

13 Civic stratification, stratified reproduction and family solidarity: Strategies of Latino families in Milan

Paola Bonizzoni

13.1 Introduction

Despite a strong discourse of closure that progressively spread across all European Union countries from the 1970s onward, migration in Europe still persists in a variety of forms. Migrants comprise the professional and technical elite, families, asylum seekers, seasonal workers, undocumented persons and EU and non-EU citizens. This range reflects a stratification of statuses and belongings, a system that Morris (2000), following Lockwood, calls civic stratification: a structure of inequalities of access to the freedom of movement and rights that represents the prevalent modality of managing migration in European countries. The process of assigning different sets of rights to people with respect to their status (long-term resident, national or European citizen, family migrant, guest worker...) generates a complex scenario of partial inclusions together with – and despite – statements and proposals for equal treatment. A selective conceding of rights qualifies as a kind of governance; both surveillance and control are gained through building these ‘internal frontiers’, which become increasingly strategic as the ‘external’ ones – namely, border controls – tend to manifest weakness. This system aims to reconcile contradictory tensions: the will to open borders and create more inclusive patterns, both for economic and demographic reasons and as a consequence of ‘embedded liberalism’, clashes with the safety sphere in terms of social security and social order.¹ A pivotal role is the one played by family reunification policies, the right to which, I will show in this chapter, becomes conditional and stratified. Nationality as well as social and economical resources are laid down as conditions for access in national policies to limit the risk of an uncontrolled, unselected growth of migration flows.

The objective of this chapter is to highlight the multi-layered borders Latin American immigrants face during the process of family separation and reunification in their migration to Italy. I will focus on the forces that jeopardise migrants’ capabilities to reproduce their families, while demonstrating the resources of social capital they bring into play to limit the costs that family separation entails. I seek to take the immigrants’ own agency into account,² yet at the same time not remain blind to the strong,

persistent dynamics of discrimination affecting them, since these hinder and concretely stratify their right to family life. Linking the concepts of civic stratification (Morris 2002) and stratified reproduction (Colen 1995), I aim to show how immigration policies and labour market segmentation serve as bonds tending to leave little room for migrants' action. In line with critics of the macro-structuralist approach, I also attempt to capture the dynamic interplay of structure, culture and agency in immigrants' strategies and behaviour (Ambrosini 2005; Foner 1997).

13.2 Migrant and minority ethnic families: Addressing culture, structure and agency

International literature has often referred to two main paradigms to understand the livelihood of migrant and ethnic minority families: structuralist frameworks, characterised by an emphasis on the stratification processes going on across society (as well as in the world order), and culturalist approaches, which are more attentive to the ethnic identity formation and acculturation processes. These, as I will show, are quite distinctive ways to account for social difference and change.

Culturalists tend to impute the ethnic specificity of family behaviours (such as marriage rate, cohabitations and divorces, fertility rates, parenting and courtship styles, gender and age roles) to inherited cultural traits, partly or entirely reproduced in the new environment after migration. At the same time, they tend to read changes in intimate relationships as the outcome of acculturation processes, namely, as the effect of immigrants' assimilation into a new society's values and lifestyles.

By contrast, structuralists tend to view family differences as the outcome of broader processes of stratification taking place at the macro-level (generally, as consequences of political or economic forces), and emerging family behaviours as more or less successful adaptations to a historically changing environment. Structuralist approaches (Baca Zinn 1990; Coles 2005; Glenn 1983; Staples & Mirande 1980) initially arose as a critical reaction to the mainstream literature dominating the debate in the 1970s. Particularly aware of the effects of the racial hierarchy, they denounced culturalist approaches that traced the root of social failure and marginality to the cultural traditions of ethnic minority groups.³ Instead, these authors proposed a positive evaluation of such features,⁴ seeing them as the only possible adaptation to an often hostile, tough environment.⁵ These critical works showed historical and geographical variations in ethnic families' lifestyles;⁶ at the same time, they revealed how some social traits in family life are cross-sectional among groups, since they can be imputed to factors such as class position or time of settlement. The merit of these studies has undoubtedly been to show the ideological and

misleading character of certain approaches, but they also reveal a certain explanatory weakness. For instance, such approaches fail to explain the persistence of inherited values and behaviours that continue to manifest themselves even if economically inefficient,⁷ as well as why different minority groups or individuals in similar socio-economic positions display contrasting behaviours. More broadly, they tend to underestimate identity values and ethnic identification processes lying behind group formation, driving human agency and enforcing (and constraining) migrants' capacity for action.

I am thus prompted by a twofold objective. On the one hand, I wish to take advantage of some structuralist intuitions, namely, attention paid to the stratification processes. Because of the peculiarity of the research context (European, not North American), I will further develop the structure of constraints model, linking together Morris' (2002) findings about civic stratification to Colen's (1995) notion of stratified reproduction. In this way, I will improve the notion of civic stratification with a stronger emphasis on demographic and family behaviours, and integrate stratified reproduction with a focus on immigration policies. On the other hand, following Foner's (1997) idea of a dynamic interplay of structure, culture and agency, I hope to highlight the way immigrants react to these boundaries.

13.2.1 *Managing migration: Civic stratification and the selective access to rights*

As prior suggested, the right to family reunification is enjoyed only under certain conditions and in radically different ways depending on the nationality, status and economic resources available to the applicant. Third-country nationals (TCNs) and European citizens are subject to different laws regarding their entry and permanence in Italy, and they are consequently subject to a different set of rules in respect to family reunification and social rights.⁸ The levels of growing restrictiveness can be assessed by taking a comparative look at the following dimensions: the characteristics of who can apply for family reunification, the necessary requirements, the number and classification of rejoinable relatives, the status relatives get and the regularisation opportunities (as well as the chances to obtain a more favourable status) offered by family ties.

The Bossi-Fini law regulates the permanent residence of TCNs in Italy by linking their kind of job contract to the kind and length of their stay permit.⁹ After six years of regular residence, if they earn a sufficient income and hold a renewable permit, they can apply for the permanent resident card, known as the *Carta di Soggiorno*, which also applies to dependent relatives (spouses and minor children). TCNs' main legal way of entry is found in yearly quotas and family reunification: in 2009, 136,332

persons entered the country as dependent workers, while 107,410 entered for purposes of family reunification.¹⁰ European citizens staying for periods up to three months are not subject to any formality. Subsequently, they are expected to show they earn sufficient income to be registered at the municipality register offices and obtain their residence. European citizens' family reunification can be seen as an extension of their mobility rights: since EU citizens are allowed to enter, work and travel back and forth, so are their family members. This may transpire in slightly different ways, depending on whether the relative is also European or a TCN. In any case, their reunification is easier than in the case of a TCN trying to reunite with another TCN. In the same way, being (or becoming) the relative of an Italian citizen offers more naturalisation and regularisation options than being an EU citizen's or a TCN's relative. Finally, especially vulnerable subjects, such as minors and pregnant women, can both gain and provide long- or short-term forms of protection.

Among TCNs, only the holders of a one-year (or longer) residence permit can apply for family reunification. This means that it is not only the undocumented, but also seasonal workers who do not enjoy this right. Thereafter, TCNs must start a very complicated, long and demanding procedure (that involves the police headquarters, known as the *Questura*, embassies, consulates and municipalities). They must prove they are living in a home large enough to accommodate a certain number of people holding a regular contract and that they earn enough money, the amount contingent on how many relatives they wish to bring. They must also translate and authenticate several certificates attesting their family ties. The law strictly specifies who the rejoinable relatives are: the (not legally divorced) spouse, minor children (of the sponsor and the spouse) contingent to the other natural parent's permission, adult children with a proven disability who are unable to sustain themselves and elderly parents if it is proven they lack adequate support in their country of origin.

Once in Italy, relatives receive a family permit allowing them to work, which is valid for as long as is the applicant's permit is. In the case of divorce or separation, the family permit may be converted into a work permit (this also happens to the minor's permit when coming of age). Chances of regularisation via family ties are few for TCNs: for instance, in the case of a married couple in which one TCN is undocumented, the only chance for the undocumented partner is to return to the country of origin – yet doing so implies the risk of being caught and expelled at the border – and to wait out the family reunification procedure. European citizens can reunite with family members as soon as they want. If working, they are not expected to show any proof of housing or income, nor do they need any visas for their European relatives. The definition of 'family ties' for the purpose of reunification could seem pointless in the case of an EU-EU family tie, since relatives themselves are entitled to freedom of circu-

lation. It does, however, become worthy of attention in the case of an EU-TCN family tie. EU family members are specified as the spouse; children under age 21 or older if still economically dependent on the European citizen; and economically dependent parents.¹¹ Parents and children of the TCN's spouse are also accepted under the same conditions. While EU relatives need only register at the municipality, a TCN relative must request the Questura for a residence permit for EU citizen family members, which is valid for five years, after which the relative acquires the right to permanent residence.

The proven degree of relationship with an Italian citizen determines for the foreign citizen (both EU and TCN) better treatment in the legal system, since the Italian citizen's constitutional right to the family unit then counts. This right is to be found in full application of the Unifying Text on Immigration when it guarantees a residence permit to the foreign parent of an Italian minor¹² (art. 30) or when it establishes that the foreigner staying illegally in Italy cannot be expelled if he or she is the first- or second-degree relative of an Italian.¹³ Moreover, marriage to an Italian citizen is the easiest way to naturalise, since Italian law is otherwise quite restrictive (TCNs need ten years of legal residence; EU citizens need just four). However, since the so-called 'security decree' issued in 2009, regularisation opportunities via marrying an Italian have shrunk; undocumented people are no longer allowed to marry in the country.

The following section will show that immigrants are not the passive victims of this multilayered system of constraints regulating their intimate lives. Instead, through the construction of family, friendship and, more broadly, supportive relational ties (with both Italian and immigrant citizens), many manage to reunite their families after shorter or longer separations that may nonetheless negatively impact their intergenerational and conjugal ties.

13.2.2 *Gender, ethnicity, race, class and the access to reproductive and care rights: The concept of stratified reproduction*

Colen (1995) coined the term 'stratified reproduction' to describe the power relations through which some categories of people gain greater support while others face greater obstacles and hardships regarding reproduction and care. In light of this, it is possible to identify different regimes of inequality with regard to the way care and social reproduction are socially distributed, represented, sustained and sanctioned throughout the world. In Colen's view, various institutions¹⁴ contribute to the legitimisation (or marginalisation) of specific living arrangements and family styles, so that some become dominant while others are stigmatised for being deviant. At the same time, some people possess, while others lack, the means to practise and control reproductive activities.¹⁵ In her study of

paid Dominican care workers in New York, Colen describes the socio-economic challenges (low wages, long working hours, lack of maternity leave and affordable high-quality care for their own children) and political constraints (immigration policies) that force West Indian workers to arrange their reproductive activities transnationally. In this way, biological and social reproduction, as well as socialisation and care (in terms of resources and burdens, rights, duties and responsibilities) are carried out according to hierarchies of gender, class, race and ethnicity in a global context. Because of the different distribution of resources and expectations in the social system, reproductive work is experienced and perceived in different ways by women and men, the young and old, wealthy and poor as well as ethnic minorities and majorities.

Hochschild and Ehrenreich (2003) have also focused on the way care is affected by global inequalities, showing the interconnections between local contexts and processes (for instance, demographic and economic changes) and global phenomena (composition and direction of migration flows). This insight is quite relevant, since in Italy, as in other Southern European countries, female migration flows have been established because of a growing demand for domestic and caring labour (see also Banfi & Boccagni this volume). This demand arises from demographic and economic changes – the whole population getting older, the growing number of women working full time, etc. Another cause concerns the features of the welfare state, which has been defined as ‘familial’ just because it is characterised by a lack of investment in care services and a huge amount of care is still carried out by family members, mainly women. Ehrenreich and Hochschild show that many families in the world are increasingly dependent on immigrant women’s labour, women who are forced to leave their own dependent relatives abroad, in the care of other persons (generally female relatives, but also paid women and sometimes husbands), generating what has been called a ‘care chain’. This concept highlights processes involving a significant number of households in the world, but it doesn’t take into account several relevant aspects actually diversifying the shape and extent of care chains, as well as their evolution in time (see also Evergeti & Ryan this volume). The evolution of care chains is not just due to the life cycle’s shifting regimes of dependency, but also because women often try to relocate their family ties abroad, to put an end to the transnational family living, something often hard to sustain in the long run. The timelines and challenges marking this process are manifold, presumably different between countries and contingent on various factors. Such factors include migration policies (family reunification provisions, visa policies, naturalisation policies, characteristics and frequency of amnesties, etc.), the social rights immigrants have access to (health care, educational and care facilities, housing, etc.), family structure (couples or single parents, number of children, etc.). They also depend on

the way immigrants manage to build family and interpersonal relationships allowing them to cross the civic stratification hierarchy, as well as to reach more favourable positions in the labour or housing market (giving and receiving hospitality, subcontracting, sharing mortgages, etc.).

It is here that stratified reproduction proves useful. This concept allows a charting of the strategies available to immigrant families, while also identifying differences among immigrants themselves. From there it is possible to identify constraints accounting for the genesis of new family forms, such as transnational families, as well as to allow the emergence of ways to solve problems, such as the work-family balance. I argue here that the system of civic stratification and stratified reproduction generally leaves little room for migrants' agency. It sometimes puts at risk the strength of their family ties due to forms of 'forced transnationalism',¹⁶ discrimination in the field of social rights, work-family balances that are quite hard to solve as well as ethnic and gender segregation in disadvantaged forms of employment (in terms of salary and schedules).

This analysis is applied to a study of Latin American family migration in the next section.

13.3 Latin American families

Latin American families are a group characterised by high rates of female participation in the labour market, thereby warranting investigation into the hardships of the work-family balance. Latin American migration flows in Lombardy, Italy, mainly comprise Ecuadoreans, Peruvians, Brazilians, Salvadorians, Dominicans and Bolivians. These populations constitute a relatively recent flow¹⁷ (granted there are differences among them, for instance, Peruvians arrived a little earlier than the others), which have recently started to show significant rates of family migration.¹⁸ Mainly of urban origins themselves and holding medium-to-high degrees of education, they are largely concentrated in cities such as Milan, Genoa and Rome, where they are also characterised by fairly high rates of being undocumented (Ambrosini & Palmas 2005; Lagomarsino 2006). The population in Lombardy includes quite a high level of separated and divorced people, especially among women. Available data on stay permits show that 4 per cent of women (compared to 1 per cent of men) coming from Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Peru are separated, divorced or widowed.¹⁹ Women are highly segregated in the care and domestic sector: according to a representative survey carried out in the Lombardy region (ISMU 2008), 68.3 per cent of Ecuadorean and 74.4 per cent of Peruvian women are employed in cleaning, domestic or care work. Compared to the female immigrant population as a whole, they are less often housewives (8.8 per cent of Ecuadorean and 5.2 per cent of Peruvian

compared to 17.9 per cent of all immigrant women) or part-timers (respectively, 12.4 per cent and 8.8 per cent compared to 33.8 per cent) and show lower unemployment rates. Men appear to be less represented in typically 'manly' niches of the labour market, rather trailing in 'feminised' occupations. Just 11 per cent of Peruvian and Ecuadorean men are employed as construction workers, compared to 22.5 per cent of all immigrant males. Meanwhile, 11.1 per cent of Ecuadorean males and 19.2 per cent of Peruvian males, compared to 5.9 per cent of all immigrant men, are employed in the cleaning, domestic or care sector.

My sample is mostly composed of Ecuadoreans and Peruvians, though I decided to include some Dominicans, Venezuelans and Colombians to check the effects of nationality on family reunification dynamics. Actually, this is quite a relevant dimension, since for some (such as Ecuadoreans, Colombians and Bolivians), it was easier for them to enter Italy due to not needing – until recently – a tourist visa. It is therefore evident how this can be seen as a further form of civic stratification. While there are differences between and within the groups, certain factors led focus more on the similarities Latin Americans share rather than on their differences. Sex ratio, occupational typology, urban origin and destination, language spoken and religious affiliation, for instance, are comparable among these groups.

The 45 interviews were conducted with married or cohabiting couples (nine couples, eighteen interviews) with children aged five to 23, single parents (seven interviews) and teens (twelve interviews, ages fourteen to nineteen). Some were also conducted with social workers in the City of Milan (three) and NGOs (three), as well as with a Peruvian cultural mediator and the spokesperson of an Ecuadorian association. Interviews, initially in-depth, and subsequently semi-structured, touched upon several aspects and issues of immigrants' migratory history and were generally conducted in the interviewee's place of residence, with the exception of children who preferred to be interviewed in public places such as cafes or parks. The next section discusses migrants' experiences with different immigration statuses and processes of reunification.

13.4 Difficulties of family reunification

In order to reunite their families, the first difficulty immigrants must overcome is being regularised. In my sample it took, on average, three years. However, I met people who, having arrived just before a *sanatoria* (as regularisation programmes are called), managed to obtain a resident permit in just one year, as well as people who, having missed the latest *sanatoria* (due to being unable to find an employer willing to hire them legally), had to wait several years for the next one. Therefore, housing and

work – in terms of lacking both income and time to pursue them – can become a problem, especially for the many single mothers I met. Women generally start working as live-in maids or care workers, subsequently having to find a regular hourly paying job and a home that is big enough to fulfil legal requirements and offers a regular rent contract. Finally, one should not underestimate all the time and the efforts needed to provide the requisite documentation (birth and marriage certificates, municipality papers certifying their home's adequacy, income certification, etc.). This documentation must be collected from, and delivered to, several generally overworked and crowded offices both in Italy and the home country.

Family reunification processes are so tricky and complicated that, even if initiated by sole individuals, they are generally the outcome of collective efforts. It is through the solidarity and mutual help enabled by their social ties that immigrants manage, in the end, to reunite their families (Bonizzoni 2009). Transnational family ties are essential aids in collecting necessary documentation in the country of origin, fixing appointments at embassies and consulates and having certificates translated. In addition, local family ties are extremely helpful. For instance, a Dominican woman interviewed named Lina managed to reunite with her son thanks to the help of her own mother. Her mother declared to officers that the child was going to reside in her own home, since Lina was living in a flat without a regular rent contract. Also, Italian families, generally the ones immigrant mothers work for, can sometimes be of some help. Some Italian families are moved to compassion when they become aware of their employee's sad family history. Some offer their house 'on paper' to help the employee obtain from the immigration offices the right to bring her family in, though others have even hosted the worker's relatives in their own home. Through displays of their grief, some women have obtained considerable help from their employers, even if this 'supportive' relationship should be critically problematised, given the unbalanced power relationship characterising it.²⁰

The legal, also known as *de jure*, family reunification procedure can become so long, expensive and complicated that many who were able to do so joined their families 'illegally' and stayed in the country (Ecuadorians, Colombians and Bolivians could, until recently, enter Italy as tourists without a visa). *De facto* family reunification entails several advantages, but also implies certain risks, which people are generally unaware of and painfully discover after they have migrated. Among the positive aspects, I should mention the advantages that follow from having faced the migration as a family unit. Coming as a whole family means avoiding the pains and uncertainties that come with separation and, moreover, having to choose which members to bring, including parts of the family (such as minor children, sisters and brothers) who are not allowed to migrate le-

gally. Subsequent difficulties are, at any rate, notable: when everyone is undocumented, fundamental needs, such as a home and a job, can cause distress for families. Some experiences can become real emergencies when shared with dependent family members. Examples include the situation of *posto letto*, sharing a home with many strangers, something the majority of migrants do due to lack of money and the documents necessary to rent their own place, and job-related uncertainties such as when work will be found, how much – or if – it will pay, how many hours in a day can one work. Living with strangers is sometimes perceived as a risk for children; many of the parents I met generally did not trust leaving children at home in their absence, which means that even work-oriented women often stay at home or work just a few hours, thus prolonging the family's economic difficulties. Moving to a new home, a normal occurrence in the first phases of a typical migrant life, can be a source of stress for children, since they could be forced to change schools frequently within a period of initial adjustment that is already troublesome enough for most. Hence, care needs can be pressing for families with preschool-aged children since, on one hand, women are the ones finding jobs more easily; on the other, because it is not possible to enrol undocumented children in public nurseries, and private care services are too expensive. Immigrants are often also deprived of their grandparents, a fundamental resource for Italian families, since non-working parents are extremely difficult to re-join. In Italy, where public care services are scarce and families are used to relying on relatives or private care services (often provided by these same immigrant mothers), conciliation can become extremely difficult to perform, even more so for immigrant women.

Living undocumented entails risks that are better faced with the help of family members, a support network that proves extremely useful for gathering and exchanging information about housing, jobs, regularisation 'tricks' and procedures. In this regard, family relations are a powerful means of social and economic integration, since they can 'mediate' undocumented immigrants' access to resources and social rights (job, housing, care, etc.) from which otherwise they would be excluded. The history of Pedro and Milagros (29- and 31-year-old Ecuadoreans in Italy for four years) exemplifies how the support provided by relatives can help solve most of the problems undocumented immigrants commonly face. Having to decide between migrating to Spain (where Pedro's family of origin had moved) or to Italy (where Milagros' brother and mother are living), the couple moved to Italy. While his relatives advised against migrating with a child, her mother offered to help them. As such, husband, wife and daughter migrated together, entering Italy as tourists. Regularly residing in Italy for over eight years, Milagros' mother helped both her daughter and son-in-law find informal jobs in the cleaning sector, where she was working as well. She subsequently rented a house where, at the

time of the interview, they were living together. Mother, father and grandmother coordinated their schedules to provide care for the eight-year-old daughter. Following the example of others she knew, Milagros' mother suggested her daughter try a regularisation procedure through the juvenile court. Two years later, Milagros and her daughter were regularised (art. 31 of the Unified Text of Law).

Of course, not everyone I met could rely on such generous relatives. Moreover, for Dominicans and Peruvians entering illegally meant spending money on the risky clandestine entry (some Peruvians spoke of US\$ 5,000 for one fake document), since they required tourist visas to enter.²¹ For them, the only option was waiting to meet all the requirements of the legal family reunification procedure. For the women who managed to marry or have a baby with an Italian citizen, things went more smoothly: they could bring their children, even if older than eighteen, without showing any income or housing requirements. They could also find a way to regularise other relatives not belonging to the nuclear family. As such, some families were internally composed of different statuses and citizenships: i.e. Italian citizens (due to mixed marriages and births) and TCNs holding long- and short-term stay permits. This reveals how civic stratification can be traced among individuals, but also within families.

When separation persists, families enact a range of practices and rituals aimed towards the maintenance of long-distance intimacy (Pleck 2002; Gardner & Grillo 2002). Phone and video calls, letters, visits (if they are documented), delegated and collective shared care (if they have children or dependent parents in the country of origin), remittances and gift exchanges: these are the means through which family members keep themselves connected and in relation, mutually sustaining and resisting the emotional costs that distance implies (Horst 2006; Parreñas 2005; Salih 2002; Silvey 2006; Sutton 2004; Wilding 2006). However, as already highlighted, many factors intervene in making transnational caregiving more or less difficult: for instance, the age of the children and the length of the separation play a very significant role (Bonizzoni forthcoming). The extent to which children can effectively engage in long-distance communications depends heavily on their age: very young children hardly understand what is going on around them, and it is difficult for mothers to explain where she has gone and why, when she will come back or leave, and so on. After a long separation, communications can become a sort of routine and, in the long run, it is normal for children to become attached to their substitute caretakers (grandmother, aunts, etc.), relativising the importance of their mothers. A good level of coordination between children, mothers and substitute caregivers is also needed to manage transnational care relationships (especially when the children are young and dependent): however, family conflicts (especially conjugal conflicts,

which are not rare in female migration, as mentioned by Banfi and Boccagni in the previous chapter) can threaten this balance. Family life is also sometimes punctuated by unexpected events, such as illnesses, births and deaths, which demand immediate responses and adjustments, a fact that poorly reconciles with the long durations required by the legal procedure (for instance, the death of the caregiver can seriously jeopardise transnational family life). The limits of transnational family life compel these families to relocate their families abroad: however, even family reunification represents a sometimes unexpected challenge.

The reunification process presents a highly sensitive phase in the family life cycle, as the following section will illustrate. Prolonged separations can heighten family tensions, and the feeling of reciprocal estrangement sometimes experienced by relatives does not facilitate the already complicated adjustments children and partners in Italy must undergo.

13.5 Joys and pains of recovered unity

For couples, parents and children, living together again is a moment that is certainly as hard-fought as it is longed for. Unfortunately, a new life in Italy does not come without risks and troubles. First, the kind of job migrants generally have makes balancing work and family time quite difficult: broken shifts (such as in hourly cleaning jobs), night shifts (in factories and nursing homes), spending holidays and vacations with the families one works for (as baby-sitters or domestics do), let alone the ‘day and night’ job of live-in elderly care workers make migrants’ family lives a real challenge – sometimes a dangerous masterpiece of a juggling act. Not all the women interviewed managed easily to switch from live-in to live-out jobs, and not all their employers helped them in reconciling work and family. For instance, Fanny, a separated 32-year-old Ecuadorean mother in Italy for five years, decided to bring two of her four children to Italy after three years of separation. She knew the authorities would imminently introduce the tourist visa for Ecuadoreans and, since her children were reaching adulthood (at ages sixteen and seventeen), Fanny was aware of having no chance to try the legal procedure for them. She decided to bring them even though she was still a live-in worker. Once in Italy, the children first lived with Daniel, her new partner whom she met a year before though a complete stranger to them, and for a year they could only see their mother on Sunday and Thursday afternoons. At the time of the interview, they were living in a small two-bedroom house that they were trying to buy together. However, until the two older children, who are still financially dependent, earn a sufficient income to leave home, Fanny will be unable to sponsor the migration of her other two children.

Conjugal relationships can also be made stressful by separation and

reunification processes. Even if the length of the separation between partners is generally shorter than the one between parents and children (because couples often prefer leaving together to improve their living conditions in a shorter time), many couples deeply fear betrayal and abandonment. Many are the narratives of infidelity and couples broken up not just during the separation, but also after having reunited. Life in Italy is challenging for many men: the labour market offers more opportunities to women and work-related regularisation channels have recently become more open to domestic and care workers. Though, from 2005 onwards, the government reserved significant migration quotas for domestic and care workers,²² they proved insufficient to cover actual needs – a fact that led to September 2009's regularisation addressed specifically to these kinds of workers.²³ Networks driving migration from Latin America often comprise women; men may face difficulties 'colonising' more remunerative and, for that matter, 'manly' jobs due to the relevant role that networks play in mediating labour offers and demands. As a consequence, several Latin American men are employed in the feminised – and underpaid – domestic and cleaning sector, where they are unable to earn a family wage.

Women are strongly pushed into work, both by poor salaries and the relative ease at finding jobs; for couples, it generally means shifting their schedules in order to share personal care and domestic work more equally. If some of the men interviewed showed they accept, or even appreciate, their new family responsibility, and thus refuse the label of 'macho', others expressed more ambivalent views on this matter. In this vein, cultural orientations, which seemed to differ among the Latin American immigrant population, can lead to very different outcomes. I met more than one couple who still adhere to a more or less traditional gender contract, i.e. the woman being a housewife or just working part time. In these cases, structural constraints, such as the lack of care services, combined with personal orientations to reinforce a traditional gender balance. This, nonetheless, proved quite risky in the Italian context, both in terms of poverty and because the main breadwinner's job less risks throwing the whole family into irregularity.

Conjugal relations may also get reworked. One reason for this is that women tend to behave more freely in an environment where actions that would be disapproved of in their home countries (such as independently hanging out at night with friends) are not stigmatised. They are simply practised in an immigration context where social control on their behaviour outside the home is weaker. At the same time, mainstream society condemns some family behaviour that may be tolerated in their home countries, for instance, domestic violence. Women can also rely on relational resources (e.g. networks) and economic ones (e.g. income), allowing them to live independently if they want to.

Single mothers are forced to work full time, as do Italian single mothers, though without relying on non-working parents to look after their children or always having access to affordable care services. What these women generally do is start horizontal solidarity relationships with sisters and friends, as well as ask their children to take care of themselves early on. It is noticeable how the same concept of 'independent-adult children' is a cultural construction mediated by structural constraints. Many women had to send their children off to school alone at the early age of ten, and many children spend numerous hours alone at home, or are taken to the mother's job. Work and family conciliation is thus easier when children are relatively mature and independent and when they can be enrolled in compulsory schooling. The school system offers relatively long minding coverage (many schools provide after-school programmes until 6 pm), which is also open to undocumented children. However, the younger the children, the more difficult conciliation becomes. Two mothers I interviewed transnationally cared for their children who were born in Italy, but sent back to relatives in Latin America until they become old enough to take care of themselves, or at least to be enrolled in school.

We must also consider the relational troubles that can sometimes follow from the loss of intimacy with children due to long separations, as many studies have shown (Artico 2003; Suarez Orozco 2001; Queirolo Palmas & Torre 2005). This can become a serious challenge. Cases of angry children are not rare. Especially when very young, they often find it hard to understand their parents' choices. Moreover, they pass from a situation of relative leisure, a middle-class status in the country of origin – fed by decent salaries and spoiled by the people who take care of them and are hard to leave behind – to a situation in which life is generally hard. They experience a lowering of their class position and often have to take on, for the first time, tasks such as household chores, caring for siblings and economic responsibilities. Some parents draw on their ethnic identity to legitimate educational styles that are generally perceived as 'different' from native ones. In this case, the need to discipline children – making them more 'respectful' and less 'spoilt' than their Italian peers – goes hand in hand with a system of constraints leaving little room for the consumerist behaviour typical of Italian teens. All this happens in a new neighbourhood, school and peer environment, in a new house with 'new' parents and sometimes with new, unknown relatives.

Doris and Maria, sixteen- and seventeen-year-old Ecuadorean sisters in Italy for four years, told me that when they arrived, they did not feel at ease with their mother. Even though they fell in love with their baby step-sister as soon as they saw her at the airport, when they first became aware of her birth and their mother's new partner, they became jealous and angry. Their lack of intimacy with her, as well as fears of being left to fade into the background, initiated a period marked by troubles and misunder-

standings. The two sisters reacted by becoming more and more attached to each other and marginalising their mother who, in turn, began to feel excluded and frustrated, as if her children could not understand the effort she made to have them with her. Their mother, Lucy, a 35-year-old Ecuadorean who has been in Italy for nine years, tells me that if she had to do it over again, she would never separate from them. Even though she knows she had no choice at the time, a number of hardships were overcome only after many years of sufferings. Doris and Maria do not blame their mother for her choices; they now recognise how hard their mother's life has been (and still is), and they are aware of all the efforts she is making. They now admit that living far apart made it difficult to understand each other, especially as children who can barely understand what's going on around them.

13.6 Conclusion

These collected histories reveal how immigrant family life is disciplined by a system of political controls bound to strict economic requirements that impact the geographical location of their intimate relationships. Several families are forced to live transnationally for longer than expected, and the balance of productive and reproductive work may be difficult to manage both at local and transnational levels.

Families follow different strategies to overcome this system of constraints. They can try to challenge immigration rules by reunifying relatives illegally and facing, as a consequence, poor standards of living, welfare exclusion and the risk of expulsion; or they can try (often through the help of relatives) to gather necessary resources to apply for legal family reunification routes, albeit experiencing prolonged separations that complicate the management of transnational care arrangements and the experience of reunification abroad. In order to overcome this system of constraints, immigrants take advantage of their local and transnational networks, often made up of extended family ties. Through them, they endeavour to provide care at a distance as well as relocate their family ties abroad. Nevertheless, the civic stratification process intersects in multiple ways with these strategies.

Some families I met, especially those from countries not requiring a visa to enter as a tourist, could venture into informal reunification strategies. These shortened or nullified interpersonal separation, although they were counterbalanced by a more difficult integration experience (due to the irregular status of their relatives). Others, through the establishment of family ties (births, marriages) with Italian citizens could experience more profitable positions. This came in terms of their juridical status and the easier paths they could follow in reunifying relatives. Civic

stratification impacts immigrants' strategies indeed, but it is noteworthy that this is also reflected in the internal composition of families, in which TCNs, Italian citizens and undocumented persons as well as short- and long-term sojourners often coexist.

Latin American immigrants' position on the labour market in Italy is often weak. On the whole, it is easier for women to find jobs, though they are very demanding, poorly paid and leave employees little family time of their own. When children are brought to Italy, new caring arrangements are needed, but resources are often scant: non-working relatives (such as grandparents) – a critical resource in Italy's 'familistic' welfare system – are often unavailable to immigrant families due to the law's stringent requirements on reunification and movement across frontiers. Also, the role played by immigrant women in the labour market is shifting how genders and generations take part in productive and reproductive activities: some men play a more active role in household and child-care tasks and children (especially in female-headed households) are often expected to become independent early on.

It seems difficult to interpret immigrant families' adaptations to the new country in terms of culture and acculturation alone. After all, these individuals and their relatives are subject to a special set of regulations and economic incorporation, which locates them in the lower strata of a stratified reproduction regime. To interpret the variety of their strategies, it is necessary to consider the way immigrants draw on local and transnational networks, as well as the way these relationships intersect with the civic stratification regime that is imposed upon them.

Notes

- 1 As Bauböck states (1991), the transnational sphere of market and rights clashes with the bounded nature of welfare systems: as the set of internal rights guaranteed by citizenship status expands, it becomes equally pressing for states to guard and limit access to privileged statuses and, in so doing, generating a proliferation of conditions of partial inclusion.
- 2 This choice is reflected methodologically, namely, in the use of qualitative methods.
- 3 For instance, in their opinion, Chicano families' patriarchal and authoritative parenting style hindered children from learning the skills necessary to survive in an individualistic American society.
- 4 One such feature was the crucial role played by extended family ties.
- 5 At the same time, these authors demonstrate the paradoxical irrefutability of those theories that, when faced with examples such as democratic styles of parenting among Chicano families, traced them back to the influx of North American values to which these families were successfully socialised.
- 6 The works criticise the all-encompassing nature of some conceptions of culture, demonstrating their internal contradictions.

- 7 It is therefore difficult to explain why – despite the phenomenon's accompanying risk of poverty and having all means of birth control available – teen pregnancy remains so widespread. It is also difficult to explain why, since female employment is relatively easy to gain, some groups tend not to let women be involved in this kind of activity.
- 8 On TCNs' entry, stay and family reunification, see the Unifying Text of Immigration Law (286/98), Bossi-Fini Law (189/2002) and Decree no. 5/2007 (reception of the UE Directive 2003/86/CE on family reunification); on EU citizens, see Decree no. 30/2007 (reception of the EU 2004/38/CE) and Circular Ministry of Interiors no. 19, 6 April 2007.
- 9 Seasonal workers maximally hold a nine-month stay permit, open-ended workers hold a two-year stay permit and temporary workers hold a one-year stay permit.
- 10 http://www.esteri.it/MAE/Pubblicazioni/AnnuarioStatistico/2010_capitolo_sec-ondo.pdf.
- 11 President of the Republic Decree no. 30 issued on the 6 February 2007.
- 12 Citizenship can be gained by blood ties; hence, the child of an Italian citizen is also an Italian citizen.
- 13 Before the so-called *decreto sicurezza* (no. 94) came into force in August 2009, a fourth-degree TCN relative living with an Italian citizen could not be expelled. The new law restricts the range of relatives who enjoy this right: today undocumented children, parents, siblings, grandparents and grandchildren of an Italian citizen may be given a family stay permit (though also uncles, aunts and cousins also enjoyed this right in the past).
- 14 Such institutions include the state, the service sector and labour market, but also the family, media and local communities.
- 15 Such means include birth control, abortion, care and health facilities for mothers and children, educational and recreational services.
- 16 In this sense, we want to propose a less celebratory vision of the strength of transnational ties; my interviews have shown how often family transnationalism is an imposed, rather than chosen, condition.
- 17 As a whole, these flows emerged mainly during the last decade.
- 18 According to my elaborations from data available on the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) website (<http://demo.istat.it/altridati/permessi/index.html>), 36 per cent of stay permits issued to Brazilian, Colombian, Dominican, Ecuadorean and Peruvian were for family reasons (compared to 32 per cent for the whole immigrant population).
- 19 <http://demo.istat.it/altridati/permessi/index.html>.
- 20 Italian families are generally less inclined to host husbands and other adult relatives than children. Yet, when children are numerous, a solution becomes all the less feasible. Regardless, any hospitality tends to be limited, usually lasting as long as the work relationship. When the work comes to an end, the domestic worker finds herself both without a house and without a job – this can become a problem, especially if she cannot rely on relatives to sustain her. Finally, we must pay attention to the complex dynamic taking place between the 'two families' of the domestic worker: the relation can be one of affection and cooperation, but it can also be characterised by mutual competition. We must not forget that domestic and care workers are paid to take care of other families and houses – the kind of work to leave little room for the workers' own families and needs. The way children experience this arrangement still also needs deeper investigation.

- 21 Tourist visas were introduced for Colombians in 2001, for Ecuadoreans in 2003, for Dominicans and Peruvians in the early 1990s.
- 22 The last quota decree, which was intended to programme work entries for 2011, established a total of 98,080 requests, 30,000 of which were for domestic work (Decreto del Presidente del Consiglio dei Ministri del 30 novembre 2010, <http://www.meltingpot.org/IMG/pdf/testo-decreto-flussi.pdf>).
- 23 <http://www.meltingpot.org/articolo14687.html>.

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Annex on following page

Table 13.1 *Family reunification processes of couples and single parents*

Family structure	Pseudonym	Country	Status	Years undocumented	Profession	Family reunification process
Rejoined family	Raul	Ecuador	Undocumented	6	Cleaner full time	Flor migrated first, after 2 years Raul and the son entered as tourists (4 years old, still undocumented)
	Flor	Ecuador	Undocumented	8	Cleaner + babysitter fulltime	
Rejoined family	Domingo	Ecuador	Work permit (amnesty 2002)	1	Storekeeper full time	Domingo migrated first, after 3 months Estela and the children (2 and 4 years old, regularised with the mother's work permit) entered as tourists
	Estela	Ecuador	Work permit (amnesty 2002)	1	Cleaner part time	
Rejoined family	Pedro	Ecuador	Undocumented	3	Janitor full time	No separation: all the family migrated together (one daughter, 5 years old, 'regularised' the mother)
	Millagros	Ecuador	Art 31 (juvenile court)	2	Janitor + babysitter full time	
Rejoined family	Victor	Ecuador	Art 31 (juvenile court)	4	Factory worker full time	Victor migrated first, after 1 year Doris entered as a tourist, after other 2 years the daughter did the same (7 years old, regularised through the mother's work permit), accompanied by Doris' daughter.
	Doris	Ecuador	Work permit (amnesty 2002)	3	Janitor part time	
Rejoined family	Alfonso	Ecuador	Work permit (amnesty 2002)	2	Factory worker full time	Amanda migrated first, after 1 year Alfonso and the children entered as tourists (5 and 12 years old, regularised through the mother's work permit), after another 4 years the adult daughter did the same (20 years old, still undocumented)
	Amanda	Ecuador	Work permit (amnesty 2002)	3	Factory worker full time	

Table 13.1 *Continued*

Family structure	Pseudonym	Country	Status	Years undocumented	Profession	Family reunification process
Rejoined family	Miguel	Ecuador	Work permit (amnesty 2002)	1	Driver full time	Miguel migrated first, after 1 year and half Mercedes and the daughters (5 and 8 years old: regularised through the father's work permit) entered as tourists
	Mercedes	Ecuador	Undocumented	4	Housemaid	
Rejoined family	Alvaro	Perù	Carta di Soggiorno (amnesty 1995)	4	Janitor full time	Alvaro migrated first, after 6 months Felicitas and the son (2 years old, regularised through the father's work permit) entered as tourists
	Felicitas	Perù	Carta di Soggiorno (amnesty 1995)	4	Janitor full time	
Reconstituted family	Rosario	Ecuador	Work permit (amnesty 2002)	3	Cleaner full time	Rosario brought her 2 children after 1 year (regularised through the father's work permit) as tourists, but after 4 years they went back in Ecuador to live with the mother
	Noemi	Ecuador	Art 31 (juvenile court)	6	Cleaner part time	
Reconstituted family	Daniel	Ecuador	Work permit (amnesty 2002)	1	Cleaner full time	None Fanny brought 2 of her 4 children (as tourists) before the introduction of the tourist visa (and she regularised them through 'family cohesion'); the others remain in Ecuador because she's unable to meet the family reunification requirements in terms of housing.
	Fanny	Ecuador	Work permit (amnesty 2002)	1	Cleaner full time	
Separated mother	Lucy	Ecuador	Residence permit (mother of Italian child)	4	Cleaner full time	Lucy brought her three children as tourists after 5 years and regularised them through the last daughter, born in Italy and Italian citizen

Table 13.1 *Continued*

Family structure	Pseudonym	Country	Status	Years undocumented	Profession	Family reunification process
Separated mother	Judith	Dominican	Work permit (amnesty 1995)	2	Babysitter full time	Judith is completing the family reunification procedure and is going to legally bring her son after 13 years of (not consecutive) separation.
Separated mother	Erika	Ecuador	Work permit (amnesty 2002)	4	Cleaner full time	Erika brought her daughter as a tourist and regularised her through 'family cohesion' after 3 years of separation
Separated father	Diego	Ecuador	Italian citizen (Italian ancestry)	0	Factory worker full time	After two years of separation Diego managed to convince his divorced wife to live with the three children, that entered as tourists and stayed legally being all Italian citizens (Italian ancestry)
Widow	Sabina	Colombian	Carta di Soggiorno (amnesty 1995)	1	Cleaner part time	Sabina brought her daughter as tourist and regularised her through 'family cohesion' after 3 years of separation
Widow	Nancy	Ecuador	Undocumented	3	Cleaner part time	Nancy migrated in order to give back to her adult daughter (previously migrated in Italy years ago) the granddaughter (regularised through 'family cohesion') she has taken care of in her absence.
Widow	Rosa	Ecuador	Work permit (amnesty 2002)	3	Carer + cleaner full time	After one year of separation Rosa bought her granddaughter (that she looked after for years after the mother migrated in Spain) but the last remains undocumented because of legal problems arising from the fact Rosa is not her natural parent.