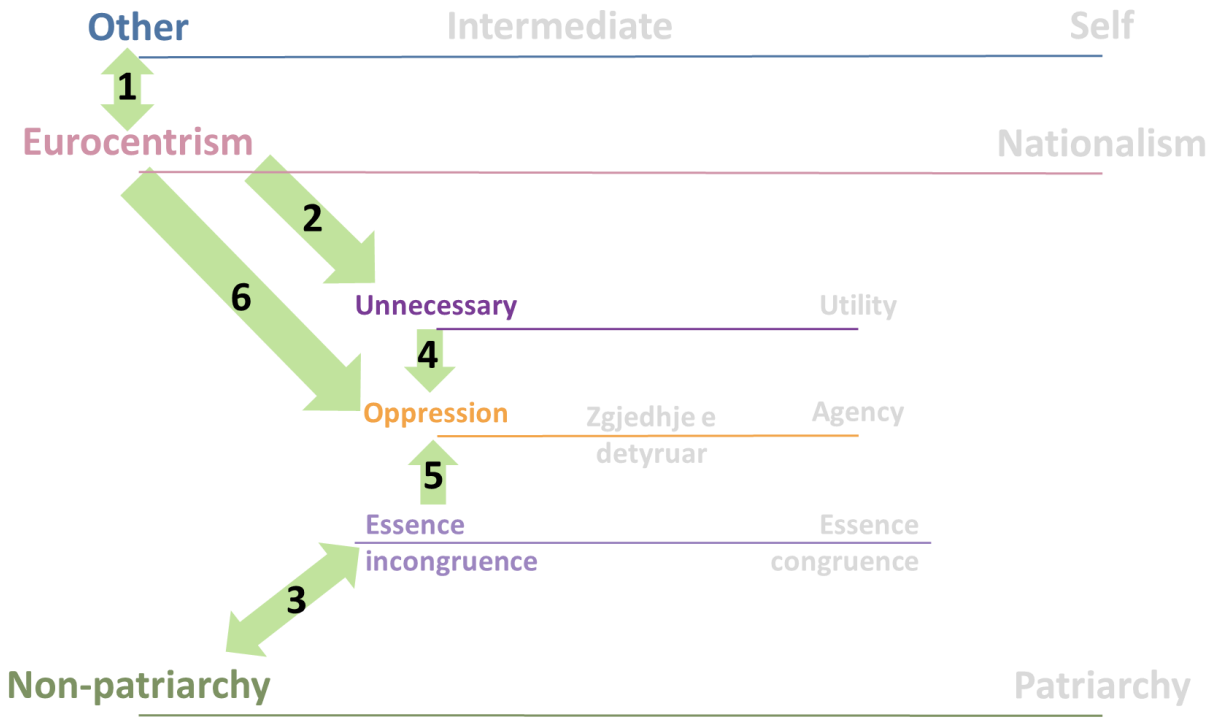

FIGURE 25: THEMA ACTIVATION NETWORK FOR UNNECESSARY OPPRESSION REPRESENTATION

Burrnesha are symbolic of Albanian culture and as such stood in opposition to representations of Europe. Therefore, positioning burrnesha as the *other* was coextensive with identifying with a Eurocentric narrative (1). Within the Eurocentric framework, adversity was no longer inevitable. Consequently, burrnesha were seen as unnecessary (2). Utility could not be used to justify essence incongruence, leaving essence incongruence to conflict with patriarchy (3). Respondents' narratives drew on both lack of utility (4) and essence incongruence (5) to convey oppression of burrnesha. Eurocentric narratives added to this through gender equality (6). The constellation of negative themata (unnecessary, oppression, essence incongruence, and non-patriarchy) simultaneously motivated othering while contributing to the process.

The final diagram represents the Agency representation:

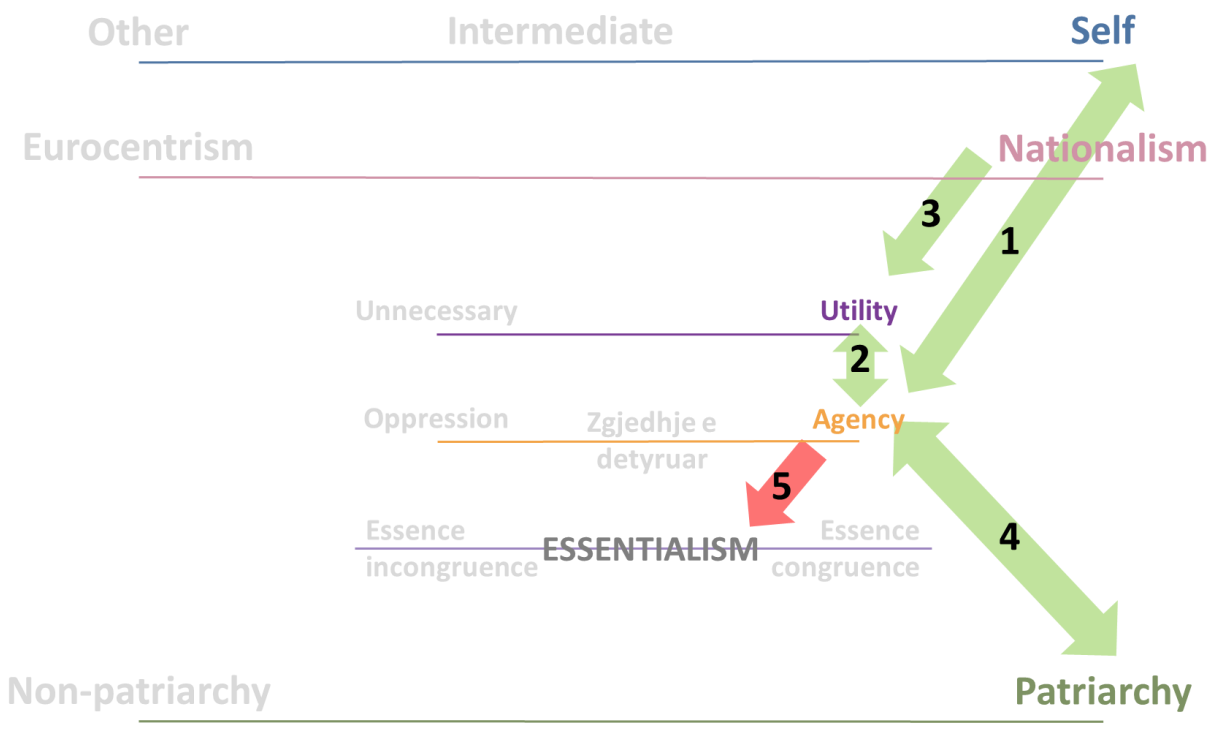

FIGURE 26: THEMA ACTIVATION FOR AGENCY REPRESENTATION

Here, it seems that differences in the representation were driven by identification with burrnesha. This first-person perspective was compatible with an emphasis on agency (1). The respondent presented utility as a function of agency (2). Although less explicitly than the Family Collectivism representation, the nationalist narrative was evident in the values that R propounded and in her assumption of adversity (3). Agency, specifically through masculinity, reasserted patriarchal values (4). Unlike the other representations, essentialism received little, if any, attention. Conceptually, essentialism is incompatible with agency. Essentialism suggests that people's characteristics and behavior are immutable and inherent, leaving little room for free will. Therefore, the essentialist narrative would compete with the respondent's expression of agency (5).

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter we explored positioning and pluralism in representations of burrnesha among respondents. While the previous chapter focused on elucidating a relatively universal

representation of burrnesha that usually emerged in the first and middle parts of interviews, this chapter compared different representations that usually emerged later in the interviews. To evaluate these different representations, I took a social positioning approach, interpreting respondents' discursive positioning not only in relation to burrnesha themselves but also in relation to the various place identities relevant to them and the interview context. I hoped to show how different respondents emphasized different elements of the burrnesha representation in the interest of self identity protection, and I evaluated what the socio-psychological functions of this positioning might have been.

CHAPTER 7: ANALYSIS: BURRNESHA'S REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPARISON

CHAPTER 7 INTRODUCTION

While both previous analysis chapters evaluated community respondent data, the present chapter will compare that group to the burrnesha respondents. As this data is rich and unique, there are many potential avenues for analysis. However, given the scope of the dissertation, I will take a relatively narrow approach. The research questions I hope to address in this chapter are:

1. What is burrnesha's social representation of themselves and how does it compare to the dominant social representation held by community respondents as per research question 1? How do differences between these representations reflect social positioning processes?

In pursuit of these answers, I found that the most salient and relevant differences between respondent groups revolved around the role of hardship in narratives of motivation, decisiveness/commitment, and virtue. For this reason, I will focus on these three themes. I will explore how the differences between these narratives tie into overall differences in each group's representation of burrnesha and social positioning.

In the interest of this chapter's analytical goals, I would like to clarify three issues. First, I will be treating the burrnesha respondent data as a whole, paying relatively little attention to differences between individual burrnesha. Given the small number of respondents and the uniqueness of the population, exploring individual differences in-depth may be of great interest for future research. Because I will be comparing general trends in the two datasets, focusing on individual differences may be confusing and beside the point for the present purposes. I may briefly mention individual differences where relevant.

Second, I would like to acknowledge a systematic difference between groups. The community cohort was describing burrnesha as a general category, whereas the burrnesha respondents were usually describing *themselves*. In some cases, they were describing other specific burrnesha or burrnesha as a general category, but this was not systematic due to

differences in the interview guide. Ideally, the burrnesha interviews would have more systematically covered burrnesha's descriptions of other burrnesha in addition to their self-descriptions. Nevertheless, I argue that the comparison between the community's descriptions and burrnesha's self-descriptions by itself is still of interest. In those cases, I am comparing the lived experiences and self-representations of actual burrnesha with their communities' interpretations of what those lived experiences were.

Third, there is a potential delicacy of making inferences about a person's motivation to transition from living as one gender to another. As discussed in previous chapters, I do not pretend to know whether any of the burrnesha respondents I spoke to are transgender in the way Western society has come to understand the term. Evaluating whether they are transgender is not part of this dissertation. The process of qualitatively analyzing interview data can give the impression that I, as the analyst, question the face-value truth of respondents' words. As I will deal here with burrnesha respondents' reports of why they decided to live as men, I feel it important to clarify that I do not question the veracity of their reports. SRT suggests that respondents negotiate their true experiences in light of how they want to represent themselves to others given the present social context. While I will analyze this process of dynamic self-representation in terms of social positioning, it does not hold that their reports are not accurate according of their lived experience.

In this chapter, I will begin by briefly describing the respondents and interviews. Then, I will present data on burrnesha's motivation to live as men, their decisiveness/commitment, and their virtue. Following this, I will explain how this data led me to consider lessons from Attribution Theory. After introducing Attribution Theory and its compatibility with SRT, I will evaluate the data. Finally, I will connect the present findings back to findings from the previous analysis chapters in the discussion section.

RESPONDENTS AND INTERVIEWS

To provide greater context, I will briefly remind the reader of who the burrnesha respondents were and generally describe the interview responses, including photos of those

respondents who granted permission for me to share them. In order to protect their privacy, I will not indicate which photos are associated with which respondent. In presenting the data in the following section, I will use the codes in the chart below to refer to specific respondents:

Code	Age at interview	General Region	Age of transition
Af	87	Urban, central	~30 y. o.
B	60	Rural, northern	Childhood
D	62	Urban, central	Childhood
Gj	51	Rural, northern	Childhood
H	80	Rural, northern	Childhood
Il	37	Rural, northern	Childhood
M	50	Rural, central	Childhood
Li	67	Urban, northern	Childhood
Lu	51	Urban, northern	Childhood
Sh	82	Rural/urban, northern	Childhood

TABLE 6: BURRNESHA RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

FIGURE 27: PHOTO OF RESPONDENT

FIGURE 28: PHOTO OF RESPONDENT (FARTHEST LEFT) AND FAMILY

FIGURE 29: PHOTO OF RESPONDENT

FIGURE 30: PHOTO OF RESPONDENT

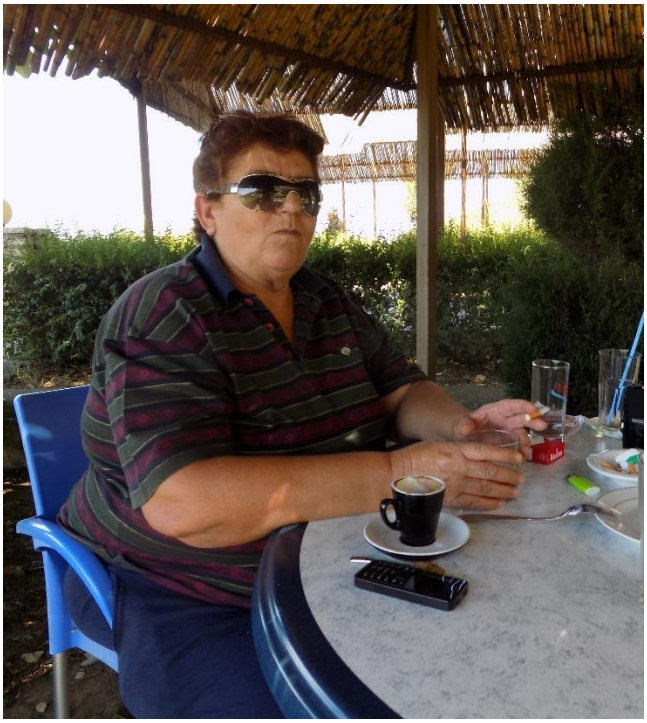

FIGURE 31: PHOTO OF RESPONDENT

FIGURE 32: PHOTO OF RESPONDENT

FIGURE 33: PHOTO OF RESPONDENT

FIGURE 34: PHOTO OF RESPONDENT

FIGURE 35: PHOTO OF RESPONDENT

As these photos demonstrate, burrnesha respondents invariably dressed in masculine clothing and had masculine hairstyles. I would like to draw particular attention to Figure 26 where you can compare the burrneshe respondent (farthest left) to his family members. Note the three female family members. One is older and dressed more traditionally with a skirt and kerchief. One is younger and also dressed more traditionally. The third woman is younger and dressed in leggings and a fitted T-shirt. There is also a male family member dressed in a polo shirt and loose-fitting (masculine) trousers. The burrneshe is wearing a polo shirt and cargo shorts. By observing the burrneshe with his family, it is especially clear which gender he has chosen to dress like. Polo shirts and cargo shorts are rarely, if ever, worn by Albanian women in these regions unless they are a burrneshe.

During interviews, respondents' masculine performance extended beyond their dress. Their posture and body language were generally masculine. Almost all (8) smoked continuously during the interview. Some engaged in other very male-typical behaviors, such as offering alcohol to Ardit, flirting with me, or swearing.

I will describe the data on the broadest, most superficial level to familiarize the reader with the interviews beyond the themes of focus for this chapter. The interview guide I used for burrnesha respondents can be found in Appendix E. This guide was based on Alice Eagly's Social Role Theory, and covered aspects of respondents' transition to live as men and their daily life thereafter. On the whole, the burrnesha's responses were very similar to each other. All except Af reported having lived as a male since childhood. The motivations they described for doing so were also very similar across cases; almost all said that they started to live as men because it felt right to them. All except Li made it clear that they had no regrets whatsoever in living as a man. Most reported that although they had female legal names they were usually called by a male name by friends and family: either the male version of their legal name or an unrelated male nickname. All ten were very similar in that they described mixed reactions from family and community members, ranging from enthusiastic support to strong discouragement. Usually, the most supportive people were male (e.g., fathers or uncles) and the most unsupportive were female (e.g., mothers or sisters). Unlike the community respondent group, burrnesha did not describe their lifestyle as a sacrifice or a hardship in and of itself. Finally, most burrnesha actively conveyed a very positive self-opinion.

THEMES

As I analyzed this dataset, there were many patterns of responses that stood out in contrast to the community data. Perhaps the most consistent and extreme difference, and the one most intuitively related to representations of burrnesha, was respondents' depiction of burrnesha's motivation to live as a man. Related to this were differences in their depiction of decisiveness/commitment and virtue. In this section I will use data excerpts to show how the two respondent groups differed in these three respects.

MOTIVATION

In Chapter 5 I demonstrated how community respondents characterized burrnesha's motivation to live as men as an obligation due to external factors, including poverty and family needs. I argued that emphasizing external motivators was instrumental to justifying the deviance of gender transgression, especially in contexts where the respondent was placed in an in-group with burrnesha. Burrnesha gave a very different account of their transition to a masculine lifestyle. Except for one respondent, they all conveyed that they had lived as men since early childhood *not* due to external pressures but because they had wanted to, or it had simply felt natural to them. In other words, their account focused primarily, if not exclusively, on internal sources of motivation. Their motivation had always existed and was based on personal feelings rather than external pressures. Here is M's account of his decision to live as a man:

DATA EXCERPT 41

ER: How did you begin to dress as a man?

M: Ever since I was 10 years old, I was like this. I hung out with boys, played football with them. I graduated from high school in Zejmen, a village not far from here, in agriculture and after went to Tirana to study cooking. Currently I work as a cook in the prison of Shenkoll. All my life I lived as a man, hung out with men, played dominoes or something else with men and so on. I never had any issue with my family for this. I live my life as I want. I work a lot and also take care of my mother because she is sick. We have hired someone to take care of her, but mostly it's me who does that. I never hung out with women.

ER: Before 10 years old did you dress as a girl?

M: Yes, I did.

ER: How did you make the decision to change that?

M: It just came to me naturally. I never wanted to get married or anything else women do.

Here, M described how he started living as a boy around the age of 10. Instead of describing this as a decision *per se*, he said that he was like this "ever since [he] was 10 years old" and it "just came to [him] naturally". At the beginning of his narrative, he says that he started living as a man ("I was like this") and spent time with men ("I hung out with boys") without reference to any concrete motivation, let alone external circumstances. His internal motivation was made explicit when he said "I live my life as I want." At the end of the excerpt, M said "I never wanted to get married or anything else women do". This argument is less of an indication of a pure desire to live as a man for its own sake. However, this is still quite distinct from the community's reference to external pressures to live as a man in order to support the family in poverty. Hoping to avoid marriage, which in this case does not seem to be the primary reason as it was added at the end of the narrative, is still very much a choice motivated by personal feelings and desires.

Most burrnesha were like M in that they started to live as men because of an underlying feeling that it was "natural" to them, or they "liked it". Take these phrases from five other burrnesha in reference to how they started to live as men: Li: "It was nothing intentional, rather everything [living as a boy] came naturally."; B: "Since I was a kid, around 3 years old, God brought me to life to stay with boys not with girls."; Lu: "Inside me I always felt this, for as long as I can remember, since I was in primary school. I always accepted to only dress as a boy"; Il: "Well, since an early age, around 10 years old, I liked to have the lifestyle of a boy."; D: "I grew up feeling like a man". There is undoubtedly diversity in these excerpts, especially as regards reference to *naturalness* versus *preference,* a distinction which may be of interest for future research. For the present purposes, what they all have in common is that living as a man was personally motivated without any reference to external circumstances.

Among the remaining four burrnesha, H and Gj did not refer *explicitly* to an underlying naturalness or preference for living as a man. But I argue that their narratives drew on the same themes as the aforementioned burrnesha. They made it clear that it was their personal choice, even in opposition to their family and without any reference to an external pressure for them to do so:

DATA EXCERPT 42

ER: How did you start dressing as a man?

H: When I was six years old, I made up my mind. My mother wanted me to wear pretty clothes for girls, but I didn't accept that. She would even beat me sometimes, because I wouldn't agree to dress up like she wanted me to. […] This lasted until my father came back, in 1944. He called me and my mother in the room to talk to us. I remember once I even wanted to hang myself, but I didn't know how. When I found out how to do that, I decided that if my mom would beat me again, I would hang myself, but thank God my mom didn't beat me anymore. So, my father told me that they wanted the best for me, they were worried how would I live when they are not there anymore. My mother had seen that other burrneshe living in terrible conditions, so they were worried I'd end up like that. I told him I had made up my mind and that I was willing to live alone if they didn't agree. We had a small piece of land and I told them I would build a room for myself there and take Gale, one of the cows, because we had around 18 cows, and just live on my own. Then, my father told my mom to never beat me again and she got off my back. She would tell me that God made me a woman and for that reason, if I died, the grave wouldn't take me. I would think about that in my head a lot and that's the part that scared me the most, but I still wouldn't say anything. After that, no one told me anything anymore, not even my mother. She loved me a lot, but she would scold me because she wanted the best for me. She would think about my future and worry who was going to take care of me when I get old.

H began by stating that he "made up [his] mind" to dress as a man. This by itself does not necessarily indicate whether his motivation was personal or resulting from external pressure. However, reading on, we understand that in fact H was acting *against* considerable external pressure (his mother discouraging him to the point of physical abuse) in living as a man. H depicted his decision to live as a man not only as an independent decision but as one that went directly against his mother and even against God ("She would tell me that God made me a woman and […] the grave wouldn't take me"). Despite the immense pressure not to live as man, it was so important to H to do so that he was prepared to live alone (which is very uncommon in

these communities) and even considered suicide if not allowed to do so. Thus, even though H does not explicitly reference his emotional states, we can infer that his motivation was fundamentally a personal one.

Gj similarly did not explicitly reference a specific motivation. Take this excerpt:

DATA EXCERPT 43

ER: How did you come to start dressing as a man?

Gj: I should be honest, since when I was 7 years old. My father was originally from ex-Yugoslavia and he was one of the first teachers on this area. He always gave us freedom to do what we liked, but always saying we should be careful and responsible. He always taught us the good behaviors like not harming anyone, not be jealous of other people and other good manners. […]

Gj continued this narrative by describing his family and the poverty that they experienced in the past. As such, he did not give any clear answer to the question. In interpreting the excerpt, one could speculate that living as a boy may have been because of the "freedom to do what we liked" granted by his father, but this is simply not clear. Later in the interview I probed the topic further in search of clarity:

DATA EXCERPT 44

ER: How did people react when you dressed as a man?

Gj: My hair was always short, even shorter than now. They would ask me why I didn't keep my hair longer. They'd say I might want to get married at some point, so, I should start growing my hair. Even my sister would try to convince me to get married. I was glad for them to be married but I made my own choices. I never thought of it. Even my female friends, that have their families now, would tell me "Why do you want to stay like this? When you get old you might need your own family." and I would tell them jokingly that when I get old, they would take care of me. My sister would tell my brother "Make her life boring so she decides to marry someone" and the brother would say "She has her own life, she makes her own decisions".

This response gave the impression that Gj wanted to live as a man in order to avoid marriage ("I never thought of it [marriage]"). I am hesitant to propose that this was his primary motivation seeing as he brought this up in the context of other people's reactions and did not

mention this in terms of his own transition as discussed in excerpt 43. Regardless, it is again clear that Gj acted to some extent in opposition to external pressures ("Even my sister would try to convince me to get married"), indicating a more personal and internal drive to live as a man.

The last two burrnesha, Sh and Af, were slightly different from the others. Here is Sh's response:

DATA EXCERPT 45

ER: How did you come to be a burrneshe?

Sh: I had a brother, I had a brother and three sisters and I liked to go farming with livestock. My uncle was a shepherd and since I was able to walk I was running with the livestock. I liked to go farming to not be controlled by anyone but to be free. So I chose it by myself. I always dressed with boy's clothes and never wore girl's clothes. I chose it by myself, they tried to remove this thing but they couldn't convince me.

ER: How old were you when you started [living as a boy]?

Sh: I was about 7, 8, 10 years old, but I always kept it, never stayed with girls. Not to dress [like girls], nothing, only like boys. They used to bring me dresses so I would wear them and I never wore them, always refused.

Sh's narrative is different from others in that he did not refer directly to "natural" feelings about living as a man and he contextualized the decision in terms of being able to shepherd and "to be free". Despite these differences, Sh's narrative was fundamentally a personal decision, like the other burrnesha's. Sh made no reference to circumstances necessitating his decision. He said he "chose it by myself", emphasized, again, by the fact that he went against some of his family members' wishes ("They used to bring me dresses […] and I […] always refused"). In this respect, Sh's narrative is similar to the other burrnesha's and different from the community respondents'.

Unlike the other burrnesha, Af grew up as a woman and had even been married at one point. However, the marriage fell through and Af started working as a truck driver after being urged to do so by a female friend who did the same. Af reported being teased considerably for having such a masculine job as a woman. Soon after, in his 30s, Af started to live as a man:

DATA EXCERPT 46

ER: How did you start wearing men's clothes?

Af: Actually, I grew up as an orphan. My father died when I was 2 years old and my mother when I was 3. I had a sister who was married, so she raised me. Now it's been more than 20 years since she passed away. I had to start working since I was 18 years old until 1984 when I retired. First, I was a simple worker, then I worked as a fitter in the factory and later on as a driver. In 1961 I first cut all my hair. I was embarrassed to see myself working as a driver with the long hair, because there were no female drivers here. When I would pass by in the street with the car, the kids would be like "Look, there's a female driver!". Ever since, I started wearing man's clothes and keeping my hair short.

ER: Up until that moment did you dress as a woman?

Af: Yes, mostly.

ER: What did the people say when you first started dressing as a man?

Af: In the beginning they would judge me and shame me, but then they got used to it.

ER: Who said that?

Af: Women mostly. Relatives more, but others as well. in the beginning it was like that, but later they got used and they would tell me "You actually look better like this", "It suits you better".

ER: How old were you at the time?

Af: In my thirties.

ER: Had you been married before that?

Af: Yes, I have. They just made me get married, because I was just a servant to the husband. He was more than 60 years old. I stayed like 4/5 months with him and I left.

AZ: How old were you back then?

Af: 17 years old.

After giving a brief summary of his life, Af described his transition as follows: "In 1961 I first cut all my hair. I was embarrassed to see myself working as a driver with the long hair, because there were no female drivers here", and went on to explain how he was teased for being a female driver. This indicated that the respondent found it more acceptable for his body and appearance to be incongruent than for his appearance and social role to be incongruent.

Following, Af revealed that other people were initially resistant to his change in lifestyle ("they would judge me and shame me"), similar to other burrnesha's experience.

Af's case is unique for many reasons, not least of which because he had been married before starting to live as a man. Af reported that he left the marriage after only a few months because of their 40+ year age difference and because he felt like a servant to the husband. On the one hand, this sounds like traditional conceptualizations of burrnesha in that Af wanted to avoid marriage. However, he had been married before becoming a burrneshe, which should not be possible according to the traditional definition. Of more interest to the present work, Af did not conceptually tie his rejection of marriage and his decision to live as a man. We may infer that the two events are in fact related following the logic that as an unmarried woman, Af had to work and the only work available was male-typical, impelling him to live as a man. Indeed, this very well may have been a major, if indirect, motivation for Af. I will not focus further on the idiosyncrasies of Af's case in the interest of treating the burrnesha data as a whole. What is relevant for the present purposes is that even in a case where the burrneshe did not start to live as a man since childhood because it "felt natural", he still did *not* draw on the same narratives of hardship and sacrifice used by the community respondents.

In summary, among the ten burrnesha there was some variation in their narratives of their own motivation. Most (6) explicitly reported that it felt right or natural for them to do so. I argue that two more (H and Gj) also experienced a personal, emotional motivation although their narratives were not as explicit. Sh's motivation seemed personal, but externalized to the extent that he wanted to be a shepherd. However, all ten, including Sh and Af, made it clear that their choice was made independently, with no reference to conditions of hardship as motivators, and often in *opposition* to external pressure rather than because of it. This indicates the fundamental difference between burrnesha's representation of their own motivation and the community's representation.

DECISIVENESS AND COMMITMENT

Just as most burrnesha reported dressing as boys since childhood, most reported a great deal of conviction about their decision. This was clear in many of the excerpts provided above. For example, H (data excerpt 42) conveyed a great deal of commitment to living as a man. Consider also Sh's response: "I chose it by myself, they tried to remove this thing, but they couldn't convince me" (data excerpt 45). This narrative was the norm among burrnesha. Take this excerpt from Il's interview demonstrating the strength of his commitment:

DATA EXCERPT 47

ER: Besides Eliza, was there any other journalist that came to speak to you?

Il: Before there were some that came, some Chinese as well.

ER: Since there were these different people that came, how was it?

Il: Just like with you. They would ask different questions like "did you regret your choice?" and so on.

AZ: I don't think you regretted it, did you?

Il: No, even if they were to hang me, I wouldn't change this decision I've made.

Although we began by speaking about Il's experiences with other journalists, the conversation turned towards the topic of regret. Acknowledging the leading phrasing of Ardit's question, Il reported having no regrets in the strongest of terms: he would rather be dead than live as a woman. We saw that H had also considered death (by suicide) as an alternative to living as a woman. Although not all burrnesha respondents indicated their conviction in such explicit and strong terms, all except one made it clear that they had no regrets. The strength of Il's statement was also interesting considering that he was the respondent who noted the greatest degree of resistance from his community.

In this next example, Lu discusses the issue of decisiveness head-on:

DATA EXCERPT 48

ER: If you were speaking to someone that doesn't know, how would you describe what a burrneshe is?

Lu: If you want them to understand it you need to explain it well. Women who are very manly in the sense that they're strong, brave and trusted people.

AZ: For example, what obligation does a burrneshe have?

Lu: They should consider themselves men, they should behave like men, be responsible. They're not women anymore.

ER: Can anyone become a burrneshe?

Lu: It's all about making a decision. If you're not decisive about living as a man, then it's not for you.

ER: I heard that all women should take an oath to become burrneshe. Is that an important part of being a burrneshe?

Lu: If someone takes an oath, they do it for themselves, not for the others. It's a big deal to take a personal oath. If I don't take an oath within myself, it doesn't matter if I do it in front of the others.

ER: Do you consider yourself to be burrneshe?

Lu: Yes, I am a burrneshe. My word has weight, it's valuable.

ER: Have you made an oath?

Lu: Yes, within myself I did.

Lu characterized decisiveness as a central element of being a burrneshe: "It's all about making a decision. If you're not decisive about living as a man, then it's not for you." With my prompting, Lu connected this to the concept of oath-taking. Unlike media portrayals, oath-taking for him was not a public ritual as much as it represented the burrneshe's personal commitment. This understanding of the oath was expressed not only by Lu, but by other burrnesha as well. Lu nested decisiveness in a broader description of a burrneshe's character as "strong, brave and trusted", "responsible", and respected ("My word has weight, it's valuable"). More importantly, reference to decisiveness and the other traits was not incidental but was explicitly used to position burrnesha as men: "Women who are very *manly* in the sense that they're strong, brave and trusted people"; "They should *consider themselves men,* they should behave like men, be responsible. *They're not women anymore*" (my emphasis).

We can compare this to Li's, somewhat poetic account of decisiveness:

DATA EXCERPT 49

ER: How would you describe “burrneshe” to a foreigner, to someone who doesn't know?

Li: The word “burrneshe” is much more than a female. First for her comes the personality, which is much more important than her looks. Her dignity has abandoned betrayal/dishonesty and achieved an extraordinary sincerity. The word burrni itself with two *r*s tells you that she is a decision maker that doesn't take other people’s advice, makes every decision without anyone else's advice. It's not like the clock that you can change the dials by hand.

Li’s description of burrnesha as a concept was very laudatory. He described them as trustworthy, sincere, and “more” than women. Like Lu, he explicitly tied decisiveness/commitment into a narrative of masculinity and virtue. *Burrni/burrnia* could be translated as masculinity, manhood, manliness, or in some cases machismo. The expression “burrni with two *r*s” refers to the rolling *r* sound in the pronunciation of the word (a single *r* is not rolled in Albanian). When speaking, people sometimes emphasize the roll of the *r* as if to make the word itself sound more manly. This phonetic tendency has evolved into the literal idiomatic expression “burrni (or *burre*: man) with two *r*s” to say that something or someone is exceptionally manly. *Burrni* is the root of *burrneshe*. With this in mind, we can understand that Li directly linked decision-making to masculinity and independence: “The word burrni [in the word burrneshe] itself with two *r*s tells you that she is a decision maker that doesn't take other people’s advice, makes every decision without anyone else's advice.” He emphasized this point again by contrasting burrnesha from clocks, which can be easily manipulated.

VIRTUE

Data excerpts 48 and 49 on decisiveness/commitment simultaneously demonstrated burrnesha’s virtue. There were various characteristics the burrnesha commonly identified with. These traits were perhaps universally positive. Although I sometimes asked specifically about respondents’ abilities and characteristics, they often spoke about these traits unprompted. Notice how D indicated his own exceptional virtue in this discussion of his career:

DATA EXCERPT 50

ER: Was military service obligatory for men and women as well?

D: It became obligatory for women as well. They were divided in two groups. Some would do the course to become drivers for the military and some would be trained to join the army. The women would come from different areas of the country, different villages. Judging from my personality and the connections I had, they said that only I could handle these women so, they assigned me to train them.

In this excerpt, I was following up on the respondent's mention of having participated in military service. He said that he was in charge of a group of women. Without prompting, D explained how he was given this leadership position on account of his "personality and connections". In fact, he was the "only" person for the job. This narrative demonstrates traits that are not just exceptional, but exceptional in such a way that was connected to leadership in a traditionally masculine job.

Respondents did not only rely on traditionally masculine virtues, such as leadership and decision-making. They also expressed their wisdom, generosity, integrity, and other virtues, often using elaborate narratives. Consider H's story about helping someone in need:

DATA EXCERPT 51

ER: Which of these professions you think you were the best at?

H: I did well all of them, everywhere I worked they would give me honorary certificates.

ER: Which one was your favorite then?

H: I liked all of them. At the bakery I was sent to regulate the situation because back then the bread was rationed, it was corn bread.

A: So, you were there to direct them?

H: At the time, the head of committee called me at his office and asked me if I could go work at the bakery. The villagers were taking more bread than the told ration and the village was short on bread, so they needed someone to go and control the situation. So, I went. Once, a young boy around 12 years old came to me and said he needed some bread because his mother was sick for five weeks. I gave him the bread. Then, when he left the shop on the way to his house, he met one manager we had. He asked the boy "Where did you get this bread?" and he answered "At the shop". The manager took him and brought him back to the shop. The shop was full of people when they entered. The manager asked me if I had given the bread to the kid and I said "Yes". I told the little guy to take the

> bread and go home then told the manager that he shouldn't have brought the kid all the way back there. I told him that I don't eat corn bread, so I gave that kid my ration. He said I made a mistake giving him that bread and I told him that I would give 5 kg bread to his brother every time he came at the shop, but he never considered that a mistake. When I closed the shop, I went to the office and told the deputy chief what happened. He said for however long I was there, every time I considered right giving the bread to someone, I should give them and say it's his order. After that I didn't have other problems. There would be people with different problems that needed bread and I gave it to them.

After H had told me about the many different types of jobs that he had had over the course of his life, I asked which profession had been his favorite. From the very beginning, H communicated his virtue by saying that he won "honorary certificates" in every professional role he had. His leadership was clear in that he was the one asked to go "control the situation" when there were rationing issues in the village. Then, H took the opportunity to relate a seemingly unprompted narrative that conveyed both his virtue and agency. At that time in communist Albania, food was allotted by ration. H gave more bread to a boy than his ration allowed. Although one manager chastised H for this, the director approved. In this story, H's generosity is expressed through H's independence, decision-making power, and control over resources. In short, H's generosity and his agency were two sides of the same coin. A similar pattern appeared with other traits we might not typically associate with agency, such as wisdom.

Comparison and Analysis

Generally speaking, the most salient difference between the groups' narratives was that the community group relied heavily on context for explaining burrnesha's behavior while the burrnesha themselves did not. While this was most obvious where motivation was concerned, I found that this difference underlay all three themes. Community respondents' narrative represented living as a man as an extreme decision that could only be motivated by extreme survival needs, such as leading the family, gaining leverage in property disputes, and taking on male jobs. Respondents drew on themes such as sacrifice and altruism to emphasize that this was not a decision that a burrneshe could possible enjoy taking. This representation was reiterated by respondents' implication that burrnesha "don't exist" today because social conditions are so

much better than they were in the past (Chapter 6). By contrast, as we saw above, burrnesha in no way referred to hardship in order to explain their decision to live as a man. Their narrative focused almost exclusively on their inherent masculinity and/or preference for a male lifestyle.

Community respondents, like burrnesha, also drew on decisiveness/commitment as a theme. However, they used it in the context of explaining that living as a burrneshe was a difficult decision that required a great deal of psychological resilience in order to commit to. Burrnesha, on the other hand, seemed to characterize decisiveness as 1) a commitment to their male identity, and 2) an inherent part of their masculinity. In the first instance, consider H's narrative of his transition (data excerpt 42). His extreme commitment to living as a man had nothing to do with making a sacrifice for the sake of his family. To the contrary, he *opposed* his family for the sake of his male identity. In this way, his narrative of commitment emphasized the internal source of his motivation to live as a man. As for the second point, consider Lu's and Li's discussion of decision-making. They characterized decision-making as one of burrnesha's masculine virtues with no reference to external circumstances.

This leads us to respondents' elaboration of virtues more generally. Both respondent groups drew on hardship in discussing virtue. However, again, the logical relationship between hardship and virtue was fundamentally different. Community respondents positioned hardship as the source of virtue, in the sense that burrnesha were virtuous because living as a man was their response to hardship. Burrnesha respondents used hardship to elaborate narratives of their virtue, along the lines of "you can see how generous I am because of how I behaved when faced with a real challenge".

Based on these observations, I concluded that the differences between the respondent groups' representations of burrnesha could be characterized as external (contextual, relational) in the case of the community data, and internal (inherent, emotional), for the burrnesha. This observation led me to consider aspects of Attribution Theory (AT). AT suggests that people use different types of attributions in describing other people or themselves and evaluates the functions of those attribution types. Following, I provide a brief summary of AT and how I intend to use and critique it in this analysis. Subsequently, I will evaluate the functions of attribution type in the present data, drawing on lesson from AT in a broader SRT framework.

LESSONS FROM ATTRIBUTION THEORY

Attribution Theory is primarily based on the distinction between “dispositional” and “situational” attributions as different ways that an observer may explain the behavior of an observed person. Dispositional attributions generally make inferences about the person’s psychological states and personal traits, whereas situational attributions draw on context to explain behavior. This distinction very neatly reflects the observed differences in the present data.

For many authors, the importance of the distinction between attribution types lies in the perceived locus of control (e.g., Fishman & Husman, 2017; Ryan & Connell, 1989). Dispositional attributions assume that “the actor is perceived as an "origin" of his or her behavior” whereas in situational attributions “the actor is seen as a "pawn" to heteronomous forces” (Ryan & Connell, 1989, p. 749). Therefore, while some works have distinguished dispositional and situational attributions as internal and external (respectively) (e.g., Ryan & Connell, 1989), more recent works have clarified that locus and controllability are two independent dimensions characterizing an attribution, with stability as a third dimension (Fishman & Husman, 2017; Weiner, 2010). As Fishman & Husman (Fishman & Husman, 2017) explain using examples, “effort is often considered internal, unstable, and controllable, whereas ability could be considered internal, stable, and uncontrollable” (p. 560). I believe that this elaboration of attribution types is particularly useful for understanding the functions of attributions.

Like SRT, AT takes interest not only in what kind of attribution is used but also how a speaker uses them to achieve different social goals. This again makes AT particularly compatible with SRT. For instance, research in that field finds that people are more likely to use situational attributes when explaining that they engage in a deviant behavior than when they talk about other people engaging in that same behavior. Authors interpret this as an attempt to move the source of deviance outside the self and “place the blame” on external factors. Similarly, Guiot (1977) argued that observers most perceive an other as deviant when they cannot attribute the deviant behavior to external circumstances and must therefore conclude that it originates internally. Such

observations can not only reveal social projects of the speaker in question, but also the broader societal construction of concepts (in the example above, of the specific deviant behavior), including identity (McLeod, 2012).

Much AT research on specific topics is compatible with the more general assertions listed above. For example, research has found that respondents express the greatest support for gender and racial equality when observed behavioral differences can be attributed to context (Napier, Luguri, Dovidio, & Oltman, 2018). Interestingly, work on attributions of trans people (as well as other LGBT+ groups, e.g. (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2008)) often contradicts this pattern. Several studies have found that situational attributions are negatively correlated with support for trans rights (Bowers & Whitley, 2020). Perhaps this empirical inconsistency may be explained by different power asymmetries between groups or by different attribution categories (e.g., Ryan & Connell, 1989 distinguish perceived external from internal motivations of behavior whereas Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2008 distinguish controllable (environmental/personal) from uncontrollable (biological) motivations). I will not devote too much attention to this specific issue in AT in this work. Instead, I will rely on SRT to evaluate the specific utility of respondents' use of different attributions based on the context and social representations involved.

Given the plurality of theoretical frameworks I draw upon in this thesis, I would like to clarify the role that AT takes in the present analysis. I intend not to replace SRT with AT but, as in previous chapters with other theories, to consider how AT can contribute to our understanding of the content of social representations and respondents' discursive social positioning. AT has been developed extensively by authors such as Kelley (1967) and Weiner (2010). However, it is sometimes criticized as being reductionist: the theory does not adequately consider the full complexity of influence of social context on the attribution process, a failing that could be remedied by considering the principles of AT within an SRT framework. Therefore, I do not deal with attribution theory in its entirety but rather take lessons from it insofar as they are compatible with SRT. Primarily, I am interested in its consideration of different types of attributions and its suggestion that those attributions serve different social purposes. In analyzing what specific purposes they serve, I will rely less on findings in AT and take a more flexible approach, considering the many facets of context as I have in previous chapters. I will briefly compare my

conclusions to empirical findings in AT as to the functions of those attributions. Other aspects of the theory, such as the Covariation Principle (Kelley, The Processes of Causal Attribution, 1973), propose models for why people use certain attributions. These models, while no doubt of great academic value, are usually based on a relatively reductionist explanatory approach that is not entirely compatible with the broader vision of SRT. For that reason, I will pay considerably less attention to such aspects of the theory.

General Functions

I argue that burrnesha's versus the community's narratives fall under dispositional versus situational attribution types, respectively. As we saw in the data excerpts, burrnesha's descriptions focused almost exclusively on their own feelings and internal states, especially as explanations for their behavior. The community respondents explained burrnesha's behavior by elaborating contextual pressures on them. AT allows us to understand these stances as fundamentally different ways of explaining behavior. Furthermore, AT confirms that these differences are not coincidental but socially strategic: this is the focus of this section. o.

The following graphs represent the discursive differences between respondent groups regarding the present themes. Although both respondent groups draw on the same themes, the logical connections between them are different. Most notably, for burrnesha the source of their traits is an *inherent* "burrnia". For the community group, *context* (circumstantial hardship) is the source of a burrneshe's traits, and burrnia is, in some sense, an emergent property of those traits. Figure 36 depicts burrnesha's representation:

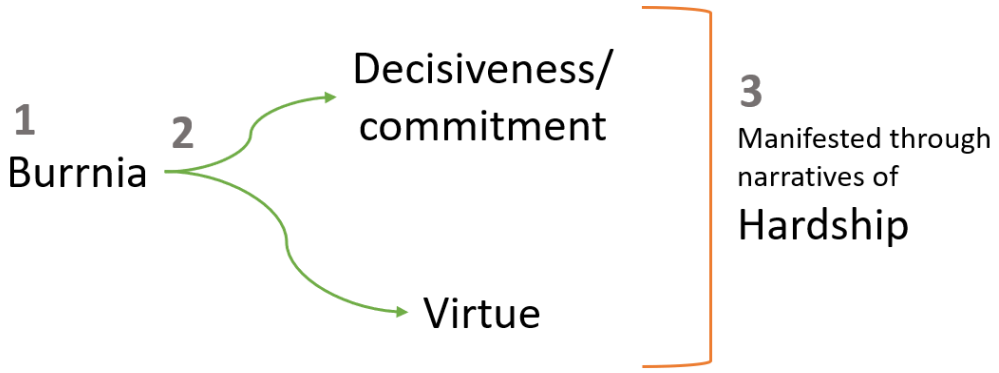

FIGURE 36: BURRNESHA'S REPRESENTATION OF THEIR MOTIVATION AND TRAITS

For burrnesha themselves, burrnia was a given (1): an inherent and immutable part of who they were. In this highly patriarchal context, decisiveness/commitment and virtue are natural extensions of burrnia (2). These traits are not the consequence of hardship, however adverse circumstances evoke their manifestation (3). We can compare this to the community group's discourse in Figure 37:

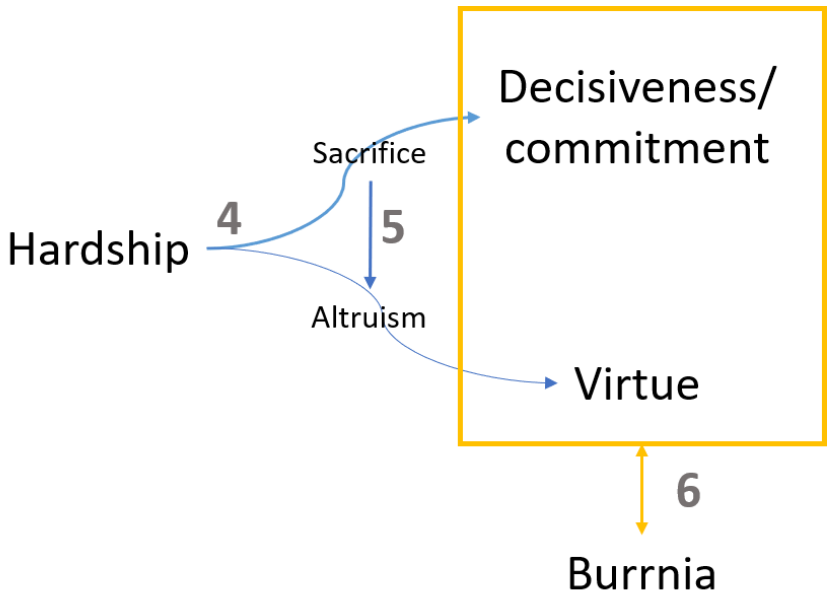

FIGURE 37: COMMUNITY RESPONDENTS' REPRESENTATION OF BURRNESHA'S MOTIVATION AND TRAITS

The community respondent group agreed that burrnesha exhibit burrnia, decisiveness, and virtue. However, in their narrative, decisiveness and virtue are the consequence of hardship (4): it is burrnesha's decision to live as a man *as a response to hardship* that *earns* them these

traits. They use themes of sacrifice and altruism to elaborate the extent of burrnesha's decision-making power and general virtue (5). Burrnesha, by contrast, in no way represented their decision to live as man as a sacrifice. In the community narrative, burrnia is in part the consequence of those traits, as if it were an emergent property. These respondents also sometimes portrayed burrnia as inherent to burrnesha, in a bidirectional relationship with the traits (6). I argued in Chapter 5 that this cognitive polyphasia positioned burrnesha as exceptions rather than the norm, while also allowing respondents to justify their male status.

Due to internal inconsistencies in AT, it is difficult to position these observations neatly in its framework. AT predicts that situational attributions are used to avoid stigma (like the community group but unlike the burrnesha group), except in LGBT+ contexts (like the burrnesha group but unlike the community group [assuming this is an LGBT+ context]). Therefore, I suggest calling into question what the assumed "disposition" is, not only in terms of the locus of control, but also in terms of the social representations of that specific disposition.

With this in mind, I argued that the community group used context to avoid associating burrnesha with LGBT+ and/or ill behaviors and identities. In their representations, LGBT+ behavior may have been a choice of the actors. In AT research, dispositional attributions of LGBT+ people refer to biological factors that are out of the actor's control. While each of these contexts would broadly be classified as dispositional, the difference in controllability may underlie the different functionality in avoiding deviance. Further research is needed to investigate whether community respondents actually view LGBT+ behavior in this way, however, I offer this as one possible explanation for the discrepancy between my findings and other findings in the field.

We may also understand these discrepancies by considering that community respondents and burrnesha drew on different social representations. While community respondents' dispositional attributions referred to LGBT+ identity, burrnesha's referred to a masculine one. For this reason, the community group positioned the dispositional motivation as one to avoid while the burrnesha group positioned it as desirable. Community respondents seemed to fear an aberrant disposition in burrnesha, namely that they were ill and/or LGBT+. Burrnesha seemed to avoid this issue altogether by emphasizing their "pure" masculinity. The disposition they

elaborated was male, not ill, gay, or trans. Meanwhile, they paid little to no attention to the incongruity between their physical characteristics and social expectations of their behavior, except when describing resistance from family and acquaintances. They had the extra advantage that masculinity was not only "pure" but also highly valued. Their embrace of masculinity reaffirmed patriarchal values in general, especially in terms of the desirability of being male and the association of masculinity with agency and virtue.

While this evaluation applies to burrnesha's use of dispositional versus situational attributions in general, I believe there are some more specific functions to consider. Below, I consider the function of essentializing each of the three themes of focus for this chapter: motivation, decisiveness/commitment, and virtue. Each of these contributed to the overall functions expounded in this section as well as other more specific functions.

Specific Functions

Burrnesha's narrative of motivation to live as a man was based on it feeling "right" to them. This sense of "rightness" was not trivial, but a core aspect of who they were, withstanding family opposition and the passage of time. As discussed above, this firstly allowed burrnesha to avoid the issue of deviance by sidestepping association with deviant identities: they were not gay, trans, or ill, they were men. This narrative also served to convey entitlement to the male role: they deserved the treatment of men because they acted and thought like men, and they acted and thought like men because they really were men. A reference to contextual pressure would call into question their inherent burrnia and might raise doubts as to their ability to fully adopt the male role. Meanwhile, this narrative allows burrnesha to reinforce patriarchal values about gender roles: if their access to the male role is contingent upon their inherent burrnia, then we do not have to expect all women capable of taking on the male role.

Burrnesha's decisiveness/commitment further reinforces the importance, inherence, and permanence of their burrnia. It also communicates their agency: they are not victims of external circumstances, but independent actors in control of their lives. Given the central role of agency

in representations of masculinity, this may be a central aspect of burrnesha's performance of masculinity. A context-centered narrative would have conveyed a passivity at odds with their male role. Consider the cognitive polyphasia in community respondents' narrative of "forced choice" (Chapter 5). Burrnesha seemed to avoid this conceptual conflict altogether by eliminating the "forced" aspect. Perhaps their doing so was contingent upon their narrative of inherent burrnia, which allowed them to avoid potential association with a deviant identity. While an inherent burrnia reinforces their male identity, it also reproduces the association between decisiveness, agency, and masculinity in the general patriarchal context.

Besides being masculine and agentic, decisiveness/commitment is considered a virtue. As we have seen, it is not the only virtue burrnesha associated themselves with. Like decisiveness, burrnesha elaborated these virtues not only as self-aggrandizement, but also to reinforce their agency and masculinity. They communicated this through in-depth narratives, even for traits that we might not typically think of as agentic. Let us compare leadership and generosity. Leadership, which we saw in data excerpt 50, is an archetypically agentic trait. Generosity, on the other hand, we might not immediately think of as indicative of agency. However, consider excerpt 51. Here, H spoke of his generosity in such a way as to establish his leadership and authority among men.

Community respondents also portrayed burrnesha as virtuous, drawing on many of the same virtues (Chapter 5). However, what is notable is the difference in which each group situated these qualities. The community respondents consistently drew a logical connection between these traits and the external pressures obligating a burrneshe to live as a man. They characterized burrnesha as being heroic *because* they were helping their family in need. Similarly, they were altruistic *because* living as a man was a sacrifice which one would only make given extreme external pressures. By contrast, burrnesha described themselves as virtuous in their own right. In their narratives, external issues, such as poverty or political oppression, were critical to communicating their virtue. However, the connection between hardship and virtue in no way indicated that their decision to become a burrneshe was the *consequence* of that hardship. I conclude that burrnesha's exceptional self-descriptions were crucial to the performance of masculinity by conveying their agency. In this way, much as I described in previous chapters, they reproduced general patriarchal values. They simultaneously upheld the

association between masculinity and virtue in general terms and positioned themselves in proximity to that masculine and virtuous identity.

DISCUSSION

Although this chapter has focused on differences between respondent groups, it also exposes the universality of key themata. Based on the themes I chose to inspect here, the most salient themata are patriarchy, essentialism, and agency, which we observed in earlier chapters. Burrnesha reproduced patriarchal norms through their narratives of motivation, decisiveness, and virtue. They protected the assignment of gender roles by characterizing themselves as inherently male. Meanwhile, they continually emphasized the association between masculinity, agency, and a list of virtues. In these ways, burrnesha's responses were situated in the same conceptual space as the community respondents', despite important differences in their strategies to avoid stigma.

While Attribution Theory played a major role in helping me come to the conclusions of this chapter, my analysis also highlights the theory's shortcomings. First, I argued that burrnesha avoided stigma not by using situational attributions but by drawing on a different social identity than community respondents assigned them. By integrating AT into an SRT framework, I demonstrated the importance of characterizing the social representations of social identities in order to fully understand the functions of the attributional process. Second, my analysis might contradict AT's findings that dispositional attribution actually *increases* support among observers in the context of LGBT+ identities. I think it is possible that this is because in those research contexts, dispositional attribution is based on inherent biological traits, which are not actually under our control. I think it likely that my community respondents saw LGBT+ behavior as a controllable choice. Although further research is necessary to make these claims with confidence, we can see the utility of specifying different kinds of dispositional attributions instead of treating them all as the same type. While some works do this (e.g., Fishman & Husman, 2016; Ryan & Connell, 1989), the fact that AT is primarily based on a binary distinction between situational and dispositional attributions may be overly simplistic.

This last point brings me to a final theoretical note of interest for further study. The reader may have observed that essentialism theory would be compatible with this analysis, a consideration which I have presently omitted for the sake of conciseness. In fact, I think a combined consideration of AT and ET within an SRT framework could be fruitful for all three paradigms. AT and ET each emphasize and elucidate different elements of related processes. While both theories deal with a kind of essentializing process (broadly speaking), ET has contributed more heavily to understanding what the psychological essence is and how it contributes to our representations of objects. This might help us understand why the Albanian public views an LGBT+ disposition differently than a Western pubic does. By contrast, AT focuses more on the discursive process of assigning essences or non-essentialist attributes to objects given context and social goals. In doing so, AT deals in greater detail with non-essentialist attributes (i.e., situational attributes) than ET does. While ET's focus tends to be on content, AT gives more attention to discourse, making the combination of the two theories especially apt for tackling questions put forth by SRT.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I analyzed data from burrnesha respondents and compared it to data discussed in previous chapters from community respondents. I focused on three themes to argue that the fundamental difference between the two respondent groups is in their treatment of hardship in representations of burrnesha. Community respondents positioned hardship as the source of burrnesha's masculinity and other traits. Burrnesha respondents saw themselves as inherently male and instead used hardship in order to elaborate narratives of their masculinity. I concluded that burrnesha, like community respondents, used these narratives to uphold patriarchal values. Finally, I used my analysis to critique Attribution Theory and recommend future avenues of research.

CHAPTER 8: GENERAL DISCUSSION

CHAPTER 8 INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter, I will briefly summarize the content of this dissertation, interpret the findings in greater depth, explore some of the implications of the findings, and evaluate the research itself with suggestions for further work to be carried out. My goal here is to provide a concise account of the research conducted and consider its quality and implications within the broader contexts not only of the field of psychology but also of society as a whole.

In evaluating this study within the broader contexts of academia and society, I would like to remind the reader that this study was exploratory in its research questions and design. This approach largely determined the goals and scope of the research at hand.

RECAPITULATION

I began this dissertation by describing the general context of the burrnesha tradition. I provided a brief account of Albanian history, geography, and society. My goal was to demonstrate that the burrnesha tradition is embedded in a series of intersecting conditions. It emerged from a combination of material hardship and cultural values. These values included family collectivism, honor, sexual conservativism, and patriarchy. These values and other social structures are reflected in and reproduced by the kanun. Burrnesha are described in some versions of the kanun and are probably related to the tradition of blood feuds. Blood feuds, also drawing on values of family, honor, and patriarchy, may have made it more likely for families to lack male members. This may have been one of the factors "necessitating" the tradition of burrnesha to replace male family members.

In Chapter 2, I focused on presenting the burrnesha tradition as it has been most commonly described. Rather than analyzing the tradition from an in-depth socio-psychological perspective, I took descriptions at face value. In doing this, I relied on anthropological literature, media, and personal conversations with Albanians. I discussed the supposed purposes and motivations of burrnesha as well as their appearance and lifestyle. I described how the tradition has manifested across different regions of the Balkans and throughout time. I ended by discussing the presence and absence of burrnesha in academic research, journalistic media, and fiction.

With this background understanding of burrnesha, I spent the next chapter outlining the development of the current research questions. In doing so, I described in some detail Social Representations Theory (SRT) as the project's primary theoretical framework. My goal was to demonstrate the compatibility of the theory with the research goals. This chapter included a description of content and process in SRT, social power and Social Identity Theory, and specific SRT research of gender construction.

In the next chapter, I built on the theoretical framework to justify the methodology and specific methods I used to carry out this project. I described qualitative methodology and

interview methods in general. Then, I described the research I conducted and discussed some of the considerations related to maximizing the quality of the study.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 comprised my analyses. In Chapter 5, I demonstrated that the dominant representation of burrnesha functions to preserve patriarchal norms in various ways. For example, it preserves the association between masculinity and leadership by presenting burrnesha as the "solution" to the lack of male family members. Furthermore, despite gender non-conformity, burrneshas' asexuality prevents them from conflicting with heteronormativity. This analysis revolved around three, interrelated themata: patriarchy, essentialism, and utility.

In Chapter 6, I went on to demonstrate how the representation of burrnesha adapted to a changing socio-political climate in Albania. In a context where adversity was no longer taken for granted, living as a man to support the family ceased to seem necessary. This narrative was supported by the implication that behaving against one's gender essence was oppressive. In summary, this representation reproduced patriarchy through essentialism and heteronormativity while reflecting the power asymmetry between traditional Albania and the West. This analysis primarily revolved around the themata of self/other and nationalism/eurocentrism, although the previous themata were also present. I contrasted this representation with a highly positive, agency-based narrative used primarily by a respondent who had seriously considered becoming a burrneshe.

In Chapter 7, I compared community respondent data to burrnesha's responses regarding motivation, decisiveness/commitment, and virtue. While both respondent groups drew on similar themes, the logical connections between these themes were different in important ways: community respondents positioned masculinity as the result of hardship, whereas burrnesha characterized themselves as being inherently masculine. Burrnesha's narrative further contributed to the patriarchal ideology of their community. I drew on lessons from Attribution Theory in this analysis, critiqued that theory, and suggested further research.

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

This research demonstrated the applicability of SRT to the subject matter of burrnesha. In this specific project, I approached several analyses within this framework. These included examining the content and structure of representations of burrnesha, and evaluating pluralism, social identities, and social positioning. I expect that other topics in SRT could be applied to this issue.

I also demonstrated the compatibility between SRT and other theories in social psychology. SRT is not intended to replace other work within social psychology. Rather, it is a framework that can reconceptualize other approaches. This has been demonstrated in other empirical and theoretical works, especially highlighting the compatibility between SRT and Social Identity Theory or Harre's Social Positioning Theory (Andreouli E. , 2010). In this dissertation, I presented the conceptual compatibility between SRT and Psychological Essentialism Theory and Attribution Theory. I demonstrated how the conceptual developments of each sub-field contributed to the other. This combination provided a more exact and meaningful understanding of the constructs (e.g., essences or attributions), interacting with other aspects of the representation and social norms.

Beyond the field of psychology, this research has contributed to a greater understanding of burrnesha as a custom. Unlike previous research about burrnesha, this project has focused on the construction of burrnesha identity from a socio-psychological perspective. This can lead to a better understanding of how burrnesha interact with their communities, and how this interaction is changing over time. Furthermore, this led to an evaluation of how broader social dynamics are expressed even in the specific context of burrnesha.

Beyond the context of burrnesha, this research has implications for our understandings of gender construction and discrimination of gender non-conformity in general. Gender non-conformity in the context of burrnesha is acceptable because it ultimately upholds patriarchal social structures. Burrneshas' asexuality is a key component of this by keeping heteronormativity, and by extension patriarchy, intact. Ultimately, this differentiates burrnesha from LGBT+ groups. These findings may have implications for social efforts to address discrimination of gender non-conformity, such as homo- or transphobia. We can infer that such efforts must evaluate the relationship between the social identities at hand and more general

power structures. Patriarchy stands out as the most obviously relevant power structure in this context, due to its direct evocation of gender. However, other power structures may be relevant as well. As we saw in Chapter 6, individuals responded to and reproduced place-based power dynamics in their representations of burrnesha. This reminds us that each social identity is embedded in a network of associations that the individual responds to. Therefore, anti-discrimination interventions will likely have the greatest success when prepared to address the full range of conceptual roles of the social identities.

EVALUATION AND DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

In this section I evaluate the quality of the research presented in this dissertation. I discuss its success in terms of meeting the goals and addressing the research questions of the project. I also evaluate it according to some of the criteria proposed by Gaskell & Bauer (2000) that I introduced in Chapter 4. I discuss how shortcomings can be addressed by future research that is narrower and more in-depth, includes mixed methods, involves greater collaboration with Albanians, and/or compares representations of different social groups.

RESEARCH GOALS AND QUESTIONS

Given the dearth of socio-psychological research on burrnesha, it was appropriate that this study took an exploratory approach. The goal was to introduce burrnesha as an appropriate object of study of identity construction and begin analyses of the content, process, and implications of this construction. In part as a consequence of this exploratory design, the data is rich; instead of concentrating on specific topics, I chose to keep the subject matter relatively broad and flexible to the respondents' responses. I did this in order to allow greater opportunity for unexpected themes to emerge rather than restricting data to themes that I imposed.

In Chapter 1, I listed three specific research goals within this exploratory framework: a) to evaluate the role of burrnesha in Albanian society, especially in relation to shifting gender dynamics and general societal change in the country; b) to evaluate the suitability of Social

Representations Theory for studying this topic; and c) to provide the groundwork for future research. Both of the first goals were demonstrated in my analysis chapters as I described the content and structure of social representations of burrnesha. In doing so, I demonstrated how this topic is compatible with SRT by elaborating its connection to broader social context, including societal change. I showed that general cultural values (e.g., patriarchy) and political projects (e.g., nationalism) are expressed in the comparatively specific context of social representations of burrnesha.

This analysis also led to addressing the third research goal: to provide the groundwork for future research. I will elaborate on this in the Directions for the Future section later in this chapter.

Quality Management Criteria

In Chapter 4, I presented Gaskell & Bauer's (2000) criteria for quality management: triangulation and reflexivity, transparency and procedural clarity, corpus construction, thick description, local surprise, and communicative validation. These six specific elements contribute to an overall evaluation of research in terms of *confidence* and *relevance*. Most of these criteria I discussed sufficiently in Chapter 4. Some I would like to consider in light of the analyses presented. Specifically, I will return to the criteria of triangulation and surprise.

As discussed in Chapter 4, my research included *data triangulation* through multiple respondent groups, and *investigator triangulation* through collaboration with native Albanians. Data triangulation contributed to confidence in the findings through the comparison of different groups' representations of burrnesha. For example, in Chapter 6 I showed how respondents from Shkoder tended to distance themselves from burrneshas' communities through rural/urban representations of space, whereas respondents from Tirana tended to use north/south representations. This comparison demonstrated that respondents used representations of space to actively negotiate the place identity difference between themselves and burrnesha. If one of those respondent groups had been omitted, this may not have been evident in the data.

I was transparent in reporting investigator triangulation in my analyses. This was perhaps most obvious in identifying sexual themes in the data. To do this, I relied on a detailed analysis of the corpus as a whole. By contrast, Mr. Zaja relied on his social intuition as an in-group member with the respondents. Combining both of our insights contributed to greater confidence in identifying sexual (and other) themes in the data.

Gaskell & Bauer's (2000) fifth point suggested that relevance could be evaluated in part by the surprise that the research evoked in the reader. Surprise may be considered in relation to theoretical or common-sense expectations: "In order to avoid the use of qualitative interviewing or text analysis as generators of citations that can be used to support preconceived ideas, any research needs to document the evidence with an account of confirmed and disconfirmed expectations" (Gaskell & Bauer, 2000, p. 350). This criterion is satisfied by virtue of the fact that this is the first research into social representations of burrnesha to my knowledge. Due to its exploratory framework, it is not meaningful to evaluate this in terms of "confirmed and disconfirmed expectations"; my intention was to avoid *specific* empirical expectations in order not to prematurely analyze the data (this excludes general expectations, such as that SRT would be a suitable theoretical framework). Nevertheless, this research contributed new and relevant knowledge, constituting a "surprise" in Gaskell & Bauer's (2000) terms.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The exploratory approach of this research provided various advantages. First, multiple themes emerged that may not have in a more thematically restricted interview. For example, I did not expect *essentialism* or *patriarchy* to be salient themes and may not have known to address them in a more specific interview. Second, the richness of the data indicated multiple lines of inquiry for future exploration, beyond those presented in this dissertation. As such, the present study leads to future research questions while demonstrating the applicability of SRT and, as I argue, other theoretical frameworks. Here, I consider what some of this future research may consist of, although this list is not exhaustive.

Studying burrnesha presents an opportunity to explore the compatibility between SRT and numerous other psychological theories beyond those already noted, such as essentialism and Attribution Theory. Themes in the data were relevant to embodiment (e.g., the role of dress), individualism/collectivism (e.g., family collectivism), system justification (e.g., as it relates to essentialism [Brescoll, Uhlmann, & Newman, 2013]), and other theories. Rather than explore potential research questions in detail, I would like to note that cross-theory compatibility is potentially extensive. Such an approach may be fruitful for understanding representations of burrnesha as well as for the conceptual developments of the respective theories.

As an exploratory, qualitative study, there were limitations to the conclusions I could draw. As I discussed in Chapter 4, I could not generalize the findings or make rigorous, causal inferences, nor were these my goals. Such research questions may be addressed by quantitative designs that build off of this or other research. A quantitative design could also contribute to triangulation in this research. Furthermore, having covered a relatively wide range of themes, I sacrificed some level of depth in exploring specific themes. Again, one of the goals here was to identify points of interest for future, more focused research. Future research may address more specific research questions, whether within a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methodological framework.

The cross-cultural aspect of the research presented both advantages and disadvantages. As a cultural outsider, I noticed themes and brought perspectives that might have been taken for granted by an Albanian researcher. While I did take steps to maximize quality via feedback from native Albanians, collaboration was limited due to practical constraints. Future research would benefit from more equal involvement between Albanian and foreign researchers. Such collaboration would improve all aspects of the research, including design, data collection, and analysis, through deeper familiarity with Albanian culture and language.

Finally, I would recommend that future research compare representations of burrnesha to representations of other instances of gender non-conformity. This could include both accepted

customs, such as Afghan *bacha posh*[17], and stigmatized groups, such as LGBT+ communities from Albania or other countries. Such research could illustrate patterns in a social group's reasoning about gender and help us understand the relationship between gender construction and general societal norms.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, I summarized and evaluated the present research. I demonstrated that the current research was successful in meeting its goals. I suggested some of the implications that the current research has and recommended general directions for future research.

[17] The Afghan *bacha posh* are usually young girls who live as boys until they are old enough to marry. They reportedly do so for greater safety and freedom. This custom is generally well-accepted by their communities. As such, this presents a comparable custom to burrnesha, especially since the direction of gender nonconformity is the same (female to male) ("Bacha Posh", n.d.).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INFORMATION SHEET

The following information sheet was required and approved by the Cambridge Psychology Research Ethics Committee. I have provided both the English and Albanian versions. Respondents, of course, were given the Albanian version.

(English Version)

Study on Northern Albanian Culture

Researcher: Ellen Robertson

Institution: Department of Psychology, University of Cambridge

Information Sheet

Before you decide to take part in this study it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. You may ask the research team any questions if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Participation is entirely voluntary. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

This research project forms part of a PhD dissertation in psychology at the University of Cambridge. The purpose of this study is to understand northern Albanian culture and women's and men's roles in Albanian society. You have been invited to participate because as a native Albanian you have insight into the research questions of interest.

You will be interviewed in a group of your peers and asked to describe your life experiences and the people in your community. The total interview should take 45-90 minutes to complete. You will be compensated 1500 leke for your participation.

The interview will be audio recorded to help the researchers remember it in detail. Recordings will be identified only by a code, and will not be used or made available for any purposes other than the research project. These recordings will be permanently erased at the end of the study.

During analysis and reports of the study, all data will be identified only by a code, with personal details kept on a secure computer with access only by the immediate research team.

The interview questions are relatively general, and it is not expected that you will experience any discomfort. However, if you do, you may refuse to respond to any question and you can ask the interviewer to move on to the next question. You may choose to end your participation at any moment. You may also pause at any point to ask the researcher any question.

Only participants 18 years and older may participate.

This project has received funding from the University of Cambridge Department of Psychology. It has received ethical approval from the Psychology Research Ethics Committee of the University of Cambridge. If you have questions after the study, please contact Ellen Robertson by email at er442@cam.ac.uk, or by phone by +4478261 96990.

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

The following consent form was required and approved by the Cambridge Psychology Research Ethics Committee. I have provided both the English and Albanian versions. Respondents, of course, were given the Albanian version. Respondents were required to check all items in order to have an interview.

(English Version)

Study on Northern Albanian Culture

Researcher: Ellen Robertson

Institution: Department of Psychology, University of Cambridge

Consent form

The purpose of this study is to understand northern Albanian culture and women's and men's roles in Albanian society. You will be interviewed and asked to describe your life experiences and the people in your community. Please read the following and sign if you are in agreement with all of the statements.

☐ I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant Information Sheet

☐ I have had the opportunity to ask questions and had them answered

☐ I understand that all personal information will remain confidential and that all efforts will be made to ensure I cannot be identified (except as might be required by law)

☐ I agree that data gathered in this study may be stored anonymously and securely, and may be used for future research

☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

☐ I agree to take part in this study

☐ I confirm that I am at least 18 years old.

Signature_____ Date _____

Printed name _____

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The following interview protocol was required and approved by the Cambridge Psychology Research Ethics Committee.

1. I provided respondent with information sheet (Appendix A).
2. I provided respondent with consent form to sign (Appendix B).
3. All of the information on the information sheet and consent form were communicated verbally to participants as they were presented.
4. The interviews were audio recorded, and participants were explicitly informed about audiotaping in advance.
5. Interviews began by showing participants two photographs of burrnesha. Subsequent questions approximately followed the interview guide (Appendix D).
6. At the end of the interview, participants will be debriefed verbally and in writing (Appendix E), including contact information for the researchers.
7. At this time, they were also given monetary compensation for their participation and signed a receipt.

APPENDIX D: COMMUNITY RESPONDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

The following interview guide was approved by the Cambridge Psychology Research Ethics Committee. As the interviews were semi-structured, strict adherence to this guide was not necessary or expected.

PHOTO RESPONSES

- [Show both photos of burrnesha]
- Who are these people? Describe them.
- What do these two people have in common?
- (If answer "burrnesha") How do you know?/What makes her so?

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP: FIRST ENCOUNTER

- Have you met someone who looked like this before?
    - (If yes) Tell me about the first time you met someone like this. How did you know they were a BN?
    - (If no) Tell me about the first time you heard about someone like this.

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP: GENERAL DAILY LIFE

- (If meet regularly) What are your interactions with burrnesha usually like?
- (If don't meet regularly) What stories do you usually hear about burrnesha?

GENERAL CONCEPT/DEFINITION

- What is a burrneshe?
- Do burrnesha need to take an oath?
- How would you explain it to a foreigner?
- What makes a person a burrneshe?
- What are valid motivations for becoming a burrneshe?

- Who can become a burrneshe?
- Can a woman do a man's work/role even if she doesn't dress/hair as a man?

OTHER USES OF THE WORD

- What else could burrneshe mean? Who else could be one?

CHANGE OVER TIME

- Are the stories you hear about burrnesha different than they were 10 years ago?
- What has caused the change in burrnesha?
- What is burrneshas' role in Albanian society today?

Demographic questions

- Name
- Age
- Profession
- Education
- City
- Family: marriage and children
- Religion

APPENDIX E: BURRNESHA INTERVIEW GUIDE

Initial general prompts:

- How did you come to be a sworn virgin?
- Follow up questions:
    - How did people react?
    - How did your life change after this event compared to before?
    - How old were you?
    - Who are the different members of your family (siblings, parents, etc.)

Topic: daily tasks/roles

- Can you describe what a typical day looks like to you?
- What tasks are easy for you? What makes them easy?
- What tasks are difficult for you? What makes them difficult?
- How did you learn how to carry out these tasks?
- What is your greatest skill? How did you learn how to do that?
- What tasks do you enjoy? What makes them enjoyable?
- How much time do you spend with men/women? How is that for you?

Topic: ceremonies

- Have you been a guest at someone's wedding?
- If yes: Tell me about what it was like and what you did there.
- If no: What do you imagine it would it be like and what would your role be?
- Have you been to a funeral?
- If yes: Tell me about what it was like and what you did there.
- If no: What would it be like and what would your role be?

Topic: helping

- Has there ever been a time when someone came to you for support when they were mourning a death?
- If yes: Tell me about the event.
- How did you feel yourself?

- If no: If someone came to you for support for this, what would you do?
- Are you skilled at providing support? What makes you good/bad at it?
- What is the ideal way to provide support to someone?

Topic: aggression

- Have you ever been in a physical fight?
- If yes: Tell me about the event.
- How did you feel?
- If no: What would motivate you to be physically violent?
- Are you skilled at fighting? What makes you good/bad at it?
- When is it justifiable to be violent?
- What are bloodfeuds?
- Have you ever been involved in a bloodfeud?
- If yes: Tell me about it.
- If no: What would you do? What would it be like?

APPENDIX F: DEBRIEF FORM

The following debrief form was required and approved by the Cambridge Psychology Research Ethics Committee. I have provided both the English and Albanian versions. Respondents, of course, were given the Albanian version.

English Version

Study on Northern Albanian Culture

Researcher: Ellen Robertson

Institution: Department of Psychology, University of Cambridge

Debrief form

The study you have taken part in is about gender and the differences between men and women in different cultures. The purpose of the interviews is to compare sworn virgins' lives to those of other people in their community. If you have questions after the study, please contact Ellen Robertson by email at er442@cam.ac.uk, or by phone by +4478261 96990.

APPENDIX G: LIST OF CODES FROM COMMUNITY RESPONDENT DATA

Below is the list of codes used in analysis of community respondent data. As mentioned in Chapter 4, I used Albanian codes during analysis. I have translated them into English for the purpose of reporting them here.

"burrneshe" as interjection	family relative (with burrneshe)	obligated
"phenomenon"	family collectivism	old
abnormal	for the sake of family	othering
advantage	family is good	patriarchy
adversity	family longevity	patriotism
agency	family pressure to become burrneshe	perserve culture
Albania	feels female	personal desire
altruism	feels male	physical strength
ambiguous gender	forced	pity
Angela Merkel	freedom	positive discrimination (of women)
anyone can become a burrneshe	Freud	poverty
arranged marriage	frustrated	power
avoid marriage	gender equality	privilege
backwards	gender inequality	public opinion
blood feuds	gender norms are good	raising toasts
brave	gender segregation	raki (liquor)
burrnesha are men	give something up	religion
burrnesha are not men	harsh	respect women
burrnesha are not women	head of the household	romanticization
burrnesha are women	hierarchy	rural
burrnesha better than men	highlander	sacrifice: feminity
burrnesha better than women	honor	sacrifice: new family
burrnesha disappearing	housework	sacrifice: sex
burrnesha don't harrass women	I don't blame	self-protection
burrnesha life hard	I don't judge	sex

burrnesha still exist	I would become a burrneshe	Shkoder
burrnesha time appropriate	I wouldn't become a burrneshe	Shote Galica
burrnesha: negative valence	identification	single (unmarried)
burrnesha: positive valence	independent	smoke cigarettes
capable	inheritance	social problems
change gender	isolated	socially accepted
change over time	justified	soft (character)
changing gender norms	kanun	son preference
city/urban	lack of men	south (Albania)
civilized	lgbt	status/respect (of burrnesha)
clothing	limited	stigma
commitment	Malesia e Madhe	storytelling
communism	Margaret Thatcher	strong
conservativism	marital problems	surprise
context	married	survival
cowboys	masculinity as virtue	teasing
culture	media	the West
curious	medical sexual reassignment procedures	Theth
decision (to become burrneshe)	men better than women	Tirana
decision-making	men living as women	title of respect
defend	men of the North	touchy subject
democracy	men's behavior	tradition
deviant	men's character/personality	traditions disappearing
different sub-cultures	men's room	Tropoja
different/unusual	men's space	unique to Albania
dress: men's	men's speech	unnatural
dress: uniform	men's work	unnecessary
dress: women's	Mirdita	unremarkable
Dukagjin	modern	virginity
economic development	modesty	war
emigration	motherhood	weapons
essence: against nature	n/a	wild
essence: ana gjinore (physiolgical sex)	no children	woman of the house
essence: female nature	no justification	women better than men

essence: genetics	Nora e Kelmendit	women don't speak
essence: God	normal	women's emancipation
essence: male nature	north (Albania)	young
essence: not themselves	nostalgia	zgjedhje e detyruar (forced choice)
exceptional character	not interested	zona te thella (remote areas)
face hardship	oath	

APPENDIX H: LIST OF CODES FROM BURRNESHA DATA

Below is the list of codes used in analysis of burrnesha respondent data. As mentioned in Chapter 4, I used Albanian codes during analysis. I have translated them into English for the purpose of reporting them here.

flirting	Female privilege	No revenge
swearing	Female solidarity	Norms
Abuse	Female title	Not woman
Acceptance	Fights	Oath
Active	Financial support	Offended
Advice	Forced	Offer cigarettes
Age	Free time	Oldest in family
Aging parents	Freedom	Opportunity
Alcohol	Friendship	Oppression
Anti-Hoxha	Funeral	Optimism
Anti-woman	Games	Origin
Arrest	Gender ambiguity	Other burrnesha
Attention	Gender clothing	Othering – rural/urban
Bad marriage	Gender essentialism	Passing as a man
Better than men	Gender intermediary	Patriarchy
Blame parents	Gender norms	Politics
Blood feuds	Gender spaces	Popular
Burrneshe = man	Gender titles	Poverty
Burrneshe as honorable title	Generosity	Preference
Burrneshe has voice	Get used to it	Pressure to marry

Burrneshe identity	Gets along	Privacy
Burrneshe is normal	God	Protector
Burrneshe poverty	Good father	Rejection
Burrneshe type comparison	Good life	Religion
Burrnesha friends	Good manners	Reputation
Burrnesha solidarity	Good mother	Resistance
Brave	Good relationships	Respect
Breasts	Good student	Respect for father
Calm	Good uncle	Respected
Care in old age	Hardship	Responsible
Ceremonies	Hardworking	Rude
Change over time	Hasn't met burrnesha	Sacrifice
Childlike	Head of household	Self respect
Close family	Help family	Shame
Close to father	Hero	Shepherding
Clothes	Hobbies	Siblings
Commitment	Honor	Since childhood
Country comparison	Housework	Skills
Cross gender spaces	Illness	Smoking
Crying	In trouble	Social male
Cut hair	Independent	Social support
Daily life	Jobs	Socialization
Decisiveness/conviction	Journalists	Spontaneous use "burrneshe"
Defend women	Knowledge of burrnesha	Sports
Different	Leadership	Strength
Disadvantage	Leadership as a burden	Strict
Disconnected from family	Live alone	Suicide
Doesn't want to move	Live with family	Support family
Don't care about public opinion	Living as woman unnatural	Swearing
Don't like interviews	Loyalty	Teasing
Doubts/regret	Male advantage	Toasts
Education	Male ceremonial role	Tough love
Embarrassment	Male clothes	Tradition

Equal to man	Male friends	Transition/motivation
Exceptional	Male identity	Trustworthy
Fairness	Male role	Unacceptance/judgement
Family	Male soul	Uncle
Family acceptance	Male spaces	Unemployment
Family altruism	Male title	Unfair
Family care	Marriage	Unmarried
Family death	Meaning of burrneshe	Violence bad
Fanatism	Media interest	Virginity
Father	Men better than women	Virtue
Father role	Men unreasonable	Wanting agency
Father role model	Military	Wedding
Feel good	Mixed gender id	With kids
Feel like man	Modesty	Women argumentative
Felt like bn	Mother	Women inferior
Female clothes	Natural	Women submissive
Female emancipation	No female friends	Women vulnerable
Female identity	No knowledge burrnesha	Work

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