DEMOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Family reunification – who, when, and how?
Family trajectories among migrants in Italy

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Contents

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Abstract

BACKGROUND
Family reunification of migrants in their destination country is often the result of a process that includes one or more steps and combines family and migration events. However, the lack of relevant data often limits the possibility of studying all these stages.

OBJECTIVE
The paper aims to identify family migration models by means of the entire family migration trajectory, highlighting the relationship of these models with the migration project and with the family, cultural, and gender norms of the country of origin.

METHODS
We used sequence analysis on a large sample of resident families with at least one foreign-born member in Italy, using data collected by the Italian Institute of Statistics in 2011–2012. We focused exclusively on migrants from less developed countries and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

RESULTS
Our results indicate that family characteristics and stability in the host country are not always relevant for family reunification. Family, cultural, and gender norms of the home country and the nature of the migration project itself determine the family migration model. When the migration project becomes orientated, or converges over time to settlement, family reunification is pursued regardless of the possible difficulties and conditions during emigration. Conversely, during the time that migrants are maintaining a temporary project, family reunification is not even considered.

CONTRIBUTION
Adopting a longitudinal approach, we generalised and extended previous results, considering migrants from additional countries and studying the reunification of all

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family members. We compared family migration models and their association with gender, cultural, and family norms of the country of origin and the family migration project.

1. Introduction

European countries of both long-standing and more recent immigration have experienced family settlement, even if this has occurred later in Southern European countries compared to those of Northern Europe (Strozza 2010; Ambrosini, Bonizzoni, and Triandafyllidou 2014). Family settlement has been fostered by family permits, one of the main legal routes of entry after the halt of work-related migration (Ambrosini, Bonizzoni, and Triandafyllidou 2014; Kofman 2004; Kraler, Kofman, and Kholi 2011). Consequently, family reunification is a key concept for understanding the settlement and integration process of migrants and for planning adequate policies.

For a long time, family reunification in the host country has been conceptualised as the aspiration of all migrants after a period of transnational living arrangements, and it was considered to be strongly connected to the characteristics of members left behind and to the economic and social conditions in the host country. However, the results of numerous studies questioned this general belief due to a variety of factors: the persistence of transnational living arrangements even after a long sojourn in the host country (e.g., Baizán, Beauchemin, and González-Ferrer 2014; Caarls and Mazzuccato 2016); reunification being pursued regardless of a certain level of stability in the host country (González-Ferrer 2007; Fresnoza-Flot 2017); and lack of family reunification among migrants with the credentials to accomplish it (Fresnoza-Flot 2017). In addition, there is no consensus regarding the relationship between the characteristics of members left behind and their reunification. These results contributed to forming the basis for a new approach that studies family migration by taking into account the country of origin with its gender, cultural, and family norms and their effect on family migration (Hoang 2011; Baizán, Beauchemin, and González-Ferrer 2014; Beauchemin et al. 2015; Bonizzoni 2015; Caarls and Mazzuccato 2016; Fresnoza-Flot 2017).

To better understand the reunification process, information about family members living in the host country as well as those left behind is needed (Gonzales-Ferrer 2007; Beauchemin et al. 2015; Caarls and Mazzuccato 2016). However, this information is usually not available. For this reason, in Italy, as well as in other countries, studies on family reunification have been strongly limited by the nature of the data. The dynamic nature of the family reunification process, the different timing, order of events (migration and family formation), and sequencing of family members' arrivals

determine different family migration models (Esteve and Cortina 2011; Ishizawa and Stevens 2011; González-Ferrer, Baizán, and Beauchemin 2012) and suggest sequence analysis as a suitable approach to the phenomenon. Until now, the data available for Italy had prevented this approach. However, a recent survey conducted by the Italian Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) on a large sample of households with at least one foreign-born member revealed detailed information about family members in the host country and those left behind. Based on this data, we study family reunification trajectories among first-generation migrants coming from high migration pressure countries (HMPCs) – namely, less developed countries and the countries of Eastern and Central Europe.

However, the contribution of our study is not limited to the adopted approach and the novelty of Italy as a case study. The paper contributes to the literature on family migration in three ways. First, most of the studies on family reunification are focused on a single country of origin and study a specific aspect of family reunification: for instance, migrants from sub-Saharan Africa and their propensity not to reunify in the host country (Baizán, Beauchemin, and González-Ferrer 2014; Beauchemin et al. 2015; Mazzuccato et al. 2015; Caarls and Mazzuccato 2016) or women from Latin America and the Philippines and transnational motherhood (e.g., Ambrosini 2008, 2015; Boccagni and Lagomarsino 2011; Banfi and Boccagni 2011; Bonizzoni 2015). This approach allows the cultural context of a specific country of origin to be taken into account, but it impedes a generalisation and comparison with the other family migration models. Conversely, in our study we do not focus on a specific country of origin to point out which factors affect the family migration model.

Second, previous studies focused mainly on the reunification of a family member: of a spouse (Baizán, Beauchemin, and González-Ferrer 2014; Beauchemin et al. 2015; Caarls and Mazzuccato 2016; González-Ferrer 2011; Ishizawa and Stevens 2011) – with greater attention given to a wife's reunification, neglecting a migrated husband as a dependant (Fresnoza-Flot 2017) – or of children (Ambrosini 2008, 2015; Bonizzoni 2015). Alternatively, scholars studied the two processes (child and spouse reunification) separately (González-Ferrer 2007) or without distinguishing which members were left behind, thereby focusing on transnational families (Mazzuccato et al. 2015). This approach considers only a single step in the reunification process and prevents differentiation of family migration models. Taking advantage of the available information on all family members who emigrated and those left behind, we differentiate family models ranging from living apart together across borders (no reunification) to complete family reunification (spouse and children). We also consider intermediate cases of 'partial family reunification' with only the spouses (wife and husband) being reunified or reunification with the children only.

Third, we reflect on the role of family characteristics and conditions in emigration, questioning their effect on family decision-making while pointing out that family migration models are strongly connected to gender, cultural, and family norms of the country of origin and the family migration project.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: Section 2 summarises the mainstream approach to the study of family reunification. Section 3 presents the emerging theoretical framework. Section 4 shows official data on family migration in Italy. Section 5 describes data and methods of analysis. Section 6 presents the main results. Section 7 discusses and concludes.

2. Family reunification: Literature review

Most of the studies on family reunification are grounded on three main ideas. First is the idea that family reunification in the destination country was the only option among long-term migrants. However, this 'certainty' was questioned by the results of studies on migration between sub-Saharan Africa and Europe, which demonstrated that this option is not always preferred (Baizán, Beauchemin, and González-Ferrer 2014; Beauchemin et al. 2015; Mazzuccato et al. 2015; Caarls and Mazzuccato 2016). Living apart together is a common living arrangement among sub-Saharan migrants; therefore, the choice of living apart together across borders (LATAB) reproduces the usual living arrangement (Baizán, Beauchemin, and González-Ferrer 2014; Beauchemin et al. 2015; Mazzuccato et al. 2015).

Second, family reunification was usually considered to be intertwined with the stability reached in the country of destination. Thus, scholars studying this topic have usually focused on the relationship between economic conditions, legal status, and years since migration. However, the results did not always support the hypothesis that migrants pursue family reunification only after having reached a certain level of stability in the host country. Scholars have recently pointed out that legal status neither facilitates nor impedes reunification (González-Ferrer 2011; Baizán, Beauchemin, and González-Ferrer 2014; Caarls and Mazzuccato 2016). In fact, migrants may reunify the family through alternative routes, and reunification is sometimes pursued even without legal status (Caarls and Mazzuccato 2016; Fresnoza-Flot 2017). In addition, Beauchemin et al. (2014) found that family reunification is more likely in countries with more restrictive policies. Family reunification is a time- and money-consuming process; therefore, it rarely occurs immediately after the migration of the forerunner; however, the increase in years since migration does not necessarily increase the likelihood of family reunification (González-Ferrer 2011; Mazzuccato et al. 2015). As for economic stability, some scholars (Castles and Miller 2003; King et al. 2004; Kulu

and Milewski 2007; Glick 2010; Ambrosini 2015) have pointed out that reunification occurs only after the forerunner has achieved economic stability and he/she can afford the cost for family life in the host country. Other scholars (González-Ferrer 2011; Fresnoza-Flot 2017) pointed out that migrants, despite their economically difficult situation, reunify the family with the support of social and family networks.

This raises the following question: Is family reunification effectively related to conditions reached in the host country (e.g., economic and home stability, or legal status)? These conditions are important, but neither condition is sufficient nor necessary: Reunification is pursued even without these conditions, and conversely, reunification is often not pursued among migrants with these credentials (Fresnoza-Flot 2017). This leads us to our first hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 1*: Family reunification may occur regardless of economic performance and legal status.

Third, studies on family reunification have focused on the role of the characteristics of the family members left behind, and their job and educational opportunities 'here' and 'there,' in shaping family migration. As for a spouse's characteristics, results are contradictory. For instance, Caarls and Mazzuccato (2016) found that having a highly educated spouse left behind decreases family reunification in the host country, while Baizán, Beauchemin, and González-Ferrer (2014) and González-Ferrer (2007) found that having a highly educated spouse left behind increases and accelerates family reunification in the host country. Similar contradictory results also emerge for the occupational status of the spouse left behind. Having an employed spouse left behind delays (González-Ferrer 2007) or impedes (Baizán, Beauchemin, and González-Ferrer 2014; Caarls and Mazzuccato 2016) his/her reunification because having the children and both spouses in the destination country would increase the costs of family life. However, the opposite may be true: Reunifying an employed spouse may positively contribute to the family economy, sharing the costs and improving the living conditions in the host country (Bonizzoni 2015).

As for children's characteristics, scholars unanimously recognised that having a higher number of children delays family reunification in the host country (Dustman 2003; González-Ferrer 2007; Ryan and Sales 2013), but the results regarding gender and age selection among children are ambiguous. As for gender selection, some studies highlighted a gender preference for male reunification (Barou 2001; Dustman 2003; González-Ferrer, Baizán, and Beauchemin 2012) while others found no gender preference (Ortensi 2006; Valtolina and Maiorino 2006; González-Ferrer 2007). As for age selection, some scholars (González-Ferrer 2007; Friberg 2012; Mazzuccato et al. 2015) found that younger children tend to be reunified later than older children. They

require more parental care and have more time before being excluded from legal reunification when turning 18 years old, while adult children may positively contribute to the family economy through employment (Bonizzoni 2015; Fresnoza-Flot 2017). Conversely, some scholars (Zontini 2004; Friberg 2012) highlighted the difficulties of reunifying teenaged children due to the decrease in social and economic prestige experienced through emigration and the break-up of friendships and affective relationships, as well as possible difficulties with the host-country language and schooling. Job and educational opportunities for children 'here' and 'there' also intervene in the decision to reunify children or not (Mazzuccato et al. 2015; Fresnoza-Flot 2017).

These contrasting results regarding gender and age selection among children, as well as the educational and working status of the spouse, could be attributable to the different origins analysed in each study. This leads to our second hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 2*: We expect that family members' characteristics affect family reunification in different ways, reproducing gender and family norms of the country of origin.

3. An emerging theoretical framework for family migration and reunification

The above analysis stressed that some 'forces' act beyond the characteristics of the members left behind, and the conditions in emigration affect the decision whether to reunify them or not (Hoang 2011; Ishizawa and Stevens 2011; Baizán, Beauchemin, and González-Ferrer 2014; Mazzuccato et al. 2015; Caarls and Mazzuccato 2016; Fresnoza-Flot 2017). Even if scholars unanimously agreed in describing family trajectories with respect to the first migrant's gender combined with his or her origin (Kofman 1999; Tognetti Bordogna 2004; González-Ferrer 2007), conceptualisation of the problem has only recently begun, putting the normative context 'there' at the core of the debate and recognising that family migration decisions and the perception of rights and obligations are strongly connected to family norms, hierarchies of power 'there,' and the normative context in the country of origin (Mahler and Pessar 2006; Boyle, Feng, and Gayle 2009; Ishizawa and Stevens 2011; Shauman 2010; Hoang 2011; Baizán, Beauchemin, and González-Ferrer 2014; Beauchemin et al. 2015; Caarls and Mazzuccato 2016; Fresnoza-Flot 2017). These norms, in turn, are strongly intertwined with social identity as men or women, as well as the norms and expectations ascribed to social identity.

Therefore, decisions regarding family reunification are influenced by migrants' perceptions of the expectations of their family and their original community with respect to their migration and gender identity (Ishizawa and Steven 2011; Hoang 2011; Fresnoza 2017). The sequencing of husbands' and wives' arrivals in a receiving country is shaped by the gender roles in the sending country, which favour or prevent female autonomous migration (Ishizawa and Stevens 2011; Beauchemin et al. 2015) and influence the choice regarding reunification of the family in the host country (Fresnoza-Flot 2017). In patriarchal societies, female migration for work reasons is conceived as the 'last choice' because it reflects the husband's poor capacity to fulfil his breadwinner's role (Hoang 2011). Moreover, reunification is less frequent and more selective (Beauchemin et al. 2015). In contrast, among migrants from societies that are more egalitarian in terms of gender, the spouse's reunification could help in realising transnational and settlement-orientated projects more rapidly (Bonizzoni 2015). Hence, this leads to our third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: We expect that the family migration model is strongly shaped by the gender, cultural, and family norms of the country of origin.

Migration is generally not a decision made, 'uncontested,' by the isolated forerunner (Hoang 2011: 1446); rather, it is a choice negotiated within the household (Caarls and Mazzuccato 2016) following the home country's norms that sanction the way migration is negotiated within the family (Hoang 2011). These norms regulate the degree of participation and the agreement of the other household members in the decision, ranging from 'consensual' (complete household consensus before migration) to 'negotiated' (the decision to migrate was negotiated in an attempt to resolve conflicts) to 'conflictual' (disagreement within the household) (Hoang 2011). For instance, Beauchemin et al. (2015) found that the elderly being opposed to reunification in the host country was an important deterrent to women's migration. Thus we have our fourth hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: We expect a relationship between the decision-making process within the family and the family migration model.

Finally, family reunification is frequently conceptualised as being constrained by normative, economic, and social conditions in the host country that neglect the migrants' agency and aims. Migrants exercise agency in regulating their family decisions and their family migration project (Hoang 2011; Beauchemin et al. 2015); therefore, the constraints may be insufficient to limit family reunification. The reunification process is strongly associated with the migration project (Constant and

Massey 2002) – namely, the migrant's idea about their migration, which includes the motivation for the migration, the desired length of stay, future intentions, perspective, and aspirations (Ferro 2006). Reunification is more likely in the case of settlement intentions (Borjas and Bratsberg 1996; Khoo 2003; Kley 2011; Fresnoza-Flot 2017). According to the New Economic of Labour Migration theory, migrants who are target earners usually do not reunify the family, or only those members who can help in reaching their savings target more rapidly are unified (González-Ferrer 2007; Bonizzoni 2015). Because migration intentions and expectations can change over time, their evolution (rather than the initial plan alone) should also be considered when studying family reunification (De Jong 2000).

Thus, we have our fifth hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: We expect that the family reunification decision is coherent with the evolution of the migration project.

4. A look at migration trends and family permits in Italy

In Italy, the foreign presence is a rooted reality, and the number of foreign families has increased rapidly over the last two decades (Blangiardo and Terzera 2008; Bonifazi et al. 2009; Istat 2013a) as documented by the increase in family permits, foreigners' marriages, and births (ISTAT 2013b; Blangiardo 2014; De Luca, Gabrielli, and Strozza 2015). Since 1999, the number of foreign residents, namely those registered in the Population Register (Anagrafe), has increased from about 1.1 million to more than 5 million in 2015 (Figure 1), and the estimated number of migrants amounts to 7 million, including legal and illegal nonresidents (Blangiardo 2016) and those who have become Italian citizens (Strozza 2016). During this period, Italy – together with Spain – has become one of the main European host countries; this is despite the economic crisis of recent years that caused a significant slowdown in the overall flow of immigrants. At the same time, the ratio of foreign births to total births in Italy has settled after a prolonged increase, now maintaining a stable quota of around 14%. Similarly, the percentage of marriages in which at least one of the spouses is foreign has decreased, stabilising at around 13% in recent years.[3]

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[3] This reduction is presumably attributable to a 2009 change in the law regarding the acquisition of Italian citizenship after a marriage.

Figure 1: **Foreign residents, percentage of foreign births, and percentage of marriages with at least one foreigner, Italy, 1999–2016**


% foreign births   % marriage with at least one foreigner   Residents (right axis)
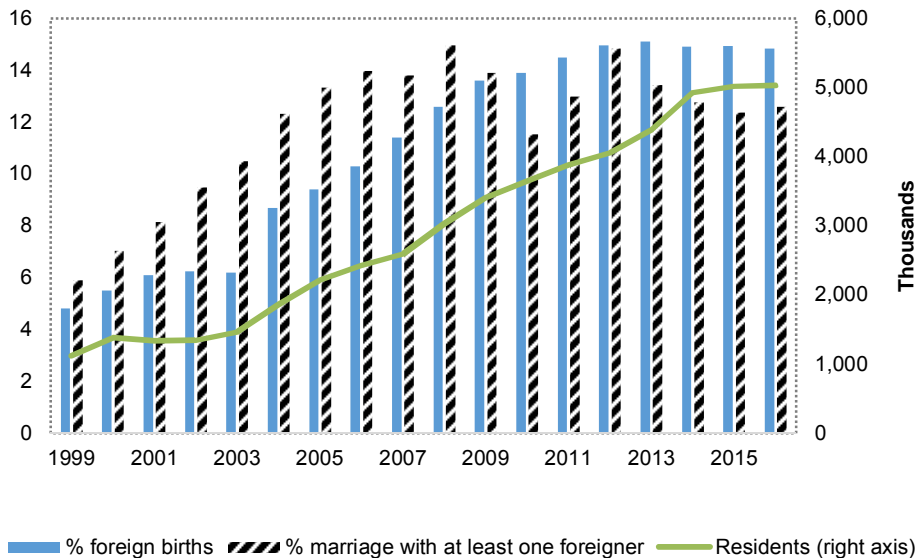
This impressive growth resulted from inflows from many origin countries, characterising, for a long time, Italy for its heterogeneity of immigration compared to the migratory model in Northern European countries. Over time, there has been a more rapid and substantial growth of some nationalities that were historically present in Italy (China, Morocco and, later, Albania), those that have arrived more recently (Ukraine and Moldova) and those who have benefitted from entry to the EU (Romania) (Bonifazi 2017).

Other information comes from residence permits; this source allows indirect analysis of family dynamics. Also, from this perspective, the economic crisis represented the conclusion of a period of extraordinary growth of immigration, which started in the early 1990s with the fall of the Berlin Wall (Bonifazi and Marini 2014). During this period, the quota of family permits, in relation to the number of work permits, has risen from less than 20% to about 40% (Figures 2a and 2b). This dynamic is clearer among women, who are currently the only people with an increasing percentage of family permits.

Figure 2: **Resident permits, percentage of permits with work reasons, family reasons, and other reasons by gender, 1992–2016**

a) Men
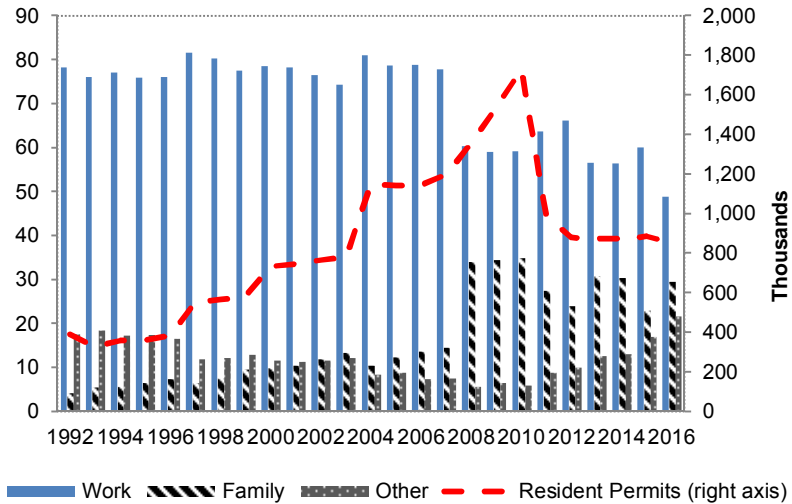
b) Women
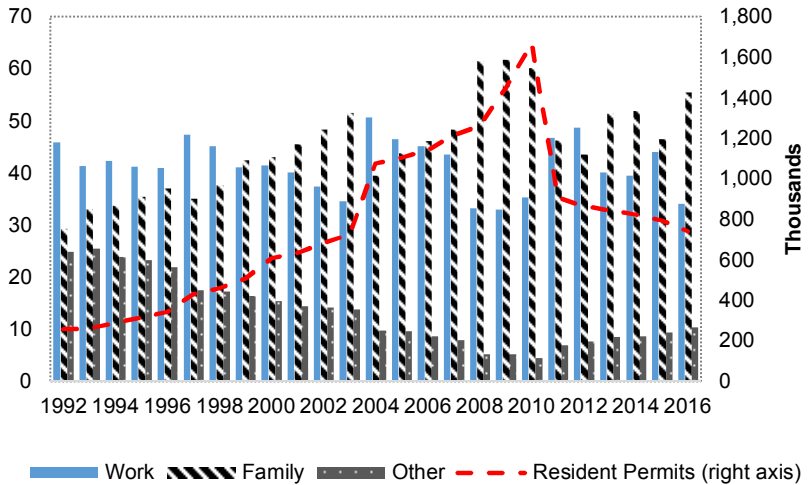
However, this source of data is not exhaustive, as it does not include foreigners who do not need a residence permit (for example, because they come from a member state of the European Union, as with the Romanians since 2007, or because they acquired Italian citizenship) or illegal foreigners. Furthermore, both of these sources of data lack information required to study the trajectories that lead to foreign family settlement in Italy and its timing. Consequently, little is still known – and often only at a subnational level – about the dynamics of family reunification (Bonomi and Terzera 2003; Terzera 2006, 2011; Gabrielli, Paterno, and Terzera 2016).

5. Data, methods, and measurement

5.1 Data

The analyses are performed on the data collected by the survey 'Social Integration and Condition among Foreign Citizens' conducted by ISTAT during 2011–2012 on a sample of 9,500 households with at least one foreign-born member, including a total of 25,000 individual interviews.

The survey aimed at describing the social integration and everyday life of foreigners living in Italy. The sample is a two-stage design in which municipalities are the first-level units and households are the second-level units. All members of selected households are included in the sample. The households are randomly selected from the Population Register (Anagrafe) among those households with at least one foreign-born member. The interview was carried out with the technique of computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI).[4]

The focus of the paper is family reunification; therefore, we considered only those members who could be reunified according to Italian law: spouse and children. Consistently, we excluded from the analysis all the families that could not experience family reunification in the legal sense: unmarried couples,[5] one-parent families with all children born in Italy, couples married after the migration of both partners,[6] couples with at least one Italian partner, all families whose first migrant was a son (because

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[4] For further details, see http://www.istat.it/it/archivio/10825.
[5] In these cases, the date on which migrants became a couple is not registered. Therefore, it is not possible to correctly identify the causal relationship between migration and couple formation: the two partners may have migrated independently and could have met in emigration – in this situation, no reunification took place.
[6] As in the case of unmarried couples, it is not possible to determine the specific order of events of migration and couple formation; they can be independent or dependent.

Italian law allows reunification of the parents only in specific cases)[7] and, finally, a few families who jointly migrated. Finally, we focused on migrants coming from HMPCs; thus, we excluded families whose forerunner came from other countries. These migrants follow different models of family migration characterised by a higher percentage of joint family migration, a higher complete reunification rate, and fewer differences between female and male forerunners (Terzera and Barbiano di Belgiojoso 2018). In addition, migrants from HMPCs constitute the majority of resident migrants in Italy.

These criteria allow us a suitable and representative sample to study family reunification among migrants from HMPCs. Our final sample size is 7,045 families.

Before proceeding, we point out a few limitations of the study. First, the sample was selected by the Population Register (Anagrafe) which, in Italy, includes only legal migrants who voluntarily register themselves in the Anagrafe of their municipalities. Usually, only migrants with a high number of years since migration (i.e., those who are more stable) register themselves in the Anagrafe. Therefore, the analysis refers only to documented and more stable migrants. Second, the sequences were retrospectively built, and thus we may miss the arrival of those children who, at the time of the survey, had already left the family, having returned home, migrated again, or formed their own family. However, considering that second-generation immigrants in Italy are still below the age of 18 (Istat 2009), the under-estimation should be limited.

5.2 Methods

We used sequence analysis, which has been successfully employed to analyse migrant issues such as working trajectories (Kogan 2007; Fuller 2014) and was recently used to study family formation and emigration (Kleinepier, de Valk, and van Gaalen 2015).

We proceeded as follows: First, we constructed the sequences. A family migration trajectory is a string of characters representing a monthly sequence of family states. The family states describe the family condition in Italy (couple, with or without children, one-parent family, or single) taking into account the members left behind. For example, a 'couple without children' in Italy may be a 'reunited couple without children' – that is, a couple without children in which the forerunner has reunified with the spouse (the only family member left behind) in the host country – or a 'reunited couple with children abroad' – that is, a couple that has left all their children behind. Similarly, we defined the other states for couples with children and for one-parent households. In

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[7] According to article 23 L 189/02, a migrant can reunify with his or her parents in the host country if the parents do not have other sons in the country of origin or are 65 years old with other sons who cannot support the parents.

addition, we distinguished between migrants who are alone (migrants who migrated alone leaving a spouse and/or children abroad) and single migrants (migrants who migrated alone without a spouse or children, including those widowed and divorced without children – hereafter described as single – and migrants without a household, as done by Kleinepier, de Valk, and van Gaalen). We also took into account the gender of the forerunner. Hence, our state variable is coded as follows: AM = alone male; SM = single male; AF = alone female; SF = single female; OPI = one-parent family with some members abroad (partner and/or children); OPR = reunified one-parent family; CWI = reunited couple with incomplete total of their children (couple with some children in Italy and some children abroad); CWR = reunited couple with children; CWA = reunited couple with all children abroad (the partners living in Italy but all children living abroad); and CR = reunited couple without children.

The surveyed families had different lengths of stay in Italy at the time of interview. Thus, as conventionally done (Fuller 2014; Castagnone et al. 2015; Kleinepier, de Valk, and van Gaalen 2015), to compare family events among families with the same length of time spent in Italy, we considered as the starting time the date of arrival, measuring the time in months since arrival. We therefore focused on three different observation windows, limiting the analysis to three subgroups of the initial sample: five-year period after arrival with 5,408 families who stayed in Italy for at least five years; ten-year period after arrival with 3,362 families who stayed in Italy for at least ten years; and 15-year period after arrival with 1,478 families who stayed in Italy for at least 15 years. We excluded from the analysis the families with missing information for the year of the arrival (123 families), while in cases of a missing month, we estimated it according to the distribution of the arrival months of the overall sample. We constructed the family events dataset in which each record represents an event (marriage or family member's arrival) with the associated duration and the 'family state' after this event.

Second, to obtain a dissimilarity matrix with the distance between all pairs of sequences, we applied the optimal matching algorithm (OMA).[8] For further details, see Abbott and Tsay (2000), which is one of the available methods. The high flexibility of this method makes it possible to compare sequences that are partly similar but shifted (Fulda 2016; Scherer and Bruedel 2006 as cited in Fulda 2016), and the good performance in similar studies that used OMA (Fuller and Martin 2012; Fuller 2014; Fulda 2016) justify this choice. The distance between each pair of sequences is the number of operations (deletion, insertion, and substitution) to transform one sequence into another. In addition, each operation has a cost, and thus the distance between two sequences is the minimal total cost for transforming one sequence into another one. There is no unique solution to assign the costs (Abbott and Tsay 2000; Kleinepier, de Valk, and van Gaalen 2015). However, as pointed out by Lesnard (2014), when data

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[8] For the analyses, we used the SQ package of Stata (Brzinsky-Fay, Kohler, and Luniak 2006).

includes several strong clusters (as in our case), the costs mainly affect the assignation of the atypical or less frequent sequences: Lower substitution costs between states 'allow grouping [of] the sequences if they are sufficiently similar' (Lesnard 2014: 42), while higher costs allow separating of the specific groups. In our specific case, the distance between two states could vary according to the number of members who emigrated at the same time and their role in the family: children or spouse (Carlson 1985; Boyd 1989; Dustman 2003; Tognetti Bordogna 2004; Ortensi 2006; González-Ferrer 2007). Therefore, as done by Fuller (2014), we decided to adopt an ad hoc substitution matrix (see appendix) that assigns higher weight in cases of more members reunited at the same time and higher cost to children's reunification as compared to that of a spouse.[9]

Third, to identify the main trajectories of family formation, we grouped the sequences with the cluster analysis. We identified the optimal number of clusters by means of Dada and Caliński methods, also taking into consideration the number of cases for each cluster with the aim of maximising how informative the classification was (Halpin 2016). The number of selected clusters varies according to the observation window: four for a five-year period, seven for a ten-year period, and five for a 15-year period.

Finally, to determine how different models of family migration (clusters) are associated with family characteristics and the migration project, we employed a series of logistic regression models. We decided to perform the regression analysis only for the ten-year period because we can observe more changes compared to the five-year period, and we have a higher sample size compared to the 15-year period (which is a consistency check). We compared trajectories of (partial) reunification with the trajectories of no reunification to highlight the differences between these two-family migration models: transnational or reunited family. Moreover, we compared partial family reunification with complete family reunification.

5.3 Independent variables in the logistic regression models

We considered the following personal characteristics of the forerunner: gender (male is the reference category), age at arrival, participation in a regularisation programme, educational level, and country of origin. For the age at migration, we created four categories reflecting the family cycle as follows: 1 = before 18; 2 = 18–29 (reference

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[9] We tested other solutions (such as costs based on transition rates; default option deletion and insertion 1 and substitution 2; other forms of the matrix shown in appendix with larger or smaller differences in the cost of children's and spouse's reunification) that produced only slightly different results; therefore, we opted for this solution because it guaranteed the most informative classification.

category); 3 = 30–45, and 4 = 46+. As for the educational level: 1 = compulsory (reference category); 2 = secondary; and 3 = tertiary. As for the country of origin, we defined 12 areas, in some cases coinciding with a single country (Romania, Morocco, China, the Philippines, and Albania), while in other cases we grouped countries from the same area because there were no differences in family dynamics at the country level (Ukraine and Moldova, Indian subcontinent, sub-Saharan Africa, other North Africa, other Asia, other Eastern Europe, and Latin America). Unfortunately, the legal status at arrival is unknown; therefore, we use as a proxy the variable 'participation in a regularisation programme.'

To examine the evolution of migration intention along the migration experience, we considered both the initial and the present intention, and thus we included in the model the variable 'migration plan along migration experience' as a combination of the answers to the questions 'intention at the arrival' and 'future intention at the interview.' It is coded as follows: 1 = stay forever with no change (if migrant declared his intention to stay forever in both instances – reference category); 2 = temporary project changed to permanent (if migrant changed intention from temporary project to settlement); 3 = temporary project with no change (if migrant indicated intention to leave in both instances); and 4 = changed for remigration (if migrant changed plan from settlement to remigration).

We added a dummy to summarise the age of the children at the emigration of the first family member coded 1 if all the children were younger than 13 years old (not yet teenagers) and 0 otherwise.[10] Considering that the immigrant flows into Italy have changed substantially over time (Codini 2014), we also included in the model as control variables the period of arrival, coded as follows: 0 = before 1994 (reference category), 1 = 1994–1997, 2 = 1998–2000, and 3 = 2001–2002. As for the economic status of the family, we considered the economic performance of the forerunner along the trajectory of migration. The variable measures job satisfaction and any changes in tasks and income during the migration experience, coded 1 for high (high satisfaction and an increase in tasks and income) and 0 otherwise (including those who are not working – reference category).

We added the civil status (married, single, and return single) for comparison between female-lead trajectories; moreover, for the model that compares partial and completed family reunification, we added a dummy 'spouse employed before migration' and a dummy for a forerunner with a higher educational level compared to the spouse.[11]

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[10] As partial reunification with only some children is a rare event, we do not test for selectivity among children.

[11] Educational level and occupation before migration are available only for family members in emigration, and this prevents us from using this information in the other models.

6. Results

6.1 Descriptive statistics

Before proceeding with the analysis, we will provide a brief description of the 7,045 families at the time of interview (Table 1). The majority of the families (47.8%) have a man as the forerunner, and only 13.9% migrated partially or completely together. The mean duration of stay is considerably high (more than ten years). A small percentage of families (8.9%) have all children born in Italy.

Table 1:   Main characteristics of the family at the time of interview

Variable	Percentage/Mean
Gender of the forerunner	
Female forerunner	38.3%
Male forerunner	47.8%
Joint or partial family migration	13.9%
Years since migration of the family (mean)	10.4
Families with all children born in Italy	8.9%
Area of origin of the forerunner	
Romania	25.6%
Ukraine and Moldova	10.1%
Albania	11.9%
Other Eastern Europe	9.0%
China	3.1%
Philippines	3.1%
Indian subcontinent	8.2%
Other Asia	1.7%
Morocco	10.2%
Other North Africa	5.0%
Sub-Saharan Africa	6.4%
Latin America	5.7%
Number of families	7,045

Source: Own elaboration on ISTAT data

One family out of four has a Romanian forerunner. Albanian, Ukrainian and Moldovan, and Moroccan forerunners are the most numerous after Romanians.

6.2 An overall picture of family trajectories

Confirming previous results (Ambrosini 2015; Barbiano di Belgiojoso and Terzera 2016), female autonomous migrants, as well as female forerunners, more frequently than men persist in the initial position (single or alone migrant) and face more difficulties in reunifying the family (Ambrosini 2015) or do not intend to reunify the family in emigration (Baizán, Beauchemin, and González-Ferrer 2014). As shown by Table 2, the percentage of single and alone men considerably decreased along the years of migration, while among women, the decrease is lower, and even after ten years in Italy, most female migrants are still alone or single. It is well known that reunification is a time-consuming process, especially if it occurs legally; therefore, assuming a short observation period, most sequences do not have any changes: Migrants are alone or single throughout the period, with a considerable gender gap – 83% among women compared to 70% among men. Interestingly, 7% of male migrants acquired a family during their first five years in Italy, even if they continued to live apart together ('SM – AM'); among women, this percentage is negligible (0.69%). Male forerunners usually reunify in the host country simultaneously with the spouse and their children ('AM – CWA,' 'AM – CWR'), while among women, reunification exclusively with their children is one of the most frequent situations. This includes cases of one-parent families with female forerunners, which usually partially or completely reunify with the children in the host country ('AF – OPI' and 'AF – OPR').

Table 2: **Main trajectories according to the observation window and the gender of the forerunner (column percentage)**

Trajectory	Male			Female		
	5 years	10 years	15 years	5 years	10 years	15 years
SM or SF	46.7	28.2	18.9	45.2	39.4	41.9
AM or AS	24.3	18.6	18.7	38.7	34.4	30.3
SM/SF – AM/SF	7.5	7.4				
AM/AF – CWR	4.8	7.3	5.9			
AM/AF – CWA	3.4	3.3	4.1	2.9	3.1	4.1
AM/AF – CR	3.2	3.7	3.9	1.3	1.6	2.2
SM/SF – AM/AF – CR		12.7	18.5			3.8
SM – AM – CWR		2.4	5.5			
AF – OPI				4.5	7.0	4.9
AF – OPR				3.0	4.1	4.1
No. of unweighted cases	3,076	2,133	1,111	2,332	1,229	367

Note: Empty cells represent negligible percentages. The percentages do not add to 100 because we omitted rare trajectories. AM = alone male; SM = single male; AF = alone female; SF = single female; OPI = one-parent family with some members abroad (partner and/or children); OPR = reunified one-parent family; CWI = couple with some children in Italy and some child abroad (uncompleted); CWR = reunited couple with children; CWA = couple without children in Italy but with all the children abroad (uncompleted); and CR = reunited couple without children.
Source: Own elaboration on ISTAT data.

Among women forerunners, reunification with the spouse and children tended to take place at different times, while among male forerunners, the most frequent model of reunification (nearly 10%) included the spouse and children at the same time.

As shown in Table 2, extending the period up to ten years, the percentage of men who are single considerably decreases, while there is an increase in the frequency of trajectories leading to complete family reunification ('AM – CWR' and 'SM – AM – CR'). Usually, migrants who married during emigration have to reunify with only the spouse – being the only member left behind – while migrants who migrated after marriage more frequently reunify with the spouse and children at the same time. The results over a 15-year period confirm this trend, pointing out a continuous increase in family reunification by means of the above-mentioned trajectories. Among women, the situation does not change significantly, even if the observation window is extended. It should be noted that it is quite rare for women to get married in the country of origin after the migration. In addition, complete reunification takes place only after a short time, as pointed out by regional evidence (Gabrielli, Paterno, and Terzera 2016), and only step by step.

Figure 3[12] shows family trajectories assuming a ten-year period and confirms that family migration and country of origin are strongly intertwined. Forerunners from North African countries tend to be men who migrated alone and, after an average of five years abroad, go back to the country of origin to get married. After a short time (on average 2.6 years), they reunify with the spouse in the host country – the so-called trailed spouse model (Bruegel 1996). In contrast, sub-Saharan migrants tend to be men who migrated and left their family abroad without family reunification, adopting an LATAB strategy (Baizán, Beauchemin, and González-Ferrer 2014; Beauchemin et al. 2015; Mazzuccato et al. 2015).

The Latin American, Ukrainian and Moldovan, and Philippines models describe women who do not reunify with members left behind, thus remaining 'single' or 'return single' throughout the considered period. Less frequently, they partially reunify the family, usually reunifying with the spouse, and in a few cases, also the children (more frequently among Latin Americans and Filipinos). Transnational families are usually a preferred option.

Albania and the Indian subcontinent show a similar pattern of family reunification according to the 'female as dependant' model (Kofman 1999): the male forerunner who reunifies all family members left behind within five or six years, or single migrants who, after having acquired a family during the migration, reunified it. However, they differ in quantity: Albanians have a higher reunification rate. Chinese and Romanian

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[12] The index plot represents, along the *x*-axis, the trajectory of the families that are arrayed along the *y*-axis. The different colours along the *x*-axis represent the family state month by month. The position of the trajectories along the *y*-axis reflects their similarity: the trajectories with similar starting points are adjacent.

forerunners are more equally distributed along gender lines, with higher family reunification among men, who usually reunify the spouse, on average, three years after migration, and the children ten months after the spouse. These communities are favoured in family reunification by the long duration of stay in emigration and/or the size of the ethnic community in the host country, which are recognised as favourable conditions for family reunification (Bijwaard 2010; Barbiano di Belgiojoso and Terzera 2016).

Figure 3: **Household migration trajectories according to the country of origin, for first ten years, Italy**
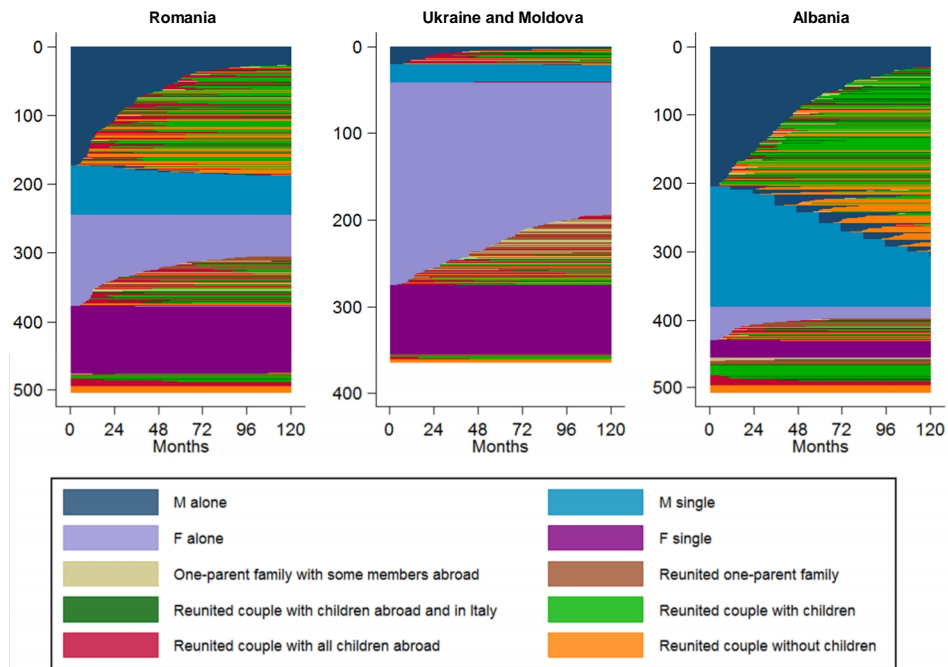
a) Europe

Figure 3: **(Continued)**

b) Asia
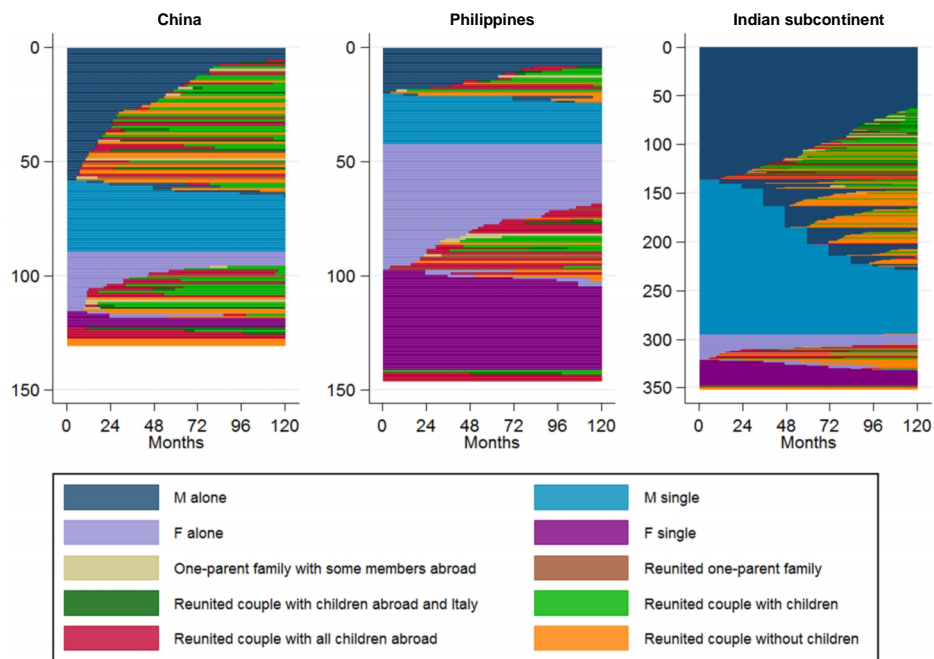
Figure 3:   (Continued)

c) Africa and Latin America
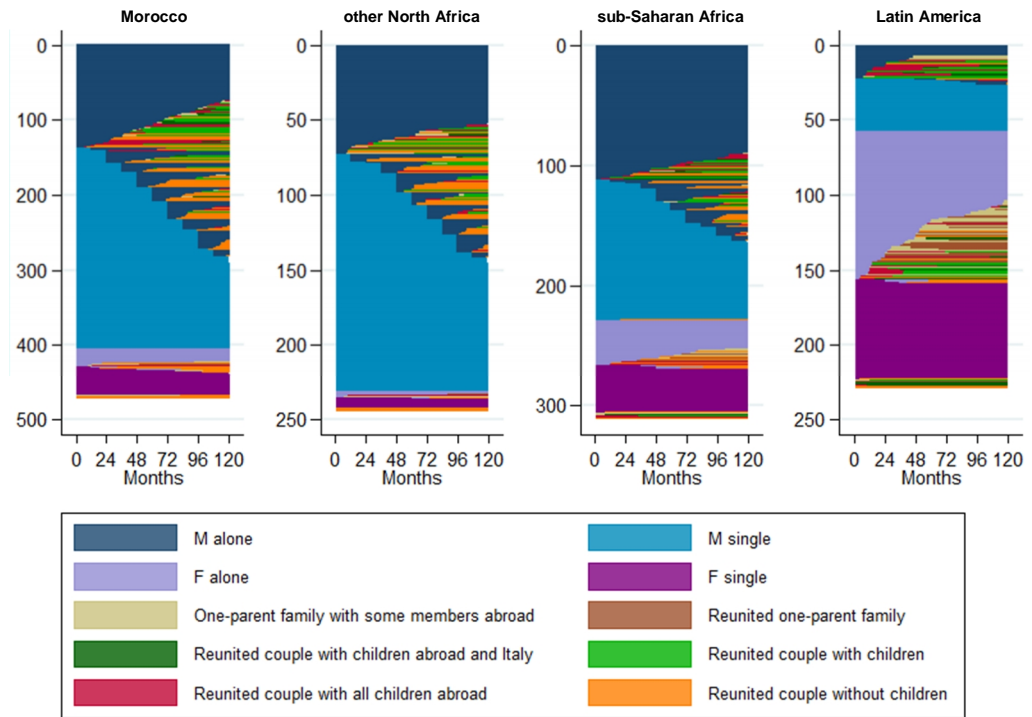
Source: Own elaboration on ISTAT data

6.3 Trajectories, family characteristics, and the migration project

The previous analysis has confirmed that origin and family migration are strongly intertwined. The following step is to show how family models are associated with gender, cultural, and family norms of the country of origin.

By means of the cluster analysis on the ten-year period, we identified seven clusters, each representing a different family migration model (see Figure 4 and Table 3). Cluster 1 represents migrants who are alone (25.7% of the families): men and women who, even after a long time spent in Italy, have not reunited with their partner or children, or both. Cluster 2 (6.1%) describes the reunification of couples without children: the man who reunifies with the wife shortly after emigrating (on average, two

and a half years after his arrival). Cluster 3 is the biggest (42.9%) and represents single women and men throughout the entire period and male migrants who get married after eight years of migration (on average) and reunify with the spouse a short time later.

Figure 4:   Family migration models in Italy. Seven clusters in a ten-year observation window
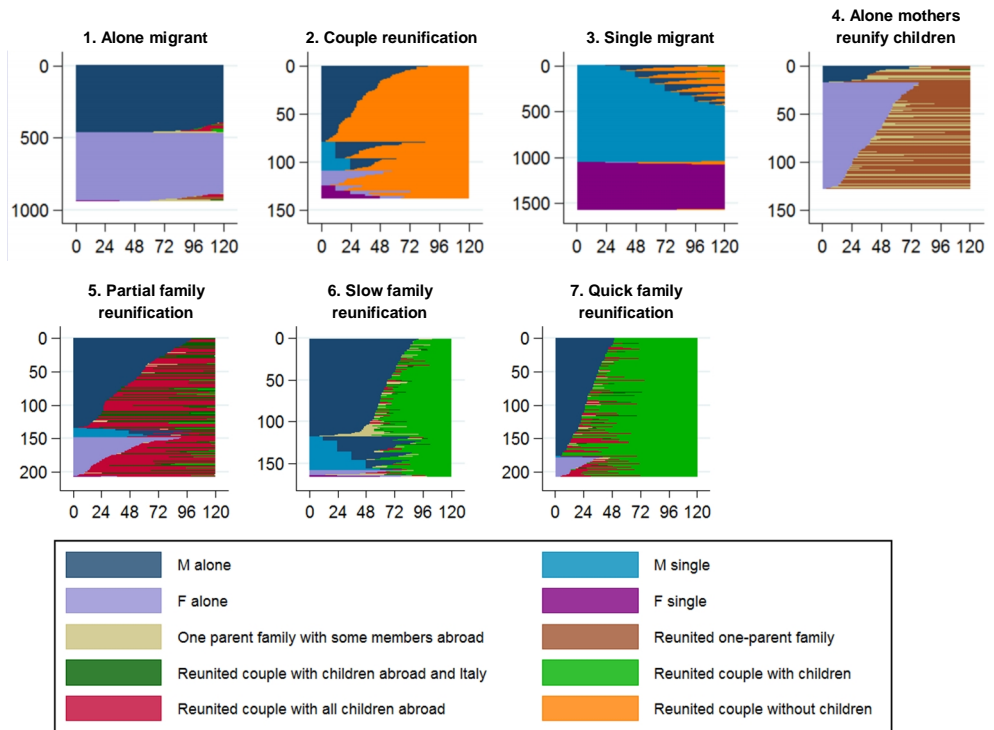
Source: Own elaborations on ISTAT data

Cluster 4 (4.5%) groups women who migrated and left their children behind but (partially) reunified with them after a short time (on average, four years after their arrival). Cluster 5 (7.8%) represents partial reunification on the part of migrants who, in contrast to cluster 2, also have children: Only the partner, or partner and some but not all, of the children, are reunified. Overall, the spouse arrives after three or nearly four and a half years, depending on the gender of the forerunner; it is a shorter time in cases of a female forerunner, which are the minority. Clusters 6 and 7 describe a complete family reunification on the part of men. Cluster 6 (4.4%) groups migrants who reunified

with their spouse and children at the same time after nearly five years, while cluster 7 (8.6%) describes a reunification by steps: initially, the couple's reunification (after 2.3 years), and then within the followings seven months, the children's reunification.

Table 3:   Cluster description: Timing and events

Cluster	Gender of the forerunner	Time before first family event (years)	First event	Time between first and second family event (years)	Second event	*N*
1	M	–	No	–	no	469
	F	–	No	–	no	473
2	M	2.7	Spouse arrival	–	no	109
3	M	8.2	Got married	–	no	1,054
	F	–	No	–	no	520
4	F	3.4	Children arrival	–	no	111
5	M	4.4	Spouse arrival	–	no	131
	F	3.1	Spouse arrival	–	no	54
6	M	4.7	Spouse and children (all) arrival	–	no	158
7	M	2.3	Spouse arrival	0.6	Children arrival	178

Source: Own elaborations on ISTAT data

The results of the logistic regression models (Table 4) confirm the relevant role of gender and origin and their strong interdependence. Complete family reunification is more frequent among male forerunners coming especially from Albania, Romania, and China (clusters 6 and 7), while women usually promote partial family reunification (cluster 5) or children's reunification in the case of a one-parent family (cluster 4). In this latter case, there is no clear relationship with the area of origin, confirming the exceptionality of this reunification among women forerunners and its strong connection with their being 'single' or 'return single.' Complete transnational families are more frequent among sub-Saharan migrants and Ukrainians and Moldovans.

Table 4:   Binary logistic regression models, odd ratios, and significance

	Family reunification (6 and 7) vs. alone (1)		Partial family reunification (5) vs. alone (1)		Single mother reunifying children (4) vs. alone female migrant (1) (Only female)		Partial family reunification (2) vs. family reunification (6 and 7)	
	OR	sign.	OR	sign.	OR	sign.	OR	sign.
Gender of forerunner (ref. male)								
Female	0.05	***	0.22	***	–		2.42	**
Area of origin[13]								
Romania	ref.		4.50	**	0.64		2.26	*
Ukraine and Moldova	0.18	***	1.70		0.72		10.14	***
Albania	1.75		4.35	**	2.58		ref.	
Other Eastern European	0.46	*	1.87		0.28	*	2.67	*
China	3.40	*	9.00	***	0.49		1.70	
Philippines	1.05		9.44	***	0.29		4.81	**
India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka	0.34	***	1.94		0.34		2.36	*
Other Asia	0.45		–		2.99		-	
Morocco	0.28	***	0.83		0.26		1.36	
Other North Africa	0.19	***	ref.		3.93		1.60	
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.10	***	0.85		0.25		4.24	**
Latin America	0.36	*	2.03		ref.		2.44	
Performance in the labour market (ref. lower)								
High	1.22		1.00		1.14		0.91	
Migration project (ref. settlement with no changes)								
Switch to settlement	0.97		1.11		0.84		1.02	
Always temporary project	0.38	***	0.96		0.37	**	1.92	*
Switch to temporary	0.86		1.13		–		1.82	
Age at arrival (ref. 18–29)								
<18	0.13	*	1.22		–		8.06	
30–45	0.94		1.52		0.54		4.05	***
46+	0.11	***	0.40	*	0.11	***	8.12	***
Period of arrival (ref. <1994)								
1994–1997	1.54		0.78		3.08		0.47	*
1998–2000	2.75	***	0.83		6.33	***	0.28	***
2001–2003	4.44	***	0.71		4.61	***	0.17	***
Regularization (ref. no)								
Yes	0.71		1.01		0.95		1.56	
All children aged below 13 years								
Yes	0.28	***	0.26	***	2.07	*	0.55	**
Education (ref. none or compulsory)								
secondary	1.52		1.35		1.58		0.60	
tertiary	1.86		1.08		1.63		0.37	

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[13] The reference category for each model was chosen after testing all the alternatives in order to facilitate the comments.

Table 4:   (Continued)

	Family reunification (6 and 7) vs. alone (1)		Partial family reunification (5) vs. alone (1)		Single mother reunifying children (4) vs. alone female migrant (1) (Only female)		Partial family reunification (2) vs. family reunification (6 and 7)	
	OR	sign.	OR	sign.	OR	sign.	OR	sign.
Education of forerunner higher than that of spouse							2.31	**
No agreement or incomplete agreement on migration decision with children and spouse	0.86		0.36	***	0.75[a]		0.56	*
Civil status (ref. married)								
Single					7.60	***		
Return single					5.76	***		
Spouse employed before migration							2.09	*
Constant	1.9		0.08	***	0.04	**	0.69	
N	1,285		1,114		564		555	
Pseudo R²	0.39		0.22		0.22		0.23	

Source: Own elaborations on ISTAT data
Note: [a] Agree with parents. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Having a temporary project is associated with a higher likelihood of no family reunification (cluster 1) compared to partial or complete reunification, while having a settlement project or having extended the desired length of stay to settlement increases the likelihood of complete family reunification (clusters 6 and 7) compared to a partial one (cluster 5) or no reunification (cluster 1).[14] The decision to reunify with only the spouse seems part of a strategy aimed at maximising the family income with two earners: If the spouse had a previous job before emigration, the likelihood of only partial family reunification is double that of complete reunification.

The age at migration and the consequent life cycle shape the trajectory: Having already fulfilled family responsibilities is strongly associated with lack of family reunification (cluster 1) or to partial family reunification (cluster 5).

The results for the age of children at the emigration of the forerunner are partially contrasting: Partial family reunification is strongly related to having at least some teenaged or older children, indicating that they are not reunified due to their older age. Moreover, single mothers reunified with their children due to their young age. Conversely, migrants who are alone did not reunify with their children even if they were all aged below 13 years at the time of emigration of the forerunner. This seems to indicate that the characteristics of the members left behind are not the only relevant elements in the decision to reunify with them or not.

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[14] Our tests revealed that 'always temporary project' has a positive and significant odds ratio compared to 'switch to settlement' in both models.

The migration project affects reunification: Once a migrant's project is aimed at settlement, sooner or later the family is completely reunified. The reunification of children (and the spouse) in the nonreunification model is not even contemplated due to the impermanence of the project among migrants who are alone, while families with a settlement intention aim for reunification of children even if this could generate some problems. The family migration project is therefore a determinant. In this regard, partial family reunification seems to be strongly connected with a consensual family plan designed to work more effectively according to the family migration project and sharing the cost of the family life in the country of origin. These are dual-earner couples coming from countries with more egalitarian gender roles. Conversely, family reunification in the host country and the LATAB are associated with a nonconsensual decision as a result of more traditional gender roles in the countries of origin.

Family reunification is not associated with illegal migration or economic performance. As stated above, reunification often occurs without legal status or economic stability. Even if we measured economic performance by considering the evolution of economic status during the migration, our results could be partially affected by the biased sample in terms of duration of stay, as stated in Section 5.

7. Conclusion

This paper adapted sequence analysis, a longitudinal and quantitative method, that allowed the study of family reunification considering both spouses and children. We analysed the timing and order of family members' arrivals, and we identified and compared different family migration and reunification models. These comparisons showed that the characteristics of members left behind and conditions in the host country are not always relevant, as there are other 'forces' governing family decisions (Fresnoza-Flot 2017).

More specifically, our results pointed out some important considerations. First, family models are strongly related to area of origin, which is in turn strongly related to gender. As expected, complete family reunification is more frequent among male forerunners. Women also promote complete family reunification, but only among one-parent families. The exceptionality of this situation is also confirmed by the lack of a prevalent area of origin: Reunification with children occurs because the mother is the only parent and cannot continue to leave them behind; children's reunification is, therefore, an 'emergency strategy' (Bonizzoni 2015).

Second, our results fill the gap of 'migrant men as dependents' (Kofman 1999; Fresnoza-Flot 2017). Women also promote their husband's reunification but only among migrants coming from countries that support female work participation and

favour female autonomous migration. Their behaviour is approved by family and cultural norms of their country of origin and complies with the expectations ascribed to being a woman 'there' (Ishizawa and Stevens 2011; Fresnoza-Flot 2017).

Third, partial family reunification seems to be a consensual decision of the couple and is pursued mainly when the reunited spouse can speed up the process of achieving the family's savings target because he or she was employed before migration.

Fourth, the trajectories are orientated by and coherent with the family migration project: Migrants with persistent temporary intentions usually exclude family reunification in the host country, while migrants with a strong orientation to settle in Italy reunify the family. Those families who changed their project during the migration experience by deciding to extend their permanence in Italy adjusted their strategy coherently with their new aim. Thus, family characteristics as well as the conditions in the host country may not be relevant.

Our study has two implications: First, to study family trajectories, a long period of observation is unavoidable. Sometimes, a long time may pass before the first event takes place. Second, to study family reunification it is necessary to go beyond family characteristics and the conditions in the host country because these may not be sufficient to formulate theories or conclusions. However, the cultural, gender, and family norms of the country of origin must be put at the core of the debate because family reunification is strongly limited and affected by them. Moreover, migrants' family projects are a main driver of family migration: Once the migration project is orientated or converged over time to settlement, family reunification is pursued regardless of the possible difficulties of reuniting with a spouse and children, and the problem of reconciling work and family. Conversely, as long as migrants maintain a temporary project, family reunification in Italy is not considered.

The selection of the sample in terms of length of stay and the lack of more information on working status and educational level of the members left behind partially limited our analyses. However, these results allowed advancement of the knowledge of family reunification and lay the foundation for future studies.

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Appendix

	AM	SM	AF	SF	OPU	OPR	CWU	CWR	CU	CR
AM	0	0.5	0	0	1.5	2.0	1.75	1.75	0.75	0.5
SM	0.5	0	0	0	1.5	2.0	1.75	1.5	0.75	0.5
AF	0	0	0	0.5	1.5	2.0	1.75	2.0	1.5	0
SF	0	0	0.5	0	1.5	2.0	1.75	2	1.5	1.0
OPU	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	0	0.75	1.5	2.0	2.0	2.0
OPR	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	0.75	0	1.5	2.0	2.0	2.0
CWU	1.75	1.75	1.75	1.75	1.5	1.5	0	1.0	0.5	1.5
CWR	1.5	1.5	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	1	0	1.5	0.5
CU	0.75	0.75	1.5	1.5	2.0	2.0	0.5	1.5	0	1.5
CR	0.5	0.5	1.0	1.0	2.0	2.0	1.5	0.5	1.5	0