


Daily Family Routines of Italian and Ecuadorian Immigrant Mothers in Everyday Life: A Qualitative Approach Using Diaries and Interviews

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Abstract

This study compares Italian mothers' and Ecuadorian immigrant mothers' daily family routines. Thirty mothers took part in this investigation: 15 Italians ($M = 37.5$ years, with ages ranging from 30 to 42 years) and 15 Ecuadorians ($M = 36.1$ years, with ages ranging from 18 to 46 years and having lived in Italy for an average of 15 years), with children ranging in age from 4 to 8 years. The objective is to highlight the differences and similarities between the daily routines and family relations that characterize the lives of each of the two groups of participants. The instruments employed in service of these aims were in-depth interviews and diaries. The results showed similarities regarding the routines of Italian and Ecuadorian families. However, a relevant difference emerged regarding their perceptions of social support. Specifically, Italians receive more social support from their parents than do Ecuadorians, who are supported more by other relatives or by friends.

Keywords

routine, family relations, diary, interview

Routines in the Family Context

Cultural psychology is interested in daily practices, especially in routines and rituals, because these are built on belonging to the culture and modified according to the needs of a culture's members. Routines are particular to each family and reflect their motivational and cultural models as moral values and norms and also their cognitive expectations about reality, as in their beliefs about family life or parenthood. Routines influence the cultural systems that drive emotions and motivations and that are shared by family members and reinforced by intergenerational transmission. The "custom complex," the practices and meanings shared and transmitted from generation to generation, acquires a very important role in constructing the feelings of people within the community (Mistry & Wu, 2010). Routines are individual aspects of family organizations that provide a specific meaning to the group and its activities (Fiese, Hammons, & Grigsby-Toussaint, 2012; Migliorini, Cardinali, & Rania, 2011). Routines are defined as models of interaction and behavior including two or more family members; because of their repetition and stability over time, they provide predictability and specific meaning for groups (Budescu & Taylor, 2013). Thus, family routines are daily practices that are regularly repeated within families (meals, bedtime, housework) that in fact

characterize it, making it unique (Fiese, 2006). Routines are modified following family life cycle transitions, so that they allow families to better accommodate changes. They are characterized by instrumental communication and define activities and tasks that people are expected to perform in a group, such as specific family celebrations, different traditions of celebrating birthdays or holidays, and interactive practices of daily life. Some characteristics of family routines are similar in different families or cultural contexts but do not necessarily have the same meaning or the same functions. For example, gender roles and beliefs about children's autonomy are influenced by cultural models that express themselves in different ways in the daily routines of families from different cultures (Spagnola & Fiese, 2007). Daily life is not just the background against which family interactions develop but is also a protective factor that promotes family well-being (Passini, Melotti, Palareti, & Emiliani, 2003); increasing feelings of safety, belonging, stability, cohesion, and

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satisfaction; and empowering children's social skills (Spagnola & Fiese, 2007) and their mental and physical health (Worthman, 2011).

Family Routines With Young Children

Routines are factors that mediate and interact with the elements that characterize children's development and with the evolution of the entire family. Most family activities and routines change over time, evolving with children's growth and development. Fiese (2006) affirms that the routines of families with young children become more regular, for example, mealtimes, weekend activities, and negotiating new routines such as reading a story before bedtime or playing games together (Fiese, 2006). Another change that follows the arrival of a child is the introduction of the grandparent figure, who is able to materially and psychologically support the parents, playing the role of a "stress buffer" (Botcheva & Feldman, 2004). Grandparents help parents manage their children, making up for the lack of a welfare state (Stevenson, Henderson, & Baugh, 2007), in particular in families in which the mother has a job. They are figures whom parents trust and who can care for their grandchildren with competence and effectiveness (Gerard, Landry-Meyer, & Guzell Roe, 2006). Routines help to structure children's acceptable social behaviors. In the preschool period, children and parents begin to negotiate some daily routines, for example, personal cleanliness, bedtimes, and behavior during meals (Spagnola & Fiese, 2007). It must be highlighted that the routines' structure and the parent-child interactions and relationships cannot be ascribed solely to personality traits or to the behaviors of other people; they are also the result of mutual interactions with the social and cultural contexts of families' countries of origin (Izquierdo et al., 2006; Keller et al., 2005; Kremer-Sadlik, Izquierdo, & Fatigante, 2010). As maintained by Worthman (2010), culture has a large influence on constructing everyday experiences during development; it becomes embodied through "natural" nurturing. Spagnola and Fiese (2007) demonstrate that preschool children have more influence on the family unit because they are old enough to become more active participants in the daily course of family life and routines. In fact, during this period the family's attention shifts from the couple toward their child (Fiese, Hooker, Kotary, & Schwagler, 1993). The preschool period seems to be a critical time for family development; during this period, there is an increase in mealtime and weekend routines (Fiese et al., 1993). The importance of mealtime and bedtime routines for the families of young children emerges from studies, and indeed, these routines are used to communicate to children the rules about social engagement and how to face and organize daily activities. As was already stated, routines originally aimed to achieve daily tasks, but it is not unusual for them to take on an emotional connotation and a resulting change in rituals because simple activities acquire meaning. For example,

bedtime is not only about getting children to fall asleep, but is also an occasion to spend quality time with them, to be together, cuddling and showing affection (Spagnola & Fiese, 2007). Mealtimes are another family routine that is associated with better child mental and physical health (Flores, Tomany-Korman, & Olson, 2005; Munoz, Israel, & Anderson, 2007). For example, during mealtimes, children have the opportunity to develop their language skills; during dinner, families discuss the events of the day, talk about past stories, make plans for the future and so on (Spagnola & Fiese, 2007), all of which exposes children to rich language, narratives, explanations, and cultural rules about speech (Aukrust, 2002; Ely, Gleason, MacGibbon, & Zaretsky, 2001). The presence of a number of people during meals allows the language to become richer and more complex than in a dyadic situation (Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2002). The conversation during mealtimes can explicate the family's emotional climate because it is characterized by verbal and nonverbal affective expressions and offers the opportunity to talk about feelings, affect, and empathy (Herot, 2002). One more routine that is important for families with young children is reading books together; this can support the development of literacy skills and sets the stage for enjoying their school years (Fiese, Eckert, & Spagnola, 2006). Rosenkoetter and Barton (2002) suggest that the routine of joint book reading promotes later academic success. This routine not only involves regular engagement with family members but also cuddling, explicitly, through the reading of a favorite story, taking turns repeating familiar statements, adding personal touches to the story and so on. This allows children to perceive book reading as a positive event, a positive experience that will be useful during school years. In the lives of young children, routines also improve socialization skills and represent an opportunity to build "scaffolding" to positively support children's development. They enable children to structure their behavior toward achieving goals and then present the opportunity to offer praise and encouragement for accomplishing them (Martini, 2002).

However, within the theoretical framework that has been outlined, and considering the breadth of the work on this issue, there are few studies of routines in the contexts of migration. Few studies investigate the everyday lives of families, which is an important component of family well-being. The entire migratory process, in fact, could represent a potential factor of family vulnerability.

Family and Migration

Western countries, and societies in general, are now living in a global and multicultural context (Cushner, 2008) in which embedded people directly experience mutual cultural influences between the people in their daily lives. Migration, in fact, is considered, from a community psychology perspective, an ecological transition that involves vast changes in the contexts of interactions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Garcia-Ramirez et al.,

2005). The recent multiethnic dimensions of individual countries, and of Western societies in general, animate various studies about immigrants' integration (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010). In these contexts, immigrant groups often find themselves in the minority position, which has implications for the ways in which they adapt and negotiate their ethnic and cultural identities (Soon, 2002; Yijälä, Lönnqvist, Jasinskaja-Lahti, & Verkasalo, 2012). In addition, native families are involved in a process of mutual exchange that occurs when different cultural groups come into contact with each other (Van Oudenhoven & Ward, 2013), and indeed, acculturation processes produce changes in both migrant populations and the host communities (Larsen, Vazov, Krumov, & Schneider, 2013; Rania, Migliorini, Cardinali, & Rebor, 2015; Rania, Migliorini, Rebor, & Cardinali, 2014, 2015).

The migration experience should be read in the particular situations in which it is placed; each family that migrates, in fact, participates in a variety of contexts that may represent conditions of inclusion or exclusion, areas that are characterized by different ethnic and/or social classes, education levels, religions, and so on. These factors make up a particular ecological niche (Super & Harkness, 1986) that corresponds to a set of protective or risk factors and to processes of normality or specific difficulty. People who move to a new country are also exposed to important changes and life stressors associated with the search for home or work, the recognition of skills acquired in the country of origin, and the identification of resources and services that allow them to integrate into the new situation without excessive psychological or emotional costs (Kelaher, Williams, & Manderson, 2001). The migration experience is generally a highly stressful event for many reasons from the need to learn a new language in a short time to facing possible discrimination; in these cases, the stress related to the new environment adds to the stress of family life (Baccallao & Smokowsky, 2007). Adapting to a new culture has been identified as a phenomenon of culture shock. Culture shock is the transition from a familiar to an unfamiliar environment in which old behavior patterns become ineffective (Lysgaard, 1955). The stages of adaptation are euphoria (honeymoon), disillusionment, adjustment, and integration (Beamer & Varner, 2003). Individual adaptation to the new cultural context may be favored by positive feelings and satisfaction about a person's own situation and the sense of self-efficacy he or she perceives in the context, that is, the individual's ability to develop relationships with people who belong to the host culture (Moghaddam, Taylor, & Wright, 1993).

According to Ward (1996), the intensity of the stress and difficulties related to the new contexts for immigrants depend on how much the original culture differs from the host culture; this difference may be moderated by contact with the host culture and by factors such as language skills, motivation, and supportive social inclusion. The process of mutual adaptation that follows is a basic human need; individuals must regain equilibrium and the sense of security and

belonging that is so strongly connected with psychological and social well-being.

Migration also carries within it some changes: family structure linked to migratory movements (starting order and reunions), the distance from the country of origin, and the consequent maintenance of two memberships, the transnational families (Boccagni & Lagomarsino, 2011; Herrera, Carrillo, & Torres, 2005), and the family structure tends to become larger than the nuclear family structure that held in the country of origin (Donati, 2014; Ghiringhelli & Marelli, 2011). The migration process can reflect extreme situations in which minors are alone in the migration, following a familiar mandate, and this condition presents a peculiar fragility. For this reason, institutions create services that support unaccompanied children in the attempt to replace the absence of their families (Rania, Migliorini, Sclavo, Cardinali, & Lotti, 2014).

The literature has given importance to the cultural parenting model related to children's education and growth (Kägitçibasi, 2006; Moscardino, Nwobu, & Axia, 2006; Penderi & Petrogiannis, 2011). Adult migrants bring with them ideas, values, and expectations that may differ greatly from the cultural patterns shared by members of the host society (Bornstein & Cote, 2004; García Coll & Pachter, 2002). They possess implicit knowledge about educating children, including development goals, care practices, communication styles, and values, and they are involved in a process of encounter-clash with the attitudes and parenting behaviors of the new country (Gratier, 2003). These styles, objectives, and care practices create knowledge and beliefs that tend to remain unchanged for a time when families change their physical environments and cultural references even when circumstances in the receiving country are different from those in the country of origin.

The challenge for these families is to attempt to bring together different meanings and cultural knowledge related to parenting styles and child care practices, attempting to manage their ambivalence between the desire to keep their cultural interpretation and the desire to acquire those of the host society. A phenomenon present in the literature is the role reversing in the processes of socialization in the new context where a child or adolescent takes care of typical roles and responsibilities of adulthood, becoming a familiar pattern that may be dysfunctional (Scabini, Regalia, Giuliani, 2007). A number of studies (Keller et al., 2007; Keller, Borke, Chaudhary, Lamm, & Kleis, 2010; Keller et al., 2004) have noted that the belief systems of immigrant parents tend to resemble those used in the country of origin from previous generations. That is, ideas, beliefs, and care and socialization practices appear to represent cultural patterns that are relatively resistant to change. However, a number of other researchers have noted that the attitudes, values, and behaviors of immigrant families are influenced by processes of acculturation and integration within the host cultures (Berry, 1997; Bornstein & Cote, 2006).

The Context of the Study

Ecuadorian migration in Italy dates back to 1970 and the highest increase attendance Ecuadorian registers in the second half of the nineties. Available data show that between 1992 and 2002, the Ecuadorian community in Italy has increased from 1.037 to 11.170 legally residing. Ecuadorian immigration in Italy is characterized by the prevalence of female employed mainly in the field of social services and people. The presence of Ecuadorian is consolidating with an increase of the second generation and long-term residence permits, as well as an increase in family reunification. In sociodemographic composition of Ecuadorian immigration, it is possible to identify three profiles, which may be corresponding to several stages of the migration cycle: the first migrants (mainly women), children reunited, and reconstituted families (Boccagni & Lagomarsino, 2011). The present study was conducted in Genoa, a city of Liguria region (Italy). In Genoa, Ecuadorians are the largest of immigrant groups. On January 1, 2011, the most numerous cultural groups (in thousands) in Italy were Romanian (968.576), Albanian (482.627), and Moroccan (452.424), but Liguria does not reflect this cultural breakdown; in fact, the cultural group with the largest presence is the Ecuadorians (22.038 individuals, 17.6% of the foreign population in Italy). North Italy, with 81% of admissions, is the first goal of the Ecuadorian community, with a higher incidence of more than 16 percentage points compared to the overall immigrant population (65%). The first three regions of settlement are Lombardia (44.5%), Liguria (24.5%), and Lazio (10.7%). Liguria is the second most popular Italian region among Ecuadorians, in particular, most of them choosing to live in Genoa (16.753; Istituto nazionale di statistica [ISTAT], 2012). Not surprisingly, most of the Ecuadorian immigrants come from the city of Guayaquil, where there is a huge presence of Italians from Genoa who migrated there at the end of the 19th century. In the 1990s, Ecuador survived a socioeconomic crisis that drained the middle class and supported an exodus. Studies conducted in Genoa have noted that from the beginning of the Ecuadorian migration phenomenon in Italy, the women led the way in the migration (Pagnotta, 2003), to be joined by their husbands and children later (Queirolo Palmas, 2004). These women were accustomed to finding employment as housemaids and especially as in-home nurses because of the large number of elderly people living in Genoa (27.8% of the population; ISTAT, 2012). Regarding studies conducted on immigrant women in Italy, they underline the characteristics of Ecuadorian culture and they deepen the different gender role in the family structure. Boccagni and Lagomarsino (2011) focus on the dynamics of transnational motherhood of Ecuadorians, who have to manage the difficult balance to cover two different but complementary roles: breadwinner and caregiver at a distance.

The Research

Objectives

This study aimed to explore, applying cross-cultural approach, the similarities and differences between Italian and Ecuadorian mothers in routines and family relations that are generally investigated in cultural psychology. The study was specifically focused on culturally determined family routines and lifestyles, which provided a global perspective on a regular family day, including the habits and behaviors in specific daily situations (e.g., taking the children to school or picking them up, dinner organization). The analysis of the families' routines allowed us to understand how parental roles are structured and how couples share domestic tasks. Furthermore, it enabled us to understand how the routines helped to know the roles of the people who provided social support in daily life and child care.

Method

Participants

Thirty mothers living in Genoa took part in the present study, each with a child below 10 years of age. This family phase was chosen because family routines are particularly important for the development of young children (Spagnola & Fiese, 2007). Fifteen mothers were Italian (M age = 37.5 years, range = 30-42 years), and 15 were from Ecuador (M age = 36.1 years, range = 18-46 years), who had lived in Italy for 10 to 23 years (M = 15). Ecuadorian participants were first immigration and did not speak Italian before arriving in Genoa. There was little difference between the groups with regard to the number of children (M = 1.7 Italians, M = 1.6 Ecuadorians) and age (M = 6.5 Italians, M = 8.5 Ecuadorians). Some of the foreign participants were recruited through the church, which plays a large role in the Ecuadorian community in this city, and more were identified through snowball sampling; after the interviews, many mothers provided the contact details of friends who agreed to take part in the research. The Italian participants were recruited through their children's schools. The majority of Italian participants were married (n = 12), only 1 was separated and 2 were cohabiting. Similarly, most of the Ecuadorian mothers were married (n = 9) or cohabiting (n = 4); 1 was divorced and 1 was a single mother, and their partners were also Ecuadorian. In the Italian group, 8 participants had a job and 7 were unemployed. Similarly, in the Ecuadorian group, 8 participants were employed, primarily as domestic workers, and 7 were unemployed. The education qualifications possessed by the most participants in both groups was high school graduation (Italians n = 9, Ecuadorians n = 11). Three Italian and 3 Ecuadorian mothers had college degrees, and 3 Italian mothers and 1 Ecuadorian mother possessed a middle school degree. Generalizing these data, it was possible to affirm the homogeneity of the two participant groups.

Measures

This study had a multimethod approach that used different self-report techniques (diaries and in-depth interviews) to investigate the same participants about the same topic (Kremer-Sadlik, Fatigante, & Fasulo, 2008; Overall & Sibley, 2010), but in reading about the object families from different points of view, with the diaries, the researcher focused on routines and practices during interactions, and through the interviews, the researcher was able to access the internal representation of the relationship and how people make sense of personal experiences.

Diary method. In the present research, two types of written diary, each completed only once, investigated the participants' and their families' habits on a regular weekday and a regular weekend, providing a view of Italian and Ecuadorian families' current routines. The main dimensions investigated were family routines and lifestyles. The diary's grid was divided into three main areas: morning, afternoon, and evening (Kremer-Sadlik et al., 2008). Participants were also asked to provide the times and places where activities took place and details of the people who took part in the activities (Overall & Sibley, 2010).

In-depth interviews. The in-depth interviews followed the Ecocultural Family Interview (EFI; Weisner, Coots, & Bernheimer, 1997), which collates narrations about people's daily routines to document the culture and specific ecology of a community. The interviewee was invited to rethink his or her regular day, describing the actions, customs, feelings, and reason that underlie the routines. The dimensions investigated were family routines and lifestyles. The interview begins by asking the mother if she can tell "typical day" and then it is deepened themes that emerge spontaneously from conversation.

Procedure

This research was conducted following the ethical norms stipulated by the AIP (Italian Psychology Association). The meeting place (usually the school the children attended or the church) and time of interview varied according to the mothers' availability. Interviews were conducted by an Italian research team, in the Italian language, without the need for an interpreter, and they were usually 1 hr in duration. Before the interview, each participant received an informed consent form that contained a brief explanation about the research and informed potential participants that the interview would be audio-recorded and the data processed and anonymized; it also assigned a code to each participant that allowed her interview to be aggregated with those of the other mothers during the analysis, in compliance with Italian Law on Privacy n.196/2003. After the interviews, the researchers asked each participant to fill in a diary that allowed for

systematizing the information that emerged during the interviews.

Data Analysis

Diary. The data from the diaries were codified by two independent judges. They used grids for each diary type (weekdays and weekends) that separated the Italian and Ecuadorian participants. The data were organized in two tables to facilitate comparison between the immigrant and Italian mothers during weekdays and weekends.

In-depth interviews. The in-depth interviews were codified by two independent judges following the constant comparison analysis technique (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011) within a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The judges applied the protocol analysis separately, and afterward met to compare the identified categories and select those that best accounted for the different points of view to obtain a common categorization using NVivo 9 software data analysis (2010). In the event of discord between the two judges, they discussed the item to reach agreement.

Results

Below are the results of the routines and lifestyles that were investigated through the diaries and the interviews. Two additional areas are also presented: parental roles and the sharing of tasks and social support, both of which emerged during the deeper investigations of the families' routine lifestyles through the interviews.

Family Routine and Daily Lifestyles

Data analysis highlighted the most significant moments in the families' daily routines, from waking the children until the moment they went to sleep. In the following tables, some examples are presented of diary entries for weekdays (Table 1) and weekends (Table 2) from the mothers in both groups.

On weekdays, the women in both groups awoke in the morning at very similar hours (6.30-8.00 a.m.), although in a few cases, the Ecuadorians woke up very early (5.45 a.m.). Italians have breakfast with their children more often, whereas Ecuadorians eat alone, although the number of mothers who had breakfast with the entire nuclear family was the same in both groups. The majority of time, mothers in both Italian and Ecuadorian families take the children to school and pick them up. In both groups, most mothers are employed, although others do housework in the mornings. The lunchtimes are similar (12:00-2:00 p.m.). The Italians and Ecuadorians were equally distributed across all possible options: having lunch alone, with children, or with the nuclear family. The Italian lunch is a complete meal consisting of pasta and a main dish; Ecuadorian mothers preferred to eat Italian food most frequently, generally

Table 1. An Example of an Italian and an Ecuadorian Mother's Weekdays.

| Weekdays | Italians | Ecuadorians |
|-----------|--|---|
| Morning | <i>Wake-up and breakfast:</i> 7:45 a.m. <i>With whom:</i> With children <i>Who takes the children to school:</i> Mother <i>Morning activities:</i> Housework and errands | <i>Wake-up and breakfast:</i> 7:00 a.m. <i>With whom:</i> With children <i>Who takes the children to school:</i> Mother <i>Morning activities:</i> Work |
| Afternoon | <i>Lunch:</i> 12:30 p.m. <i>With whom:</i> With children <i>Menu:</i> Full Italian meal <i>Pick up from school:</i> Mother <i>Children's afternoon activities:</i> Sport or homework and then play outdoors | <i>Lunch:</i> 2:00 p.m. <i>With whom:</i> Alone <i>Menu:</i> Alternate ethnic and Italian food <i>Pick up from school:</i> Mother <i>Children's afternoon activities:</i> Homework and then play outdoors or at home |
| Evening | <i>Dinner:</i> 7:30 p.m. <i>With whom:</i> The entire family <i>Menu:</i> Italian food, a main course or a second course <i>After-dinner activities:</i> Play games with children <i>Children's bedtime:</i> 9:00 p.m. <i>With whom:</i> Mother <i>Ways to put the children to sleep:</i> Snuggles and talk in bed | <i>Dinner:</i> 8:00 p.m. <i>With whom:</i> The entire family <i>Menu:</i> Alternate ethnic and Italian food <i>After-dinner activities:</i> Watch TV with the entire family <i>Children's bedtime:</i> 9:30 p.m. <i>With whom:</i> Mother <i>Ways to put the children to sleep:</i> Nothing |

Table 2. An Example of Italian and Ecuadorian Mothers' Weekends.

| Weekends | Italians | Ecuadorians |
|-----------|---|---|
| Morning | <i>Wake-up and breakfast:</i> 9:00 a.m. <i>With whom:</i> The entire family <i>Morning activities:</i> Mass or going out | <i>Wake-up and breakfast:</i> 8:30 a.m. <i>With whom:</i> With children or the entire family <i>Morning activities:</i> Mass |
| Afternoon | <i>Lunch:</i> 1:00 p.m. <i>With whom:</i> The entire family <i>Menu:</i> A rich Italian meal <i>Children's afternoon activities:</i> Family activities | <i>Lunch:</i> 2:00 p.m. <i>With whom:</i> The entire family, including grandparents <i>Menu:</i> Italian food (e.g., lasagne) <i>Children's afternoon activities:</i> Family activities |
| Evening | <i>Dinner:</i> 7:30 p.m. <i>With whom:</i> The entire family <i>Menu:</i> Pizza <i>After-dinner activities:</i> Watch TV <i>Children's bedtime:</i> 11:00 p.m. <i>Who puts the children to bed:</i> Mother <i>Ways to put the children to sleep:</i> Snuggles and talk in bed | <i>Dinner:</i> 8:00 p.m. <i>With whom:</i> The entire family <i>Menu:</i> Italian food <i>After-dinner activities:</i> Watch TV <i>Children's bedtime:</i> 10:00 p.m. <i>Who puts the children to bed:</i> Mother <i>Ways to put the children to sleep:</i> Nothing |

including pasta; some of them alternated between Italian and ethnic food, and in a few cases, participants stated that they ate exclusively traditional dishes or fast food. In the afternoons, it was again mothers who mainly picked the children up from school, and the children in both groups do homework or play outdoors; Italian children played sports more often than Ecuadorians. Dinnertime (7:30-9:30 p.m.) for both Italians and Ecuadorians is mainly spent with the nuclear family. Italian mothers prefer to eat only one course, pasta or a main dish, whereas the Ecuadorian mothers more often alternate their traditional dishes with Italian ones or prefer to eat Italian food. After dinner, the mothers of both allow their children time to play or watch television. In families interviewed from both cultural backgrounds, it is the mother who usually puts the children to bed by 10:30 p.m. Italians cuddle and talk with the children, tell them a story or pray; Ecuadorians did not report any particular

routine, just that some mothers prefer to tell a story or pray with the children.

On the weekends, both groups awake between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. Italians have breakfast with the family more often than Ecuadorians, who are accustomed to having breakfast only with their children. On Sunday mornings, most Italian and Ecuadorian families go to church, and in almost the same number of cases, Italians report that they go out. Native families have lunch earlier (12:00-1:30 p.m.) than do immigrant families (12:00-3:00 p.m.). For both groups, Sunday lunch involves the entire nuclear family, and in the Ecuadorian group, if possible, the grandparents are also present. Italian mothers prefer to cook a richer, more substantial meal than on weekdays, but nearly the same number stated they cooked the same meal as on weekdays. Ecuadorian mothers prefer to cook Italian food, sometimes alternating with traditional dishes; only two of them stated

that they cook exclusively ethnic food. Usually, the children of both groups spend afternoons with their parents and frequently outdoors in parks, at the cinema or at malls. Concerning dinner, Ecuadorians seem to eat later (7:30-9:00 p.m.) than Italians (7:00-8:00 p.m.), and, as with lunch, all members of the nuclear family are present in both groups. A food that seems to be reserved for both Ecuadorians and Italians for Sunday dinner is pizza; moreover, immigrants prefer mostly Italian food in general. On the weekends, mothers from both groups put their children to bed in the same way as on weekdays, although Italian children seem to go to bed later (9:00-11:00 p.m.).

The in-depth interviews investigated the same moments of the day that were identified in the diaries (morning, afternoon, evening) to obtain perceptions of the represented family regarding the activities and routines that characterize those moments. The narrations revealed that nearly always, the mothers (Italian and Ecuadorian) were responsible for waking the children up, cooking breakfast, and taking them to kindergarten—both working mothers and housewives—as was corroborated by the data collected in the diaries: “In the morning, I wake up at 7:00 a.m. and cook breakfast for my children” (Ecuadorian02); “In the morning, we get up, I cook breakfast, we eat it, and after, I take the children to school” (Italian12). In some cases, the grandparents helped out by taking the children to kindergarten, more among the Italian mothers than the immigrants. “We leave for work at 7:00 a.m., so my parents come to our home and take the children to school; they do that every morning” (Italian05). Only a few Ecuadorian mothers preferred to share accompanying the children to school with their husbands: “Sometimes I take her to school, and sometimes my husband; it depends on our tasks” (Ecuadorian01). Some Italian mothers used the school bus service (Italian01: “I see off my son to take the school bus; it is really near to my home”). As was also highlighted in the diaries, mothers are also the protagonists of managing the afternoon activities. The results showed that Italian children were more committed to sports activities than were the immigrant children (Italian09: “Almost every afternoon, we are busy because of the sports; they play football and volleyball”). Similarly, Italian children go out to play more often, accompanied by their mothers (Italian11: “They need to vent in the afternoon; that’s why I take them to the park or the beach to play until 6:30 p.m.”), or they go to the cinema (Italian14: “I often take her to the cinema or the theater. She really likes it”) or to catechism (Italian06: “Once a week, I take her to catechism”) and church meetings (Italian05: “We go to the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ meetings. They have to be put in contact with God”). Only a very small number of both groups referred to taking their children to play with friends (Italian01: “In the afternoon, I often accommodate in my home my children’s friends, or I take them to their friends’ houses to play together”). The dinner routine characterized the final part of the day; it was described by the mothers in both groups as an

important moment that allowed the family to meet together and talk about the experiences of the day (Ecuadorian12: “We have dinner together; it is a moment to talk and share what we did during the day.” Italian10: “Yes, we have dinner together every day; it is an important moment for the family”). The participants referred to the “sacrifices” they made in managing the daily routines. A large number complained that they had hectic lives and had no time for themselves (Italian02: “It is normal to make sacrifices for the family. I stay all the day with my children, and I realize that is difficult to go to the hairstylist or to the doctor”). Others stressed how their lives were now entirely centered on their children (Italian08: “Your life as a parent changes. For example, the schedule, at 9:00 p.m. you are almost going to sleep, which is more suitable for children”). Some mothers who were interviewed highlighted how difficult things could be because their parents lived in another country (Ecuadorian15: “Becoming a mother stops everything! My daughters are my life, but they stopped everything, also because I don’t have help. I have to manage everything: work, home, children. Everything, everything, everything!”). One more difficulty that emerged was finding the time for their relationships and their husbands, without the presence of children, a difficulty that was noted more by the Italians than the Ecuadorians (Italian09: “I have not been alone with my husband since the honeymoon. I desire to take a trip of a couple of days with him, without children. This kind of freedom is the only sacrifice that I perceive”). In addition, mothers in both groups reported feeling oppressed by the economic commitment necessary to ensure their children’s material well-being (Italian12: “If you live with a salaried worker, you stupidly give up something for yourself to buy that for your daughter”; Ecuadorian07: “I give up many things! I didn’t buy a coat for one year. Before I bought clothes for me; now I think primarily of my children”).

Parental Roles and Sharing of Tasks

The family routine that generally involves fathers is the shared game that usually occurs at home during the final part of the day (Ecuadorian13: “Mostly she plays with her father. It is an important moment for my husband, and he wants to enjoy it, and they play and laugh a lot!” Italian14: “Since always, it is my husband who plays with the children. I think that fathers are born to do that”). Many mothers, mostly Ecuadorian, said that they frequently play with their children (Ecuadorian08: “Maybe we draw or we cook together; if she wants we play Monopoly”), and a few mothers said that they play together (Italian03: “We play Ring a Ring o’Roses or other games such as little puzzles . . . she has fun”). There was also one child who played alone (Ecuadorian06: “He plays alone almost always, with the PlayStation”), and one mother reported playing with her children on rare occasions (Italian01: “I had more time to play with them before; now

there is my job, and then to care about the house . . . I don't have much time"). Some Italian women referred to frequently organizing play dates that allow their children to play with their friends (Italian05: "The days that they are free, I try to ensure that they always have company to play with. I invite home their friends, or I take my children to their friends' houses"). Furthermore, as in the case of games, putting children to bed was often a father's task in both groups (Ecuadorian11: "Usually his father makes him fall asleep; it is his task"; Italian04: "Usually her father at 9 o'clock takes her to her room and she falls asleep"), although some Italian and Ecuadorian couples did that together (Italian07: "Me and my husband usually bed down children together to do it faster"; Ecuadorian10: "Together we prepare her for sleep, baby bottle, diaper"). Families manage this in different ways; physical contact was important (Ecuadorian10: "She falls asleep in my arms"; Italian08: "She needs contact; she needs to touch me to fall asleep"), as was reading stories (Ecuadorian03: "They sleep when I read them a story"; Italian15: "When they were younger, I read them tales; now that they are grown, they read by themselves"). In particular, some children were in the habit of spending a large part of the night or the entire night in the parents' bed, and it emerged that in some cases, the parents did not want to give up this practice (Ecuadorian14: "He falls asleep only if he is in my bed with me, and then I take him to his bed"; Italian13: "He still sleeps with us . . . he is cuddled by mum and dad, actually more by dad, who wants our child to sleep with us, and says: 'Until we can do that'"). Some mothers said that they sent their children to sleep with a simple exchange of kisses and saying goodnight (Italian07: "We are lucky; they simply want a kiss and then fall asleep without problems"; Ecuadorian15: "My eldest daughter comes to say goodnight before going to bed, and we kiss each other"). However, some other interviewees reported on this moment as an opportunity to play with their children (Italian03: "We lie together in bed playing, and then he falls asleep"; Ecuadorian14: "He usually falls asleep alone, playing with his cars"), to talk (Italian14: "It is a beautiful moment because we talk about the day spent"), or to say a prayer together (Ecuadorian03: "They lie down and we pray together"; Italian13: "Before going to sleep, we say a prayer to thank God for the day"). For some Ecuadorian children, the routine of going to sleep includes listening to music (Ecuadorian13: "She washes herself, and later she listens to music to fall asleep"), watching television (Ecuadorian08: "I use the timer on the television, 30 minutes and then everybody is asleep"), or having a shower (Ecuadorian05: "His ritual before going to sleep is take a shower; he wants me to wash him"). As a result, some Ecuadorian mothers said that their children needed a great deal of time to fall asleep (Ecuadorian04: "It is not easy for my son to fall asleep; it usually takes him 30 minutes"), and a few Italians affirmed that their children are used to falling asleep on the couch (Italian12: "It is easy to get her to fall asleep; you just have to lay her on the couch").

Social Support in Daily Routines

In terms of the support that they received with respect to child care, although they were the predominant figures in the development of daily routines, the mothers related how they received support from their husbands (Ecuadorian10: "My husband is really helpful. He says to me: 'Don't worry about that, I will do it'"; Italian08: "It is something natural. We never make a firm division of tasks; we help each other"), their grandparents (especially Italians; Italian03: "We try to do everything by ourselves, but for every need, we know that we can count on our parents"), and other kin or friends, usually compatriots (especially Ecuadorians): "Usually I ask for help from the mothers of my children's classmates, who are Italian and Ecuadorians mothers. They escort my children from school to home. We help each other mutually. An Italian girl really helped me when my children were younger and didn't go to kindergarten, I didn't know who to trust them with!" (Ecuadorian08)

Some Italian mothers are supported in family routines by a babysitter (Italian11: "This year, I asked for help from a babysitter, because I cannot do more").

However, not all participants reported being helped by someone in managing their children. Indeed, approximately half of them stated they were nearly alone; they could not rely upon their husbands, mostly because of work (Ecuadorian11: "Nobody helps me. Until this moment, I did everything by myself"). It is important, however, to stress that a small number of mothers considered themselves more suited to caring for children (Italian14: "I do everything, mostly because men are not able to understand").

Discussion and Conclusion

This work has allowed us to deepen the analysis of family routines in a context of migration that has been little studied in the literature. Comparing the family lifestyles of Italian and Ecuadorian immigrants reveals competence in family systems regarding building routines in this delicate stage with young children, who are important representatives of family well-being. During the transition to parenthood and the phase of the life cycle with young children, balancing the parental role, work, and family is a crucial developmental task (Feldman, Sussman, & Zigler, 2004).

Analyzing these routines has allowed us to combine the presence of events, child care, and regular activities and, at the same time, the perception of how these are conducted by the family components. Furthermore, the functions that routines play in the coordination of multiple lines of activities were analyzed in working mothers by Alby and Zuccheromaglio (2014). In fact, in analyzing the daily routines, the everyday actions and the meanings attributed to them, it is possible to access the implicit aspects of culture (Axia & Weisner, 2000). Furthermore, investigating routines allowed for the indirect analysis of family processes, such as the balance of

roles, family cohesion, and support, all of which are important elements of family life.

In everyday practice, people rework the categories of man and woman and their attributions, even though gender cannot be considered to be tied to a specific context but pervades our whole life. In family settings, gender features are confirmed and/or changed as “social construction.” A family can be considered a particular community of practices in which these processes are embedded. Addressing the issue of gender within the family itself is a complex issue for a number of reasons. First, in recent decades, one is confronted with deep changes related to being a family and to parenting (Migliorini & Rania, 2008) that are not always followed by cultural and social changes. Second, recent decades have seen an increase in women working outside of the home, with demands from both the employment and the family contexts. This condition has contributed to increased stress and role overload (Higgins, Duxbury, & Lyons, 2010).

In the present article, through the analysis of the diaries and in-depth interviews, we underlined similarities and differences between Italian and Ecuadorian mothers in managing their daily routines and caring in their parental roles. The most important result that emerges is the similar matrifocal element of the family units, indeed mothers complied with self-report techniques. The main element that appeared from our interviews was the prevalence of women in all the activities that were examined, for both Italians and Ecuadorians, as was also reported in a study by Pinto and Coltrane (2013). In most cases, mothers reported that they had the main role in the child and family care practices and in the domestic work, in line with the study by Zajczick and Ruspini (2008).

The data seem to reveal that the main commonality between the groups of participants was the traditional gender role perspective: Women are devoted to family tasks and manage the housework, and men earn the income (Evertsson & Neramo, 2004). However, the mothers confirmed that the father figure was involved more in affective and emotional dimensions, for example, with bedtime routines and games; this is consistent with recent researches realized in Italian context with working mothers and fathers (Alby & Di Pedè, 2014; Alby, Fatigante, & Zucchermaglio, 2014). These results prefigure one area that is associated with affective father figures that in the scientific literature is generally associated with the role of the mother (Scabini & Cigoli, 2012). These data can be understood in the light of recent studies about the involvement of fathers (Yoshida, 2012). However, Tanturri and Mencarini (2009) underline, with their research, that the children care is a mainly female task, while the Italian father’s participation is restricted to certain activities. Furthermore, children care by fathers is high only in few families. The data of present work, in line with several Italians recent studies (Alby & Di Pedè, 2014; Alby et al., 2014), propose the image of a paternity slowly changing and that is being redefined: new fathers seem to be more involved in the care of the children but mainly in recreational and

executive activities, whereas mothers have a more active and organizational role than fathers.

According to the mothers who were interviewed, grandparents were the second most present figures in managing the children’s routines, although in the diaries, grandparents were not named by a large number of mothers. In that regard, we hypothesized that mother perceived grandfather and grandmother social support more than daily routine states in their diary. Their presence was especially identified in the Italian group in line with Balsamo (2003). In general, Ecuadorian mothers could not count on their own parents’ support because they lived in their country of origin; therefore, these mothers relied more on brothers, brothers-in-law, and friends, who were considered an additional source of help and support and were usually compatriots, as was found in previous studies (Chelipi-den Hamer, 2008). Nevertheless, one Ecuadorian participant enjoyed the help of her own parents because they lived near her family in the host country. Grandparents provide material and social support to their families; they help to raise children and reduce the stress of the work–family balance (Colombo & Sciortino, 2008; Gerard et al., 2006). In the literature, feeling balanced across work and family life is important because it is related to many well-being outcomes (Milkie, Kendig, Nomaguchi, & Denny, 2010). Beliefs and attitudes related to gender are an important factor in the analysis of the determinants of mothers’ and fathers’ involvement in child care and housework tasks (Tognetti, 2011). This was demonstrated by husbands with egalitarian beliefs who performed more housework than did men with a traditional view of gender roles (Bulanda, 2004).

It is worth noting that the activities in which the mother feels supported by the partner were not always undertaken exclusively by the partner; indeed, the fathers were not included in completing the diary entries. When the husbands helped, it was not part of their own daily tasks but concerned routines that the spouses did together, and in some cases, the husband replaced the spouse if she was occupied at that moment, as was found by Kroska (2004). Despite the perception of receiving support from their husbands, most mothers in both groups reported feeling overloaded because of the different roles they filled every day (Higgins et al., 2010); the mothers also referred to the little time they had to devote to themselves and as couples (Carnielli Howat-Rodrigues, Suemi Tokumaru, Novaes de Amorim, Garcia, & Izar, 2013). This research thus indicates, for both Italians and Ecuadorians, a mixed model of managing family roles—against the traditional family model—with an imbalance of care tasks being allocated to women but also more balanced child care.

The research also shows the dynamics of family relationships in terms of gift debt recognition (Scabini & Cigoli, 2012). Gift is seen as the expression of an act of trust that gives rise to tie; it, as the unconditional principle of exchange, coexists with debt, which is the mirror opposite of giving, which involves an imbalance of parents toward their children.

The data in this study highlighted how the similarities between Italian and Ecuadorian families could be justified considering that the two groups belong to Latino culture (Badillo, 2006) and also the permanence of Ecuadorians in Italy. Ecuadorians can be considered culturally adapted according to the classic cultural adaptation model. Furthermore, cultural adaptation could have resulted in Ecuadorians' assimilation into the host community's way of life. However, this gives the risk of the partial loss of cultural identity, which was found in the family routines and practices that were common to the two groups and that emerged in this research.

Limitations and Future Directions

This work focused on Ecuadorian immigrant women, but it would be interesting to extend it to other cultural groups. In addition, this study is centered on women's experiences, by self-report techniques, and it would be interesting to extend it to investigating the opinions of male figures about life in Italy and the previous and present habits of immigrant fathers. Furthermore, the possibility to implement the participants should be enhancing the generalization of findings. An additional suggestion for future research, given that the participants in this work had lived in Italy for many years, would be to investigate a group of Ecuadorian mothers who had only lived in Italy for a short time. Finally, considering how integration emerged regarding languages, food, and religion—typical elements of ethnic identity for foreign participants—it would be interesting to investigate these aspects of immigrant families' previous lives in their origin countries. Furthermore, future research could be designed with participant observations, to focus on practiced family rather than only on represented one.

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