Abstract: The contribute is focused on the immigrant's re-shaping identity in the integration process through the phenomena of the "doing family" or "to continue to be a family". It provides to analysis of relationships between immigrants, the role of family as a significant dimension of migration and integration processes. It will be analyzed, the problem of managing the change that takes place, when people of diverse cultures, values, languages live together, was focused. The basic assumption is that immigrants who arrive in a foreign country continue their lives as protagonists of their lives, seeking their authentic identity through the government of their daily practices, oscillating between defending traditions, and pushing innovation, adhering to the life models of the host society.

Key words: immigration, family, religion, identity, integration

The phenomena of "Doing family" in a migrant's experience.

1. Introduction.

This essay focuses on the transformation of the immigrant's identity through the phenomenon of "making a family" or "continuing to be a family". It offers an analysis of the role of the family in the migration experience as a significant dimension of the integration processes.

In particular this essay offers a descriptive analysis based on second-level data, scientific literature, statistic data of institutional organizations with a focus on the themes examined in contemporary multicultural Western European societies. Furthermore, the essay examines the societal changes that are reflected in the social spheres of everyday practices, which in turn impact family patterns in multicultural societies.

The migratory phenomenon is multidimensional, involving the plurality of social spheres, difficult to summarize in a single analysis. It is a global structural phenomenon constantly growing worldwide. The 21st century will be the century of migrants. At the end of the century there will be more regional and international migrants than ever recorded in history[1]. Today there are 1 billion migrants. The data highlight a trend in which every decade the percentage of migrants keeps growing in resident populations.[2] Over the next 25 years the rate of migration is expected to be higher than in the last 25 years. Empirical data confirm that this is a numerically significant phenomenon. However, in the analysis of the latter, the effect that globalization has on the phenomenon is underestimated.

Host societies are facing greater linguistic, ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity. The growth and entrenchment of international migration has put a strain on the social integration mechanisms of hosting societies. The search for tools and approaches to manage the coexistence of new multicultural societies on an ethnic

[1] International Organization on Migration, 2010.

[2] Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2008 Revision (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2008), http://esa.un.org/migration; and The US National Intelligence Council, "Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds," December 2012, http://globaltrends2030.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/global-trends-2030-november2012.

basis has led to the adoption of legislative and political arrangements that are not globally uniform, but rather aimed at addressing primarily local urgencies.

The difficulties of political regulation depend on the internal variety of immigration, considering the various types of immigrants (economic, political, family reunification). The emergence and development of ethnically based multiculturalist models have not proved effective over time. The promise or intention of achieving a more integrated society has not been fully realized. These difficulties on the one hand have led scholars, politicians, and opinion makers to decree its crisis, failure, decline; on the other hand, the remedy for the abandonment of traditional models turns towards a return to approaches more marked by the cultural assimilation of immigrants.

The current challenges facing many Western European countries in terms of democratic leadership, global political reorganization, and the assertion of imperialist powers such as Russia, China, and the United States have led political parties and movements to focus on new urgencies and dangers. One of them is the phenomenon of immigration. Invasion, security, and theft of resources are the *leitmotif* of the most recent election campaigns across Europe. For this reason, racial attitudes and behaviors are strongly resistant to any moralizing appeal or to the rules of universal equality.

However, the presence of ethnic differences in daily practices, political, religious, and educational institutions, as well as in individuals and groups with distinct characteristics, inevitably becomes inseparable with the social relationships that shape identities.

The problem of managing the change that takes place when people of diverse cultures, values, languages live together, can be a complex task (Ferrante,2024). It is important to acknowledge the challenges that immigrants face when moving to a foreign land. They continue their life in a place where they do not passively participate over time but become actors. Their active participation in the new environment is activated. Finding an authentic identity can be a delicate balance between tradition and innovation, while also respecting the norms of the host society.

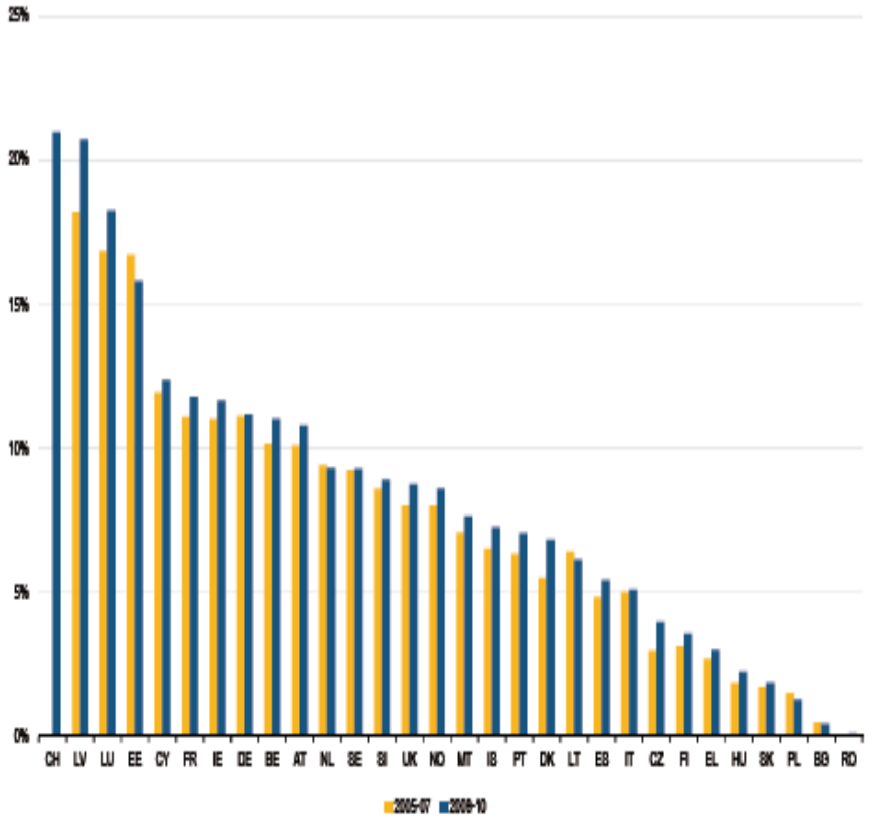
Specific forms of multiculturalism are determined, through religious syncretism, new models of contemporary family migration, genesis of transcultural and mixed families, reconfiguration of religious practices in the identity system of immigrants, especially when it is linked to migration. Pressed by the hegemonic culture of the host society, immigrants do not cease to practice their religious and origin cultural expressions. Immigrant families continue to be the essence of belonging to a place. It binds together people separated by space but united by feelings. In a distant land, the pain of lack of continuous care is underestimated. They fight for the reunion of their own family in their homeland. New families are made up or transnational ones are managed, at the cost of sacrifices and economic as well as affective deprivations. Between hopes and expectations of integration, new visions and behaviors in everyday life are introjected in immigrants, in the effort of “doing” and “being” family.

Even from afar they establish forms of co-presence with the family of origin. Marriage norms, food habits, dressing customs, festivities, politics, and people’s way of adaptation to their environment are some among others which are influenced by the hegemonic culture of the host society. This force is opposed to the one with which immigrants reject such practices, defending their. Some researches (Ferrante 2019) show how immigrant’s assimilation oscillates between attitudes of

rejection of the new culture and defense of the culture of origin, through practices whose expression changes in the public and private sphere.

Marriage is a cultural universal. It exists in every society in different forms. It is also the basic reason for the perpetuation and continuity of society and generation. Furthermore, marriage is "*subject to the reciprocal influences of social, cultural, and political forces*" (Onedera, 2008). In some European societies, despite the constraints of structural factors like the restriction of interreligious marriage by the religious community and the public one, the practice is increasing. According to Lamb (1997) and Ritzer (2011), the increasing trend of interreligious marriage in Europe reveals the decreasing role of the influence of structural constraints on individuals and the increasing freedom of individuals with rationalization. In these scenarios, younger cohorts of immigrants are the main actors in the processes of adaptation and assimilation. They experience change in daily practices, through relationships with native peers, in classrooms and places of socialization. From participation in the public dimension, they introduce innovative roles and behaviors with respect to the cultural and religious values of origin that inevitably drag into the private family dimension.

Among European countries, trends reveal that the phenomenon of mixed couples is relevant. Mixed marriages have long been considered important indicators of the social integration of immigrants, as well as potential factors of social and cultural change. By using data from EU surveys, the percentage of persons in mixed marriage is estimated in 30 European countries over recent years. Across Europe, for the period 2008-10, on average one in 12 married persons was in a mixed marriage (Tab. 1).



Tab. 1 Averages for 2005-07 and 2008-10 of the percentage of mixed couples on total married couples by country (Eurostat 2012)

2. To continue to be a family. The transnational families.

Few immigrant families arrive already formed in the receiving societies. These cases are usually located at the extreme poles of the social stratification of migration: in a pole, highly qualified migrants (e.g., managers and professionals), who move abroad with the whole family; at the opposite pole, asylum seekers, fleeing war and persecution with their families. The so-called "transnational families" are families divided between a member who emigrated abroad and the rest of the family nucleus that remained at home. The issue is relevant in the phenomenon of the departure of mothers who leave their children at home. These are entrusted to the care of grandmothers, sisters, older daughters, more rarely husbands, sometimes of other salaried women, in a kind of international chain of reallocation of care tasks. (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2004).

It is the abnormal functioning of these families that leads immigrants to frame them as a new form of family. Some features characterize their particular functioning. Among them, the sense of emptiness that derives from the departure of the biological mother, the main caregiver towards the children. Their experience of suffering is structured in relation to this absence and the efforts that mothers make to participate in the life of the remaining children. Frequent travel is only possible if costs and distances allow it. Distance parenting is another feature. Telephone, chat, video calls are used to virtually take part in family events and relevant decisions (Parreñas, 2001, Ambrosini, Bonizzoni, Caneva, 2010). The

fatigue of long-distance parenting cannot be detached from the characteristic role that immigrant mothers play in the informal welfare system that solves the problems of caring for families in hosting countries. This characteristic, according to Ambrosini, (2013) can be defined as: "*international stratification of care opportunities*". According to this form of stratification, many children and young people in the richest societies benefit from the care of mothers forced to entrust their children to others. This is a stratification, at the top of which are the wealthy families of the developed countries, assisted by nannies, domestics and baby-sitters, and at the base the families of poor countries. The latter must be replaced with temporary solutions: the departure of mothers who go abroad to care for elderly and children.

Transnational is often more a stage in the life cycle of migrant families than a fixed condition. (Bonizzoni, 2007). In many cases, the migration of families occurs through a dynamic process in several stages: 1) The family living together in the country of origin must first face the dramatic test of separation, because only those who have the greatest chance of crossing borders and finding a job migrate; 2) the transnational phase follows, namely the time of remoteness, nostalgia and emotional ties at a distance; 3) the time of reunification finally arrives. It occurs either through the return home, or more frequently with the transfer of family members to the host society, as soon as the first migrant has managed to achieve an acceptable level of integration in economic and housing well-being. At the end of this process, the reunited family is very different from the one left home years before. It is also other than that dreamed in the time of forced separation or revised during the brief returns to the homeland for the holidays.

3. Who leaves and who stays. From separation to reunification.

When it comes to the decision of migrating to a family, complex negotiations take place. Components face the test of a separation. The decision on who will leave does not lead to subjective initiatives, but to family strategies to maximize income and increase the opportunities for well-being for the whole family. If those who leave can survive the journey and try to establish their new life on the destination land, the family of origin will represent the time of distance, nostalgia, and emotional ties at a distance. Only later, the time for reunification can come, by returning home, or with the transfer of family members to the receiving society. The moment of reunification is another traumatic moment that family members have to face. After a phase of enthusiasm and joy for the regained unity, the moment of awareness and disillusionment takes place. The reunited family is different from the one left at the time of departure. It is different from the one imagined during the time of exile. Reunited families are forced to rebuild themselves, looking for a balance that is often difficult to establish between integration in the new context, maintaining identity links, and protection from unwanted elements of the new context. In these processes, immigrant families are both a component of the problem and a decisive factor in the construction of possible solutions.

Negotiating solutions leads to strategies to increase benefits and reduce loss risks. These strategies usually coincide with the paths of upward social mobility, according to the models of the places of destination. Sometimes these strategies are in open contradiction with the religious values and the family hierarchy of the origin country.

They do so through attempts to recover abandoned roles. In decision-making processes, the marginality or irrelevance of the contribution, due to a prolonged absence in the family circuit, corresponds to a feeling of loss due to the reshape of

authority roles in the internal hierarchies. In the new context, parents are more exposed to the loss of authority and control over their children. They are concerned about their loyalty to their origins, convinced of the importance of transmitting at least some of the founding elements of their traditions. At the same time, they are convinced of the value of education and social mobility for their children as steps on the path of integration to be achieved.

In these cases, the professional and family role of immigrant ethnic groups, traditionally linked to the restrictions of the roles of women, oscillates between persistence and innovation. Men tend to reorganize their social and family roles in the domestic context, either in the work they share with their partner or in limiting their power or authority, tending toward greater symmetry with their partner. These role transformations in the private sphere are identity bifurcations in the biographical path of individuals, who renegotiate with themselves and their cultural world the values of loyalty and the cost of identity betrayal.

4. The genesis of mixed families in migration experience. The ethnogenetic myth.

Intercultural marriage is a broad concept which embraces inter-ethnic or interreligious marriages. Religious and ethnic intermarriage are single dimensions of intercultural marriage. Intercultural marriage refers to the marriage between people of two different cultural backgrounds. It may involve differences in country, language, religion, race, ethnicity, political ideology, dressing styles, food customs, living styles, etc.

Intercultural marriage also called mixed marriage, implies "a marriage between persons of differing culture, origin or religion". It is a form of intermarriage and a type of interaction between religious groups, sub-societies, or societies (Cavan,1970).

In intercultural marriage, the married spouses have extreme differences among them and the challenges on its successful outcome are far more complex than in interethnic and interreligious marriages (Romano, 2008). The sociological discipline focuses its analysis on the more general international effects, taking an interest in "*how do ways of doing family change in emigration and what forms does interaction and confrontation with the other take?*" (Tognetti Bordogna, 1996). The sociological reference to the *mixed couple* reiterates the importance of referring to the internal world of the couple, of the sphere of affectivity and intimacy, as opposed to the more superficial *mixitè* that directs the gaze on otherness, therefore on the reactions that the couple moves around them (Cerchiaro, 2017).

One of the changes in the forms of interaction and comparison of differences, concerns the redefinition of identities of the social actors involved in mixed families. The redefinition represents a space for exploration and search for compatibility of differences. This is a space in which individual cultural specificities are mutually mediated through a continuous commitment to research and recognition of points of balance. It is never entirely definitive, but provisional and negotiable. In order to establish a bond with the other, in mixed unions subjective differences are characterized by the dynamic process of one's own identity of belonging (Gozzoli and Regalia, 2005). This means the reframing of one's cultural codes in a gradual process of redefining identity. More analytically, the ways in which the belonging identity is reshaped are the outcome of the negotiation of a prolonged and constant contact with an ethnic and religious identity acquired in the place of emigration.

Negotiating identity means establishing a degree of permeability with respect to the endurance of a painful betrayal of identity, when you make yours the local cultural practices in everyday life, in the choices of family life, in the education of children, in religious practices. The betrayal in question is relevant in all those cases in which the inter-religious marriage requires a conversion of one of the spouses to the religion of the other. In the confrontation of symbols and practices one is sometimes obliged to socialize and reconcile opposite life's horizons of meaning. The subjective right to believe can be called into question by the need or obligation of conversion.

Conversion implies the effort to respect, in the same living space of the couples. Belonging to an "undesirable" religion is sometimes tolerable when it is a legacy of a family history, but it becomes a fault to be punished when it is the upshot of an individual choice. This is a counter-test of the profound link between religion and individual freedom. In the experience of Islamic conversion, it is above all women who leave their own family to become part of that of their spouse (Dariyo 2021).

One receives teachings from the mother-in-law and relatives of the husband, oriented towards submission, respect for family hierarchies and dedication to the husband.

Religion is not really the original factor upon which to build the differences that prevent or prohibit marriages between people of different faiths. For some communities particularly united in collective identity, such as the Jewish one, even if fragmented in a multiplicity of ethnic differences, origins and epic paths, the obstacle factor to mixed marriages is the ethnogenesis of the community. The historical reconstruction of genealogy of the community (Jewish, Islamic, etc.) justifies the idea that the origin of the community and continuity must be maintained with the same symbols, values, beliefs, practices, and social organization. On the one hand, ethnogenesis is a strategy of exclusion of strangers and strengthening of uniqueness, purity, of race. On the other hand, History demonstrates and contradicts this idea. In fact, it is precisely thanks to the ethnogenesis of communities that racial elements of different origins have been acquired through proselytism and mixed marriages with "the children of a foreign God".

It is evident that in these patterns of identity reproduction, through religion we seek the reasons for the roots of identity as the basis of social exclusion. The real problem in this political strategy, is the difficulty in collecting adequate information on the anthropological and religious characteristics of social groups contaminated from the outset by unions of peoples, ethnicities, races, especially as these groups have dispersed and fragmented over time through diasporas, migrations, land movements.

Interreligious spouses are treated differently in different societies. These treatments are subject to the attitude of the society and the dogma of a particular religion towards the practice. Despite the variations across societies, in some societies the practice is considered as deviant behavior which goes against the established norms and values of marriage (McCutcheon, 1988).

In the native communities, the perception of the relationship of mixed couples is of great problem, due to the irreconcilability of cultural differences. The constitution of such perception often occurs by stereotypes that generalize physical attributes, traditional clothing, food practices or behaviors of individuals who struggle to deviate from the value and behavioral universe of their culture. In common sense, mixed couples carry the social stigma of transgressing the rules of

social proximity, referring not only to nationality but also to race, ethnicity, and religion.

About the motivations of choosing a foreign partner, the collective perception is built on the degree of integration of immigrant communities with the native population. Some research (Gritti, 2004) hypothesizes that mixed unions in a specific historical and social context are the most significant indicator of the progressive level of integration of a society (more than that of schooling and housing integration). Actually, these hypotheses have been more defined if related to the effectiveness of multicultural policies. For example, some assimilation hypotheses argue that the more immigrants are assimilated to the cultural and economic reality of the native community, the more likely they will be to marry the natives (Adserà and Ferrer, 2015). On the level of economic and status differences, other hypotheses correspond to and reinforce many of the clichés and prejudices about mixed unions. We refer to the theories according to which, the wider the socioeconomic and status distance between the partners (in this case between natives and immigrants), the greater the possibility that unions (especially if formalized in a marriage) are constituted as a consequence of an economic and symbolic exchange between native and immigrant. From it both partners get mutual benefits (for example, the young age of the immigrant partner would compensate for the imbalance of ethnic status[3] with the native partner, receiving in return a greater sense of belonging to the local community).

Mixed unions, to be intended as markers of population change, would demonstrate more than any other social process, the erosion of social, cultural, religious, and psychological boundaries between different ethnic groups (Kulczycki and Lobo 2002). In particular, in nations traditionally characterized by immigrant flows and higher ethnic differentiation, the scientific debate has identified mixed marriages as the indicator of assimilation and identification of a certain ethnic group with the culture of the host society.

Overcharged by social pressures to the effort of adaptation, the members of the mixed relationship tend to defend themselves from alienation of their sense of identity, landing at a multiple identity that facilitates possible cultural contradictions. When social pressure to adaptation of subjects submits members to unbearable psychological stress, when faced with a climate of hostility towards them, the reaction is often a refuge in the value and religious niche of origin. The more the orthodoxy is amplified, the greater the sense of hostility experienced. This strategy of refuge in a protective shield guarantees members from the uncertainty of the actions to be taken without any cultural guidance now lost.

The cultural distance between the partners stands as the intersection of a path that both partners undertake when establishing a bond with a person of another culture or religion. This path is characterized by asymmetrical cultural contexts and backgrounds. In the coordinates internal/external, universal/particular of the social scenarios in which they live, intercultural couples are obliged to negotiate within them the cultural meanings of the communities to which they belong. They negotiate new values that have emerged from their union with the external communities. The point we want to emphasize is therefore that the place where the critical issues are negotiated is not external but internal to the dimension of daily life. In such couples, when members face routine problems of daily life, amplified

[3] The imbalance of ethnic status is determined by the original non-belonging to the local community and the distrust that derives from the culture, daily practices, and religion of origin.

by cultural, religious or lifestyles diversity, different values seem to emerge in all their evidence and potential opposition. Specifically, this happens when it comes to assessing how the partners behave with respect to time management, the use of money, the order of common tasks and the education of children.

Within the daily experience, communication is one among the most critical issues. You choose a common language, often that of the immigration land, especially if you have children already included in the processes of education and local socialization. Otherwise, the problem is the exact understanding of the language and the attribution of different meanings assigned to the words spoken. Some misunderstandings may depend on the intimate idea that the partners have of each other, for example, one judged conservative, compared to the other innovative. They are visions that sometimes are not explicit, to avoid judgments that over time can produce grudges and serious conflicts.

In conclusion, in my opinion, what has been defined by the scientific literature as *binational marriage*, *interfaith marriage*, *intercultural families*, *cross-cultural marriages*, *mixitè conjugale*, etc. is a delimitation of a social change referred to the family environment in which the difference concerns society as a whole. Furthermore, mixed couples represent an indicator of integration or assimilation of the foreign partner in multicultural contexts, through which to hypothesize distance or proximity between social groups. Moreover, the phenomenon of mixed unions highlights that in integration processes, to an initial phase of cultural assimilation (to the language, rules, values, daily practices, nutrition) follows a phase of structural assimilation in which an immigrant becomes part of the social networks and institutions of the host community. Just the mixed unions would be the sign of the structural assimilation of an immigrant in the host society (Gordon, 1964), facilitating him in the entry into structural networks. Couples like many others have multiple identities, through which to observe the dynamics of change in society in a portion of the mirror which reflects the pluralism of daily family lives. A micro context from which to grasp, within cross-cultural practices, the most relevant data for the entire social structure.

5. Being close from a distance. The hidden side of distant families in migratory experiences.

Can one be absent and co-present at the same time? The stories of migrants are stories of families. Families separating. Families facing the unknowns and fears of separations. Families who recompose, finding themselves in the destination country to face a load of uncertainties, learn a new language, adapt to new habits, and daily practices. Bonds, hierarchies, roles are redefined because of the acculturation to the social scenarios. In a foreign land, the rights of families and their members are governed by migration policies that often demarcate a border line which distinguishes different treatment between native and foreign families. The perimeter of who is part, who has the right to live together and under what conditions is controversial. All this does not set the emigrants back in the effort of sacrifice to continue keeping their family alive. The traditional family dimension continues to persist as an existential unit that increases a sense of belonging and continuity to one's own community. Migrants face the pressure of family ties as early as they leave. It is a lacerating psychological condition parallel to that of separation from one's own home. You leave the bed in which you sleep. The first glance in the morning is no longer on the usual panorama of objects and people. One wonders if the effort to leave for providing needs for family, or for ensuring future security, can temper the pains of separation. That is, the pain of depriving

the spouse and children of affection and common life, in the hope of seeing them again one day, certainly grown or aged. But it certainly changed.

The tests to which families are subjected in migratory experiences are complex. Variables move in the coordinates of time and space.

The first variable concerns gender identity. The difference between man and woman as protagonists of the emigration project is significant both emotionally and factually. When it is the woman, mother, and wife who leave, the possibility of having children cared for and raised by others is concrete. The rupture of a universal moral and biological order is associated with women and refers to the intimate bond between mother and children. For men there is always a socially accepted condition of responsibility and dedication to the family. The consequence is that migrant women suffer forms of blame and stigmatization when they fail in their natural tasks and leave their families behind. Thus, creating forms of self-guilt. (Bal, 2012).

If it is the man, the husband, who leaves, landing in a faraway land and a creating new life can break the bond of union. The union is made fragile by separation, in the awareness that for him a new family life, more or less declared, can be realized, accepting it with fatalism and resignation. For men, since the function of emotional-affective care of children and their daily presence is less accentuated, the migratory experience psychologically and factually facilitates life in solitude (Lutz, 2008). So, such as the acceptance of jobs with atypical or extraordinary schedules to maximize the outcome of the project. Social control over daily life is loosened or absent. When the man, father, remains at home he can tend to a greater involvement and responsibility in the care of children, although assisted by other parental or neighborhood female figures. He manages the economic resources and uses them independently. Emigration breaks the bonds that create integration at home, but also control of behavior (Ambrosini, 2019). Life in a society culturally open to separations and new unions, in which the opportunities for meetings and opportunities to find a new partner multiply, exposes the subject to new experiences. Sometimes living in these conditions convinces them of the preference to educate their children at home, respecting the religious and cultural values of origin. Meanwhile families have already begun to depend on the economic remittances of those who have emigrated. They have improved their level of well-being but continuing to be a family is an impractical desire (Van Hear and Sorensen, 2003). Returns to the homeland are temporary and above all expensive.

A second variable concerns the adoption of tactics and strategies of surrogacy of presence. Being a family is a concept intimately linked to physical proximity. According to Baldassar (2008) continuing to be a family from afar means finding ways to compensate for the absence with the co-presence in life of those who have remained at home. The availability of multiplication of technological and communication tools is worth establishing a *virtual* co-presence, directly and without the need for intermediaries. You can be present in the important moments that celebrate festivals, rites of passage. Surrogates of presence like phones, emails, virtual chats, establish a particularly effective point of contact today. Easy access to technological tools, on the one hand it has eliminated the difficulties of contact. On the other, a moral obligation has been created to communicate more frequently. So, the risk of fraying the bonds is reduced and the exchange of caring acts is guaranteed.

A form of co-presence with a nostalgic and emotional flavor is the *delegated* one which derives from the objects sent and received between those who leave and those who remain. The memory and essence of those absent is symbolically *delegated* to

the visits of relatives and friends. Through gifts and visits, those who are not there become present. The object embodies memory and its function surrogates absence. The sense of family unity persists even in the absence of communication, for example, when remembering family members in prayers. One imagines continuing to live together, in the memory of happy moments, mitigating tensions. The *physical* co-presence, as the most intense form of communication, is realized on the occasion of temporary returns to the homeland. The feelings that generate these encounters do not always have the desired results, especially if you have been away from your family for a long time. The forms of *virtual*, *delegated*, *physical* and *imagined* co-presence examined idealize and surrogate the physical presence. Through them lives the representation of a family unit in which confidence and intimacy as well as feelings of abandonment and self-guilt coexist. Strategies are used for a family life at a distance.

A third variable is related to reunification. The life path of the families in migratory experiences is never linear. Unexpected obstacles can turn back or be a starting point. We separate and reunite. The emotion of finding oneself overlaps with nostalgia, with the illusion of continuing where family life has been interrupted. Illusions give way to the difficulties of learning to be together again as if time and distance had changed nothing. In reality, when living under the same roof, it is the people, feelings, and emotions that change. In reunification, a new balance must be recreated. Each individual's life must be recalibrated to accommodate the co-presence of all family members. each of whom is forced to share and negotiate the living space of the others.

Whether one returns home or reunites in a foreign land, the recovery of broken ties is never easy or obvious. Just as the settlement in the new contexts of life is not. The separations of unhappy or already fragile relationships at the time of departure, after the suspension in the emigration experience, return to being unhappy (Boyle et al. 2008). Or they break permanently. In these circumstances one goes back with the product of acculturation to the new context in which independence, freedom, equal opportunities have been experienced. Especially for some women from countries with a high gender differential, they return with the intention of freeing themselves from control and dependence on their husband and his family. Those who are or have been alone in a foreign land can live in a new union and can have other children. These are signs of an incessant vital drive to get out of loneliness or economic difficulties or even for the usefulness of regularizing one's legal status.

Migrant families must undertake various forms of mobility to maintain their housing, occupational and economic standards and sometimes may move to other countries to preserve their unity. It may happen that for some immigrants their economic situation has deteriorated to the point that they decide to send their wife and children back home, failing to bear the costs of their maintenance in a foreign land. The project of family recomposition can be compromised by the fall into underemployment, temporary or irregular work. In these conditions we find ourselves taking a step back. That is, returning to being alone with a job that, even if precarious, can allow you to continue to hope to recover the economic stability that allows you to bring your family back with you. One can give up returning home when the family has a strong emotional bond among the members that it does not want to break; one can give up also when they have already experienced the strain of acculturation through school attendance and job professional integration.

More globally, it is the whole experience of emigration that tests individuals in the experimentation of freedom and new skills. You feel like you “make it” not just to survive but because you find that you are capable of it. Self-reflection on one’s

abilities is activated by unprecedented forms of interaction when interacting with public health or school services. In relations with public services, the complexity of bureaucratic procedures is overcome by the search for practical, although non-formal and precarious solutions. The network of solidarity with the community to which it belongs can give support in a climate of reciprocity of favors received and offered. In the silent form of welcoming of newcomers or hosting the children of working parents, forms of coexistence and mutual satisfaction of needs can be created.

Older and lonely people, who become adoptive aunts and grandmothers, find an existential and productive answer to the empty time of their days. In these practices, defined by Stack and Burton (1993) *Kinscripting*, the expansion of the family network and the early emancipation of children, determine a positive effect in the functions of family care and in the empowerment of the children themselves. The latter, in the absence of parents. Rapidly growing up, children are often expected to take on the roles of governing the home and caring for younger siblings.

6. The emotive compensatory trap of immigrant's families.

Moving to a new country can be an arduous experience for anyone. The family shares and divides the stress of change equally among the members. The migration experience is lived differently among family members of different ages. Children live the immigration experience differently than their parents, especially if children are not involved in the discussion of immigrating to a new country. They are brought to an unfamiliar environment with little preparation. Children may feel powerless on a journey they did not even want to take. In foreign land, newcomer children often struggle with feelings of loneliness as they miss their friends and extended family back home and may feel pressured to juggle traditional values and customs of parents with the local practices of their peers.

The problems that families initially face concern the satisfaction of basic needs: a job, a home adapted to family needs, effective communication with the local context through a language that is sometimes not known. These issues are addressed to and managed by adults who bear the emotional burden of the migration experience as a whole, with the perspective of compensating for suffering and healing trauma. Sadness over separation from grandparents and friends, anxiety over uprooting caused by moving, and frustration over learning a new language were among the challenges the parents identified. When you decide to leave, you do not imagine that children will become sad. That far from their own land they would have suffered the lack of their grandparents or friends. The desire to repay their suffering with a better life grows in parents. They will want to give them everything they haven't had in their lives.

The priority in the solution of basic needs, in the first phase of emigration projects, puts in the background the children's settlement issues. It is only in the later stages that all members of the family find a wider satisfaction. Children's socialization and adaptation to the new environment, ensured by attending school, and participating in sports clubs and cultural projects in their home community, allow children to interact with the wider community and improve their social interactions. If the path to integration for younger cohorts begins in school, it is complicated, especially for second-generation immigrants, by their desire to recover the essential components of their identity.

In these scenarios, religious affiliations also acquire a renewed strength and a role of legitimization of individual and family behaviors that if amplified in

fundamentalisms, can be transformed into identity revenge on the hegemonic presences on the same territory.

To reduce the risk (or feeling) of loss of identity, some communities' immigrants use techniques such as visiting their country of origin, teaching their kids their country of origin, taking them to prayer places, festivals and traditional weddings. Some research has shown that parents give birth to their children in their place of origin. Their children attend classes that focus on learning the language and traditional practices of their place of origin. (Ferrante, 2015).

Perched within their own community and often within the territorial boundaries of the neighborhood of the first settlement, they perceive and amplify the hostility that surrounds them. Frightened by the failures of so many of their compatriots and without hope for the future, they tend to exercise stringent control over their children. Worried that the latter emulate the immoral behavior of their native peers, and especially of their native peers, they limit their relationship life through prohibitions and impositions, exacerbating family control to the limit of the semi-imprisonment of female daughters.

In the practices of gated communities, other emotional traps are revealed. Parents face the tradition/innovation dilemma of raising their children, prioritizing family values of origin. At the same time, they do not exclude that they can have a public social life, have friends, go out with them. Attendance at public schools does not exclude the possibility of attending schools with linguistic and cultural programs of the country of origin, in order to preserve the knowledge and use of the cultural and religious heritage of origin. In these cases, the oscillation between the innovation of family practices and the sense of belonging to the origin's community can become a defense tool against the processes of new inequalities.

7. **The answers to the identity confusion of mixed marriages. Forced marriages, arranged marriages and the reasons for others.**

Cultural values, through family configurations and their genesis, can be expressed in particular and different ways depending on the local context, as in the case of *Akan* matrilineal families (Appiah,2007). These show that, although there are various types of organization of family life, relating them to our horizon of meaning as reasonable depends on the principles of the culture in which we were born. Among different cultures and territorial mentalities, it can be difficult to understand the meaning of a prohibition or an act that in different contexts is not performed simply because there are significant reasons for not performing. Cultural practices in the daily lives of individuals are inspired by a sense of belonging to a community and to the history of its reproduction.

In some communities it is forbidden to eat pork. In others, the cow is sacred. In the Western world these prescriptions are not applied, but rather are subject to stigmatization because they are rationalized. In various cultures, the demarcation between forbidden and permitted is quite clear. The reification of this border into symbols has the ability to define the identity elements of the community. What is forbidden has an ancient history. It has been consolidated in the collective imagination as a tradition, neither rational nor criticized. Transgressing a cultural prohibition often corresponds to breaking a taboo.

The semantic value of the word taboo amplifies the importance of tradition, a sign of the constitutive roots of the community. Honoring a taboo, as well as a tradition, is an obligation to belong to a group or community. It is not a prohibition that is taboo. Nor is it the taboo that constitutes the prohibition to perform an act. The point is that in every culture, acts or behaviors are avoided because there are

good reasons not to perform it. In some communities, caste marriage is taboo. In others, the bond between spouses may occur if they share the same religious faith. Incest is taboo in our societies. In ancient times, it was accepted and favored in some social groups because it was intended to perpetuate lineages and descendants. The concordant love that predominated in Greco-Roman society persisted until the Middle Ages, when the central unit was the patriarchal family. The patriarch establishes alliances to maintain and strengthen the family's wealth. Marriage has become one of the most productive ways to increase wealth. The man moves from choosing a partner for merely reasons of erotic attraction to incorporating the calculation of convenience.

In Western multicultural societies, the tensions of social change are amplified by the coexistence of multiple transnational identities. These inevitably generate a plurality of instances (endogenous and exogenous) and short-sighted views on migrant communities. Maintaining one's own subjective and collective identity, in the course of migrant experiences, translates into the creation, interpretation and reconfiguration or even in the rediscovery of practices more or less shared within the groups to which they belong. However, these practices are often in contrast to the legal norms of the host countries.

Among these practices, arranged marriages and forced marriages fall into categories that culture, values of freedom, equal opportunities and Western European regulations hastily label as retrograde or irrational. Often these practices are traced back to an “essentializing orientalism” (Saïd, 1991). What do such labels hide? Do these marriages perform functions that are underestimated, or is their importance overlooked?

The difference and the social distance that immigrants articulate in reference to one's religious and cultural practices generate a state of disintegration among immigrants and natives that accentuates the “ethnic” criterion as a “discriminative” social category to establish new identities on which to base the social order.

In this sense, the influence of religion and cultural practices in the genesis patterns of families, even in migration experiences, thus in foreign lands, is decisive. In a foreign land, Hinduist families who have already been resident for years, integrated and acculturated to the local lifestyle, can continue to arrange marriages according to traditions never abandoned. Thus, it happens that the father of one of the sons addresses an intermediary who deals with combining marriages. He was looking for the best combination of people and families. In some ethnic communities of Tamils Hinduist, people have a booklet of personal profiles filled with the help of the stars. The intermediary with this booklet seeks the most suitable person, even with the economic level and the status of the families because we still have the castes that differentiate people.

To give a more analytical answer, we will use the anthropological, sociological and juridical studies that show that in all societies there are oral or written, juridical and social norms, constantly evolving, which regulate marriage and the choice of future spouses (Gaudemet, 1987; Sacco, 2007, Bello, 2016). These norms define the boundaries within which the marriage can be contracted. In details, these defines: the space left to the choice that comes from “romantic love” (Bordieu, 2009); the freedom to express the consent of those who are about to marry; the possibility of interference by parents, relatives or even the community to which they belong in individual choices to contract and end marriage; the social sanctions in the event of transgression; the space for honor and shame (Julios, 2015); the influence of religion and values of origin (Ferrante, 2019, ibidem).

Analysis of awareness level of subjective and contextual motivations cannot be detached from the functions these practices perform for individuals and the communities to which they belong. In this regard, in the functionalist socio-anthropological tradition, from Malinowski to Merton, the relationship between need and the satisfaction of need is highlighted. According to Malinowski, there is a close relationship between institutions and functions. That is, the function of a given phenomenon must always be related to the order and persistence of society. According to Merton (2000), every element (custom, material object, belief) that is part of a civilization performs a vital function. The author thinks that men are not always aware of the goals they are pursuing and therefore of the functions that their behavior performs. A distinction must therefore be made between a) *manifest functions*, i.e. the aims intentionally pursued by the men involved in social practices; and (b) *latent functions*, which are not recognized or even unintended by the individuals involved.

With regard to marriages, these distinctions can be traced in the two authors and in others of classical sociology. Among the manifest functions of endogamous forced marriages, in Durkheim's extensive contribution on the family as institution (1982) "protection function", that is, the protection of the spouses from dangers external to the family or the community is relevant.

From whom and from what does endogamous forced marriage protect the spouses? Again, the answers are unequivocal. Sometimes the condition of migrants leads families to safeguard their children from the otherness of a "degenerate" society, in which family ties are "liquid" (Bauman, 2008), seem to collapse and do not respect the individual.

For the reason that "it has always been done in this way", families who impose marriage in countries of emigration are reassured precisely by traditions and customs. These practices would bring about "the best" for their children and in their communities. When the spouses are identified in the origin's country, the imposed union can serve to strengthen ties with the family or community that remained in the country of origin. Especially in societies that are hostile to migrants, or perceived as such by "foreigners", forced marriages play a predominantly latent function of cohesion, strengthening of identity and continuity of the community. This feature protects against the risk of "Europeanization" of the progeny (Khanum, N. (2008). It is no coincidence that marriage is imposed on many girls when they fall in love with "European" peers (Phillips, 2008). With reference to women, the protection of the sexuality of young women can be traced back to the *manifest function*, thanks to the identification of a husband who, presumably, will respect and protect them during engagement and marriage. This "protection", certainly paternalistic and patriarchal, preserves the reputation of the family through the protection of women's "honor". In reality, forced marriage has no clear epistemologically boundaries but, above all, understandable by Western culture for which the choice (of the woman) moves between freedom and physical violence. For example, in the case of so-called "child brides", the marriage is certainly to be considered forced and violent. It is more difficult to comprehend the forms of oppression, material and symbolic, which are also present in other types of marriage in which there is a formal manifestation of consent. Available data show that forced marriages almost never perform a beneficial protective function, especially for the bride. (Chantler et al., 2009).

In addition to the coercion exercised to contract marriage, there are often other types of violence (psychological, sexual, physical, economic) against women, during marital life, because of the reduced freedom they often benefit. Moreover, families find it difficult to play the desired role of mediation between spouses and, indeed, in many cases exert pressure so that they do not end the marriage.

Conclusions.

When multicultural policies have not been composed to be compatible with integration processes, the result has oscillated between tolerance and attitudes of superiority. Thus, multiculturalism has become an ambiguous and elusive concept that often refers to the problem it is intended to solve. The failure and decline of traditional models of multiculturalism in Western democracies has depended on the idea of bringing together all foreign individuals, aliens, immigrants, towards a single way of life (Brubaker, 2001; Joppke, 2004; Baubock, 2002).

The conflict that has arisen has depended on the underestimation of the right of these men to live their lives "in their own way". In short, there was no respect for legitimate differences. The conflict sometimes has been violent. The reasons for the conflict or antagonisms was the field of values. On the one hand, living with us and like us implied an obvious need to share the social scenarios of a world that had already been experienced.

At the end of years or centuries of progress and civilization, societies became fortresses of values that provided security and order for their fellow citizens. The presence of outsiders in these cosmopolitan scenarios thrilled projects of understanding for differences.

The thesis that different cultures can exist side by side without sharing a homogeneous system of values and without reaching a final agreement seems to be utopian to this political lineup.

Vice versa, sovereignist agreements have opposed the presence of "those who arrive uninvited" (Simmel,1908) or those who "arrive today and stay tomorrow" (Baumann, 1991). Political rhetoric has fed fears of invasions, religious contagions and clashes of civilizations (Huntington, 2004).

But values, practices and beliefs, introjected into subjective and collective identity give meaning to different lives. On the level of religious values and beliefs, the diversity in the foreign gaze is mutual. However, here is no symmetry between natives and foreigners. Through the consolidation and crystallization of what one is not and does not want to be, the natives and their cultural political mainstream produce the narrative of differences and the domination of the majority.

Some beliefs may appear irrational because they are linked to the supernatural, magic, and magical rituals, such as the *juju* rituals practiced in West African countries such as Nigeria, Benin, Togo, and Ghana. The practice/rite, based on blood, hair, and chicken feet is celebrated before the departure of women in the more traditional and conservative areas and with a strong tribal collective identity (Adeyinka, Lietaert, and Derluyn, 2023).

An ethnocentric and rational perspective would judge this practice as a control mechanism to keep the victims tied to the community and exploited, enslaved, and indebted to the human traffickers.

For those who believe in it, it is a curse that will fall upon the women and their families if they fail to repay the debt incurred when they embark on the journey. Spirits and ghosts are also brought into play in this ritual, to the point of believing that objects may have magical properties.

Wherever you are from, you will not have peace in the morning, afternoon and night. No, I did not give you that money I spent to bring you from Nigeria to Italy. You will always have fire on you, you will not have peace for your life.

These words serve to psychologically intimidate women and their families that if they do not repay the debt, no matter what the cost or condition, their souls will be damned forever. Such rites and beliefs will seem unreasonable to the heirs of European Enlightenment culture. If so, then it is probably a value. But if it is a value that is fundamental to individual or collective identity, then it cannot be subjected to criticism. Different cultures, rites, religions and values show that the phenomena of "Doing family" in migrant's experience unfolds along the coordinates of persistence and innovation of traditions, practices, and values of origin, against the background of cultural prejudices that push for homogenization, i.e., identity loss.

Freeing oneself from prejudices in order to understand their logic of operation facilitates their acceptance without abandoning or betraying one's moral values. It seems clear that traditional models, prejudicially judged as conservative, have characteristics of modernity or even anticipate social change, if we compare them, for example, with the current configurations of stepfamilies in postmodern societies, that is, the newly formed families that are highly regulated by law.

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