Contested Subjects: Biopolitics & the Moral Stakes of Social Cohesion in Post-Welfare Italy

CONTESTED SUBJECTS: BIOPOLITICS & THE MORAL STAKES OF SOCIAL COHESION IN POST-WELFARE ITALY

A Dissertation Presented

by

MILENA MARCHESI

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

September 2013

Anthropology

CONTESTED SUBJECTS: BIOPOLITICS & THE MORAL STAKES OF SOCIAL COHESION IN POST-WELFARE ITALY

A Dissertation Presented

by

MILENA MARCHESI

Approved as to style and content by:

_____
Elizabeth L. Krause, Chair

_____
Lynn Morgan, Member

_____
Leslie King, Member

_____
Julie Hemment, Member

_____
Thomas Leatherman, Department Chair
Anthropology Department

DEDICATION

For Jeff and Noah Matteo

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation is based on research supported by a 2006-2007 Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research Dissertation Fieldwork Grant (No. 7477) and a 2006-2007 University of Massachusetts Graduate School Fellowship. The Anthropology Department's European Field Study Program allowed me to conduct pre-dissertation research in 2004 and provided an intellectual space for formulating a research project, as well as financial support. A research associateship at the Five College Women's Research Center at Mount Holyoke College in 2009 offered a supportive intellectual community and a productive writing space. The Reproductive Politics Group at Hampshire College brought together a community of scholars and activists engaged in reproductive issues and served as an early sounding board for this research. The Center for Research on the Family offered support for presenting my work.

I am profoundly grateful to the members of my dissertation committee, Elizabeth (Betsy) Krause, Lynn Morgan, Julie Hemment, and Leslie King. This dissertation could not have been written without Betsy's tireless advising efforts; I am thankful for her invaluable intellectual and professional mentoring, enthusiasm, collegiality, trust, and patience. I am grateful to Lynn Morgan for guiding me through the intellectual landscape of the literature on reproduction, for providing invaluable feedback on grant applications, and for cheering me on through the long path to completion. Thanks are due to Julie Hemment for her expert feedback and for welcoming me as an auditor in her research and writing course, which came at a crucial moment in my analysis. I am also grateful to Leslie King for hanging on during the long writing process. Jackie Urla and Banu Subramaniam contributed early on to shaping my dissertation project with rigorous

feedback and productive questions. I would never have embarked on an anthropological career had it not been for the teaching and mentorship of Donna Goldstein, my undergraduate advisor at the University of Colorado at Boulder, who made it possible for me to envision myself as a potential researcher. I am indebted to Silvia De Zordo for her invaluable collaboration on academic panels and publications and to the faculty and graduate students in the anthropology department whose research, political engagement, and passion for the discipline have been a source of inspiration throughout my graduate career. The staff in the anthropology department office, especially Shelley Bellor, but also Lisa Wegiel, Grace Rock, and Debbie Averill, helped me navigate university and department bureaucracy, a support that was particularly invaluable to me as a first generation university student. Much would have fallen through the cracks without their steady support.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the many people in Milan whose generosity in welcoming me into their lives made this dissertation possible. I am particularly indebted to the indomitable "Nilde" for providing the first field site foothold at a feminist family planning clinic and to the rest of the staff for agreeing to host me. Eleonora Cirant and Marina Mariani helped me see the bigger picture of what is at stake in women's health in Milan. Many thanks are due to the Milanese cultural mediation cooperative that allowed me to audit a cultural mediation course and to the course's participants, particularly to those who took time out of their busy lives to talk to me. I am thankful to Monica and Sahar for warmly welcoming me into their integration project and to other members for their availability and openness. Thanks are due also to Dr. Graziella Sacchetti, to the

immigrant association “Todo Cambia,” and to the indefatigable and inspiring Edda Pando.

I am grateful and so much richer for the friendships that got me through graduate school and which have grown far beyond it as we move on to the next phase of life. I am particularly indebted to Lisa Modenos who regularly prodded me to “write like the wind” and who reminded me of how good it would feel to be done, and to Leyla Keough who reassured me whenever I hit a rough patch that it was surely a sign that I was close. Mary Hannah Henderson and Flavia Stanley helped me believe in my work when insecurity reared its head. Julie Skogsbergh provided moral support and priceless childcare at critical times in my writing. I also owe many thanks to my friend Jessica Lawrence for introducing me to anthropology in the first place and for her enduring friendship and support over two decades. I am also grateful to Kenneth and Sue Golden for their early and invaluable influence on my academic path and to Christopher Golden for encouraging and sharing the early part of this journey.

Finally, I owe a profound debt of gratitude to my family for their unwavering encouragement and support throughout my (long) academic career. I am grateful to my father, Luigi Marchesi, for modeling the skeptical mind and a love of knowledge, for laying the foundations for an intellectual path, and then for generously contributing to supporting it, and to my stepmother, Francoise Marchesi, for her enthusiastic support. I am grateful to my mother, Palma D’alessandra for sharing with me her political passion and for introducing me to feminism and reproductive politics early in life. My sister, Barbara Marchesi, provided encouragement and cheerleading when it mattered most. I am endlessly grateful to my husband, Jeffrey Felberbaum, enthusiastic fieldwork

companion and assistant, unconditional supporter, and parent extraordinaire. Last, but not least, much gratitude goes to my son, Noah Matteo, for adding new impetus and a much needed sense of balance to the dissertation project.

ABSTRACT

CONTESTED SUBJECTS: BIOPOLITICS & THE MORAL STAKES OF SOCIAL COHESION IN POST-WELFARE ITALY

SEPTEMBER 2013

MILENA MARCHESI, B.A., UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO AT BOULDER

M.A., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Ph.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Elizabeth L. Krause

The requirements of European Unification, along with broader processes of globalization, including immigration, are reshaping economic and welfare priorities and reconfiguring the relationship between citizens and the state in Italy. The reorganization of the Italian welfare state around the principle of subsidiarity combines neoliberal restructuring with a commitment to social solidarity and cohesion and privileges the family as the social formation best suited to mediate between state, market, and citizens. As the state retreats from some of its former social welfare responsibilities, it simultaneously extends its reach into matters of reproduction and family-making. Biopolitics in the time of subsidiarity encompasses concerns over birth rates, the population, the rights of the unborn, and the proper composition of the family.

This dissertation examines the terms of social cohesion in post-welfare Italy and the central role that matters of reproduction and the family play in its reformulation as a moral and cultural problem. I focus on three discursive sites: the politics of life; the assertion of the heteronormative family as an urgent and legitimate site of political

intervention; and the parameters for the “appropriate” integration of migrants into Italian society. I draw on ethnographic inquiry with associations and individuals engaged in reproductive and migrant health and politics in Milan. Tracing the policies, practices, and discourses that seek to govern in the name of social cohesion sheds light on new citizenship projects and logics of inclusion/exclusion in the post-welfare moment and underscores the continued salience of gender, sexuality, and reproduction to processes of state building.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE POLITICS OF LIFE AND SOCIAL COHESION

"*Il futuro non è più quello di una volta*"
"The future is no longer what it used to be"[1]
graffiti on wall in Milan, 2007

"*Io sono proprio dispiaciuta per i giovani, perché non è più come una volta*"
"I am really sorry for the youth because things are not like they used to be"
Carla,[2] November 29, 2006

Introduction

In this dissertation I examine the terms of social cohesion in post-welfare Italy and the central role that matters of reproduction and the family play in its reformulation as a moral and cultural problem. I focus on three sites, each of which generates significant contestation: the politics of life, particularly the anticipation of subjecthood from birth to conception; the "explosion" of the family onto the political stage as a legitimate site of political intervention; and the terms by which migrants are to be integrated into Italian society. Taken together, these three facets of the way social reproduction is problematized and governed shed light on transformations in social citizenship in the post-welfare moment.

The sense that things in Italy have changed fundamentally around the turn of the millennium is widespread. Beginning in the early 1990s, Italian politics was upended by the

[1] Variations of the English version of this quote have been attributed to everyone from Arthur C. Clarke to Yogi Berra, though its earliest usage can be traced back to French writer Paul Valéry (*Regards sur le monde actuel*, Oeuvres II, 1931: 1062) (see http://pinobruno.globalist.it/2008/07/perche-il-futuro-non-e-piu-quello-di-una-volta/). In 2009, the quote was used as the title of a song by the Italian group *Aram Quartet* in an album titled "Il pericolo di essere liberi," (The Danger of Being Free).

[2] The names of research subjects and associations have been changed into pseudonyms, with the exception of politicians or official figures speaking in public settings.

Mani pulite (Clean Hands) scandal, making way for new political parties, politicians, and politics. The fiscal requirements of European Unification and the macro-economic processes of globalization reshaped the economic and welfare priorities of the Italian state and the experiences of its citizens. The loosening of some labor protections and the increasing privatization of social services (Della Sala 2004) have contributed to a widespread sense of *precarietà* (precarity) among Italians (Molé 2010; Muehlebach 2007). A growing immigrant population, which tripled in size in the decade between 2001 and 2011 (Istat 2012),[3] is affected by these processes, as well as by significant added structural challenges: lack of political rights, a difficult path to citizenship, and racism. Other vulnerabilities mark the ongoing transformation of the relationship between citizens and the state; for Italian feminists, the future has taken an unexpected turn away from the gains of the women's movement in the 1970s as the Catholic Church has consolidated political power.

Politicians, demographers, and Popes warn about a future threatened by the "*persistent very low* fertility levels" (Caltabiano et al. 2009: 681, emphasis in original) of Italian-origin women, decrying its implications for economic prosperity, welfare entitlements, and Italian culture and values (Krause 2006; Krause and Marchesi 2007; Marchesi 2012). The meaning of the graffiti on the passing of the future that was is open to interpretation: Is it a reference to widespread sense of economic insecurity among Italians, particularly among the younger generations? Is it inspired by nostalgia for a very recent past when Milan was not yet the multicultural city it is today? The latter was the past bemoaned by Carla, a woman in her early sixties who was the self-appointed manager of

[3] As of 2012, Italy's official migrant population is 4.029.145, while Italy's total population is 59.433.744 (Istat 2012).

the apartment building in which I lived during fieldwork. Having cornered me on the stairs of our building early on in my stay, Carla launched into a wide-ranging lament over the moral and cultural decline of Italian society. Her monologue included condemnation of the lack of discipline of today's children, mapped out the recent history of break-ins in our building and in neighboring ones, and warned of the dangers posed by Muslim immigrants in the neighborhood and of the coming "wave" of Romanians. Gone were the days when "we would leave the door unlocked," she sighed. I was to be sure to lock all doors at all times.[4]

These concerns over a vulnerable present and future call forth different responses that include, among other interventions, the criminalization of undocumented status, the empowering of citizen surveillance and policing, and the tightening of borders. They also play out in a different kind of politics of security, which implicates state and non-state actors in the fostering of social cohesion and integration in the post-welfare and multi-cultural moment. Interventions in the name of social cohesion encompass a wide range of projects examined in this dissertation: the reorganizing of the welfare state, the assertion of embryos as precarious subjects to be protected by the state, the politics of the family and the "common good," the training and employing of cultural mediators in social services and grassroots intercultural projects. In examining these different manifestations of the governing of social cohesion I ask: How are ideas of personhood, subjecthood, and citizenship reconfigured by discourses, policies, and practices governing in the name of

[4] Pasts and futures, of course, are selective and mobilized for different purposes. The very building and staircase in which Carla trapped me with her long disquisitions was rebuilt on the site where her mother's house had been destroyed by heavy Allied bombardments during WWII of this neighborhood in the northwest periphery of the city, which at the time was surrounded by heavy industries. The ruins of Carla's mother's house probably rested not far from us in the *Monte Stella* (Star Mountain) park, an artificial hill built out of the rubble from those bombardments, the only change in the otherwise endlessly flat topography of Milan.

social solidarity and cohesion? What does inquiry into the terms and forms of engagement and contestation of these moral transformations in social citizenship reveal about the possibility for alternative politics?

Ethnographic Research

The Setting

I conducted dissertation fieldwork research in the northern city of Milan, Lombardy, a location that provided the perfect setting for examining the emergence of new terms of social cohesion and social citizenship (see also Muehlebach 2012). Geographer John Foot notes that

> Milan has always played a key role in Italian history. It invented fascism and urban reformist socialism. It was host to the end of Mussolini's regime and the birth of a new democracy. The city's economy pulled Italy into the world economy in the 1960s and again dominated key sectors in the 1980s and 1990s. The left first experimented with post-socialist ideas in Milan, and northern regionalism first took power in this city. Finally, Milan produced the first post-political movement to take power in Europe, *Forza Italia!* [led by Silvio Berlusconi] (Foot 2001: 183).

Over the past decade, the city and its region of Lombardy have also been the site of significant decentralization of public administration and services. Since 1995, the region has been governed by a Catholic and conservative coalition, which has applied the principle of subsidiarity. Subsidiarity, a Catholic-derived principle of governance, holds that governing should be exercised at the closest possible level to the governed and has become the dominant principle of governance in Italy. Lombardy, however, has implemented it particularly aggressively, especially in the administration of health care and social services, with the region dubbing itself "the region of subsidiarity" (Consiglio regionale della Lombardia 2002: 7). The Region opened up public funding formerly reserved for health and social services to non-state entities, often ones with ties to the Catholic Church. These

reforms have had profound implication for the quality of services and for reproductive rights; they have also engendered widespread corruption.

Fieldsites

Following pre-dissertation research on a 2004 law restricting assisted reproductive technologies in Italy, my dissertation research aimed to examine subjectivities and practices in the family planning clinic against a backdrop of demographic alarmism and nationalism (Krause 2001; 2006). Through participant observation and interviews I had hoped to document how the biopolitics of the population translate into practices. I had picked *consultori familiari*, family planning clinics established in the 1970s, as my primary field site; I was particularly interested in the encounter between service providers and clients, both Italian and migrant.

From my earliest days in the field I started to realize that the politics of biological and social reproduction, including of migration and integration, saturated daily life, the discourse of political and religious authorities and of demographic and sociological experts, and through them, the media. At the same time, I was finding the family clinics walls difficult to cross.[5] I hovered near those enclosed clinical spaces, joining a training course for cultural mediators because I knew that many mediators were employed in women's health settings, and volunteering at least one day a week in the reception area of an independent feminist clinic.

The reception of the family planning clinic was a social space in which patients and the different figures required by law to be associated with the clinic—a gynecologist, a lawyer, a psychologist/social worker, and a psychiatrist—intersected with clients and

[5] Late in my fieldwork I was told by a politician and sociologist of the family and by the head of a cultural mediation association in Milan that conducting research in public health settings in Italy is very difficult without political connections. Personal communications, May 25, 2007 and April 23, 2007.

visitors, and joined ongoing conversations among the two receptionists and the anthropologist. In the afternoon the space was dominated by Nilde. In her early 80s, she was a formidable presence. Nilde had a lifetime of political engagement, ranging from her participation in the resistance against fascism and Nazism, when she smuggled weapons to partisans in the hills of Tuscany, to her communist militancy, and to her feminist politics, which included being one of the founding members of the clinic. Nilde loved to tell stories about the condition in which the women who had started the clinic had found the space, which they leased from the city of Milan: the floors had been covered in layers of pigeon droppings that had to be scrubbed away and the "furniture" initially consisted of just a single cot.

The clinic had since added a second apartment in the same original building, which provides one side to Milan's famous *galleria Vittorio Emanuele.* The clinic was accessed through one apartment, which included a foyer with a table covered in flyers and pamphlets, a bathroom, a short hallway crowded by the photocopier, a coffee machine, and a small fridge stocked with mineral water. The reception area was furnished with mismatched desks, chests of drawers, chairs, and filing cabinets. Behind the large wooden desk at which Nilde sat hung two posters, prized possessions of hers. One was a poster for a successful march in defense of reproductive rights held in January 2006; the other was a reprint of a poster from the 1970s bearing the slogan: "There is no revolution without women's liberation. There is no women's liberation without revolution." Patients set on an old couch, replaced by one from Ikea early in my fieldwork, or on wooden chairs organized around a coffee table. The main room off the reception area was better furnished, with inviting couches and chairs, a nice desk and art on the walls. It was used for appointments

with a family lawyer, who was also the head of the clinic, a psychiatrist or psychologist, or for staff meetings. Climbing out of the window behind the desk was a treat that Nilde encouraged me to partake in once in a while. The window offered access to a narrow balcony which afforded amazing views high up in the *galleria*. The exam room was in a different apartment, on the same floor. After checking in at the desk, patients had to exit the reception area and go into a separate waiting room. The small exam room included a desk, an exam table, an ultrasound machine, and cabinets with instruments. I spent most of my time in the reception room, helping with projects, sometimes translating for English speakers, chatting with patients, answering phones, running errands, and mostly talking with Nilde and Laura, the other receptionist on duty. I draw on these conversations throughout the chapters that follow.

My association with the clinic led me to another key fieldsite: the feminist network *Donne, Diritti, Salute*, an informal group that started after the assisted reproduction legislation referendum of 2005 by Daniela, a politically active woman in her early thirties, and by Franca, a woman in her 50s who was active in the *Partito della Rifondazione Comunista* (Communist Refoundation Party). Laura, a woman in her late 40s who sometimes worked as a counselor at the clinic had since become a regular and reliable member. Less frequently, Carolina, a cultural mediator, originally from Ecuador, also participated. The meetings were held in the clinic after it closed at 7pm. Through *Donne, Diritti, Salute* and its careful focus not only on reproductive politics like abortion and the assisted reproduction law, but also regional health care policies, I began to understand the implications of the restructuring of health care for reproductive rights. It was in the first

meeting of *Donne, Diritti, Salute* that I attended that I heard the word "subsidiarity" for the first time.

In turn, through *Donne, Diritti, Salute* I started to attend the meetings of the umbrella association *Usciamo dal silenzio* (which can be translated as either "We Are Coming Out of Silence" or, "Let's Come Out of Silence"), a group that also formed in response to the assisted reproduction legislation. *Usciamo dal Silenzio (UdS)* had gained prominence and visibility after organizing a march for reproductive rights in Milan in January of 2006 in which tens of thousands of women, Nilde included, marched. The organization's leadership included leaders in Italy's biggest trade union, journalists, lawyers, politicians, and "historic feminists," veterans of the struggles of the 1970s. Through my participant observation at hours-long meetings of *UdS* and *Donne, Diritti, Salute* I gained a sense of the struggles and challenges of feminist politics in contemporary Italy, of the difficulty in defining an alternative to the consolidation of a moral politics that delimits women's reproductive and political rights.

Through my participation in the cultural mediation course I was able to ethnographically document the pedagogical articulation of an alternative model of integration, the model of *intercultura*, and to document the experiences and perspective of a group of long-term immigrants in Milan. I show how migrants, especially migrant women, are tasked with fostering integration, and thus social cohesion, through their roles as cultural mediators. I also draw on class lecture and discussions, conversations, and interviews, as well as on my participation in a grassroots *intercultura* project that aimed to bring together Muslim and Italian women, to show the central relevance of gender and family-making to the project of integration.

The politics of reproduction and the family were active political issues throughout my time in the field. Within my first week in the field I attended a protest in front of a Milanese hospital contesting plans to consolidate family planning clinics into hospitals and the continued penetration of right-to-life organizations and volunteers into family planning and abortion services. A few months into my research, a new regional norm mandated the burial of fetal parts and feminist groups organized and re-energized in response to this and other new attacks on reproductive rights. At the same time, the center-left government led by Romano Prodi introduced a watered down civil union legislation. The center-right and the Vatican seized the issue and the value and form of the family became a key issue in public and political discourse. This debate reached its peak with a hugely successful "Family Day" protest that took over Rome in May of 2007. The government organized the first National Conference on the Family, a three-day conference held in May.

The terms of social reproduction and cohesion that were so heavily debated in the context of the family were also in play in the context of migration. While the migrant population in Italy as a whole was still lower than that of the main migration-receiving countries in Europe, constituting around 5% of the total population at the time of my research compared to, for example, 9% of the total population in Germany, the city of Milan and the region of Lombardy had higher rates than the national average (Caritas 2005: 4). In 2007, the percentage of migrants residing in Milan was around 10% of the city's residents. Now that a center-left government was in charge, there was talk of a new immigration law that would address the limitations of the restrictive Bossi-Fini law of 2002 and even introduce a new citizenship law that would shift away from the descent-based *jus sanguinis* model to the territory-based *jus soli* model. The Minister of Migration took a

weeklong trip throughout the country to listen to various immigrant constituencies, hoping to put together recommendations for immigration reforms that would be based more on what was needed on the ground than on politics. At the same time, the Prodi government had to manage a shift in the immigration bureaucracy initiated by the center-right coalition of Silvio Berlusconi. Residency permits and most matters of immigration applications were shifted from police stations to the post office. Chaos ensued, forms were not available and people whose permits were about to expire had no means to renew them and thus to prevent lapsing into undocumented status. During that winter a regional law targeted immigrant phone and internet café businesses with a host of new regulations, driving a large portion of them to close. Another set of regulations aimed directly at the Chinese business community led to a violent confrontation in Milan's "Chinatown." By the spring, different immigrant communities came together in a network, calling themselves *cittadini di fatto,* (de-facto citizens). Another grassroots group, which called themselves *Incontriamoci* (Let's Get Together) aimed to bring together Italian and Muslim women to counteract stereotypes and misinformation. Through all this, an endless number of conferences on migration and integration were held in Milan.

Thus a project envisioned as being organized around the core site of the family planning clinic became instead a highly multi-sited ethnographic project (Marcus 1995) that tracked policies, discourses, practices, and forms of contestation and resistance across the city of Milan. Participant observation at these sites yielded about 400 pages of fieldnotes, digital recordings of interviews with twenty-one participants, and sixty audio and video recordings of meetings, conferences, cultural mediation trainings, debates, parades, and protests. Additionally, I collected over 100 policy documents concerning family,

immigration, integration, and reproductive policy in Italy and in the European Union. This dimension of research was not limited to my time in Milan but has been ongoing as new policies, and updated reports have been published.

Theoretical Framings

Governing the Population & Society

Conceptually linking the different threads of my dissertation field research, reproductive, family, and migration politics, was the politics of the population. From the development of my dissertation question, through a good portion of my fieldwork, biopolitics framed my project. Based on Foucault's influential insights on the nature of modern power as biopower, biopolitics emerges alongside the modern state. In the introduction to the *History of Sexuality*, Foucault writes that "at the beginning of the modern era, natural life begins to be included in the mechanisms and calculations of State power, and politics turns into biopolitics" (1978: 3). Biopower describes a form of power distinct from the repressive, oppressive, and death-wielding power of the sovereign. Unlike sovereign power, biopower harnesses and governs biological life as it addresses "man-as-body" (Foucault 2003: 243).

Biopower encompasses two different forms of power, which Foucault envisions as two poles: on one end are disciplinary techniques aimed at the individual body and often contained in the spaces and knowledges of institutions like the clinic and the prison ("*anatomo-politics*") (Foucault 1978: 139). On the other, a complementary form of power, "*a biopolitics of the population*, focuses "the species body" by which Foucault means "the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes:

propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity" (Foucault 1978: 139).

Biopolitics harnesses knowledge about life in order to foster it; the center of gravity of modern power shifts form the juridical realm to the biological, from the law to the norm and regulation (Prozorov 2007). The management of life through power "situated and exercised at the level of life" (Foucault 1978: 137) is at once insidious, penetrating, generative, and simultaneously diffused through internalized norms (individual disciplinary power) and managed "through an entire series of interventions and *regulatory controls*" (Foucault 1978: 139). With the deployment of biopolitical power/knowledge, "at stake is the biological existence of the population" (Foucault 1978: 137). Scholars have built on Foucault's theorization of biopolitics, extending it, for example, to analyze the biologization of mental illness and its treatment (Rabinow and Rose 2003), developments in genetic engineering (Novas and Rose 2000), reproductive politics and technologies (Franklin 1997; Hartouni 1997; Kaufman and Morgan: 2005), and biological claims to citizenship (Petryna 2002). Driving this scholarship is the understanding that what characterizes the biopolitics of our era is a politics "concerned with our growing capacities to control, manage, engineer, reshape, and modulate the very vital capacities of human beings as living creatures" (Rose 2007: 3). Another literature seeks to push the concept beyond Foucault's original articulation, particularly as it concerns "negative biopolitics" (Balibar 2002: 38; see also Agamben 1998; Biehl 2005; Fassin 2009; Mbembe 2003).

Biopolitics has been "good to think with" in matters of reproduction, and reproductive politics, particularly as new technologies and forms of knowledge and expertise have come to bear on reproductive experiences, shaping subjectivities and even

constituting new subjects at the intersections of political and medical technologies (Casper 1998; Casper and Morgan 2004; Holc 2004; Kaufman and Morgan 2005; Petchesky 1987; Rapp 1999; Taylor 1992). Scholarship in critical demography has drawn on biopolitics to examined the deployment of knowledges in problematizations related to birth rates, family planning, and other population politics (see Ali 2002; Greenhalgh 2003; Kanaaneh 2001; Krause 2001).

One of the theoretical challenges I faced as my fieldwork progressed and during data analysis concerned how to conceptualize two aspects of my research that did not seem to be to fully captured by the field of the biopolitical: the politics of life waged by the Catholic Church and the whole array of discourses and interventions into social and familial relationships that characterize the post-welfare moment in Italy. Some of these interventions, such as those aimed at strengthening the family in the name of increasing birth rates, were clearly biopolitical. Other discourses, however, such as the assertion of the family as the basic source of social solidarity and building block of social cohesion, the Catholic Church's doctrinal insistence of life as a gift from god and of its non-availability to intervention and manipulation (see, for example, the 1995 Encyclical Letter "Evangelium Vitae")[6], or the discourse on reciprocal "contamination" of the *intercultura* model of integration seemed to be addressing social and moral subjects outside of biopolitical rationalities.

[6] The Italian version of the Encyclical uses the notion of *indisponibilità,* which I translate as "the non-availability of life to intervention" (http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_it.html). The English version refers to the "absolute sacredness of life" instead (http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html). The concept of non-availability more clearly contrasts with the biopolitical project and the ethopolitical empowerment and responsibilization of individuals.

Governmentality

Foucault's concept of governmentality, defined most minimally as governing through "the conduct of conduct," provides a broader perspective that foregrounds the biopolitical, but also includes "the forms of knowledge and techniques of the human and social sciences" (Dean 1999: 19; Foucault 2003: 81, in Nadesan 2008: 9). Studies that take a governmental approach are attentive to the framing of "governance's problem-solution" and to "how problems and technologies of governance are formulated and addressed" (Nadesan 2008: 6). The "government" in governmentality draws from older meanings of the term that are not centered on the state (see Lemke 2001; Dean 1999: 209). Governmentality refers to the rationalities of government that work through state and non-governmental entities and agencies "employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seek to shape our conduct by working through our desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects, and outcomes (Dean 1999: 209). The literature on neoliberal and advanced capitalist governmentality, as Dean's definition exemplifies, tends to emphasize self-government and responsibilization of subjects (see for example Rose 2007 and Rabinow and Rose 2003).[7] However, other scholars theorize governmentality as encompassing more coercive forms of power too. Majia Nadesan, for example, reminds "that sovereignty remains an important technology of control" (Nadesan 2008: 11), especially for subjects not deemed responsible enough to be self-governing.

[7] However, see Dean's definition of "advanced liberalism" which recognizes that these "forms of government can also include paternalistic and coercive measures for those deemed not to display the capacities of responsible and prudential autonomy" (Dean 1999: 209).

Neoliberalism

The neoliberal rationalities reshaping government and reconfiguring the relationship between citizens and the state in Italy hold a number of implications for reproductive and family politics and services, which I describe below. I draw on the literature on neoliberalism and neoliberal governmentality to make sense of these transformations and to probe the links between the moral politics of life and family and discourses of social cohesion. Neoliberalism, according to David Harvey's widely used definition, is characterized by "deregulation, privatization, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provisions" (2007: 3). How to understand "neoliberalism," however, is a matter of scholarly debate. Kingfisher and Maskovsky (2008) map out three main theoretical approaches to the scope and nature of neoliberalism: a Marxist analysis, most closely associated with David Harvey, which presents neoliberalism as a cohesive project functional to "the restoration of a dominant class power" (Harvey 2005: 83); the neoliberal governmentality literature, which builds on Foucault's concept of governmentality and biopower and which focuses on the way subjects are "optimized" to govern themselves (Rose 2007; Rabinow and Rose 2003); and Aiwha Ong's "neoliberalism as exception" approach (2006), which Kingfisher and Maskovksy see as distinct because of its emphasis on assemblages and transnational citizenship (2008: 119). While critical of Ong on a number of counts, Kingfisher and Maskovsky share her emphasis on "contingency, ambiguity and instability" (2008: 119; see also Comaroff & Comaroff 2001). I draw on all three of these approaches to probe "the limits of neoliberalism" (Kingfisher and Maskovsky 2008) that emerge from my data. In addition to finding it useful to break "neoliberalism" down into local manifestations, practices, and meanings and to not assume

determined outcomes, I find Ong's linking of Schmitt's "state of exception" and neoliberalism as revealing of the way the politics of life and the embryo-subject represent an "exception to neoliberalism" (2006: 6). In contrast to the ideal neoliberal active citizen, the embryo acquires new state rights and protection from the market.

Informed by works that challenge the ideal type, one-size-fits-all neoliberalism that has been theorized from the British and American contexts, I find neoliberalism "with a small *n"* (Ong 2006: 4) and more localized understandings of neoliberalism (Hoffman et al. 2006: 10) useful in thinking about the post-welfare moment in Italy in terms that recognizes the articulation and negotiation of neoliberal logics with other cultural, social, political and moral contexts. In so doing I locate my work in a growing literature that seeks to probe ethnographically, rather than assume, "new forms of governing and being governed and new notions of what it means to be human [that] are at the edge of emergence" (Ong 2006:4; Kingfisher and Maskovsky 2008; see also Hemment 2012; Molé 2010; Muehlebach 2009, 2012; Yazc 2012).

Taking an anthropological, grounded, and feminist approach to the transformations wrought by neoliberal reforms and logics, following Kingfisher and Maskovsky, I treat "neoliberalism as a cultural formation (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000; Kingfisher 2002), a set of cultural meanings and practices related to the constitution of proper personhood, markets and the state that are emergent in a contested cultural field" (2008: 120). In order to go beyond the "monolithic" (Kanna 2010: 102) and "automatic unity" (Ferguson 2009: 183) model of neoliberalism in favor of "learn[ing] to see a field of specific governmental techniques" (Ferguson 2009: 183), I focus on governing practices as they emerge in policy documents, laws, political and expert conferences, authoritative discourses, pedagogical

programs, health care reforms, and the reorganization and reconceptualization of welfare and society.

Italian "moral neoliberalism" (Muehlebach 2012) differs from the ideal type, "Anglo-Foucauldian" (Ferguson 2009: 173) of neoliberal governmentality as a technique of governing that "activates" rational, entrepreneurial, "autonomous" individuals (Rose 2007; Lemke 2001: 203). The "'withdrawal of the state'" that is often attributed to neoliberalism is more properly understood "as a technique for government" that does not automatically lead "to the state losing powers of regulation and control" but rather to the "reorganization or restructuring of government techniques" (Lemke 2001: 2001). My analysis of the politics of reproduction and the family, however, departs from the notion that neoliberal governmentality necessarily works by "shifting the regulatory competence of the state onto 'responsible' and 'rational' individuals" (Lemke 2001: 201-02). The kinds of "responsibilized citizen-subjects" (Ferguson 2009: 172) sought by the Italian neoliberal project are not conceived as individually responsible and rational. They are moralized as relational and altruistic citizens embedded in family relationships of mutual responsibility that translate into broader forms of social reciprocity. Additionally, in the discourse on reproduction, both as it concerns the "problem" of low fertility and the moral discourses of abortion and reproductive technologies, women are not recognized as "responsible" and "rational" individuals. In the post-welfare moment in Italy, matters of life and family morality are increasingly governed by moral principles, whether in the name of social cohesion or Catholic doctrine, set aside from neoliberal and market logics, a moral "exception to neoliberalism" (Ong 2006). The politics of reproduction, then, provide a particularly useful prism through which to examine the way neoliberalism "is reconfiguring

relationships between governing and the governed, power and knowledge, and sovereignty and territoriality" (Ong 2006: 3). Vice versa, the assertion of moral politics of "life" and family, often accompanies neoliberal reforms and logics in a number of settings, including the US (see Harvey 2005: 82-84; Comaroff 2007; Gal and Kligman 2000; Holc 2005; Mishtal 2012; Yazc 2012).

In Italy, the contradiction between unfettered individualism and the demands of social solidarity (Harvey 2005) is negotiated through the principle of subsidiarity, which provides a moral ideology, derived from Catholic social doctrine, and an architecture for the reorganization of the governance of the welfare state. This principle, which is also central to the organization of power and competencies at the level of the European Union (see Holmes 2000), holds that power should be decentered from the State and that whenever possible "matters should be handled by the lowest, or closest possible level to where they will have their effect" (Colombo 2008: 182). Unlike other neoliberal reorganizations of welfare responsibilities that shift the burden of care to the individual in the name of freedom and efficiency, subsidiarity retains a role for the State to intervene whenever lower social formations cannot resolve a need. Moreover, by virtue of its focus on social formations, the principle of subsidiarity takes as its central object of responsibilization not the individual, but the heteronormative family, understood as the natural foundation of society, the most basic cell out of which society and its cohesion are constituted. This reorganization is not simply rhetorical: the principle of subsidiarity is now enshrined in the Italian Constitution and has been aggressively implemented by the conservative Catholic coalition that has governed the Region of Lombardy and Milan since 1995. In the name of subsidiarity, public funds for social and health services in Lombardy

have been redirected to hybrid public-private entities, often with ties to the Catholic Church, with important consequences for the provision of reproductive services (see chapter 2).

In emphasizing the principle of subsidiarity, political authorities and experts in Italy self-consciously aim for a third way between, on the one hand, the individualistic *homo oeconomicus* and unfettered market ideal of the Chicago School style of neoliberalism, and, on the other, the solidarity of the welfare State. Under the moral neoliberalism governed by subsidiarity, solidarity remains an important aim, though one that has shifted to the cultural and moral dimension of "social cohesion." In this reconfiguring of welfare and social citizenship, the protection of life from conception and of the heteronormative family figures prominently in discourses and in official documents, such as position papers on welfare.

The legitimation and further penetration of the state into matters of reproduction and family-making suggests that the metaphor of a shrinking, retreating state does not capture the ongoing reorganization of welfare (see Kingfisher and Makovksy 2008; Lemke 2001; Nadesan 2008). If anything, in matters of reproduction and the family the State is advancing, not retreating. The literature on reproductive politics can be understood as a corrective to the ungendered illusion of a freed and "optimized" subject under neoliberalism (see Gal and Kligman 2000). The convergence of medical, moral, and political technologies and discourses on women's bodies and the attenuation of women's citizenship in the name of the competing rights of the embryos bring into relief the contradictions and tensions of discourses of rights, freedom, and choice under neoliberalism.

The Chapters

I examine the concept of subsidiarity, its genealogy in Catholic social philosophy, and its influence on the reshaping of welfare services in Lombardy in chapter 2, "'More Society, Less State': Subsidiarity and Italy's New Social Model." I show how neoliberal reforms of welfare are justified and legitimated by concerns with "social cohesion." Tracing the rationalities and effects of the restructuring of health care services along the principle of subsidiarity, I show how neoliberal reforms in Lombardy are inextricable from the moral regulation of reproduction and the family. I examine national and regional policies and documents that link a new welfare model to relational solidarity and ground social cohesion in the protection of the heteronormative family and of "life."

Drawing on fieldwork with two feminist groups in Milan I document the terms and forms of their political engagement with changes in reproductive services and other social rights. I show how subsidiarity, the mechanisms through which much of the restructuring of reproductive services has been enacted, is experienced as a potential means to empowered political and social engagement. The neoliberal rationalities of "choice" and the responsibilization of individuals in relation to health were highly contested moves. Faced by the "emptying of reproductive rights from within" enabled by the intertwining of neoliberal rationalities and the moral politics of the church, feminist actors in Milan revaluated their critiques of the state and of institutional engagement.

Chapter 3, "'The Embryo Is One of Us': Making Reproductive Subjects Under Moral Neoliberalism" traces three key moments in the politics of reproduction in contemporary Italy: the decriminalization of abortion in the 1970s, the approval of a restricted assisted reproduction legislation that awarded subjecthood to the embryo in the

mid-2000s, and the under-the-radar amendment of the regulation of the burial of biological remains in the region of Lombardy. The chapter examines the much-contested emergence of the embryo as a subject, the political reassertion of the Catholic Church over matters of life and family, and "the neoliberal exception" that extends the reach of the state into reproduction at the very time that the state is supposed to be retreating. The "exception" of the embryo as a weak and deserving subject that calls forth more rather than less regulation resolves the contradiction of the restriction of choice in matters of reproduction and health at the very time that those values are rhetorically championed. I show how the struggle against the erosion of reproductive services centered around the reassertion of women as subjects, an assertion made harder to negotiate in the midst of the reconfiguration of the relationship between citizens and the post-welfare state.

Chapter 4, "'The Family Grows, Italy Grows': Family & the Common Good," examines the rise and legitimacy of pronatalist and pro-family politics in Italy and the way they are intertwined with the re-articulation of the terms of social welfare and with the emerging terms of a new social contract. What do the politics of the family reveal about emerging citizenship projects in Italy, and more broadly, in the Eurozone? I draw on ethnographic research at the First Government Conference on the Family, held in May 2007, to document the way the family "blows up" onto the center of the political stage and the celebration of the "cultural leap" that enables a new politics of the family. I juxtapose these institutional politics with discussions at meetings in which feminist and lesbian activists sought to articulate an answer to the question "what do we think about the family?" I show that the stakes of recognition of which relationships constitute "the family" have intensified as the family becomes increasingly both object and subject of welfare. My

analysis highlights the struggles for articulating alternative positions on sociality because of the difficulty in disentangling the moral discourse on social solidarity and welfare from moral neoliberal notions of relational citizenship and, ultimately, from the assertion of the heteronormative family as the source of solidarity and the basis of social cohesion.

Chapter 5, "Demographic Discourses and Reproductive Encounters" draws on ethnographic research with migrant advocates and cultural mediators to address the question: How do intensifying expert and political discourses on the population and reproduction translate into experiences, subjectivities, and practices on the ground? I argue that demographic discourses that juxtapose low fertility among Italian women with hyper-fertility among migrant women, even warning of the disappearance of Italians, do not directly translate into systemic policies and practices aimed at reducing migrant women's fertility. Instead, demographic anxieties are distilled through other political projects and commitments, which include the politics of life and the institutional presence of feminist reproductive health providers in clinics and hospitals. Moreover, demographic warnings over the future of the nation are amenable to reinterpretation. I show how migrant and Italian women reappropriated and redeployed warnings over their problematic fertility, turning them into biopolitical claims for citizenship and a less precarious life.

Chapter 6, "Integrating Subjects, Engendering Coherence: Cultural Contamination & the Limits of Integration" examines discourses and practices of integration in Italy. Drawing on participant observation at a cultural mediation training course and an informal group bringing together Muslim and Italian women, among other sites, I examine the way integration is conceived and enacted. What are the terms under which immigrants are expected to integrate into Italian society, and conversely, the terms that justify their

exclusion: What are the expectations and practices of immigrant-receiving countries concerning the integration of Others? On what terms is integration into Italian society being demarcated? I show that the "moral regulation" of the family in the name of fostering social cohesion extends to debates over how to successfully integrate a substantial and diverse immigrant population and delineates the limits of integration.

CHAPTER 2

"MORE SOCIETY, LESS STATE": SUBSIDIARITY AS MORAL NEOLIBERALISM

> By restoring the question of society at the centre of the scholarship on the EU we can begin to formulate analyses that do justice to the stunning transformations unfolding across Europe.
> (Holmes 2000: 112)

Introduction

In the past decade the anthropology of Europe has been concerned with the broad transformations taking place on the continent: the expanding process of European unification, with its implications for citizenship and the role of the nation-state (Soysal 1994, Tambini 2001) and for cultural identity (Shore 2000, Soysal 1998); the post-socialist transition (Berdhal 1999; Gal and Kligman 2000, Hemment 2007); and the emergence of an increasingly multicultural Europe (Modood and Werbner 1997). An equally important process is taking place at the level of European governance as the vaunted European social model characterized by the "dual focus on economic and social principles" (Eurofund 2009)[1] is increasingly at odds with the neoliberal restructuring requirements placed on member states. Neoliberal economic processes, like the economic austerity demanded by European monetary unification and a shift toward global market logics, are altering the social contract on which the EU is based (Holmes 2000; Storey 2004). The ongoing transformations in governance, culture, and citizenship in Europe, including the reorganization of the social state, have profound anthropological and social implications

[1]According to Habermas and Derrida, for example, "Europeans have a relatively large amount of trust in the organisational and steering capacities of the state, while remaining sceptical towards the achievements of markets... They maintain a preference for the welfare state's guarantees of social security and for regulations on the basis of solidarity" (2003: 295, cited in Storey 2004: 3).

(Holmes 2000). In Italy, government officials and sociological experts frame the development of a new welfare model as a cultural project (see for example Rossi 2005: 97) aimed at transforming social relations, altering the social contract between citizens and the State and shifting the balance of the rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship.

In this chapter I examine how a particularly reflexive set of "informants"— feminist intellectuals and activists whose political and intellectual practice included a long view of their relationship to the State—negotiated and experienced transformations in social services, especially health care and understood their implications for reproductive services. Their reflections belong to a broader political and scholarly conversation on the question of society and its cohesion. I trace this conversation through policy documents and Italian Catholic sociological literature on the welfare state. As new social models are proposed, sociological questions have acquired new relevance for politicians and scholars alike: What are the new bases of solidarity as the social state is decentralized and organized around new logics? In a time in which labor protections are loosened and social services increasingly privatized, how can cohesion and integration be fostered and anomie and dis-integration avoided? These concerns over social integration and social cohesion clearly echo the concerns of Durkheimian sociology with forms of solidarity that would hold together modern, industrial societies.

The "deep preoccupation with society" that anthropologist Douglas Holmes identifies in the European project (2000: 93) is evident both at the national and European Union levels. The emergence of "social cohesion" as a social and political problem, for example, is pervasive in European Union speak, where it is has been mostly associated with concerns over social inequality, social exclusion, employment, and population decline

(European Commission 2007). The project of European Unification has engaged and given new relevance to the question of society, social solidarity, as well as to the terms of local, regional, national, and supra-national belonging. In Italy, the "problem" of social cohesion also refers to problems of inclusion/exclusion, social inequality, immigration,[2] and low fertility. A strong emphasis on culture and values, particularly in relation to anxieties over the reproduction of the nation, characterizes the framing of social cohesion (Krause and Marchesi 2007). Increasingly, as the role of the state in fostering the welfare of its citizens is reconfigured in the name of efficiency, leaner budgets, more tailored services, and active citizenship, the issue of social cohesion emerges as a "problem-solution" (Nadesan 2008).

I examine the discourse on social cohesion and solidarity that accompanies the transformations in the social state. I trace the emergence of a moral model of governance in Italy, the model of subsidiarity, which offers a moralized framework for the decentralization of the state. Subsidiarity is central to the politics of reproduction in Italy and to the transformations taking place in public services, particularly health care. The effects on the restructuring of health care according to the logics of subsidiarity are particularly evident in the region of Lombardy. Governed since 1995 by a conservative Catholic administration, the region is known for its enthusiastic and aggressive implementation of subsidiarity, particularly in the reform of health care. Tracing the logics and effects of the model of subsidiarity sheds light on the moral and gendered politics that it has enabled, particularly in the area of reproductive rights. This chapter is informed by the following questions: What are the terms of the new social model emerging in Italy? What political subjects and subjectivities are engendered by the project of remaking Italian

[2] See Lægaard 2010 for a discussion of how immigration and cultural diversity are often framed as being inversely related to social cohesion.

society? How do politically engaged subjects and social service providers negotiate, contest, and engage this emerging social model? What alternative politics are possible?[3]

To answer these questions I draw on my participation in the meetings of two feminist groups, *Donne, Diritti, Salute* (*DoDiSa*), and the larger 'umbrella' feminist organization, *Usciamo dal silenzio* (*UdS*); weekly participant observation in an independent feminist family planning clinic; and analysis of government documents and expert literature on the changing regional and national welfare model. Data collected consist of digital recordings and written notes of discussions and informal 'speeches' at meetings; conversations and interviews; texts of policy proposals published by the government; and sociological literature on subsidiarity, mostly Catholic in orientation. Through these government documents and expert literature I trace the history and deployment of the subsidiarity model of governance, its effect on the funding of social services, particularly health care, and the central role played by the Catholic association *Compagnia delle Opere* (CdO) in the moral restructuring of health care in Lombardy. Ethnographic research allows me to examine how feminist activists negotiated the limitations and opportunities of the deep social transformations taking place in Italy, how they articulated an alternative model of social solidarity, and a new relationship to the State.[4] Conscious of the pitfalls of

---

[3] I am grateful to Jackie Urla for raising this question in the context of a discussion on governmentality in June 2010.

[4] I owe my understanding of the importance of Italy's new welfare model for the politics of reproduction to the thoughtful reflections of the small feminist network *Donne, Diritti, Salute,* which I joined soon after entering the field. At the time I was conducting research, I did not conceive of these activists as informants. I was still conceptualizing my research in terms of the politics of migration and reproduction and I saw my participation in this group as a way to gain more understanding of these politics on the ground and to find opportunities for accessing *consultori familiari*, the family planning clinics that were my original proposed fieldwork site. In the long run, this network of women engaged in feminist activism in the area of women's health and reproductive rights helped me understand the shifting stakes of Italian society and the means through which these politics were enacted. Thus, my argument in this chapter owes much to the analysis of activists like Daniela and Laura from *Donne, Diritti, Salute*, even as I bring my own anthropological analysis to the issue of subsidiarity.

describing everything as neoliberal, to the detriment of recognizing "other rationalities" and "previously existing mentalities of rule" (O'Malley 2001: 18), I highlight the contradictions and particularities of the unfolding of Italy's moralized social model. The new welfare model proposed by the center-right government of Berlusconi reveals a complex picture. The adoption of the principle of subsidiarity as the philosophy informing these changes enables the restructuring of the state, which retains its role as the ultimate guarantor of social solidarity, redefined here as its responsibility to protect life and the family. In fact, Catholic morality and the political influence of the Vatican play an important role in the moralization of post-welfare Italian society. The focus on the family as the ultimate root and source of the social often overshadows the individual as the privileged interlocutor of the State or the market. The cold bureaucratic state and the uncaring unfettered market are contrasted to the warmth of social relations and the moral economy of "the gift" (see, for example, Portanova 2009, and Sacconi 2010: 44). The role of the State is reduced in the name of the rediscovery of moral social formations, which begin with the family as the basis of society and social solidarity, and then extend out to associations and non-state forms of aggregation and solidarity. Thus, the remaking of the Italian welfare system is a political, social, and economic project that enables the unmaking of the state as it replaces it with a moral vision of a better society built on solidarity and the moral and relational ties of family and associationism.

When I arrived in the field to research the politics of the population in Italy I wanted to examine the articulations of increasingly alarmist discourses on low fertility and on rising immigration rates. Italy's birth rates reached the status of lowest in the world in the mid-1990s and Elizabeth Krause's ethnographic research in Tuscany during that time

revealed a “sneaky pronatalism” permeating expert discourses (2001, 2005). By the early-to-mid 2000s, this mostly careful demographic discourse had morphed into increasingly explicit political discourses and interventions aimed at raising birthrates (Krause and Marchesi 2007). In my dissertation research I wanted to track how this alarmism over the fertility of Italian women intersected with the restriction of reproductive rights and anxieties over immigration. As my research progressed, however, I started to see that the anxieties over the future of Italian society were articulated through discourses and practices that escaped the original framing of my dissertation research project. The restriction of abortion, for example, was less often justified in terms of the need for more Italian babies and for the reproduction of the nation (in fact, abortion rates are higher among immigrant women than Italian women) and more often argued in the moral terms of the politics of life. The rollback of reproductive access via the assisted reproduction legislation of 2004, which introduced strict limitations to fertility treatment in Italy, or the attempts to make emergency contraception and RU486, the so-called abortion pill, difficult to obtain, are informed and influenced by a resurgence of the Vatican’s political power and its strong emphasis on the protection of life and the family.

Politicians, religious figures, and experts often frame abortion and other interventions in reproductive matters as a threat to social cohesion because they undermine the family. In other words, while a discourse on the threat posed by immigration and low birth rates to national reproduction is certainly at play, even in the work of mainstream demographers, another, and seemingly apolitical discourse that privileges concerns over social reproduction, cohesion, and solidarity animates the politics and policies of reproduction. This discourse foregrounds the family and the protection of life as the roots of

a solidaristic society. Combined with the reorganization of power and public funding enabled by the adoption of the Catholic principle of subsidiarity, this discourse manifests in various policies that hold profound implications for reproductive and gender and sexual rights in Italy.

This rosy vision of a moral, solidaristic, market-based society has its critics, though they tend to be at the left margins of the political spectrum. Center-left political parties and figures have adopted, with some criticism, a variant of the right's subsidiarity and family model for a new welfare. The feminist activists whose work I followed in Milan, particularly the members of *Donne, Diritti, Salute*, brought a gendered lens to their reading of these shifts in welfare. To them it was clear that the containment of the role of the state in the provision of health services in particular had serious implications for reproductive rights as well as for women's health more generally. These political actors, however, did not necessarily identify the shift to the subsidiarity model of governance as the cause of the erosion of health care services and the undermining of reproductive services many of them had fought for in the 1970s. The increasing influence of the Vatican, the lack of women's political power, and the encroaching of market and Catholic logics in health care were seen as the problem. They saw the potential for subsidiarity to open up the field to non-profit associations as a mechanism for an alternative politic in which their organization could hope to participate. Thus, while I owe much of my understanding of the reorganization of health and social service funding to the organizers of *DoDiSa*, the analysis of subsidiarity does not necessarily reflect their perspectives.

Neoliberalism & the Problem Social Cohesion

Welfare, Gender, & the Family

The dominant discourse on the transformation of Italy's welfare State and the emergence of a new social model presents them as "apparently ungendered processes" (Gal and Kligman 2000: 3). In fact, Italy's new social model has profound gendered implications, which are strongly contested by both new and old feminists (or *femministe storiche*, as I often heard feminists from the 1970s being described). Research on the division of domestic labor continues to show a significant gender gap (Mencarini 2012; Ranaldi and Romano 2008: 10-11, 22-29), while Italian women's participation in the labor market is low at 46.3% (vs. 70.5% for men)[5] (Ranaldi and Romano 2008: 15-22; Samek Lodovici and Semenza 2008: 160). Whether they work outside the home or not, Italian women are responsible for most of the family care work, including that of elderly parents.

Italy's welfare system always relied upon women's care work in the family as it assumed that men would be the breadwinner and women the home-makers (Ranaldi and Romano 2008). Scholars already characterized Italy's welfare system as "familistic" (see for example Saraceno 2002; Vicarelli and Bronzini 2009). Neoliberal reforms in Italy are further eroding this already weak welfare system and explicitly identifying the family as its replacement. The notion that a cohesive society is a society built on heteronormative families justifies devolving even more responsibility to the family, and thus to women.

Another gendered implication of the new welfare model is the way it has enabled new, and less visible ways of restricting reproductive rights like abortion, which on paper are still guaranteed by national legislations. The devolution of social services, like family

[5] The most recent World Economic Forum "gender gap index" ranks Italy as 72nd out of 134 countries overall, 88th out of 134 for "labour force participation," and 45th in terms of political empowerment (Zahidi and Ibarra 2010: 62).

planning clinics, to non-governmental associations and private entities has opened up the field to the Catholic Church. Combined with the increasing emphasis on the family, which invests public family planning clinics through various political interventions described below, these shifts in funding threaten access to reproductive services.

Neoliberalism & Moral Authority

Global processes of economic and political restructuring combined, in the 1990s, with fiscal requirements for inclusion in the European Union's common currency, the Euro, contributed to the restructuring of the social state according to neoliberal logics (see Muehlebach 2009, 2012; Molé 2010). Neoliberalism is generally understood to be characterized by a combination of "deregulation, privatization, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision" (Harvey 2005: 3). In Italy these transformations in the role of the state, though far from an ideal neoliberal type especially as it concerns deregulation (see Della Sala 2004), have ranged from health care and social services (the focus of this chapter) to the loosening of labor protections. The particularities of post-welfare Italian moral neoliberalism (Muehlebach 2012), however, problematize the notion that neoliberal governmentality always "activates" rational, entrepreneurial, "autonomous" individuals (Rose 2007; Lemke 2001: 203). In emphasizing the principle of subsidiarity and the moral basis of the family, political authorities and experts in Italy self-consciously aim for a third way between the individualistic *homo oeconomicus* and unfettered market ideal of the Chicago school style neoliberalism and the solidarity of the welfare State. Under the moral neo-liberalism governed by subsidiarity, solidarity remains an important aim, though one that has shifted to the cultural and moral dimension of "social cohesion," a discourse which in turn draws on the social sciences, particularly on Durkheim but also on Maussian

notions of role of reciprocal obligations of the gift in holding society together. Individuals are relocated in a more "natural" and organic social formation, that of the family rather than the State. In this reconfiguring of welfare and social citizenship, the protection of life from conception and of the heteronormative family figures prominently in discourses and in official documents, such as position papers on welfare.

These "anti-choice" political interventions engender resistance on numerous grounds, including their seeming contradiction with the rhetoric of individual responsibilization deployed in other settings, particularly in the reorganization of welfare. Yet, rather than exceptions and contradictions of neoliberalism, these manifestations of disciplinary and sovereign power may well be intrinsic to neoliberal governmentality. The moral regulation of "free individuals, loose of all but the necessary constraint by the state" (Greenhouse 2010: 8) offers a "solution to the contradictions of neoliberalism" (Harvey 2005: 86) whereby unchecked individualism risks bordering on the "ungovernable" and "may even lead to the breakdown of all bonds of solidarity and a condition verging on social anarchy and nihilism" (82). The ideology of neoliberalism, which views the state as inefficient and a burden on the market and which seeks to engender independent individuals who take on the risks and responsibilities of welfare, generates the problem of social cohesion. For this reason, as Harvey's argument shows, a view of neoliberalism as amoral or immoral ignores the fact "that the gospel of laissez-faire is always already accompanied by hypermoralization" (Muehlebach 2012: 6). This approach to neoliberal governmentality builds on but departs from analyses that emphasize ethopolitics (Rose 2007), or the self-techniques of empowered and responsible subjects who govern themselves through "desires, aspirations, and interests" (Dean 1999: 209) homologous with rationalities of

government (Nadesan 2008: 1) by recognizing the continued relevance of moral authority (Muehlebach 2012) and even "direct coercion" (see Morgan and Roberts 2012: 243).

The recognition of a "neoliberal moral authoritarianism" (Muehlebach 2012: 6) is part of a reconception of neoliberalism as constituting a "retreat" of the state rather than a reconfiguration of government (Kingfisher and Makovksy 2008; Nadesan 2008) that shifts risks to individuals while consolidating moral authority in the name of social security, or social cohesion. Andrea Muehlebach work on volunteerism and the emergence of ethical citizenship in Milan probes an important facet of what she terms "moral neoliberalism," the mobilization of affect and relational citizenship among volunteers (2009, 2012). Through ethnographic research with elderly volunteers she demonstrates that neoliberal governmentality does not simply rely on an economic view of the subject as self-interested, maximizing *homo oeconomicus,* but that a relational and solidaristic ethic of care experienced as being oppositional to the values of the market is also both enabling and legitimating of neoliberal reforms. In this chapter, and in the dissertation as a whole, I stretch this original framing of the concept of "moral neoliberalism" to include the biopolitics and vitapolitics of reproduction and the family, which I show are a central object in the reorganization of welfare and social citizenship.

Remaking Welfare

Beginning in the 1990s both center-left and center-right governments introduced policies and legislations that profoundly altered the architecture of the Italian social state. Labor law, pensions, and health care services have been transformed by a series of legislations (Graziano 2009). The social contract between citizens and the Italian State has been altered in significant ways: legislation opened up the provision of social services to

non-state entities, both non-profit, and hybrid combinations of profit/nonprofit; the division of power between the national and regional and local governments was reformulated so that many responsibilities of the State were devolved to the regions, leading many observers to comment on the resulting heterogeneity of practices and outcomes on the peninsula; the Italian Constitution was amended to include a new architecture for the administration of the State based on the concept of subsidiarity. "Flexibility" of terms of employment for workers entering the labor market was introduced in the late 1997 and expanded in 2003[6] (Della Sala 2004: 1051-1054; Graziano 2009: 605). These reforms led to a split labor market in which older workers retained older protections while newer ones faced an unregulated market in which temporary contracts became a (precarious) way of life (Molé 2010, Muehlebach 2007). "Flexible" employment reforms translated into short-term contracts without benefits and into a generalized sense of *precarietà* (precariousness) among Italians (Molé 2010).

The Italian *Sistema sanitario nazionale* (National Health System) was instituted in 1978 to provide publicly funded health care throughout the Italian territory. The levels and quality of health care offered, however, was never homogenous in Italy with a particularly significant gap between services available in the wealthier north compared to a relative lack of services in the south (Ginsborg 2001: 227). The reform of the health care system dates to the 1990s and it can be categorized into two main changes: one, the accreditation of private health care entities by the State and second, the devolution of the management of health care from the national government to Italy's 20 Italian regions (Graziano 2009: 611). As a consequence of this decentralization of the health care system, "there is no national health-

[6] Law 196/1997, approved by a center-left government, initially opened up the labor market, which was then further deregulated by the Berlusconi government in 2003 with law 30 (Graziano 2009: 605).

care system but different regional health-care systems co-funded nationally" (Graziano 2009: 611).[7] The added effect of these reforms is that the Italian model of the social state is in the process of being significantly altered, with profound implications and effects for its citizens.

Social Cohesion

With the devolution and diffusion of the responsibilities of the welfare state and the erosion of the protections of labor with reforms in labor laws in the 1990s, experiences and practices of solidarity and social relations are also reconfigured. The pervasive emphasis of concerns with social cohesion, from the supranational level of the EU to the regional and city level, can be understood as a "problem-solution" (Nadesan 2008) of neoliberal government. Social science concerns with the basis of solidarity have their roots in Durkheimian theorizing about the profound shift from mechanical to organic solidarity in modern society (Durkheim 1984 [1933]). As with the social upheavals of the industrial revolution, social cohesion generates "the greatest interest … in times of fundamental economic, social and political change" (Hulse and Stone 2007: 109).

The meaning of "social cohesion," however, remains somewhat loosely defined (Friedkin 2004; Hulse and Stone 2007; Vergolini 2011). In Canada, the term "social cohesion" re-emerged in the 1990s in a similar context as the European one, namely "as a means of thinking about some of the social stresses and strains being experienced as a result of several factors, including the effects of neoliberal, pro-market policies on aspects of wellbeing such as poverty and health, the challenges associated with high levels of immigration, and some loss of confidence in public

[7] According to Graziano, "the decentralization process of welfare services (in particular with respect to employment and health care) is opening new differentiated forms of 'choice' welfare, thus endangering the future development of a coherent and comprehensive national welfare state in Italy" (2009: 613).

institutions (2007: 110). In Canada, social cohesion was tied to "the ongoing process of developing a community of shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunity within Canada based on a sense of trust, hope and reciprocity amongst all Canadians" (Jenson 1998: 4, cited in Hulse and Stone 2007: 110). This framing was ultimately tied to the demise of the concept, precisely because of the problematic assertion of "shared values" in a multicultural society and its potential for eliding issues of social justice under the framework of values (Hulse and Stone 2007: 111). A related discourse in the United States coalesced around the notion of "social capital," most visibly championed by political scientist Robert Putnam (1995; Hulse and Stone 2007: 111).[8]

The terms of social cohesion in Italy are contested, with conservative Catholics locating it in the respect for life and in the heteronormative family and leftists emphasizing social justice and insisting on the role of the state in generating social solidarity. An analysis informed by governmentality can hold together different facets of the political project shaping up in the wake of the social state, a project that includes the rise of the biopolitics of the embryo, increasing moral regulation of reproduction and the family, and attempts at a definition of the terms for the integration or exclusion of newcomers into Italian society. This approach, in turn, brings into relief the way gender and family ideologies are the glue of the cultural and moral reconfiguring of old, centralized state forms of social solidarity into cultural and moral problems of social cohesion in a post-welfare, neoliberal regime.

[8] Putnam developed his concept of social capital in his 1994 book *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton University Press, in which he argued that Northern Italian regions had effective and creative governments because of the rich civic life of their citizens, in contrast to the corruption and inefficiency of Southern regions where such social capital was lacking. Putnam was criticized for his lack of attention to conflict and Italian history (see for example Boix and Posner 1996).

A Lexis-Nexis search of the instances of the term "*coesione sociale"* ("social cohesion") and "*solidarietà sociale"* ("social solidarity") in the Italian media shows a significant increase in the circulation of these terms through the first decade of the 2000s. My sense during fieldwork that both terms were quite pervasive in Italian discourse was confirmed by a basic search in the Lexis-Nexis database of Italian newspapers and press releases (see Table 1). The use of the terms "*coesione sociale*" and "*solidarietà sociale*" clearly intensifies in 2004 increasing in frequency in the second half of the first decade of the 2000s. Interestingly, the frequency of "social solidarity" peaks in 2006 and 2007, a period that coincides with my fieldwork, and then declines. References to "social cohesion," on the other hand, continue to increase.

Table 1. Instances of the terms "*coesione sociale*" and "*solidarietà sociale*" in the Italian media.[1]

Year(s)	*Coesione sociale*	*Solidarietà sociale*
1980-1990	0	0
1991-1995	44	184
1996-2000	162	775
2000	56	192
2001	58	96
2002	70	90
2003	48	60
2004	363	263
2005	516	263
2006	464	1824
2007	428	> 3000[2]
2008	348	1085
2009	1766	924
2010	2303	649
2011	2434	618
2012	2398	542

The increased currency of "social solidarity" and "social cohesion" emerges at a time when neoliberal reforms are reconfiguring the old welfare guarantees and putting the

[1] Lexis-Nexis search August 5, 2010, updated June 27, 2013.
[2] The maximum count for articles found by the Lexis-Nexis search engine is 3000.

meaning of the social into question. Just as reforms in areas like labor and health care of the late 1990s-early 2000s undermine the historical bases of social solidarity, the terms are invoked more frequently. This increase in these terms' circulation reflects a political project seeking to redefine the bases of social solidarity and social cohesion away from the state as provider and guarantor and toward voluntaristic and non-governmental solutions. The shift toward civil society makes non-governmental associations and the family into the protagonists of this new welfare. The family in particular emerges from documents and Catholic sociological literature as the ultimate and morally appropriate source of social security. At the same time that individuals are called upon to shoulder more responsibility for themselves in areas such as employment (see Molé 2010) and social services, social solidarity is relocated in social and affective relations. The family is asserted as the ultimate model and originator for these solidary relationships, which in turn form the natural basis of social cohesion in contrast to the artificial solidarity of the welfare state.

The rewriting of the social contract in Italy has been accompanied by a discourse on the need to strengthen social bonds rather than by a celebration of individual choice and freedom usually associated with neoliberalism. The shift from the social state to other forms of social cohesion is not antithetical to the neoliberal project, of course. In the mid-1990s Nikolas Rose identified a shift away from an emphasis on "the social" and toward "community" in the British context (1996: 331). According to Rose, the notion of community replaces "the social" "as a new territory for the administration of individual and collective existence, a new plane or surface upon which micro-moral relations among persons are conceptualized and administered" (Rose 1996: 331).

The moral discourse on social cohesion in Italy does not view it as simply the outcome of responsible, empowered, autonomous neoliberal subjects acting in their best interest. Social cohesion is also not just generated by responsible volunteers engaging in affective labor (Muehlebach 2012). Analyses of neoliberalism, such as Rose's and Muehlebach, which identify a shift to a generalized sphere of civil society and community gloss over the central importance of moralized discourses on the family as the basis of relational citizenship (see Donati 2007) and of a form of solidarity that is at once "natural," suffused with morality, and compatible with the shift from the welfare state to a state that has devolved its responsibilities to the private sector, non-governmental entities, and, ultimately, the family. The logic of this emerging social model extend to the articulation of the terms of integration of immigrants. Increasingly integration requires abiding to a heteronormative model of the family and a particular gender ideology (see Ministry of Interior 2007), while even leftist politicians and immigrant social service providers often frame the need for family reunification for immigrants in terms of security.[3]

The foregrounding of the role of the family in discourses of social cohesion is accompanied by structural reforms that have enabled the channeling of public money away from public services, such as family planning clinics, and toward private, public-private

[3] Rosy Bindi, the Catholic center-left Minister of Family Policies, for example, used this framing to argue for the importance of family reunification to integration in her speech at the first national Conference on the Family in May of 2007. Minister Bindi argued that it is easier to integrate immigrants who are in Italy as part of a family rather than as individuals:

> I believe that the family is precisely the site where the integration of different cultural models is possible. The relationship between a Chinese and an Italian, between an Italian and a person from the Maghreb can represent a challenge; but the relationship between a Chinese family and an Italian one, or between an Italian family and one from the Maghreb brings into play more possibilities of encounter and exchange… We have to acknowledge, however, that multiculturalism raises also issues of security … But it is precisely integration that is the principal policy for security (Bindi 2007).

hybrids, and non-governmental entities, many of which are Catholic in orientation. De facto, Catholic social doctrine and vitapolics play an increasing role in Italian society.

Subsidiarity

The frame undergirding the remaking of the welfare State is that of the Catholic principle of subsidiarity, the idea that decision-making and power should be located at the lowest possible social formation—a principle quite compatible with neoliberalism—but which also calls upon the higher social formation, in this case the state, to step in as *subsidium,* or aid, if the need cannot be met. Unfamiliar to most American readers, though fairly common in Europe, the concept of subsidiarity is usually associated with the allocation of powers between the supranational European Union and its member States. The *Europa Glossary*, the official online glossary of the European Commission, defines subsidiarity as "the principle whereby the Union does not take action (except in the areas which fall within its exclusive competence) unless it is more effective than action taken at national, regional or local level."[4] According to the principle of subsidiarity, governing should occur at the political/administrative level closest to the citizen: "Subsidiarity is the idea that matters should be handled by the lowest, or closest possible level to where they will have their effect" (Colombo 2008: 182). Anthropologist Douglas Holmes recognizes the Catholic roots of subsidiarity, describing it as "the key principle of Catholic discourse on political power and social justice" (Holmes 2000: 96), while also identifying it as the central concept that shaped the architecture of the EU. In this section I build on Holmes's insight that the concept of subsidiarity represents "a comprehensive social theory" (Holmes 2000: 96) to make sense of its deployment in Italy and to the new model of society it

[4] Europa Glossary, http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/subsidiarity_en.htm.

represents. Far from being just an obscure model of governance, subsidiarity speaks to "core struggles facing the EU" and "evokes the classic sociological and anthropological problematic: what are the terms and conditions by which the individual is related to various renderings of collectivity in the new Europe?" (Holmes 2000: 111). Whether at the level of the EU, or at the national or regional levels, the remaking of society according to the model of subsidiarity speaks to these key questions, to the terms of belonging and the nature of society. Most of the Italian literature on subsidiarity identifies and foregrounds the family as the lowest and most basic social formation. Non-governmental associations appear at the next level of preferred social formations as sites of governance.

Outside of the context of the EU and of Italy, the concept of subsidiarity has been tied to the British Third Way model, which locates the mediation between market and state, in the "voluntary sector" (Turner 2001: 201). Subsidiarity, from an Anglophone perspective, "would be achieved through a process of devolution of state functions, authority and funding to a network of voluntary associations" (Turner 2001: 201). While the concept is very similar, the Italian model is distinguished by its focus on the heteronormative family as the ideal and moral locus of this devolution and by the heavy presence and power of Catholic associations. Despite the championing of the individual usually associated with neoliberalism, in the subsidiarity model it is families and associations that are identified as the most important constituting elements of Italian society: "From the perspective of subsidiarity, small and intermediate-sized communities or institutions – like the family, the church and voluntary associations – are mediating structures which empower individual action and link the individual to society as a whole" (Colombo 2008: 184).

The concept of subsidiarity gained a foothold in the organization of government in late 1990s in Italy. The reorganization of governance from a centralized model to one based on subsidiarity was made possible by a 2000 amendment to the Italian Constitution.[5] This constitutional amendment enabled two central reforms: "1. the strengthening of the political autonomy of county governments, not merely with respect to their legislative powers, but also more generally; and 2. the introduction of the principle of subsidiarity in both its vertical and horizontal dimensions" (Maltoni 2002). With the transition of welfare responsibilities (and funding streams) away from state agencies and toward non-profit or profit/non-profit hybrid associations, the realm of the social became available to new political and social interventions. The social, cultural, and political effects of the transformation of social services enacted by these reforms are still unfolding.

In Catholic thought the concept of subsidiarity has two dimensions, horizontal and vertical, and these have carried over to its policy deployment. Vertical subsidiarity refers to the principle that power is best deployed at the lowest possible level of administration, with

---

[5] The concept of subsidiarity was added to the constitution through a 2000 amendment, which was approved via a popular referendum the following year. Amended Article 118 of the Italian Constitution reads: "States, Regions, Urban cities, Provinces and Communes favor the autonomous initiative of citizens, singly or in association, for the development of activities of general interest, based on the principles of subsidiarity" ("Stato, Regioni, Città metropolitane, Province e Comuni favoriscono l'autonoma iniziativa dei cittadini, singoli e associati, per lo svolgimento di attività di interesse generale, sulla base del principio di sussidiarietà.") http://www.governo.it/Governo/Costituzione/CostituzioneRepubblicaItaliana.pdf, pg. 22. Colombo summarizes the changes introduced by this amendment by arguing that "The formal (constitutional) hierarchical superiority of the 'state' over local authorities was abolished" (2008: 179). In the new division of power and responsibilities the State retained control over

> foreign and EU affairs; immigration; religious affairs; defence; state institutions and administration; the currency; saving; state taxes; security; the judiciary; 'basic civil and social rights' to be guaranteed throughout the national territory; social security; national, provincial and communal electoral law; safeguarding the environment; and culture (Colombo 2008: 179).

An area of shared competence (between State and regions) was carved out as well, and this one includes: "international relations of the regions, foreign trade, the labour market, education, research, health, food, sport, civil defence, land use planning, ports and airports, major transport infrastructures, energy, communication, environment and culture promotion" (Colombo 2008: 180). The rest, including the administration of healthcare and social services, is left to the region. With the demise of centralized power, regions acquire new autonomy, with the possibility that even the above areas of shared governance might in the future devolve more to the regions (Colombo 2008: 180).

the central State taking on a subsidiary role, only stepping in if the entity lower in the hierarchy cannot fulfill its duties. Horizontal subsidiarity describes the delegation of administrative powers from local government authorities to non-governmental associations and families and is the principle enabling the dispersal of governing across the social terrain. Horizontal subsidiarity is also the principle that governs the dispersal of funds to hybrid public/private agencies, including a large contingent of Catholic-oriented entities (Fiorentini 2005; Maltoni 2002; Rinella n.d.).

Proponents of subsidiarity, particularly those of Catholic orientation, emphasize its horizontal dimension. Italian sociologist Giovanna Rossi, for example, argues that vertical subsidiarity is not so different from the old welfare model because of its hierarchical nature, its privileging of the institutional level, and its reliance on the state as the ultimate guarantor. Horizontal subsidiarity, on the other hand, is "an ethico-social principle that orients relations among subjects who operate in the social and who recognize the fundamental contributions offered by less structured entities toward making society more itself (*rendere la società più se stessa*)" (Rossi 2005: 92). Vertical subsidiarity reorganizes the relationship between State institutions, while horizontal subsidiarity is the realm of moralized social relations and of a new framing of society.[6] In other words, horizontal subsidiarity is more than "a mere organizational criterion;" it is "a culture" (Rossi 2005: 97).

This model of governance is based on a different philosophical premise than free-market neoliberalism, of which it is often critical. Subsidiarity privileges autonomy, the devolution of power at the local level, and the development of a solidaristic civil society,

[6] Another way of distinguishing between vertical and horizontal subsidiarity is to say that the former refers to institutional and public actors, while horizontal subsidiarity refers to private actors (Fiorentini 2005).

but it also calls upon the state to play a subsidiary role, to step in if and when the lower social formation is not able to meet the social need. The Catholic origins of the principle of subsidiarity differentiate the social model that subsidiarity engenders from other neoliberal communitarian approaches, such as the British "Third Way." Both models lead to the scaling back of the social state in favor of empowering non-governmental entities. What distinguishes the Italian subsidiarity-informed third sector model from the British Third Way "quangos" model (quasi-autonomous non-governmental organizations) is the fact that in Italy "the 'third sector' (social enterprise) has an 'explicit ethical mission'" (Lippi and Morisi 2005: 74, cited in Colombo 2008: 185). Thus, although both neoliberal reform and the devolution of governance along the logics of subsidiarity result in decentralization, the underlying theory of society that informs this process is not the same: "while its [subsidiarity's] praxis has involved the privatization of public services, the policy has been derived from a fundamentally different and more complex vision of the nature and purpose of social organization than contemporary neo-liberalism." (Colombo 2008:186). The subject of subsidiarity is called upon to reorient to a different moral universe, one in which solidarity is dispersed through the social body in the form of the normative family and its affective forms of caretaking. Subsidiarity can be read as a theory of social relations that is neither capitalist nor socialist, but rather more akin to relations and responsibilities woven through social reciprocity (Colombo 2008: 187). Although philosophically different from the "Third Way," which emphasizes the market, subsidiarity is conceptualized as a third way nonetheless: "in the Lombard political debate of the last decade, subsidiarity has emerged as a philosophy of social organization promising a genuine alternative to the

stalemated trench war between liberal anti-interventionism (based on the market) and socialist interventionism (relying on the state)" (Colombo 2008: 187).

Positive readings of subsidiarity outside of the scholarship sympathetic to its Catholic orientation claim that it enables a plural rendering of society (Holmes 2000 argues this for the case of Europe; see also Maltoni 2002),[7] and that it may hold yet unfulfilled radical potential (Cotturri 2003). The ambivalence among those on the left or center-left toward subsidiarity speaks to its seductiveness. For example, former Communist Italian journalist Antonio Polito (2006) argues that subsidiarity

> is not (just) an ethical choice. It is also a necessity. In modern societies, the State is no longer able to handle first hand all that the community needs. First of all it is a matter of resources. … Yet, the necessity is not just a matter of money. It is the quality of the services that the State is no longer able to guarantee, when they are services to the person. Between a *badante* (care-worker) and a state employee there is an abyss of humanity and flexibility that the State is not able to fill. … It is better that the State refrain from doing all that can be accomplished by the individual.

Italian political and legal sociologist Giuseppe Cotturri argues that the way the concept of subsidiarity was finally articulated and included in the Italian Constitution was a result of resistance by the left and by associations to a first draft that placed much more emphasis on reducing the role of the state in favor of the free market. The way the concept was developed actually brings the state back in the picture in the role of supporter and enabler of active citizenship (Cotturri 2003). According to Cotturri, the consequences and implications of subsidiarity are "radical," may not have been foreseen by the politicians who enacted them, and are yet to be fully exploited by associations: "the fact is that the space that was opened is ... vertigo-inducing" (Cotturri 2003: 4). This potential is what

[7] "The principle of horizontal subsidiarity implies that society in all its various forms (as a community of persons at the sub-state, state and international level) places itself at the service of the individual human being. The individual is thus considered as both a single entity of social expression and as being within a social pattern in which his/her personality can unfold (in accordance to the maxim: *civitas propter cives, non cives propter civitatem*). In such a context, one can fully grasp the connection between subsidiarity and the principle of social pluralism, as it is expressed in article 2 of the Italian Constitution" (Maltoni 2002).

makes subsidiarity an attractive model across the spectrum. How it actually plays out on the ground, at least in the region of Lombardy, suggests that there may be a significant gap between its potential and its enactment.

The Green Paper on Welfare: "The Good Life in the Active Society"

The moral coordinates of Italy's new social model are laid out in the government's policy proposal, the Green Paper. The 2008 Green Paper on Welfare, titled, *La vita buona nella società attiva* (The Good Life in the Active Society) lays out a clear roadmap for a new Italian society. The presentation of the Green Paper on the government's website identifies the main reasons why welfare reform is necessary: "Demographic trends, … unregulated globalization and economic growth that remains below potential are progressively eroding the network of old securities" (Governo Italiano 2008). Foregrounded as one of the central problems with the social State are the country's "demographic tendencies," a reference to the shifts in population due to low fertility rates and increased immigration. The solution for this undoing of "old security safety nets" is the new welfare proposed by the Berlusconi government. This intervention is framed as being cultural and social: "The challenge to which we are called is not solely economic in nature, but, most of all, it is a cultural and programming challenge. We want to repropose the centrality of the person, in itself and its relational projections, beginning with the family" (Sacconi 2008: 3). The cultural nature of this project and the centrality of the family and life to its orientation are repeated throughout the document: "The crisis of the Italian social model is, first and foremost, a cultural crisis, a crisis of values, beginning with the failure to acknowledge the centrality of the person, the insufficient attention to the fundamental defense of life, the

recurrent negation of the role of the family" (Ministero del Lavoro, della Salute e delle Politiche Sociali 2008: 10).

The project of constructing a new model of society runs through the remaking of Italian citizens from "passive" subjects and recipient of state welfare, to active, relational subjects located in "traditional" families.[8]

> The time has come to build the foundations of a new Welfare, which, in order to guarantee to all components of society equal opportunities and rights that are sustainable through the entire cycle of life, avails itself in a logic of full subsidiarity, of the contribution of responsibly active subjects (Ministero del Lavoro, della Salute e delle Politiche Sociali 2008:15).

The government's proposal for a new social model replaces publicly managed social services with a relational, moralized, and "diffused" network of social relations:

> The capacity to make community … is fundamental, beginning with its essential projections, which are the family, volunteerism, associationism and the work environment, and through the rediscovery of relational and service spaces, such as the parish, the pharmacy, the family doctor, the post office, the police station. It is only in this way that it seems possible to build a diffused and capillary network of services and new securities integrating the action of the public actor (Ministero del Lavoro, della Salute e delle Politiche Sociali 2008: 16).

[8] The irony of the Berlusconi's government championing of Catholic family values as Berlusconi himself engaged in behavior at the opposite end of the moral spectrum underlies the instrumental nature of this moral discourse. The embracing of family values and morals as the basis of a new welfare, on the one hand secures the political of the Vatican, and on the other enables the neoliberal, market reforms sought by Berlusconi's party. Even the supposedly very Catholic governor of Lombardy, Roberto Formigoni, has defended Berlusconi despite allegations of underage prostitution and orgies at Berlusconi's mansion (http://milano.repubblica.it/dettaglio-news/milano-11:44/3666).

A prominent feature of this new welfare project is its foregrounding of "life" as a central objective. The new model is linked and moralized in part through the charge of safeguarding "the entire cycle of life – from conception to natural death" (Ministero del Lavoro, della Salute e delle Politiche Sociali 2008: 3). This call for the protection of "life" recurs throughout the document and links subsidiarity, social cohesion, and associationism with the politics of life:

> Only through the full application of the principle of subsidiarity has it been possible to aid civil society in realizing a path of self-organization and self-determination founded on community values of solidarity, social cohesion, respect for life, and for the common good (Ministero del Lavoro, della Salute e delle Politiche Sociali 2008: 16)[9]

The Green Paper for the new welfare model was drafted in 2008, but more recent articulations of the model reprise its main characteristics. In a letter to Italy's daily *Il Corriere della Sera,* the Minister of Welfare Maurizio Sacconi summarized the Berlusconi government's orientation for "Italy's future social model" with the phrase: "*meno Stato, più società"* ("Less State, more society"):[10]

> Less State means less rules, less structures, less public spending, less political-institutional intermediaries. As a result, more society means more market, more subsidiarity, more private spending for the common good, more responsibility on the part of social and community actors, including the family. … It is a matter of making virtue of necessity, developing on the one hand the authority of the State as regulator oriented toward results for the common good and, on the other, the historic proclivity of our community toward the culture of the gift and of our social organizations for managing services… The same welfare service has a different effect if it is rendered by a cold public administration or through the warmth and solidarity of the gift (Sacconi 2010: 44).[11]

---

[9] "Ministero del Lavoro, della Salute e delle Politiche Sociali 2008: 16.

[10] "Perché ci vuole meno Stato e più società" (Sacconi 2010: 44). http://www.ilsussidiario.net/News/Economia-e-Finanza/2010/6/17/CORRIERE-DELLA-SERA-Sacconi-Welfare-ecco-perche-ci-vuole-meno-Stato-e-piu-societa/93738/
or: http://www.adnkronos.com/IGN/Lavoro/Welfare/Sacconi-nel-welfare-ci-vuole-meno-Stato-e-piu-societa_554301681.html

[11] For a critique of the historical antecedents of this discourse, see Bimbi 1993.

The Society of Good Works

"More society, less State" was also the slogan of a powerful Catholic organization deeply invested in the economic and moral restructuring of the Lombard Welfare system, the *Compagnia delle Opere* (The Society of Good Works) or CdO. The CdO, which has been described as a "sort of Catholic Rotary" (Paris 2000), is an international association with its roots in Lombardy. Over 34,000 small-to-medium size firms, including non-profit social service firms, are members of the CdO. According to information formerly available on its website, the

> CdO was established in 1986 within the experience of the Catholic Movement *Comunione e Liberazione* [Communion and Liberation], which aims to "promote and defend the dignity of the individual in the society and work environment, as well as promoting the creation of social works and companies, characterized by a culture of economy and trade, able to entirely understand and respect the person in all aspects and expressions.[12]

The *Compagnia delle Opere* takes credit for introducing the concept of subsidiarity into the broader political discourse with a conference on welfare reform held at Milan's Palalido arena in 1999.[13] At the conference, the "key word was subsidiarity" (Vecchi 1999).[14] In 2007, the company's gross revenue was 45 billion euros, with 450,000 employees.[15] With the company's headquarters in Milan, and with one of the politicians the company supports, Formigoni, as the governor of the region of Lombardy, it is not surprising that the CdO obtains a huge slice of the regional budget of public funds for non-profit/private health

---

[12] Art. 1 of the Incorporation Certificate, electronic document, http://www.cdo.it/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=63Ftc2iWzvE%3D&tabid=464&mid=1412 last access August 18, 2008..

[13] Vittadini quoted in Fontolan 1998 http://www.tracce.it/det_Articoli.asp?Sezione=aprile+1998&ID=19980403

[14] The remaking of welfare along the principle of subsidiarity relies on expert and academic knowledge, which contributes a gloss of neutrality and factuality. Out of the Compagnia delle Opere, for example, emerged in 2002 the *Fondazione per la Sussidiarietà* (Foundation for Subsidiarity), a research foundation made up of academics and other "experts." Their first publication was titled "Liberi di scegliere. Dal welfare state alla welfare society," ("Free to choose. From the welfare State to the welfare society" (Fondazione Sussidiarietà, http://www.sussidiarieta.net/it/storiafps).

[15] http://www.cdo.it/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=63Ftc2iWzvE%3D&tabid=464&mid=1412.: 5

services. The analysis of regional representative Mario Agostinelli, speaker for the leftist coalition *Sinistra – Un'altra Lombardia* [The Left-Another Lombardy], highlights the centrality of this Catholic organization in the redirecting of public funds: "In the Lombardy system, the *Compagnia delle Opere* is a formidable invention because it interposes itself between the needs of citizens and a considerable mass of ethico-social firms: welfare, education, training… In this way the element of privatization is glossed over and that of volunteerism, of 'the gift' is highlighted" (Portanova 2009).[16] The Maussian references to the gift deployed in politicians' discourse (Sacconi 2010: 44) and in the writings of sociologists suggest an interest in proposing an alternative to the welfare state. However, while the also common Durkheimian references to social cohesion and social solidarity reflect Durkheim's concerns with the integration of modern, industrialized, state societies, the Maussian references to the gift seem to suggest an interest in non-state forms of social obligation and responsibility.[17]

In the introduction to an edited volume titled *Welfare Community and Subsidiarity*, Italian sociologist Sergio Belardinelli argues for a move away from the welfare state, not toward "individualism" or "cultural relativism," but rather to a society based on subsidiarity that values and attends to "social relations" (2000: 21). These social relations, however, must take a particular form, that of the normative family. The author provides two examples to support his claim that individual rights are problematic for society: the "demand" for gay marriage and for the "right" for assisted reproduction for a woman in her sixties. Such demands, according to the Italian sociologist, instead of "promoting a more liberal society"

[16] Agostinelli edited a book on the Lombard welfare model, titled, *La corsa è finita* (The Race is Over) (Unaltralombardia 2007).
[17] Mauss, however, saw continuity between the solidarity of the gift and the "returning to a group morality" (1990: 68) in the establishment of the social state.

end up "instead undermining the normative order and the social capital necessary to its subsistence" (Belardinelli 2000: 20). As with many other elaborations of the concept of subsidiarity, the author identifies the heterosexual, married, reproductive family as the correct basis of and model for society. The family should have its own "social subjectivity" (Belardinelli 2000: 22), displacing the idea of individual rights as abstracted from social relations. Belardinelli calls for "a new citizenship of the family, according to which there are rights that individuals acquire by virtue of being members of a family," concluding that "from the perspective of society as a whole we can then say that the more the family is family, the more it is useful to society" (2000: 22). Another contributor argues that in the "new orientation [of Italian society] guided by the principle of subsidiarity… the value rests in the fact that renewed attention is given to interpersonal relationships" (Giuffrè 2000: 70), particularly those in the family:

> The implicit model of values is that of the family as civil community with inalienable responsibilities of procreation, of education of children, and of generating those internal and external ties of association that generate those informal and formal networks in which the primary and secondary social capital of society is formed (Giuffrè 2000: 75).

The relevance to the provision of social services from a perspective of subsidiarity is immediately evident, but the author even provides a practical example of the difference in the provision of services informed by subsidiarity at the *consultori*. While a liberal or welfare approach would offer a pregnant woman "who is refusing the pregnancy" an abortion in the institutional health setting, in

> the subsidiarity-informed approach the woman will not only be helped to understand the meaning of pregnancy and the rights of the *nascituro* [to-be born], but she will also be supported in accessing the means necessary to welcome the new life and to sustain the burden of support and education of the child (Giuffrè 2000: 76).

The restructuring of welfare and the remaking of reproductive politics and services is enabled by political and administrative reforms in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. Subsidiarity is thus both a theory of proper government and a moral theory of society that foregrounds the family and the protection of life through numerous techniques of management.

Lombardy: the Laboratory of Subsidiarity

The region of Lombardy, with its more than a decade of center-right governing, offers some insights into how the space opened up by the devolution of State responsibilities for social services may be partitioned in the name of subsidiarity. Referenced as the laboratory of subsidiarity,[18] or the Region of subsidiarity (Consiglio regionale della Lombardia 2002: 7), the Lombard welfare model emphasizes the so-called *privato sociale* (private social services), a hybrid of nonprofit and for-profit entities. The reorganizing of funding and administrative power has reshaped the political landscape at all levels, making available forms of, and funds for, organizations that did not exist a decade earlier. The dispersion of public moneys and of governance, including moral governance, through non-governmental organizations has changed the way health care and social services are accessed and provided.

Lombardy, where the welfare state is giving way to a diffused moral network of associations and private (Catholic-oriented) health and social service clinics, offers a

[18] See for example, a conference co-organized with the John Hopkins' Institute in Milan in June 2009: "Beyond the welfare state, towards subsidiarity". Formigoni's speech about subsidiarity as "a new model of government":
http://www.arifl.regione.lombardia.it/cs/Satellite?c=News&childpagename=Regione%2FDetail&cid=1213299977930&p=1213273365520&packedargs=locale%3D1194453881584%26menu-to-render%3D1213273365520&pagename=RGNWrapper
and conference program:
http://www.unimib.it/open/eventi/Oltre-il-welfare-state_-la-Sussidiarieta/8779442473511847479

particularly striking example of the articulation of neoliberal and Catholic politics. The neoliberal celebration of choice and individual responsibility has been qualified by the Vatican's hard line against individual rights in matters of life (and death). Much of what *Donne, Diritti, Salute* and other feminist groups were contesting in the restructuring of the Italian welfare state was the result of the pairing of Catholic morality and neoliberal ideology. This pairing has shaped the restructuring of health care in the region of Lombardy under a conservative Catholic administration. In Lombardy the welfare state is in the process of being increasingly replaced by a diffused moral network of associations and private (Catholic-oriented) health and social service clinics. As its social and moral doctrine increasingly permeates social services previously provided by the state, the Vatican's stance on issues of "life" and death holds important implications for health and reproductive services. A moralized discourse that celebrates the respect for "life" and the centrality of family relations and associations to social cohesion enables the privatization of health by introducing an alternative model of solidarity and justice. These reforms, in turn, have engendered resistance and criticism on the ground, particularly among feminist activists. In the next section I explore the politics of reproduction as they played out among feminist actors in Milan.

Negotiating Subsidiarity on the Ground

During the early days of my field research I returned to the independent feminist clinic in downtown Milan where, during pre-dissertation exploratory research in June 2005, I had met Nilde and received her blessing to conduct research on site. Nilde was in her early eighties and one of the founders of the clinic in the 1980s. Part receptionist, part administrator, and part political inciter, Nilde held forth at her wooden desk in the reception

area of the clinic, a poster from the 1970s bearing the slogan: "there is no revolution without women's revolution" hanging on the wall behind her. When something triggered her fiery temper, Nilde would threaten to quit, and to take the prized poster with her.

Nilde was happy to have me help out in the reception area. Long afternoons and evenings at the clinics, especially when the patient flow was not too intense, would turn into opportunities for Nilde to talk about the history she had lived: her participation in partisan actions in the second world war; following the war, the missed opportunity for a communist revolution; feminism; and current politics. In part spurred by my questions and my topic of research, but just as often by comments or current events, Nilde was an indefatigable and heated orator.

Soon after I began to conduct research at the clinic I found out that a feminist group focused on women's health issues met at the clinic after hours and I began to participate in their meetings. The clinic closed at 7pm and the use of the reception required the hand-off of the clinic key from Nilde to Daniela, a thirty-something activist, journalist, and co-founder of the group. At the end of the meeting, the key had to be dropped off to an elderly lady who lived in the apartment building in which the clinic was located and who held onto it until the morning, when it would be retrieved by the morning receptionist. At the first meeting I attended, however, Nilde could not find the key and the group had to find an impromptu meeting place. Not wanting to spend money anywhere, we headed for the Feltrinelli bookstore in downtown Milan. Undaunted by the public and unorthodox arrangement, Daniela and Laura, the two main conveners and facilitators of the *DoDiSa* group, launched into a fast-paced update on the most recent health policy proposals in the region of Lombardy. Although I did not know it, this was my introduction to subsidiarity

and the importance of the reorganization of health care to the issues I had come to research: reproductive politics.

Other participants in the group that night included a young woman from an association for the disabled, a local politician with the communist party *Rifondazione Comunista* (who co-founded the group with Daniela[19]) and Livia, a cultural mediator from Peru. Laura and Daniela updated the group on the health policy proposals recently unveiled by Roberto Formigoni, Lombardy's center-right governor. Central to the politics of Formigoni was the issue of health vouchers as a means for accessing health care in Lombardy. The group was critical of the idea of "consumer freedom" that informs the concept of vouchers. Laura argued that the idea of "freedom" actually places a burden on citizens to advocate for services that should be their right, making citizens increasingly responsible, under the guise of freedom, for figuring out how and where to obtain services. The regional deregulation plan for health care was sending a very clear message that "you, the citizen, are responsible for your health."[20] Laura and Daniela's frustration extended to the national center-left government in power at the time, which also seemed to adopt a similar ideology of health. Laura complained about a recent statement by the Minister of Health, Livia Turco: "Livia Turco: if you smoke you have to pay a higher copay because you are a cost to society!" Laura's critiques echo the analysis of scholars of neoliberalism and governmentality who argue that

> the strategy of rendering individual subjects "responsible" (and also collectives, such as families, associations, etc.) entails shifting the responsibility for social risks such as illness, unemployment, poverty, etc. and for life in society into the domain for which the individual is responsible and transforming it into a problem of "self-care" (Lemke 2001: 201).

[19] Daniela interview, July 19, 2007
[20] Fieldnote, Donne, Diritti, Salute meeting, December 18, 2006.

While the critique of neoliberalism, including the push to individual responsibilization, was very familiar to me, I struggled to keep up with the conversation because of Laura and Daniela's rapid-fire references to various legislations and names of regional politicians with which I was not yet familiar. An excerpt of that conversation from my fieldnotes[21] reveals my difficulty in keeping up at this initial meeting: "The Region's legislative proposal is full of problems. First of all it negates law 328/78 [which established the National Health System]. … It abolishes two laws [one from 1986 and one from 2000] and law 328/78, but without being a unified text [*testo unico*], which it should be…" The notes trail off at this point in the conversation as I gave up trying to write down numbers of legislations and changes to health plan proposals. The group's intense focus on regional health care policy was disorienting to me. I had expected a different conversation, one that focused on the state of reproductive politics in Italy.

Yet it was in this conversation that I first heard the term *sussidiarietà* (subsidiarity), a concept whose meaning was unfamiliar to me, but that has since become central to my analysis. In my hurriedly jotted down fieldnotes, I noted that one of Laura's criticisms of regional health care reform was that it would "interrupt vertical and horizontal subsidiarity."[22] Although I recorded this phrase in my notes, I did not understand it until after I returned from the field and started to research subsidiarity beyond the context of European Union governance. In retrospect, I realize that Laura's comment was a criticism of the consolidation of health care in hospitals being proposed by the regional administration. Laura argued that this consolidation would lead to the closure of clinics,

[21] My request to record the meetings was politely denied by Daniela who felt that it would unnecessarily expose the group. This concern reflects the intensity of the politics of reproduction in Italy as a whole, but also, I believe, the struggles among various other feminist groups. As a result of her request, all my data from *Donne, Diritti, Salute* meetings comes from field notes.
[22] Fieldnote, Laura, December 18, 2006.

including family planning clinics, and reduce access to the most vulnerable. Laura's criticism was deploying subsidiarity to point to a contradiction in this policy of an administration so vocally supportive of the principle of subsidiarity in government: the folding of family clinics into hospitals was a move toward centralization rather than de-centralization.

My initial confusion on the focus of *Donne, Diritti, Salute*'s activism reflected my lack of understanding of the relationship between health care policy and the way the politics of "life" were deployed on the ground. Daniela, Laura, and Franca, on the other hand, were keenly conscious of the effects of the reorganization of health care to reproductive and women's issues. Laura's passion about this topic was at least in part an outcome of personal and familial experience with illness, as well as the result of her feminist politics. Daniela had become interested in assisted reproduction while at university and had become engaged as a public intellectual in the debates over the moral restriction of assisted reproduction approved by the Italian parliament in 2004. Daniela described the path of Donne, Diritti, Salute in an interview, locating its beginning in a working group on women's health issues constituted within *Usciamo dal silenzio* in response to the approval of the assisted reproduction legislation in 2004 and the failure of a referendum to amend it in 2005. From the beginning, the focus of the group was on health care services as they impacted women's health.

All three core members of *Donne, Diritti, Salute* shared a concern with issues of access, both financial and geographical, which they expressed with consistent references to the need to "defend the territory," or of statements about *Donne, Diritti, Salute* being "for the territory." *Donne, Diritti, Salute* was very critical of the restructuring of welfare and the

privatization of "the public." Laura, for example, was concerned by the increasing administrative equivalency of public and private companies and complained that today "when you enter in a hospital you don't enter a hospital, you enter into an *azienda di servizi*[23] (service firm)."[24] Other feminist activists, particularly ones of Laura's generation, expressed similar concerns. For them health care is and should remain a right, a public service guaranteed by the state. Speaking of health care in the language of the market represented a loss of the public, as well as a threat to women's health.[25]

Laura's comments on the transformation of hospitals into health care corporations points to the tight coupling that *Donne, Diritti, Salute* members saw between the privatization of health care and the moral politics of reproduction. The politics of the public/state vis-à-vis the market and the Church were very much in the process of being rethought and renegotiated at the numerous meetings of feminist networks that I attended. Following her critique of the corporatization of health care, Laura had asked, "how do we rethink ourselves as persons who don't want to be redefined by either the State … or the Church?"[26] Feminist activists held a complex view of the State, informed in no small measure from recent and less recent history; most activists argued that public services, particularly health care, should be provided by the State, and should be outside of capitalist logics and Catholic doctrine. At another *Donne, Diritti, Salute* meeting, Franca articulated

---

[23] *Aziendalizzazione* (corporatization) was instituted through legislative decrees (*D. lgs*.) 502/92 and 517/93. *Regionalizzazione* (regionalization) emerges out of the 2001 reform of Title V of the Italian Constitution *(titolo V della Costituzione*) del 2001 (Maciocco 2006: 96).

[24] Fieldnotes, *Donne, Diritti, Salute* meetings on December 18, 2006 and February 13, 2007.

[25] The commitment to public service distinguished *Donne, Diritti, Salute* participants and other feminist activists from other visible political champions of reproductive rights, particularly the *Partito Radicale*, whose defense of individual freedom, scientific research, abortion, and other social issues was informed by a liberal-libertarian, individual rights perspective. The tension was palpable and coalition-building tricky in the instances in which I witnessed attempts at cooperation across these ideological divides or participated in projects that included the *Radicali* in Milan.

[26] Fieldnote, *Donne, Diritti, Salute* meeting, February 13, 2007.

the group's political project as a defense of the public: "we are for the public *consultori*. What we are doing is politics, helping politics stand back up, the public, not because we are statalists, but because health is a public good."[27]

Our Welfare Is Required

For many feminist activists, negotiating a position vis-à-vis the State, and producing an alternative politics, was both a necessity and a work in progress. The proliferation of meetings, *laboratori* (workshops), and conferences reflected both the need to gather information about what was happening in an increasingly fragmented social terrain and an opportunity to articulate alternative positions. To this end, early in 2007 *Donne, Diritti, Salute* decided to organize a day conference that would bring together activists, politicians, and providers from Lombardy, Piedmont, and beyond. The conference, titled, *Occorre il nostro benestare* (Our welfare is required) was an opportunity for all involved to *fare rete*, to network, and find out from each other what was happening on the ground to women's health and reproductive services. The conference took place on a Saturday in early May 2007 in the basement room of the *Unione femminile* association, founded in the early 1900s as a meeting space for women.[28] The association is located on the ground floor of one of Milan's old, stately buildings. In early May, the many flowering plants in the courtyard were in bloom, providing a lush backdrop to informal conversations during breaks. The working part of the conference took place in the "small room" of the association, where rows of red brick columns held up a vaulted ceiling.

[27] Fieldnote, Donne, Diritti, Salute meeting, May 22, 2007. The discourse on the new social model based on subsidiarity offers an opposite reading, one in which the State is oppressive and patronizing, as well as inefficient. Non-State entities are the ones that escape the limitations of the state and moralize the market by providing a personalized service infused with solidarity.
[28] http://www.unionefemminile.it

Participants and speakers seated at a large table included regional politicians, feminist activists, and reproductive service providers, including gynecologists. A major thread running through the talks was the issue of the role of the state in providing health services and the implications for women's health. In her opening comments Laura argued for "public services, private ones can be additional, but not a replacement. The State is a guarantee for women, even if … with difficulty, but it's a guarantee against slavery and servitude, … and for health."[29] After the introduction, speakers took to the floor to describe the situation of reproductive health services in their region. A regional politician in the *Rifondazione comunista* party, Nicoletta Parotta, argued that "In the region of Lombardy there is no longer a distinction between public and private subject, any subject that engages in public activity is considered public and funded as such. What do we mean by public? We have to clarify that for ourselves." Echoing Laura's comments at an *Donne, Diritti, Salute* meeting, Parrotta described the "devastation" of welfare and health care and the "*aziendalizzazione* [privatization] of the health system" whereby "today we don't have hospitals anymore but hospital firms. Once [we had] beds, now we have procedures… [We need to] discuss the concept of the public. There is no longer a distinction between public and private entity." She also called for attention to issues of the body, a traditional feminist concern, but in the context of the relationship between one's body and the welfare system: "First question is our embodiment, but then also what services. Keep public services." Artemia Oriani, another regional politician, noted that the issue of health "founded on [the idea of] freedom of choice wanted by Formigoni [Governor of Lombardy] doesn't give women much freedom." Instead, it is a model that has undermined health care over the past ten years and that has "split the *socio-sanitario* (social-health care dimension) from the

[29] Digital recording, May 5, 2007.

social" with the system of accreditation of *consultori* leading to a decrease in public *consultori.* These comments mark a shift in the relationship between women and the State since the 1970s, when feminists debated the value of engaging the state and its inescapably patriarchal politics.

The politics of rights, particularly women's rights, requires engaging state, market, and Church.[30] This need for rethinking feminist political engagement, and developing new political projects, was articulated by a long-time activist in both feminist and lesbian movements:

> We need to propose our ethics, our morality, it's in the studies, in feminist thought, it also has to do with the economy, economic restructuring affects women. Next to the economic needs, the values of the angel of the hearth is rediscovered. Self-determination is not ok anymore. They cut funds for the *consultori*… women's centers. We need places of gathering … We need to give an example on the ground.

The need to "*fare rete*," to network and reconnect, as well as to defend women's spaces, points to a widespread sense that sociality, in this case women's spaces, are being eroded by changes in Italian society.

"Emptying Reproductive Rights from Within"

Donne, Diritti, Salute's focus on the deregulation of health care in Lombardy coexisted with their activism around more immediate threats to reproductive rights. Prior to my arrival in the field they had participated in the mobilization against the planned closing of a public *consultorio familiare* (family planning clinic). *Consultori familiari* were public spaces created in the 1970s when feminist activists sought to establish places to discuss sexuality, contraception and, in some case, even to provide clandestine abortions. Older feminists often reasserted the original understanding of *consultori* as *spazi d'ascolto*

[30] Fieldnote, Elena, February 21, 2007.

(listening spaces) and bemoaned their institutionalization into sites of medicalization.[31] While their incorporation into law, like the abortion legislation, was seen by feminists as a compromise, the *consultorio familiare* still retains a holistic and social approach to health, which includes not only medical, but also legal and psychological services. The importance, and even uniqueness of these spaces, was evident to me on a warm May day when I was at the *consultorio* helping out while Nilde was out for the day after a fall in the subway station. In the middle of a busy day of scheduled appointments, a young woman came to the reception area saying that she had a friend standing outside who was having panic attacks and was suicidal. "We didn't know where else to go, and then we thought that maybe here…"[32] Despite her full schedule the psychologist made time for an impromptu session.

In addition to holistic services, family planning clinics provide over a third (38.2%)[33] of the medical certifications required by Italian law to obtain an abortion at an Italian hospital (Ministero della Salute 2010b: 5). In recent years, they also provide the bulk of reproductive services to migrant women, while middle-class Italian women tend to obtain these services from their general practitioner or gynecologist.[34] *Donne, Diritti, Salute* devoted a significant amount of attention and activism to the struggle to protect public *consultori familiari* from numerous threats: closure; incorporation into hospitals; and even

---

[31] Law 405/1975 established that *consultori familiari* should be available to Italians throughout the national territory.
[32] Fieldnote, May 9, 2007.
[33] This number varies greatly by region in Italy. In the northern region of Piedmont, for example, the rate of abortion certifications provided at *consultori familiari* reached 63.8% in 2008 as opposed to a low of 8.3% in the southern region of Abruzzo (Ministero della Salute 2010b: table 16). In the region of Lombardy, 42.2% of women obtained certifications at *consultori familiari*, versus 26.7% from their general practitioner, and 28.4 from an Ob/Gyn (Ministero della Salute 2010b: table 16). These statistics reflect the availability of *consultori familiari* and the degree of conscientious objection of its providers, which varies greatly across the territory.
[34] According to the most recent government survey of abortion practices in Italy, 31.3% Italian women obtain certification for abortion at *consultori familiari* as opposed to 52.4% of migrant women (Ministero della Salute 2010a: 5). At the national level (including both Italian and migrant women) 38.2% obtain certification at a *consultorio*, 27.4% from their general practitioner, and 32.4% from an Ob/Gyn (Ministero della Salute 2010b: table 16).

takeover by pro-life groups and by the government's interest in turning them into sites for the promotion of the family. *Consultori*, originally conceived as sites of radical feminist consciousness-raising, are being undermined and transformed, mostly through shifting funding streams away from them and toward private, often Catholic clinics. With the deregulation of public health care, *consultori familiari* are at risk of being closed, reoriented, or constrained through the process of accreditation, which is required to obtain public funding.

National and regional politics, administrative legislation, the Catholic politics of life, and the privatization of health care are all factors contributing to the transformation of reproductive services in Lombardy. With the implementation of subsidiarity, public financing was opened up to private and non-profit clinics in 2001. Of these clinics, 60-70% of which were Catholic in orientation,[35] which in practice means that they are exempted from having to provide the reproductive services related to abortion and contraception that the public family clinics are required by law to offer. Between 2003 and 2006 there was a steep decrease in staffing at public clinics and an even steeper increase in the staffing of private ones.[36] Of the 364 public family planning clinics operating in Lombardy in 1996, only half survived to 2004.[37] Meanwhile, private family planning clinics almost doubled (to 58) between 2003 and 2006.[38] These changes are part of why *Donne, Diritti, Salute* activists, politicians, and other reproductive service providers were critical of the

---

[35] "In Lombardia +53% in tre anni, con incassi cresciuti del 132%. Le strutture pubbliche cresciute solo del 18%. Operatori in calo," http://lombardia.indymedia.org/?q=node/3136

36 Rapporto sull'attività dei consultori familiari accreditati 2003/2006 - Assessorato Famiglia e Solidarietà Sociale, Regione Lombardia-

37 Il Piano Socio Sanitario della Lombardia 2006 – 2008: analisi, evidenziazioni delle criticità e proposte http://64.233.169.104/search?q=cache:2zf7fGojJFsJ:www.unaltralombardia.it/materiali/Unaltralombardia%2520sanita.doc+lombardia+legislazione+socio+sanitaria+fondi+a+cliniche+private&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=7&gl=us&client=safari

38 " In Lombardia +53% in tre anni, con incassi cresciuti del 132%. Le strutture pubbliche cresciute solo del 18%. Operatori in calo" http://lombardia.indymedia.org/?q=node/3136

reorganization and de-funding of public family planning clinics and the related encroachment of Catholic morality in reproductive services. *Donne, Diritti, Salute* participants described on more than one occasion this erosion of reproductive services as an "emptying of reproductive rights from within."[39] This emptying refers to the process of undermining reproductive rights through its funding, without the need to touch the legislative façade of abortion. For the women involved in *Donne, Diritti, Salute* and other activists the process of restructuring health care in Lombardy was inseparable from the erosion of reproductive rights and services.

In the early summer of 2007, Laura's question of "how is health managed?" had become even more central to the group's political work. *Donne, Diritti, Salute* wanted to obtain access to the regional data on funding of health service organizations. Laura, Daniela, Franca, and Cristina, a lawyer, wanted to trace the funding of family planning clinics. They had become particularly concerned with the fact that Catholic clinics receive public funding without having to abide by the requirements applied to public clinics, namely that of offering abortion certifications and contraception. This was an issue, both because of its effects on the availability of reproductive services, but also because it provided a financial advantage to private clinics. Yet, tracing the streams of funding was not possible as the information was available to the public only as an aggregate. After brainstorming some possibilities, including the option of having me as the "American researcher" seek to obtain the data from the region, a few phone calls with a sympathetic regional official convinced the group of the futility of this approach. Tracking the flow of public funding to private clinics turned out to be impossible even for reasonably connected activists. This despite the rhetoric that the new welfare model represented a more efficient

[39] Fieldnote, Daniela, February 13, 2007.

and rational model oriented toward the individual citizen as compared to the bureaucratic, impenetrable welfare state.

Becoming an Interlocutor

The opening up of the social enabled by subsidiarity offers the potential for opportunities for intervention and funding to a number of associations and groups. Even *Donne, Diritti, Salute* started to talk about becoming a registered association. The beginning of a conversation about putting together an association from the informal network of *Donne, Diritti, Salute* started as I was on my way out of the field. Becoming an association meant that *Donne, Diritti, Salute* "would show up as a political entity and have some political recognition."[40] Yet, it would inevitably also define the parameters of the organization's work as the associations, projects need to be fit into the requirements of grants, often through the region. At the early meetings in which the shift to an association was discussed, some of the concerns of participants included whether *Donne, Diritti, Salute* would still be able to do *lavoro di rete* (networking) once it became an institutionally recognized entity and whether, in becoming an association, it would lose flexibility. The appeal of such a move was the eligibility to qualify for funds, which could then be used to do research on the situation of *consultori familiari*, for example. Becoming an association would enable Donne, Diritti, Salute "to be recognized as an interlocutor": "if we become an association, it will allow us to become a subject, [to participate] in consultations with Livia-Turco [then Minister of Health] and other commissions."[41] Later in the year, the group became a registered association. Its transition from informal feminist network to registered

[40] Fieldnote, Donne, Diritti, Salute meeting, Laura, June 18, 2007.
[41] Fieldnote, Donne, Diritti, Salute meeting, Franca, June 18, 2007.

association speaks to the draw of being a recognized subject able to tap into emerging political and funding opportunities.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the politics of reproduction are inseparable from the moral neoliberalization of welfare in Italy. The neoliberal and moral restructuring of society along the principle of subsidiarity is at once a political project able to redirect public funds to private and religious entities and a moral project aiming to assert the family as the social formation that holding society together in the post-welfare moment. Even the language in the government's policy proposal seemingly borrows from Foucault, celebrating the fact that new welfare would be "stimulating responsible behaviors and life styles, conduct useful to oneself and others" (Ministero del Lavoro, della Salute e delle Politiche Sociali 2008: 3).

The principle of subsidiarity undergirds a new model of the social that promises to maintain social cohesion and solidarity even as the state shifts its administrative and welfare responsibilities onto non-governmental entities and to families. Governing through subsidiarity requires and engenders "moralized individuals" that will engage in "active solidarity," beginning with the family and expanding to other forms of association, as the state remains in the background in the role of "facilitator" (Holmes 2001: 96). Subsidiarity provides the architecture for enacting the moralization of society as a sphere of social relations separate from the state. The terms of this moralization are spelled out in various policies and legislations where they inevitably coalesce around the heteronormative, reproductive family as the natural basis of society and source of social solidarity and the protection of life from conception. In this discourse, explicitly laid out in government

proposals as well as in sympathetic sociological literature, the "artificiality" of the social state is contrasted with "natural" forms of social relations, epitomized by the heteronormative family. Ethnography with groups engaged in counteracting the implications of these transformations for women's health and reproductive rights reveals different ideologies of the public and the state, but also the seductiveness and potential of subsidiarity to enable alternative politics and new opportunities for resistance. In the next chapter I delve deeper into the politics of "life" that are interwoven in the social transformations taking place in Italy.

CHAPTER 3

"THE EMBRYO IS ONE OF US": FROM ASSISTED CONCEPTION TO FETAL BURIALS

"The embryo is one of us"

National Bioethics Committee[1]

"We have lost the courage to say that the embryo is not a person"

Intercultural psychologist[2]

Introduction

On International Woman's Day 2007, I joined a group of women from a Milanese feminist collective, *resistenti* (resistant) as they were setting up for a protest in front of the headquarters of Lombardy's regional health administration offices. Two women unfolded a cardboard coffin, soon to be filled by a 3-foot sanitary pad stained a deep, bloody red. Tampons that had been dipped in red dye hung over the coffin's sides. Nearby two women used spray-paint to blacken the bright yellow *mimosa* flowers that are the ubiquitous symbol of Women's Day in Italy. Some participants had saved their used pads, tampons, and condoms which they deposited at the door of the health administration's building. The police blocked off half the street for the protest. The funeral marching band's warmed its horns up behind us as we finished preparing to march. As I covered my head with a black veil and prepared to step off the sidewalk and into the street, I was handed one of the ropes on the sides of the coffin; I became one of the four pallbearers in a funeral for the "unfertilized egg."

[1] 1996 Comitato nazionale per la bioetica. I pareri del Comitato identità e statuto dell'embrione umano, 22 giugno, available online http://www.governo.it/bioetica/testi/220696.html
[2] Fieldnote, February 13, 2007.

The *resistenti* collective was protesting a recent regional amendment to burial regulations that had changed the status of embryos and fetuses for purposes of biological waste procedures. Whereas prior to this amendment only fetuses of over 20 weeks were eligible for burial, now all "products of conception" required burial by the health authorities, or could be claimed by the "parents" for a private burial. Women scheduled for an abortion or suffering a miscarriage were presented with a form on which to indicate their "choice" of burial. In response, feminist networks in the Milan area came together to discuss how to counter this blatant, though almost invisible, attempt to recognize the personhood of the unborn. After all, as Viola, the organizer of the protest, put it at a feminist meeting centered on this issue, "a funeral means that the fetus is a person."[3]

With the procession of about 50 women making its way through downtown Milan, followed by the marching band's funerary music, the women of *resistenti*[4] sought to make visible and at the same time deride the elevation of biological functions to personhood and subjecthood. Viola led the march, carrying what looked like a religious staff, except that its contoured top traced the shape of a woman's uterus and ovaries. She took turns with another collective member at shouting through a malfunctioning megaphone that made their words unintelligible. Others handed out flyers and spoke to people watching from the sidewalk. Almost no one had heard of the obscure regulatory changes we were protesting despite some coverage in the newspapers. Most passersby and those gazing down on the bloody pad from their seats in the trams, looked perplexed, surprised, or amused.

As we approached the *piazza del Duomo* and I felt my arm starting to get sore from my role as pallbearer, I pondered the absurdity of the whole thing, the burial regulation, the

[3] Fieldnote, *Donne, Diritti, Salute*, March 12, 2007.
[4] The collective's name was lowercase, following a widespread Italian feminist practice of de-capitalizing all but individual's names as an "extension of democracy to the printed word" (Birnbaum 1986: xxi).

rooster-like sound emerging from the megaphone which effectively silenced the protestors' arguments, and the amused and confused reaction of people in the streets. However, in looking back at the pictures and video of this ironic and irreverent critique of the sacralization of the embryo, I also see something else: The funeral for the unfertilized egg manifested both the outrage and creativity of Italy's numerous feminist collectives and groups, and a sense of loss and mourning among women engaged in feminist politics. At stake for them were the gains the feminist movement had seemingly secured in the 1970s and which now seemed at risk of ending up in a coffin of their own. The traditional funeral attire, including the dark veil over our heads, harkened back to an older Italy, the Italy of my grandmother, which many of these women had fought to change. The blackening of *mimose,* the yellow flowers that mark the celebration of Women's Day, resonated with a mourning that was palpable at the feminist meetings I attended.

The mock funeral march was one way of contesting the latest attempt at undermining reproductive rights. At the cusp of the millennium, the politics of life have become a site of intense political and moral struggle in Italy, most visibly through debates over how to regulate medically assisted reproduction. Linking various politics and policies of reproduction is a vigorous, if at times indirect, assertion of the unborn as a person and as a "rights-bearing subject" (Morgan and Roberts 2012).[5] Confronted by this political project,

[5] A commonly referenced human rights document in the debates over the embryo and the politics of life in Italy is Article 2 of the European Union Convention for Human Rights, titled "Right to Life," which states that "Everyone's right to life shall be protected by law." Another European reference is the "Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union" (Official Journal of the European Communities 2000), an expression of the European Union's commitment to "a future based on common values" (8). The Charter states in its second article that: "Everyone has the right to life" (Official Journal of the European Communities 2000: 9)
OTHER EU CASES: http://www.lawandreligionuk.com/2013/03/06/human-embryos-the-beginning-of-life-and-eu-citizens/

feminist actors in Milan struggled with "how to respond."[6] Looming large over the politics of reproduction and the discussions at feminist meetings was the legal introduction of the embryo's subjecthood in a 2004 national law regulating assisted reproduction.

In this chapter I trace the contours of the politics of reproduction and the embryo in Italy over the past two decades, most visibly through the 2004 regulation of assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs). I draw on policies and on political and religious discourses as well as on participant observation with a network of feminist groups in Milan to examine the terms and means by which the assertion of embryo subjecthood is justified and contested. My analysis is framed against the broader contexts in which the rise of the subject-embryo gathers its meaning, urgency, and specificity. The politics of reproduction in Italy play out against anxieties over low fertility rates among Italian women and a steep increase in immigration in the 1990s and 2000s. However, against a backdrop of demographic alarmism fertility-enhancing technologies have not found more support from the state, as they have, for example, in Israel, where interrelated concerns over the differential reproduction, the legacy of genocide, and religious accommodations of these technologies have led to widespread access to ARTs, but not to contraception and abortion (Kahn 2000). In Italy, however, the inverse is true: Abortion and contraception are legal and, at least on paper, accessible and free for all women; assisted reproductive technologies, on the other hand, have been tightly regulated since 2004. At the center of this contradiction is the embryo, which is recognized in the ART legislation as a subject with rights equivalent to those of the other parties to assisted reproduction, which de facto means to those of the woman undergoing in-vitro fertilization.

[6] Fieldnote, *Donne, Diritti, Salute*, "Fetal Burial Meeting," Daniela, February 13, 2007.

I examine the embryo's path to subjecthood through policies and political debates and in the moral pronouncements of the Catholic Church. I draw on ethnographic research with feminist networks in Milan to document the terms and forms of opposition to this moral project. Discussions at feminist meetings, personal conversations and interviews with reflexive and politically engaged actors shaped my understanding of the complex stakes, meanings, and relevant contexts of the struggle over subjecthood and subjectivity in which the unborn is the undisputed protagonist. The historical context of the regulation of abortion in the 1970s resonates in these debates, both as the impetus of the decades-long politics of life of the Catholic Church, but also for making sense of the terms and forms of contestation of the restriction of reproductive rights in the name of the embryo.

The biopolitics of the Catholic Church successfully entwine biology and theology in a cultural project of life at the same time that the Church's influence on Italian politics has grown over the past two decades. This increased political power and intensified salience of matters of life and family explains some of the contradictions around reproductive politics in contemporary Italy: the approval of a restrictive law governing fertility technologies at a time of demographic anxiety over the low birth rates of Italian-origin women (see Krause 2001; 2006) and its coexistence with abortion legislation, approved in a different political era almost three decades prior, that guarantees free abortions to all women in Italy.

I also argue that the terms by which the recognition of the embryo-subject is justified also suggest that that the Church has been able to harness a politically transversal distrust of neoliberal rationalities in contemporary Italy. Restrictions introduced by the ART legislation have delineated a moral barrier around the embryo and the "natural family" to protect against the market's penetration. This barrier constitutes a moral "exception to

neoliberalism" (Ong 2006: 4). In turn, this exception delineates deserving subjects of state protection from undeserving ones, reconfigures subjects and rights, and extends the reach of the state at the same that the state pulls back from other areas of safeguarding and welfare. This suggests that political-economic process of neoliberalization may be an important dimension of the politics of life, and vice versa, that the politics of life and family are a key dimension of moral neoliberalism in Italy, if not beyond. The restrictions of reproductive technologies in the name of the protection of the embryo as a vulnerable subject delineates a space for the state's legitimate moral containment of the market at the same that it legitimates broader neoliberal transformations in social welfare that generate vulnerability among already-born citizens in Italy.[7]

The Embryo at the Intersections of Medical and Political Technologies of Reproduction

A broad anthropological literature explores the cultural, political and moral articulations and implications of reproductive technologies. Anthropologists studying reproduction have been interested in the ways the meanings of pregnancy, the fetus, and even children vary cross-culturally and in how these meanings and practices are shaped by complex intersections of power, political economy, and culture (Michaels and Morgan 1999; Sheper-Hughes 1992). Different threads in this research examine policies and discourses governing reproduction (Hartouni 1997; Oaks 2001; Petchesky 1984; Ginsburg 1998), the subjectivities of men and women undergoing fertility treatments (Becker 2000; Gribaldi 2005), the subject-making power of medical technologies, visual and otherwise

[7] The reorganization of welfare, particularly of health care, from a universal model instituted in the late 1970s to a model structured on the principle of subsidiarity is also characterized by a significant role of the Catholic Church in social and health care services. In Lombardy, the devolution of health care has taken the form of partnerships with the Catholic Church, mostly because of a conservative Catholic regional coalition that has ruled since 1995 (see chapter 2).

(Petchesky 1987; Taylor 1992; Casper 2004; Layne 2003; Petchesky 1987; Morgan 1998), the articulations of religion and reproductive technologies (Kahn 2000; Inhorn 2003; Roberts 2006), and the relationship between reproductive technologies and kinship (Hartouni 1997; Kahn 2000). In this literature, the status of the unborn figures prominently, especially as it is brought into relief by visual reproductive technologies. Through ethnographic research and analysis of its scientific construction, the unborn emerges as a privileged entity upon which are projected social meanings and political aspirations (Morgan 2003). In the 1980s, Rosalynd Petchesky, for example, identified the resonances between the emerging disembodied, seemingly independent fetus imaged through ultrasound and the "self-made," independent, neoliberal subject of the Reagan era (1987). More recently, the constitution of the unborn as a political subject and citizen has been examined as an artifact of political and legal technologies (Holc 2004; Casper and Morgan 2004; Sperling 2004). Janine Holc (2004) describes the 1997 decision by Poland's highest court to deny a right to abortion and to award the embryo political rights in post-socialist Poland. Italy's assisted reproductive law put the country on the map in the Anglophone literature (Bonaccorso 2006; Hanafin 2007; Fenton 2006) adding to research on gender, Italian feminism, abortion, and critical demography (Andall 1994, 2000; Krause 2001, 2005, 2006; Plesset 2006). Italian sociological and anthropological studies of assisted reproduction date back to the 1980s, though the approval of legislation has engendered new scholarship on the topic (Bimbi 1989; Gribaldi 2005; Lombardi and Pizzini 1994; Lombardi and De Zordo 2013).

The literature that most closely examines the political constitution of the unborn is informed by Foucault's concept of biopolitics, a theorization of modern power that

reconfigures the sovereign power to mete out death into the power to know, regulate, and foster life at the level of the population (Foucault 1990 [1978]; Kaufman and Morgan 2005). This form of power, which Foucault terms "biopower" has a dual, or "bipolar," nature: one pole concerns the individual "anatomo-political" disciplining of bodies while the other, biopolitics, takes up "life" in the aggregate of the population. Having discovered patterns and properties at the level of the population, biopolitics "exerts a positive influence on life that endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations" (Foucault 1990 [1978]: 137, cited in Krause and De Zordo 2012: 139). In the modern state, "politics now addresses the vital processes of human existence: the size and quality of the population; reproduction and human sexuality; conjugal, parental and familial relations; health and disease; birth and death" (Rose 2001: 1).

Vitapolitics

With the neoliberal state's increasing devolution of its welfare responsibilities to non-state entities, the stakes of the politics of life shift. The role of the state in fostering health or protecting the biologically constituted nation gives way to a vital politics that "is concerned with our growing capacities to control, manage, engineer, reshape, and modulate the very vital capacities of human beings as living creatures. It is, as I suggest, a politics of 'life itself'" (Rose 2001: 3). The shift from welfare as centralized in the State to the individualization of responsibility and risk characterizes neoliberal rationalities of government. According to Rose, "this complex of marketization, autonomization, and responsibilization gives a particular character to the contemporary politics of life in advanced liberal democracies" (Rose 2001: 4), which emphasizes internalized techniques of

government. This shift, for Rose, constitutes a different kind of politics, which he terms "ethopolitics" and defines as all those "attempts to shape the conduct of human beings by acting upon their sentiments, beliefs, and values—in short by acting on ethics" (2007: 27). It is through affect and values, according to Rose, that enables the linking up of "autonomous individuals … with the imperatives of good government" (Rose 2007: 27).

> If 'discipline' individualizes and normalizes, and 'biopolitics' collectivizes and socializes, 'ethopolitics' concerns itself with the self-techniques by which human beings should judge and act upon themselves to make themselves better than they are. While ethopolitical concerns range from those of life-style to community, they coalesce around a kind of vitalism, disputes over the value accorded to life itself: 'quality of life,' 'the right to life' or the 'the right to choose,' euthanasia, gene therapy, human cloning, and the like. This biological ethopolitics—the politics of how we should conduct ourselves appropriately in relation to ourselves, and in our responsibilities for the future—forms the milieu within which novel forms of authority are taking shape (Rose 2007: 27).

While this emphasis may very well be appropriate in the context of the individualization of choices about quality of life or in the responsibilization of health, the "disputes over the value accorded to life itself" in the context of the politics of reproduction is governed by a range of interventions. Among them, the power of the law remains important alongside "the immanent power of the norm," as Foucauldian scholar Sergei Prozorov writes (2007: 59). Rose's assertion that *ethopolitics* characterize the neoliberal, post-welfare moment does not fully account for the moral politics of reproduction taking hold in Italy. In the Italian case, disciplinary techniques in matters of "life" coexist with, and sometimes eclipse, techniques of the self. The political influence of Catholic doctrine limits the empowerment of individuals in matters of life, which for the Church is explicitly off-limits to direct intervention. Catholic doctrine denies individuals the right to self-determination in matters of life and death. The *ethopolitical* empowerment of individuals to manage and intervene in "life itself," then, is not the only game in town.

The Church's insistence that at the moment of conception a unique potential human being is formed entwines biological expertise with moral doctrine on reproduction and the family.[8] The establishment of the Papal Academy for Life (*Pontificia Academia per la Vita, PAV)* by Pope John Paul II in the early 1990s marks the Vatican's engagement with and foray into embryology. Since 1994 the PAV has held conferences and produced papers on the status of the embryo and on the beginning of life. [9] A sample of the titles of the conferences over the span of a decade reveals the Papal Academy for Life's focus on reproduction and the status of the embryo: "Rational foundations of the sacredness of life in all its phases of existence" (1994); "Identity and statute of the human embryo" (1997); "Human genome. Human personhood and the society of the future" (1998); "The culture of life: foundations and dimensions" (2001); "Nature and dignity of the human person and foundation of the right to life. The challenges of the contemporary cultural context" (2002); "The dignity of human reproduction and the reproductive technologies: anthropological and ethical aspects" (2004); and "The human embryo in the pre-implantation phase," International Conference, February (2006).[10] Catholic *vitapolitics* insist that individuals are

---

[8] Catholic doctrine on the status of the embryo itself is historical and not absolute. The Aristotelian theory of ensoulment, which held that it occurred on the 40th day after conception, was influential until it was reconsidered at the turn of the 18th century in light of early visualizations of follicles, spermatozoa, and embryos. These new developments brought about "a reconsideration of animation and the beginning of life, as well as the lot of unredeemed souls" (Filippini 1993: 160).

[9] Writings from the Pontificia Academia per la Vita (PAV), established by Pope John Paul II with the purpose to engage in research on human life and its dissemination. http://www.academiavita.org/template.jsp?sez=Pubblicazioni&pag=testo/ident_embr/serra_colombo/serra_colombo

[10] Listed at: http://www.academiavita.org/template.jsp?sez=AssembleaGenerale&pag=assgen
An example of the work produced at these conferences comes from an undated publication available on the Academy of Life's website:

> We can summarize the principal concepts of the Christian tradition in the following points: the embryo is a human being. On this point tradition is unanimous. In fact, it is not even an issue to be discussed. ... We are talking of a *futurus homo* in the way that today we would speak of a *future adult* or a *future citizen.* The well-known expression by Tertullian, *anticipated murder,* means that the destruction of the unborn is equivalent to the premature murder of a citizen.

not empowered to dispose of their biological lives, which belong to God. Yet, the Church's position is not absolute. Despite its opposition to any "artificial" interventions into reproduction, [11] the Church actively supported Italian legislation on in-vitro fertilization for married couples.

Writing about the Italian ART legislation, legal scholar Patrick Hanafin argues that Italian vitapolitics cannot be described as ethopolitical because they are "not a politics of empowerment but a politics of entrapment in an imagined natural order" defined by the Catholic Church (Hanafin 2007: 5). Instead, the politics of life in contemporary Italy represent "a rigid top down *vitapolitics*. In this politics the embryo has been constructed by conservative lobby groups as an active individual agent" (Hanafin 2007: 5). Hanafin's emphasis on *vitapolitics* resonates with the assessments of feminist actors and of non-politically engaged leftist women in Italy. I heard on at least two occasions women engaged in feminist politics describe this sense of feeling weighed down by a "leaden pall" [12] or "oppressive pall."[13] The recognition of this *vitapolitical* project is a useful reminder that even in the neoliberal moment, biopolitics has not transformed into ethopolitical "self-techniques" that align subjects with particular political projects through optimization, desire, and aspiration. At the same time, a top-down *vitapolitics* is not the only politic of life at work in Italy. Sovereign and disciplinary power are contiguous and co-existant with technologies of self-regulation and ethopolitical projects; they are not sequential (Nadesan 2008: 7).

Ignacio Carrasco de Paula. n.d. *Il rispetto dovuto all'embrione umano: Prospettiva [sic] storico-dottrinale*. Pubblicazioni Pontificia Academia Pro Vita, Translation by Milena Marchesi, http://www.academiavita.org/template.jsp?sez=Pubblicazioni&pag=testo/ident_embr/carrasco/carrasco

[11] In the late 1950s Pope Pius XII voiced the first denunciation of artificial insemination by the Catholic Church on the grounds that it represented "acts against nature," even in cases of "homologous" fertilization that uses a woman's husband sperm (Cirant 2005: 173).

[12] Fieldnote, Susanna Camusso, UdS meeting, April 4, 2007.

[13] Fieldnote, Daniela, Fetal Burial Meeting, February 13, 2007.

The debate over ARTs revealed deep divisions among legislators as well as significant resistance among different groups and associations in Italian society. The political interventions of the Church are viewed by leftist and liberal activists, intellectuals, politicians, and journalists as illegitimate, illiberal, backwards, and even un-European. The curtailment on moral grounds of individual choice in matters of reproduction and in biomedical research galvanizes intense opposition. While this resistance did not prevent the law's passage or its amendment via referendum, it did succeed in producing a feminist network out of numerous dispersed feminist groups. Additionally, some of the law's more restrictive provisions have since been found unconstitutional in the courts.[14] That the battle for reproductive rights takes place through less visible policies and practices that de facto undermine abortion without changing the law suggests that a top-down vital politics of entrapment does not fully capture the struggles over reproduction and the family in Italy. The concept of "reproductive governance" (Morgan and Roberts 2012: 243), which draws on Foucault's concept of governmentality, is more useful for making sense of the politics of reproduction in Italy than either the oppressive, top-down power described by Hanafin's vitapolitics or the empowered and responsibilized individual of ethopolitics in Rose's accounting. Reproductive governance encompasses a broad spectrum of institutions and "actors" and of forms of power, ranging from coercion to incitement:

> Reproductive governance refers to the mechanisms through which different historical configurations of actors – such as state institutions, churches, donor agencies, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – use legislative controls, economic inducements, moral injunctions, direct coercion, and ethical incitements

[14] A 2009 ruling by the Italian Constitutional Court overturned the ban on cryogenic freezing of embryos, the limit of producing three embryos per cycle of in vitro fertilization, and pre-implantation diagnosis. See De Luca 2012. Central issues that have not been redressed in the courts are the ban on fertile couples who are genetic carriers of diseases like Cystic Fibrosis and who would access IVF in order to select a healthy embryo, the ban on donor-assisted fertilization, and the restriction of access to heteronormative couples.

> to produce, monitor and control reproductive behaviours and practices (Morgan and Roberts 2012: 243).

One of the most contested issues in the politics against reproductive rights is the assertion of the rights of the embryo. Italian feminist women have loudly countered the constitution of the embryo subject, resisting, contesting, and even mocking the notion of a "sacred" embryo, insisting that it represents nothing less than an attempt to diminish women's subjecthood and citizenship. In response to the approval of the assisted reproduction legislation in 2006 a new umbrella feminist organization, *Usciamo dal silenzio* (Let's Come Out of Silence) organized a hugely successful protest, organizing by some estimates upward of 200,000 people into the streets of Milan in defense of reproductive rights (Hanafin 2007: 39).[15] These numbers, which are comparable to, or even exceed, estimates of feminist protests of the 1970s (Birnbaum 1991: 91) remind that "women are not 'docile bodies'" (Krause and De Zordo 2012: 140). Or, as Nilde put it on one of multiple occasions in which she described the protest to me: "women, when you needle them, they respond!"[16]

The politics of reproduction, however, are fraught with unresolved tensions within Italian feminism regarding abortion, the politics of rights, and engagement with the state, which I discuss below. Many in the women's movement of the 1970s were disappointed by the terms of the abortion legislation. Some had warned about the dangers of engaging in a politics of rights in which women would by definition always lose. Patrick Hanafin refers to Italian feminist Ida Dominijanni's critical stance against the 2006 protest, which made

---

[15] Legal scholar cites an estimate of participation at the protest ranging between 100,000-200,000 people, but does not cite a source (2007: 39). In the field I often heard a 100,000 estimate, including from Nilde. Whatever the actual number, the UdS protest was undoubtedly the largest protest on reproductive rights since the mass protests of the 1970s and sent a message about the political feasibility of revisiting law 194.
[16] Fieldnote, Consultorio, January 24, 2007.

newly relevant "all the issues which were current at the time of the debate about the decriminalisation of abortion in the 1970s, namely, the need to refuse to reduce abortion to a mere question of legal rights, how abortion legislation is a compromise with male power, and how today women should not be forced to use a grammar of rights in relation to abortion, which would force them into a merely defensive position" (Hanafin 2007: 40).

The Politics of Reproduction in Post-War Italy

The influence of the Catholic Church over the drafting of Italy's postwar Constitution (1948) produced a document that recognizes a special status to motherhood and defines the family based on marriage as a "natural society." The constitutional recognition of women's equality and rights, such as the right to work, was qualified by the assertion of women's unique duties to family and motherhood (Andall 1994; Caldwell 1991; Hanafin 2009).[17] The postwar moment was marked by the continuation of fascist laws criminalizing abortion and contraception as "Crimes against the Integrity and Health of the Stock,"[18] which remained on the books for three decades following the end of fascism (Caldwell 1991).

The divide between Catholics and Communists extended to women's organizations in the postwar period. In 1944 the *Udi*, *Unione donne italiane* (Union of Italian Women) was formed, eventually bringing together partisan women who had fought against Nazism

[17] Article 29 of the Italian Constitution, often referenced in debates on assisted reproduction as well as in public debates over civil unions, subordinates equality to the "unity of the family," implicitly subordinating women's roles to the family: "The Republic recognizes the rights of the family as a natural society founded on matrimony. Matrimony is based on the moral and legal equality of the spouses within the limits established by law to guarantee the unity of the family." Article 37 recognizes women's equal rights to work and pay at the same time that it calls for this work to be compatible with "women's essential role in the family": "Working women have the same rights and, for equal work, the same wages as working men. The working conditions must allow women to carry out their essential role in the family and ensure special adequate protection for the mother and the child."

[18] A series of articles in the Fascist Rocco Code of 1930 criminalized abortion and contraception under a new category of crimes: "Crimes against the Integrity and Health of the Stock) making both doctors and women seeking abortion punishable with prison sentences (Caldwell 1991: 89; Horn 1994: 83-84).

and Fascism in northern Italy and southern women (Birnbaum 1986: 48). Following the war another important women's group, *Centro italiano femminile* (Italian Women's Center) emerged among Catholic women associated with the Christian Democratic Party (Birnbaum 1986: 48). In the late 1960s and 1970s, a new generation of feminists came of age in the leftist activism of the times. After decades of marginalization in decision-making within the Communist Party, women collectives emerged separately from the party feminism of Udi (Birnbaum 1986: 80-81).[19] Women's groups argued that women's liberation could not wait for, and was not guaranteed by, a proletariat revolution. The slogan: "There is no revolution without liberation of women. There is no liberation of women without revolution" (Birnbaum 1986: 81) captures the spirit of the time.

The collectives engaged in the practice of *autocoscienza,* "self-knowledge" (Birnbaum 1986: 81) or "consciousness-raising" (Bono and Kemp 1991: 2).[20] These groups saw liberation in broad terms: not only in political structures, but also in the depth of the very sense of what it means to be a woman. The practice of *autocoscienza* in small women's groups entailed "a process of the discovery and (re-) construction of the self, both the self of the individual woman and a collective sense of self: the search for the subject-woman" (Bono and Kemp 1991: 9). "Emancipatory" feminists organizations, like *Udi,* worked within the institutional and gendered hierarchy of the Communist party structure seeking women's equality in employment and political rights (Birnbaum 1986: 48; Pojmann 2005: 74). "Liberationist feminist," on the other hand, associated with the feminist

[19] Udi itself separated from the Communist Party to become an independent feminist organization in 1982 (Nuzzo 2007).

[20] While the idea of consciousness raising was an American "import," "the name given to this practice in Italy, *'autocoscienza'*, indicates its distinctly Italian character" (Bono and Kemp 1991: 8). Carla Lonzi, a prominent Italian feminist, introduced the practice "in the context of a theoretical speculation which had already moved away from the mere analysis of oppression to envisage the autonomous production of interpretative categories of reality. *Autocoscienza* meant independent, small groups of women, meeting to discuss issues of all kinds on the basis of personal experience" (Bono and Kemp 1991: 8-9; Hanafin 2009: 230; Pojmann 2005: 89).

cultural associations and collective argued that one could not find liberation in the logics and power relations of patriarchy (Bono and Kemp 1991; Hanafin 2009; Irigaray 1985).[21] Even in the 1970s, however, the practice of *autocoscienza* was not removed from politics as many women participated in "*doppia militanza*" (double militancy) by participating in both the separatist and relational work of liberation with other women and in political and institutional organizing (Birnbaum 107-109; Bono and Kemp 1991: 11). In addition to practices of *autocoscienza* aimed at deconstructing women's subjectivities under patriarchy, some feminist groups eventually embraced the practice of *affidamento* (entrustment) between two women (Bono and Kemp 1991; Hanafin 2009: 230). Italian feminism has also been characterized by its rejection of the notion of gender parity and equality in favor of an embrace of "the crucial issue of difference" between the sexes (Bono and Kemp 1991: 14).[22] The legal and political accomplishment of the Italian women's movement in the 1970s suggest that these practices were not incompatible with the movement's achievement of significant political change.[23]

---

[21] However, Italian feminist Ida Domnijanni offers a less positive assessment of the *autocoscienza,* charging the practice was "naive in believing in the authenticity of the lived experience and of the word which expresses it, and therefore unable to go beyond the recognition of each woman in her fellow-women (Bono and Kemp 1991: 132).

[22] Bono and Kemp argue that it is the insistence on difference that distinguishes most Italian feminism from Anglophone feminism (1991: 14). The embrace of women's difference, as Bono and Kemp acknowledge "may sound essentialist" to Anglophone feminists (1991: 17). However, Italian feminists, they argue play with "the risk" of essentialism "seriously," while denying a "deterministic" and essentialist reading of difference. Influential feminist theorists such as Rosi Braidotti deny a "deterministic" understanding of woman, in favor of seeing women as being constituted by "historical experience" (Bono and Kemp 1991: 17-18). This is neither a political project organized around "a simple request for equality," nor a call for separatism; rather it is an assertion that "difference means duality … It has to do with the full acceptance of the partiality of both the female and the male subjects" and the denial of man as "the *only* subject" (Bono and Kemp 1991: 18).

[23] Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum's (1986) list of these political accomplishments gives a sense of the scope and successes of feminist struggles in the decade of the 1970s:

> repeal of punitive law against unfaithful wives (1968); divorce law (1970); nursery schools legislation (1971); repeal of law forbidding birth control information (1971); protective legislation for working mothers (1971); referendum campaign to repeal punitive abortion law (1971); protective legislation for women in cottage industry (1973); defeat of referendum to repeal divorce law (1974); court decision declaring constitutionality of

The Struggle for Abortion

The issue of reproductive self-determination dominated the decade of the 1970s, even as some feminist groups were critical of the politics of legalization (Andall 1994; Birnbaum 1986: 87; Pojmann 2005: 74). In the early 1970s, feminist groups established independent family planning clinics (*consultori autogestiti*), spaces where women could obtain information on abortion and contraception, and in some cases obtain abortions illegally (Bono and Kemp 1991).[24]

The fight for the decriminalization of abortion was marked by suspicion of the project of asking the state to recognize abortion as a right. Prominent feminist philosopher and writer Luisa Muraro reminds in a 2011 interview that while the libertarian *Partito Radicale* fought a campaign for the right to abortion, the women's movement "asked for its decriminalization without making it a right" (Bertoncin 2011).[25] In fact, a number of feminist collectives were critical of the path toward a legislation on abortion, seeking instead for a repeal of the fascist laws that criminalized it. Writing in the years just before law 194 on abortion was approved, the *Comitato Romano per l'Aborto e la Contraccezione* (Roman Committee for Abortion and Contraception, or CRAC) describe their goal as being to secure "the right to free abortion on demand for all women, including minors, within public health structures, and for the woman to make the decision without

---

therapeutic abortions (1975); law for family health clinics with provision for birth control counseling (1975); maternity and infant legislation (1975); law clarifying equal family rights (1975); house approval of bill on abortion (1977); law clarifying equal pay and equal treatment of male and female workers (1977); law legalizing abortion (1978); referendum campaign against sexual violence (1979); 300,000 referendum signatures for law against sexual violence presented to parliament (1980); defeat of referendum to repeal the abortion law (1981) (89-90).

[24] Fieldnote, Nilde, December 4, 2006.

[25] Luisa Muraro is one of the most well-known *femministe storiche*, historic feminists who were on the frontlines of the women's movement in the 1970s. Bono and Kemp credit Muraro as the main writer behind *Non credere di avere dei diritti* (Don't Think You Have Any Rights), even though the manifesto, in keeping with feminist practice, was published under the name of the collective, *La libreria delle donne di Milano* (1991: 130).

censorious interventions by so-called experts" (Programme of the CRAC, in Bono and Kemp 1991: 219). After years of protest and as political parties worked on a compromise bill on abortion, the *Movimento per la Liberazione della Donna* (Movement for the Liberation of Women) published a manifesto in 1978 that outright rejected a recourse to law: "We're more convinced than ever that we don't want laws on our bodies. We maintain that any law on abortion will give the state power to decide for us" (Manifesto of the Movimento per la Liberazione della Donna, 1978, in Bono and Kemp 1991: 226). The group, like CRAC, sought for the repeal of the criminalization of abortion and for its treatment on par with "giving birth" and other surgeries, such as "appendectomies or pulling teeth."

One of the most well-known manifestos on abortion was published by the Libreria delle donne di Milano: *Non credere di avere dei diritti* (Don't Think You Have Any Rights).[26] The authors argued that "when women turn their attention to the law and ask Parliament to resolve some of the social conflicts which affect them, and when sexual difference and the man-woman conflict are involved, they damage their own sex and put it into a position of lacerating contradictions" (cited in Dominijanni 1987, in Bono and Kemp 1991: 134). *Rivolta femminile* (Female Revolt) argued that a law on abortion would not address sexual inequalities. They argued that unintended pregnancy was rooted in women's sexual subordination and colonization by men's sexuality (Bono and Kemp 1991: 216).[27]

---

[26] The full title reads: *Non credere di avere dei diritti: la generazione della liberta' femminile nell'idea e nelle vicende di un gruppo di donne (*Don't think you have any rights: the generation of female freedom in the ideas and events of a group of women). The first part of the title is taken from a quotation by Simone Weil. (Bono and Kemp 1991: 110).

[27] These claims echo similar Anglophone arguments in feminist texts, such as Andrea Dworkin's *Intercourse* (1987), that abortion served man's pleasure (see also Dworkin's *Right Wing Women*, 1983).

In 1978, under pressure from the women's movement to decriminalize abortion, and following a 1975 Constitutional Court ruling allowing abortion in cases of a serious threat to the woman's health, [28] the Italian Communist Party and the Christian Democrats produced a compromise legislation (Hanafin 2009: 231). The law, which came to be known by its number as "*la 194"* or "*la legge 194"* ("the 194" or "law 194"), however, did not decriminalize abortion as feminists had demanded. The title of the law, "Norms for the social protection of motherhood and for the voluntary termination of pregnancy," belies the tensions and compromises behind its legislative process in the Italian Parliament. Law 194 asserts the state's responsibility "to recognize the social value of motherhood and to safeguard life from its beginning" at the same time that it asserts the primacy of women's psychological and physical health and of her economic and social conditions over the right of the unborn to life.[29]

To obtain an abortion within the first 90 days of gestation a woman needs to obtain a doctor's certificate attesting to physical or psychological threats to her health should the pregnancy continue. A waiting period of 7 days is required. Legislators limited abortion to public hospitals and required parental consent or a judge's approval for minors and included a conscientious objection clause, enabling doctors and other medical staff to opt out of providing abortion services, except in cases when the women's life is in imminent danger. While it brought abortion outside of illegality, the law did not recognize women's

[28] The constitutional ruling recognized the rights of "the conceived" but it prioritized those of the pregnant woman: "there is no equivalency between the right not just to life but also to health of who is already a person, like the mother, and the safeguarding of the embryo whom has yet to become a person" (cited in Colombo 2005).

[29] Article 1 and article 4. Legge 22 maggio 1978 n. 194 (pubblicata nella Gazzetta Ufficiale n. 140 del 22 maggio 1978). "Norme per la tutela sociale della maternita' e sull'interruzione volontaria della gravidanza." The first article of the abortion law asserts that access to abortion should be granted on grounds that pregnancy and birth constitute "a serious danger for the pregnant woman's physical or psychological health, in relation to her health status, or her economic, social, or family conditions, or in relation to the circumstances under which conception occurred, or in cases of anomalies or malformations in the fetus."

reproductive autonomy, as the women's movement had demanded: "contrary to what is generally believed, this is not a law which allows abortion. It is a law which prohibits it, except in certain circumstances" (Conti, 1981: 100, in Hanafin 2009: 231). This was no "free abortion on demand" (Movimento di Liberazione della Donna, 1978, in Bono and Kemp 1991: 226).

The women's movement and the Radical Party were disappointed by the restrictions on the law. On the opposite side of the political spectrum, the Vatican strongly opposed the legislation. The Italian *Movimento per la vita* (Movement for Life) formed in response to the legalization of abortion, with the support of the Catholic Church, and gathered signatures for a referendum to overturn its legalization.[30] The failure of the Vatican to block abortion in Parliament and then its inability to prevail in the referendum, along with a similar failure in its opposition to divorce, were watershed events in Italian politics and culture, broadly interpreted as an indication of the decline of the church's political, social, and moral influence in Italy.[31] Politically, the Catholic Church seemed headed to irrelevance. Writing in their widely referenced reader on Italian feminism in 1991, Paolo Bono and Sandra Kemp dismissed the intellectual importance of the church to Italian feminism. They noted that while "the church has saturated the cultural traditions of the country and helped to shape the prevailing images of women, … its intellectual premises are not challenging" (Bono and Kemp 1991: 22). If anything, according to Bono and Kemp, too much attention has been paid to Catholicism in Italy, a mistake they seek to rectify by purposefully granting it "so little space" in the 450-plus pages they devote to Italian

[30] Another referendary effort, by the *Radicali* with support from some parts of the women's movement, sought the complete deregulation of abortion. This too was rejected.
[31] Italians voted resoundedly (67.9%) in favor of protecting the recently gained right to a legal abortion (Cirant 2005: 177).

feminism (Bono and Kemp 1991: 22). A decade later, however, Italian feminists find themselves faced by a politically resurgent church prolific in its discourse on life and family, ideas that hold new resonance and meanings in the moral neoliberal era. Today's feminists, dispersed across various associations and cultural groups, struggle with how to respond to the politics of life of the Catholic Church.

Reproductive Rights at the Turn of the Millennium

Even as abortion and contraception have remained legal and public family planning clinics, established by law, provide certification for abortion and access to contraception, the right to abortion has been limited in practice, especially through the conscientious objection clause. Over the past decade, the rates of conscientious objection have increased greatly. Some hospitals, even in cities like Rome and Milan, do not provide abortion because all doctors are objectors; in the central region of Lazio, 10 out of 30 public hospitals do not provied abortions because the entire staff has declared themselves to be conscientious objectors (De Zordo 2012). Government data show that in 2007 almost 60% of gynecologists and almost 50% of anesthesiologists in Italy were conscientious objectors.[32] Data from 2010 show that the rates have increased to over 70% for gynecologists and to over 50% of anesthesiologists.[33] In both years, the highest rates of objection are found in the South, where a number of regions have rates of conscientious objection above 80%.[34]

---

[32]Ministero della Salute, Relazione del Ministro della Salute sulla attuazione della legge contenente norme per la tutela sociale della maternità e per l'interruzione volontaria di gravidanza (legge 194/78), dati preliminari 2006, dati definitivi 2005, Roma, October 4, 2007, pg. 35. http://www.salute.gov.it/imgs/C_17_pubblicazioni_679_allegato.pdf

[33]Ministero del Lavoro, della Salute e delle Politiche Sociali, "Relazione del Ministero della Salute, sull'attuazione della Legge contenente norme per la tutela della tutela sociale della maternità e per l'interruzione volontaria della gravidanza. Dati preliminari 2010. Dati definitivi 2009," pg. 34, Roma, 6/8/2010, http://www.salute.gov.it/imgs/C_17_pubblicazioni_1312_allegato.pdf

[34]Ibid.

Pharmacists too can invoke conscientious objection. Spurred by the Vatican's denouncing of emergency contraception, also known as the morning after pill, some pharmacists have refused to dispense it, while doctors in some Catholic hospitals will not write prescriptions for it. The decade-long attempt to obtain approval for RU-486, the drug that induces a medical abortion, has similarly encountered a host of obstacles. The requirement for a hospital stay, for example, defeats the anonymity and privacy that this type of abortion is supposed to provide. As a result of the limited numbers of abortion providers, women accessing abortion in Italy are faced with long waiting periods. Carolina, a cultural mediator who worked with migrant women in reproductive services and who sometimes attended *Donne, Diritti, Salute* meetings, reported that the wait can sometimes be as long as a month.[35] Additionally, institutional and regional practices have enabled the presence of volunteers for the *Movimento per la vita* in public hospitals in Milan, where they provide pre-abortion counseling. While this counseling is supposed to be voluntary, the line is not always clear. During my fieldwork activists familiar with hospital policies described how being a conscientious objector benefited a doctor's career, while practicing abortions was detrimental to it, an explanation confirmed by recent ethnographic research on conscientious objection (De Zordo 2012). Silvia De Zordo found that doctors who are not morally opposed to abortion still become objectors because of the multiple ways in which being an abortion provider can negatively affect a doctor's career (2012).

After the intense politics of the 1970s, the Italian feminist movement fragmented, becoming diffused and turning toward a kind of cultural feminism spread out in numerous associations (Birnbaum 1986: 262; Caldwell 1991). The threat posed to the reproductive

[35] Fieldnote, *Donne, Diritti, Salute* meeting, March 12, 2007. The one-week waiting period required by law before a woman can undergo an abortion procedure is waived in cases when it would put the woman over the 90 days limit required by law.

rights gained in the 1970s by contemporary vitapolitics galvanized a temporary and strategic coming together of various associations and collectives, most visibly through the 2006 march organized by *Usciamo dal silenzio*. Nilde, the receptionist at the independent feminist clinic *consultorio*, who had participated in the resistance and had been active in the Communist party, was very frustrated by this retreat of Italian feminism, and of leftist politics in general, remarking that: "there are no longer any political projects, neither on the left nor on the right. … Prodi[36] says yes to US military bases in Italy, and us, [we sit] here in our own space, like some *stronze* (assholes). I don't like it … it's been like this for thirty years!"[37]

Tracing the Rise of the Embryo Subject

Outside of the medical setting, other obstacles to abortion emerge with a concerted effort to link the recognition of subjecthood and personhood to the moment of conception. The Vatican has played an important role in this eminently biopolitical project. In 1987, the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, led by then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, published "Instructions on Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation. Replies to Certain Questions of the Day"[38] (see also Cirant 2005: 178-179). The document addresses the new interventions enabled by assisted reproduction, arguing that the human body is not simply biological matter and asserts that: "The human being must be respected—as a person—from the very first instant of his existence" (Ratzinger and Bovone 1987). Ratzinger's "Instructions" draw upon Catholic doctrine to assert conception

[36] Prime Minister Romano Prodi, head of the center-left coalition governing Italy at the time of Lidia's comments.
[37] Fieldnote, January 17, 2007.
[38] http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19870222_respect-for-human-life_en.html

as the determining moment of human moral existence. The document, however, buttresses Catholic doctrine with biological knowledge, arguing that the Church's teaching on matters of life are "confirmed, if confirmation were needed, by recent findings of human biological science which recognize that in the zygote resulting from fertilization the biological identity of a new human individual is already constituted" (Ratzinger and Bovone1987). The document's assertion of these biological "facts" negates the complex history of the emergence of embryos and the fact that "there is a great deal of disagreement among embryologists about the so-called facts and significance of fertilization and other biological markers" (Morgan 2009: 21). On the doctrinal side, the status of the ensoulment of the unborn has also not been absolute. Yet, drawing on biological "fact" and Catholic doctrine, the Ratzinger-penned doctrinal map of what is morally acceptable in matters of reproduction almost perfectly foretells the restrictions to ARTs that would become law almost two decades later (Ratzinger and Bovone 1987; see also Cirant 2005).

One of the most influential recognitions of the rights of the embryo, however, came out of Italy's National Bioethics Committee, an institutional body that carried the status of scientific neutrality even as conservative Catholic members were overrepresented. In a 1996 document on the statute of the embryo the committee's president, Francesco D'Agostino, wrote that: "the embryo is one of us: this phrase, so simple as to sound irritating to some, explicates well the fundamental bioethical attitude that emerges from our text: the sense of the limitation of the potential of our technological actions" (Comitato nazionale per la bioetica 1996). In including the embryo as "one of us" the committee sought to protect it from technological intervention.

The National Bioethics Committee's statement was not an obscure development: it garnered significant media coverage. A television interview of D'Agostino featured "behind his shoulders … the image not of an embryo but of a fetus of a number of months holding his little finger in his mouth" (Valentini 2004: 115, cited in Cirant 2005: 181). The statement galvanized the Movement for Life and other associations to organize for an amendment to Italy's civil code that would recognize juridical capacity at conception rather than at birth (Cirant 2005: 181).

The embryo gained grounds in less visible ways, too: In the late 1990s and early 2000s at least two regional laws recognized the unborn as a member of the family. In the region of Lazio, the center-right administration produced legislation that recognized the conceived as a member of the family for purposes of figuring family income.[39] In 1999 the region of Lombardy, recognized "the conceived" in regional family policy legislation: "The region ... recognizes the family as a politically relevant legal subject … For the purpose of the interventions intended by this law, the conceived is considered a member of the family" (Regional Law 23/1999, art. 1, comma 1). Just as a growing consensus on the need to regulate assisted reproduction was emerging in the mid-to-late 1990s, so was a multi-pronged politico-religious-scientific effort to assert the subjecthood and personhood of the embryo, to make the embryo "one of us."

Governing Medically Assisted Reproduction

The most vigorous and contested assertion of the embryo as a subject came in national legislation to regulate assisted reproduction in Italy. Until 2004, despite numerous legislative proposals on the matter dating back to the late 1950s, assisted reproduction was

[39] Zegarelli, Maria Annunziata. "Anche l'embrione è un cittadino." *l'Unità,* November 16, 2001.

governed by *circolari*, (administrative directives).[40] In 1998, the government's directives were supplemented by a voluntary medical code of ethics that informed practice in private clinics.[41] However, by virtue of being self-governing, these guidelines were also subject to flexible interpretation. This flexibility, and the fact that third-party donor techniques were fully located in the private sector, made assisted reproduction in Italy a particularly unregulated field (Bonaccorso 2006). In 2004, Italy had 331 clinics, 206 of which were private.[42]

In the mid-1990s, a growing consensus solidified around the "problem" of unregulated assisted reproduction in Italy. One of the biggest areas of concern was the lack of regulation of the business of gamete donation in the private sector (Bonaccorso 2006: 84). In the 1990s and early 2000s, feminist and progressive legislators and activists argued for the state to regulate the market and safeguard women's health (Soldano, personal communication, 2004). Some Italian feminists, however, warned of the political dangers inherent in opening up reproductive matters to the legislative and political process. The invitation to discipline assisted reproduction risked "reopening the debate over the role and limits of State intervention on the reproductive choice of individuals" (Zuffa 1994: 100). A number of legislative proposals were put forth in the 1990s, none of which succeeded in becoming law.

---

[40] The most important of those was the 1985 *Circolare Degan* (Circolare n. 19/1985), which disciplined assisted reproduction in public hospitals and clinics, and the 1987 *Circolare Donat Cattin*. The *Circolare Degan* was concerned with defining which reproductive techniques would be accessible in publicly-funded institutions.

[41] Article 42, *Codice Deontologico Federazione Nazionale degli Ordini dei Medici Chirurghi e degli Odontodiatri*, approved October 10, 1998.

[42] Lombardy and Lazio had the highest density of clinics among the regions of Italy (over 50 each). Data from 2003. Istituto Superiore di Sanità. "Procreazione medicalmente assistita: risultati dell'indagine sull'applicazione delle tecniche nel 2004." http://www.iss.it/binary/rpma/cont/08_25_WEB.pdf. 2005.

Researchers probed the particularities of Italy's political system that would lead it to its inability to approve a national law on ARTs, including the stalemate in the bicameral system and the political divide between Catholic and secular leftist politics on assisted reproduction (Neresini and Bimbi 2000; Ramjoué and Klöti 2003, Vincenti 2008). With the collapse of the postwar parties during the "Clean Hands" scandals of the 1990s, however, came a new political configuration in which Catholic politics were no longer consolidated into a degree of "political unity" in one political party, the Christian Democrats (Diamanti and Ceccarini 2007: 43). Instead, Catholic votes were dispersed across the political spectrum and the power of the Church exercised in the form of a "pressure group" or "lobby" representing "an influential minority" (Diamanti and Ceccarini 2007: 48). Rather than weaken the influence of the Vatican, under this new political arrangement Catholic votes became sought after by all parties, including leftist and centrist parties, significantly expanding the influence of the Vatican over Italian politics and politicians (Bova 1999; Soldano, interview 2004). By the early 2000s, the stalemate in Parliament had shifted enough for the approval of a bill informed by Catholic positions on reproduction. The conservative coalition presided by Silvio Berlusconi instructed its politicians to vote in support of the law rather than leaving them free to vote according to "conscience" (Fenton 2006: 75). The structuring of the voting process and the Vatican's declaration in January of 2003 that Catholic politicians must abide to Catholic doctrine,[43] "led to a 'Catholic vs secular' (respectively, for and against the law), polarisation within Parliament," which added to the Catholic influence over the content of the law and produced the most restrictive regulation of assisted reproduction in Europe (Fenton 2006: 74-75).

[43] "Doctrinal note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in political life," http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20021124_politica_en.html, cited in Fenton 2006: 75, n. 16.

Despite controversy in and outside of Parliament, in February 2004, after two years of intense debates, the Italian Parliament approved restrictions to medically assisted reproduction. Among its many controversial provisions the ART law, which came to be known as *la legge 40* (law 40) introduces "the conceived" as a subject on par with the other parties involved in assisted reproduction. The law also bans donor gametes,[44] the cryogenic freezing of embryos, pre-implantation diagnosis,[45] surrogacy, experimentation on embryos and reserves access to reproductive technologies to heterosexual "stable" couples, defined by cohabitation. Additionally, the law defined a maximum number of embryos that could be produced and insisted that they all be transferred in utero.[46] Within a few years these restrictions led to a significant practice of "cross-border reproductive care" (Shenfield et al. 2010) toward European members states, like Spain. In a study involving six European countries, Italy emerged as the most common country of origin of "cross-border reproductive care" (Shenfield et al. 2010).

---

[44] Rulings by Courts in Milan, Florence, and Catania have found the ban on heterologous fertilization to be constitutionally dubious.

[45] Beginning in 2006, numerous cases have made their way through Italian court appealing the ban on pre-implantation diagnosis, in some cases enabling the procedure on an individual basis. In 2012, the European Commission for Human Rights (ECHR) found in the Costa and Pavan v Italy case that Italy's ART law is in violation of human rights. The case concerned a couple who discovered they were healthy carriers of cystic fibrosis when they had a child affected by the disease and who chose to have an abortion when in a subsequent pregnancy the fetus was found to be affected by the disease as well. Unable to access assisted reproduction and pre-implantation diagnosis to conceive a child without cystic fibrosis, the couple appealed to the ECHR. The Commission found that the ban on pre-implantation diagnosis constitutes "a violation of Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) of the European Convention on Human Rights" and noted its "inconsistency" considering the legality of abortion. Interestingly, the official press release of the court also includes the following caution: "The Court observed first of all that the notions of 'embryo' and 'child' must not be confused." ("Ban preventing couple of healthy carriers of genetic disease from screening embryos for in vitro fertilisation violated their right to respect for their private and family life," Press Release issued by the Registrar of the Court, ECHR 327 (2012) 28.08.2012, http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/pages/search.aspx?i=003-4055415-4740328#{%22itemid%22:[%22003-4055415-4740328%22])

[46] A 2009 ruling of Italy's Constitutional Court found this article unconstitutional, doing away with the limit of three embryos and the requirement of their transfer (Ruling n.151 May 9).

Conceiving "The Conceived" as a Precarious Subject

The term "*concepito,*" "the conceived," only appears in the first article of the law (see also Hanafin 2007: 62 ; Cirant 2005: 99), in the context of the assertion of its rights: "recourse to medically assisted reproduction is allowed, on the conditions and according to the modalities envisioned by this law, which assures the rights of all subjects involved, including those of the conceived.*"*[47] Unlike "fertilized egg" or "embryo" or "fetus," "the conceived" lacks biological and developmental specificity at the same time that it foregrounds conception as the defining characteristic of this new rights-bearing entity. A leftist politician commented that these provisions were "so embryo-centric that law 40 could be renamed the 'law on the statute of the embryo".[48] Even before the ART law's formal approval, a center-right Senator boasted "that having obtained the recognition of the principle that the embryo is a human being, we will now have to undertake a profound revision of the law on abortion in order to avoid a clamorous contradiction."[49]

The linguistic choice of *concepito* echoes the Catholic Church's focus on conception and its denial of distinctions, such as the designation of "pre-embryos," that have been used to allow ART techniques and stem cell research in other settings:[50]

> The terms "zygote", "pre-embryo", "embryo" and "foetus" can indicate in the vocabulary of biology successive stages of the development of a human being. The present Instruction makes free use of these terms, attributing to them an identical ethical relevance, in order to designate the result (whether visible or not) of human generation, from the first moment of its existence until birth (Ratzinger and Bovone 1987).

---

[47] Law 40/2004, Article 1, Comma 1, emphasis added.
[48] Fieldnote, Conference "*Stato e Laicismo*" (State and Secularism), Anna Bernasconi, March 10, 2007.
[49] Senator Maurizio Ronconi, *Udc*. In *L'Unità"* website, 10/12/03.
http://www.unita.it/index.asp?SEZIONE_COD=HP&TOPIC_TIPO=&TOPIC_ID=31220
[50] The 1984 *Warnock Report* in Britain delineated a phase, lasting 14 days from conception, during which embryos could be used for research purposes. This move was controversial, and initially rejected by the British Parliament. In 1990, Parliament reversed itself and endorsed the Warnock Report. The change hinged on the successful lobbying by the scientific community, which pushed the distinction between the pre-embryo and the embryo phases (see Mulkay 1994).

The term *concepito* encompasses and equates different stages of development, from zygote to fetus.

With the approval of *la legge 40*, Italian legislators effectively prioritized the embryo's potential right to life over women's bodily autonomy and reproductive choice and established the embryo's "independent relationship with the State" (Oaks 2001: 175).[51] The extension of subjecthood and rights to the embryo, the "weakest subject,"[52] emerges at a time when the relationship between the Italian state and all of its subjects is being renegotiated. Just as the post-welfare state retreats from its responsibilities of social citizenship shifting them onto "society," the private sector, the family, and ultimately on active citizens, the state reaches deeper into the moral terrain of reproduction and family-making to protect the welfare of "the conceived."

Activists and politicians had argued for the need for a national norm on assisted reproduction as it concerned the lightly regulated private sector. In a 2004 interview, Monica Soldano of the *Madre Provetta (*Test-Tube Mother) association took responsibility for introducing the term "Far West of reproduction" in the process of advocating for legislation (see Krause and Marchesi 2007). While Soldano had introduced the term from a leftist feminist perspective in the name of safeguarding women's health and regulating the

[51] Legislators went to such length to protect the embryo that they negated informed consent to treatment from the moment conception occurs, imposing that embryos be transferred in *utero* even if the woman undergoing IVF decided against having the procedure. A feminist sociologist MP called this provision equivalent to rape (Fieldnote, Bimbi, Margherita Roundtable, February 25, 2004). In December of 2012, the revoking of consent once the embryo is formed mandated by Law 40 was referred by judge to Italy's Constitutional Court for review of its constitutionality. The case in question concerns a couple which after undergoing pre-implantation diagnosis, another procedure originally banned by law 40 but subsequently found unconstitutional, refused the embryo transfer and asked for the embryos to be destined to research (Bocci 2012).

[52] Senator Corrado Danzi, a member of the Catholic Udc party argued in the Italian Senate that: "We consider this a just law, because at every step, in each of its articles, in each of its words, it foregrounds the defense of the weakest subject" (Senato della Repubblica, seduta pubblica 506, Resoconto sommario e stenografico, 11 Dicembre 2003, pg. 11, http://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/leggi_e_documenti/raccoltenormative/15%20-%20Procreazione/SENATO/AULA/st506.PDF

private market, the term resonated with the conservative right's moral project of disciplining reproductive disorder (see Krause and Marchesi 2007; Marchesi 2007). However, some overlap exists between the left and the right over the "Far West" of reproduction. This overlap solidifies around concerns with the market's penetration and commodification of life. In that shared terrain lies some of the power of the politics of "life" in neoliberal Italy. The "Far West" justifies regulation by the state at a time when the rhetoric of deregulation prevails. The embryo holds special status compared to the already-born in this respect too, deserving special protection from the market. This exception is evident in the argument articulated by a conservative Catholic MP during the early debates of the law:

> We need a good law and we need to employ every effort to neutralize the transversal attempts of those who work so that everything remains in complete deregulation [English in original]. Only the approval of a law can introduce those limits and establish those norms that will safeguard the right to life and the dignity of the to-be-born. Thus, it is not thinkable to entrust everything to the regulations issued by the Ministry of Health. … I believe that it is in fact essential to restate that the law has a principal finality: to reduce, avoid (and not allow) the many abuses that are perpetrated, in a perfectly licit and legitimate manner, in the test-tube Far West of this country of ours.[53]

Neoliberal projects are compatible with the restriction in rights and "choice," especially when those restrictions are accomplished through the assertion of the human rights of other, competing subjects (Morgan and Edward 2012: 243). The approval of strict regulations of reproductive technologies weaves together Catholic politics of life and a new relevance of discourses of human rights under neoliberalism. Attention to the terms by which the assisted reproduction law was argued and contested brings into relief a complex reconfiguration of rights, social citizenship, and morality under neoliberalism that holds profound implications for gendered and sexual bodies. Donna Haraway's insight that "the fetus functions as a kind of metonym … for configurations of persons, nation, origin,

[53] Giuseppe Fioroni, Camera dei Deputati, 2002: 18-19.

choice, life, and future" (2001:75) points to the unborn's ability to condense relevant social meanings and political projects. The embryo emerges from these discourses as the most deserving subject of the state because of its ultimate weakness and inherent dependence, a quality at odds with the active citizenship expected of other subjects. Writing about the awarding of subjecthood and even citizenship to the unborn in Poland, Janine Holc argues for examining the relationship of the rights of the unborn with those of other subjects, especially in at a time when "all citizenship identities are in the process of reformulation and reimagination" (2004: 758).

While Italy is not a post-socialist state, it has been invested by profound transformations in employment protections, welfare, and in the terms of social citizenship (Molé 2010, 2008; Muehlebach 2012). The extension of rights to the embryo reaffirms the role of the post-welfare state in fostering the life of its citizens and reaffirms its role in "moral regulation" (Corrigan and Sayer 1991). The state is called upon to protect "the weakest subject" from the threats of deregulation, commercialization, and the Far West of capitalism. This safeguarding is linked to the State based on rights, and, according to another conservative Catholic MP,

> from this rationality descend all the limits introduced by this law. These limits are not "no's" but also "yes's." It is about saying 'yes' to life; saying 'yes' to the family; a 'yes' to the principle of equality, because in the face of the human being in the youngest phase of its existence we witness the very participation of a common humanity; of 'yes' to solidarity, because no one is smaller and poorer than our children when they begin to exist.[54]

This protection, however, comes at the expense of the rights of women. As legal scholar Rachel Fenton notes, "The Italian position is a striking example of how, the more that law

[54] Domenico De Virgilio, June 18, 2002, pg. 106.

is concerned with protection of the embryo, the more women stand to lose in terms of bodily autonomy" (Fenton 2006: 83).

After the Law: Where Were Feminists?

The ART law, particularly in its recognition of the embryo subject, engendered significant resistance, both inside and outside of parliament. However, in its earliest incarnation the opponents of the law coalesced around its threat to scientific progress and to Italy's modernity, more than to women's bodies and reproductive rights. The early contestation of the law was also marked by a widespread Orientalizing discourse that warned the ART law tainted Italy with backwardness and threatened a "slide" away from Europe (Krause and Marchesi 2007). Patrick Hanafin's observation that the "Far West" is in fact a misnomer, a combination of the "Wild West" and the "Far East" (2007: 51 n. 13) captures the sense that the space of appropriately European and modern regulation of reproductive technologies had been overshot. Neither anarchy nor moral regulation befit a modern, liberal, European nation. This early public debate around the law was surprisingly masculinist. The campaign for a referendum, initially organized by the libertarian-leaning *Partito Radicale*, centered on a former politician, Luca Coscioni, affected by Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). Coscioni came to personify the law's turn away from medical research and its denial of IVF and pre-implantation diagnosis to fertile couples who are carriers of genetic diseases. That the most visible campaign against the law would be articulated in terms of science, progress, and liberal individual rights, and embodied by the suffering of a man's rare illness, displacing in the process the implications of the law for

women and reproductive rights, illustrates the relative political weakness of feminism in the early 2000s.

Feminist efforts lacked institutional power and visibility, a fact noted by some leading Italian feminists and by scholars writing prior to 2006. Rachel Ann Fenton, for example, writes that "Italian feminism revealed itself reticent, if not silent, and certainly not organized" (2006: 77). However, it is not that feminists were not talking about the issue within the cultural associations that characterize the diffused feminism that followed the mass movement of the 1970s. In May of 2004, for example, I attended the last of a series of meetings titled "*Gruppo Procreativo"* (Reproductive Group) at the *Libera Universita' delle Donne*, a cultural association in Milan. The meetings were centered on assisted reproduction and its recent legislation. The meeting was small, including only a handful of women, all of whom had or were gaining expertise in the matter and relative visibility. Participants included Daniela, who would write a book on the legislation the following year, and Elena, a noted feminist. The discussion sheds some light on the silence of feminists on the law as it revealed the underlying ambivalence over reproductive technologies and motherhood.[55] Other noted historic feminists like Luisa Muraro and Ida Dominijanni weighed in on the silence of feminism noting "the reticence on the part of the feminist narrative to confront feelings of hatred towards the desire for motherhood, a desire possessed by many women. This is an issue which Muraro suggests that many have on their minds but few wish to discuss" (Fenton 2006: 81). Another obstacle in articulating a feminist position on ARTs was more political in nature: many feminists expressed unease at the gamble of a referendum; they were keenly aware of the implications of a potential failure.

[55] Fieldnotes and digital recordings, "Gruppo procreativo" (Reproductive Group), May 5, 2004.

"Welcome to the Embryo":

The Failure of the Referendum on Assisted Reproduction

In June 2005, the referendum to overturn key articles of the law failed to reach its required quorum, a failure that marked a dramatic reversal in the political and moral power of the Vatican over Italian society and signified a watershed in the politics of reproduction in Italy. The failure of the referendum has been attributed to the intense political intervention of the Vatican, to the technically difficult questions that faced voters, and to inadequate information in the media (Fenton 2006: 76), much of which was controlled by Silvio Berlusconi. The ART legislation was the inverse of the politics and social changes that had come out of the decade of the 1970s: Whereas the abortion law had extended, with limitations, the reproductive rights of women, asserting women's physical, psychological, and social wellbeing as being primary relative to the fetus, the assisted reproduction law asserted an equivalence between women and embryos; whereas the divorce law, along with the reform of family law in 1975, had recognized the family as an evolving social formation, rejecting the patriarchal oppression inherited from fascism, the assisted reproduction law reasserted the notion of the "natural" heteronormative family; and, finally, whereas the failure of the Vatican to block the legalization of divorce and abortion legally, politically, and electorally had signaled the Church's waning political and social power in matters of sexuality, the family, and gender, the Vatican's explicit and successful influence on the assisted reproduction law heralded an invigorated political and moral role. A newspaper headline from the day after the referendum reads: "Welcome to the embryo" and

acknowledges the power of Church official to "dictate law."[56] The leftist intellectual daily *Il Manifesto* ran a blackened out front page to signify the return of the "Dark Ages."

A few days after the referendum's failure, I visited a feminist *consultorio familiare,* a feminist planning clinic, to inquire about conducting dissertation research. In the foyer of the clinic I encountered Nilde, the formidable receptionist and administrator. As I mentioned earlier, Nilde had been a partisan during World War II, a communist political activist, a veteran of feminist struggles, and one of the *consultorio's* original founders. The talk at the *consultorio* was the referendum. As Nilde gave me a tour of the clinic she told me that doctors there provided the certification that women need to obtain an abortion at the hospital. As she reminded me that abortion in Italy is free for everyone, she stopped and qualified her statement by saying "at least until the referendum. Now…?"[57]

"Coming Out of Silence": Engaging with the State

When I returned a year and a half later to conduct my dissertation research, abortion was still free and the *consultorio* still offered certifications for women seeking an abortion. After the referendum campaign and then following its defeat, a more cohesive and active feminist movement had emerged. A concerted and visible response to the law only emerged after the failure of the referendum and increasingly explicit attempts by emboldened Catholic politicians to target the law on abortion. In direct response to those attacks an email by an Italian journalist went viral and set into motion a series of events that culminated into the formation of *Usciamo dal silenzio* (Let's Come out of Silence) into a huge protest in defense of reproductive rights and law 194. Italian feminism,

[56] Sandro Magister, 2005, "Benvenuto embrione. Al referendum Ruini vince e detta legge," espressoonline.it. http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/33525.
[57] Fieldnote, June 15, 2005.

particularly the kind in which historic feminists are most influential and visible, can more easily unite around the protection of legal abortion than assisted reproductive technologies.

Soon after I started to volunteer at the clinic I became involved in a group focused on women's health issues, *Donne, Diritti, Salute* (Women, Rights, Health). The group met in the clinic's reception after hours, and often after our meetings we would join the larger meetings of the feminist organization *Usciamo dal silenzio* (Let's Come out of Silence). In the wake of the defeat of the referendum and of increasing talk of reforming abortion, a coalition of women from the fields of journalism, union politics, and law had come together to reassert feminist voices.[58] *Usciamo dal silenzio* had managed to build a large coalition and to mobilize one to two hundred thousand women to march in the streets of Milan on January 14, 2006 (Hanafin 2007: 39). The march was a protest against the *legge 40* and against attempts to restrict abortion. Nilde referred to the *Usciamo dal silenzio* protest on numerous occasions, always lighting up as she recounted her participation. The power of large numbers of women marching for reproductive rights was very meaningful to her. On slow days and evenings, sitting behind her wooden desk in the heart of the consultorio, Nilde would bring up the protest and chide me for not having been there (even though I was not even in Italy at the time). On one occasion she told me, "women, when you needle them, they respond. We saw it with that protest, the streets were full, a river of women from the *Stazione Centrale* to the *Duomo*, in rows of 50, there were no empty spaces!"[59] A large poster advertising the protest hung in the clinic's hallway for the entire length of my fieldwork, more than a year after the protest had taken place. Despite her long history of

[58] During my fieldwork I heard critiques that *Usciamo dal Silenzio* was divided into two classes: elite "intellectuals" and *operative*, the operatives that did the grunt work, such as assembling and dismantling stages after events, while the intellectuals gave speeches.
[59] Fieldnote, Nilde, January 24, 2007.

activism, Nilde was impressed by the scale of the protest, and more heartened than when I first met her in the days following the defeat of the referendum.

The approval of the assisted reproduction legislation temporarily galvanized feminism into a unitary response. Yet, Italian feminists found themselves fundamentally in defensive mode regarding reproductive rights (Dominijanni 2006, cited in Hanafin 2009: 232). With a sustained effort aimed at abortion and other reproductive rights, the suspicions of political engagement with the state of some of the feminist groups of the 1970s seemed less relevant. Even some feminists who in the 1970s had focused in the *autocoscienza* practice argued for political engagement in the face of intensifying biopolitics. Confronted by the assertion of the embryo subject and the restriction and weakening of reproductive rights the question "how do we respond?" increasingly required confronting both cultural and political and legal issues.

I heard the articulation of a new politics from one of the most well-known public intellectual and *femminista storica* (historic feminist),[60] Elena, who spoke at meetings of the *Usciamo dal silenzio* feminist group. Elena described her process of coming to understand the impossibility of avoiding the realm of the political in our time. Elena argued that as bio-politics intersect in the female body to the degree that they do today, women's politics cannot afford to ignore politics and policies:

> So, I'm new at this type of issue, I come from an experience of activism, the women's movement, and on the question of relationship. The issue of rights, as you know, has had a varied history in [Italian] feminism. I don't belong to the feminism who wrote *Non credere di avere dei diritti* [*Don't Think You Have any Rights*].[61]

[60] See Di Cori 2007 for a discussion of different generations of feminists in which she uses both the common terminology of *femminista storica* "historic feminist" and "not-so-young feminist" to refer to the generation of feminists born in the 1940s and 1950s, in contrast to "young feminists," born in and after the 1970s. Di Cori uses this generational distinction to argue that "young feminists" in Italy are shut out of public discourse while historic feminists dominate what little visibility feminism maintains in the Berlusconi era.

[61] Libreria delle Donne di Milano. 1987. *Non credere di avere dei diritti: La generazione della liberta' femminile nell'idea e nelle vicende di un gruppo di donne.* Rosenberg & Sellier, Torino 1987. Translated into

> On the abortion issue as well, the part of feminism [who said] "we don't want the law, we don't protest [in the streets] because these are the ways in which, again, in some way, the State intervenes, intervenes with the form of control, etc." … I did not underwrite that document that said, "no, I'm not interested in abortion," but I too was diffident of the politics of rights. Protest, no, I'm of the *piazza,* I come from Romagna, I don't know, maybe I like *piazzas*, I like to protest, but I was saying, with time, maybe I have reflected and since, and I have come to understand that now, more than ever in the past, the relationship between, I mean, that the politics of rights, that the right/law is not so insignificant after all, so foreign to the practices of the movement, especially, after, let's say, that today I see more clearly, because today all of that stuff that we have reflected upon and began a political practice, the practice of the encounter among all the themes of sexuality, sexuality, motherhood, the body, etc., today are profoundly intersected by institutional politics. Today to do just consciousness-raising work, of changing consciousness, wouldn't, would be really unrealistic in the sense that today the body, sexuality are the object upon which, over which they are applying laws, upon which the Church intervenes heavily.[62]

At an earlier meeting Elena had similarly argued: "I am not institutional now that I have integrated the State and institutions into my vision."[63]

Daniela, the main impetus behind *Donne, Diritti, Salute*, was in her mid-thirties, with startling blue eyes, a head of unruly, curly hair, and an infectious boundless energy. Her political activism was forged in the G8 protest of 2001 in Genoa in which Italian police brutally assaulted protestors in the high school in which they were staying. During her involvement in the referendum campaign as frequent speaker at roundtables in her role as author of a book on ARTs she had become frustrated by the limited parameters of its debate, which centered on science and modernity versus "life."[64] Heartened that the feminist "networks had mobilized" in response to the ART law she wanted to keep it going, "to not let them settle" back down. Daniela helped fund the network *Donne, Diritti, Salute*, which focused on women's health as it was impacted by regional and national health care

---

English as *Sexual Difference: A Theory of Social-Symbolic Practice*. The literal translation I used in the text speaks to the relevance of the speaker's reference to one of the multiple threads of Italian feminism that fought against the recognition of rights from the State.

[62] Fieldnote, Elena, Laboratorio Dico, February 21, 2007.

[63] Fieldnote, UdS, January 16, 2007.

[64] Interview, Daniela, July 19, 2007, digital recording.

and reproductive policy. The group's insistence that to safeguard reproductive rights feminists had to keep an eye on the fine-grained mechanisms of health care policy and funding was the antithesis of the campaign for the ART referendum. Daniela and the women who participated in *Donne, Diritti, Salute* understood "freedom" and "choice" as being grounded in the material and ideological realities that structured access to reproductive rights.

The struggle over subjecthood and rights directly implicated the state and law. Yet, there was disagreement about how much to focus on reproductive rights. The leadership of *Usciamo dal Silenzio*, for example, was wary of keeping too tight a focus on reproductive issues. One of the movement's most visible and powerful leaders cautioned against a defensive politics that limited feminists to the role of "vestals of the 194."[65] The members of *Donne, Diritti, Salute* profoundly disagreed with this assessment, seeing in the defense of reproductive services the central struggles of women's rights in contemporary Italy. In response to their unwillingness to be tied predominantly to reproductive health, *Donne, Diritti, Salute* member Laura remarked to me "once the 194 [the abortion law] is gone, then they will all cry over it."[66]

Echoing Dominijanni's assessment of the inherent defensive stance of Italian feminism in the 2000s, the meetings of feminist groups in which I participated were implicitly or at times quite explicitly organized around the question of how best to respond to the latest attack to health care and reproductive rights. Feminist actors, especially, but not only in the *Donne, Diritti, Salute* group, understood and sought to counter what they saw as an "erosion" of reproductive rights, often through indirect and invisible means. The

[65] Fieldnote, Usciamo dal Silenzio, Susanna Camusso, February 28, 2007.
[66] Fieldnote, February 28, 2007.

recurrent topic in these discussions was the status of the embryo. The organizers of *Donne, Diritti, Salute*, Daniela, Laura, and less regularly, Franca, a middle-aged politician in the *Rifondazione Comunista* party, regularly traced back the latest attack on reproductive rights to the recognition of the embryo subject in the ART legislation. The first article of the law, which asserts the commensurability of the embryo's rights as a subject with those of the other parties of reproduction, was seen as the basis on which policies and regulations aimed at weakening reproductive rights rested. Entwined with a material analysis of the channeling of funds from public to Catholic clinic described in the previous chapter, they also identified an "internal" political project in need of resistance, the remaking of women's subjectivity from within, especially relative to the status of the embryo.

Inspired by the "personal is political" slogan of the 1970s, Daniela's comments at roundtables or meetings started with herself, including her struggles with the desire and fear of motherhood. While participating in a roundtable on a recently published ethnography of assisted reproduction in Sicily,[67] Daniela raised the question of "what is freedom" and "what are the conditions of a free choice?" The roundtable took place in a former nunnery turned women's library in the city of Bologna. On the Eurostar train ride from Milan to Bologna, Daniela and I had already discussed some of these issues in Italian feminism and, more personally, our own ambivalent relationship with the desire for a child. At the roundtable, Daniela seemingly picked up the conversation where the two of us left off. As I sat in the audience I pondered the difference in how Daniela and I thought about the line between the public and the private. Daniela's politics rejected those boundaries in matters

[67] Alessandra Gribaldi's 2005 *La natura scomposta.* Fieldnote, Roundtable on *La natura scomposta,* Bologna January 26, 2007.

of reproduction. Highlighting the sacrificial narratives of in-vitro fertilization that Gribaldi's ethnography documented, she asked:

> who are the subjects who choose, what is the meaning of self-determination? … My desire for motherhood freezes and thaws. I experience it as oppressive, as martyrdom. I feel ambivalence, fear of having to adhere to a model that makes me coincide with a reproductive organ, it manifests as a form of conflict that is lived individually in the intimacy of mothers.

She referred to her experience of a "conflict and a process in my willingness to become mother, even if this assumes the folkloristic tones of 'the women who don't want to have children.' I oscillate between control and desire." Through the practice of *autocoscienza* Italian feminists sought to grapple with the question of motherhood as well as sexuality, often through a feminist reframing of psychoanalytic theory (see for example Irigaray 1985). The way out of the individualizing politics and experiences of reproduction, for Daniela, lay in coming out from isolation, in narrative, in relationship with other women, and in political engagement to reconstruct the "us" of feminism that had become diffused and fragmented following its crisis in the 1980s. The original feminist idea for independent family planning clinics remained important to Daniela not just in terms of medical services, but also of the "narrative spaces" they provided. Daniela's project combined the *autocoscienza* of the 1970s, the sense that women's subjectivity could be changed through self-awareness, narrative, and relationships with other women, with attention to politics and the fine-grained policy mechanisms of health care.

Italian feminists like Daniela confront a very different political and cultural landscape compared to the 1970s. The project of decriminalizing abortion generated significant consensus by the time the referendum reaffirming its status was held in 1981 (Caldwell 1991). Illegal abortion had been widespread and even "routine" at least since Fascist times as emerges from oral histories, such as Passerini (1986, cited in Caldwell

1991: 90; see also Guiducci 1977). For Italian women of the generation that struggled to legalize abortion the question of the moral or social status of the fetus was secondary to the issue of saving women's lives from illegal abortion and of asserting women's self-determination. Nilde, who had been active in abortion politics for decades, including through the practice of taking women who needed to abort across the border to the former Yugoslavia and in forming the first independent feminist family planning clinics,[68] was famous for her no-nonsense attitude about abortion. Daniela twice told me the story of the time she worked in the reception at the clinic and Nilde responded to a woman crying about the prospect of having an abortion by saying: "'but no! It's just like pulling out a tooth!'"[69] While cautious not to overgeneralize, Daniela argued that

> Those who fought for abortion, probably generally speaking, they tend to emphasize this aspect less, instead those who already have abortion all wrapped up and guaranteed, as we say, maybe is more… All the, their generation, the ones not politically engaged, it's like this, they don't, they have absolutely no idea, except with rare exceptions, of the fact that abortion years ago did not exist, eeeh, there is this rhetoric really, this thing is there, of the emotion, of the, plus there, the discourse of the church according to which life is life and you can't touch it, has taken hold.[70]

Daniela explained the difference in terms of complacency and de-politicization of a younger generation of women but also pointed to success of the cultural politics of life in reshaping meanings and emotions related to pregnancy and the unborn and in changing subjectivities around abortion.[71]

---

[68] Interview, Nilde, June 6, 2007, digital recording.
[69] Interview, Daniela, July 19, 2007, digital recording.
[70] See Paxson 2004 for an ethnographic examination of the intergenerational differences in the meaning of abortion to women in Greece.
[71] However, young people in Milan could be very politically active, including in matters of reproduction, as the student march on Women's Day described below illustrates. The heavy-handed nature of the moral politics emanating from the conservative Catholic regional administration engendered resistance among students and youth involved in the leftist *centri sociali* (Social Centers).

Daniela's own perspective on the embryo gave space to emotions and to the potential for it to hold multiple meanings. Daniela argued for recognition of the "ambiguity of the embryo, an embryo that is also the image of the child" rather than an outright dismissal of its meaning or status. She disagreed with those, like Nilde, who dismissed the embryo as a non-entity. For Daniela, embryos should be safeguarded, though not from women and not in terms of "life" in the abstract, but from capitalist exploitation. In an interview[72] she articulated her position on the embryo:

> My thought on the embryo is like this, life is gradual, and thus, like law 194 recognizes, in fact that there is a gradualness, such that for me the question is not, 'is it life or not life,' eh, it doesn't make sense, it shouldn't even be asked. Of course it's life! We are not those, those who say, 'ah, it's a clump of cells!' I think it's wrong even posing in the attempt, um, to proselytize, saying, 'ah, it's just a clump of cells!' For me it's not just a clump of cells, I mean, for me there is also a whole emotional charge, which, um, which which which brings, hmm, which brings to the fact that the embryo is not just a clump of cells, but it is created out of the body, but it is stored, it is conserved, it is frozen, it can be used for research, thus, this poses new problems which before, when embryos stayed inside a woman's body, did not exist. So, I think, in fact, um, I have had the chance to experience first hand when I was doing the debates, especially in the schools, with high school students, um, the fact-, mmm, there, the fact that it may be a life in the making is felt, in a way very, maybe, it is an aspect that counts in their decision about how the law should be. So, thinking also about how much emotional charge we women put in motherhood, it's not as if it was all neatly resolved, it's very contradictory and ambivalent, and so why wouldn't it be also in the case of a frozen embryo? So, for me we should also, that those who argue the need to change law 40 should also integrate this problematic, but resolving it denying the possibility of touching these embryos is not in my opinion the correct route. We should instead put some, some limits regarding the research of biotechnolo-biomedical research, um, on the other, um, for example with respect to the problem of ownership, copyright, the fact that, I mean, another thing that I, I was struck by during the referendum was how there was no, there was no attention to the aspect of the prevarication of the market. I mean the fact that in any case DNA today is subject to, it can be, sequences of DNA can be subject to copyright, I mean, I say, let's start there, let's make sure that the law is exercised, that it interrogates and finds a solution with respect to this problem, I mean, eh, between an individual and a multinational, who has more power? Certainly the multinational, so, ok freezing the embryo, but I mean, what after?
> Milena: to what end?

[72] Interview, Daniela, July 19, 2007, digital recording.

> Daniela: Exactly, to what end. And so here specify these two: one, take into consideration all the emotional imagination aspects, emotional that in any case surround, no, give reality to the embryo, substantiate the embryo, and on the other, put attention, politics, in my opinion, should put attention to these aspects of the market.

Daniela's argument that "life" in the form of DNA should be protected from the market rejected both the notion that embryos should be made off-limits in the way that the law 40 had done or that they could just be considered "a clump of cells." Instead, Daniela called for the recognition of the plural and emotional meanings of the embryo and made the case for regulation to protect life from profit-driven interests.[73] Negotiating reproductive rights at the intersection of an increased vulnerability of all life to the market in the post-welfare moment and of moral politics that offer a sacred alternative to commodification is no easy task. The question of "how to respond" to the politics of life had no easy answers and differences in strategies among feminist groups tested the fledgling network that *Usciamo dal silenzio* had built even as continued attempts to undermine reproductive rights continued to fill spaces of protest.

"Choice" in the Politics of Life & Death

The multi-pronged march of the unborn to political and social recognition gained a new urgency early in 2007 when the Regional Council of Lombardy, led by a conservative Catholic coalition, succeeded in approving an amendment to an article in Lombardy's

[73] In the European Union, embryos have been protected from patenting under a 1998 directive: European Union Directive 98/44 EC protects human embryos from patenting: "uses of human embryos for industrial or commercial purposes must also be excluded from patentability" (art. 42, Official Journal of the European Communities 1998: 16). The question of what is exactly a "human embryo," however, is not self-evident. In 2010 Germany's highest court referred the case of Brüstle v Greenpeace to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) to resolve the question of "what is meant by the term 'human embryo.'" The questions posed by the German Court underscore the multiple possible definitions and permutations of what constitutes an embryo while the CJEU's ruling exemplifies the way law and policy-making are a central site for the constitution of "the human embryo" as a definite category (see "EU Law, Human Dignity and the Human Embryo: The Decision of the CJEU Grand Chamber in Brüstle v Greenpeace (C-34/10)," *eutopia law,* eutopialaw.com/2011/10/21/eu-law-human-dignity-and-the-human-embryo-the-decision-of-the-cjeu-grand-chamber-in-brustle-v-greenpeace-ev-c-3410/.

burial regulations concerning the handling of embryonic and fetal remains. The Regional Council of Lombardy voted unanimously to amend the existing regulation on funerals and cemetery matters (*Regolamento in materia di attività funebri e cimiteriali*),[74] in effect mandating the burial of fetuses and embryos, regardless of age of gestation. The amendment changed the status of embryos and fetuses less than 20 weeks gestation from "unrecognizable anatomical parts"—previously incinerated with other biological waste from the hospital—to "recognizable anatomical parts" that require burial. Women having an abortion or suffering a miscarriage would be offered a "choice": to privately bury the embryo or fetus or to delegate burial to the health authorities. The amendment introduced two changes: first, women would need to state a "choice" on a form about what to do with the products of conception, instead of having the option to request it; and second, all products of conception, including embryo, would now be buried with "recognizable anatomical parts," instead of being incinerated. The amendment would not create a separate cemetery for fetuses and embryos, nor require a funeral.

This change in the way these materials would be treated was rejected forcefully by various women's groups in Milan. Even an obscure regional bureaucratic regulation in fact represented another salvo in the battle over the status of the unborn, a challenge immediately recognized by feminist activists, but not by the leftist councilors who had unwittingly approved it. With their attention focused on a pay fight over health care copays, the councilors claimed not to have noticed the implications of the amendment to the 2004 burial code, for which they voted unanimously; they had missed the assertion of personhood buried in a seemingly uncontroversial item concerning modifications to the

[74] Modifiche al Regolamento regionale del 9 novembre 2004, n. 6 "Regolamento in materia di attività funebri e cimiteriali", d'iniziativa della Giunta regionale.

regional code on funeral and burial activities.[75] The conservative Catholic governor of Lombardy, Roberto Formigoni, wasted no time in bragging about its significance. The morning following the approval of the new regulations the newspapers carried statements Formigoni boasting that "finally the dignity of the fetus is recognized" (Dazzi 2007).

In February of 2007, I joined a meeting of *Donne, Diritti, Salute* in the reception of the *consultorio*. Participants included Daniela, Laura, Franca, Viola, from a feminist collective, and Carolina, a cultural mediator. The plan was to meet as a group to discuss the issue prior to joining together with other feminist groups at a meeting of *Usciamo dal silenzio* later that evening. As we sat on the new Ikea couch and on wooden chairs pulled from the desks of the receptionists, Daniela started to summarize the situation. She circulated a copy of the regulation that had been approved and because of her involvement with the leadership of *Usciamo dal silenzio*, she had a sense of the critique of the regulation that was going to be articulated, a critique that hinged on the argument that the "choice" of organizing the burial oneself or having the regional administration take care of it through burial in a "common grave" was no choice at all.[76] The form came to represent both the lack of choice in matters of reproduction and an attempt to shape women's experience of the nature of the unborn.

Franca called the amendment "macabre" and argued that "what is behind it is the first article of the *legge 40*. You keep reasserting through different means that the conceived has juridical dignity." These other means, for Franca, included not just the fetal burial law, as it came to be called, but also the Church's overwhelming presence in the media: "if you browse newspapers, including *Corriere* and *la Repubblica*, they are full, the

[75] Consiglio Regionale della Lombardia, VIII Legislatura, "Processo verbale della seduta n.49 del 30 gennaio 2007."
[76]Fieldnote February 13, 2007.

front pages, full of the interventions of the Church. Even watching TV shows, it is indicative." Almost three years since the ART law's approval, the awarding of subjecthood to the embryo continued to motivate contestation of the emerging reproductive regime and loomed large in the discussion of other reproductive policies.

The discussion turned on how to respond to the fetal burial law. An entwined struggle of subjecthood and subjectivity played out against the alliance of politics and church. Both Viola, of *resistenti*, and Daniela argued that a broad perspective on the issue was required. Viola called for a response that would "hold the threads together" of this moral project and that would include reasserting the subjecthood and citizenship of women vis-à-vis the embryo. Seeing the fetal burial law as linked to the assertion of the subjecthood of the embryo, Viola warned: "we have to reflect because the moment the embryo becomes a subject they can also impose a thought that is not yours. You impose your thinking on me because it would never occur to me." This thought was in fact a "theological vision, a sanction of a second-class citizenship." Viola's focus was on the different facets of the Vatican's "immense project" to define and impose "the natural" across reproduction and family-making. Viola called for the fetal burial protest, which would deny the embryo its sacredness and put it back in its place, as it were, with other bodily function. Daniela argued for a return to a movement that raised awareness and worked at the level of subjectivities because "subjects mobilize starting with themselves." The question remained "how to make this important to a large number of people" and not just to the usual suspects. She called for keeping the focus on "the territory," on protecting public reproductive health services from the privatization that was opening them up to Catholics. She also emphasized the need for narrative, for continuing to "talk about

ourselves, sex, school, relationships with guys" with young women. Otherwise, she cautioned, "Ratzinger constructs us from within." She asked: "what changes in our heads" through these continued assertions of the embryo's subjecthood," especially "if the subject in cause does not experience herself as a political subject"?

However, looking for a way against and out of these politics was not straightforward. Franca, who dismissed the sanitary pad protest as "dealing with the effect but not the cause," was also critical of one of the most common oppositional discourses, including among feminists, which rested on appeals to *laicità*, the term for "secularism" in Italy. She argued that these calls for *laicità* were not, in fact, truly oppositional, but rather constituted a misuse of a term that in the Middle Ages described the non-ordained faithful. Even the language of resistance seemed to not provide a way out of the reach of the Catholic Church on Italian society, just as there was no out in the "choices" of the fetal burial form.

The conversation continued in the street after we closed the clinic and headed toward the *Usciamo dal silenzio* meeting. Glistening from a light rain, the streets and sidewalks reflected the lights of downtown Milan. I felt lighter leaving the stuffy air of the *consultorio* where I had been since early in the afternoon, and invigorated by being out in the fresh air, walking across the piazza del Duomo. I enjoyed the feeling of belonging to this group of engaged women trying to articulate a complex and reflexive political perspective to the politics of the embryo. I soaked in the beauty of the Duomo Cathedral, its ornate marble façade illuminated in the darkness. This very cathedral was occupied in January 1976 by a feminist group who sought to protest the Church's position on abortion (Cirant 2005: 175). I have loved this building since I was a young child and the

contradictions of this simultaneous aesthetic appreciation of the cathedral and enjoyment in being part of a group of reproductive activists struck me as part of the complexity of Italian society.

It was almost 9pm as we made our way to the headquarters of Italy's biggest union, the CGIL, for the *Uds* meeting. I knew from experience that the meeting would go on for at least two hours. Often I did not get home from these meetings until after midnight. I wondered how the women who attended these meetings, all of whom had day jobs and some of whom had families, maintained this level of engagement. Daniela was always overbooked, with her work, her writings, the many roundtable discussions in which she participated, not to mention the organizing of *Donne, Diritti, Salute* and other projects. As we walked down *corso* Italia I asked her how she managed to maintain such a high level of activism. She laughed and replied that she felt like she had no other choice: "I feel like I'm living under a *cappa oppressiva*," an "oppressive pall;" the only way to survive under its weight was to fight it. However, Daniela added, she would soon have to pull down the *saracinesca*, the metal security door used to lock up businesses a night, in order to catch her breath.

We arrived at the *Casa del Lavoro* and we climbed the wide flight of steps toward its entrance. Groups of women were lingering on the steps, engaged in animated conversations, and smoking. A few participants of the *Donne, Diritti, Salute* group peeled off to greet friends. I followed Daniela to a large auditorium, much larger and more modern than the basement conference room used for other *Usciamo dal silenzio* meetings I had attended. The auditorium was crowded. At least 100 women and a handful of men filled the seats or mingled in the aisles. More kept streaming in long after the discussion had started.

The room was abuzz in conversation. As I was settling in my seat a woman I'd never met before leaned towards me. A mournful look on her face, she declared: "things haven't been this bad since the 1970s." A similar comment was made by Cristina, the introductory speaker from Union's press office and one of the organizers of *Usciamo dal Silenzio*. Cristina described the fetal burial law as part of "the violence of the clerical attack by the right, which is really cohesive. I don't think I've ever seen the clerical hierarchies so lined up… not even in the 1970s [was there] such oppression."[77] These comments speak to the fact that in many ways Italian feminists had been caught off guard by the intensity and success of the Catholic right, especially in matters of reproduction. With the failure of the referenda to repeal divorce and abortion, the Vatican's political influence had seemed on the wane and the Church increasingly irrelevant.

The introductory speeches weaved together the fetal burial law, reproductive rights, and the battle over the civil union legislation. A legal scholar asked whether one can "call a closed option a choice… who has the freedom and the power to choose? Who has a right to exist? For the church, yes, [woman] is reproductive. For politics, we are becoming reproductive as far as the electoral body is concerned."[78] The organizers then invited the center-left councilors who had voted for the amendment to explain themselves and to discuss what could be done to remedy the situation. The debate centered on the nature of what had happened, countering the notion of some council members who had voted for the amendment that this was simply a technical matter. One of the councilors speaking to the group said that that while the norm may hold "symbolic power," in fact it was only a change in how people were informed, not in substance: "we simply confirmed a procedure

[77] Fieldnote, February 13, 2007.
[78] Fieldnote, February 13, 2007.

already in place." The audience, including the leaders of the movement, forcefully, and angrily, countered these arguments. Visibly frustrated they educated their representatives: "we are not dealing with a technicality" all one has to do is read "the propaganda in the newspapers from Formigoni," the conservative Catholic governor of Lombardy, charged one of the organizers. With Formigoni speaking of the "dignity of the fetus" this was a question of "legal personhood," which had not only "a strong symbolic value, but also a practical one." What the council members had voted for was "a choice that is not a choice." Susanna Camusso, one of the main organizers of *Usciamo dal silenzio* and secretary general of the CGIL union in Lombardy,[79] countered "I am not convinced that politics can be differentiated into techniques and politics. I am not able to dissociate technique from politics. Formigoni has one object: the fetus as person." Her response was to "change the terrain of the struggle" to the political project that she was championing of women's political representation rather than continue to just play defense: "women as subjects of politics, it's a subject that doesn't exist anymore, a subject no longer a full-fledged subject, but an object of reproduction." Camusso argued that the left lacked

> a culture of the values that are in play today. The values of life, death, etcetera. These values are in the hands of the Church … These bourgeois values, conservative, family, *perbenismo* [respectability], [we have] contested them since the 1970s, they are still dangerous. … the battle on abortion and divorce, and now we're right back in it. We lack that big picture about which ideas of society we want to further. We need to re-launch the values on which we the left should be founded … and on which citizenship we live.

At the end of the meeting, an intercultural psychologist who provides pre-abortion counseling to migrant women stated that the fetal burial change "has a symbolic and real

[79] In November 2010 Camusso became the first woman elected to be the national secretary general of Italy's biggest labor, the CGIL. "Una donna volta pagina alla Cgil, il timone nelle mani della Camusso," *la Repubblica.it*, http://www.repubblica.it/economia/2010/11/01/news/camusso_cgil-8627262/.

impact on real lives and structures social relations in reproductive services. The embryo is a person because funerals are only given to persons. We have lost the courage to say that the embryo is not a person." Following the meeting, *Usciamo dal silenzio* produced a press release that charged:

> Once again, women, who are the bearers of life into the world, are pushed back into history, relegated to the reproductive role and, in those cases in which they decide to terminate a pregnancy according to the procedures provided for by law 194, they are associated with death through the rite of burial, which is in the public space, with an obviously punitive and guilt-inducing intent.

The Funeral for the Unfertilized Ovum

Viola and the collective she organized had not "lost the courage to say that the embryo was not a person" and they set out to publically contest the fetal burial amendment. The growing "imposition" of the embryo as subject was the catalyst. Participants wanted to challenge the idea that the embryo deserves a funeral and they envisioned a protest that would ridicule the very notion of the embryo's personhood not only by giving it an over-the top funeral, but also by anticipating the recognition of personhood even further to the unfertilized egg. The protest, while explicitly directed at the fetal burial amendment, also reminded of efforts by pro-life organizations over the previous decade to institute funerals and cemeteries, and even to erect monuments, to "the children who were never born" (Laurenzi 1991).

The first organizing meeting for the mock funeral protest took place in the headquarters of a women's cooperative on the ground floor of an apartment building in a hip area of downtown Milan.[80] When I joined the group I realized that despite attending *Donne, Diritti, Salute* and *Usciamo dal silenzio* meeting for a couple of months I didn't know anyone in the collective except for Viola. I sat next to her on the couch as she pulled up the document she was still editing, and which would become the flyer for the protest. In

[80] The following description is based on fieldnotes from February 25, 2007.

a haze of cigarette smoke Viola shared her design of the logo for the event, which cleverly morphed the regional clover-like logo of the region of Lombardy into a pad with wings; instead of reading "Region of Lombardy" the text by the logo had been changed into "Region of Sacristy"[81] to underscore the rising power of the Catholic Church in the regional government.

Viola read aloud a draft the flyer to be handed out at the protest. The flyer announced a "new requirement" issued by the health administration offices for the women of Lombardy, urging them to pick up "regulation sanitary pads for the collection of the unfertilized ovum." The pads would be blessed and buried; "transgressors will be persecuted and prosecuted according to inquisition law." Viola's text equated the Governor of Lombardy to a slave owner and the bodies of women in Lombardy with those of slaves: "during slavery, landowners would rape female slaves and those born of those rapes were considered property of the slave-owners. Today, in the year of the lord 2007, the feudal lord of the Region of Sacristy considers himself owner of aborted fetuses on his territory and enforces that they be considered as already-born." The flyer called on women to fight back against this form of slavery, which it defined as

> not only a clear criminalization of abortion—already made difficult by the increasing presence of conscientious objectors in the hospitals of the Region of Sacristy—but also of the imposition on all women of the religious conviction of Governor Formigoni. We don't intend to tolerate this climate worthy of a theocratic regime any longer.

To resist this imposition, Viola's flyer called on participants to gather at the central headquarters of the ASL, the health administration offices in Milan to turn in "our used pads so that they be buried 'with dignity.'" All women are invited "to participate, dressed for mourning, and to bring their used pads (and condoms) to be turned in to the *feti*shists [a

[81] "Regione Lombardia" changed into "Regione Sacrestia"

play on words on the Italian "*feti"*(fetuses) and the word "fetiscisti" (fetishists)] of the Region of Sacristy."

The women of the collective liked the flyer. Some, however, expressed reservations about having to save their pads for a couple of weeks ("I live in a small apartment, my dog will get into them!" worried one participant). The idea, however, was appealing to some, such as a university student who thought that it would be like a "stink bomb," a bomb made of menstrual blood, maybe even one that included a spring so that it would pop up. Other participants found the thought of saving up their pads for the month or so until the protest disgusting and inconvenient. Ideas bounced around, until the main concept was decided: a mock funeral procession for the unfertilized egg, symbolized by a large bloody menstrual pad. A discussion ensued as to whether to include men, and it was finally agreed that they should march in the back.[82]

The decision that men should march separately from and behind women cost the group the participation of younger women involved in a Milanese *centro sociale* (social center) started by students in an abandoned theater at the periphery of Milan. One of the members of the center participated in the cultural mediation training group I audited. I also met other members who came to interview Nilde at the *consultorio* about her history of political activism in the Resistance and in women's issues. These young politically engaged activists had no patience for what they saw as a dogmatic, separatist, and old-style feminism. They organized their own, much larger protest for the morning of Women's Day. Thousands of students and members of political collectives participated calling in their speeches, through a functioning loudspeaker, for self-determination in matters of sexuality, bemoaning the high rates of conscientious objection, calling the fetal burial law "shameful,"

[82] Fieldnote, February 28, 2007.

and criticizing the moral politics of the Church as medieval.[83] These activists did not participate in the more institutional and older political activism of *Usciamo dal silenzio* and even of *Donne, Diritti, Salute* (one group was, however, interested in the previous generation of feminists, coming to interview Nilde about her history in the resistance and in the feminist movement). At that protest, the moral politics of life and the family came under attack in the speeches of members of a social center, a political collective, and of students. Their demands were for individual rights and self-determination for all. Topping the van at the front of the protest was a priestly figure covered in a giant condom.

Despite the mock funeral protest and other, more institutional, forms of political and legal resistance, the regulation on fetal burial was not overturned. In June, months after its initial discussions, the issue reemerged as a topic of discussion at the *Donne, Diritti, Salute* meetings. *Donne, Diritti, Salute* did research through contacts in health services about whether and how the law was being implemented, finding that there were no real guidelines, that products of conception were being thrown down the drain. Carolina reported that "they are accumulating in all the hospitals." My fieldnotes from these meetings document the gruesome discussions of three-dimensional unborn biological "waste" bundled up with severed legs and other human waste to be "dismantled" and incinerated, and of embryos being disposed of with bandages.[84] This "macabre" regulation and discussion, as Franca described it, reflected the intent of the amendment to closely associate abortion with the death and dismemberment of already-born human bodies. Lynn Morgan's research on the constitution of the status of fetuses and embryos and on their disposal (2002, 2009).

---

[83] Digital recording, student march, March 8, 2007.
[84] Fieldnote, June 18, 2007.

Pressure from women's groups and the libertarian *Partito Radicale* brought an important change: rather than having to fill out a form of "informed consent" about burial options, the information would be hanging on a bulletin board in hospital foyers. While this was an improvement, Daniela said "the problem was, it's not enough for us that they hang it on the bulletin board." Michela, a young woman who rarely participated in the meetings, jumped in "they need to eliminate this rule, throw away this nastiness." The struggle was to return to a situation in which women could ask but it would not be imposed upon them. Franca agreed that the goal should be to go back to the time when the burial code didn't "impose the fetus on you," but the center-left opposition in the Regional Council lacked the votes.[85]

Participants had heard through their contacts in the hospitals that there were still instances when women were confronted with this question. Carolina reported the story of a migrant woman she assisted in her role as a cultural mediator who had been faced with the question of whether to undertake the burial of the fetus after an abortion, only to find out that there was a 50 euro fee that she could not afford. In response, Daniela wrote an op-ed for the Communist paper *Liberazione* in the voice of the migrant woman. The pressure from *Donne, Diritti, Salute, Usciamo dal silenzio*, and the *Partito Radicale* finally extracted a promise that the less invasive application of the law would be implemented and verified and that women would not have to fill out individual forms regarding fetal burial. The combined efforts of different networks and groups active in reproductive rights issues had successfully pushed back against this policy, in the process revealing the diversity and fractures of the movement. The "us" in feminism that Daniela sought to recuperate remained elusive. The Region's political strategy of undermining reproductive rights,

[85] Fieldnote June 18, 2007.

meanwhile, continued to intervene in social and health services. In 2008, the Regional Council of Lombardy approved legislation that requires social service providers to protect motherhood and unborn life from the moment of conception (Regione Lombardia 2008).

Embryo Subjects of the Post-Welfare State

The governing and disciplining of reproduction in Italy is an important dimension of an emerging moralized neoliberal governmentality. The politics of reproduction are particularly suited to and effective at moralizing and legitimizing political change, as anthropologists Susan Gal and Gail Kligman (2000) have argued with reference to the post-socialist context. Analysis of the politics of reproduction should encompass understanding of how policy shapes and affects reproductive matters, but also "how the political process itself is shaped through the discussion and control of reproduction" (Gal and Kligman 2000:17). In Italy, the politics of reproduction and family-making represent an important terrain over which the role of the State is being renegotiated and redefined, and its retreat from other areas of welfare responsibility legitimated. The disciplining of assisted reproduction, abortion, and even contraception, enables the State to assert responsibility for the welfare of the unborn at the same time that it devolves the provision of welfare to civil society, the private sector, and ultimately families.

One of the terms on which the embryo's rights are asserted that resonates across the Catholic/leftist and feminist divide concerns the need for the state to safeguard assisted reproduction and the gametes and fertilized eggs and embryos that it makes available, from commodification and the market. The State's intervention to protect the embryo and recognize its rights, defines the realm of reproduction and "life" as a moral exception to the logics of deregulation just as health care and other welfare protections are in the process of

being deregulated. The extension of the state's protection of the "precarious" embryo, the inclusion of the embryo as "one of us," legitimates neoliberal policies of deregulation that expose the already-born to the market.

The politics of reproduction and "life" in contemporary Italy are emerging in the context of a broader political project reshaping the role of the State through the moralization of society and the family. In this new social model of active citizenship and civil society, social cohesion is reframed to be a result of cultural, social, and ultimately moral interventions rather than economic and political justice. With the emergence of the embryo-subject, women's reproductive choices are qualified and restricted in the name of the rights of the embryo at a time when women's reproduction is already the object of intense expert and moral scrutiny because of anxieties over low fertility rates.

Transformations in the social contract reconfigure the relationship between citizens and the state and the status and rights of subjects (Gal and Kligman 2000; Holc 2004; Turner 2001). Women's subjecthood is already qualified under liberalism because of women's reproductive roles (McLaren 2002: 74-46; Ruhl 2002). As the unborn as a competing subject gains ground through medical and political technologies, women's rights transfer to the embryo and the fetus. Yet, the notion that the fetus is a right-bearing subject makes no sense from a liberal perspective because "in liberal theory, rights are irretrievably tied with obligations" (Ruhl 2002: 39). Since the unborn subject cannot possibly be considered to fulfill any obligations of subjecthood and citizenship,

> what we witness in this description of pregnancy is not two liberal subjects in one body, but rather *one* liberal subject in two bodies. The pregnant woman has all of the obligations of a 'normal' or typical subject but none of the rights. The fetus, on the other hand, has all of the rights of a typical liberal subject but none of the obligations. A strange situation indeed (Ruhl 2002: 39).

Women's compromised role as a liberal subject holds powerful implications for reproductive politics because "the law, the institution most likely to be called upon to defend (or curtail) this freedom, is based on liberal principles" (2002: 38). Italian feminists have argued against looking to the state for women's liberation for over three decades because of these and other contradictions. However, confronted with a steady erosion of rights guided by the politics of the Catholic Church, feminists today find themselves defending an abortion law that represents a compromise that many had criticized three decades prior. In addition, some feminists who had seen engagement with the law as inherently self-defeating for women, had changed their minds in the face of the biopolitics at play in the new millennium.

The granting to the unborn of rights without obligations makes sense in the moral neoliberal context where its status as "the weakest subject" marks it as uniquely deserving of state protection and welfare. A new welfare model that calls upon Italian citizens to make themselves into autonomous "active citizens" is moralized through appeals to the "respect for life" and to the "family" (Ministero del Lavoro, della Salute e delle Politiche Sociali 2008). The unborn, cast as the "weakest subject" and even "the foremost among the *precari*" (Schoepflin 2012), represents the "ideal citizen" that a neoliberal state can afford to recognize—apolitical, non-racialized, non-gendered, appropriately dependent.[86] The embryo as an "icon of life" (Morgan 2009) in need of protection from doctors, women, and the market is well-suited to moralize new logics of welfare and new configurations of social citizenship.

[86] See Holc 2005 for a similar argument on the politics of unborn citizenship in Poland.

Conclusion

This chapter traced the rise of the embryo through policies and discourses that have asserted its subjecthood and personhood, and examined the terms by which this assertion has been contested by feminist groups in a region of Italy closely associated with conservative Catholic politics. Feminist responses to the emerging politics of reproduction in Italy attempt to "hold together" various dimensions of the moral politics of reproduction in contemporary Italy even as they struggle to find a unified response. Despite differences in strategies and politics, however, Milanese feminist groups were at their most unified and galvanized when reproductive rights were put into question by a further recognition of the personhood or subjecthood of the embryo. The awarding of subjecthood to the embryo in the first article of the 2004 ART law remained a highly contested issue across the movement that managed to bring together, at least temporarily, various feminist groups and convinced many feminists, including those whose activism goes back to the 1970s, that engagement with politics is vital. While the fetal burial amendment had once again underscored the power of policies, no matter how obscure, to create or negate personhood, subjecthood, and citizenship, *Donne, Diritti, Salute* seemed alone in its focus on regional health care policy as an important means through which reproductive rights were regulated. The struggle against more and less visible erosions of reproductive services ultimately centered around the reassertion of women as subjects, an assertion made harder to negotiate in the midst of the reconfiguration of the relationship between citizens and the post-welfare state.

CHAPTER 4

"THE FAMILY GROWS, ITALY GROWS": THE "CULTURAL LEAP" TO THE POLITICAL STAGE

> Experience teaches us that the family is the solid base upon which all of society rests.
>
> Pope Benedict XVI, 2008[1]

> It's time to think in terms of the family
>
> Rosy Bindi, National Conference on the Family, May 2007

Introduction

In May of 2007, Prime Minister Romano Prodi participated in a Q&A session at the First National Conference on the Family. After sitting through two days of political speeches and scholarly panels, I still watched with the excitement of a political junky as the Prime Minister took the stage. Ten families were invited to pose a question to the Prime Minister. The first question went to the Vivarelli, a family with six children. After enumerating their struggles and declaring the family's faith in god, Giovanna Vivarelli asked whether the Prodi government would address the problem of high utility costs for large families.[2] Prodi assured the couple the issue was of concern to him and proceed to outline his center-left coalition's approach to family policy. He highlighted efforts to increase incomes and referred to the government's budget, which set aside €3 billion to support family policies. However, he also acknowledged that these efforts

---

[1] "L'esperienza insegna che la famiglia è lo zoccolo solido sul quale poggia l'intera società" *la Repubblica.it*, "Il Papa a Lourdes: 'I vescovi accettino la messa in latino,'" September 15, 2008, http://www.repubblica.it/2008/07/sezioni/esteri/benedetto-xvi-23/lourdes-14set/lourdes-14set.html

[2] Large families are penalized by an energy saving incentive that increases the price of energy beyond a certain threshold of consumption.

"are not sufficient, obviously. But, finally, they are the beginning of the inversion of the previous course." Prime Minister Prodi then turned reflective, asking the audience to allow him to draw upon his personal "family experience":

> It's something that my father used to say many, many years ago. I am the eighth of nine children and he, I remember it very well, used to say: "except for the newspaper, all the expenses of a *famiglia numerosa* (large family) multiply." Very simple, no? It was something of extreme simplicity. Then he would bury himself in the newspaper, no? Finally, the problem of the family has blown up. But still I don't forget that 26-27 years ago there were still the titles in the newspapers: "Italians … like rabbits" and the youth doesn't know this. This is what they used to say in Italy. There is then the problem that breaking out of this has not been a simple problem. Now there is finally an opening of this kind, also because the birth rate has declined to almost the lowest levels in the world. Only in Russia and in other countries, and Japan, barely, barely, barely, but certainly we are at very low levels. It's clear, then, that finally, a discourse on [inaudible] etcetera also coincides with the national interest. I say finally because now there is more ease, more possibility, there is more push … to make the decisions that we need.[3]

Prodi's personal anecdote captures key elements of the contradictory politics and discourse on the family in Italy: The "problem of the family" has "not been a simple problem" to assert. Even in the context of a new legitimacy buttressed by a decade-long discourse on Italy's demographic problems (see Krause 2001, 2006), family politics remain a delicate subject. I was reminded of this as I noticed some discrepancies between my recording of Prodi's off-the-cuff, personal remarks on the Italian family and the official transcript published as part of the conference proceedings. Most of the differences can be attributed to the polishing of spoken speech into a more coherent text. However, one significant disparity stood out. The official transcript does not include Prodi's comment that, "finally, a discourse on …. also coincidences with national the national interest." That this part of his talk would be omitted, despite it

[3] Prodi's quote is drawn from digital recording by the author and official conference proceedings by the Dipartimento per le Politiche della Famiglia 2007.

being immediately reported in the media,[4] is unlikely to be an oversight. The elision of the national reference suggests that while the family has gained legitimacy as an object of political intervention, this is a delicate legitimacy that depends, in part, on its distance from any nationalist echoes of fascist policies.

What do the politics of the family reveal about emerging citizenship projects in Italy, and by implication, in the Eurozone? In this chapter, I examine policies and discourses that make possible this "cultural leap" of the heteronormative family to the center of the political stage and the struggles of those opposed to it to articulate alternatives. The terms of a new social contract are so tightly coupled to the reassertion of the family that even feminist actors historically opposed to the moral project of the family and to neoliberalism struggle to find the terms to articulate their positions.

A convergence of factors, including demographic anxiety, the dismantling of the social safety net, and the resurgence of Catholic influence on social issues in Italy, all contribute to the family "blowing up" onto the political stage. In this chapter I trace this coalescing of a confident, explicit, and legitimized message on the family's social role. As the family's political role solidifies, so do its heteronormative boundaries. I draw on ethnographic research with feminist groups in Milan to examine counter-discourses and projects critical of moral familism. The struggle of women engaged in feminist politics against reproductive and family politics reminds that, while increasingly mainstream, the moral discourse on the traditional family is contested in Italian society. It also reveals the difficulty in articulating an alternative vision of the social and its welfare as

[4] See for example: "Prodi alla Conferenza della Famiglia. Tesoretto per anziani e nuclei numerosi," which opens with: "Today the family coincides with the national interest" http://www.repubblica.it/2007/05/sezioni/politica/coppie-fatto-9/famiglia-firenze/famiglia-firenze.html, *la Repubblica.it*, May 26, 2007.

the language of social solidarity, cohesion, reciprocity and affect has become entangled with the moral economy of welfare in neoliberal times (see also Muehlebach 2009, 2012). Finally, I conclude by examining the "National Plan for the Family," an expert proposal on family policies approved by the Italian government in 2012. In calling for a "citizenship of the family," the program confirms the heterosexual, married, and reproductive family as the centerpiece of the new welfare model and underscores the implications of the moral remaking of the terms of the social contract and of citizenship.

Neoliberalism and Moral Familism

Yesterday's stigma of *famiglie numerose*, of Italians reproducing like out-of-control rabbits, contrasts with today's hand-wringing over *figli unici* (only children) and with the pervasiveness of discourses and policies aimed at encouraging reproduction. What is considered rational, responsible family-making might have reversed from the time when Italians were considered too fertile, but the centrality of reproductive and family-making practices to Italian identity, politics, and, increasingly, social citizenship, endures. For decades, a number of obstacles prevented explicit government interventions in family-making. The memory of fascist pronatalist policies (Krause 2001, 2006; Horn 1994), the lingering stigma attached to "excessive" reproduction and backward familism (Krause 2006) indexed by Prodi, and the first Republic's political and cultural Catholic-Communist divide (Kertzer 1980; Ginsborg 2003; Shore 1990), all contributed to delimiting explicit family politics in Italy. As recently as the 1990s, demographic concerns were still politically dangerous territory making possible only a discursive "sneaky pronatalism" (Krause 2001). In retrospect, this sneaky pronatalism paved the way for increasingly more explicit interventions beginning in the early 2000s

(Krause and Marchesi 2007). Since then, as Prime Minister Prodi so vividly proclaimed, "the problem of the family" has "finally" "blown up" onto the political stage. The Prime Minister's personal anecdote on the family and its reproduction lays bare the legitimacy that demographic alarmism today affords pronatalist and profamily politics and the way it has reversed previous framings. The remaking of the social state, in turn, opens up new possibilities for interventions in the family in the name of supporting the costs of reproduction.

The entwined nature of the new politics of the family and the emergence of a new welfare model is evident in the way another pathologizing discourse concerning the Italian family is giving way. For decades a negative association has adhered to the Italian family, popularized by the influential work of Edward Banfield's 1958 *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society.* Banfield coined the term "amoral familism" to describe the family-oriented social strategies of southern Italian villagers, which he characterized as incompatible with civil society and thus democracy.[5] The term has stuck in Italy, where it is not an uncommon reference in discussions of the "problem" of the Italian family and of Italian society.[6] Through the first decade of the new millennium, Italians' family-making practices continued to be lamented by experts. Italian demographers warned in increasingly alarmist tones of the upcoming crisis of pension and of the disappearance of Italians (Krause 2001; 2006). Even in the context

[5] See Sydel Silverman 1968 article "Agricultural Organization, Social Structure, and Values in Italy: Amoral Familism Reconsidered" for a critique of Banfield's thesis that inverts the causality of his argument. Silverman argues that the strategies described by Banfield are a result rather than the cause of the economic, political and social conditions he describes. Silverman argues that explanations should focus on the region's agricultural system rather than family structures.

[6] See, for example, a *New York Times* Op-Ed, translated from the original Italian, titled "How Italy is Adjusting," on the response of Italians to the economic crisis: "As so often happens in Italy, anxiety manifests itself in individualistic survival strategies. People turn away from government and broader society, fall back on family and clan loyalties and the informal sector. Sociologists call the result "amoral familism," a term Edward C. Banfield coined in the 1950s" (Rastello and Parola 2011).

of low fertility, the "problem" of "too much family" rather than too little has come under scrutiny. The relatively late departure of children from the family home (see Santarelli and Cottone 2009) has been blamed as a cause of Italy's low birth rates (Livi Bacci 2001). Demographer Massimo Livi Bacci has diagnosed this pathology of the Italian family as "*la sindrome del ritardo"* or "postponement syndrome" (Livi Bacci 2001:147, see also Sgritta 2003:65 cited in Krause and Marchesi 2007). The phenomenon of the *mammoni,* adult children who linger at home well into adulthood, was cause for international derision in the early 2000s.[7] In the fall of 2007, in the context of presenting the center-left Prodi government's budget, then Minister of the Economy Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa spoke dismissively of young Italians as *bamboccioni*, overgrown and spoiled children. The Minister declared that in introducing rental subsidies for young adults "we are sending the *bamboccioni* out of the house. … We provide an incentive to leave the home for young adults who stay with their parents, do not get married, and do not become autonomous. It's an important idea."[8] Even the residential proximity between parents and adult children who moved out of the parental home has been identified as indicative of "too much family" and the unwillingness of Italian youth to be flexible workers.

An inversion in this discourse seems in the works in the face of economic crisis and of a welfare model increasingly oriented toward and dependent upon the family. The problem of "too much family" represents a solution to Italy's welfare problems, a

---

[7] See for example, articles by the Guardian: 'Why Italy's mamma's boys can't cut the ties,' January 20, 2010, http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2010/jan/20/italys-mamma-boys-cant-cut-ties, the BBC: 'Italians 'slow to leave the nest,' February 1, 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4227675.stm, and the CBS 60 minutes segment on '*mammoni*' that aired in March 2001 (I am grateful to Elizabeth Krause for this reference).

[8] "Mandiamo i bamboccioni fuori casa. Padoa Schioppa: con la Finanziaria misure che consentiranno ai giovani di affrancarsi dai genitori. October 4, 2007, http://www.corriere.it/politica/07_ottobre_04/padoa_bamboccioni.shtml

way to maintain social cohesion. Recent family policy proposals identify kinship ties as a resource to be supported as opposed to a "pathology" to be cured (Ministero del Lavoro, della Salute, e delle Politiche Sociali 2009; Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri 2012). A 2012 statistical survey, titled *Crisis*: *Living Together, Living Better* (*Crisi: Vivere insieme, vivere meglio),*[9] shows that one third of Italians live with their mother, while over 40% live no more than 30 minutes' distance by foot. This is not a new finding; what is new is the positive interpretation. In reflecting on the study's findings, the president of the study's sponsor, the agricultural association *Coldiretti,* notes that

> often, the structure of the Italian family in general, and of the rural one in particular, is considered outdated while in fact it has proven itself fundamental to keeping many citizens from plunging into the difficulty of the crisis… the solidarity among the generations upon which is based the family enterprise is a winning model for living and being well together, and not a sign of social and cultural backwardness as many insist on arguing.[10]

Sociological and demographic experts advising policy-makers now advocate supporting the proximity of family members. The *National Plan for the Family*, discussed below, calls for housing incentives that support "growing" and extended families, and the residential closeness of adult children and their elderly parents (Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri 2012: 10). Catholic sociologists and politicians argue that the time has come for a citizenship of the family in which the state "finally" recognizes citizens not simply as individuals but as belonging in meaningful affective

---

[9] The survey was run conjunctively by *Censis* (Centro Studi Investimenti Sociali, Center for the Study of Social Investment), a research institute focused on socio-economic issues, and *Coldiretti* (Confederazione Nazionale Coltivatori Diretti, National Confederation of Direct Cultivators), a Catholic association representing Italian farmers, http://www2.coldiretti.it/News/Pagine/731---19-Settembre-2012.aspx.

[10] The official summary of the survey's finding attributes these changes to two factors: economic crisis and the emergence of a new welfare in which the family is the primary subject "that operates as provider of services and safeguards for its members who need it." http://www2.coldiretti.it/News/Pagine/731---19-Settembre-2012.aspx.

and social relationships (Donati 2007; Belardinelli 2005). Central to this moral order is the emergence of *homo relationalis* alongside *homo oeconomicus* (Muehlebach 2009: 502). This value-oriented approach, which is not limited to Italy but is a feature of a new articulation of neoliberalism in the post-Washington consensus moment, recognizes social relations as an important component of the engine of social capital. The emphasis on values and social relationships "finds particular expressions in Italy," argues Muehlebach, at "the intersections of the EU's Third Wayism[11]with post-Washington consensus economic theory" and with a discourse on society "as a social panacea … rendered in highly moralized registers that spring directly from the country's Catholic and communist tradition" (2009: 503). As a result, the "Italian neoliberal welfare society" is not driven "by mere utilitarian calculation and instrumentality but by compassion and solidarity, not by mere market logics but by moral logics. This neoliberalism entails a model of man not only as *homo oeconomicus* but as *homo relationalis*. The market neo-liberal, in other words, is accompanied by what one might call a moral neoliberal" (2009: 499). The language of solidarity that characterizes neoliberal welfare in Italy appeals to both left and right, enabling the "suturing of incommensurables" into "a single moral order" (Muehlebach 2009: 499, 495). Progressives in Italy participate in this suturing of the rips in the safety net of the social state while interpreting their actions as oppositional. According to Muehlebach, they engage in a kind of forced "ventriloquism" of moral neoliberal solidarity, which has appropriated the values and language of solidarity of the left.

[11] Most notably enshrined in the 2000 Lisbon Strategy, which calls for "developing an active and dynamic welfare state." Presidency Conclusions. Lisbon European Council 23 and 24 March 2000, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/00100-r1.en0.htm.

However, as I show in this chapter, Italian moral neoliberalism is not simply centered on broad notion of *homo relationalis*. An emerging neoliberal welfare model in Italy explicitly identifies the heteronormative, reproductive family as the natural and ineludible generator of solidarity and social cohesion. Here I depart from Muehlebach's argument, which sees the discourse on the family as rhetorical, "a register." The family, according to Muehlebach, is residual in the neoliberal welfare, a waning institution that needs to be harnessed into the private third sector (2007: 507). This represents "a core aim of the welfare society—to redistribute affect away from dwindling forms of familial care toward the nonprofit and voluntary sector and thus to privatize the private sphere, as it were" (Muehlbach 2007: 507). In so doing it performs a "magical trick" by making the new, privatized welfare model "seem inspired and grounded in anticapitalist logics" (2009: 507). I show in this chapter that the family's role in legitimizing the moral neoliberalization of care cannot be so quickly dismissed. While it is true that the work the family performs in moralizing neoliberalism is discursive and that in reality the family as measured by the statistics of marriage, divorce, and single-person families seems on its way out.[12] However, kinship ties in Italy remain close (Santarelli and Cottone 2009). In the time of economic crisis, the Italian family's role as "social shock-absorber" becomes all the more significant.

Additionally, when the context of demographic alarmism and of Catholic resurgence in matters of reproduction and the family are considered, the role of the family in the remaking of the social contract emerges as anything but residual. Asserted as the ultimate model and source of social reproduction, solidarity and cohesion, and as

[12] See the statistics on the family elaborated by the Italian Statistical Institute, Istat, for Italy's 150th celebrations "L'Italia in 150 anni. Sommario di statistiche storiche 1861-2010." Chapter 3, "Families." http://www3.istat.it/dati/catalogo/20120118_00/cap_3.pdf.

I show in chapter 6, even of Italian identity, the family is central both discursively and materially to the Italian moral neoliberalism that Muehlebach describes.

Concerns with fostering social cohesion and social solidarity, which gain traction at the turn of the new millennium in the midst of transformations of the social state, become problems to be addressed beginning with the family. The reframing of the subjects of social citizenship in relational terms in Italy is tied to the family as the basis of solidarity and welfare. This trend underscores the centrality of kinship and reproduction, and thus of gender and sexuality, to the profound transformations investing European states. The demographic convergence of low fertility rates and high immigration legitimizes the political focus on the family. A shrinking welfare state increasingly shifts its responsibilities onto the family at the same time as the family is discovered as the primary source of social cohesion.

The turn toward the family as a solution to the crisis of the welfare state is not limited to Italy. Despite widespread leftwing and feminist appeals to the European Union as a source of modernization and secularism for Italy, the Eurozone is also rediscovering families in the midst of demographic change and of transformations in the social state. Partnership with an emerging European Alliance for Families was announced by the Prodi government at the Conference on the Family.[13] Today, the European Economic and Social Committee "firmly supports the idea of making 2014 the European Year for Families."[14] In the UK, Prime Minister David Cameron places the family "right at the top of our agenda": "to those who say that government should

[13] http://www.familyplatform.eu/; http://ec.europa.eu/social/families/index.cfm. The European Alliance for Families describes itself as "the European Commission's official resource for family policy news, events and good practices from across Europe."
[14] "EESC opinion: Family policy and demographic change," http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.soc-opinions.14900.

forget about parenting and families and focus on the big, gritty issues, I'd say these are the big, gritty issues. Families don't just shape us as individuals, they make a stronger society. That's why supporting families is right at the top of our agenda – and I'm going to make sure it stays that way."[15] At stake in these discourses are questions about the relationship between individual rights and the terms of social citizenship, and ultimately ideas about the nature of society itself.

The "Family Grows, Italy Grows:" The First National Conference on the Family

Prime Minister Romano Prodi's off-the-cuff musings about his own large family-of-origin capped the three-day first Government Conference on the Family. For the first time since the fascist period, the family became an explicit and legitimate object of political attention. Nearly the entire cabinet participated along with the Prime Minister in an institutional display that at once acknowledged the family's new-found legitimacy as a political subject and legitimized the urgency and importance of governing the family. The conference arrived on the heels of a hot spring of contested politics on reproduction and the family: the fetal burial amendment in Lombardy, a legislative proposal granting some recognition to civil unions, and, only two weeks prior to the opening of the conference, the hugely successful *Family Day* protest organized by conservative Catholic politicians and associations, with support from the Vatican, in response to the civil union proposal.

By the time official ceremonies marked the opening of the Conference on the Family its organizer, Minister of Family Policies Rosy Bindi, had for months been the target of an intense backlash from the Catholic right. More recently, she had come

[15] "Parenting lessons: this is not the nanny state, says David Cameron," *The Guardian,* http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2012/may/18/parenting-lessons-not-nanny-state-david-cameron?INTCMP=ILCNETTXT3487, May 18, 2012.

under attack from the left as well. Bindi's involvement as co-author of a proposal to recognize civil unions had set off the hostility of the *teocons,* a term used to refer to conservative Catholic politicians.[16] Despite her Catholic *bona fide* being well-established—she is widely referred to as "a lay nun" and an urban legend has it that she lives in a monastery in Rome[17]—the civil union proposal was treated by Catholic politicians and by the Vatican as a direct attack on the "traditional family." The Minister reacted to the backlash by continuously reassuring that civil unions were not the same as marriage, that the "natural family" is founded on marriage, and, eventually, by very publically stating her exclusion of associations representing gay and lesbian families from the Conference on the Family.[18] In an interview with a Catholic newspaper she made public her response to gay rights organizations that had requested to participate in the conference: "I answered with serenity that I won't invite them because this is a Conference on the Family, the one that is founded on art. 29 [of the Italian Constitution], founded on marriage."[19]

In protest, the Minister for Solidarity, Paolo Ferrero, canceled his participation in the conference (Buzzanca 2007). Prominent scholarly figures who had been scheduled to participate, including two of Italy's prominent leftist sociologists of the

---

[16] The term, widely used in media coverage of "ethical issues" such as assisted reproduction to refer to the Catholic Church friendly positions of conservative Catholic politicians, is, according to the Italian dictionary *Treccani*, derived from the English "theocon" (see, "teocon," *Treccani.it L'Enciclopedia italiana,* http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/tag/teocon/). The term finds its opposite in "*teodem,"* a term used to describe politicians, such as Minister Bindi, who take conservative Catholic ethical positions, despite being in the center-left (see, "teodem," *Treccani.it L'Enciclopedia italiana, http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/teodem/*).

[17] "La Bindi sul ring: io, il sesso, i gay combatto e nessuno mi rottamerà," *Repubblica.it*, July 21, 2012, http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2012/07/21/news/bindi_nozze_gay-39440585/?ref=HREC1-4.

[18] One exception was an association representing the parents of gay children (Agedo, *Associazione Genitori di Omosessuali*). A film made by the association that celebrated the parents' acceptance and support of their children's sexual orientation was shown at the Conference on the Family.

[19] "Famiglia, l'esclusione dei gay spacca il governo, *Repubblica.it*, "http://www.repubblica.it/2007/03/sezioni/politica/coppie-di-fatto-7/ferrero-firenze/ferrero-firenze.html

family, Chiara Saraceno and Marzio Barbagli, withdrew their participation in protest. Barbagli and Saraceno said in interviews that they could not participate in a conference that explicitly excluded an entire group of people. Moreover, they disagreed with the government's definition of the family. Barbagli noted that "for a sociologist, the family is not that which is defined by law. There are no clear distinctions between what is and isn't a family. Any time there are ties of solidarity among people, whether they be of the same sex or not, and independently of their numbers, it's a family."[20] In a revelation that underscores the exclusionary and intensifying politics of the family in Italy Barbagli also added: "I was thrown out as director of the *Osservatorio sulla famiglia* (Family Observatory) by the center-right government's Minister of Welfare, Maroni. And with me was excluded Chiara Saraceno. The reason: we focused on 'irregular families.'"[21] The decision to publicly exclude "unnatural" families—family forms other than the "natural family" recognized by the Constitution—from representation in this institutional setting caused significant controversy. The exclusion of unmarried and same-sex families from the National Conference on the Family dogged the conference proceedings through high-profile desertions, protest speeches, and media coverage of the issue. A group of women who identified themselves as being involved in social services (*nel sociale)* worried about whether the conference was going to be a personal failure for Bindi because of all the desertions.[22] The National Conference on the Family

---

[20] Due relatori abbandonano la Bindi. http://www.radicalimilano.it/news/rassegna-stampa/item/3209-Corriere%20della%20Sera-%20«Errore%20escludere%20gli%20omosessuali».html

[21] Due relatori abbandonano la Bindi. http://www.radicalimilano.it/news/rassegna-stampa/item/3209-Corriere%20della%20Sera-%20«Errore%20escludere%20gli%20omosessuali».html.
The Observatory on the Family hired Catholic sociologists and demographers who support the politics of the family. The Observatory produced a set of policy proposals, discussed below, called "The National Plan for the Family," which were approved in 2012 by the Italian government.

[22] Fieldnote, May 24, 2007.

became an institutional stage on which played out some of the main themes, contradictions, and tensions of the politics of the family in Italy.

While these controversies make clear that the politics of the family in Italy are the object of political struggle, the conference stands as a prime example of the ascendance of the institutional legitimacy of family and pronatalist politics. This ascendance has been swift: the explicit nature of policies on the family and reproduction has intensified over the space of just a few years, the outcome of two decades of demographic alarmism over Italy's low fertility (Krause 2001). Just three years prior to the first National Conference on the Family Rosy Bindi had been involved in organizing a conference on the family for the *Margherita* Party, at the time in the opposition (Krause and Marchesi 2007). At that earlier conference in 2004, called "Let's Raise the Family!" the question of the family was treated gingerly; cautiousness and an ethos of inclusiveness seemed to predominate. Speakers did not attempt to define the family, referring to "families" instead (Krause and Marchesi 2007). In contrast, the public pronatalist and pro-family orientation of the 2007 National Conference on the Family marks a significant shift in Italian political discourse, which has since continued to move in the direction of explicitly privileging the heteronormative family in both symbolic and material ways. Ever more explicit assertions and definitions of what and who is family accompany its rise to the status of privileged political subject. A project that cloaks itself in the rhetoric of social solidarity and social cohesion is in fact increasingly built upon systematic exclusions.

The Conference

I arrived in Florence on the first day of the conference and hurriedly tried to find my way from the train station through throngs of tourists, dampened by unseasonably hot and muggy weather. It was a relief to arrive at the air-conditioned conference center. After going through a security check that included metal detectors, I checked in and was given a messenger bag emblazoned with the official logo and stocked with supportive materials. These included a booklet and CD of statistics on the family specifically elaborated for the conference by Italy's statistical institute, Istat, and a booklet based on an interview with Minister of Family Policies Rosy Bindi about her Catholic-informed positions on the family. I valued the conference messenger bag because of its precious research cargo. However, as soon as I would leave the Conference Center grounds I would find myself turn the bag so that the logo was facing inward. I was embarrassed to be identified as a participant lest people assumed that I identified with the exclusionary definition of the family that had come to mark the first National Conference on the Family. Other participants in the conference included representatives of associations working *nel sociale* (in the social), the constellation of third sector associations that provide social services in contemporary Italy, sociologists and demographers, local administrators and politicians. National politicians made an appearance over the three days of the conference.

In the conference messenger bag was also a picture book titled *La storia della famiglia in immagini* ("The History of the Family in Images"), which in its portrayal of a hundred years of Italian families evoked all the complexities of the politics of the family in Italy: the tensions between nostalgia and modernity, the gender roles that

undergirded the patriarchal family, the striking decline in numbers of children over the decades. The book is a portrait of the profound changes investing families in Italy, changes that simultaneously support the notion that the family is in crisis and in need of intervention and remind of its historical and social nature, contradicting arguments about its essential nature.

While evocative, the book and its images cannot capture the complexity of the history of kinship relationships and of the family in Italy. The term "family" encompasses a very different set of social relations today than it did 150 years ago. The first census of Italy's population, taken ten years after unification in 1861, used a broad definition of family that encompassed all who shared food together and warmed themselves around the "hearth," servants, guests, and roomers included.[23] The practice of sending children to wetnurses and the forced removal of illegitimate children from their mothers challenges romantic notions of natural and warm relationships among members of families past (Krause 2001, 2005; Kertzer 1993).

The stage of the conference main auditorium was framed by graphics of colorful, stylized figures symbolizing affective and care-taking relationships: two figures holding hands, one of them in a wheelchair, a heterosexual couple with their arms around each other, a grandfatherly figure with a cane walking with a child, a father carrying a young child on his shoulders, and a pregnant woman. The logo of the conference depicted a heterosexual family with two children and a third one on the way, and one of the most prominent figures was that of a pregnant woman in profile.. Above this "solidarity tableau," these same figures were projected on a large screen when the

[23] *L'Italia in 150 anni. Sommario di statistiche storiche 1861-2010*. Chapter 3, "Families." http://www3.istat.it/dati/catalogo/20120118_00/cap_3.pdf.

conference was not in session. These visual representations of solidarity as background for a conference on the family marked by the slogan "The Family Grows, Italy Grows," highlight the two main roles assigned to the family in contemporary Italy: to reproduce the nation biologically and to generate a more efficient social solidarity and welfare via personal relationships of care. The empowerment of the family toward these aims is a political project shared across the political spectrum.

The logo of the Conference on the Family is not statistically representative of the Italian family. In 2010, women in Italy had an average of 1.40 children (Istat 2010: 2). Only a tenth of Italian couples with children have three or more (De Luca 2010). The aim of the conference, however, was not representation but aspiration. By bringing together politicians and experts, Minister Bindi sought to identify effective policies that would make both the family and Italy "grow" into the larger family with three children that demographers identify as the way out of Italy's low fertility issues.

Framed by the pronatalist slogan "The Family Grows, Italy Grows," and the logo of the couple with (almost) three children, and by the large profile drawing of a pregnant woman on repeat on the screen, speakers began to assemble around the stage. They were aided by a number of young attractive women dressed in yellow, with matching hair bows. These assistants helped speakers settle, answered questions, and once the talks got started, brought them water. Even as the conference balanced its pronatalism and pro-familism with a narrative of progressive gender roles ("[we want] more fathers in the family and more mothers at work"[24]), the presence of these vestals in yellow was jarring, perhaps because it was an unwitting reminder of the gendered division of labor that still characterizes the Italian family; Mills et al. (2008), for

[24] http://www.nonprofitonline.it/default.asp?id=404&id_n=1352.

example, found that "Italy has a pronounced unequal division of household labour, with about 70 percent of women engaging in more than 75 percent of the household duties" (16; see also Istat 2011c: 5).[25]

The conference's opening ceremonies included a dramatic reading of "The Canticle of Canticles" by Amanda Sandrelli and Blas Boca Ray, two actors married to each other. Prior to beginning their reading, the couple made an unofficial personal statement about their support for the legitimacy of different kinds of families: Sandrelli, herself the daughter of two Italian celebrities, actress Stefania Sandrelli and singer Gino Pauli, declared: "We have been married for 13 years, and we did it at City Hall. His parents were married in Church, mine never married, but we are a family."[26] Her husband thanked Rosy Bindi for her "less than cautious invitation" of a "*coppia laica*" (a "secular couple") to open the conference. Their statement gave a public voice to the struggles over definition and recognition of the family that had come to mark the conference. Unlike those who had canceled their participation in protest of the exclusion of non-normative families, Sandrelli and Boca Ray appeared to have reconciled their role in the conference by taking the opportunity to publicly state their disagreement with the conference's exclusionary definition of the family. While their very statement suggests that public disagreement over these politics is possible, it also points to what such disagreement is struggling against. The very act of thanking Minister Bindi for her "daring" invitation of a "secular couple" reveals the degree to which the moral politics of the family have permeated the political discourse of a supposedly secular country.

---

[25] According to this Istat report, Italian women spend an average of 2 hours and 25 minutes more than men on housework, a disparity that holds across the life course (2011: 5).
[26] Fieldnote May 24, 2007.

In his keynote speech broadcast from Rome, Italian President Giorgio Napolitano spoke of the historical tensions between secular and Catholic positions on the family in Italy and called for compromise. A formerly Communist politician, the elderly Napolitano referenced the referendum on assisted reproduction as proof of Italians' desire to protect the family from intervention. At the same time, he also acknowledged the existence of "new families" (*famiglie nuove*), which he argued deserved recognition of their "rights and duties." On the one hand, he advocated a historical rather than essentialist reading of the Italian constitutional definition of the family "as a natural society based on marriage"; on the other, like Minister Bindi, he reaffirmed the uniqueness of "the family based on marriage." Napolitano justified the need for the recognition of all "stable relationships" in terms of their contributions to social cohesion: "understanding that all the solidarity and mutual responsibility that grows out of stable relationships based on love and reciprocal respect constitute a significant reality in terms of civil coexistence and of social cohesion." The President's speech reflected and contributed to the discourse that locates in family relationships the glue that holds society together. This commitment to the family as the source of social cohesion spans the political spectrum. Whether the family should be the locus of solidarity in the post-welfare state generates little controversy; what is at stake is the question of which relationships should be recognized as "family," and thus as worthy of official recognition and of the benefits associated with it.

"It's Time to Reason in Terms of the Family"

Minister Bindi's opening speech to the conference asserted the notion that the family is the source of Italy's social cohesion. She argued that Italian families, even

with all their contemporary challenges, "remain the living backbone of this country, the extraordinary social capital of energy, trust, loyalty, stability, sociality that feed and regenerate social ties and cohesion in the country." Perhaps as a nod to the controversy over the civil union proposal, the Minister acknowledged that governing the family remains "a very delicate matter to be handled with care and discretion." Despite the difficulties, however, Bindi argued that the time had long past for matters of the family to be addressed through policy, claiming that "it's time to reason in terms of the family."[27] This new, explicit politics of the family was on display on the political stage of the conference in the celebratory assertions of ministers as well as regional administrators and demographers. Minister of Health Livia Turco, who has been involved in policies related to family for more than a decade, declared that a "cultural leap" had taken place in the politics of the family in Italy:

> this conference marks a real turning point because we go from, including in our [political] experience … of developing family policy,[28] through which we experienced almost a cultural hesitancy in talking about the family, with this conference … today we mark a turn, a cultural leap that says that politics, very slowly, concretely, takes on the family.[29]

Leftist politicians, like Turco, celebrated the newly found availability of the family to politics without acknowledging the ideological and moral implications of this development.

Yet, even at the conference, despite its being organized and held under a center-left government, politicians and personalities aligned with the opposition made clear the

---

[27] Fieldnote, Conference on the Family, May 24, 2007.
[28] Turco is referencing legislation approved in the year 2000 by the center-left coalition led by Prime Minister Amato (law 328/2000), which, among other social service provisions, introduced support for maternal and paternal leave, some financial support for low income families with children, and political attention at the national and local levels to the balancing family and work time (see Krause and Marchesi 2007).
[29] Minister of Health Livia Turco, digital recording, May 24 2007.

moral underpinnings of their support for family policies. Letizia Moratti, then mayor of Milan and a member of Berlusconi's conservative party, introduced one of the conference's working groups, titled "The Family and Generations." Moratti described her administration's family policies as contributing to "the making of a society in which the role of the family truly returns to being central,"[30] a society in which the family is recognized as "an active subject."[31] Moratti described the policies proposed by her administration, which include tax detractions for grandparents caring for grandchildren and a "baby bonus" subsidy of about 400 euros to be awarded to low-income women who stay home for a year following the birth of a child.[32] Rather than being additional to social services like daycare, the "baby bonus" was an alternative to daycare; accepting this subsidy would make the child ineligible to attend public daycare (Benuzzi and Colombini 2007).

While Moratti presented these policies as examples of good practices in the support of the family, their gendered implications were denounced by the women of *Usciamo dal Silenzio* in a press release dated only two weeks after the conference. In the press release, *Usciamo dal Silenzio* accuses the Moratti administration of "**having its head turned toward the past**" (Benuzzi and Colombini 2007, emphasis in original). Policies like the baby bonus, they charge, foster "traditional roles" by encouraging women to stay home instead of providing better services and policies to enable them to remain in the workplace.

---

[30] (Some of the material from the conference is drawn from the official acts because I could not attend all the sessions contemporaneously.) Moratti, Sessione Famiglia e Generazione, pp. 76, Atti Conferenza.
[31] Moratti, Sessione Famiglia e Generazione, pp. 76, Atti Conferenza.
[32] Ibid 78.

The critique articulated by the *Usciamo dal Silenzio* group indexes a struggle that feminists thought they had "won" in the 1970s with the shift in social policy toward a recognition of the individual as such rather than as a member of a family (Bimbi 1993). These changes included the establishment of public daycares to allow women access to the workplace. Tensions between an orientation of social policy toward the individual or toward "family rights" was a theme that emerged in discussions at the conference, and even Minister Bindi referred to it in her speech. Yet, just as quickly as she raised the issue, she dismissed it as a false dichotomy in need of its own cultural shift. Bindi claimed that the conference marked a new era in which the citizenship and rights of the family need not be in contradiction with the rights of individuals:

> A new phase of change is afoot around some of the challenges that we need to face together and around which [we] need to recognize first and foremost the cultural change: the capacity, finally, to be able to conjugate the rights of the family and the rights of the person. These rights are not in contradiction with each other.[33]

Despite Bindi's reassurances, the protests and boycotts elicited by the explicit exclusions of non-married families from the conference suggests that the conjugation of those rights remains problematic at best. At the same time that Minister Bindi sought a synthesis of individual and family rights, influential figures on the right, like Catholic sociologist Pierpaolo Donati, argued for a new model of welfare in which the family is awarded its own citizenship and in which individual rights are reframed in relational terms. In that context too, the rights of the family and the rights of individuals, particularly women, are asserted to not be in contradiction despite evidence to the contrary.

---

[33] Fieldnote, Bindi, May 26, 2007 and "Conclusioni del Ministro delle Politiche per la Famiglia Rosy Bindi," *Conferenza Nazionale della Famiglia*, pp. 253.

"Erased But Resistant"

The "cultural leap" on family politics playing out on the stage of the First National Conference on the family was not universally celebrated. As I sat in the auditorium listening to Prime Minister Prodi's reflection on the "explosion" of the family to the center of politics, my partner Jeff participated in, and documented, a protest outside the conference center. The protest was organized by *Facciamo Breccia* (Let's Breakthrough), a feminist and GLBT network that included one of the feminist collectives I knew in Milan, *resistenti.*[34] The flyer produced by the group to advertise the protest played with the logo and the slogan of the conference. The slogan "*Cresce la famiglia, cresce l'Italia"* (The Family Grows, Italy Grows) was turned into a question mark: "*Cresce la famiglia, ma l'Italia cresce?"* (The Family Grows, But Does Italy Grow?). Using the same graphic style as the conference materials, the flyer depicts the fertile couple of the conference logo in black and white. The representations of other family configurations—two men holding hands, a single pregnant woman, an elderly or disabled couple, and two women holding hands—are faded out, as if hit by an eraser. The text reads:

> President Napolitano will open the proceedings, Rosy Bindi and Romano Prodi will close them. Together they celebrate the family. We ask: which and why? The answer is easy: it's in the logo. So, we look around, but we really do not see this family. Something is strange… it looks like the sacred family or the family of the *mulino bianco.*[35] Erased from this place/logo, erased from politics/policy, our relationships and free choices erased. With the strikes of an eraser neoliberalism erases rights and the social state and denies them to those who

[34] Like many other feminist organizations, *Facciamo Breccia* was founded in 2005, in the political environment of the ART referendum. The organization describes its objective as: "to construct a path of permanent mobilization based on self-determination, *laicità* (secularism), and antifascism" (http://www.facciamobreccia.org/content/view/316/75/) . The name *Facciamo Breccia* is a reference to the breaching of Porta Pia in Rome on September 20, 1870 by the Bersaglieri.

[35] A reference to a brand of sweets that uses idealized, traditional imagery of family in its advertisement.

> don't sanctify themselves in the traditional family. Rights are either for everyone, or they are the privilege of the few.[36]

The protest drew about 100 people to a piazza nearby the conference center. Police officers lined the entrance of the center while protesters unfurled banners and engaged in street theater critical of the normative push of the family conference and of the state's reliance on the family as the source of its welfare. A hand-written sign read: "welcome to the family, since forever the hidden leg of the Italian social state" (Fig. 2). Others manifested the theme of erasure by donning cardboard masks and carrying signs that stated: "*cancellati ma resistenti*" ("erased, but resistant," Fig. 3).[37] The protest articulated the exclusion of those who fall outside the bounds of heteronormativity, a sense that I often heard expressed in meetings and personal conversations with women involved in feminist and LGBT issues. The protesters were contesting not "just" symbolic erasures. The exclusions increasingly enacted in the name of the normative family inform an emerging welfare system of and for the family.

The welfare implications of these family policies were highlighted in a counter-conference organized by *Facciamo Breccia* to coincide with the official family conference. The alternative conference, titled "The Uses of the 'Natural' Family in the Time of Neoliberalism" offered two panels, one of which I was able to attend, in which academics and radical left and feminist politicians reflected on key themes raised by the

---

[36] "Il presidente Napolitano aprirà i lavori, Rosy Bindi e Romano Prodi li chiuderanno. Insieme celebrano la famiglia. Ci chiediamo: ma quale e perché'? La risposta è facile sta nel logo. Allora ci guardiamo attorno, ma questa famiglia proprio non la vediamo. C'è qualcosa di strano… sembra la sacra famiglia o la famiglia del mulino bianco. Cancellate/I da questo l(u)ogo, cancellati/e dalla politica, cancellate le nostre relazioni e le nostre libere scelte. A colpi di gomma il neoliberismo cancella diritti e stato sociale e li nega a chi non si consacra alla famiglia tradizionale. Ma i diritti sono per tutte/i o sono privilegi per pochi!" Coordinamento Facciamobreccia pamphlet (www.facciamobreccia.org-norme-normali.noblogs.org)

[37] The charge of erasure in protesting the moral politics of reproduction and the family is a recurrent one. Female parliamentarians donned white masks on the day of the final approval of the ART law in February of 2004 to symbolize what they charged was the erasure of women's subjectivities and subjecthood.

government's conference on the family: analysis of the significance of the notion of the "natural" family and the relationship between neoliberalism, welfare, and the family. The *Facciamo Breccia* critique aimed right at the heart of the connection between the intensifying moral politics of the family and the assertion of a neoliberal familist welfare.

The Rights & Duties of Stable Relationships

The First National Conference on the Family played out against the backdrop of the successful backlash over a civil union proposal co-authored by Minister Bindi. With the blessing of the Prodi government, along with co-author Barbara Pollastrini, Minister of Equal Opportunities, Rosy Bindi presented a limited civil union proposal in January of 2007. The proposal, titled *Diritti e doveri delle persone stabilmente conviventi* (Rights and responsibilities of persons in stable cohabitation), immediately became known by the acronym "DICO," which in Italian also means "I say." Introduced just as the controversy over the fetal burial legislation was intensifying in Lombardy, the DICO legislative proposal promised to recognize some basic rights to cohabiting couples, including those of the same sex. If approved, the DICO would award unmarried couples, same-sex and heterosexual alike, the right to participate in health decisions for one's partners, eligibility for inheritance, alimony, the right of succession on rental leases, the right to some benefits granted to public employees, and eligibility to residency permits on the basis of cohabitation. The process of entering into a DICO, however, seemed explicitly designed to avoid any semblance to a marriage ceremony. The couple would not appear together; one person would initiate the process at City Hall while the other would wait to be notified by certified letter.

This attempt at a compromise between secular leftists' demands for recognition of civil unions and renewed Catholic intransigence against the recognition of any relationship outside of marriage as family was not well-received. The DICO generated outrage from the right and derision tinged with hope among leftist supporters of civil unions. Politicians, commentators, and church officials came out against the DICO. The Vatican weighed heavily on the matter, casting the DICOs as a powerful threat to the "natural family" and to Italian society. Conservative politicians and experts used the DICO as further proof that the "traditional" family is under siege and to argue that priority should be afforded to the reproductive, heteronormative family, particularly in light of Italy's low birth rates.

At a conference sponsored by the Italian Movement for Life ominously titled "Demographic Winter," the DICO became a rallying point. The Catholic editor of one of Italy's main conservative dailies, *Il Giornale*, articulated the Catholic position against the DICO: "we are against the DICO because it's an act that undermines the family in Italy, and thus Italian society."[38] The weekly Catholic magazine *Famiglia Cristiana* ran a cover titled "Less 'Dico,' More Family," which included an interview with Minister Bindi.[39] The *Forum delle Associazioni Familiari* (Forum of Family Associations) organized a protest that came to be known as *Family Day*. The *Family Day rally*[40] was very successful: several hundred thousand participants filled piazza San Giovanni in Rome and major political figures, including Silvio Berlusconi, made an

[38] Fieldnote April 14, 2007.
[39] "Meno 'Dico' Più Famiglia," *Famiglia Cristiana,* n.7, February 8, 2007.
[40] The *Family Day* rally took place on May 12, 2007, less than two weeks prior to the beginning of the National Conference on the Family.

appearance. Then-mayor of Milan Letizia Moratti declared that "without family there can be no society."[41]

DICO No!

The DICO also engendered protest from the left, though on a much smaller and less visible scale. On Valentine's Day 2007, my partner and I headed to a protest against the DICO in downtown Milan. After leaving the *consultorio* at closing time, we walked on *corso* Vittorio Emanuele, a pedestrian-only street lined with fancy cafés and shops nestled under porticos. The *corso*, framed on one end by the illuminated Duomo Cathedral and on the other by the fountain in piazza San Babila is a romantic evening spot any time of the year. On this evening it was teeming with couples. Once we reached piazza San Babila we had trouble locating the protest, which turned out to be so small as to be dwarfed by the police presence, a few journalists, and the mob of passersby. About twenty people held signs saying "Dico no!" a play on words that translates as both "I say no" and "no to the DICO."

I recognized Viola, a feminist academic and activist who was often a critical and radical voice at meetings of *Donne, Diritti, Salute* and *Usciamo dal silenzio.* I didn't know anyone else, so Jeff and I added our numbers as participant observers. We chatted with a man from Taiwan who was taking pictures of the protest; he turned out to be a researcher too. A young man from *Arcigay*[42] joined us. He remarked how unusual it was

[41] As reported by the Berlusconi-controlled TGCOM website, http://www.tgcom24.mediaset.it/politica/articoli/articolo361510.shtml.

[42] Arci, an acronym for "Associazione ricreativa e culturale italiana," (Italian Cultural and Recreational Association). Arci was founded in 1958 but its roots go back to the mutual aid societies and solidarism of the 1800s and to anti-fascism and anti-Nazism. Today, Arci is divided into a number of *circoli*, or circles, and includes sub-sections such as *Arcigay*, *Arcilesbica*, and *Arcidonna* and an anti-racist, anti-globalization, and anti-Berlusconi political orientation (see "Storia," *Arci*, http://www.arci.it/arci/storia/index.html).

to see a heterosexual couple at a gay rights event in Italy. "Whether it's the left or the right," he added "you're a faggot in Italy" if you participate in a gay rights rally.[43]

Some protestors complained about the certified letter, the focus on the morbid aspects of relationships (inheritance, succession in an apartment lease, the right to have access to and make decisions about a partner in a medical emergency). One participant questioned why a married couple would have inheritance rights immediately, whereas a "DICO couple" would have to wait nine years. Another participant described the DICO as "humiliating." Not all agreed, however, and an argument was going on at the side between two men, one of whom was wearing a t-shirt with a serigraph of a laughing Romano Prodi.

At a meeting of the feminist *Usciamo dal Silenzio* association, one of the founders and past presidents of *Arcilesbica,* Italy's largest and most influential lesbian rights association, summarized the problems she saw with the DICO proposal:

> The legislative proposal is considered by the movements, by the homosexual associations and by the one I belong to, which is *Arcilesbica*, to be strongly inadequate with respect to the demand, inadequate with respect to European standards, inadequate with respect to the commitments first made and then walked back, then readjusted, and insufficient with respect to real needs.[44]

Nonetheless, she defended the proposal as a first step toward the recognition of same-sex relationships.

The DICO proposed the institutionalization of affective relations outside of marriage at the time that such relations are being held up as the basis of a new model of welfare. While the DICO would not have recognized these relationships as a family, it would have formalized the rights and responsibilities of those who entered toward each

[43] Fieldnote February 14, 2007.
[44] Usciamo dal silenzio, February 21, 2007, digital recording.

other. By entering into a DICO the two parties would be responsible for providing each other with "reciprocal material and moral support and solidarity." In addition, the DICO would potentially recognize affective relationships broadly construed, not just romantic/sexual ones. Eligibility would be open to two adults "even of the same sex, united by affective ties, in a situation of stable cohabitation and who provide each other with assistance and material and moral solidarity, without being united by matrimonial ties or by kinship relations of direct descent." This inclusiveness may be one of the most striking aspects of the DICO.

The proposal marked the beginning an intense few months of political debates, including among feminist and LGBT actors, over the DICO, and ultimately over the family. The DICO, like the assisted reproduction debates of the early 2000s, explicitly raised the question of what is family. Feminists who opposed the moral politics of the "natural family" found themselves needing to articulate their own views on the matter. In a different way from the Conference on the Family, the reflections among a group of Italian feminists on the family underscores the way the family is inextricably linked to the remaking of the social in the moral neoliberal moment. The terms by which the DICO and similar political projects are supported or contested underscores the stakes of the politics of the family in a time in which the rights of social citizenship are increasingly reoriented toward the "natural family." At the same time, the sense of potential that some feminists and lesbian activists expressed in relation to the DICO, points to the desire for an alternative to the tightening definition of the family as heterosexual, married, and reproductive.

After all the protests and discussion, the DICO never had their day in parliament. Following the success of the Catholic *Family Day* protest, the proposal was tabled. The issue of civil unions resurfaced later in the summer of 2007 under a new title and acronym: the *Cus* (*Contratti di unione solidale,* or Contracts of Supportive Union). The *Cus* would be a private contract undertaken in front of a notary public or a justice of the peace. In Italy justices of the peace do not marry people, civil marriage takes place at City Hall. The *Cus* removed any shred of symbolism of a quasi-marriage by taking it away from City Hall. For many the *Cus* was like the *Dico* minus the certified letter. The rights and responsibilities acquired would have been fairly equivalent, except for the right to obtain a residency permit for foreigners, which disappeared without comment in the *Cus.* In the end, the *Cus* also disappeared due to the opposition of the center-right, leaving Italians, as of yet, with no civil union option.[45] On the other hand, the arguments in favor of protecting and privileging the heteronormative family, which had gained momentum in the debate over assisted reproduction, the DICO, and over the shape of a new welfare model, continued to gain ground.

Thinking about the Family

With the locus of social citizenship increasingly shifting toward the family, struggles over inclusion and recognition of affective relationships have gained new relevance and intensity. Widespread economic precariousness has made these issues all the more urgent. Neoliberal reforms have profoundly reorganized Italian society while maintaining legitimacy through a moral discourse attentive to solidarity and critical of

[45] In the summer of 2012 the issue of civil unions came up again in the debates over the platform of the Democratic Party. The political memory of the debate over the DICO and their ultimate failure was an important part of these discussions.

individualism and capitalism (see Muehlebach 2012). Central to this discourse of social solidarity is its insistence on locating its ultimate source in family relationships. Social solidarity and cohesion are reimagined and, as a result increasingly governed, as an extension of normative family bonds of affective reciprocity rather than as the outcome of a state responsible for the welfare of its citizens. This discourse, emanating especially from Catholic politicians, from sympathetic scholars, and from the Vatican, identifies the "traditional" family as the perfect moral and economic mediation between state, market, and individual.

A number of women in the groups I attended in Milan seemed taken aback by how quickly the Catholic right had gained ground in matters of reproduction and the family. Part of this surprise may be the disconnect between the social changes that have taken hold in Italian society since the 1970s and the attitudes on ethical and social matters of many Italians, including those who consider themselves Catholic, which are more liberal and pluralistic than those of the Church (see Diamanti and Ceccarini 2007: 54).[46]

The intensifying of the Church's political influence and its legislative success made a feminist reflection unavoidable. Should the DICO be supported despite its significant limitations? Should feminists seek to broaden the scope of the family when three decades prior they had declared the institution inherently oppressive? Should other social formations and affective relations be recognized as something other than family? Participants in meetings on the DICO expressed different positions on these questions. Nonetheless, a common thread emerged from their reflections: an argument for the

[46] "on the most controversial subjects – *de facto* families, assisted procreation – opinion surveys (Eurisko, Demos, Ipsos, Lapolis) suggest that the positions of the ecclesiastical hierarchy failed to prevail even among observant Catholics" (Diamanti and Ceccarini 2007: 54).

state's recognition of all social and affective relationships that hinged on their contribution to social cohesion and the "common good."

The format of these meetings, like the format of other feminist discussions and meetings I attended, was loose: usually one of the organizers would open the discussion with some remarks that would frame the issue. Participants spoke in turn, usually for about ten minutes, sometimes representing an association to which they belonged, sometimes as individuals. Often the comments seemed to go in such different directions as to appear not to be in conversation; at other times participants engaged more directly with each other's comments. Everyone spoke without notes and yet most produced coherent and eloquent arguments. This format enabled revealing differences of perspective to share the stage.

In this section I analyze the speeches and arguments of participants engaging the question "what do *we* think about the family?" Elena, one of the more influential participants in the group, had explicitly posed this question. My focus in analyzing the terms by which these speakers sought to persuade fellow participants of their position on the family is threefold: First, to examine what these arguments suggest about the circulation and growing hegemony of the discourse on social solidarity and cohesion; Second, I am interested in the political subjectivities engendered by the discourse of a new welfare and what it reveals about the possibilities for alternative articulations; Third, I am interested in what these debates reveal about the remaking of social citizenship in Italy in the post-welfare moment. The answers to the question of the family that emerged in these meetings shed light on the struggle inherent in renegotiating feminist positions on the family in Italy. They reveal the power of

discourses that link affective social relations to social solidarity and cohesion, and, ultimately, underscore the growing importance of questions of the family to social citizenship in the post-welfare state.

"We Have to Say What *We* Think about the Family"

In early 2007, women belonging to different feminist and lesbian associations in Milan came together to discuss feminist positions on the civil union legislation. In the reproductive health association *Donne, Diritti, Salute*, the questions raised by the DICO and by the Catholic backlash against it wove in and out of discussions over the fetal burial legislation and resuscitated the debate over the assisted reproduction legislation. Shortly after the introduction of the DICO proposal, I joined a group of about twenty women in the bookshelf-lined, one-room basement headquarters of a historic feminist organization in Milan. The group included a number of women in elite professional roles: lawyers, writers, journalists, as well as leaders in the feminist and lesbian movement. Most of them were *femministe storiche*, "historical feminists," a term that refers to the generation active in the mass movements of the 1970s. Thirty years later, the radical and anti-family thought that ran through the Italian feminist movement remained relevant for some, while others expressed a different view of the family based on their personal experiences and social changes.

Elena, a well-known feminist writer and public intellectual, argued for the need to articulate a feminist position on the family in the face of the DICO and the Church's growing influence on these matters:

> we have to say what *we* think about the family … about this deep form of belonging that will really take a long time to deeply chip away. Within us, what do we think of these new forms of cohabitation? Well, I think that on this, well, certainly a protest cannot succeed in saying all these things in

> depth, it will take, I think that it will take in any case work of … groups, workshops, in other words, we have to work on this theme that I believe is fundamental.[47]

For Elena, a feminist contribution to the public discourse on the family ought to start with reflection. Her own stance on the family is never in doubt, however: the feminist project is to chip away at the bonds of the family, the very forms of "deep belonging" that current politics elevate.

Elena stated her continuing allegiance to the anti-family feminist analyses articulated in the 1970s. Critical of the demands for the recognition of unmarried and same-sex relationships as families, she reminded participants of the historical contributions of feminism:

> If I remember well, the discovery of feminism … was that of identifying in the family the site of male power, the subjection of woman … feminism had identified precisely within the affective group, of the relationship man-woman, in the family, the site of the oppression of women. So the family had been identified many years ago as the site of oppression. Now we go and ask for other families. This has always really astounded me (Elena 1/24/07).

This critique of the family is rooted in the feminism and politics of the 1970s. An anti-family ethos informed the decade as feminists as well as liberals, sought to overturn misogynist laws that governed the family and reproductive rights. Until the 1970s, as Leslie Caldwell notes, "the subservience of women to their fathers and husbands is actually written into Italian law" (1978: 71). Women were subordinated in marriage, required to follow their husbands, subject to harsher penalties for divorce, and seen as extensions of the honor of their family members (Caldwell 1978:76-78). Central to the unequal treatment of women and men under the law was the qualification of equal citizenship rights enshrined in the Italian Constitution. While under article 3 "all

[47] Fieldnote, February 21, 2007.

citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, personal and social conditions," the often cited article 29 "recognises the rights of the family as a natural society founded on marriage" and subordinates the "moral and legal equality of the spouses" to the need "to guarantee the unity of the family."[48]

Against the Family

A booklet published in 1974, and available on the bookshelves of the feminist association hosting the workshop on the DICO, embodies the radical anti-family politics of the time. Titled Contro la famiglia, (Against the Family) and published by Stampa Alternativa (Alternative Press), [49] the manifesto against the family was banned by the Italian government. All available copies were recalled, and the director of the press was imprisoned for 18 months. While *Against the Family* is not a feminist tract but rather a Marxist denunciation of family violence in which the family is presented as "the fundamental repressive structure" under capitalism (1975: 10), it resonates with feminist critiques. The cover graphic places the "traditional family" inside a bloody-red bomb, its fuse lit, about to explode. The potential for bloodshed and violence depicted on the booklet's cover also reminds of the intensity of political struggles over the family in Italian society and captures an institution in the midst of a cultural explosion. Today, in contexts such as the First Government Conference on the Family, politicians speak of a different kind of "explosion" of the family as they celebrate its move to the front of the political stage.

---

[48] http://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/istituzione/costituzione_inglese.pdf
[49] The full title reads: *Against the Family: A Manual of Self-Defense and Struggle for Minors* (*Contro la Famiglia. Manuale di autodifesa e di lotta per i minorenni*).

By the end of the 1970s, divorce and abortion were legalized, family law reformed, a network of family planning clinics (*consultori familiari*) established by law, family social services, including public daycare expanded, and a universal health care system was established (Bimbi 1993; Saraceno 1994). These changes represent a shift from the family-oriented welfare and social services provided by the Catholic Church to a more universal welfare approach that addressed individual rights (Ginsborg 2001: 226). The defeat of the Catholic Church in referenda against the legalization of abortion and divorce in the late 1970s and early 1980s, marked the waning of the Church's power over the social and moral arena giving way to significant changes in family-making, gender roles, and sexuality. The graphics and language of *Against the Family* today evoke a bygone era of radical politics seemingly incongruous with a modern society. Yet, with the resurgence of Catholic politics on the family and reproduction, some of its arguments still resonate.

The struggles over the Italian family form an important backdrop to these debates and to calls like Elena's for forsaking recognition in an historically oppressive institution. Elena offered an alternative, urging that feminists seek the public recognition and support of all relationships, citing their "social value":

> Well, then, if the traditional family has been privileged, or has laws that protect it because it contributes to the good of society, because it creates relationships, setting aside all the homicides [laughter], but let's forget those, but at least because we thank our families who raised us and cared for us, … and at one point the elderly were taken care of… if it's because of all this, why not recognize the enormous social value for society of any form of aggregation, anything that makes community? And here lies in my opinion the limitation of … having just a defensive discourse, a discourse that is just defensive, it becomes just a thing of rights for those who need them and does not bring together also a group of people that believe that society needs sociality, that we are in a moment so disconnected, for economic causes, how production is, the state of transportation, the way the city is organized, for all these things that we

> know, … people who get together, who help each other, support each other, why does society not recognize them? Why shouldn't they have something more than those who just mind their own business? …I am of this perspective, I mean, I believe that more than rights, to work in this sense of the common good, of love, of mutual help, of creating forms of collectivity, I think that no one can deny this, there can't be ideology, there can't be that absurd argument (Elena 1/24/07).

Elena's critique echoes other feminist critiques of a politic of rights, even as Elena later positioned herself as not averse to institutional engagement. Her comments point to the struggles in locating a politic of solidarity caught between atomization and the moral politics of the family, and the ease with which that alternative can slide into the relational and affective labor that Andrea Muehlebach describes as one of the characteristics of moral neoliberalism in Italy (2012).

Other Families

Other participants had different views on the family. Antonia, one of the founders and past president of Italy's main lesbian association, *Arcilesbica*, disagreed with Elena. Her political project, and that of her organization, was to demand recognition "that these things that we are making are families."[50] Arguing that gay and lesbian families were not comparable to the heterosexual, patriarchal family, Antonia declared

> we have reclaimed the term "families" …. I find it a bit simplistic to define a family composed of two men with that traditional family that we know to be constituted on the hierarchies that women over the past thirty years have disrupted, began to overcome. In any case, how can we say that if you use the term 'family' then it must mean that you want to do the same thing. I don't believe my ears when I hear this thing. And then, a family of two women, how can it be the re-proposition of a patriarchal form. I mean, … I don't believe it how much I hear these things said, maybe I've never understood it. I am not afraid to say that there are new kinds of families that are experimenting with relationships built on reciprocity, including also in heterosexual families today.[51]

[50] UdS meeting on Dico, digital recording, February 21, 2007
[51] UdS meeting on Dico, digital recording, February 21, 2007.

For Antonia the family is not owned by morally conservative forces and should and could be, in fact, reclaimed. The DICO was an opportunity that required a unified front of lesbian movements and prominent feminist groups like *Usciamo dal Silenzio*. It is ironic that in making her argument in favor of the flawed and even "comical" DICO proposal, Antonia was forced to navigate not just the obvious obstacles thrown up by the Catholic right, but also those put forth by the "traditional" Italian feminist movement's view of the family as inherently patriarchal and oppressive. She denied that feminist critiques of the heterosexual family apply: "[same-sex families are] in no way, in my opinion, part of the structures of tradition, of the exchange[52] of women, of the exploitation of the reproductive body. It's impossible." A clear discourse could not emerge until "some" in the feminist movements overcame their distaste for the term family, "some stutter because some words *gli si puntano fra i denti* (get stuck between their teeth) and they don't want to pronounce this word."[53] When confronted by those who say "'you are not family,' Antonia argued that someone has to respond, 'yes, we are'" an affirmation that would carry more power if "we didn't have to give the answer alone."

Despite this disagreement on the nature of the family, Antonia's description of what the meaning of same-sex families holds striking similarities to Elena's argument for the recognition of all forms of sociality. Both deploy the language of reciprocity, of mutual help and solidarity. Antonia noted that "when we say family we say an affective

---

[52] Ironically, Antonia's case in support of same-sex families in the name of the functional value of reciprocal relationships to social cohesion shares some theoretical roots with the social alliance theory of the exchange of women that she decries as incompatible with same-sex families. While the role of women and the relations of power are obviously incommensurable here, the underlying assumption of reciprocal exchange as generative of broader social relations and ties remains relevant.
[53] Antonia, fieldnote, 2/21/07.

core (*nucleo*), of mutual help, of solidarity, which demands respect and rights."[54] Like Elena, Antonia appeals to the potential contribution of same-sex relationships to the "common good" to legitimize their claim to public recognition:

> I think that they [same-sex relationships] should be considered a common good, not just for the people who carry them on, because romantic and care-taking relationships are, as they say, it's not just that it's me who is here, … all reasonable people, romantic relationships generate social cohesion instead of loneliness, instead of disaggregation, instead… So, recognizing them on the part of the state … means, 'I recognize them, I register them, I protect them from offense, from defamation, etc. etc.'[55]

Elena and Antonia represent two distinct approaches to the family that rehash some of Italian feminism's debates on the relationship between feminism and institutions in the language of solidarity and social cohesion. Other women shared more personal evolutions in their perspectives on the family. Some shared Elena's notion that the family is oppressive and that feminism's political project ran counter to the family. Deana reflected that never marrying her male partner was "a matter of freedom" and related that her child says "my mother forgot to get married." Milena described "women's lives" as being lived "inside norms. Ours is an escape from norms." Others, like Anna, a woman in her fifties, argued that the Italian family itself had changed, and thus by implications should feminist positions:

> today's families are no longer that gas chamber that it was for us, that we recognized as such, from which we have, we tried in all ways to get out, to do some things, to leave, but then also to not recreate them. … Young women, the young, the young women today, the family they do it differently, they understand it in a different way. And then, that it is still the site in which a discourse on woman and man is reproduced, I think that's still the case, but it's not so obvious, much less, it's more "soft," it's much more, how can I say it, a lot less suffocating, if you will.[56]

---

[54] Fieldnote, February 21, 2007.
[55] Fieldnote, February 21, 2007
[56] Fieldnote, January 21, 2007.

Anna also pointed to the personal and social changes that had shifted her views of the family:

> The critique of the family that we made in the 1970s… it's age too. In the 70s we were daughters, it was more oppressive. Over the years family relationships are relationships that are born of ties of relatedness, positive or negative which in the 70s I couldn't see. It's a path, [now] I see things that I used to see as a daughter with different eyes. It's age, given also that children are not born anymore (*i figli non si fanno più)*, the crisis of pensions… [we need] to recognize that families are made up of freedom and ties, of reciprocity, an exchange.

The family, she continued, "is a substance that hides the people who belong to it… an opaque reality. If politicians continue to use this term as unitary, it hides what's within. But I reassert my relationship, in its diversity, [we need] public recognition for forms of relation that are not family." This narrative showcases the way personal experience of change over three decades entwines with social discourse to generate a different perspective on the family. Changes in the family affect the sense oppressiveness or freedom inherent in the institution while the discourse on low fertility also engenders a different view of the family and its social relevance, in this case to pensions. Sometimes these perspectives coexist, recognizing that the family has changed and has a social function, but rejecting participation in it.

A surprising "provocateur" argument came from another prominent voice, Assunta Sarlo, a journalist and the woman whose email had sparked the *Usciamo dal Silenzio* 2006 protest. Sarlo suggested that maybe the stronger ties of marriage did contribute something more to society. Sarlo, who had recently married at "an advanced age" in order to please her elderly mother, described discovering "the power of the institution" over her life and, potentially, the "social function" of marriage:

> With the original question, which was, "are you so sure [that the family] is not just inherently oppressive?" I agree, *a priori*, with all that relates to the

> condition of discrimination, the safeguarding of freedom and of the choice of the individual … but, I as, to understand each other, because we always, if we choose less strong [relationship] ties, then I could, at the very least the provocateur part of me could say, "ok, less binding ties, how to say, could be also more convenient, in the sense that, not taking care of the 95-year-old mother-in-law with Alzheimer's could also be an advantage." So do we want a society who does not take care of the 95-year-old mother-in-law?

This suggestion that marriage cements the responsibility to care for family elicited angry responses. Not only did it echo conservative Catholic arguments that marriage guarantees social stability, it also reproduced the gendered responsibilities of care-taking. Furthermore, it legitimates the Berlusconi's government project for a family-based welfare for the elderly.[57]

Sarlo pointed to the fact that increasingly care has been shifted to immigrant careworkers, implying that "weaker ties" shift the burden upon them. Immigrant carework is in fact increasingly recognized as the "backbone of the 'do-it-yourself' welfare." By 2010 *assistenti domiciliari* (household assistants) were employed by 10% of Italian families.[58] That taking care of the "95-year-old mother in law with Alzheimer's" is seen as either the responsibility of family or paid careworkers points to the degree in which welfare in Italy is expected to remain a private responsibility. The suggestion, even under the guise of a devil's advocate provocation, that social solidarity depends on highly gendered caretaking responsibilities made stronger by marriage

---

[57] See for example its articulation in the 2009 White Paper on Welfare: "in our country the condition of the elderly is still strongly supported by the a more solid endurance of family relations compared to other countries. This bond has to be encouraged and fostered – consider the phenomenon of domestic workers, grown from below as a request from families – not only and not really because of a lack in public services, but for the need for a flexible service, more tailored to families, controlled and managed directly by relatives" (Ministero del Lavoro, della Salute e delle Politiche Sociali 2009: 51).

[58] "Sommerso e con poche tutele: il lato oscuro del lavoro domestico," Comunicati Stampa, *Censis,* 2010 http://www.censis.it/10?resource_50=107733&relational_resource_51=107733&relational_resource_52=107733&relational_resource_385=107733&relational_resource_381=107733&relational_resource_382=107733&relational_resource_383=107733&relational_resource_384=10773

underscores the purchase of a new discourse of social solidarity centered on the family. Implicitly, it suggests that social anomie and disintegration are failures of individual and relational responsibilities.

Peeling away the layers of these arguments sheds light on the way feminist perspectives on the family are entangled with prevailing discourses on social welfare. The deep transformations that have affected Italian society have also shifted feminist thinking. From the vantage point of a different location in the life course and with the influence of a different social and political context, the feminist language on the family shifts from critiques of its inherent oppressiveness as a site of patriarchal violence to a reflection of a changed institution in a changed society. The oppressive gender and family roles that many women had experienced in the 1970s have given way to rhetorical commitments to "modern" gender roles and to changed practices and experiences. For some, the tension between freedom and oppressiveness is recast in terms of freedom versus reciprocity and solidarity.

Italian society, however, has been profoundly changed in other ways: the Fordist context of the mass movements of the 1970s has given way to neoliberal rationalities and policies. With the unraveling of the admittedly already wide-gapped social safety net, existing social protections have given way to precarious, often short-term, employment (Muehlebach 2012; Molé 2010). Immigration has engendered concerns over social cohesion as well as social solidarity. Concerns over solidarity in the state of

precariousness are shared across political chasms. In 2007, Pope Benedict XVI publically criticized neoliberal *precarietà'* for its effects on the family and society.[59]

While they disagreed on the politics of the struggle for recognition as family, Elena and Antonia both appealed in their speeches to arguments about the common good. Antonia advocated for the recognition of romantic and family relationships while Elena made the case for social and political ones by appealing to the role relationships play in fostering solidarity and social cohesion, while remaining critical of the notion that the heteronormative family has a privileged or unique role to play in this regard. Their arguments link up with the dominant discourse on the family and the new welfare by seemingly embracing a model of social solidarity located within and between personal relationships of mutual aid and reciprocity. Elena, who called for jettisoning the term "family," altogether, asserted the contribution that other (non-heteronormative family) forms of solidarity make to society, and even the nation, while Antonia spoke of the value of same-sex families in terms of their contribution to the common good. In this they resonated with Catholic arguments on the "solidaristic value of the family," a point of contact that Elena acknowledged in her speech and embraced as a better strategy than always "playing defense" against the Church.

Other resonances between Catholic arguments on the family and feminist and lesbian ones can be heard in Antonia's contribution. Despite her assertion that "we have reclaimed the term 'family'" and rejected "the lexicon and the ideological repertoire of the Church," in fact, some of the language used to justify the recognition of same-sex families would not be out of place in Catholic defenses of the "traditional" family. In

[59] "Il papa contro il lavoro precario. Bagnasco: 'Vita e famiglia non negoziabili,'" *Repubblica.it*, October 2007, available online, http://www.repubblica.it/2007/10/sezioni/cronaca/bagnasco-lavoro/bagnasco-lavoro/bagnasco-lavoro.html

addition to claims for individual rights in matters of sexuality, "the freedom of persons to self-determination,"[60] Antonia appealed to arguments about the social value of such relationships and their potential to contribute to "social cohesion instead of loneliness, instead of disaggregation." Moreover, according to Antonia, by denying same-sex relationships recognition as family, the state "looks with a gaze that separates people who are united," seeing and thus treating them as nothing more than the individuals who make them up. As a consequence, "we continue to be seen as individuals … people who cohabitate, who do not constitute a nucleus holder of fundamental rights."[61] This argument echoes Catholic calls for the recognition of families rather than just individuals.

At a Catholic conference on religious values and immigration held in the Milan Archdiocese in November 2006, for example, a priest argued that the Church's "focus is on the family not just as individual, but in terms of relationships, in response to social rationales in our society where the subject is seen just as an individual."[62] These arguments about the need to recognize subjects as citizens-in-relation, rather than as just individuals, have coalesced into explicit policy proposals for a citizenship of the family (Consiglio dei Ministri 2012). The context of a political project seemingly headed for a special status for families, a project that is poised to draw new topographies of privilege and discrimination, new terms of inclusion and exclusion in the name of the social contribution of different social formations, is crucial to making sense of the convergence, whether strategic or not, of calls for the recognition of individuals in

[60] Fieldnote, February 21, 2007.
[61] Fieldnote, February 21, 2007.
[62] Fieldnote, November 18, 2006.

relationship. This convergence is mediated by the stakes of a shrinking welfare state and new rationalities for appropriating the benefits of social citizenship.

Disentangling the Moral Discourse on Solidarity

How did women with long-standing commitments to leftist feminism come to articulate their positions on the family and civil unions in terms of their potential contributions to social solidarity and the "common good"? Making sense of these narratives posed an analytical challenge for me as I struggled to reconcile the coexistence of the rejection of the heteronormative family model with the embrace of relational solidarity that emerges in these narratives. In the dominant discourse the heteronormative family and relational solidarity are two faces of the same coin. The first iteration of my analysis focused on exploring the degree to which these debates reflected the emerging hegemony of relational solidarity in post-welfare Italy. The discussion on the family among historic feminists struck me as being infused with the same moral logic that undergirds the neoliberal concern with social cohesion. The deployment of terms that would not be out of place in the mouths of Catholic officials, sociologists, and politicians, and which are in fact uttered by them on a regular basis in discussions on the family, suggested a surprisingly shared set of social assumptions. The appearance in feminist discourse of morally-laden arguments about affective and familiar relationships seemed a kind of "ventriloquism" (Muehlebach 2009) ultimately functional to an emerging moral neoliberal social order.

Appeals to "mutual help" as an alternative to a familist solidarity, such as in Elena's speech, reinforced my view that while these arguments were critical of the individualistic subjectivity of capitalism they recapitulated the neoliberal embrace of

"community" and other private forms of solidarity that characterize "the death of the social" as we knew it (Rose 1996; see Muehlebach 2009). In the time of the "crisis of welfare," mutualistic model of social protection have gained attention as a non-statist, grassroots form of solidarity that could mitigate the market's "everyone out for themselves" ethic (Luciano 2012: 4; 15). Even as they offer more local control, however, these societies are limited in scope compared to the universal welfare state. The original Mutual Aid Societies (*Società di Mutuo Soccorso*) were autonomous and voluntary organizations that formed in Europe in the 19th century as a way to provide some social safety nets to workers otherwise exposed to the unfettered market (Luciano 2012; Mauss 1990). In the post-welfare moment Mutual Aid Societies have garnered new interest as a grassroots alternative to the social state.[63] A recent study argues that "nostalgia" for mutualism has given new relevance to Mutual Aid Societies, which are idealized as a more organic form of democracy and citizenship compared to the social state (Luciano 2012: 6). This "nostalgia," however, ignores the fact that the "matrix" of socialist and Catholic principles of "universalism and redistribution" that animated these societies is what eventually gave way to the development of the universalist welfare state (Luciano 2012: 6). In fact, as the author points out, the principle of universality, "could never have been realized within the confines of short-range solidarity and of local criteria of redistributive justice that characterize mutual aid societies" (Luciano 2012: 7).

Feminist appeals to alternative models of solidarity, including mutualism, seem a departure from the universalist principles that many of these same activists fought for

[63] A recent study by the European Research Institute on Cooperative and Social Enterprises cites the existence of 2000-plus Mutual Aid Societies in Italy today (Luciano 2012: 1). See also Lisa 2011.

three decades ago. Demands for the recognition of personal relationships articulated in terms of their social functionality reflect the appeal and amenability of a moral and relational model of solidarity. However, the feminist deployment of mutualism as the basis of solidarity suggests an additional interpretation of these discourses that reads them as less, or at least as not only, a re-proposition of the dominant moral discourse, but also as an attempt to deconstruct the very basis of the post-welfare discourse on solidarity in Italy: the heteronormative family. In these feminist discussions mutualism and other forms of solidarity are proposed as an alternative to a dominant discourse that privileges the heteronormative family because it identifies it as the ineludible source of social cohesion. Elena's approach strategically seeks to claim the high ground of a form of solidarity and social cohesion that is based on a sociality and reciprocity outside of the confines of the heteronormative family.

I decided to take these narratives seriously, along with other discussions, informal and not, that focused on the oppressiveness of the moral politics of the family and reproduction. Ultimately, in the Italian context, denying the heteronormative family's role, either by highlighting the power relations and inequalities that still constitute it, or by emphasizing the violence that resides it in, or even simply by recognizing that other ways of being a family exist, challenges the foundation of a broad social project. It represents a challenge to the welfare model of subsidiarity, which rests on the active citizenship of the family to construct social cohesion out of the private moral values of reciprocity and the gift. The moralized family is the safeguard against the alienating, anomie-inducing, and disintegrating effects of the unfettered market. To deconstruct and deny the family is to deny the moral legitimacy of the

neoliberal project by stripping it bare of the social values that make it tenable in Italy and compatible with Catholic morality.

The extension of the social relationships that would be recognized as generative of the common good would not be equally functional to a restructured social state that relies on private forms of solidarity. At least not in the present configuration of moral neoliberalism in Italy, which legitimizes the dismantling of the universal state in the name of empowering the natural and moral social formation of the family. As I show below, the project of generating a neoliberal post-welfare society and the rising social citizenship of the family are inextricably linked. If the post-social moment is characterized by a shift toward "governing thorough community" (Rose 1996), in Italy that shift includes a heavy emphasis on "governing through the family".

The narratives of historic feminists confronting new personal, social and political-economic contexts highlight the degree to which the new welfare society in Italy has been hitched to the heteronormative model of the family. The terms of these arguments show how opposition to the moral politics of the family inevitable tangles with the privileged role afforded to it in contemporary, post-welfare society. While it may not challenge the privatized, relational aspect of care associated with neoliberalism in Italy, this kind of politics does challenge the solidifying lines of inclusion and exclusion on which the neoliberal project rests and which are poised to redefine social citizenship. The shared language between feminism and Catholic neoliberal discourse also suggests a poverty of oppositional alternatives to a project that cloaks itself in concerns for the common good rather than in the naturalization of market logics of profit and individualism. As the language of solidarity has lost its leftist oppositional

significance in the post-welfare moment, merging into a vocabulary shared with Catholic doctrine and sociology as well as with neoliberalism, its deployment has to be approached with a critical ear in an attempt to parse the context, subtext, and implications.

The grappling with the politics of the family showcased in these discussions also reminds of the central role of the family in the neoliberal moment. Italy's moral neoliberalism is not constituted by a generalized *homo relationalis*, as Muelenbach describes. It is built upon a specific and moralized set of relationships, those of the heteronormative family. Any other way of making family, be it same-sex families, unmarried couples, or the specter of Muslim polygamous relationships, is asserted to be inferior to the task of generating social cohesion, if not detrimental to it.

The oppressiveness of this moral project is reflected by the degree of hope that even the potential for the official recognition of relationships outside of "the family" inspired in some women. While conscious of its limitations, some participants in discussions on the DICO saw this civil union proposal as a challenge to the dominance of the Church in the politics of reproduction and the family. Laura described the meaning of the DICO proposal for her: in raising the question of "what does family mean? It made me dream, I mean, if this is the route, then we can pick up again the question of women and assisted reproduction, the question of parenthood."[64] Franca, a feminist and politician in the radical left *la Rifondazione Comunista* (Communist Refoundation Party), gave voice to ambivalence and hope:

> this is not the law that I wanted. I am forced to confront certain issues when there is a law, instead of [being able] to elaborate it… on the other hand, it's something that unhinges [*scardina*], otherwise you wouldn't have these

[64] Fieldnote, February 21, 2007.

> reactions. Symbolically it says, 'there is no more family,' and this makes them go haywire. For me, the fact of affirming affective ties that are not immediately connected to reproduction is important. … It's a breaking point.[65]

The politics of the family and of welfare in Italy are not easy to disentangle in the post-welfare moment. At stake are ever-shrinking social benefits and protections, which become even more vital in times of economic precariousness. Increasingly, the politics of reproduction and the family are the terrain over which are negotiated and legitimated deep transformations in individual and social rights and in the basses of citizenship. In the wake of the retreat of the social state and the "natural" family's increasingly important social role, the consolidation and tightening of the definition of family has significant consequences for those who fail to meet the criteria. Those who fall outside the boundaries of the "traditional" family may not only continue to be implicitly excluded from the full entitlements of social citizenship. If the moral project of redefining social citizenship in relational, familial terms succeeds, those who are not recognized as family may be explicitly and legitimately excluded in the name of social solidarity and cohesion.

The Social Relevance of the Family

Arguments about the social function of the family are increasingly widespread across the political spectrum. At the First Conference on the Family the conservative mayor of Milan, Letizia Moratti, justified the shift to a family-oriented approach to social services by appealing to the "family's social function" and to its centrality as site of production of "social capital" and thus social cohesion.[66] With the election of the Berlusconi coalition in 2008, the politics of the family intensified and became more

[65] Fieldnote, *Donne, Diritti, Salute,* February 13, 2007.
[66] May 25, 2007, pp. 76.

explicit. The Berlusconi government produced policy proposals on a new welfare centered on the family. The family's social role in reproducing the nation, which was edited out of Prodi's comments at the First Conference on the Family, was embraced under the center-right Berlusconi coalition, which included the separatist and xenophobic Lega Nord party and the post-fascist *Alleanza Nazionale* party. In the Berlusconi years, the discourse on the family's social function weaves together demographic alarmism, the moral politics of life, and the assertion of the family as the ultimate source of social cohesion.

This approach is exemplified by the testimony of Undersecretary of State Carlo Giovinardi in a parliamentary committee meeting. Giovinardi justified the government's support for the traditional family in terms of the demographic and cultural problems brought by immigration and demographic "decline": "it is absolutely important that fiscal policies recognize that having children is not simply a private matter, but rather an issue of great social relevance for the future of our country" (Camera dei Deputati 2008: 9). Against this backdrop, and because resources are finite, Giovinardi argued "there should be a difference between the couple that guarantees a potential stability" by being married and "the others" "if … we identify some priorities, a favorable eye should be turned to those who also carry out a social function" (Camera dei Deputati 2008: 27-28). The exclusion of relationships outside the boundaries of the "traditional family" is justified in these discourses in the name of the heteronormative family's social and national functions: reproduction and the production of social cohesion. These political discourses are not just aimed at increasing birth rates among Italians, but at having Italian babies born within the moral and cultural parameters of

the "traditional" family, understood as the best guarantor of identity, stability, and social commitments.

These same arguments about the need to recognize the family as a privileged subject of welfare emerged in a more public setting at the Second Government Conference on the Family in 2010, this time organized by the Berlusconi government.[67] Minister of Welfare Maurizio Sacconi made headlines by arguing that financial support should be reserved for the "natural" family: "financial support and help should only be given to the natural family founded on marriage and oriented toward reproduction."[68] By contrast, "heterosexual unmarried couples renounce public recognition of their own volition, they want to live without assuming ties of any kind, it is clear that vis-à-vis the state this is a different situation. And it is evident that they will have a differential treatment."[69]

The "cultural leap that says that politics, very slowly, concretely, takes on the family"[70] celebrated by Minister Turco in 2007 seems to be fully realized, if not in the direction that the leftist former Minister would approve. The center-left's discourse on the family's centrality to social solidarity and its implicit and increasingly less tentative forays into pro-family *and* pronatalist policies, such as those on display at the Conference on the Family, contributed to the legitimization of the more nationalist and exclusionary discourses embraced by the right. Both left and right increasingly appeal to the social function of the family to make claims about the importance of developing

---

[67] I draw my data for this section on media reports, parliamentary committee proceedings, and the official conference proceedings of the Second National Conference on the Family, held in 2010, which I did not attend.

[68] "Giovanardi: 'La biotecnologia toglie diritti ai figli,'" *l'Unità.it*, November 8, 2010, http://www.unita.it/italia/giovanardi-laquo-la-biotecnologia-toglie-diritti-ai-figli-raquo-1.254061.

[69] "Sacconi: 'Aiuti solo a coppie che procreano.' Poi ci ripensa: 'Anche a quelle di fatto.' *Repubblica.it*, November 8, 2010, http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2010/11/08/news/napolitano_famiglia-8870840/.

[70] Minister of Health Livia Turco, digital recording, May 24, 2007.

family policy. The right takes those argument to their logical conclusion, arguing for a society that privileges the kind of families deemed to contribute the most to society.

A Citizenship of the Family

The assertion of the family's centrality to a new social model in the post-welfare moment has given way to calls for the recognition of the family's citizenship. One of the most prominent and influential voices in this regard is that of Catholic sociologist Pierpaolo Donati. Donati proposes a relational sociology (2012) based on reciprocity and the gift economy, and originating in the traditional family. In this section I examine Donati's work on the citizenship of the family because of its profound influence on discourse and policy. His arguments and suggestions are not simply a powerful articulation of a broader expert discourse on the family. As head of the Scientific Committee of the *National Observatory on the Family*, a (politically-appointed) organization that conducts research and produces policy recommendations on the family, Donati oversaw the writing of a draft document titled *The National Plan for the Family* (*Il Piano Nazionale per la Famiglia*), which was presented in June of 2011 and approved by the Italian government in June of 2012. The plan reflects Donati's writings on the need for a rearticulation of citizenship from an individual orientation to a relational, family-based approach. The relevance of sociological expertise in the reorientation of citizenship and the basis of social cohesion suggests that reports of the "death of the social" and of the decreased relevance of sociology have indeed been exaggerated. Catholic sociology is influential in policy-making in Italy as it helps negotiate a path that avoids welfare universalism and individualism.

In 2007, the same year as the first National Conference on the Family, Donati proposes a new approach to family policy in which the state would go beyond providing "relief and assistance" and instead embrace "a relational policy, a form of social governance based on a principle of complex subsidiarity" (2007: 128). Donati makes three broad arguments: 1) that policies aimed at the family should be distinct from other kinds of social policies; 2) that the recognition of what we call family should be delimited to the heterosexual, married family; and 3) that this family should be recognized as a social and juridical "subject" in its own right (Donati 2007: 128). Donati is critical of existing models of social policy: the liberal model, he charges, leads to "individualism and fragmentation of the social fabric;" the social state leads to "the loss of social bonds," while the corporate model of welfare based on work leads to "gender inequality and "subsidiarity in reverse," as the family props up the social state" (Donati 2007: 131).

"Current family policies," he charges, "individualize individuals and forget about the primary social capital inherent to the family" (Donati 2007: 133). At the same time, its "outsourcing" of social services from the family to the state leads to "an overburdened welfare state" (Donati 2007: 132). Donati articulates the need for more services in the liberal idiom of choice, arguing that families, rather than individuals, should be the subjects of those services, that they should be empowered to "manage themselves" the "services they need" through "family associations" (Donati 2007: 133). The services that Donati identifies as ideal for self-management—"one thinks of family counseling services, day care centers, care for children and the elderly, domiciliary services" (Donati 2007: 133)—are the very services that became public in the 1970s, a

move to which feminist sociologists attribute an increase in individual rights vis-à-vis the traditional family (Bimbi 1993; Saraceno 1994).[71]

Because of its unique role in "generating relationships of full reciprocity between the sexes and generations" the family merits recognition of its citizenship (2007: 139). Donati articulates an expert sociological discourse that argues for the unique contributions of the family to social solidarity to justify an emerging citizenship of the family. The reason for delimiting privileges to "the family" is that only the family based on marriage and sexual differentiation is generative of "full reciprocity," stability, and thus social solidarity and cohesion, as well as being biologically generative.[72]

Donati argues that "there is urgent need for a new 'social pact' between the generations both within the family and in the collective sphere, that is, of work, of distribution and redistribution of resources, and above all, in that of relations of citizenship" (Donati 2007: 133-134). This new "social pact" requires the rethinking of the basis of citizenship in which the individual citizenship of the Enlightenment gives way to a "relational citizenship" (Donati 2007: 139) and natural rights are redefined as "relational rights" (2007: 142). This new model requires the reconfiguration not just of

---

[71] Saraceno, for example, writes that "we see a kind of pendulum in the recent history of the Italian welfare state: during the seventies a number of caring needs were at least partially defined as individual social rights (health care, daycare and education for preschool children and basic education)" (Saraceno 1994: 62). The "pendulum" was already shifting in the other direction by the 1990s, when "means-testing has tended "to weaken individual rights in favor of family rights (and compulsory) family solidarity" (1994: 62).

[72] The link between family, citizenship, and welfare is of course not unique to Italy, nor to Europe. Despite Catholic protest that EU has not been supportive of the family, a European-level concern with the Arguments about the family's role vis-à-vis the state and the politics of reproduction have intensified in the US political arena as well, as was evident in the 2012 presidential campaign. Rick Santorum authored a 2006 book *It Takes A Family: Conservatism and the Common Good* in which he argues that the traditional family is at the basis of society. Scholars too have begun to examine the family's role vis-à-vis the state. The 2001 volume *Progressive Politics in a Global Age* examines that relationship from a leftist, scholarly perspective and includes a section on the "Family, Citizens and the State," even earning a citation from Donati 2007 who describes these approaches (with a particular emphasis on David M. Anderson, "Toward a Progressive Family Policy: the Family Unity Act") as indicative of "new orientations" (2007: 135) in thinking about the social role of the family.

citizenship but also of personhood into a "social personhood" that encompasses the family: "The family has its own citizenship (family citizenship) in that the family is a 'social person', a holder of a complex of social rights that go beyond individual rights" (Donati 2007: 140). This, combined with the family's unique role in generating reciprocity and social cohesion justifies its recognition as a subject and its rewarding with privileged citizenship rights relative to other social formations and to individuals:

> The distinction between citizenship/non-citizenship of family forms implies that there are types of families that merit the acknowledgement of a set of rights/duties having public recognition and other forms which do not. This distinction is not made on the basis of a discriminatory criterion, but, on the contrary, according to the very characteristics of the relations chosen and created by the subjects. If persons create forms of co-habitation in which there is no assumption of social responsibility towards the surrounding community, then public recognition is not required. (Donati 2007: 147)

The new social contract proposed by Donati explicitly justifies discriminating against those who are viewed as skirting "social responsibility towards the surrounding community" by virtue of engaging in affective relationships that lack social recognition. Leaving aside the tautology of this argument, what is striking about this passage is that it explicitly argues for a new model of social citizenship built upon discrimination among family forms.

Yet, Donati casts the project of a citizenship of the family as the way toward a just society in the post-welfare world. Citizenship is required in order to protect the family from the inevitable burden that the crisis of the welfare state would place on it and for protecting society from "anomie":

> Only the recognition of a full citizenship of the family, with all that it implies, would avoid widespread phenomena of anomie, discomfort, injustices, and social pathologies, which families often experience today. Actually, without such recognition, increasing burdens of generating social solidarity, which cannot be assumed by the welfare state, would be transferred in a perverse, implicit, indirect, and undeclared manner to families. This would act against the

> pursuit of goals of social equality and of universalistic solidarity inherent to citizenship. (2007:152).

This approach of course says nothing about what would happen to those who are not recognized to belong to a family. Would "the increasing burden of generating social solidarity" be "transferred" to them?

Donati's writings shed light on the contours of an emerging revision of the social contract in the neoliberal, post-welfare moment. Neoliberal reforms in Italy have provided fertile ground for the renegotiation of the social contract, putting into question even its founding subject. The heteronormative family is the protagonist of a new social citizenship. In these writings, the social citizenship of the family represents a preferable "alternative to statism … and to that kind of liberalism that is a mere affirmation of individual rights, but not bound to community responsibilities (citizenship of the market)" (2007: 148). The importance of the family to this new model cannot be overstated. Donati suggests that the family represents a "fourth way," an alternative to state, market, and civil society. If the relocation of society from the state to civil society and "community" could be described as the "death of the social," its further retreat into the family would constitute its burial. Of course, the converse is also true: by becoming so central to social reproduction, cohesion, and solidarity, and even citizenship, the family assumes a public and social function that invites, even requires, intensified governing.

Conclusion

The Italian welfare state has always leaned on Italian families to bridge the many gaps in its safety net. What distinguishes the neoliberal moment is the explicit anointment of the heteronormative family as worthy recipient of social services by

virtue of its function as generator of solidarity. In the first decade of the new millennium the family has "blown up" onto the political stage propelled by a new welfare model, demographic concerns, and the resurgence of the Vatican. There it is likely to play multiple leading roles for some time: threatened and vulnerable institution in need of government protection; privileged site of biological, social, and cultural reproduction; social formation that fosters cohesion, integration, and security; and citizen of a new social contract. In this chapter I have examined policy proposals and moments of institutional articulation of this new approach to the family, as well as the terms of the resistance they have engendered. The First National Conference on the Family laid out the logics of a new politic of the family, legitimating and justifying explicit government intervention in support of particular kinds of families and the exclusion of others.

The convergence of heightened politics of the family elicited reflection and discussion among a group of feminist actors about feminist positions on the family. I draw on this discussion to show the pervasiveness of a discourse that justifies the recognition of relationships in terms of their social function in fostering social cohesion and social solidarity. The discussions on the family among feminists drew upon shared logics of the functionality of affective relationships to society. The very notion of "social cohesion" presupposes harmonious social "goals" (Dobbernack 2010: 149), an idea at odds with leftist and feminist theories. At the same time that they drew on a shared lexicon of solidarity, however, feminist narratives on the family reject the notion, central to the new welfare and new moral order, that only the bonds of heteronormativity produce social cohesion and solidarity.

I interpret these arguments as reflecting the pervasiveness of a post-welfare social model that locates social solidarity in the private sphere of affective relationships (Muehlebach 2012), a model that is functional to neoliberal governing. However, I also suggest that these arguments represent more than simple "ventriloquism," or even "strategic appropriation" of the dominant discourse. Read against the context of intensifying biopolitical and Catholic politics of the family and reproduction, the assertion of the functionality of other family forms to society is not a residual critique. Neoliberal restructuring in Italy is moralized and legitimated through discourses and policies that inextricably tie social solidarity and cohesion to the heteronormative family and its reproduction, both social and biological. The assertion of other forms of family-making holds the promise to "unhinge" social logics.

The politics of the family are central to the transformations in social citizenship unfolding in Italy. Developments in family policy since 2007 confirm the family's central role in the revisioning of the social contract under neoliberalism. New citizens, subjects, and persons are being asserted through policies and in discourse, ranging from the embryo to the family. Even as it promises a more appealing alternative to individualistic neoliberal logics, the relational model of citizenship in Italy is predicated on the privileging of heteronormative relationships and the exclusion of other family forms. Justified in terms of the functionality of the family to social cohesion and solidarity, particularly in the post-welfare moment, this revisioning of the social contract threatens to engender new boundaries and logics of inclusion and exclusion.

CHAPTER 5

DEMOGRAPHIC DISCOURSES & REPRODUCTIVE ENCOUNTERS

Introduction

In an article that has inspired and oriented a burgeoning feminist anthropological literature on reproduction, anthropologists Faye Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp (1995:1) called on researchers to bring reproduction "in both its biological and social interpretations" to the forefront of social inquiry. Over the past decade it would be difficult to ignore the centrality, relevance, and importance of reproduction to the biological, moral, and social reproduction of Italian society. Statistical elaborations of fertility rates regularly make headlines, often juxtaposing the fertility rates of Italian and migrant women; politicians, experts, Vatican officials, and cultural commentators warn of "disappearing Italians," "demographic suicide,"[1] and foretell of a graying nation unable to sustain its social entitlements.

These discourses are not limited to Italy. Europe's demographics cause concern among commentators and institutions of governance across the Atlantic. From the United Nations and the European Union, to the likes of Pat Buchanan and Orianna Fallacci, news coverage and cultural commentaries warn of an apocalyptic scenario for the future of a continent no longer reproducing itself. An editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* asserts that "the greatest threat that Italians face is one of demographic self-immolation," a fate shared with other Europe countries as "Italy is not alone in committing demographic suicide" in Europe (Meotti 2010). Anxieties over whether and which children are being born echo across Europe. In national contexts as different as

[1] Dalla Cei allarme per l'occupazione "E l'Italia va verso suicidio demografico," *la Repubblica*, May 24 2010.

Germany, France, and Poland they translate into discourses and practices that treat women's reproductive practices as a threat to the nation (Castañeda 2008; Sargeant 2006; Mishtal 2012). Nationalist demographies (Krause 2006) differentiate between the fertility rates of citizen and migrant populations, but demographic discourses also implicitly or explicitly identify other "internal" groups' marked by class, race, religion, or regional affiliation as a threat to the nation. Scholars of reproduction and critical demography have documented these production of fertility panics directed toward reproductive "Others," like Latino women in the US (Chavez 2004), Palestinian women in Israel (Kanaaneh 2002), Malay and Indian women in Singapore (Heng and Devan 1992), and poor and black women in Brazil (De Zordo 2012; Cardarello 2012). These "political arithmetic" (Kanaaneh 2002: 27) articulate with global processes in which people are increasingly mobile, but unlike capital, remain beholden to national boundaries (Willen 2005).

In Italy demographers have been warning about the "problem" of low fertility for two decades. In the 1990s, these expert warnings did not translate into explicit calls and policies for more Italian babies. Constrained by the social memory of fascist pronatalism, concerns over low fertility rates played out discursively as "demographic alarmism," a "sneaky" form of pronatalism (Krause 2001). In the 2000s, the issue of low fertility gained legitimacy as a legitimate problem requiring intervention into the family (Treves 2000; Krause and Marchesi 2007). Italians were scolded into reproducing or accepting its consequences, as former Minister Giuliano Amato's quip for Italians to "either have children or accept immigrants" (Pugliese 2000) suggests.

This chapter addresses the question that led me into the field for my dissertation research: How do intensifying expert and political discourses on the population and reproduction translate into experiences, subjectivities, and practices on the ground? I draw on interviews with migrant advocates, cultural mediators, and feminist actors and on participation in a conference on Italy's "demographic winter" to examine the terms and struggles around the politics of fertility over the past decade. I examine demographic discourse in relation to the sphere of reproductive rights and health, a framing that brings to light contradictions and even paradoxes. My findings suggest that discourses that juxtapose fertile migrant women with un-reproductive Italian women do not directly translate into systemic policies and practices aimed at reducing migrant women's fertility. Instead, demographic politics are distilled through other political projects and commitments, often limiting intervention to the dimension of discourse and governmentality. Unlike top-down demographic policies like those that linger in the social memory of Italians from the fascist period, or the vitapolitics being brought to bear in the politics of the embryo, pronatalist politics in Italy work through governmental techniques of power which aim to influence "the conduct of conduct" (Foucault 1982: 220-221) by shaping subjectivities and engendering desires. As scholars of governmentality note governing through freedom and agency generates inherently unpredictable effects (Dean 1999: 11).

Insights from critical demography, the anthropology of reproduction, and Foucauldian theorizations of power and discourse inform my analysis. Migrant cultural mediators, health care staff, and migrant advocates shared generally positive assessments of reproductive, particularly obstetrical, health services for migrant women

in Milan, including for those who are undocumented. This finding was doubly surprising to me in light of intensifying alarmist demographic discourse that targets migrant women's reproduction and of the "erosion of reproductive services from within" decried by Italian women's health advocates. Moreover, these positive assessments run counter not only to these trends in Italian society, but also to research that finds significant reproductive health outcome differentials between Italian and migrant women (see, for example, Bollini et al. 2009, cited in Severino and Bonati 2010: 57 and Lombardi and Carrillo 2011).

In this chapter I seek to tease out these contradictory findings by showing that they reflect a complex and contradictory synergy of political and moral commitments that include the ascendance of moral politics of life that award subjecthood and rights to the moment of conception; the recognition, enshrined in Italy's Constitution, of health care as a universal human right and of pregnancy and motherhood as requiring special "safeguarding," even at the expense of women's agency and rights;[2] of the existence of spaces and services, such as family planning clinics and cultural mediation, informed by feminist commitments to reproductive rights; and finally, they reflect the limitations of liberal democracies to explicitly intervene, and more so to intervene in differential ways, in the fertility of their subjects (see King 2000). In addition to the sometimes surprising effects of these institutional articulations, I also show that demographic warnings over the future of the nation are amenable to reinterpretation. Both migrant

[2] Article 32 of the Italian Constitution reads "The Republic safeguards health as a fundamental right of the individual and as a collective interest, and guarantees free medical care to the indigent" (Senato della Repubblica 1947, http://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/istituzione/costituzione_inglese.pdf).

and Italian women reappropriate and redeploy warnings over their problematic fertility into biopolitical claims for citizenship and a less precarious life.

These findings suggest that while demographic concerns are global in scope they always play out over complex social and moral terrains. The relationship between population politics and practices is dynamic, multifaceted, and unpredictable, especially when population politics aim to shape reproductive practices through discourses, incitements, and expertise. Despite criticism that Foucault's theorization of power leaves little room for agency, this approach in fact foregrounds the possibilities for agency and resistance. However, while my focus is on highlighting the contradictions and indeterminacies of demographic politics in Italy as they emerge in their articulations with other political projects, I hope to avoid glossing over the inequalities that structure the domain of reproduction (Colen 1995). Additionally, while my research focused on the dimension of politics and discourses and not on the direct observation of the micro-interactions that take place behind closed doors between health care providers and their patients, I am cognizant of the disciplining and political divestment of migrants that may occur under the guise of welfare or universal human rights (Fassin 2007; Ong 1995; Ticktin 2006).

My analysis is informed by Rhoda Kanaaneh's notion of "political arithmetic, often a highly racialized, classed, and gendered form of knowledge/power," the effects of which "can be overestimated" (Kanaaneh 2002: 27). Kanaaneh cautions that population politics often do not produce the desired effects. I find Kanaaneh's application of Derek Sayer's (1994) questions about state projects to demographic issues very productive to think through the contradictions that emerge at the

intersections of demographic discourse and reproductive health practices in Italy. Sayer asks:

> First, how cohesive historically are hegemonic projects? Second, even if they are cohesive at some level – of intellectuality – how cohesive are they when actually translated into practice? Third, even if these projects are successful at both levels, how confining are they anyway? And fourth, who is the audience for this performance? Or are we just dealing with stories that elites tell themselves? (Sayer 1994:371, cited in Kanaaneh 2002: 27-28).

In this chapter I start by delineating the "stories that elites tell themselves" in Italy about the threats posed by Italy's demographics and the history that informs and constrains them. I then turn my attention to the stories that migrant women told me about their experiences with reproductive services in Italy and to projects and policies that run counter to the "political arithmetic" of political and expert discourses. I show that practices of reproductive health care and migrant advocacy suggest that demographic discourses in Italy are in fact not "cohesive … when actually translated into practice."

Sarah Willen's (2005) research on migrant women's reproductive health care in Israel provides another example of the contradictory effects of demographic alarmism and immigration policies and advocacy. Willen frames her analysis of the demographic context of selective pronatalism in Israel and the challenges that the global political economy of migration poses to the social contract between a nation-state and its citizens. Willen finds that despite Israel demographic politics, the institutional hold of Israeli pronatalism comes to invest, in a weakened form, even natalism deemed a threat to the nation, at least in the context of the leftist Tel Aviv. In this she identifies the important role played by NGOs active in migrant advocacy in acting as a "counterweight" to demographic state policies. In emphasizing the possibilities, if

limited, for advocacy of migrant undocumented women enabled by policies seemingly at odds with nationalist demographic concerns, her analysis sheds light on the relationship between pronatalism, migration, reproduction.

The chapter is divided into three parts. In the first section I draw on literature on the history of the discipline of demography and of population interventions in Italy as a context for the political and expert discourses that have gained legitimacy over the past two decades. Drawing on ethnographic data I show that this newfound legitimacy enables respected demographers and conservative politicians to identify persistently low fertility rates among Italians and a fast-growing immigrant population as a threat to the integrity of the nation. In the next section I turn to the experiences of migrant cultural mediators employed in health services who articulate a relatively positive assessment of reproductive services for migrant women in Milan. In my analysis of these narratives I bring to bear the institutional, legal, political, and moral contexts of these experiences. I argue that even as these narratives run counter to other findings about health inequities between migrant and Italian women that suggest that reproductive stratification is in fact a problem in Italy, they do remind us to consider how demographic discourse intersects and articulates with local political and moral contexts. I conclude this section by showing how the urgency of demographic discourse is amenable to being reframed and redeployed to assert the reproductive contributions of immigrants to the nation.

In the last section of this chapter I examine the way Italian feminists and women's health activists contest the discourse of demographic alarmism. Italian feminists, especially women of reproductive age, were critical of the politics of life and the population. I draw on participant observation in discussions of low fertility to show

how feminist critiques of demographic discourse deflect discourses of low fertility by attributing them to the failures of the social state. In contesting the terms of demographic discourse, feminist counter-discourses made demands for a less precarious economic and social situation. Finally, I point to the continued relevance of competing demographic discourses by showing how concerns with overpopulation have not been replaced by anxiety over low fertility. Whatever the framing of "population problems," women's bodies and reproductive practices are centrally implicated. I conclude by suggesting that while demographic alarmism has so far failed in its intended objective of increasing the birth rates of Italian-born women, it has succeeded in legitimating explicit political profamilist interventions, which I examine in the following chapter.

Demographic Discourse: A Brief History

The "problem" of the population

Political concerns over demographic statistics and attempts to intervene to alter them are not new in Italy. The birth rate of Italians has been a 'problem' for the State for at least a century, though the nature of the problem has varied. The fascist regime's support for the new science of demographic statistics paralleled its obsession with the birth rates of Italians. The regime famously instituted pronatalist policies such as a tax on bachelors and criminalized contraception and abortion, including the dissemination of information about them, deeming them 'crimes against the health and integrity of the stock' (Horn 1991: 585). In addition to punitive policies, financial and other incentives were also introduced; these took the forms of "marriage loans" to be "repaid" in children, payments for children born alive, train discounts for honeymoons, and lactation rooms in factories (Ipsen 1997, 217-239). These measures were mostly

symbolic as the requirements were hard to meet (Ipsen 2007).[3] Neither coercion nor incentives, however, ultimately succeeded in increasing birth rates; in fact, the penetration of the fascist state into the family-making practices of Italians engendered resistance (see de Grazia 1992; Passerini 1987; Wilson 1996).

Resistance to population politics continued for decades following the demise of the fascist regime. What has been possible to say and do in the realm of population politics in Italy has a lot to do with the legacy of fascist population politics (Krause 2001; Treves 2007). In the postwar period, pronatalist policies were delegitimized because of their association with fascism even as policies on the family and reproduction, such as the criminalization of contraception and abortion continued through the 1970s (Caldwell 1978). When I described my project to an Italian feminist sociologist using the term "population politics" she cautioned me that no one would use those words in Italy because of their fascist connotations.[4]

A "long 'demographic silence"' followed the "demographic intoxication" of the fascist regime (Treves 2007: 47). Historical geographer Anna Treves has traced the evolution of demography and population politics in Italy, with a particular focus on a period often ignored: the postwar era through the 1970s. She describes how the prestigious status fascism accorded to the discipline of demography vanished in its wake, the term "demography" became "almost unpronounceable and declaring oneself a demographer almost impossible" (Treves 2007: 48). So intertwined was the discipline of demography with the fascist regime that for a period of at least three decades after

[3] It is these positive, incentivizing interventions in marriage, the family, and reproduction that most echo the current politics of fertility in Italy, with its "baby bonuses" and proposals for "baby bonds," an account for each child born that would combine state financial supports with family contributions (see, for example, Livi Bacci 2003).
[4] Fieldnote, "Conference on the Family," May 25, 2007.

the end of World War Two "to speak of 'demographic policy'" was equivalent to uttering "one of the names of fascism" (Treves 2007: 47). This silence lingered in the postwar period, not just among the political classes but also among the very demographic experts who had founded a number of demographic journals during fascism (Treves 2007: 47). In the postwar period, articles on Italian demography "disappeared" from the pages of these journals, replaced by other kinds of "social and economic statistics" and articles on methodology (Treves 2007: 47). Demographers became statisticians and avoided demography to such an extent that detailed data on postwar demography in Italy are lacking (Treves 2007: 48).

The disappearance of demography did not mean that there was no discourse on population in the postwar period. Population issues still mattered, but were researched and discussed indirectly. In the 1950s and 1960s, demographic discourse became the invert of that espoused by fascist demographers: the problem was no longer defined by a deficiency of population but rather by an excess, particularly as it concerned the south (Treves 2007: 48-49). In fact, Italy's overall TFR in the postwar period reached its highest level at 2.702 in 1964 (Istat 2011d: 109). These arguments recapitulated at the national level the global overpopulation concerns of the times. Yet, when one looks at the statistics available for the decades following the war, the rise in birth rates is not that drastic, and not beyond what would be expected. Not much had changed since fascist time and yet the undisputed notion that Italy's population was deficient was replaced with the equally undisputed fact that Italy had a dangerous excess of population (Treves 2007: 50).

The post-fascist period was marked by significant continuity in family and reproductive policy (Caldwell 1989: 170-2). The criminalization of abortion and contraception, for example lasted until the 1970s.[5] No longer justified by a pronatalism at the service of national military power, the continuation of fascist population policies reflected instead the powerful influence in postwar Italy of the Christian Democratic Party and the Vatican (Caldwell 1978). In the 1960s and 1970s feminist campaigns to legalize abortion, contraception, and divorce, to reform patriarchal family legislation, and to found family planning clinics, known as *consultori familiari*, challenged leftover fascist policies and Catholic ideologies of reproduction and the family. This period marks the beginning of a new phase in the politics of population in Italy where the nature of "the problem" reverses once again to population decline and low birth rates (Krause 2001; Treves 2007: 55). Demography begins to come out of its postwar silence and to shed its fascist associations as a new generation of demographers "timidly" returns to the study of the Italian population (Treves 2007: 55). In the decades to follow, demographers become increasingly emboldened in their research and warnings over the low fertility rates of Italians, helped by emerging critiques of coercive Malthusian family planning policies around the world (Treves 2007: 56; see Hartmann 1995). These expert discourses make their way into the media and prepare the terrain for a mostly successful overcoming of a "giant taboo" toward a "natalist renewal" (Treves 2007: 57).

Alarmism over Italy's population underwent a third inversion in the 1990s, coming back full circle to concerns over population decline (Krause 2001). However,

[5] Contraception was legalized in1971, divorce in 1970, and abortion in 1978. In what came to signal a significant loss in the social influence of the Vatican, the legalization of divorce and abortion were confirmed by popular referenda in 1974 and 1981 respectively.

until the 2000s, politicians remained cautious to suggest any intervention that could be construed as pronatalist and could trigger comparisons with fascism. As the Italian left, the undisputed heir of anti-fascism, took on the problem of low fertility in the mid-2000s, the "natalist renewal" was fully legitimated (Krause and Marchesi 2007; Treves 2007: 57). The "natalist taboo" is successfully overcome, pronatalism became once again politically feasible, and "the State declared itself newly ready to penetrate the intimacy of the bedroom to encourage couples to make babies, or to make more babies" (Treves 2007: 58). By the late 2000s politicians across the political spectrum had embraced the problem of Italy's low fertility, often framing interventions in terms of family policy (Krause and Marchesi 2007).

Population Arithmetic

Unlike the postwar period, for which detailed demographic data is lacking, fertility rates in Italy today are constantly monitored and demographic statistics regarding births and migration are published multiple times a year by various institutes and reported in newspaper and newscasts. Those statistics show that in the mid-1990s total fertility rates (TFR)[6] dipped below 1.2 children per woman (Caltabiano et al 2009, 681), well below the 2.1 children per woman considered replacement level for an industrialized population. Today, even with rates that have increased to 1.4 children per woman (Istat 2009 in Caltabiano et al 2009, 681), Italy continues to be described as "a country with *persistent very low* fertility levels" (Caltabiano et al 2009, 681). An important dimension of the discourse on fertility decline among Italians is its coincidence with a significant increase in the migrant population, which constituted 7% of the total

[6] TFR refers to total fertility rates, "the number of children that a woman would bear if she survived through the ages of childbearing and gave birth at the age-specific rates of the time period" (Johnson-Hanks 2008: 302).

population in 2010 (Istat 2010: 1), and with the higher fertility rates of migrants reported regularly in demographic statistics, which in the same year totaled 13.6% of total births (Istat 2010: 2).[7] According to a 2010 report by the Italian Ministry of Health, the majority of immigrant women having children in Italy originate from other European Union countries (about 40%), followed by 26% originating from Africa, 17% from Asia, and 9.5% from South America (Ministero della Salute 2010: 20-21).

The "problem" of low fertility among Italian women is often juxtaposed with the growth of the immigrant population, both through immigration and births. Anxieties over the racial and cultural reproduction of the nation, which anthropologist Elizabeth Krause has described as "demographic nationalism" (2006), are articulated by politicians as well as by some demographers. In a 2008 hearing on low birth rates in Parliament, for example, the Undersecretary of the Family, Carlo Giovinardi, warned that:

> This is a country that is dying from low birth rates, from the aging of the population, from a migratory flow so massive that it renders integration difficult since there is no longer an Italian society into which non-EU immigrants can integrate. … If this is the trend, in two or three generations, Italians will disappear.[8]

Demographic issues are extensively covered in the media, explored in books, and featured as prominent topics in the discourses of politicians and cultural commentators. Newspaper headlines warn of a looming crisis. Three consecutive years of headlines describing Italy's statistical institution's report on the population in the leftist *la*

---

[7] In 1995, children born of foreign parents represented 1.7% of the births (Istat 2009, 3). The increase in births by migrant parents between 2009 and 2010 was of 10.4% (Istat 2010, 3). Regional differences in immigration patterns are reflected in the birth rates as well: 19% of the total births in the North are classified as "foreign children," in the Center the percentage of foreign children to total births is 14%, while in the South it drops to 3.4% (Istat 2009: 3).

[8] Undersecretary of the Family, Parliamentary Testimony, July 2008 Commission XII Affari Sociali, Audizione del sottosegretario di Stato alla Presidenza del Consiglio, Carlo Giovanardi, sugli orientamenti programmatici del Governo in materia di famiglia e di droga, Seduta di giovedi 3 luglio 2008, http://new.camera.it/_dati/lavori/stencomm/12/audiz2/2008/0703/s000r.htm, 8-9.

Repubblica daily show an increasing alarmism: "Istat, in Italy more residents and children. Decisive the presence of immigrants"[9] (2007); "Italians are almost 60 million, growing thanks to immigrants. 564, 000 newborns, of which 60,000 are foreigners. But demographic growth is near zero"[10] (2008); "Istat: 'We have gone beyond 60 millions, record-breaking births from foreign parents. The children of immigrants fill 19% of the cradles of northern Italy"[11] (2009). *La Padania,* the daily published by the far right *Lega Nord* party, also covered the publication of Istat's report on the population, writing "We are the grandfathers of Europe and the fathers of Islam: Many elderly and few youths, more divorces and less marriages" (Pesante 2006).[12] In early 2007, *La Padania* used demographic statistics to warn of an "invasion" of the "cradles": "And now 'the invasion' comes from the cradle. According to demographic projections, 10% of the children that will be born this year will be children of immigrants." The "problem" of Italy's low birth rates is not one of absolute population numbers, but rather a racialized and nationalist discourse about who is filling Italy's cradles.

In the mid-2000s, the conservative coalition led by Silvio Berlusconi instituted the 'baby-bonus,' a financial reward for mothers having a second child or beyond. Significantly, only European Union citizens were eligible for the 1000€ one-time bonus (Krause and Marchesi 2007). In 2007, the Ministry for Policies on the Family, a

---

[9] "Istat, in Italia più residenti e bambini. Decisiva la presenza degli stranieri L'istituto di statistica evidenzia il ruolo degli immigrati. Ritorna l'emigrazione dal Sud al Nord, culle di nuovo 'piene,'" la Repubblica.it, July 5 2007.

[10] "Gli italiani sono quasi 60 milioni in crescita grazie agli immigrati 564 mila i nuovi nati di cui 60 mila stranieri. Ma crescita demografica vicina allo zero." La Repubblica.it, July 3, 2008, http://www.repubblica.it/2008/05/sezioni/cronaca/istat/istat/istat.html, last accessed August 21, 2009.

[11] "Istat: 'Siamo oltre 60 milioni,' record di nascite da genitori stranieri. Superato il traguardo grazie agli stranieri. I figli degli immigrati riempiono il 19% delle culle del nord Italia" la Repubblica.it, 23 June 2009, http://www.repubblica.it/2009/04/ sezioni/cronaca/istat-popolazione/istat-poplazione2/istat-poplazione2.html, last accessed August 21, 2009.

[12] Despite its title, the article does not actually mention Islam, but rather focuses on Italy's aging, fertility rates, highlighting the higher fertility of immigrants, and the crowding of prisons, which the article attributes in large part to immigrants.

ministry established for the first time by the center-left Prodi government, organized the first National Conference on the Family. The conference, with its slogan "The Family Grows, Italy Grows" (*Cresce la famiglia, cresce l'Italia*), marks the legitimacy obtained by pronatalist discourses and policy-making in Italy, a shift enthusiastically described by Minister of Health Livia Turco as a "cultural leap" for Italy.[13] Over the past decade, the period of demographic "abstinence" that followed fascism has undeniably given way to "demographic intoxication" (2007: 47).

Of Demographic Winter and a False Spring

With demographic discourse rehabilitated and the "problem" of low fertility rates elevated to the level of national threat, explicitly pronatalist projects and discourses proliferated in Italy, often targeting women. In warnings about missing Italian babies the politics of life and demographic anxieties converge. These convergences were evident at a conference titled, "*Inverno Demografico*" [14] ("Demographic Winter") co-sponsored by the city of Milan and the Italian Movement for Life. The poster for this conference caught my eye as I was walking near the University of Milan, in the city's downtown. Written in large letters over a landscape painting of icebergs, "Demographic Winter" evoked a natural disaster. The poster identifies the artwork as Friedrich's "Sea of Ice," a painting also known as "The Wreck of Hope," probably in reference to the shipwrecked remains buried under the jutting icebergs. The imagery warns of a disaster foretold, of death without the hope of

[13] Digital recording, May 24, 2007.
[14] The full title of the conference reads: "Inverno Demografico: dinamiche demografiche e crescita zero in Europa, Italia e Lombardia" (Demographic Winter: Demographic Dynamics and Zero Growth in Europe, Italy and Lombardy). A PDF of the conference flyer is available at: http://www.to.chiesadimilano.it/or/ADMI/esy/objects/docs/685466/Volantino_Inverno_demografico.pdf.

renewal. Below this catastrophic imagery was the slogan of the Lombard Movement for Life: "defending life to defend our future."[15]

The featured speaker was Gian Carlo Blangiardo, a leading demographer of migration with Lombardy's respected institute on migration research and statistics, *Iniziative e studi sulla multietnicità (*ISMU). I had seen professor Blangiardo give papers at numerous conferences on immigration. This was a different kind of conference. Instead of the free statistical and qualitative research on immigration provided to participants at conferences of the migration institute, volunteers with the Milanese Movement for Life hawked pamphlets about conception and the beginning of life, abortion, and the traditional family. The audience consisted of about 50 middle-aged or older men and women, many of them members of the pro-life movement.

After speeches by conservative journalists and by Milanese officials, the President of Milan's Movement for Life, Paolo Sorbi, introduced the demographer. Sorbi celebrated the "new centrality of demography" in the wake of "sociocultural changes and family dynamics" and of shifts in "geopolitical conditions" "over the past 5 or 6 years". "The heart of demographic dynamics," argued the pro-life activist, "is the issue of the family. It's not just a sociological problem, it's a human problem of non-replacement: children are not born!"[16]

In his speech the demographer made the case for a lingering demographic winter without true renewal in Italy. He argued that interventions were necessary because Italy's demographic situation was comparable to that of a cold and barren country: "the setting is of winter, not of spring, which renews itself giving fruit." The demographer

---

[15] "Difendere la vita per difendere il nostro futuro." http://www.to.chiesadimilano.it/or/ADMI/esy/objects/docs/685466/Volantino_Inverno_demografico.pdf.
[16] Fieldnote and digital recording, "Demographic Winter," April 14, 2007.

was particularly interested in dismissing recent increases in Italian birth rates: "demographic winter exists, it's a rigid, heavy winter." The promise of a thaw in the uptick in birth rates was due to higher immigrant fertility and not to an increase in Italian women's birth rates, which would produce the "right" kinds of fruit. With "10% of children born in Italy being from immigration," the demographer did acknowledge that migrants contribute "an injection of vitality." However, he cautioned that increased immigrant births, along with a growing population due to immigration, threatened to overwhelm the national body. The demographer warned that "where immigration assumes excessive speed, uncontrollable reactions are released. Time is needed to immunize ourselves."

Despite acknowledging that demographers could not find any causal links between the legalization of abortion and Italy's fertility decline, "we looked," he said,[17] the demographer still noted that "the over 5 million children who are not here" because of abortion represent a sizeable "missing population." Its absence is further compounded by the fact that by now these missing Italians (ostensibly) would be reproducing too. With Italy's immigrant population in 2007 estimated to be around 5 million in 2007, the implication that the "missing population" of aborted Italians[18] has been replaced by immigrants is hard to miss. The demographer proposed that low birth rates were "linked to vast cultural changes, the debate on abortion, divorce" and changes in women's roles. Also to blame were "hedonistic tendencies," epitomized by the "need" for that "trip to the Caribbean." This cultural orientation to hedonism was

[17] Blangiardo suggested that low birth rates were "linked to vast cultural changes, the debate on abortion, divorce" and changes in women's roles (Blangiardo, fieldnote 4/14/07).
[18] This calculation doesn't acknowledge the fact that a portion of these "missing children" would have been born to migrant women who have higher abortion rates than Italian women (Ministero della Salute 2010; Spinelli et al. 2006). For the purposes of this talk the unborn became uniformly Italian.

responsible for generating a situation in which the "missing" Italians have to be replaced by immigrants. "We can import them," he concluded, "but it's not the same thing."

The "Demographic Winter" conference presented Italy's "problem" of low fertility in moral and cultural terms, as a problem of the weakening of the traditional family, as an outcome of hedonistic consumerism, tinged with Islamophobic references to "geopolitical" concerns. The demographer highlighted differences in fertility rates between migrant and Italian women, and dismissed the notion that immigrant fertility is a solution to Italy's demographic issues, citing threat posed by un-integrable and inassimilable differences centered on the family. In this framing, the low fertility of Italian women is juxtaposed with a threatening "excess" of immigrants, "an enormous demographic pressure at the borders, which will continue for decades," as well as an internal pressure from the higher fertility rates of migrant women.

The Limits of Population Arithmetic

The "Demographic Winter" conference showcased the urgency of some expert and political demographic discourses that warn that the survival of the nation is at stake. Pro-natalist and pro-life aims converge in demographic alarmism and in incentives such as the baby-bonus. Less visible policies, such as the defunding of public reproductive services in favor of Catholic clinics described in the previous chapters,[19] or a moral politics of the family are interventions through which pronatalist discourse can materializes into practice.

[19] These interventions affect migrant women disproportionality, since migrant women access public family planning clinic at significantly higher rates than Italian women (Lombardi and Corrillo 2011).

The politics of life and exhortations to Italian women to have more babies, however, are not always aligned. In 2004, the Italian Parliament approved legislation strongly supported by the Vatican that restricted access to assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs). The law disciplined ARTs in the name of protecting embryos and the "natural" family, marking a new, if seemingly paradoxical, era of moral intervention in reproduction. The debate over the ART legislation hinged over the subjectivity of the embryo and the superiority of the traditional family as the site of reproduction.[20] This paradoxical restriction in access to fertility treatment in Italy in the time of demographic anxiety reminds that demographic discourse is not simply a matter of numbers. In addition to the desire to encourage the birth of more Italian babies, demographic concerns intersect intensifying moral commitments to life and family. Catholic politicians supported the restriction of assisted reproduction in the name of the right of the embryo not just to life, but to a heteronormative, biologically related family. Pronatalism and pro-familism are tightly coupled in Italian demographic policies, as the comments of an Italian parliamentarian well-known for her Catholic orientation, illustrate: "We don't want, however, to do as France has done. We want children born within marriage, and thus, we also need politics that contribute to stabilize familial ties. We are talking about a vast cultural work (*si tratta di un grande lavoro culturale*)."[21] In the rest of the paper I examine how the cultural work of demographic discourse and

[20] Of course, the assertion of embryo subjecthood ultimately could translate into a direct intervention in fertility as it could erode contraception and abortion services.
[21] Binetti's comments are all the more striking because they came in response to the testimony cited above that warned of disappearing Italians replaced by immigrants, http://new.camera.it/_dati/lavori/stencomm/12/audiz2/2008/0703/s000r.htm.

moral pronatalism is experienced by women differentially targeted by it and how it is enacted in policies and practices related to reproductive health.

Migrant Women & Reproductive Health

How do these discourses of demographic alarmism, "replacement anxiety," and moral pronatalism translate into practices at the point of access of reproductive services? One way of assessing the effect of demographic discourse is through the very fertility statistics that fuel demographic alarmism. Statistical data suggest that pro-natalist interventions, both discursive and material, have not succeeded in changing fertility rates among Italian-origin women. This lack of translation of pronatalism into more of the "right" kinds of babies is not an exception. Fascist pronatalism was famously unsuccessful in boosting fertility. Working in the context of Israeli and Palestinian demographic politics, Rhoda Kanaaneh notes that 'population policies are frequently unsuccessful, at least by their stated goals … The desired production of 'manageable' subjects often seems to remain elusive." (Kanaaneh 2002: 27). Demographic policies and discourses, however, may have other, unintended and unstated consequences as they intersect with the broader context in which they are deployed.

In this section I draw on the experiences of migrant women with health services, both as patients and as cultural and linguistic mediators. I examine a women's health program for migrant women, and a policy that grants pregnant undocumented migrant women temporary residency permits. These experiences, policies, and health care projects reveal the limits of demographic discourses that warn of the dearth of Italian-origin babies and of the surplus of "foreign" babies as it encounters other political,

moral, and social commitments. Because I was unable to obtain access to systematic, direct observation of interactions between health providers and migrant women, my data cannot speak to the nature of those interactions and the assumptions and disciplining technologies that may structure them (see for example Ong 1995; Rapp 1999; Salih 2002).

My data do speak to the perception among some migrant cultural mediators and advocates that reproductive services represent a bright spot relative to other institutional settings. In conjunction with another finding, that migrant women, advocates, and activists appropriate demographic discourse to assert their contributions to the nation and to demand citizenship for migrants' children, these data highlight the limits of discourses to shape reproductive practices and subjectivities toward particular aims (see Dean 1999). I argue that a combination of feminist commitments to women's health, the presence and work of cultural mediators, and policies such as a residency permit for pregnancy converge to provide avenues for advocacy and support for women whose reproduction is marked as a threat to the nation. Conversely, I show that the universalist orientation of anti-abortion politics target migrant women's abortion rights as they do Italian women, though the consequences and implications may differ. These findings are limited to the city of Milan; in regions of Italy where feminist and public reproductive services and cultural mediation are weaker, the entanglement of demographic concerns and universalist politics of life and solidarity may produce different outcomes.

Research on migrant women's reproductive health shows continuing inequalities in health outcomes relative to Italian women (Bollini et al. 2009, cited in Severino and

Bonati 2010: 57; Lombardi and Carrillo 2011). A meta-analysis on literature concerning reproductive health outcomes in twelve European states found significant indicators of inequality between Italian citizen and migrant women; these differences include lower frequency and delayed prenatal care appointments, higher rates of premature births, and fetal and neonatal deaths among migrant women, among other indicators (Bollini et al. 2009, cited in Severino and Bonati 2010: 57). A review of the statistics on health access of Italians and migrant women also shows significant gaps between women who are Italian citizens and migrant women in the rates of utilization of preventative health services like pap tests and mammograms (Lombardi and Carrillo 2011).[22] Despite these differentials in health access, however, Italian sociologist Lia Lombardi finds that migrant women's access to reproductive services seems "overall adequate," a more positive assessment compared to Lombardi's research in the early 2000s (Lombardi 2004). A quantitative and qualitative research project conducted by the National Institute of Health on migrant women and abortion (Spinelli et al. 2006) found that generally migrant women generally expressed satisfaction with abortion services in Italy (48). Studies also quantify what is obvious to anyone involved in public health services: migrant women access public reproductive health services at much higher rates than Italian women (Lombardi and Carrillo 2011: 19).[23] This difference point to the implications of the disproportionate effects that the erosion of public reproductive services is likely to visit upon migrant women's reproductive health.

---

[22] According to data elaborated by Istat, 51.6% of migrant women of appropriate age obtain pap smears and 42.9% receive mammograms, as opposed to 71.8% and 73.1% respectively among Italian women (Lombardi and Carrillo 2011: 18).

[23] Lombardi reports that over 50% of migrant women see a gynecologist in a public health setting as opposed to only 16.5% of Italian women, who tend to see a private provider. Similarly, migrant women's use of public family clinics, at about 38.3.3% is about three times higher than that of Italian women (13.7% of Italian respondent reported accessing a public consultorio familiare) (Lombardi and Carrillo 2011: 19).

Statistical differences in health care utilization, however, reflect more than inequities related to health care, especially in a context like Italy where both undocumented and documented pregnant migrant women have a right, at least on paper, to equivalent prenatal services as Italian women. Some of the differences in health outcome may reflect the discrimination that structure migrant women's lives and limited access to preventative and primary health care for undocumented migrants in general. Other gaps in outcome may be due to structural obstacles outside the scope of health care services. Some differences may reflect culturally inflected practices and understandings of prenatal testing, such as differences in rates of utilization of ultrasound scans during pregnancy (see Rapp 1999, Gammeloft 2007).[24]

Mediating Reproductive Health

Nina, a cultural mediator originally from Peru, was a participant in the cultural mediation course I attended. Like many of the other students in this course, Nina had been working as a mediator for years and was taking the course to obtain the certificate of completion that would make her eligible for more mediation opportunities. Nina invited me to meet her in the rundown office of the renters' union where she worked a couple of afternoons a week helping immigrants to navigate the bureaucracy of obtaining public housing and providing advocacy for renters. After I helped with some of the paperwork, we sat down in the bare office to talk. Nina described the dire situations of the immigrants she came across in her work at the union, and was highly critical of the lack of social services and limited public housing options. Nina was

[24] While migrant women have fewer ultrasound scans than Italian women—4.4 scans per pregnancy among Italian women versus 5.6 scans per pregnancy among migrant women (Lombardi and Carrillo 2011: 20)—they still have twice the rate of 2.7 ultrasounds per pregnancy found among US women in 2005-2006 (Siddique et. al 2009).

particularly upset by the process of family reunification; on paper migrants were eligible to bring certain members of their family to Italy, but in practice the process was a "*via crucis*," the long suffering path of Jesus on his way to crucifixion. Accessing that right is made difficult by minimum income, housing, and other paperwork requirements, which sometimes delays the process for years. Nina discussed the pain of having been separated from her children for four years after migrating to Italy and the psychological consequences she attributed to that separation. Her dreams of returning to Peru to participate in a project with an indigenous group in the Andes had to be scrapped because of her oldest son's problem. Nina told me that she had decided to put her life on hold in order to go back and "finish this work of being mother" with her grown son. She recounted telling him: "I want to finish this work, and then we'll see, you'll see that it will be better for you too."

Despite these difficulties and her experiences with the daily discriminations and inequities experienced by immigrants, Nina responded to my question about her work mediating for Latin American women in family planning clinics and hospitals with a very uncharacteristic positive assessment:

> Nina: I mean, I can tell you that within this, this, of this field, in this health service, it's positive. Immigrant women experience it this way too, I can tell you as a migrant woman.
>
> Milena: at least there is something [positive]!
>
> Nina: yes, luckily, luckily, those who started to offer this type of service, or who offer it are people who have a higher social and political conscience of those who are in the government… they are the ones, they are always the ones who have created this type of service because they have seen the need.

Nina invoked a kind of universal sisterhood, a feminine orientation toward care, to further explain why she thought women's health services for migrant women were good:

> I mean, we who are women can also understand other women, for the fact of gender, we are women, we don't see the race, I'm sorry, not the race, we don't see the country of origin, we don't see these things, we only see the need of us women. For that reason, um, I think that, um, within this area, it is great, the service is good.

In contrast, Nina described other health services for migrants as being terrible:

> if we have to speak in general about immigrant health, here in Italy, or at least here in Milan, I can tell you that the service is awful… I can guarantee you, I have experienced myself personally, with the death of my father, and it's not a unique case. … I can tell you that the things that I saw in the month that I lived in the hospital, the care for immigrants is awful.

In our interview she described seeing migrant patients having to be operated multiple times for appendicitis and implied that her father's death was caused by malpractice fueled by discrimination. Despite recent painful experiences with Italian health care providers, Nina spoke positively of migrant women's access to reproductive health services.

I met Carolina, a cultural mediator who worked in women's health and who had migrated from Ecuador in the mid 1990s, through her involvement with the women's health association *Donne, Diritti, Salute*. Carolina worked in a migrant women's health center located in a Milanese hospital and in public family planning clinics. One day a week she provided support to migrant women undergoing abortions in the hospital. During an interview in a noisy McDonald's in Milan's *galleria*, she described positive experiences in navigating Italian reproductive health care services on behalf of Latin American women. She acknowledged that these positive experiences may have something to do with the presence of cultural mediators:

> in the *consultori* I don't see that a professional says 'no, I won't put in a request for an abortion or for these tests.' This has never happened, and I don't think that it will ever happen either. I don't know, this, our presence has also helped a lot at looking differently at the Other. I can't say how it was before, I can't say how it would be, how it went, I really don't think that they don't do them, they know their duty.

The real issue, she told me, was not the treatment of migrant women by health service providers; it was the laws that governed migrants' rights: "in terms of services, what a pregnant woman has a right to is something that comes from above that doesn't depend on the family planning clinics or the centers [in the hospitals], that is to say, the laws which are applied each time in a harsher manner." Carolina's concern was with the recent tightening of the requirements for obtaining a residency permit for reasons of pregnancy for undocumented pregnant women.

Since Italy's 1998 Turco-Napolitano immigration law, undocumented migrant women who are pregnant are legally "undeportable" and become eligible for a temporary residency permit for the duration of the pregnancy and for six months postpartum.[25] A 2000 ruling by Italy's Constitutional Court extended the non-deportability of an undocumented pregnant woman to her cohabiting husband.[26] Obtaining the residency permit for pregnancy temporarily legalizes an undocumented woman's status and grants her access to free health care. Copays for diagnostic tests and for any expenses related to birth are waved, as they are for Italian women. The residency permit for reasons of pregnancy protects women from deportation, however,

---

[25] This right is established by Article 19 of the 1998 Turco-Napolitano immigration law: "*Divieti di espulsione e di respingimento. Disposizioni in materia di categorie vulnerabili*" ("Prohibition of expulsion and refusal of entry. Dispositions in matters of vulnerable categories"). http://www.altalex.com/index.php?idnot=51626.

[26] The Constitutional Court ruling, number 376, July 27, amends the text of the 1998 Turco-Napolitano Immigration Law. http://www.altalex.com/index.php?idnot=51626. Unmarried fathers are not eligible for the residency permit until the baby is born and they claim paternity, and are thus eligible for a permit due to "family cohesion" reasons.

it does not permit employment and it is not renewable after the six months postpartum period. Additionally, the permit is not granted for the maximum length of pregnancy and six months postpartum, but requires multiple renewals. The paperwork necessary for each renewal includes certification of the pregnancy by a doctor. This medical surveillance of pregnant women enables authorities to rescind a permit if the woman is no longer pregnant, though she remains eligible in cases of a still-birth.

Residency permits for undocumented pregnant women are not unique to Italy. Germany, for example, also grants temporary permits on the basis of pregnancy, though with more limited benefits (Castaneda 2008). The act of applying for the permit makes an undocumented migrant woman visible to authorities; its temporary nature makes that visibility doubly problematic. However, unlike what Castaneda found in Germany, where being undocumented is a crime, I did not hear this concern expressed by migrant advocates or mediators in Italy during my fieldwork.[27] From legal advocates, to doctors, to migrant cultural mediators, the permit for pregnancy was described to me as an important, if flawed, means to access health care, and even as a potential foothold toward legal status for migrant women. The permit, however, cannot be converted into permanent status, a point that was stressed to me by Irma, a migrant legal advocate who had migrated to Italy in the 1980s from Albania. Irma noted: "the legislator thought of a temporary protection, but not to go beyond the immigration laws." Voicing the perspective of the legislator she argued that they didn't want immigrants to come to Italy and have children in order to obtain legal residency.

[27] This vulnerability became much more significant with the approval of the 2009 "Security Act," which criminalized undocumented migrants and opened up the possibility that health care providers could inform the police about the immigration status of their patients. Previous immigration law in Italy forbade health care providers from notifying authorities.

Irma saw the permit as being deeply contradictory and her narrative reflected this assessment as she wove back and forth between its benefits and restrictions "luckily it exists, to give the possibility of protection, also for letting women birth in the hospital, for example there was a period that women gave birth at home." Yet, the restrictions are significant, from not being able to work during pregnancy, to the problem of what to do once the six months are over, to the paradoxical paperwork requirements, which included documenting a stable residence: "this is a major contradiction of this permit. I mean, on the one hand there is a safeguarding that should exist regardless of the fact that you have housing or not, on the contrary, the less you have housing the more you should be safeguarded." On the other hand, as Carolina noted, the requirement for the declaration of residency becomes the biggest obstacle to obtaining the permit. A 1978 law requires notification to the police within 48 hours of hosting a foreigner on one's property.[28] In order to legalize her status a woman needed her landlord or host to admit to be housing her illegally.[29] Carolina's interpretation was that officials at the *questura*, the police station then in charge of accepting and reviewing documentation for residency permits, had decided that residency permits on the basis of pregnancy were too easy to obtain. As a result, as Carolina complained,

---

[28] Article 12, law 191/78. The law actually requires this notification for any subjects, including Italians, with the difference that for Italians the notification within 48 hours is required for guests who plan a stay of over 30 days, while for foreigners it is required for any length of stay (http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/anagrafe_e_autocertificazioni-dichiarazione_di_ospitalita_5841.html).

[29] The approval under the Berlusconi government in 2009 of the "*Pacchetto Sicurezza*," ("Security Packet or Security Law) have resulted in further paradoxical requirements for undocumented women seeking a residency permit on the basis of pregnancy. The Security Laws introduced the criminalization of undocumented migration. Thus, undocumented women requesting a temporary residency permit on the basis of pregnancy are in fact declaring their criminal status (undocumented migration) for which they could be persecuted and fined between 5000 – 10,000 euros (Severino and Bonati 2010: 58). Additionally, renting to an undocumented migrant was also criminalized under the "Security Law" of 2009, thus making the declaration of residency required to apply for the permit a very tricky process. The Security Law also introduced the provision that a legal residency permit was required in order to be recognized as the parent of a newborn child.

these requirements put migrant women in a bind and put cultural mediators like herself who worked in institutional settings into the difficult position of indirectly pointing out loopholes without outright telling women to lie about the length of their residence on an official form:

> So, we have them read, we point it out that there is this thing [the 48-hour requirement]. When they ask I usually answer that the police doesn't go to the home to check. Hmm, that's my answer, what they do… so she makes it up, she understands also because I don't say anything, she knows I can't say anything, so she makes it up and we know that she makes it up, but we don't check up on it.[30]

Similarly, Irma described other loopholes in this requirement. She reported that such migrant women who live in a situation where declaring their housing could risk exposing other undocumented residents use friends or even nonprofits and associations as their official residence.

The Health and Support Center for Migrant Women and their Children

Carolina and Nina's experiences with reproductive health services for migrant women were at least partly informed by working at two highly respected migrant women's health centers *Centro salute e ascolto donne straniere ed i loro bambini* (The Health and Support Center for Migrant Women and their Children) located within two of Milan's largest hospitals, *Ospedale San Paolo* and *San Carlo*. The history, philosophy, advocacy and funding associated with this project provides a broader and institutional context to the experiences of cultural mediators. In an interview with the

[30] This requirement became even more difficult in the wake of the 2009 "Security Act," which in addition to criminalizing housing an undocumented person and the status of being undocumented itself, it also allowed, in contravention of Italy's immigration law, for health care providers to notify authorities about the immigration status of a patient. The security laws also raised the possibility that undocumented migrant women might lose custody of their children at birth by introducing the requirement of documented status in order to officially recognize a child. A coalition of health care associations, non-governmental and religious groups united in the successful "*Noi non segnialiamo*!" (We don't inform!) campaign (Severino and Bonati 2010: 51).

center's medical director, conducted in the small room where a social worker and cultural mediator conduct intakes of new patients, the director of the center, doctor Graziella Sacchetti, described its history. Sacchetti traced the origins of the center back to the mid-to-late 1990s when health providers like herself began to be confronted with increasing numbers of migrant women accessing reproductive and obstetrical care. The impetus to do something, she said, was a combination of wanting to do the right thing for these patients and to help health providers.

The original project put together in the late 1990s was a 900-hour course to train migrant women as cultural mediators. The course was funded by a grant from the Region of Lombardy, with monies set aside in the national immigration law. The course included an internship component that placed cultural mediators in training in the network of family planning clinics and hospitals. The explicit decision to tie cultural mediation together into the network of family planning clinics reflects the feminist political history and orientation of providers who, like Sacchetti, were involved in the project.

During the three months of the internship of the first cultural mediation course, health providers started reporting that migrant women were "self-selecting" their appointments for the days in which cultural mediators were present. Sacchetti remembered one provider complaining "hey, this is becoming a clinic just for migrant women!" With the need for cultural mediators in reproductive health setting becoming increasingly obvious, a need that Sacchetti described in terms of "all the problems related to lack of knowledge about health services, the lack of knowledge of the language, the lack of knowledge of many institutional paths," she and her collaborators

decided to propose a project for "a dedicated space that facilitated the overcoming of these barriers." Thus was born the Health and Support Center for Migrant Women and their Children. From its inception, the orientation of the center and its providers transcended a strictly medical approach. Sacchetti explained that while the first need at access was related to health this need

> immediately broadened, at the moment of first contact with the institution these people would bring, simultaneously, other problems related to their lives, which however were linked to health. There was the problem, obviously, of economic difficulty, of work, of their precariousness, their irregularity on the Italian territory.

Mindful of these problematics, the center proposed a project that would bring together cultural mediators, social workers, and doctors to provide an integrated approach to migrant women's health. Sacchetti described an interest in balancing the needs of migrant women, including through providing an option for drop-in appointments, a very unusual model of access in Italy's highly bureaucratized hospital services. Yet, in setting up of a dedicated space for migrant women, Sacchetti was concerned with avoiding the "ghettoization" of migrant women's health. The center's ultimate goal was for integration into the wider hospital and its bureaucratic expectations for accessing services, and ultimately, into Italian society as a whole.

The center's funding, however, is dependent on grants, originally from the Region of Lombardy from money set aside in Italy's immigration law for integration projects. Increasingly, the burden has shifted to the other source of institutional support, the hospitals in which the clinics are located. The project partnered the hospital, which provides the space, some personnel and equipment, with the cultural association-turned-cooperative Crinali. Crinali, with its roots in one of Milan's feminist associations, the *Libera Università delle Donne*, began as a place for bringing together "women of the

global north and south" and is now deeply involved in providing cultural mediation in health care settings. The cooperative was regularly awarded the contract to provide cultural mediation to the hospital, to the frustration of other mediation associations. However, as Sacchetti complained, the grant-based model put the project in

> a situation of great precariousness, especially for these figures that we were proposing, migrant cultural and linguistic mediators, who, since they needed to live off of this work, in reality, we lost many, including good ones, because in the meantime they found more secure employment.

The history and funding of the center are relevant to understanding the project's orientation toward women's reproductive health and rights. The feminist commitment of the doctors involved in developing the project and in providing health care is completely orthogonal to any demographic discourse concerned with the effects of women's reproductive practices on the nation. A different logic and moral orientation governs the health care and advocacy of pregnant migrant women who are seen not just as patients whose health care access and legal status matters only as long as they are pregnant, but as women whose reproductive health and rights, and integration, depends on obtaining legal residency. As such, providers and cultural mediators use the permit in their advocacy for migrant women, even while recognizing its limitations.

The center offered a rotating schedule of cultural mediators from Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe, and Asia. Also on staff were a psychologist and a social worker, as well as medical professionals. I met with Anna, a social worker and Maria, a cultural mediator from Romania, for an interview centered on the kinds of advocacy that the center provides. Like the center's medical director, Anna emphasized the importance of recognizing the relevance of the patient's social context to her medical concerns. Both described this broader approach as encompassing

the woman's legal, employment, and housing situation. This information was collected in an intake interview, enabling the center's staff to connect the patient with available resources to address social vulnerabilities, primarily undocumented status and unsafe housing. Sometimes the social worker or the cultural mediator accompanied pregnant women to the police station to sort out problems with paperwork needed for the pregnancy permit or to a different part of the hospital, outside of the center, to obtain care unrelated to pregnancy or pediatric issues.

The advocacy with which the center's staff was most involved concerned the residency permit for reasons of pregnancy. While they encouraged and provided information and support to undocumented migrant pregnant women to obtain the permit, Anna and Maria also pointed to the permit's limitations, particularly the expiration at six months postpartum. Anna explained: "we can say that the big concern for women is what to do after the baby has turned six months old and the residency permit for pregnancy expires. And in fact the solutions are very difficult, because they are the ones provided by the law." Short of having a documented partner to marry, the only other basis for obtaining a residency permit is to have an employer willing to sponsor, which would then enable the issuing of a work-based permit.[31] Yet, as the permit does not allow migrant pregnant women to work legally, it also makes it difficult to secure an official employment relationship that would allow for residency sponsorship upon the expiration of the pregnancy permit. Nonetheless, the social worker told me that she advises pregnant undocumented women to "utilize as best as you can this time that you are in Italy for the pregnancy to weave a network that could

[31] Even in cases when women could secure an official position with an employer willing to sponsor them, the pregnancy permit's non-renewability required them to return to their country of origin in order to be eligible to re-enter legally in Italy, a requirement that posed serious financial and logistical hurdles.

be useful for afterward, let's say substantially to obtain an employment contract."[32] Despite these limitations, cultural mediators, social workers and others use this legal tool to advocate for their clients and patients, with an eye also on turning this temporary foothold in the country into something more permanent.

The residency permit reflects the moral politics of pregnancy and life: it recognizes pregnancy as a special status automatically deserving of full health care. The rights awarded on the basis of pregnancy are revoked if a woman chooses to end the pregnancy for any reason, but still apply for the maximum amount of time in cases of stillbirth. These distinctions in eligibility reflect the moral politics of reproduction, which penalize women's reproductive agency at the same time that they afford needed protections and rights.

(Non)Reproductive Health

The limitations of the permit are illustrated by Rose Marie's story of a serious reproductive health issue unrelated to pregnancy. Her experience sheds light on some of the difficulties in obtaining needed health care faced by undocumented migrants who are not pregnant. Rose Marie migrated to Italy from Peru in 2000, joining her sister and brother. Despite her psychology university degree and work experience in Peru, Rose Marie became undocumented after her tourist visa expired. The only employment she was able to secure work as an unregistered careworker for an elderly woman and then as a nanny for a family. In an interview conducted in the living room of the small apartment she shared with her Italian husband and two-year-old daughter, Rose Marie described having had a very positive experience with reproductive health services in

[32] This would, however, require leaving the country and returning under the new residency permit, a step that the social worker also acknowledged.

Italy. Premising that she would have to describe something "intimate," she talked about having suffered from very severe menstrual bleeding at the time she was undocumented. When she sought help from a clinic that served undocumented migrants, she was referred to another, well-known clinic for migrants in Milan staffed by volunteer doctors. The doctor who examined her in turn referred her to "his own private studio," which was full of "so many young immigrant guys and immigrant women, almost the entire ambulatory was full immigrant women. Everything, including the ultrasound, was free." Rose Marie recounted how the ultrasound revealed "three gigantic and three small fibroids, so painful." She was told that the situation was "urgent, I needed surgery, I couldn't have children, or I could lose my uterus. But I didn't have documents." Lacking a residency permit, Rose Marie was only eligible for emergency room treatment, not for a surgery that was subject to scheduling ahead of time.

The doctor asked if there was no one she knew who could hire her, thus enabling her to obtain a residency permit and a national health care card. There wasn't. The doctor then told Rose Marie: "don't worry, wait for my phone call." When he called, having arranged a way for Rose Marie to obtain the treatment she needed, she was ultimately forced to decline the arrangement because of her inability to afford the time off for the lengthy recovery the surgery required. Eventually, with the help of her Italian boyfriend, who would later become her husband, Rose Marie was able to take a month off from work. The doctor arranged for her surgery at a hospital outside of Milan where, as he explained to Rose Marie, there were "less controls." At that hospital they could do the surgery under the pretext that she had an accident and needed emergency treatment

to save her life:[33] "In September I did the surgery, I did it in September 2001, I remember it very well because it was the week after the Twin Towers, the next week, I did the surgery with my passport alone, … they were very good… he is still my doctor, he followed my entire pregnancy and my daughter." Rose Marie was in the hospital for a month recovering from the surgery. She was very grateful to the doctors who preserved her health and her fertility, remarking "I was able to have this surgery thanks to these doctors that, if you see, take immigrants to heart, help immigrants. They don't care, 'we are doctors, I am a doctor, my job is to save lives, not to expect money.'"

Rose Marie's story illustrates the inequities in women's health care that separate not just migrant and Italian women, but also migrant pregnant women from women who have other health problems, including reproductive health problems. If her health crisis had been related to pregnancy, Rose Marie would have qualified for the temporary permit for pregnancy and thus for full, free health care access. However, her medical problem, which ironically was located within her uterus, did not afford her such coverage. Instead, Rose Marie's health and fertility were dependent on a network of volunteer health care providers and on a doctor's willingness to skirt the law. The positive outcome of her health crisis also hinged on a supportive relationship with an Italian boyfriend and with his family, which enabled her to afford taking time off of work to get needed treatment.

The Politics of Life & Migration

Individual acts of advocacy, volunteer doctors treating migrant patients, cultural mediation associations and projects, such as the center for migrant women have a

[33] Rose Marie claimed to know others migrants who also were able to have free surgeries by going outside of Milan and avoiding the more stringent controls.

complex relationship to broader, institutional change. On the one hand, they are a manifestation of the Italian left's commitment to solidarity that anthropologist Muehlebach describes as being both oppositional and enabling of neoliberalism. "Loophole advocacy" (Willen 2005) that enables individual migrants to access rights by skirting institutional and legal restrictions obviously does not constitute a structural solution to the problem. It is an approach that is of a piece with the relational solidarity that undergirds moral neoliberalism (Muehlebach 2009) at a time in which the universalist guarantees of the state, always fragile and inadequate in Italy, are being eroded even further. On the other hand, the very existence of migrant advocacy associations and of projects and spaces that intervene in institutional barriers to political and social rights are supported by the redistribution of public funds enabled by subsidiarity. Projects like the migrant women's health clinic change practices within institutions like hospitals at the same time that practitioners work at the "loophole advocacy" level. These projects are not necessarily mutually exclusive of structural change. Along with a network of other volunteer migrant providers, Sacchetti is politically engaged in efforts to force the administration of the Region of Lombardy to meet its health care obligations toward migrants.

These narratives suggest that the involvement of feminist providers and migrant cultural mediators, in combination with the limited rights afforded by the permit for pregnancy, provide a buffer against any direct translation of nationalist demographic concerns into practice. Reproductive health and rights are governed by moralized and political discourses that escape and supersede the logics of demographic alarmism. The privileged moral status of pregnancy, which arguably has only intensified under the

moral pronatalism and pro-familism of the past decade, may in fact contribute to the continued existence of policies like the residency permit for reasons of pregnancy, a provision that survived even the "draconian" and right-wing Bossi-Fini immigration law in 2002.

The influence of the politics of life is evident in the way migrant women's significantly higher abortion rates elicit a convergence of expert, feminist and moral concerns. This convergence is informed and motivated by different concerns ranging from the moral opposition to abortion by the Church to the concern that these rates reflect social inequities. Migrant women accessing abortion services need to navigate significant obstacles, which include long waits due to skyrocketing rates of conscientious objection[34] and volunteers from the Italian Movement for Life who have become embedded in hospitals. The experience of Dimah, a woman from Morocco who worked as a nursing assistant and was active in migrant integration issues, highlights the universalism of anti-abortion interventions. Dimah recounted having to meet with pro-life volunteers prior to being able to schedule her abortion. The volunteers tried to convince her that she could keep the pregnancy and that financial help would be available to her. Dimah remembered the anger and shame she experienced in response to this meeting. Dimah felt that she had no choice but to have an abortion because her monthly salary of 900 euros would not be enough to provide for a child on her own. She told me she returned to the volunteers with her paycheck to make her point. While she went ahead with the abortion and was certain that she had no other choice, she concluded her narrative by saying that she hoped god would forgive her, suggesting that

[34] The most recent report by the Italian Ministry of Health shows average national rates of conscientious objection around 70% for gynecologists and 50% for anesthesiologists (Ministero della Salute 2012).

while the meeting with the anti-abortion volunteers had not changed her actions, it may have contributed a sense of shame that compelled Dimah to justify her actions to me.

Carolina also reported emotional reactions among migrant women seeking abortions because of the paperwork introduced by the fetal burial legislation that required them to choose how to dispose of the fetal remains. Even as migrant and Italian women are differently interpellated by moral and expert demographic and pronatalist discourses, the moral politics of life impacts the agency and subjectivities of both Italian and migrant women. This impact, however, is not simply an outcome of demographic discourse that calls for more Italian and less foreign babies. Reproductive access and women's subjective experiences of the social value of their reproductive choices reflects the unpredictable effects that emerge as demographic alarmism encounters other social, moral, and political commitments.

Turning Demographic Alarmism on its Head

The Right to Citizenship

Among the unexpected effects of intensifying demographic alarmism is the way concerns about the future of the nation can be redeployed to make claims for the recognition of immigrants' contributions. Here I highlight three examples of how the politics of fertility are amenable to reframing. The first is from Rose Marie's assertion in our interview that migrant women contribute to increasing Italy's population not only through their own reproduction, but through their carework, which enables Italian women to have more children. She referred to her experience at her daughter's daycare where most of the other women were Italian and said that there had been a baby boom among Italian women that year, and that she had heard about this in the news (Marchesi

2012). In this characterization, migrants, particularly migrant women, play a literally vital role in the reproduction of the nation.

The second is the very public articulation of this discourse of migrant contribution to reproducing the nation at the 2007 May first parade in Milan. Paula, a woman originally from Peru who was a full-time activist for migrant causes had participated in organizing the first "migrant float" for the parade as part of a new migrant network called "*Cittadini di fatto*" ("De facto citizens"). As the parade wound through central Milan she yelled through the megaphone: "we are the ones who take care of your children, we are the ones who take care of your parents, we are the ones who are increasing the birth rate, if we weren't here, there would be no one to keep this country going"[35] (Marchesi 2012). Because of these contributions, she continued, the children of migrants deserved citizenship.[36]

Marybel, a nursing assistant from Peru in her forties, also made this point to me at a party organized by a grassroots group seeking dialogue between migrant and Italian women. Sitting in the basement community room of a Catholic oratory, Marybel, who herself did not have children, argued that Italy only survived because of migrants' work and birth rates: "the children who are born here, immigrants have children and raise the birth rate. If it weren't for us, Italy would be in trouble."[37] In this casual conversation and subsequently in an interview at a Milanese park, Marybel returned to the problem and injustice of the fact that migrants' children did not receive citizenship, but rather lived without guarantees about their future status.[38] A Syrian woman in her early forties

[35] Digital recording, May 1, 2007.
[36] Fieldnote, "Primo Maggio," May 1, 2007.
[37] Fieldnote, "Festa Incontriamoci'," June 24, 2007.
[38] Interview, digital recording, July 9, 2007.

also pointed to the problem of the lack of citizenship at birth for children of migrants in Italy and the discriminatory nature of the baby bonus for which non-EU immigrants were not eligible. Saja also suggested that Italian women "envied" migrant women for the fact of having children. Saja's interpretation flips the script that views migrant women as envying the freedoms of "modern" Italian women at the same time that it reproduced one thread of the dominant discourse, which views Italian women as beholden to careerism at the expense of family.[39]

These reinterpretations and protests of demographic anxiety highlight the contribution of immigrants to the national body. They do not carry the reach and power of expert, political, and religious discourses that regularly get prime real estate in the news. The harnessing of demographic alarmism in the name of citizenship does underscore, however, the paradoxical effects of the politics of demographic alarmism in Italy whereby migrant women's higher fertility may function as a biopolitical claim for belonging and for citizenship in Italy rather than as a cause for shame. Demographic incitement to reproduce also elicits protest and a demand for more social and economic rights among Italian women. The governing of fertility that calls on women in Italy to conduct their reproductive lives according to the needs of the nation also engenders counter-demands on the state to make life less precarious, both for migrant and Italian-origin women.

Khadim, a Senegalese migrant employed in social work and very active in the Senegalese community, provided a different perspective on the issue. He argued that immigrants in Italy were going to be at risk when they retired because they did not have enough time to accrue benefits in Italy, due to the time that it takes to emerge from the "black market" of employment: "another thing, a very interesting thing, these families of immigrants that today allow Italy to maintain, grow the birth rate, but these families in 20-25 years are going to be the poorest families in Italy because the immigrants who arrived here, here in Italy, they won't have a pension in their countries of origin, nor will they have a pension in Italy" (Interview, digital recording, 4/28/07).

[39] Interview, digital recording, April 21, 2007.

Precariousness = Contraception

The increasing penetration of the state in reproductive and family matters elicited resistance and contestation among feminist Italian women. Singled out for not making babies, Italian women often point back to the state's failure to provide adequate social services and labor safeguards. In a preface to a book and documentary on Italy's birth rate titled *Uno virgola due* (*One point two*, in reference to Italy's TFR at the time the book was written), Miriam Mafai, a well-respected Italian journalist, acknowledges the increasing anxiety over Italy's birth rates. Mafai asks: "Is it due, as some argue, to the fact that [Italian women] are too selfish? Too involved with themselves? Too busy with work?" (2007: 10). Silvia Ferreri, the book's author and director of the documentary writes that "everyone is talking" about "the problem of the empty cradles" which on International Woman's Day in 2004 Italian President Azeglio Ciampi identified as Italy's number one problem.[40] Ferreri gives voice to and contests the assumptions that sustain demographic discourse and single out Italian women for criticism:

> the first who are considered responsible (not surprisingly) are women, in their thirties. I feel implicated and for this reason the judgment weighs more heavily on me. Women in their thirties are in fact, for the most part, lazy women, concerned more with their hair than the future, they are *mammone*, they don't leave the home, are concerned with their careers (what career?), and not reliable enough to pull up their sleeves, take on the responsibilities that a family calls for, and raise some children (2007: 22).

Ferreri's reading of demographic discourse is supported by interventions like the one initiated by Italian Gynecological and Obstetrical Society (SIGO), which aimed at

[40] "Le culle vuote sono il primo problema italiano" (Empty cradles are the foremost Italian problem), Marzio Breda, *Corriere della Sera*, 3, March 8, 2004, http://archiviostorico.corriere.it/2004/marzo/08/culle_vuote_sono_primo_problema_co_9_040308027.shtml.

making women aware of the biological decline in fertility over the life course. SIGO produced a YouTube video[41] in which the organization's president, gynecologist Giorgio Vittori, discusses the importance of "preserving one's fertility." The video features the gynecologist walking the streets of Rome, Italians going on about their normal lives around him as he cautions women not to prioritize careers ahead of reproduction: "it's important to know that at 37 years old you may very well have a great job, a beautiful home, a great trousseau, but remember that the available oocytes are very, very few, remember it, think ahead." This warning is supported by statistical "facts" of human reproductive biology: "Female fertility is at its maximum until age 20, it halves around 35, comes down to 10% after 40. … it is important to remember, to consider this aspect too in the planning of one's family and professional life."[42] Additionally, the gynecologist warns that "it's important to maintain one's genital apparatus in perfect conditions"[43] for the purposes of maximum fertility. Armed with this knowledge, Italian women[44] would presumably prioritize having children over their career. These arguments run counter to the concerns expressed by many women and men of reproductive age over precarious employment and shrinking social services. Seeking to challenge these narratives, Ferreri focuses on the difficulties faced by women in Italy who do have children, particularly in terms of employment. The retreat of the state from the provision of social services and the spread of *precarietà* (precariousness), particularly in employment where young workers are hired on short-

[41] Uploaded September 2008, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Na6H7hlFKI
[42] 'Scoperta la proteina della fertilità, September 14, 2008, *ticinonews.ch* http://www.ticinonews.ch/articolo.aspx?id=91202&rubrica=29
[43] In an interview, Professor Vittori explains: 'we choose YouTube to speak to young women who often don't even consider the issue of a future maternity, on the contrary, they are often only concerned with avoiding unwanted pregnancies, without realizing how delicate is the equilibrium that regulates feminine biology.' http://italiasalute.leonardo.it/Copertina.asp?Articolo_ID=9361
[44] Immigrant women are not explicitly addressed or featured in this video.

term contracts without the labor safeguards enjoyed by previous generations (Molé 2010), provide plenty of fodder for this critique.

I attended a roundtable discussion of Ferreri's book that included the author and some prominent feminist figures. Participants included well-known Italian actress Ottavia Piccoli and Susanna Camusso the General Secretary of CGIL-Lombardia, one of Italy's main unions.[45] I was familiar with Camusso because she was one of the main organizers of *Usciamo dal Silenzio*. The caliber of the roundtable participants speaks to the relevance and importance afforded to this topic. Piccoli opened the discussion by admitting she read the book with a "preconception" common among leftist Italians: "what is the problem if we don't grow? In Italy there are too many of us, there are immigrants, they have more children than us. Where's the problem?"[46] The problem presented by the book, however, was a sensitive one for this progressive panel: the discrimination of pregnant women and of mothers in the workplace. Ferreri's work documents the lives of women dismissed after having a child, especially a second one, via the infamous, and illegal, "blank resignation letter" some women report being asked to sign alongside their employment contract. Ferreri noted that despite a "media bombardment on *culle vuote* (empty cradles)" and "very long talk shows" discussing the issue, "no one says anything about work."[47] Piccoli added: "they prefer to talk about the problem of low fertility relative to the issue of our roots. The only talk is 'we don't have

[45] Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (CGIL) (Italian General Confederation of Work). In 2010 Camusso was elected president of the CGIL, the first time a woman has held this position.
[46] Fieldnote, digital recording, "Uno virgola due," July 4, 2007.
[47] A sketch I saw on Italian TV just a couple of days prior to the roundtable makes a joke of this issue (while also reproducing stereotypes about the masculinity of homosexual men): A woman employed in a beauty salon is trying to take a pregnancy test, but she doesn't know how it works. Her gay boss offers to help her take it. He tells her: "I want to be the first one to know because I want to give you a beautiful gift at your new place of employment because… here, nada, zilch!" To show her how to take the pregnancy test he takes one himself, which turns out positive (fieldnote, July 1, 2007).

children and then the problem will be in the future because we will not be able to maintain" "our Christianity," jumped in Camusso. These feminist critics dismissed the cultural and moral discourse on low fertility in favor of a discourse about women's reproductive and economic rights.

The dominant discourse on low fertility in Italy was summarized by the panel as follows: "they stay home until they are 35 years old, … cradles are empty, … Lombard women have less children than others and … the increase [in birth rates] is due to immigrants." Camusso asked: "what is their imagined recipe" to address this? The baby bonus." In Italy, continued Camusso, "in every way we [women] are bodies and not persons, including [when it comes to] motherhood. But we decide, not someone else." Slogans like '"*precarietà"* equals contraception' employed by young feminist activists[48] talk back to this discourse, blaming neoliberal reforms for Italian women's low birth rates.

Feminist activists in their thirties and migrant women were the most concerned with, and affected by, the issue of *precarietà* of work and the difficulty of contemplating having a child under those conditions. For the younger generation of Italian feminists the issue of reproductive choice included the experience of not being able to choose to have a child under the state of *precarietà* that invested their lives. Daniela, for example, argued at an *Usciamo dal silenzio* meetings:

> I am so sick of these mummies on TV who say that they safeguard heterosexuals because they reproduce. They reproduce what? They reproduce where? When an apartment costs half-a-billion [liras]? Where do they reproduce, in the closet? With a job contract that ends after a few months or doesn't allow me to reach 1000 euros a month? But what reproduction? I would like to say this because there's this whole apology of procreation when women like me don't reproduce,

[48] Camusso, "Uno Virgola Due" fieldnote, 07/04/12

> they don't reproduce why? Because if they reproduce they don't work, and if we don't work we don't eat, it's that simple.[49]

The responses of Italian women past their childbearing age, and thus no longer the target of demographic discourse, to my research topic reflect a sense of being implicated by their reproductive choices. On one of my afternoons helping out at the feminist planning clinic, a middle-aged Italian woman sat on the couch of the reception area, waiting for her teenage daughter to emerge from a counseling appointment. We started talking and she told me she had two children; she added: "I made my donation."[50] After asking about my research topic at the course's Christmas holiday gathering Cristina, the Italian head of a cultural mediation association immediately asked me:

> "Did you notice that they no longer have children?"
> "Migrant women?" I asked.
> "Yes, they come here and catch a drift of how things are here" and here she touched underneath the tip of her nose and lifted her head a bit "and they stop having children." Then she pointed to Marta, a cultural mediator and instructor originally from Argentina, and said
> "Not her, though, but she had them before she came."
> "I had them for you too!" replied Marta
> Cristina shot back: "Yes, you had three!"[51]

The comments by the patient's mother and those of the head of the cultural mediation association suggest, in different ways, an ironic engagement with demographic anxiety. They acknowledge the fact that reproduction in Italy is not simply a private choice and responsibility and bring into relief the social obligation and social meaning of having children in the time of demographic anxiety over low fertility. These comments also reveal a calculus of fertility in which women keep tally of their "contributions" or joke

---

[49] Digital recording, February 21, 2007.
[50] Fieldnote, December 4, 2006
[51] Fieldnote, "Cultural Mediation Course Christmas Aperitivo," December 20, 2006

about being offset by the fertility of other women, particularly immigrants. This calculus is informed by demographic discourse, even as it voiced to highlight the sacrifice of motherhood or to average out one's lack of contribution, as it were.

Nationalist demographic discourse (Krause 2006) informs other ways of tallying contributions to the reproduction of the nation, as the comment of a participant following the "Demographic Winter" conference illustrates. In the question and answer session following the demographer's lecture on the differential fertility of migrants and Italians an Italian woman elicited widespread laughter by saying: "immigrants in Milan, the majority are Muslim,[52] if each wife has one child or one and a half and they've got four wives, people, we'll make it."[53]

Competing Demographic Anxieties

The limits of demographic alarmism are also evident in the continued relevance of other, older, population panics. Despite dire warnings about cultural and social decline, alarmism over the low fertility of Italian women coexists and articulates with previous population alarms. Environmental concerns with overpopulation, for example, are not an unusual critique of pronatalism among the left.[54] At the 2006 Christmas party

---

[52] The 2011 statistical data presented by Caritas shows that the majority of the 4.5 million immigrants to Italy are Christian (53.9%) followed by 32.9% Muslim (Caritas/Migrantes 2011 http://www.caritasitaliana.it/materiali/Pubblicazioni/libri_2011/dossier_immigrazione2011/scheda_religioni.pdf). In 2009, Muslim immigrants in Milan represent 28.4% of the immigrant population (down from 40.4% in 1996), while Christians make up 55.1% of the population (http://speciali.espresso.repubblica.it/popup/milano/7.html). Interestingly, in a special on Milan's immigrant population by the daily *Repubblica* and the weekly news magazine *L'Espresso*, a bar graph based on statistics elaborated by demographer Gian Carlo Blangiardo breaks up Christian religious affiliation into "Catholic" and "Other Christian." This distinction makes the Muslim proportion appear to be more significant, especially for the 1996 statistics when Muslims appear to be the largest immigrant group at 40.4% even though a single Christian category encompassing both "Catholic" and "Other Christian" would actually have accounted for 51.1% of the population. The report does not indicate how religious affiliation was determined.

[53] Fieldnote, "Inverno Demografico," 4/14/07.

[54] In May of 2007 I attended a roundtable titled "*Cronache Italiane della Procreazione Responsabile*," (Italian Chronicles of Responsible Reproduction).[54] The event commemorated the efforts of an influential

held at the *consultorio* I met Nilde's husband, Alberto. Alberto was also in his early 80s, with a head full of white hair, he always wore a corduroy blazer and a leather bag slung around his shoulder. Like Nilde, Alberto had a life-long history of involvement with the Communist Party. He was particularly proud of an unpublished novel he had penned about a Soviet spy and of the fact that he was an avid and regular reader of *Scientific American*. As a retired chemical engineer he enjoyed spending afternoons at the museum of science in Milan, where he often attended lectures, and he seemed to relish showing up at the family planning clinic once in a while, ostensibly to pick up Nilde, but also to flirt with other women and to hold court on a variety of theories.

At the clinic's Christmas party, Alberto engaged me in a conversation with Daniela and Laura, two of the main members of *Donne, Diritti, Salute*. He complained to Daniela that the *Usciamo dal Silenzio* group needed to take on global warming as an issue and that women should stop having children as a protest until it was addressed. He suggested that *Donne, Diritti, Salute* declare: "we women will not have children anymore!" Laura replied "we're not having them already anyway!" But Alberto continued pushing Daniela on the topic and argued that women have more of a stake in reproduction than men, that their stake in the environment is bigger than men's. Enjoying his role as provocateur, he then stated that he didn't know why procreation had been assigned to women; he wouldn't have done it that way. Daniela replied, "yes,

---

reproductive activist in Milan (Giulia Filippetti) and traced the struggle for the legalization of contraception and abortion beginning with the fascist criminalization and through the 1970s. One of the roundtable speakers identified demographic warnings on Italy's low birth rates as a continuation of politics that sought to curtail reproductive rights. He argued that the real problem remains overpopulation and its effect on the environment: "even today with the decline in birth rates, there is concern. Why is everyone concerned? They invite us to have more children, but the planet's problem is overpopulation. A lack of awareness in sexuality can have grave repercussions, not just for the Milanese, but for the whole planet" (Rusconi, fieldnote May 9, 2007).

like menstruation, *mamma mia*, how annoying it is just about now!" Unfazed, Alberto continued on with his theories, trying to convince Daniela and Laura to take on what he described as an agenda more radical than their work for reproductive rights and health. When Alberto remarked that women had been given the pains of labor and men the pains of work, Daniela looked at me rolling her eyes. Laura retorted that since Minister of Health Livia Turco intended to make epidurals more available in Italy, men could now have children too, implying that men were not strong enough to give birth without drugs.

This conversation points to the limits of demographic alarmism, which has not succeeded in replacing other ways of thinking about reproduction and the population. After a decade of warnings about the consequences of demographic "decline" interpretations of population "problems" still reflect Italians' different political commitments. Additionally, the teasing between Alberto and Laura and Daniela reminds of the fact that the politics of women's bodies and of gender are central to demographic discourse, which in its abstract terminology can often acquire a kind of gender neutrality. Italian women are the privileged target of this discourse, whether they are being chided for not reproducing, educated about fertility decline over the life-course, or called upon to refuse to reproduce as a political and ecological statement. In such a discursive environment, women's reproduction is both the target and, potentially, a "weapon" to be redeployed to assert women's strength. Thus, even committed reproductive activists like Laura and Daniela, both of whom did not have children, can appeal to menstruation and childbirth to gain the upper hand in a conversation with an older man. Daniela spoke openly about the fact that she was menstruating to Alberto

while Laura countered his provocation that men should have been given the pains of labor by suggesting that they could only birth with the use of epidurals.

Conclusion

A contradictory picture of demographic discourse in Italy emerges through the professional and personal experiences of cultural mediators and other migrant women in reproductive health settings. Discourses of racial and cultural alarmism, of "disappearing Italians," of cradles filled with the "wrong" kinds of babies, and of trees producing the "wrong" fruits do not exist in a social and moral vacuum. Anxiety over the differential birth rates of migrant and Italian women articulate with Catholic politics of life, the moral status of pregnancy and the universalist values of solidarity and feminist involvement in reproductive health. These findings suggest, as Aiwha Ong has argued, that the "ethnographic study of particular situations reveals that negotiations on behalf of the politically excluded can produce indeterminate and ambiguous outcomes" (2006: 9).

The question remains, however, as to how to make sense of those outcomes. These contradictions do not resolve the issue of how migrant women experience reproductive services everywhere in Italy. They are not meant to suggest that Italians engaged in providing reproductive services are immune from racism or anti-immigrant feelings, or from nationalist strains of demographic alarmism. What they do suggest is that these discourses interact with a complex social and moral terrain, a terrain that includes pronatalism and the moralization of family and life, as well as feminist commitments to women's reproductive health and rights. The discourse of demographic alarmism is altered as it encounters these discourses and manifests into practices.

The dire warnings of a national threat posed by low fertility have unpredictable consequences. Unlike neighboring France, Italy's fascist pronatalist past and political and moral obstacles have prevented demographic incitement from translating into concrete policies in support of births. This has left pronatalism to the realm of discourse and incentives, a governmental approach to slow fertility. Because governmentality governs through the agency of its subjects, its effects are not determined; they are refracted through other, conflicting desires and aspirations, such as those for reproductive and sexual autonomy, for economic security, and for political and economic rights. As fertility rates continue to remain low among Italian women, these incitements do not translate into changes in reproductive practices and behaviors among Italians. Intensifying and alarmist demographic discourses are refracted and countered, in discourse and practice, by Catholic universalist moral politics of reproduction and leftist and feminist universalist commitments to solidarity and human rights.

CHAPTER 6

INTEGRATING SUBJECTS, ENGENDERING COHERENCE: CULTURAL CONTAMINATION & THE LIMITS OF INTEGRATION

Introduction

The "moral regulation" of reproduction and the family in the name of fostering social cohesion through profound transformations in social citizenship in Italy extends to debates over how to successfully integrate a substantial and diverse immigrant population. How Italian society can integrate immigrants and on what terms is a question intensely debated and rhetorically deployed in public and political discourse. Always present is the specter of dis-integration. In a 2000 book aimed at a broad audience political scientist Giovanni Sartori poses the question of what constitutes a "good society" and identifies the

> very concrete problem of the 'Foreigners,' of people that are not 'like us.' Here the question becomes: up until what point can a pluralistic society accept, without disintegrating, Others who refuse it? And conversely, how can the Other, the immigrant of another culture, religion, or ethnicity, be integrated? (2000: 10).

Sartori's answer, implied by his questioning of integrating Others who "refuse" the receiving society, is that multiculturalism, understood as the assertion of one's ethnic or cultural identity, is a problem, not the path to a "good" pluralistic society. Sartori favors 'tolerance'[1] instead of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is viewed with suspicion among Italians who work on immigration issues, as is assimilationism.

[1] For a critique of the tolerance discourse see Wendy Brown (2006) *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*, Princeton University.

In this chapter, I examine the Italian approach to integration, an attempt to forge a "third way" between multiculturalism and assimilationism, through the theory and practice of *intercultura*. Building on Douglas Holmes's question: "what are terms and conditions by which the individual is related to various renderings of collectivity in the new Europe" (2000: 111) as a starting point for further inquiry on the terms and limits of integration in Italy I ask: What are the expectations and practices of immigrant-receiving countries concerning the integration of Others? On what terms is integration into Italian society being demarcated? What does the project of integration contribute to our understanding of the redefinition of citizenship and social cohesion in Italy and beyond? To answer these questions I examine the concept of integration in Europe and in Italy, in particular on the Italian ideal of *intercultura* and cultural mediation, as it emerges from a number of sites: scholarly literature, political pronouncements, the Italian government's official statement of the common values of integration, the *Charter of Values on Citizenship and Integration* (Ministry of Interior 2007), and in the orientation of practitioners engaged in integration work in the non-profit world. For the latter perspective, I draw on ethnographic research in a cultural mediation course I audited during my fieldwork. I contrast these ideals with the experiences of participants in the course and in a separate project, a grassroots *intercultura* group, *Incontriamoci* (Let's Get Together) that aimed to build bridges between women, particularly Italian and Muslim, in Italy.

Data is drawn from participation in a cultural mediation course that ran from November 2006 to March 2007 meeting for three hours twice a week; from attendance at numerous conferences and talks on immigration, integration, and *intercultura* over

the course of 9 months of dissertation research; from participation in the meetings and social activities of an intercultural and anti-racist association migrant's rights association, including a brief period of volunteering as an Italian language tutor for undocumented migrants, and from participation in the activities of an immigrant network, *Cittadini di fatto*. I interviewed nine cultural mediators and two founding members of the grassroots *Let's Get Together* project. My analysis is also informed by conversations with actors and activists involved in immigration and integration projects and issues. Drawing on these different sites affords a local perspective on the question of how immigrants are expected to integrate into Italian society, and sheds light on the experiences, subjectivities, and alternative politics of integration that play out on the ground.

In tracing how integration is conceptualized and enacted through these different sites I highlight the contradictions and gaps between the ideal of mutual "contamination" that characterizes the *intercultural* approach and the struggles that migrants face in Italy. I focus in particular on Islamophobia and on debates around the question of how Italian society should address the question of the veil and of Muslim women's condition not only because these were issues that were particularly intensely debated during my fieldwork in Milan, but also because they shed light on the way gender and family-making emerge as key sites for the negotiation of the meaning of integration and of the boundaries of inclusion/exclusion.

Integrating Difference

Italy's shift from a country of emigration to one of immigration is relatively recent. In the 19th century and through the middle of the 20th century millions emigrated

from the Italian peninsula looking for better economic conditions abroad. This massive migration was regional in character with the vast majority of emigrants originating from the South. Between 1876 and 1976 twenty million Italians emigrated (Turco and Tavella 2005: 10). In the 1950s Italy had the highest emigration rate in the world (Sassen, in Turco and Tavella 2005: 10). The year 1974 marks the official inversion in the balance of emigration and immigration; however significant immigration is a feature of the past two decades, beginning in the early 1990s.[2]

The rate of increase in immigration in Italy over the past couple of decades is striking as is the diversity of the immigrant population. Only 40 years ago, when statistics on foreigners in Italy began to be kept in 1970, foreign residents amounted to less than 145,000 (Caritas Italiana 2005: 1). That numbers stayed fairly stable through the decade, reaching around 200,000 by decade's end (Caritas Italiana 2005: 1). It is in the 1980s that the first significant immigration to Italy took hold, with over 400,000 foreign resident permits being registered in 1984, over 527,000 in 1987, and over 780,000 in 1990 (Caritas Italiana 2005: 2).[3] In the last decade of the millennium, the number of foreign residents doubled from 649,000 in 1991 to 1,341,000 by the year 2000 (Caritas Italiana 2005: 2) and then tripled in the following decade (Istat 2012). By 2004, for example, due in part to a number of "*sanatorie,"* or amnesties for

[2] In 2008, Italy ranked fourth in Europe in terms of destination for immigrants; Spain was the number one country of destination, receiving 726, 000 immigrants; Germany followed with 682, 000; the United Kingdom, received 590,000 immigrants, and Italy 535,000 (Eurostat 2010).[2] About 40% of Italy's migrants are EU citizens, while 53% are non-EU citizens (Eurostat 2010).

[3] However, the Caritas document describes serious inconsistencies in how residency permits were counted, making these numbers difficult to compare. According to Caritas, statistics become more reliable beginning in 1991, when Istat began its surveys, while government numbers are more reliable beginning in 1998 when a new system is introduced (Caritas Italiana 2005: 2).

undocumented workers, the number of registered foreign residents in Italy jumped to over 2,300,000 (Caritas Italiana: 2005: 2).

By 2007, the population of immigrants in Italy was close to 3 million (Istat 2007: 1)[4] and over the course of that year the largest increase recorded to date occurs as the immigrant population grows by almost half a million, mostly due to the entrance of Romania in the EU (Istat 2008a). The most represented nationalities of immigrants were European, with the vast majority of these (86.1%) originating in the new EU members of Romania and Bulgaria (Istat 2007: 5). In fact, Istat reports that Eastern and Central European migrants represent the largest contingent of immigrants: 39% of the total immigrant population, followed by immigrants originating from Africa (26%) and Asia (17%) and South and Central America (8.9%) (Istat 2007: 5-6). The most recent statistics place the immigrant population in the country at 4,570.317 people (Istat 2011a) (7.5% of the total population of Italy) and its net growth rate at 6 per 1000 (Istat 2011b). Eastern Europeans continue to grow as the most numerous population of immigrants, now constituting 49.3% of the total immigrant population (Istat 2010: 1).[5] The population of migrants, however, remains very diverse, spanning four continents (Istat 2010: 4). The first five nationalities represented, listed in descending order of numbers of residents, are Romania, Albania, Morocco, China, and the Ukraine (Istat 2011a: 3). Altogether these five nationalities account for about half of the total resident immigrant population (Istat 2011a: 4). Immigrant communities are also localized differently in Italy's various regions (see, for example Istat 2008a: 10).

---

[4] According to Istat's data, the population was 2.938.922. http://www.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/non_calendario/20071002_00/testointegrale20071002.pdf

[5] http://www.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/non_calendario/20101012_00/testointegrale20101012.pdf

Italy's legislation governing immigration provides two main legal channels: residency permits based on work, which require an employer as a sponsor, and residency permits based on family reunification. Over 50% of residency permits are granted on the basis of work, with about 35% being awarded for family reunification reasons (Caritas/Migrantes 2007: 5). Of the residency permit applications on the basis of work submitted in 2006 49% were in the category of "family assistance," or carework, and most of those applications were filed by Romanians (Caritas/Migrantes 2007: 2). The second sector of employment by application was construction (18%) (Caritas/Migrantes 2007: 2).

A latecomer to significant immigration, by 2012 Italy has a higher ratio of immigrant to citizen population than the European average (8.2 versus 6.6 percent respectively) (Caritas e Migrantes 2012: 4). Over 60% of those migrants are residents in northern Italy, over 50% originate in Europe, about 22% in Africa, almost 19% in Asia, and slightly over 8% in Latin America (Caritas e Migrantes 2012: 4). Of the 5.011.000 documented migrants in Italy, only 56,001 obtained citizenship in 2012, a symptom of Italy's long and difficult path to citizenship (see Zincone 2006), as well as a sense shared by migrants who had become citizens by marriage, that citizenship is "just a piece of paper."[6]

How to manage immigration at the national and supra-national level has received much attention in policy circles, in the media, and in scholarly works. The ascendance of the term "integration" in Europe dates back to the 1990s and can be traced in European documents like the Tampere Agreement of 1999 (Favell 2003: 4).

[6] Fieldnote, cultural mediation course, "Inter-ethnic relations," Ene, Khadim, and Alejandro, December 19, 2006.

The discourse and policies for "what happens after" immigration (Favell 2003: 2), or how newcomers are integrated into European societies, centers around the need to maintain social and national cohesion (Favell 2003). "Integration" has replaced previous terms that have gone out of favor, such as assimilation. It is not just politicians and policy-makers who have adopted integration as the more politically correct term; European academics have also uncritically adopted the concept as a way to counter xenophobia and social "disintegration" (Favell 1999, 2003).[7] Despite its currency at the supra-national level of the EU, member states "have used issues of immigrant integration precisely to actually underline and reproduce their existence as coherent, bounded, nation-building societies" (Favell 2003: 11-12).[8] The European model of integration is declined differently in each member state, which retain significant control over matters of immigration and integration (Gruber 2007).[9] The lack of harmonization on integration is perceived as an impediment at the level of the EU. A 2007 European Parliament working document on immigration calls for members states to work toward a more unified and "genuine legal migration policy"(Gruber 2007). Thus, despite the ascendance of approaches to migration that conceptually push beyond the nation-state to attend to global flows and transnational processes (Appadurai 1996; Glick-Schiller et al. 1995; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002), the nation-state remains an important frame of analysis of immigration and integration policies and discourses.

---

[7] EU discourses on integration, which include progressive concerns with social solidarity, coexist with the securitization of Europe's borders and even their extension beyond the walls of "Fortress Europe" (Mandel 1994; King et al. 2000) into the countries of origin of some migrants, particularly in north Africa (Sossi 2006).

[8] For a review of European research project *foci* and their funding sources see Penninx, Spencer, and Van Hear, 2008, *Migration and Integration in Europe: The State of Research.* http://www.norface.org/files/migration-COMPAS-report.pdf.

[9] See the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) site for analysis and comparison of European nation states in immigration and integration policies http://www.mipex.eu/.

Under the umbrella of integration can coexist very distinct ideas about cultural differences and citizenship. Bruebaker contends that "integration" may just be the European term for assimilation (2001: 540), a project that has merely shifted from "making" someone similar to "becoming similar" (2001: 534). In Italy, a theoretical and practical orientation toward *intercultura* emphasizes integration through dialogue, mutual change and even "mutual contamination." Some progressive Italians reject the term "*integrazione*" (integration) altogether in favor of the more mutual "*interazione*" (interaction). The lexical closeness of *integrazione/interazione* belies the difference in these approaches, with integration implying something done to, or demanded of the outsider, while interaction implicates both sides.

The Italian discourse on integration represents another key dimension of the project of reconceptualization of the ties holding Italian society together and of the foundations of its social cohesion and reproduction. The bases of social solidarity and cohesion are explicitly up for grabs as ideas about what it means to be Italian are challenged by changing demographics and by the reorganization of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship along neoliberal logics. Immigration issues feature regularly in political discourse and provide the rationale for emergency security measures. At the same time, migrant labor increasingly sustains Italy's familial welfare system as migrants, especially women, are employed in carework, providing individual welfare services to families.

Cultural Mediation

Beginning in the 1990s, faced by a growing culturally and linguistically diverse population Italians employed in the health sector and involved *nel sociale* (in the

provision of social services),[10] but also academics and politicians, started to think about the issue of integration by looking at already established models in Europe. Lacking a systematic approach to immigration and policies of integration, the needs of the immigrant population and the struggles of social and medical service providers were met by non-governmental actors, associations, and by the Catholic Church.

The poles of assimilation and multiculturalism, epitomized by France and the United Kingdom respectively, functioned as guideposts and foils for Italian scholars and educators involved in cultural mediation. These two prevailing models of integration in Europe have come to be seen as inadequate: the French Republican model of integration, which emphasizes political citizenship through institutional and especially educational assimilation (van Zanten 1997) and downplays cultural, and especially racial, differences, was undermined by the youth protests that took over French *banlieus* in the fall of 2005. More recently, the Prime Ministers of Germany and the UK have strongly criticized the multicultural approach as detrimental to the nation. In Germany, Angela Merkel claimed that multiculturalism has "utterly failed" and called upon immigrants to do more to integrate themselves into German society.[11] UK Prime Minister David Cameron has blamed multiculturalism for the radicalization of young Muslims and claimed that it has "encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and the mainstream."[12]

---

[10] Most of the impetus and interventions of cultural mediation have originated in the so-called "*privato sociale*," which broadly covers non-governmental organizations, whether non-profit, hybrid, or for-profit. http://www.edscuola.it/archivio/handicap/mediazione_culturale.htm

[11] http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/oct/17/angela-merkel-german-multiculturalism-failed http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Global-News/2010/1017/Germany-s-Angela-Merkel-Multiculturalism-has-utterly-failed

[12] http://uk.reuters.com/article/2011/02/05/uk-britain-radicalisation-idUKTRE71401G20110205

Various actors, including instructors involved in the course I audited, began to organize information sessions and informal networks and eventually to offer courses to train immigrants to work as mediators, drawing on the models of countries like France, where cultural mediation was already an established field. However, the progressive Italian model of integration sought to distinguish itself from the French and British models. Italian educators and practitioners delineated an alternative model of integration that seeks to avoid what they see as the pitfalls of multiculturalism and assimilation (Favaro 2006: 37, Favaro and Luatti 2004): lack of social cohesion, in the case of the former, and loss of cultural identity, in the latter. A progressive answer to the question of how to integrate a very diverse population of immigrants, cultural mediation embraces the *intercultura* approach, which calls for reciprocal exchange and change in the receiving and immigrant population. Like other mediation and conflict-resolution models, cultural mediation is understood to bring about mutual change and understanding and to reduce the possibility of intercultural conflict (CISP 2003).[13] Unlike the French model, immigrants are not expected to assimilate and lose their cultural identity; unlike the British model, immigrants are expected to engage with the receiving society and to be changed by it, to "contaminate" Italian society and be "contaminated" by it.

Cultural mediation sits at the intersections of the discourses and practices of integration and the new welfare system in Italy. The first cultural mediation course in Italy was offered in 1989-1990, an endeavor in which one of the instructors of the

[13] http://www.sviluppodeipopoli.org/English/Analysis/goodpractices/Frameset.html

course I audited was centrally involved.[14] The course was financed by the European Social Fund, with support from the Region of Lombardy (Castiglioni, in Cattaneo and Petronio 1995: 26). Since then, the practice of cultural mediation, still formally unrecognized as a profession, has nonetheless emerged as the way to manage the needs of a diverse migrant population. According to estimates by Caritas/Migrantes, in 2008 there were 4000 cultural mediators in Italy (Caritas Diocesiana di Roma 2008). The course I audited was organized by a non-profit cooperative that has been engaged in immigration issues since the early 1990s, making it one of the first non-profit associations in Milan in the emerging field of integration. The cooperative ran a helpline for immigrants with legal questions, conducted research on immigration and integration, provided training for cultural mediators, and collaborated on integration projects with institutional entities.

In November 2006 I joined a diverse group of students for a three-month-long cultural mediation course that met twice a week for three hours. We alternated using classrooms in the space of an association for the disabled, which was attached to a church. The bells rang on the hour; because of their proximity, depending on the classroom we occupied on a given day, they could drown out the instructors. The intrusion of the Catholic Church into lectures on immigration, integration, and interethnic relations seems appropriate in retrospect as the Church has been heavily involved in providing services to migrants, but also because it was only two decades prior, in 1985, that its hold as the state religion, enshrined in the Lateran Pacts signed by Mussolini in 1929 was loosened.

[14] Fieldnote, November 28, 2006.

The more than twenty men and women who had enrolled in the course (for a fee of 400 euros) originated from all over the world: Nigeria, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Peru, Pakistan, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, and China. Most of them had been living in Italy for years. Five instructors, all women, alternated teaching. Three of the instructors were Italian, one of them the head of the cooperative, while the other two instructors had migrated to Italy well over a decade prior, one from Argentina and the other from Albania.

On the second lecture of the course, on the theory and history of cultural mediation,[15] the head of the cooperative asked rhetorically: "Why did Italy choose the route of mediation?" In her answer she contrasted the assimilationist approach of France, which she described as a "dissociative process" that leads a person to feel "divided, dissociated." The in-between state of people originally from the Maghreb who are neither Maghrebi nor French leads to a state of being "*né carne, né pesce*" (neither meat, nor fish). A second process, that of multiculturalism, was characterized as "polarization-opposition" whereby "my identity is reaffirmed" but "one folds into oneself." In contrast, the Italian model was described as a process of "reciprocal implication": "the change, it's a relationship that we establish. I give up something of my identity, but you change too." This, the instructor emphasized, is the "strong idea of mediation": "both the client and the service provider come out changed." To illustrate the model, the instructor even voiced the appropriate approach to integration an immigrant engaged in the Italian way of integration should take:

> I adapt in an active way to the new context, I assimilate elements of this while conserving nonetheless the peculiarity of my original identity. In this way I

[15] The following is drawn from fieldnotes, November 28, 2006.

> allow myself to be contaminated, but at the same time I contaminate the receiving society with my cultural characteristics.[16]

The recurring language of contamination is striking because of the negative connotations of a term being used to describe a supposedly positive and desirable outcome. Its use may well be a reappropriation of the terms of xenophobic discourses of migration, making what is cast as problematic, namely the disruption of an imagined cultural homogeneity, into something to strive for. Yet, contamination presupposes a preceding state of purity, a homogeneity that is altered and disrupted by immigration. To an anthropologist it evokes Mary Douglas' notion of "matter out of place" (1966), of uncleanliness, pollution, and disease.

In asserting the subjectivity of a properly integrated migrant the instructor was also speaking to expectations for the integration of the students in the course. Cultural mediators are expected to facilitate the integration of members of their communities of origin by acting as cultural and not just linguistic "bridges" between Italians and immigrants. The process of cultural mediation is theorized in neutral terms, with the mediator acting as a bridge, interpreting but not generating communication between migrant clients and Italian social service providers, neither the advocate of the migrant person seeking the service, nor the enforcer of institutional or other knowledges and practices. The cultural mediator, according to the instructor, "helps to produce reciprocal recognition and change between immigrant clients and Italian social service providers."[17]

---

[16] Fieldnote, November 28, 2006
[17] Fieldnote, November 28, 2006.

To integrate is "to come together" ("*metterci insieme*") not just physically, but also culturally. At stake in this process is the cohesion of Italian society: "Entities that are not integrated" can threaten social cohesion by leading to conflict, according to the head of the cooperative. The answer to the question of "why should a state integrate a foreigner, and what does it mean?" highlights the importance of integration not just for the migrant, but for the receiving society, which needs to retain social cohesion and avoid social conflict:

> If it's not a project that can be eliminated, it's not just for solidarity, but also because of a practical principle. … I cannot allow that in a State there not be that which is called social cohesion. Conflict has to be kept as low as possible, especially in a democratic government, you have to find other systems for social cohesion, [thus] are born social policies.[18]

Other instructors emphasized different aspects of integration, focusing less on the cultural and more on the rights of social citizenship. This difference within one cultural mediation training course highlights the coexistence of multiple interpretations of integration.

By virtue of being located in cooperatives and associations, cultural mediation privileges health and social services as the sites of "coming together." As immigrants seek out services, cultural mediation "helps to produce a reciprocal recognition and a change … between immigrant clients and Italians." Cultural mediation has taken hold as the funding and organization of Italy's social and health services has been shifting from the State to public-private entities under the model of subsidiarity. Despite this erosion of the "public" in social services, one of the instructors in the course, long involved in theorizing cultural mediation and *intercultura*, emphatically framed

[18] Fieldnote, December 19, 2006.

integration and citizenship in terms of the right to access public services. One of the most important roles of cultural mediators, according to Castiglioni, is "the function of welcoming (*accoglienza*)" and of orientation of new immigrants to the receiving society.[19] The reason why this function is so important, according to Castiglioni, is that the Italian government fails to provide these services to immigrants. For Castiglioni, cultural mediation is an activist intervention that redresses the failure of the Italian state, particularly in the context of health care. The role of the cultural mediator is to fill the gap by providing information and orienting immigrants who are unfamiliar with the Italian bureaucracy so that they can obtain services. This orienting role of cultural mediators to available social services and networks enables newcomers to exercise their rights as citizens. The very notion of what it means to be foreign, according to Castiglioni, is tied up with not knowing how and where to access social services:

> What does it mean to be a foreigner? It's not having a family network, as social network, a network of services, a network of friends. The more foreign I am, the more I lack this… If the foreigner is foreign it's exactly because the network is missing, thus the network of services has to cover what is missing.

It is by becoming oriented to the city and its services that a foreigner becomes a full member of the community and a citizen:

> Facilitating the use of services, the use of the resources of the community is a citizenship right, citizen understood as inhabitant of the city. It's our right to use the services that are available, otherwise we use it in a wrong way. This is the right to citizenship. We become citizens of this city, in the meantime we are paying taxes, when we have a right to use the resources of the community.[20]

Yet, even as cultural mediators are tasked with facilitating the use of services, migrants, especially migrant women, are implicated in the provision of welfare services as the foot

[19] Fieldnote, November 28, 2006.
[20] Fieldnote, November 28, 2006.

soldiers of the "do-it-yourself" welfare model. Regardless of educational and professional experience, many migrant women in Italy find themselves channeled into domestic/carework by immigration laws that set aside quotas for it (Campani 2007) by employment offices that automatically direct women to it, by the high demand for domestic and care-workers in the absence of adequate social services, and by the lack of other opportunities due to the non-transferability of foreign education, lack of contacts, and discrimination. This was a profound source of frustration voiced by many of the participants in the course. For the students in the group, a number of whom had college degrees and professional work experience, cultural mediation represented one of the few professional opportunities available outside of domestic work.[21]

The head of the cooperative harshly reminded the students of this reality. She warned the participants that cultural mediation is not something they should be pursuing if what they are looking for is to improve their earnings:

> Why are you here, wanting to be mediators? If you think you will earn more as a mediator than you would as a *badante*[22] [domestic worker] for women, or for men by working in a factory, you are wrong. If one decides to be a domestic she can manage her own hours, it's possible to work on Sunday too, 15 Euros an hour net, you lose your job, a family, and you find two others. There is no

[21] In 2011, the percentage of migrant women who are employed was slightly higher than Italian women, 46.3% versus 45.7%, much of it attributable to domestic work (Parente 2012: 138). A significant portion of domestic work is conducted "under the table." A government report estimates that 62% of domestic work falls under that category (Parente 2012: 141). Women make up 80% of domestic workers and the countries of origin most represented among domestic workers, according to a 2010 survey are, in descending order, Romania, Ukraine, Philippines, Polonia, Moldavia, and Peru (Censis 2010 cited in Parente 2012: 142). Women from different countries of origin show widely different rates of employment. Women from the Philippines, who have been in Italy for long periods of time, have well-established associations representing them, and are highly sought after in domestic work; their rates of employment as high as 88%. Moroccan women's employment rates, on the other hand, fall on the opposite end of the spectrum at 26.4% (Istat 2008b: 46-47).

[22] The term "badante" has its roots in the word "badare" "to mind." Thus a *badante* is a "minder" a term that is considered by many to be pejorative. The preferred term is *collaboratrice domestica* or "domestic collaborator." However, this term elides the structural inequalities and vulnerabilities of this work (see Andall 2000).

> problem. If you don't want to [be] a domestic, throw yourself into working with the elderly, there is no problem."[23]

In public discourse, including by the former Minister of Welfare, the care work provided by migrant women is even celebrated as a "warm gift" that is preferable to the cold bureaucracy of the state, a gift that is enabled by the reorganization of welfare according to the logics of subsidiarity (Sacconi 2010: 44).[24]

In interviews and conversations with migrants, including participants in the course, many described a number of problems with carework, not least of which the vulnerability, including sexual, to employers, a sense of isolation and even "imprisonment," and the disjuncture between educational attainment in the country of origin and domestic work.[25] In these discussions the ideals of cultural "mutual contamination" run against the reality of structural limitations in employment for migrants, which leads the most educated, well-established and culturally "integrated" to the field of cultural mediation searching for "professional" work. Marybel, a Peruvian-origin woman employed as a nursing assistant in a Milanese hospital and a participant in the grassroots *Let's Get Together* project described below recounted the stories she heard from friends and acquaintances who were abused, including sexually, within the confines of Italian homes, underscoring the vulnerability and lack of labor protection of domestic work. Paula, an immigrant activist, also originally from Peru, described her struggles to overcome the idea of being only "good enough to be a servant," which she

---

[23] Fieldnote, December 5, 2006.
[24] See Bimbi 1993 for the historical resonance of this discourse.
[25] A government report on employment problems associated with care work, which by virtue of being delimited within individual households can lead to isolation as well as power imbalances between employer and employee (Parente 2012: 142). The report cites findings from the Ukrainian Parliamentary Commission on Foreign Affairs on the development among Ukrainian women employed as care workers in Italy of an "'Italian syndrome' characterized by agoraphobia, aggression, and other disturbed psychological states" (Tolstokorova 2007, cited in Parente 2012: 144).

explained as a combination of the limited opportunities for migrant women in Italy and from her subordinate social standing in Peru as woman of *indios* identity.[26]

Rose Marie, described her first few years in Italy, when she worked as a careworker, which she called being a "baby-sitter." She found the work isolating, describing feeling almost like a prisoner. Rose Marie described the difficulty of this experience vividly in an interview in the one-bedroom apartment she shared with her Italian husband and their 2-year-old daughter. She had earned a psychology degree in Peru where she had practiced before moving to Italy looking for a living wage that would support her parents as her father had lost his teaching job and pension through the economic restructuring of the 1990s. Without a legal residency permit, and with her university degree not recognized by the Italian system, the only work she could find was as a "baby-sitter" for an Italian family:

> the first year I was illegal and worked as a baby-sitter, and sometimes they told me that I even had to clean and I didn't like this, this I didn't like at all. Sometimes I thought: "God, what did I do to earn this punishment? Tell me what I did, if I did something. Let this punishment end!" I used to ask for this, I worked and thought: "Rose Marie, it won't be for your whole life, this was my, my motivation, my incentive that I gave myself, because it won't be [….], not my whole life doing this work. For me it was hard, the first year I cried a lot, a lot, Milena! Madonna! I was sad, because sometimes I had two hours, maybe Saturday or Sunday I … with the child and I used to see young women like me who went out on their motorcycles, Italian girls, and I used to say "darn!" What am I doing? Did I do the right thing coming here? […] In the meantime I met my husband. This changed my life, understand? … I didn't have any rest, I tell you that they had, some of the time they didn't give me the day off. Closed inside there, and some of the time they humiliate you, no? And you feel bad. No, I went through it, thank God that it was a year and a half and not longer.[27]

The structural limitations in employment for migrant women highlights the way the ideal of mutual contamination remains just that, a symbolic and cultural model that is

[26] Digitally recorded interview, July 19 2007.
[27] Digitally recorded interview, April 27 2007.

not reflected in structural opportunities for migrants. The contradictions between expectations of integration that foreground gender equity and participation of women in the public sphere and the reality of domestic work underscore the rhetorical use of gender ideologies in the assertion of Italy's modernity and in the definition of Italian identity vis-à-vis migrants, particularly those from Muslim communities.

Asserting Coherence: The Charter of Values of Citizenship & Integration

Immigration in Italy is often framed by the context of demographic anxieties, of "disappearing Italians" and a dwindling welfare state and is thus simultaneously a threat to, and a potential resource for, social and biological reproduction. In the rhetoric of the right, immigration is a threat to the imagined homogeneity of the Italian nation and to its security. Integration from this perspective requires the adoption of Italian moral values and respect for law and order. On the left, the "threat" posed by immigration to social cohesion is understood not as an inherent problem with heterogeneity and cultural diversity, but rather as a potential problem that could arise from unmanaged immigration and inequality. Despite these differences, however, politicians across the spectrum increasingly identify certain values as Italian, European, and Western and expect immigrants to adopt them. Central in this assertion of what are non-negotiable values of Italianness are the adoption of monogamous marriage and "egalitarian" gender relations, which are seen by some, but not all, as incompatible with veiling, access to education and employment, and the presence of women in the public sphere. The approach to integration as a strategy of emancipation of women is a running thread through institutional and expert discourses on immigration, integration, and nonnegotiable cultural values. The contradictions between the embrace of gender

equality as an Italian core value and the actual experiences of women, both migrant and Italian, however, opens up spaces for contestation.

The flourishing of discourses on immigration and integration finds its first institutional articulation in a 2007 document produced under the auspices of the center-left government led by Romano Prodi. Following consultation with representatives of various immigrant and religious communities, a panel of experts drafted an initially non-binding[28] document titled, *Carta dei valori della cittadinanza e dell'integrazione (The Charter of Values of Citizenship and Integration*). The state, as Donald Carter notes, "is envisioned through official documents" (1994: 73) and the *Charter of Values* (Ministry of Interior) crystallizes an important dimension of Italy's ongoing process of "state formation as cultural revolution" (Corrigan and Sayer 1991: 199). The *Charter* is a statement of the non-negotiable values of Italian society, common values that all citizens are expected to embrace.[29] The *Charter* reflects traditional leftist concerns by affirming immigrants' rights related to work, access to health care, protection from discrimination, housing, and education, the latter being identified "as an indispensable instrument for personal growth and social integration" (2007: 1). In return, immigrants are expected to abide by Italian laws and values. Issues championed by the right are also

[28] While the *Charter* lays out the parameters of integration in official terms, it was not originally a binding document. In 2010, however, the center-right government of Silvio Berlusconi introduced the *Accordo di integrazione* (*Integration Agreement*), which new immigrants will have to sign. The *Agreement* includes a requirement that immigrants sign the *Charter of Values and Citizenship*. The "Integration Agreement" is a point-based assessment. Points are acquired through the acquisition of knowledge about Italian society, the Italian language and through attendance of required civic education classes. Practices that lead to the acquisition of points include the establishment of a business, the purchase of a home, and the selection of a primary care physician. Conversely, points are lost for any kind of criminal activity leading to even "provisional" sentencing. The official text of the *Accordo di Integrazione* (Integration Agreement) is available at http://www.governo.it/GovernoInforma/Dossier/integrazione_sicurezza/accordo_integrazione.pdf

[29] The official English translation of the Charter is available online at: http://www.interno.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/assets/files/14/0919_charter_of_values_of_citizenship_and_integration.pdf

represented. The *Charter* defines Italy in terms of its Greek and Roman history and Judeo-Christian roots, identifying these as the sources of the country's modernity.

In its role as a document aimed at guiding the integration of immigrants, the *Charter* articulates the requirements and parameters of integration and citizenship. It highlights civic as well as cultural values, and identifies the adoption of shared values as an important step towards citizenship. An integrated immigrant:

> shows a good command of the Italian language, knows the essential elements of Italian history and culture and shares the principles regulating the Italian society. Living in the same territory means to be full-fledged citizens of that land and acquire, with loyalty and coherence, common values and share responsibilities (2007: 2).

Yet, deep cultural, political, linguistic, and economic rifts have been a feature of Italian history. In the postwar period the divide between Catholics and Communists has been particularly intense. The 1970s marked a period of political and cultural struggles over the family, reproduction, and the bases of solidarity, all issues that have gained new relevance in the past decade. Nonetheless, in the *Charter of Values,* the political and cultural struggles playing out in Italy have been neatly subsumed under the notion of "common values." Included among these values is gender equality, presented as an established and non-negotiable characteristic of Italian society:

> Men and women have equal dignity and enjoy the same rights inside and outside their own family. Italy offers to every female, male and young immigrant the possibility to integrate while respecting one's own identity. This path can lead those who decide to settle in our country to participate actively in the social life (2007: 2).

Yet, these values have had a fragile toehold in Italy, certainly compared to other parts of Europe. Writing about women's rights in Italy in the mid 1980s, Paul Ginsborg observes

that despite important changes, "overall … Italy occupied a distinctly retrograde place in the diverse world of European patriarchy" (2001: 105).

In addition to the affirmation of gender equality as a quintessential Italian value, an entire section of the Charter is devoted to articulating the Italian definition of the family, to which immigrants are to abide to be considered integrated. The *Charter* draws upon the definition of the family in article 29 of the Italian Constitution, which states that "Italy recognises the rights of the family as a natural society based on marriage" (2007: 3). Yet, at the very time that this document was being drafted and published, the definition of the family was being questioned and challenged by attempts to obtain the recognition of civil unions in Italy. An intense debate swirled around the constitutional meaning of "the natural family" and the configuration of family that could and should be recognized by the Italian state (see chapter 4). The definition of marriage presented in the document neither acknowledges nor reflects these social and political tensions within Italian society. Instead, the drafters of the *Charter* defined marriage as heterosexual, reproductive, and monogamous:

> Marriage is based on equal rights and responsibilities of husband and wife and it is, therefore, monogamic. Monogamy unites the lives of two persons thus making them both responsible for what they realize together, starting from the bringing up of their children. Italy forbids polygamy, it being adverse to women's rights. This is also in line with the principles affirmed by European institutions (2007: 3).

The exclusions inherent in this definition of marriage are elided in the same moment that "the freedom to choose whom to marry" is enshrined in the *Charter* as an Italian value, but only as it concerns heterosexual relationships. At the very same time that the terms of marriage and the family were under intense debate in Italy, particularly as it concerns the recognition of same-sex marriages and civil unions, the *Charter*

presents as unproblematic the heteronormative definition of marriage. The *Charter* also addresses the issue of veiling, taking a different stance from the French in recognizing it as an expression of identity and as compatible with Italian values as long as worn by choice: "In Italy there are no restrictions on people's attire, as long as it is chosen freely and it is not detrimental to his/her dignity. It is not accepted to cover the face because this impedes the person's recognition and hinders establishing relations with the others" (2007: 4). The terms by which the veil is recognized reaffirm the potential for the veil to be "detrimental to dignity," the importance of "free choice," as well as the Italian emphasis on sociality in matters of integration.

The *Charter of Values of Citizenship and Integration* presents integration as a project of emancipation and modernization that addresses immigrant women differently than men. The drafters of the document single out migrant women (alongside children) as being particularly "needy" of state protection (2007: 1). Immigrant men, on the other hand, are implicitly presented as potential oppressors of women in need of adopting Italian values of gender equality and monogamy. Additionally, the presentation of the values of integration glosses over the actual cultural, political and moral heterogeneity of Italian society. The elision of the contested and un-cohesive nature of Italian society is made possible by the projection of difference onto immigrants, Muslim immigrants in particular. Against the specter of practices like polygamy and arranged marriages otherwise contested ideas of family and gender relations in Italy are subsumed into shared commitments to gender equality and self-determination.

Anthropologists have long rejected the notion that cultural coherence is automatic (Wolf 1999: 66-67). Instead, as Wolf eloquently asserts in his final work,

cultural coherence is the outcome of active social processes. The "organization of diversity" into cultural coherence is always an exercise in power. The task of the ethnographer is to make those processes visible:

> Whenever possible we should try to identify the social agents who install and defend institutions and who organize coherence, for whom and against whom. And if culture was conceived originally as an entity with fixed boundaries marking off insiders against outsiders, we need to ask who set those boundaries and who now guards those ramparts (1999: 67).

"Moral regulation" as Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer define it, is a cultural project that is characteristic of the capitalist and patriarchal state, "a project of normalizing, rendering natural, taken for granted, in a word, 'obvious,' what are in fact ontological and epistemological premises of a particular and historical form of social order" (1991: 4). Through the *Charter* the Italian State declares "acceptable forms of social activity and individual and collective identity" (Corrigan and Sayer 1991:3) that are aimed both at migrants and Italians, making it hard at times to sort out "for whom and against whom" this coherence is being organized. However, one category of immigrants, Muslims, is uniquely interpellated in official articulations of the Italian values of integration and citizenship.

Integrability and Integralism: Islamophobia in Europe

Islamophobia has been on the rise in the New Europe since the 1990s. Scholars have examined the contours of the emergence and solidification of the Muslim as the ultimate Other to European values of universalism, tolerance, and modernity (Bunzl 2007). Anthropologist Douglas Holmes examines the link between the reconfiguring of social solidarity under "fast capitalism" and the rise of right-wing integralism and of racism across Europe (2000) The discourse on the essential foreignness and otherness of

Muslims in Europe is a form of racism legitimated by cultural, rather, than biological premises. In the 1990s, scholars of European racism noted the shift away from biological grounds and toward cultural arguments, which in their assertion of essential and immutable differences came to serve the same ideological purposes (see Stolcke 1995; Barker 1982; Miles 1993). Right-wing political figure, such as Jean-Marie Le Pen in France, Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands, Umberto Bossi and Roberto Calderoli in Italy (and the list goes on) have solidified a right-wing movement around the "threat" posed by Muslim migrants (Bunzl 2007: 37). Public intellectuals and commentators argue that Muslims threaten Western civilization through their values, terrorist violence, and hyper-fertility. Formerly leftist Italian journalist Orianna Fallaci has warned that Europe is turning into 'Eurabia' (2006).

One of Italy's most noted political scientist, Giovanni Sartori argues in a 2009 newspaper editorial that as far as citizenship and "Italianness" are concerned, "**the issue is not between white, black, or yellow, it's not about skin color, but rather about the 'integra-bility' of the Muslim**" (emphasis in original).[30] The question of the "integrability" of Muslims is a question of essential difference and of the terms of new and profound political exclusions. Sartori's concern with the refusal of the Other to integrate (2000: 10) reflects his suspicion of multiculturalism and his preference instead for 'tolerance.'[31] Following the events of 9/11, of the attacks in London and Spain, and in the context of the US-led war in Iraq and Afghanistan, the position of Muslims in Europe and Italy is complicated by the geopolitical relevance of Islam and by the global

[30] "L'integrazione degli islamici." Giovanni Sartori, December 20, 2009, *Corriere della Sera.it*, http://www.corriere.it/editoriali/09_dicembre_20/sartori_2eb47d0c-ed3e-11de-9ea5-00144f02aabc.shtml
[31] For a critique of the tolerance discourse see Wendy Brown (2006) *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*, Princeton University.

threat of terrorism. The "clash of civilizations" (Huntington 1993) gains traction beyond the symbolic and cultural level.[32]

Tensions around Muslim migrants and an intense focus on the issue of veiling in Milan were inescapable during my fieldwork. In 2006, around 40% of migrants in Lombardy were Muslims (Blangiardo et al. 2006: 71).[33] Some neighborhoods were particularly associated with Muslim residents. The most notorious was via Padova. In April of 2007, as I made my way to a small café in via Padova for an interview with Saja, a Syrian woman who had lived in Italy for two decades, I walked past multiple posters by the xenophobic *Lega Nord* party exhorting Italians to be "*Padroni a casa nostra*" ("In Charge in Our Own Home)." As I waited for Saja to join me in the bar I could not avoid the loud conversation of the Italian family seated next to me. One of them had ordered a *marocchino*, a drink similar to a "moka," but also the term for a Moroccan man and, for many Italians, the catch-all term for all North-African immigrants. The family started to joke that there were *"marocchini"* everywhere now and pointed as if in confirmation to the street. Saja, who wore a veil, was just then walking in front of the window on her way to meet me. The family fell silent when she walked in and joined me at the table.[34]

Shopkeepers in my neighborhood warned me about immigrants and spoke particularly negatively of Muslim ones, "they can't be trusted" cautioned the owner of a

---

[32] Across the Atlantic, conservative politician and commentator Pat Buchanan warned in 2002 about the coming 'death of the West.' More mainstream contributions, such as a book that asks whether it is possible to have Europe without Europeans by New York Times columnist Christopher Caldwell (2009) cast Muslims as inherently un-European.

[33] In 2012, Caritas/Migrantes estimated the religious composition of migrants in Italy as follows: 53.9% Christian (inclusive of Orthodox, 29.6%, Roman Catholic, 19.2%, and Protestant, 4.4%), 32,9% Muslim, 0.1% Jewish, "Oriental religious traditions" 5.9%, and Other 7.2% (Caritas/Migrantes 2012: 4).

[34] Fieldnote, Saja, April 21, 2007.

pet shop, "they smile at you but they always have ulterior motives."[35] Even at multicultural events, such as the celebration of the Chinese New Year in via Paolo Sarpi, a neighborhood noted for its high density of Chinese migrants and businesses, discussions among Italians about the merits of different immigrant groups were loud and unselfconscious. As we waited for the dragon to make its wind its way from Piazza Gramsci, an Italian man and woman standing next to me conversed about the neighborhood. The woman asserted: "This area is theirs now. But I prefer this neighborhood ... Here it's just them and they are not bothersome." Her companion responded, "there are Chinese in the other neighborhood too." "Yes, but not just them, there are others, like the Muslims, and you have to walk a kilometer to find a *panetteria* (a bakery). No, the Chinese are not bothersome, I have a lot of friends…"[36]

In fact, the Italian residents of the Sarpi neighborhood did find the Chinese "bothersome" enough to seek restrictions of loading and unloading in the street, a practice central to the wholesale clothing business so prevalent in the community. These restrictions, approved by Milan's conservative administration, led to a riot on April 12, 2007. On that day, instead of the bustling street I was used to catching a glimpse of as the tram I took to the *consultorio* crossed via Sarpi, I saw a large number of police vans and of agents in riot gear. Cars were overturned. The event was at the top of the news for a few days, raising once again questions of integration and social cohesion.[37]

Tensions around the ownership, symbolic and actual, of urban spaces were never more heightened than around the issue of the building of mosques. Struggles over

---

[35] Fieldnote, November 9, 2006.
[36] Fieldnote, February 18, 2007.
[37] See, for example, "Guerra di strada tra cinesi e forze dell'ordine," *corrieredellasera.it*, April 13, 2007, http://milano.corriere.it/cronache/articoli/2007/04_Aprile/12/cinesi_sarpi_vigili.shtml

mosques have played out in Italy for many years and have involved cities like Florence, Bologna, and Milan. Proposals for building a mosque in Milan has been opposed by the *Lega Nord* and Milan's conservative administration for years. Italian Senator and former minister, Roberto Carderoli, a member of the xenophobic *Lega Nord* party, took a pig for a walk on the grounds under consideration for a mosque in Milan. In 2007 he called for a reprisal in Bologna, where a mosque was also being debated. He noted that the event could be called "*Maiale*-Day" ("Pig Day"), a reference to the recent success of the "Family Day" protest,[38] underscoring how the resurgent conservative politics of the traditional family and Christian values could slide into anti-Muslim sentiments.

The lack of a mosque in Milan has led to the proliferation of cultural organizations that act as places of worship. Probably the most famous in Milan is the "mosque" of viale Jenner, which was not far from the apartment where I lived and where for part of my fieldwork I was joined by my partner Jeff. The *viale* Jenner cultural center was on the ground floor of an apartment building and on Friday it overflowed with worshippers. Jeff was invited to services there by friends he met at an Egyptian food store near our apartment. He had visited the store in search of his beloved *tahini*, which was nowhere to be found in Italian supermarkets. Because of the lack of space, the faithful spilled over the allotted space, praying in the entranceway and out on the sidewalk. Accusations of terrorism swirled around Abu Imad, the imam of the mosque. When Jeff attended, the imam welcomed him warmly and gave him a Koran. Yet, I wondered about what he and others thought of this white, blue-eyed American in

[38] "Bologna, si infiamma lo scontro sulla moschea. Calderoli: "Un maiale-Day contro l'Islam"" 13 September 2007, http://www.repubblica.it/2007/09/sezioni/politica/calderoli-moschee/calderoli-moschee/calderoli-moschee.html.

this contested space. The thought that he might be working for the CIA must have crossed some minds, including the imam's, since it was only four years earlier, right before the beginning of the Iraq war, that his predecessor, imam Abu Omar, was kidnapped on a street nearby. Omar was walking home from the mosque in broad daylight when he was seized by a group of CIA officers under the policy of "extraordinary rendition." Omar, who had been granted asylum from Egypt in 2001 by the Italian government, was then flown to the US military base of Aviano and then to Egypt, where he was tortured for 7 months.[39] The question of whether Muslims belonged in Milan, in Italy, and in Europe, then, was also caught up in broader geopolitical concerns. The politics of the war on terror, while not the focus of this chapter, raised the stakes of being Muslim on the streets of Milan, of being marked as a potential threat rather than a potential citizen.

Integration as Emancipation?

Teasing out the question of gender and integration reveals a complex political issue. After many years of neglect of issues of race and immigration (see Andall 2000), Italian feminists were beginning to address the relationship between feminism and migration in 2007, spurred by the appropriation of feminism in anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim discourse. In February 2007 I attended a conference hosted by the association *Libera Università' delle donne* (Women's Free University) and organized by Members

[39] Twenty-two American CIA officers were found guilty by an Italian court in 2009. An Italian intelligence agency chief was also found guilty and sentenced to ten years in prison. "Italy upholds verdict on CIA agents in rendition case." *BBC News Europe*, September 19, 2012. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-19653566. See also in-depth coverage by La Repubblica: "L'Imam rapito dalla Cia. I silenzi e le complicità con Washington. By Giuseppe D'Avanzo, June 28, 2005. http://inchieste.repubblica.it/it/repubblica/rep-it/2011/07/31/news/l_imam_rapito_a_milano_dalla_cia_i_silenzi_e_la_complicit_con_washington-19844593/?ref=NRCT-42862660-2).

of Parliament and other politically active women associated with the *Rifondazione Comunista* party. The conference, titled *Culture, Cittadinanze, Identità* (Cultures, Citizenships, Identities) brought together politicians, scholars, writers, activists, the head of a cultural mediation association, feminist family lawyers, the Italian principal of the Egyptian school in Milan, and even an anthropologist. The conference aimed to grapple with the recognition that feminism and gender issues were being hijacked to legitimize racist discourses and policies. In introductory remarks, Senator Giovanna Capelli explained the choice of addressing these issues: "They say Milan is the laboratory of what globalization brings to Europe," yet, as she noted, racism against Muslims and the Roma population had intensified over the past year.[40] Capelli reported on developments in the Italian Parliament: The Senate held hearings on "the status of immigrant women in Italy," which was really about Muslim women, and how "they are all subjected to the authority of their husbands," and are in need of "emancipation." In the Chamber of Deputies, a legislative proposal had been introduced by Daniela Santanchè, then an MP with the post-fascist party *Alleanza Nazionale*. The proposal was to ban the veil in Italy. For Capelli, this represented a "dangerous trend": "they are trying to use feminist words, words that belong to the left, they are decontextualized, even turned upside down, to reach an opposite goal."[41]

Santanchè had in fact been one of the motivations for the conference because of her recently published book on Muslim women and her newly found role as their protector. Santanchè's book, titled *La donna negata: dall'infibulazione alla liberazione* (Woman Denied: from Infibulation to Liberation), was published in 2006 with a preface

[40] Fieldnote, February 9, 2007.
[41] Fieldnote, February 9, 2007.

by Umberto Veronesi, a well-known Italian scientist.[42] The book's argument is that Muslim women are brutally oppressed by Muslim men[43] and that European governments should intervene to emancipate them through policies such as the banning of the veil. According to Santanchè: "To veil a woman means to spread a vision of the most fundamentalist Islam in European cities. It underscores the will to not integrate, the rejection of western values, the condemnation of female emancipation and of the equality of the sexes" (2006: 67).[44] In these arguments the veil functions as a symbol of un-integrability into Italian society.

In fact, the overlap of feminist discourse and anti-Muslim rhetoric is not the prerogative of the right. The critical approach of the *Cittadinanze* conference was highly unusual. Throughout my fieldwork I was confronted with conversations about the oppression of Muslim women, including from women involved in feminist work. The assumption that Muslim women were always oppressed, that the veil was inherently a symbol of that oppression, and that Muslim women were in need of liberation, was widespread.

In the rest of this chapter I examine the issue of veiling as it emerged in the cultural mediation course, in the *Let's Get Together* group, and in the broader public

---

[42] In his brief preface, Veronesi notes that Christianity too has had a history of oppressing women but suggests that unlike Christianity and the West Islam has not gone through the Enlightenment and thus does not benefit from the taming of religious fundamentalism and "pathology" by rationality (2006: 12). However, activists opposed to the ART law made similar arguments about Italy having been bypassed by the Enlightenment because of the influence of the Catholic Church.

[43] See Bumiller for an analysis of the way neoliberal ideologies have coopted feminist concerns with violence against women and targeted "brown men" in particular for control and punishment (Bumiller 2008: 7-10).

[44] Santanchè holds a curious notion of female emancipation and sexual equality. She has been one of the most outspoken supporters of Berlusconi during his sex scandals which have involved his awarding of political positions to women in exchange of sexual favors. Reports of "bunga bunga" parties in which female politicians and models stripped for Berlusconi and his male guests provide a powerful rejoinder to the rightwing project of saving Muslim women in the name of sexual equality and emancipation.

and political discourse. I document how veiling in Italy articulates with Italy's self-consciousness about its modernity, including in terms of progress related to women's issues, and its secularism, and yet still represents for many Italians across the political spectrum, a limit to the ideal of the "cultural contamination" model of integration.

"Not With the Veil"

In a lecture on ethnic relations, the head of the cooperative described various types of employment discrimination, highlighting the discrimination of women above all. Hafa, an Egyptian woman in her mid-thirties who was widowed and raising three children, shared her experience of employment discrimination which was related to the fact that she wore a veil. Just a few weeks earlier, Alima, a 40 year-old-woman from Morocco, had complained to me about the same issue while we sipped our bitter vending machine coffee from small plastic cups during a break in the course. Even though Alima spoke three languages fluently and would be called for an interview based on her résumé, once potential employers saw she veiled, they would turn her away. Hafa's experience echoed what Alima (and others) had described.

The instructor, however, was not willing to include this as examples of discrimination. Instead she devoted a significant amount of class time trying to put that interpretation into question. She introduced a hypothetical situation in which both she and Hafa would show up for a job interview: Hafa with her veil and the instructor wearing such a short miniskirt that one could see "thong underwear so skimpy that it could be mistaken for dental floss." The instructor suggested that both of them would be turned away: one for being too covered, the other for being too uncovered. Both are

sending messages, she argued: one that she is not going to play the part of the good girl, and the other… she trailed off:

> So, the reason why she is excluded is because she is too covered up. I am excluded because I'm not covered up enough. So my question is, she perceives this as an act of discrimination by virtue of of of her experience, of the fact that she is sending a very clear message, or at least this is how they are interpreted, dressing in that fashion. I am also sending a very clear message, I mean, for sure I want to get attention, I want to seem more or less sexy, for sure I don't want to play the part of the good girl. … The issue in this case can be that behind the refusal of "not you because you have the veil" might not be an outright act of, how do you say, discrimination because you are Muslim, it could be, I don't know, like in my case, "I don't want you because, excuse the expression, you give the impression of a whore." Because either you present yourself in another way, or like this I cannot accept you. … did you ever ask: "excuse me, I have the veil, but I can also work without" and then in a lower tone of voice, "if you are willing".

Hafa's response was to restate her experience: "When she saw me at the door she stopped me at the door and told me that the cooperative does not accept women with the veil."

Still unwilling to concede this as a case of discrimination, the instructor turned it into a teaching moment on the importance of dress for (female) cultural mediators:

> I am talking to you about this because the topic of clothing is very important, it affects the life of the mediator much more than you would think. So, let's think through this together. The agency says "not with the veil." Why not with the veil? Because you with the veil point to a particular image. However, I need to put you to work with the public; the public can have a lot of different opinions. I need people who are not marked.. who are not too marked in one way or another because they need to have a good relationship with whomever they have in front of them. Likewise, it's not ok to have the short skirt, it's not ok if you have a very low-cut top.

Part of the making of cultural mediators for this instructor (who employs cultural mediators through her cooperative), lies in producing subjects who are "not too marked" in their gender presentation and religious affiliation. In this narrative the appropriate presentation of self indexes cultural integration at the same time that it

functions as a gatekeeper of social and economic integration. As a potential and acceptable requirement of employment, cultural mediators need to conform to the "rules of the place" in terms of the gendered presentation of self. Although integration and hybridity are celebrated in theory, in practice, the amorphous boundaries of what counts as integration are set by those who have the power to make decisions, including whom to hire as a cultural mediator. And despite the progressive theory of *intercultura* and cultural mediation, veiling, which marks the subject as Muslim, religious, and oppressed because of her gender, challenges the ideal of mutual contamination and represents a limit to integration.

While progressive Italians involved in projects of integration and cultural mediation and institutional figures involved in making policy or policy recommendations highlight gender equality as manifested in not covering, choosing one's spouse, monogamy, and engagement in public sphere as non-negotiable markers of integration, migrant women and men identified other sources of oppression. Being a properly hybrid and integrated mediating subject requires the performance of "modern" and unmarked femininity. Yet, the difficulty that women migrants face in finding work outside of the private, domestic sphere, for example, contradicts one of the key markers and expectations of integration: that immigrants embrace modern gender roles and participation in the public sphere. The women taking the cultural mediation course did not describe feeling oppressed by their culture, but rather by the discrimination and narrowing of opportunities they encountered in Italy.

Aziz, a cultural mediator originally from Morocco married to an Italian woman, joined the course a few days late. Over time I got to know him and asked whether I

could interview him and his wife. They lived outside of Milan and they invited me for Moroccan tea at their small apartment decorated with Moroccan art. Aziz and his wife Simona made a very attractive couple; they had been married for a few years and the more I spoke to them, the more it seemed to me that they embodied the ideal of "contamination" and hybridity embraced by the *intercultura* mediation model. Aziz was a practicing Muslim while Simona, who had grown up Catholic, was not particularly religious. They explained to me how they had "integrated" their lives: Aziz would pray in the bedroom after work while Simona cooked the pasta and they had it timed so that he would be done just in time to eat it *al dente*. She drank wine, while he drank water. They respected and embraced each other's differences. Their intimate balancing of cultural "contamination," however, clashed with discrimination in Italian society. After driving me back to the train station and waiting with me, Aziz recounted the couple's struggles in securing a new apartment. They had found one they liked, two rooms, 750 euros. When Aziz called about renting, the realtors asked:

> "How many people?"
> "Two, my wife and I."
> "Can I inquire what nationality?"
> "My wife is Milanese and I am… Moroccan."
> "Ah, I'm sorry, but the proprietor only wants Italians."

Aziz protested to me, "but I live here, what if I had Italian citizenship? Fra and I joke that if I had citizenship, I would respond 'Italian' and then we would show up, me with a long beard and her all covered up!" For the time being, despite embodying the values of *intercultura* within their relationship, Aziz and Simona could not seem to find a way out of their cramped apartment in the periphery of Milan.[45]

[45] Fieldnote and digital recording, Simona & Hakim, April 22, 2007.

Getting Together

The demands of integration placed on Muslims, and on Muslim women in particular, and the increasing sense of being targeted by anti-Muslim discourses and practices, inspired a group of women to initiate an informal, grassroots intercultural project. They named the group *Incontriamoci* (Let's Get Together) to emphasize its social nature, hoping to initiate a dialogue between Italian and Muslim women (some of the participants were both). Most of the Muslim women who participated in the group veiled, as did an Italian woman who had married an Egyptian and converted to Islam. Marybel, a Peruvian woman, also participated in the group because of her interest in immigrant rights issues. The first few meetings, which began in February of 2007, took place in the controversial Italian-Egyptian school, where some of the participants sent their children. At the second meeting, in March of 2007, about 20 women and a couple of men sat around a large conference table talking about how Muslims are seen in Italy, the meaning of the veil, the role of the woman in the family, integration, food, racism, and even the evils of cigarette smoke. More informal conversations took place over Egyptian and Moroccan sweets and mint tea.

The two principal figures behind the initiative were Federica, a divorced Italian woman with a pre-adolescent daughter and a new partner, and Halima, an Egyptian woman with three children, who veiled, and whose daughter, of around the same age as Federica's, also wore a hijab. Federica and Halima, and some of the other women who participated in the group had found each other and become friends through their children's Italian school, prior to the opening of the Italian-Egyptian school. The synergy between Federica's anti-racist and progressive politics and Halima's desire to

do something to address what she experienced as an increasingly hostile society led to the project. Federica's friendliness and energy and Halima's warmth and infectious laughter and their very different lives and looks made them particularly well-suited to open up a dialogue that they hoped would educate and bridge differences.

As in other settings in which immigration was a topic, discussions of "integration" were common. In one of the early meetings, Luisa, a tall thin woman in her early thirties with bright blue eyes and a silky headscarf that matched her clothes, introduced herself to the group. Originally from Dagestan, she had been living in Italy for seven years, was married, and had a child. The first thing she said after introducing herself was: "I don't feel integrated. I work, I read the newspaper, I watch TV, I understand Italian, I make myself understood, but I don't feel integrated. I don't understand, it's as if I'm from another planet." Marybel, a woman in her early 40s who worked as a nursing assistant in a Milanese hospital echoed Luisa: "Picking up on what Luisa said, 'I don't feel integrated,' I don't either, and in addition, I challenge the idea of integration by the state that we are supposed to accept with our heads low. I am Peruvian, I am trying to live a quiet life, on a humanistic basis, we are all human beings, of the same species."[46]

Two Italian women one of whom was a retired teacher in Pioltello Nuovo talked about the similarities with the 1970s when the Milanese didn't want their children in the same classrooms as the children of the *meridionali* (southerners). Another participant charged that to her the word "*integrazione*" was a swear word because it meant "the

[46] Fieldnote, February 2, 2007.

erasure of identity." The discussion turned on whether the burden of integration is placed on immigrants or as Federica argued it should be, "on the receiving society."[47]

The topic of veiling and of the role of women within the Muslim family sparked the most discussion and were ultimately the central issues that Federica and Halima wanted to address. Halima was keen on Italians not assuming that Muslim women who veiled did so because their husbands forced them to. She presented the veil as a choice, one she had made independently and that she claimed her daughter had recently made as well. Halima described the subtleties of veiling, the fabrics and colors that were in fashion, and talked about wanting to hold a workshop on the topic. Gloria, an Italian middle-aged psychologist with bright red hair, introduced herself as a "historical" feminist, having been part of a feminist collective in the 1970s. She described participating in the battle to establish the *consultori* and to decriminalize abortion, marching in the streets and setting up barricades. "What amazing times, I am so happy to have lived through them," she remarked. When the discussion turned to veiling, Gloria called on Italian women to look within before judging Muslim women or making assumptions about them: "*Ma chi non ha una donna velata dentro di sé*?" (But who doesn't have a veiled woman inside her?)," she asked. "Catholic nuns veil without causing a scandal!" interjected Halima, to which Gloria replied, "Yes, "but *nonna* too." Gloria offered a psychological explanation for the threat that the veiled woman seems to pose for Italian women. She argued that this veiled figure was a projection: "she is

[47] Fieldnote, *Incontriamoci*, March 2, 2007.

dangerous, because she is inside." In order to counter that sense of danger, everyone needed to own their reactions.[48]

In an interview in the summer of 2007, Federica and Halima returned over and over again to the issue of veiling.[49] They took turns to describe the exaggerated attention that Italians pay to the veil. They laughed about the way the group of them, a handful of women all veiled except for Federica who met in the afternoons to have a coffee in the bar of the Piola subway station, the same bar where we were holding the interview, were stared at by Italian commuters. The owner was friendly and supportive, but the commuters would cup their hands around their faces, as Halima demonstrated to me, and put them on the glass window of the bar to gape at the group. Halima told me "one day you should walk with me, hidden, because they look you wrong if you are walking with a *mussulmana*, you're crazy to walk around with a Muslim woman." Halima described the "courage" that it took to start wearing the veil in Italy and the pride that she felt that her daughter had chosen to do so as well. However, she also worried for her children. Her daughter had been shoved on the city bus on her way home from school by an older woman and had fallen down the stairs of door. The incident inspired her to speak with her friends about doing something, holding some meetings, "speaking with people, because people, they have become mean, I am afraid, I am always worried for my children, for myself." Halima's fears had recently been confirmed by an incident that took place in front of the Italian-Egyptian school: One of the mothers of the children enrolled there, an Italian woman married to an Egyptian

[48] Fieldnote March 2, 2007.
[49] Digital recording, Federica & Halima, July 13, 2007

man who had converted and wore the *niqab,* was attacked by an Italian man outside of the school. The man pulled at her veil, then punched her, knocking her to the ground.[50]

Federica described the fact that even her friends, all of whom she described as leftist, questioned her friendship with Muslim women: "they are curious, but not suspicious, because from an intellectual perspective they think that we're all equal, but there is still a small obstacles, their judgment toward us, they look at me, 'how do you do it'?" Federica added, immediately after as if in answer to that rhetorical question: "I am with them, my *nonna* (grandmother) walked around with the veil, in Sardegna, in the little villages." Halima described a common experience among her friends who veiled, and something that had happened to her on numerous occasions, of being told by Italian women: "it's too hot, pull it off!" She recounted one interaction with some amusement. On a hot summer day while she was looking through fabrics at one of the stands at the weekly outdoor market, Halima was approached by an older Italian woman who asked her:

> "But do you not feel the heat like us?"
> "Yes, *signora,* I assure you,"
> "Pick me a color, but I don't do it like you, I put it here," pointing to her neck.
> "Ok, it's not a problem. Ok."

Michelle Rosaldo's quip that Third World Woman is "ourselves undressed" (1980: 392, cited in Mohanty 1988: 65) gains new meaning in these heated encounters where veiled women become "ourselves overdressed." Halima reflected that "there's a lot, there are those who understand, there are those we still need to talk." Federica returned to the fact

[50] This incident did not receive much coverage in the media, except for a small article that ran in Repubblica after the woman's husband contacted the paper. De Riccardis, Sandro. 2007. "Mia moglie picchiata perché porta il velo islamico" (My wife, beaten for wearing the Islamic veil). *la Repubblica*, May 22, pg. 29.

that Italian women of two generations ago also used to veil: "People have forgotten that our *nonne* too used to wear the veil. Ah, maybe they have forgotten?"

Through the recuperation of the veiled *nonna* Italian feminists can make connections with Muslim women who veil that counter the notion of deep-seated and unbridgeable cultural differences. These *nonne* of our memories, who covered their heads to go out in public, which preceded the Muslim women who veil today, undermine the notion of the inherent alienness of these practices and of veiled women walking on Italian streets, riding the bus, shopping at the market. Other veiled figures preceded them, still alive in the memory of their granddaughters, myself included.

Halima and Federica also sought to counter assumptions that Muslim women are oppressed in the family. In meetings of *Let's Get Together* and in our interview they presented a family system and gender roles that they argued, while different, should not be read as oppressive. Federica observed that "when they get married, it's the man who brings the dowry, not the woman, which I think is correct because the woman, she has something too… A man who asks his wife for her money is not a decent man." Halima added, "because you don't touch it, because she is the one available, it's his responsibility, it's him who has to pay for everything for the household," and Federica jumped in: "While we, women in the West, instead also work."

The discussion on "the Muslim family," like the veil, served to counter the stereotypes that mark Muslims as incompatible with western values by reasserting those differences in western terms: as self-determined choices, in the case of the veil, or as alternative organizations of gender and work within marriage and in the family, not necessarily inferior or worse for women than the unequal division of labor in Italian

families. Federica's impetus for the dialogue that Halima had sought centered on challenging the notion that Muslim women were oppressed while Italian women were free in relationship to men:

> We have to, because there is all that dimension of the relationship between men and women, because all Italians think they wear the veil because the husband forces them. This is the fundamental point. Which then, after all, there is the other side of this issue, that many Italian men, they are jealous, they don't let women leave the house, they hit them, you understand? And then they are against, you know, this thing.

In her research with Muslim women in Italy, Ruba Salih found that women who embrace an Islamist discourse "are well-educated women who aspire to and embody a modern project" (2002: 164), if an alternative one (149). This explicit presentation of self as modern on the part of Muslim women in Italy exists against a background of systematic representations of Muslims as backward "Others" to Italy's (Salih 2002). Halima's desire to provide a counter and positive representation of the Muslim family, of women's roles within it, and of the reasons and practices of veiling is an assertion in terms that is in many ways commensurable with Italian values. Halima asserts that the Muslim family, even if the woman may not work, is not inherently oppressive of women, but rather differently organized. The veil is defended both in terms of modesty and self-determination, as a choice, not an imposition. The discursive focus on the violence and oppression of "the Muslim family" is shifted onto Italians who pull on the veil calling for it to be taken off, push young girls off the steps of the bus, and assault women knocking them on the ground in front of their children's schools. The violence of the gaze is even more pervasive.

While racism and anti-immigrant sentiments and violence are not limited to Muslims immigrants, the visibility of Muslim women and the perception of their

inherent oppression as symbols of non-European values and practices make their position particularly vulnerable and the debates around the veil particularly heated. Embodying the markers of the limits of integration, Muslim women find themselves at the intersections of complex politics of gender and the family in contemporary Italy. The practice of veiling does not run counter to a shared commitment to secularism the way that it does in France. Religious influence on Italian politics and on women's lives and bodies cannot be blamed on the concern that acceptance of a public Islam will weaken secularism. The Catholic Church looms large over Italian feminist and progressive politics.

A conversation between Nilde and her teen granddaughter, Raffaella, whom Nilde was watching at the *consultorio* for the afternoon, reveals the way being Muslim is seen as incompatible to being Italian, and draws links between veiling and Catholicism. Raffaella's boyfriend's mother was in a relationship with a Muslim man, which prompted Nilde to comment: "His mother prays all day long"

> Milena: " all day long?"
> Raffaella: "she became Muslim, she has a Muslim fiancé"
> Raffaella: "she used to be Italian"
> Milena: "she's not anymore?"
> Raffaella: "yes, she's still Italian"
> Nilde: "you meant to say that she was Catholic"
> Raffaella "No, she wasn't Catholic, she was normal"
> Nilde: "she prays all day, there laying forward [mimicking putting her hands in front of her face from the sitting position]. All day long"
> Milena: "Five times a day?"
> Nilde: "eh, all day long. Would you do it?"
> Milena: "No, just like I wouldn't do any organized religion"
> Nilde: "I am already sick of the (*cattoliche integraliste*) fundamentalist Catholic women, imagine those! One that converted, moreover, … she wasn't even born into it, she converted! She must've had done the 'taunber.' Do you know that it is?"

> Milena: "No, I don't" [51]
> Nilde: "It's what you do to change religion, you ask it to the Uffizi, the same ones who used to burn the witches"
> Raffaella: "But she is not a witch"
> Nilde: "I didn't say she was a witch, but the Uffizi used to burn witches. This is why I didn't baptize Paola (Raffaella's mother)."[52]

The dialogue, which is in many ways comical, is also revealing of the way even anti-clerical, communist feminists like Nilde conflate Italianness with Catholicism. Nilde's impatience with Catholic integralism is only compounded in the case of her assumption of the woman's fundamentalism because of her "constant praying" and of the fact that she converted into Islam.

The terms of inclusion and integration underscore gender equality and the family as markers of belonging to common, Western values. However, the values of gender equality, freedom and choice in family-making remain incomplete projects of modernity in Italy. The assertion of these values as common sheds light on the opportunity that the "need" to manage cultural diversity offers for constructing moral and cultural coherence out of difference and contestation. The limitations of this project in a country widely and self-consciously identified as not fully modern opens up discursive spaces of resistance and criticism to the nation-building project of integration as emancipation.

Veils & Values

Writing in the 1990s, Angel-Ajani documented how the state sought to contain the "dangerous" sexuality of African women: "in Italy today, the dangerous individual is the African woman" (Angel-Ajani 2000: 343-344):

[51] I have failed to find other references to this term.
[52] Fieldnote, consultorio, February 22, 2007.

> much of the language about African women and prostitution is closely linked to the state's ability to control (or not control) the assumed levels of black female sexuality. Thus the presence of the African women, as well as of undocumented immigrants, brings to the surface a general anxiety over the contamination of the nation's moral value system, the very fabric of the nation (2000:344).

In the post 9/11 world, another kind of "dangerous woman" has taken center stage in discourse and policy. Her foreignness is linked not from the threat of her physical and sexual presence on the streets, seemingly out of the state's control, but from her assumed restriction within the family, the home, and the veil. This repressed figure of "Muslim Woman" (after Chandra Mohanty's discursively constructed homogenous "Third World Woman" 1988: 61) is the opposite of the "Nigerian woman" described by Angel-Ajani. "Muslim Woman" is threatening because she embodies values deemed incompatible with Italian society, with modernity, and with the West. Mohanty's "juxtaposition between the "average third-world woman" who is represented as living "an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and being 'third world' (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, religious, domesticated, family-oriented, victimized, etc.)" and "the (implicit) self-representation of western women as educated, modern, as having control over their bodies and sexualities, and the 'freedom' to make their own decisions" (1988: 65) holds for the figure of "Muslim Woman." These assumptions are at once commonsensical among Italians and vulnerable to critique in the time of increasing moral regulation of reproduction and the family. The association of veiling with oppression, a refusal to integrate, and even with the threat of terrorism is widespread in Europe (Parvez 2011: 288). In France, the ban on headscarves in public schools articulates around Republican values of *laïcité* as the basis of integration (Bowen 2007; Parvez 2011). In Italy, a self-

conscious modernity and incomplete secularism engenders a different articulation of the question of veiling and integration.[53]

Italy, unlike France, has not passed legislation banning the veil in public places. Even the *Charter of Values* recognizes wearing the veil as an expression of identity. However, attitudes toward veiling in Italian society are fairly negative and women who veil report significant harassment from Italians as well as employment discrimination. The gendered nature of the parameters of integration is not confined to Italy, but rather tracks with broader trends. In Europe, as elsewhere, the discourse on the "'true clash of civilizations' concerns 'gender equality and sexual liberalization'" (Inglehart and Norris cited in Fassin 2010; Sweetapple n.d.). The struggles over the headscarf in France, for example, point to the way gender is mobilized to (re)assert nationalist values, such as *laïcité'* and universalism in France (Bowen 2007). The debate over headscarves in public spaces in France is a debate over pluralism and religion, but also, just as importantly, about the responsibility of the Republican state to safeguard women's equality. The debate over headscarves articulates "deep-seated philosophical assumptions about what French society ought to be and equally deep-seated fears about

[53] Some of these contradictions were evident in the critiques of the assisted reproduction legislation, which deployed burkas, head coverings, and protest signs decrying "No Taliban, No Vatican" in an effort to equate the politics of the Catholic Church with the most fundamentalist expression of Islam. Women MPs opposed to the ART law released a statement that charged that its approval "slammed the door in the face of the secular State, of modern Europe." Politicians compared the law to "sharia law"[53] and when the conservative Minister of Health Girolamo Sirchia suggested introducing a copay for abortions, the libertarian *Partito Radicale* called him a "mullah" and circulated a picture of the Minister wearing a head cover. Italian actress Monica Bellucci protested the approval of the legislation by posing naked and pregnant on the cover of Vanity Fair in 2004. In her interview with the magazine she argued that "In Islam they make you wear the chador to keep you quiet. In Italy, if you are not married with all the bells and whistles they prevent you from having recourse to science to have a child." The framing of the debate over the law as an integralist policy that took "Italy out of Europe" and the West, and implicitly closer to "the Rest" sheds light on the fragility of Italy's location in modern Europe (see Krause and Marchesi 2007). The critical discourse on the approval of the legislation also included charges that the ART law was "a medieval law" that took Italy back to pre-Enlightenment times (see Arcigay's press release: Contro la legge medievale sulla fecondazione assistita, Feb 10, 2004.

what it has become" (Bowen 2007: 5). For some (though not all) French feminists, the veil is simply not compatible with French secularism and the values of gender equality (Bowen 2007). The rejection of the headscarf in public schools is justified, even if in practice it denies access to education to some young women who wear it, because it represents the principled rejection of women's subordination (2007: 217). The appeal for the state to intervene in the name of *laïcité* and of women's equality, as Bowen insightfully notes, arises from a fear that the gains of French feminism against the Catholic Church could come undone by "laxity toward women in headscarves" (2007: 220-221). Broadly shared concerns over headscarves in public spaces in France, then, "go beyond racism or xenophobia (not that those are absent) to fears that the emergence of a public Islam challenges the particular institutions that guarantee life together in the Republic" (2007: 246). Wearing a headscarf threatens the values deemed to hold society together justifying the intervention of the state in the form of a national law.

The rise to the status of "global icon" of Hirsi Ali, the Somali woman who became a politician in an anti-immigrant Dutch party and built a career on her criticisms of Islam for its treatment of women, speaks to the ascendance of gender as a legitimate basis and justification for anti-Muslim sentiments and initiatives, and conversely, for assertions of Western superiority and demands of cultural assimilation (Fassin 2010). Hirsi Ali was symbolically offered citizenship by the French Human Rights' Minister, Rama Yade, on behalf of the Sarkozy administration (Fassin 2010: 508). Fassin asks:

> Why should Hirsi Ali become French--although she did not announce she intended to live in France, nor did she speak the language, especially at a time when immigrants cannot resist expulsion by claiming long-term residence or bring in their families unless these prove already "integrated," in particular by displaying a command of French? (2010: 508).

Ali is considered French despite any actual connection to France by virtue of her embrace of secularism (Fassin 2010). Despite specific integration requirements being introduced by various countries, in which language proficiency figure prominently, the embrace of Hirsi Ali as French highlights the centrality of the (supposed) fundamental Western values of secularism as the basis for belonging in France, and by extension in Europe.

Gender norms and sexual rights have become central sites on which the stakes and morality of integration play out. In the Netherlands, the requirement of a film showing female nudity and gay men kissing is one manifestation of this process, which seeks to weed out immigrants whose values are not in line with those of the receiving country. In Belgium, Ceuppens and Geschiere argue that the demands of integration of Muslims are justified on the grounds that "the norms associated with Belgian society (democracy, the separation of church and state, equality between men and women, etc.) refer more to civic than to ethnic citizenship insofar that they are not considered Belgian but Western" (2005: 399). The argument that these norms are culturally neutral, however, glosses over their cultural and political assumptions: "both ethnic and civic citizenship can imply a process of complete assimilation, either to a specific ethnic culture or to a public, political culture that is represented as universal and, as such, is oblivious of its own culturalness" (Ceuppens and Geschiere 2005: 399). By claiming these values as civic and neutral they become non-negotiable and unimpeachable requirements of belonging and legitimations of exclusion.

Yet, Italian debates over veiling do not arise out of the same articulation of the relationship between Church and State and Italy is not properly a secularist country.[54] Italy is "un paese a *laicità limitata*" ("a country of *limited secularism*"), according to Chiara Saraceno, one of Italy's preeminent sociologist of the family (Saraceno 2011). I attended numerous conferences and meetings in which *laicità* (secularism) was an important if not central theme in discussions of reproductive and sexual rights. The logics and terms by which the most public and visible presence of Islam is disciplined in France, for example, are not the same in Italy, even as Islam occupies a similar position at the margins of the nation-state as the symbolic limit of integration and integrability. Italy's "limited secularism," combined with the memories and politics of women's positions in Italian society constitute a different terrain over which issues like veiling are negotiated. The commonly shared notion that Muslims are not "integrable" is countered by some with arguments that highlight cultural continuity, and thus commensurability that center on women's roles and on the family.

Opposition to the veil in Italy is not organized around a shared value of secularism. If anything, the Italian right views the veil as a challenge to the primacy of Italian Catholicism. Opposition to veil, however, harnesses diffused commitments to women's rights and modernity, sometimes quite strategically, into anti-Muslim practices and proposals. The struggle over veiling as a symbol of the oppression of

[54] During the fascist regime, the Italian State and Catholic Church entered into the *Patti lateranensi* (Lateran Pacts) (1929), which recognized Vatican City as an independent State. The pacts accord special recognition and privileges to the Catholic Church. The Concordat, part of the Lateran Pacts, governs the relationship between the Italian State and the Catholic Church, recognizing Catholicism as "the only state religion." When the agreement was re-negotiated in 1985 this recognition was struck down (see Hanafin 2007: 60 n. 5).

women in Islam centers on the issue of choice and of women's roles within Muslim families.

The stated intention in 2007 by a group of conservative female MPs to introduce legislation similar to the French ban on veiling in public schools engendered a debate best captured in the comments by Interior Minister Giuliano Amato. Amato's comments highlight the differences in how these debates are articulated in Italy compared to France, for example, and the role that Catholicism plays in these discourses:

> To ban the veil would mean to impose an imperialist western ideology in the eyes of those who view differently from us… For example to prevent nuns who attend university to continue to do so unless they go bare-headed. If we ban the veil in a generalized manner I don't think that there is a way. What do the nuns have on their heads? … Should we ban the veil only for Muslim women? If you make a law that prohibits wearing the veil in public places the first question that arises is: why can a nun wear it and not an Islamic woman? There is only one answer: because the nun does it in the name of your God while the Islamic woman in the name of hers. And some have the courage to argue that a law such as this should be made in the name of equality. [55]

Supporters of a ban on the veil argued that the Islamic veil, unlike the veil worn by nuns, is not a religious symbol. Member of Parliament Isabella Bertolini, a politician in Berlusconi's party, argued that the veil is instead

> a symbol of the submission of Muslim women to the imposition of males, be they husbands or heads of the family and this is why it should banned. The vestments worn by Catholic nuns instead are the fruits of a free choice that leads women to dedicate themselves voluntary and totally their lives to the good and care of the other.

Bertolini accuses Amato of engaging in an "unacceptable equivalency between Muslim and western customs leading to the diminishment and offense of our cultural and national identity. This secularist and relativist drift will soon lead us to social chaos."

---

[55] "Vietare il velo? No, da noi lo portano le suore," http://qn.quotidiano.net/2007/09/27/38616-amato_vietare_velo.shtml

This response shows that Italy's "imperfect secularism" can serve as a basis for claiming or denying shared values with Islam.

This was not the first time that Minister Amato had waded into these issues seeking to assert continuity between Italian culture and "Islam." Just a couple months' prior he had stirred controversy when he argued that the oppression of women was not a foreign practice to Italians, specifically to Sicilians: "no God authorizes a man to beat a woman. It's a Sicilian-Pakistani tradition that wants to claim the opposite."[56] His comments were met with condemnation from politicians claiming to have been offended by Amato's comparison of southern Italians and Muslims. Amato responded that he had simply been trying to argue against the stereotyping of Muslims and to suggest that these practices were not foreign to Italy. The centrality of the question of women's position in Islam and in Italy to the debate of whether Islam is compatible with European and Italian values is striking. Yet, to assert integrability in terms of a shared cultural tradition of women's oppression is intrinsically problematic on a number of levels. Amato's assertions linking Sicily (his region of origin) to Pakistan contributes to the long-standing orientalization of southern Italians (see Schneider 1998). Additionally, just a year prior to these comments Amato had taken a different stance in reference to the murder of a Pakistani young woman, Hina Saleem, at the hands of her father who was said to disapprove of her "Western" life choices, and particularly of her dating of an Italian boyfriend. In that context Amato argued that citizenship for immigrants should require the belief in equal rights for women: "The case of the

[56] "Amato: 'Picchiare le donne è tradizione siculo-pakistana,'" *la Repubblica.it*, July 11, 2007, http://www.repubblica.it/2007/07/sezioni/politica/amato-donne/amato-donne/amato-donne.html

Pakistani girl murdered by her father teaches us a lot in terms of citizenship because it is obvious that it is not enough to ask for adherence to the principles of the Constitution." According to Amato also important are "fundamental (rights) like the fact that women should be respected according to rules that I consider universal … women have the right to choose their lives and we abandoned arranged marriages some centuries ago."[57]

The problem with countering Islamophobia by drawing comparison to Italian culture and history is that much of that history is cast in the past, still positioning Italian women as more modern, emancipated, and evolved than Muslim women. The implied assumption is that Muslim migrants are *integrabili* Bowen 2007; Fassin 2010 Bowen 2007; Fassin 2010 (able to be integrated) into Italian society because they, like Italians, have the potential to evolve. These arguments aimed at countering the politics of incommensurability deployed by the right can easily slip into casting Muslim women as Italian historical holdovers, as the cultural grandmothers of modern Italian women. In the process, as Mohanty had noted for the discourse on "Third World Woman," this cultural othering constructs the modernity and progress of its opposite, "Italian woman," even as her self-determination and subjecthood is increasingly in question. This attitude is exemplified by the notion, put forth by a sociological book on migration in the 1990s, that migrant women in Italy represent "the women of tradition observing the women of modernity" (Tognetti and Favaro 1991, cited in Campani 2007: 6). Ruba Salih argues that "the day-to-day orientalist construction by newspapers, television and politicians of the Muslim Other as illiberal, traditional and pre-modern, feeds on Italian

[57] "Amato: 'Chi vuole la cittadinanza deve rispettare i diritti della donna,'" *la Repubblica.it*, August 15, 2006, http://www.repubblica.it/2006/08/sezioni/cronaca/pakistana-uccisa/legale-padre/legale-padre.html.

society's longing to represent itself as modern and progressive, acquitting itself from the charges of being a traditional and religious society" (2002: 149, also cited in Krause and Marchesi 2007). Yet, these same charges in Italy are also lobbed at the Catholic Church and the conservative-right politicians, particularly in the context of the family and reproduction, making for a fraught process of distinctions in modernity.

Minister Giulano Amato's wavering between the poles of commensurability and incommensurability of women's oppression between Italian and Muslim societies illustrates an unstable discourse in Italian society whereby sometimes Italy is cast as a modern, European country that safeguards women's rights. At other times and in other contexts, such as the disciplining of assisted reproduction, other frames of reference gain relevance, bringing into focus the country's "backwardness." One could say that casting a gaze trained by Orientalist discourses toward the East and the South makes Italians feel modern and Western, particularly as it concerns the position of women. Conversely, casting the gaze West and North brings into relief the country's uneasy relationship to modernity (see Agnew 1997; Krause 2006; Salih 2002). I heard the latter sense articulated often at feminist meetings on the topics of reproduction and civil unions. A woman in her early thirties who was a member of a university-based feminist collective powerfully articulated the deeply held sense of Italy's lack of progress, its literally unenlightened treatment of women compared, in this instance, to Spain:

> For years I have felt some oppression. My existence is managed by politics I don't like, that don't belong to me, that I've tried to avoid, but it's difficult because it enters your life, it chooses for you. A discomfort not heard, a life-time passes without any changes… a trip to Spain, crossing the border [back into Italy] and the light dims. Every day we live in a conditioning [environment], the

> church wants to manage our lives, the left. … We women, we will suffer again and for more decades.[58]

By reminding of the recent history of the patriarchal family and the relative subordinate roles of women within it, these discourses to a certain extent undermine the project of safely locating Italy among the modern West. Yet, they do so without challenging the very assumptions of modernity and backwardness that support the dichotomy of the West and the Rest, and in fact reproduce the assertion of modernity as a gendered civilizing project. In addition, these discourses work by denying immigrant populations "coevalness" (Fabian 1983) with Italians and Europeans.

Gender equality discourses and requirements of integration attempt to position Italy as a modern and Western European country in contrast to an oppressive and backward Islam. Yet, this celebration of feminist values of gender equality does not translate into feminist policies and practices. Instead, as I have argued in previous chapters, it coincides with the restriction of reproductive rights and the denial of other forms of family-making outside of the traditional, heteronormative, reproductive configuration. This paradox is recognized by activists and enables criticism and contestation of policies deemed as anti-feminist. In July 11 2007 a member of the *Donne, Diritti, Salute* feminist network wrote an email in response to the coverage of Muslim women in the media. The issue was hot because of the trial of a Pakistani man accused of killing his daughter for being "too Western" and a related incident in which Dounia Ettaib, the vice president of the Lombardy chapter of the Association of Moroccan Women in Italy (Acmid) was threatened by a group of Moroccan men for her involvement in supporting the trial. In her email, Clara expressed skepticism about

[58]Fieldnote, *Usciamo dal silenzio*, April 4, 2007.

political alliance between neo-Fascist Daniela Santanchè and the Moroccan women's group and pointed to the paradoxical location of feminism in contemporary Italy: "Foreign feminists are welcomed if they carry on the models of our civilizations, while local feminists are seen in a negative light if they dare criticize the incivility of our civilization." [59]

On that same July evening of Pamela's email, I attended a roundtable organized by the local chapter of the *Partito Radicale* in Milan in support of Dounia Ettaib. Dounia participated in the meeting, arriving with a police escort. During the discussion the conversation turned to the language requirements introduced by the Netherlands as a way to "protect" Muslim women from being controlled by their husbands in their country of immigration. The participants in the roundtable celebrated this policy, a new barrier to immigration, as a good idea.[60] Policies that make immigration more difficult, then, are embraced and legitimized in the name of protecting migrant women, particularly Muslim women. As Pamela observes in her email, migrant women who adopt Western values and are vocally critical of their culture are well-received. Dounia Ettaib's citizenship application, which had been languishing in the Italian bureaucracy, was speeded up and approved following this incident. The trope of the Muslim woman as victim on behalf of which outsiders need to intervene has global and geopolitical purchase, ranging from the legitimation of exclusions from Europe to the consolidation of support for the war in Afghanistan (see Abu-Lughod 2002).

[59] Email, July 11, 2007.
[60] Fieldnote, Dibattito Dounia, July 11, 2007.

Conclusion

The project of integrating immigrants into Italian society is a nation-building effort in which supposedly shared Italian values are explicitly articulated and contrasted to practices and values deemed incompatible. This chapter has examined the ways in which the project of integration represents another site for the articulation of social cohesion in Italian society, in this case in relation to the threat of dis-integration posed by unmanaged cultural differences. The *Charter* and the more diffused and pervasive discourse on the question of Muslim integration is another facet of the project of "moral regulation" that pervades family-making and reproduction and that redefines the terms of social cohesion and solidarity in the moral neoliberal moment. The institutional articulation of the terms of integration defines Italian society and reasserts its identity as cohesive, bounded, western and modern.

Ethnographic research on the training of cultural mediators sheds light on the contradictions and disjunctures of lived experiences and brings into relief what can easily be glossed over in the intercultural integration model: the gendered nature and implications of cultural mediation and the inequalities, discrimination, and racism that structure the lives of immigrants in Italy. The project of integration is gendered not only because successful integration is hitched to appropriate gender roles and family models, but also because its foot soldiers, cultural mediators, are mostly women whose employment opportunities are otherwise limited to domestic work.

While the centrality of gender and the family and of "sexual citizenship" tracks with other cases in Europe (Bowen 2007; Fassin 2010), Italy's self-consciousness about its modernity undermines claims for a culturally unified nation and society into which

migrants can integrate. While the terms of integration in Europe and in Italy are coalescing around gender equality and monogamy as non-negotiable, shared European principles, gender equality and the family have long been symbols of Italy's imperfect modernity and arenas of political and cultural struggle. The separation of Church and State in Italian society is no more a given than the attainment of gender equality.

The grassroots integration project "Let's Get Together" offers an example of how a sense of Italy's incomplete modernity and secularism, social memories of *nonne* wearing headscarves, particularly in the south and islands, and the widespread sense of a continued patriarchal and moral project limiting Italian women's rights can serve as critique to discourses that posit an inherent incompatibility of Muslims with Italian society. Even as these counterarguments are problematic in that they can deny coevalness to Muslim and migrant women by associating them with Italian women's grandmothers, they reflect the stakes of the limits of integration. These counter-arguments also point to the centrality of gender and family-making to processes of belonging and exclusions and to the ongoing moral project of the state.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I have examined discourses, practices, and policies on the "problem-solution" (Nadesan 2008) of social cohesion in Italy at the turn of the new millennium. In locating my ethnographic inquiry at the intersections of reproduction, the family, and integration in the post-welfare moment I sought to interrogate the terms by which the "problem" of social cohesion, and conversely, of social dis-integration, has been asserted and addressed.

The organizing principle of subsidiarity which has reshaped the Italian welfare state, and especially the administration of social and health services in Lombardy, has given a particular form to neoliberal restructuring in Italy. Subsidiarity holds together neoliberal principles of devolution of state responsibility to the private and non-profit sectors and the celebration of active citizenship, with a residual commitment to the role of the state, now cast in a subsidiary role. Concerns with social solidarity and cohesion loom large in this project. Rather than focus on empowering individuals abstracted from social relations, however, the subsidiarity model of neoliberalization foregrounds the family as the social formation mediating between state, market, and citizens.

The focus on the family as the source of social solidarity is not merely rhetorical. The opening up of public funds for social and health services to non-state entities has enabled a conservative Catholic administration to reshape reproductive rights "from within." Public family planning clinics established by law in 1975 in direct response to the women's movement have seen their funding erode, while Catholic clinics that do not offer contraceptive or abortion-related services have increased. The

remaking of health care combines neoliberal principles of active citizenship and choice with a vitapolitics of life and family.

In 2008 the Region of Lombardy continued to target reproductive health services, "eroding reproductive rights from within" by enacting legislation that requires social service providers to protect motherhood and unborn life.[1] Providers are tasked with "safeguarding maternity and human life from the moment of conception and guaranteeing interventions to support motherhood and fatherhood and the wellbeing of the child, removing the causes, social, psychological, and economic that might hinder responsible reproduction and lead to abortion." Social service providers are also called upon to support "the development of a healthy and responsible sexuality, conscious reproduction, the prevention of abortion."[2]

In 2010, the Region instituted a fund of 5 million euros to be directed at low-income women who choose to have a child instead of an abortion. The fund, named *Nasko*, onomatopoeic for "*nasco*," or, "I am born," will disburse a total of 4500 euros per pregnancy over an 18 month period (250 euros a month). The governor commented on the establishment of the fund by stating: "We want to help the family, motherhood, and fertility rates, removing obstacles as much as possible, beginning with those of an economic nature, which render more difficult to make a choice in favor of life" (Regione Lombardia 2010). This provision was enabled by a regional decree oriented toward "the experimentation of interventions aimed at safeguarding maternity and

[1] Regional Law n.3/2008.
[2] See, Franco Vitale, March 5, 2008, http://www.mpv.org/mpv/s2magazine/AllegatiTools/131/Articolo%20di%20Franco%205.3.2008.pdf, emphasis in original.

favoring birthrates,"[3] which imposes a collaboration between family planning clinics and prolife organizations.[4]

The decentralization of the state and the opening up of funding streams have weakened the reproductive and social rights that the women's movement gained in the 1970s by enabling the moral restructuring of health and social services. The erosion of public health services and its "domestication" through in-home care work is documented in a 2012 study that shows an increase in 40% in copay costs and the surpassing of health care staff employed in Italy's health care sector by care workers (774,000 care workers versus 646,000 health care providers).[5] Caught between the logics of choice and of the individual responsibilization of the market, on the one hand, and the moral interventions of the church on the other, feminist activists historically suspicious of an institutional politics of rights looked to the Italian state to protect national reproductive laws and reassert public services at the same time that they continued to contest the ART law.

The terms of the assertion of the embryo as a rights-bearing subject crystallizes a number of contradictions in the politics of the population and at the intersection of neoliberal reforms and the politics of solidarity in Italy. The approval of a restrictive law at the very time that the future of the nation is widely presumed to hang in the demographic balance is a paradox that highlights the importance of morally regulated

---

[3]D.g.r. 31 maggio 2010 - n. 9/84 Determinazioni in ordine alla sperimentazione di interventi a tutela della maternità e a favore della natalità, http://www.west-info.eu/wp-content/uploads/DGR-n.-84.pdf

[4]Allegato A. Linee guida sperimentali per la collaborazione tra i consultori familiari pubblici e privati accreditati ed i centri di aiuto alla vita. http://www.west-info.eu/wp-content/uploads/DGR-n.-84.pdf

[5] "Ssn, sempre meno servizi per i cittadini "Nel 2012 ticket farmaci +40%," *la Repubblica.it*, March 19, 2013, http://www.repubblica.it/salute/medicina/2013/03/19/news/sanit_ticket_sui_farmaci-54900788/?ref=HREC1-7. The full report is available at, http://blogpinali.wordpress.com/2012/12/01/rapporto-oasi-2012-laziendalizzazione-della-sanita-in-italia/

family-making. Biopolitics in Italy is not just about birth rates and the size of the population. It is also about the composition of the family, the biological and social relationship of its members, and Catholic doctrine about the non-availability of life to engineering and intervention. The safeguarding of "life," in turn, resonates on multiple levels, including in its assertion of an "exception to neoliberalism" (Ong 2006), a limit to the reach of the market and corporations into our "DNA." The embryo emerges as an appropriate subject of solidarity, the "weakest" and "poorest" among "us."

Attention to the politics of reproduction makes visible the ways in which the State may be retreating from some areas of its former welfare responsibilities at the same time that it is reaching into matters (of reproduction, the family, the "problem" of low fertility) into which only a decade ago policy-makers could only thread "sneakily" (Krause 2001). Attention to reproduction and the family foregrounds the salience of gender in the transformations of welfare: while some of the literature on neoliberal and biopolitical governmentality has emphasized the responsible, autonomous, empowered, self-governing subject (see Rabinow and Rose 2003), women continue to be governed as potentially irresponsible subjects vis-à-vis embryos and fetuses.

"Coming out of silence" is no easy task, especially when some of the language of the left and of feminism (solidarity, an emphasis on the relational rather than individual subject, even a distrust of reproductive technologies) has been reappropriated for an altogether different kind of politics. The struggle to articulate an alternative politics was particularly evident in debates over the family and its relations to the "common good." With the family having leapt into the center of politics, along with the embryo, what are the implications of demands for a broader definition? The question,

"what do we think about the family?" elicited divergent answers, but also highlighted the salience of commitments to the "common good" and social solidarity.

"Reasoning in terms of the family" carries a set of implications for social citizenship that have become even clearer since my fieldwork. In 2012, the National Observatory of the Family published the *National Plan for the Family*.[6] The introduction of the document claims that in view of Italy's "social and demographic imbalances," of the lack of a unified family policy, and of the failures of previous policies, an explicit policy of the family is required:

> scholars underscore the need for a move from indirect and implicit policies to direct and explicit policies that favor not only the juridical safeguarding of the subjects of family life, but also favor the promotion of the family as a social subject of primary public interest due to the relevance of the social functions that it plays, particularly in terms of the humanization of persons and of social cohesion (2012: 5).

The summary of the plan highlights four "guiding principles:" the notion of a "citizenship of the family, meaning, the family as subject upon which to invest the future of the country, supporting its function for social cohesion,"[7] followed by "explicit policies for the family nucleus," "subsidiarity and development of human and social capital," and "solidarity." The document calls for political recognition of the citizenship of the family and for the integration of individual and family rights in recognition of the

---

[6] The official website for the National Observatory on the Family (*Osservatorio Nazionale sulla Famiglia)* lists Prof. Pierpaolo Donati as "scientific-technical director" of the Observatory and as "president of the technical-scientific committee." The committee, established in 2009 under the Berlusconi government and selected by Undersecretary of the Family Giovinardi, includes other conservative social scientists and demographers. Among them, Giancarlo Blangiardo, a demographer of immigration who headlined the conference titled "Demographic Winter" described in the following chapter (http://www.osservatorionazionalefamiglie.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=480:il-comitato-tecnico-scientifico&catid=14:presentazione&Itemid=114)

[7] http://www.osservatorionazionalefamiglie.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=635&Itemid=102

family's "social function." Moreover, social benefits are targeted to the "conjugal family" because of the "ties and reciprocal obligations" upon which it is based and because of the need to support and recognize the "social function of family relationships" (2012: 7).

The Plan also includes a proposal to reconfigure *consultori familiari* (family planning clinics). The reproductive services offered by the *consultori*, as I have shown in previous chapters, have been eroded by the implementation of subsidiarity, leading some among the feminist groups I participated in to describe a situation in which these services, and the rights they were based on, are effectively being "emptied from within." The National Plan on the Family targets the *consultori* as sites to be reorganized toward new priorities. The "individualistic" approach of the past is to be replaced by a "relational" approach that includes the family (2012: 32): "we must learn to read and respond to the need of the person in relational terms. The fragmented and individualistic vision" of the past should be replaced by "reflexive and relational perspectives able to support individuals in the context of their relationships. Only from the welfare of relationships, and of familial ones in particular, can derive the full welfare of the person" (2012: 32). In order to implement this vision, the *Plan* lays out "fundamental directives;" these include "the promotion of the welfare of the family (and not of just one member, such as for example, a woman, considered outside of her relational context)" as well as the implementation of "subsidiarity" (2012: 32).[8]

[8] The *consultori* have been the target of calls for reform on the center-left too. At the First Conference on the Family, then Minister of the Family Bindi also proposed reforming them into "centers for families" as part of a broader policy of the family (fieldnote, May 26, 2007).

The proposal lays bare various dimensions of the moral politics of the family in Italy and its articulation with the emergence of a moral neoliberal welfare society. This project is at its most evident in the anti-abortion proposals and in the call, among the many possible policy actions, for the moral "reorganization" (2012: 34) of institutions that feminists constructed in the 1970s as spaces where women could exercise self-determination in matters of sexuality, reproduction, and the family. The policies outlined in the *National Plan for the Family* make clear that the promised synthesis of women's rights and family rights is in fact the subsuming of the ideals of gender equality to that of supporting the family.

Even as the Plan proclaims its European and modern "gender mainstreaming" and parity commitments, in its policy proposals women cease to be individuals accessing social services, particularly reproductive services, and return to being seen in the relational (familial) context. The assertion of the "natural family" as the privileged subject and object of welfare proposes a post-welfare society in which explicit discrimination is legitimated in the name of the "common good." In a different official articulation of gender and the family (*The Charter of Values and Citizenship)*, the state asserted modern gender roles and the heteronormative family as shared Italian values and as markers of integration for immigrants. Yet, the politics of gender, family-making, and reproduction remain contested subjects. Tracing the policies and discourses that seek to govern them in the name of social cohesion, integration, and of increasing the birth rates sheds light on new citizenship projects and logics of inclusion/exclusion in the post-welfare moment.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abu-Lughod, Lila
2002 Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others. Ethics Forum: September 11 and Ethnographic Responsibility. *American Anthropologist* 104(3):783-790.

Agamben, Giorgio
1998 *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Agnew, John
1997 The Myth of Backward Italy in Modern Europe. In *Revisioning Italy: National Identity and Global Culture*. Beverly Allen and Mary Russo, eds. Pp. 1-23. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Ali, Kamran Asdar
2002 *Planning the Family in Egypt: New Bodies, New Selves*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Angel-Ajani, Asale
2000 Italy's Racial Cauldron: Immigration, Criminalization and the Cultural Politics of Race. *Cultural Dynamics*, 12(3):331-352.

Andall, Jacqueline
1994 Abortion, Politics and Gender in Italy, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 47(2): 238-252.
2000 *Gender, Migration and Domestic Service: The Politics of Black Women in Italy*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Appadurai, Arjun
1996 *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. University of Minnesota Press.

Balibar, Étienne
2002 *Politics and the Other Scene*. New York: Verso.

Banfield, Edward C
1958 *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*. New York: The Free Press

Barker, Martin
1982 *The New Racism: Conservatives and the Ideology of the Tribe*. Marybelnd: University Publications of America.

Belardinelli, Sergio
2005 Introduzione. L'idea di Welfare Community. In, *Welfare Community e sussidiarietà*, pp. 10-24. Milano: Egea.

Berdhal, Daphne
1999 *Where the World Ended: Re-Unification and Identity in the German Borderland*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bertoncin, Barbara
2011 Mai state zitte. *Una città,* n. 182/2011, March, http://www.unacitta.it/newsite/intervista.asp?id=2112

Biehl, João
2005 *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bimbi, Franca
1989 La riproduzione artificiale come costruzione sociale. *Bioetica*. di Meo, Antonio and Claudia Mancina eds, pp. 315-330, Roma-Bari: La Terza.
1993 "Gender, 'Gift Relationship' and the Welfare and the Welfare State Culture in Italy." In J. Lewis, ed. *Women and Social Policies in Europe. Work, Family and the State.* Pp. 138-69. London: Edward Elgard.

Bindi, Rosy
2007 Intervento del ministro delle politiche per la famiglia. Conferenza Nazionale della Famiglia, Firenze, May 24.

Blangiardo, Gian Carlo, Livia Ortensi, Laura Zanfrini, Laura Terzera, Alessio Menonna, Patrizia Farina, and Maria Paolo Caria
2006 I numeri e i caratteri della presenza straniera: anno 2006. *Rapporto 2006. Gli immigrati in Lombardia.* Osservatorio Regionale per l'integrazione e la multietnicità: Milan.

Bocci, Michele
2012 La legge 40 di nuovo alla Consulta. "Via il divieto di sperimentazione sugli embrioni." *la Repubblica.it*, December 12, http://firenze.repubblica.it/cronaca/2012/12/12/news/la_legge_40_di_nuovo_alla_consulta_via_il_divieto_di_sperimentazione_sugli_embrioni-48589215/

Boix, Carles and Daniel N. Posner
1996 Making Social Capital Work: A Review of Robert Putnam's Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy. The Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, *Harvard University Paper,* No. 96-4, June.

Bollini P., Pampallona S., Wanner K., Kupelnick B.
2009 Pregnancy outcome of migrant women and integration policy: a systematic review of the international literature. *Social Science and Medicine* (68): 452-61.

Bonaccorso, Monica
2006 *Conceiving Kinship: Assisted Conception, Procreation and Family in Southern Europe*. Oxford: Berghahn.

Bono, Paola and Sandra Kemp, eds.
1991 *Italian Feminist Thought: A Reader*. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.

Buchanan, Patrick J.
2002 *Death of the West: How dying populations and immigrant invasions imperil our country and civilization*. St. Martin's Press, New York.

Bumiller, Kristin
2008 In an Abusive State: How Neoliberalism Appropriated the Feminist Movement Against Sexual Violence. Durham: Duke University Press.

Bunzl, Matti
2007 Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: Hatreds Old and New in Europe. *Paradigm*, vol. 28. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.

Buzzanca, Silvia
2007 Famiglia, l'esclusione dei gay spacca il governo. *la Repubblica.it*, May 8, http://www.repubblica.it/2007/03/sezioni/politica/coppie-di-fatto-7/ferrero-firenze/ferrero-firenze.html

Caldwell, Christopher
2009 *Reflections on the Revolution In Europe: Immigration, Islam and the West*. New York: Doubleday.

Caldwell, Leslie
1978 Church, state, and family: the women's movement in Italy. In, *Feminism and Materialism: Women and Modes of Production,* Annette Kuhn and AnneMarie Wolpe, eds. pp. 68-95. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
1991 *Italian Family Matters: Women, Politics and Legal Reform*. London: Macmillan.

Camera dei Deputati
2008 Commissione XII, Affari Sociali, Resoconto Stenografico, Audizione 4. XVI Legislatura — XII Commissione — Seduta del 3 luglio 2008. July 3, pgs. 1-28. http://new.camera.it/_dati/lavori/stencomm/12/audiz2/2008/0703/INTERO.pdf
2009 *Modifica all'articolo 19 del testo unico di cui al decreto legislativo 25 luglio 1998, n. 286, in materia di divieti di espulsione e di respingimento.* Proposta di

legge d'iniziative dei deputati, Bucchino, Turco, Argentin, Bossa, Calgaro, D'Incecco, Grassi, Mosella, Murer, Sbrollini, February 12.

Campani, Giovanna
2007 Integration of Female Immigrants in Labour Market and Society. Policy Assessment and Policy Recommendations. A Specific Targeted Research Project of the 6th Framework Programme of the European Commission Working Paper No. 6 – WP4, January.

Caritas Diocesana di Roma
2008 "18 anni di esperienza": presentato il libro sulla storia del Forum per l'intercultura. RomaCaritas. Newsletter della Caritas diocesana di Roma n. 38, November 28.

Caritas Italiana
2005 35 anni di immigrazione in Italia: una politica a metà guado. Anticipazioni del "Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2005." www.dossierimmigrazione.it/schede/090505-anticipazioni2005.pdf

Caritas e Migrantes
2012 Dossier Statistico Immigrazione. 22° Rapporto, "Non sono numeri," *Scheda di sintesi*, http://www.dossierimmigrazione.it/docnews/file/2012_Dossier_Scheda.pdf.

Caritas/Migrantes
2005 35 anni di immigrazione in Italia: una politica a metà guado. *Anticipazioni del Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2005*. www.dossierimmigrazione.it/schede/090505-anticipazioni2005.pdf
2007 Immigrazione: Dossier Statistico 2007. *XVII Rapporto sull'immigrazione*, Roma: Idos. http://www.caritasitaliana.it/caritasitaliana/allegati/471/scheda.pdf

Caritas Roma
2010 Progetto ISS. Migrazione e Salute. Unità Operativa 3 (UO3) – Politiche sanitarie Area sanitaria Caritas Roma, http://www.caritasroma.it/Prima%20pagina/Tutela_Salute_Iss/scheda_UO3_Politiche_locali.pdf, last accessed August 12, 2010.

Carter, Donald Martin
1994 The Art of the State: Difference and Other Abstractions. *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 7(1): 73-102.

Casper, Monica J.
1998 *The Making of the Unborn Patient: A social Anatomy of Fetal Surgery*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Casper, Monica J. and Lynn M. Morgan
2004 Constructing Fetal Citizens. *Anthropology Newsletter* 45 (9): 17-18.

Cattaneo, Luisa and Franca Petronio
1995 Ripensare la maternità a partire dal confronto con modelli culturali diversi. L'esperienza dei servizi socio-sanitari nel lavoro con le donne straniere e italiane in relazione ai temi della maternità. *Atti del convegno tenuto presso la Camera del Lavoro di Milano*, May 27. Milan: Associazione per una Libera Università delle Donne.

Ceuppens, Bambi and Peter Geschiere
2005 Autochthony: Local or Global? New Modes in the Struggle over Citizenship and Belonging in Africa and Europe. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 34: 385-407.

Colen, Shellee
1995 "Like a Mother to Them": Stratified Reproduction and West Indian Childcare Workers and Employers in New York. In *Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction*. F. D. Ginsburg and R. Rapp, eds. 78–82. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Colombo, Alessandro
2008 The "Lombardy Model": Subsidiarity-informed Regional Governance. *Social Policy and Administration*, 42(2): 177-196.

Colombo, Laura
2005 Intervento di Laura Colombo per il ciclo "Donne a confronto con quello che capita: Sessualità, maternità, procreazione, aborto," December 20, http://www.libreriadelledonne.it/intervento-di-laura-colombo/

Comaroff, Jean
2007 Beyond the Politics of Bare Life: Aids and the Global Order. *Public Culture,* 19(1): 197-219.

Comaroff, Jean and John L. Comaroff
2000 Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming. Special Edition, *Public Culture,* 12(2).

Comaroff, Jean and John L. Comaroff, eds
2001 *Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Comitato nazionale per la bioetica
1996 *Identità e statuto dell'embrione umano. I pareri del Comitato*, 22 giugno. Governo Italiano, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri. http://www.governo.it/bioetica/testi/220696.html

Consiglio regionale della Lombardia
2002 Il principio di sussidiarietà. Posizioni teoriche e realizzazioni in Europa e nel panorama regionale italiano. Consiglio Regionale della Lombardia, *Rapporto di Sintesi*. Milan: IReR.

Corrigan, Philip, and Derek Sayer
1991 Introduction & Epilogue. In, *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution*. London: Basil Blackwell.

Durkheim, Emile
1984 [1933] *The Division of Labor in Society*. W. D. Halls transl. New York: The Free Press.

Cotturri, Giuseppe
2003 Novità e portata progressiva della sussidiarietà orizzontale nella costituzione italiana. A proposito dell'art.118, ult. comma, nella revisione del Titolo V. www.astrid-online.it/Sussidiari/Contributi/COTTURRI-Suss-Orizz-Cespe.pdf, last accessed February 5, 2010.

Dean, Mitchell
1999 *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*. London: Sage Publications.

Della Sala, Vincent
2004 The Italian model of capitalism: on the road between globalization and Europeanization? *Journal of European Public Policy* 11(6): 1041–1057.

De Luca, Maria Novella
2010 "Crescere senza fratelli. Il sorpasso del figlio unico." *la Repubblica.it*, November 23, http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2010/11/23/news/crescere_senza_fratelli_il_sorpasso_del_figlio_unico-9398539/
2012 In 8 anni 17 bocciature nei tribunali cosa resta delle norme sulla provetta, *la Repubblica.it*, August 29, http://www.repubblica.it/dal-quotidiano/reportage/2012/08/29/news/in_8_anni_17_bocciature_nei_tribunali_cosa_resta_delle_norme_sulla_provetta-41643971/.

De Zordo, Silvia
2012 Aborto e obiezione di coscienza in Italia. Esperienze e opinioni dei ginecologi/he milanesi e romani. *Relazione alla riunione del reparto di ginecologia-ostetricia dell'Ospedale X*, Milan, December.

Donati, Pierpaolo
2007 Old and New Family Policies. The Perspective Of Relational Sociology. *Sociologia, Problemas e Práticas*. 54:127-159.

Di Cori, Paola
2007 comparing different generations of feminists: precariousness versus corporations? *feminist review,* 87: 136-140.

Dominijanni, Ida
1987 "Radicality and Asceticism," in *Italian Feminist Thought: A Reader*, Paolo Bono and Sandra Kemp eds., pp.129-138. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.

Eurofund
2009 European Social Model, electronic document: http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/industrialrelations/dictionary/definitions/EUROPEANSOCIALMODEL.htm, last accessed November 15, 2010

European Commission
2007 *Growing Regions, Growing Europe*. *Fourth Report on Economic and Social Cohesion.* Brussels: Commission of the European Communities. http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/cohesion4/pdf/4cr_en.pdf

Fabian, Johannes
1983 *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Fassin, Didier
2007 Humanitarianism as a Politics of Life, *Public Culture* 19(3): 499–520.
2009 Another Politics of Life is Possible. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26(5): 44-60.

Fassin, Éric
2010 National Identities and Transnational Intimacies: Sexual Democracy and the Politics of Immigration in Europe. *Public Culture*, 22:3.

Favell, Adrian
2003 Integration Nations: The Nation-State and Research on Immigrants in Western Europe. In 'The multicultural challenge', *Comparative Social Research,* 22, 2003, pp. 13-42.

Favaro, Graziella
2006 Uguali, diversi, "meticci" cittadinanza e pluralità culturale. In, *Il mondo in classe educare alla cittadinanza nella scuola multiculturale: Proposte, metodi, esperienze, materiali*, Lorenzo Luatti, ed., pp. 35-37. Arezzo: UCODEP.

Favaro, Graziella and Lorenzo Luatti, eds.
2004 *L'intercultura dalla A alla Z*. Milan: FrancoAngeli.

Fenton, Rachel Ann
2006 Catholic Doctrine versus Women's Rights: The New Italian Law on Assisted Reproduction, *Medical Law Review*, 14: 73–107.

Ferguson, James
2009 The Uses of Neoliberalism. *Antipode*, 41(S1): 166-184.

Filippini, Nadia Maria
1993 The Church, the State and childbirth: the midwife in Italy during the eighteenth century. In *The Art of Midwifery: Early Modern Midwives in Europe*, Hilary Marland, ed. pp. 152-175. New York: Routledge.

Fiorentini, Giorgio
2005 L'associazionismo: il modello lombardo di sussidiarietà. Lombardia 2005. Società, governo e sviluppo del sistema lombardo. Dieci anni di esperienze. Istituto Regionale di Ricerca della Lombardia (Irer). Available online, http://www.rapportoirer2005.it/sociale/II/fiorentini/capcomp, last accessed June 3, 2010.

Fontolan, Roberto
1998 Battaglia Culturale. Più società fa bene allo Stato. *Tracce* (Rivista internazionale di comunione e liberazione), n.4, April, http://www.tracce.it/default.asp?id=266&id2=164&id_n=4788, last accessed 1/29/10.

Foot, John
2001 *Milan Since the Miracle: City, Culture and Identity*. Oxford: Berg.

Foucault, Michel
1978 *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction.* Vol. 1. New York: Vintage Books.
2003 "*Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*. New York: Picador.

Franklin, Sarah
1997 *Embodied Progress: A Cultural Account of Assisted Conception*. New York: Routledge.

Gal, Susan and Kligman, Gail
2000 *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life after Socialism*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Ginsborg, Paul
2001 *Italy and Its Discontents: Family, Civil Society, State, 1980-2001*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan
2003 *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan

Ginsburg, Faye D.
1998 *Contested Lives: The Abortion Debate in an American Community*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ginsburg, Faye D. and Rayna Rapp
1995 Introduction: Conceiving the New World Order. Pp. 1-18. In *Conceiving the New World Order*. Faye D. Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp, eds. Berkeley; University of California Press.

Glick Schiller, Nina, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc Sanzton
1995 From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration. *Anthropology Quarterly*, 68: 48-63.

Giuffrè, Felice
2005 Il principio costituzionale di solidarietà come presupposto della Welfare Community. In, *Welfare Community e sussidiarietà*, Sergio Belardinelli, ed. pp. 47-66. Milano: Egea.

Governo Italiano
2008 "Presentazione." Il libro verde "La vita buona nella società attiva." Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, online document, http://www.governo.it/GovernoInforma/Dossier/libro_verde_welfare/, last accessed August 30, 2010.

Graziano, Paolo, R.
2009 Choosing Welfare or Losing Social Citizenship? Citizens' Free Choice in Recent Italian Welfare State Reforms. *Social Policy and Administration*, 43(6): 601-616.

Greenhalgh Susan
2003 Planned Births, Unplanned Persons: "Population" and the Making of Chinese Modernity. *American Ethnologist*, 30(2): 196-215.

Greenhouse, Carol J.
2010 "Introduction." In, *Ethnographies of Neoliberalism*, Carol J. Greenhouse ed, pp. 1-10, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Gruber, Lili
2007 Working Document on the Policy Plan on Legal Migration. *Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs. European Parliamen*t, January 19.

Guiducci, Armanda
1977 *La donna non è gente. L'esistenza emarginata delle più oppresse*. Milan: Rizzoli.

Habermas, J. and J. Derrida
2003 February 15, or What Binds Europeans Together: a Plea for a Common Foreign Policy, Beginning in a Core of Europe, *Constellations,* 10 (3): 291-7.

Hanafin, Patrick
2007 *Conceiving Life: Reproductive Politics and the Law in Contemporary Italy.* Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
2009 Refusing disembodiment : Abortion and the paradox of reproductive rights in contemporary Italy, *Feminist Theory*, 10(2): 227–244.

Hartouni, Valerie
1997 *Cultural Conceptions: On Reproductive Technologies and the Remaking of Life*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Harvey, David
2005 *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hemment, Julie
2007 Empowering Women in Russia: Activism, Aid and NGOs. New Anthropologies of Europe. Daphne Berdahl, Matti Bunzl and Michael Herzfeld, series editors. Bloomington: Indiana University Press
2012 Redefining Need, Reconfiguring Expectations: The Rise of State-Run Youth Voluntarism Programs in Russia. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 85 (2): 519–554.

Heng, Geraldine and Janadas Devan
1992 State Fatherhood: The Politics of Nationalism, Sexuality, and Race in Singapore. In *Nationalisms and Sexualities*. Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer, and Patricia Yaeger, eds. New York: Routledge. Pgs 343-364.

Hoffman, Lisa, Monica DeHart, and Stephen J. Collier
2006 Notes on the Anthropology of Neoliberalism. *Anthropology News* 47(6): 9–10.

Holc, Janine P.
2004 The purest democrat: Fetal citizenship and subjectivity in the construction of democracy in Poland. *Signs* 29(3):755-782.

Holmes, Douglas
2000 Surrogate Discourses of Power: The European Union and the Problem of Society. In, *An Anthropology of the European Union: Building, Imagining and Experiencing the New Europe*. Oxford: Berg.

Horn, David G.
1991 Constructing the Sterile City: Pronatalism and Social Sciences in Interwar Italy. *American Ethnologist* 18(3):581-601.
1994 *Social Bodies: Science, Reproduction, and Italian Modernity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Huntington, Samuel
1993 The Clash of Civilizations. *Foreign Affairs*, Summer.

Ipsen, Carl
1997 *Demografia totalitaria: il problema della popolazione nell'Italia fascista*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Istat (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica)
2008a La popolazione straniera residente in Italia al 1° gennaio 2008. Statistiche in breve. Rome, October 9, http://www3.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/non_calendario/20081009_00/testointegrale20081009.pdf
2008b Gli stranieri nel mercato del lavoro. I dati della rilevazione sulle forze di lavoro in un'ottica individuale e familiare, Mario Albissini, ed. *ISTAT*, http://www3.istat.it/dati/catalogo/20090109_00/stranieri_nel_mercato_lavoro.pdf
2007 Rapporto annuale. La situazione del Paese nel 2006. Roma: Istat. http://www.istat.it/dati/catalogo/20070523_00/rapporto2006.pdf
2010 Indicatori demografici. Anno 2010. January 24, http://www.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/in_calendario/inddemo/20110124_00/testointegrale20110124.pdf
2011a La popolazione straniera residente in Italia. *Statistiche Report*. September 22, http://www.istat.it/it/archivio/39726
2011b Demographic indicators. Year 2010 http://en.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/in_calendario/inddemo/20110124_00/demographicindicators2010.pdf
2011c Cambiamenti nei tempi di vita e attività del tempo libero: Anno 2008-2009. Testo integrale. *Statistiche Report*, December 6, available online, http://www.istat.it/it/archivio/47442.
2011d *L'Italia in 150 anni. Sommario di statistiche storiche* 1861-2010. http://www3.istat.it/dati/catalogo/20120118_00/
2012a Il censimento in pillole. *Comunicato Stampa*. December 19, http://censimentopopolazione.istat.it/_res/doc/pdf/censimento_in_pillole.pdf

Kanaaneh, Rhoda Ann
2002 *Birthing the Nation: Strategies of Palestinian Women in Israel*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kanna, Ahmed
2010 Flexible Citizenship in Dubai: Neoliberal Subjectivity in the Emerging "City-Corporation." *Cultural Anthropology* 25(1): 100–129.

Kaufman, Sharon R. and Lynn M. Morgan
2005 The Anthropology of the Beginnings and Ends of Life. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 34:317-41.

Kertzer, David I
1980 *Comrades and Christians: Religion and Political Struggle in Communist Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

1993 *Sacrificed for Honor: Italian Infant Abandonment and the Politics of Reproductive Control*. Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press.

King, Leslie
2000 From Pronatalism to Social Welfare? Extending Family Allowances to Minority Populations in France and Israel. *European Journal of Population*. 17(4): 305-322.

King, Russell, Gabriella Lazaridis, and Charalambos Tsardanidis
2000 *Eldorado or Fortress? Migration in Southern Europe*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Kingfisher, Catherine and Jeff Maskovsky
2008 Introduction: The Limits of Neoliberalism. *Critique of Anthropology* 28 (2): 115-126.

Krause, Elizabeth L.
2001 'Empty Cradles' and the Quiet Revolution: Demographic Discourse and Cultural Struggles of Gender, Race, and Class in Italy. *Cultural Anthropology* 16(4): 576-611
2005 *A Crisis of Births: Population Politics and Family-Making in Italy*. Case Studies on Contemporary Social Issues. John A. Young, series editor. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
2006 Dangerous Demographies and the Scientific Manufacture of Fear. *The Corner House*, Briefing paper No. 36, http://www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/

Krause, Elizabeth and Milena Marchesi
2007 Fertility Politics as 'Social Viagra': Reproducing Boundaries, Social Cohesion and Modernity in Italy. American Anthropologist 109(2): 350-362.

Krause, Elizabeth L. and Silvia De Zordo
2012 Introduction. Ethnography and biopolitics: tracing 'rationalities' of reproduction across the north-south divide. *Anthropology & Medicine*. 19(2): 137-152.

Lægaard, Sune
2010 Immigration, Social Cohesion, and Naturalization. *Ethnicities*, 10(4): 452-469.

Laurenzi, Laura
1991 E ora i bambini mai nati hanno il loro monumento. *la Repubblica.it*. Cronaca. http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/1991/12/29/ora-bambini-mai-nati-hanno-il.html

Lemke, Thomas
2001 'The birth of bio-politics': Michel Foucault's lecture at the Collège de France on neo-liberal governmentality. *Economy and Society*, 30 (2): 190–207.

Lisa, Elena
2011 In gruppo per aiutarsi. Il welfare fai-da-te, *Lastampa.it*, Torino, April 18, http://www.lastampa.it/2011/04/18/cronaca/in-gruppo-per-aiutarsiil-welfare-fai-da-te-zVkjg8Tn0vLpAUEy1Q2WzK/pagina.html

Livi Bacci, Massimo
2001 Too Few Children and Too Much Family. *Daedalus* 130(3):139–155.
2003 Un fondo per ogni neonato. Affidiamoci ai baby bonds. *la Repubblica.it*, May 14, http://www.repubblica.it/online/cronaca/divosepa/fondo/fondo.html
2006 Nuovo welfare per le famiglie, *la Repubblica.it*, 1, October 31. http://www.ds.unifi.it/livi/editoriali/repubblica-31ott06.pdf

Lombardi, Lia
2004 Donne immigrate e salute riproduttiva tra modelli culturali e condizioni sociali. *Working Papers del Dipartimento di studi sociali e politici*. Università degli studi di Milano, www.sociol.unimi.it/ricerca_pubblicazioni.php.

Lombardi, Lia and Daniela Carrillo
2011 Genere, salute e politiche sociali in Europa Focus sulla salute riproduttiva delle donne migrant. *Paper for the Espanet Conference*, Innovare il welfare. Percorsi di trasformazione in Italia e in Europa" Milan, 29 Settembre -1 Ottobre.

Lombardi, Lia and Franca Pizzini
1994 *Madre provetta : costi, benefici e limiti della procreazione artificiale*. Milan: FrancoAngeli.

Lombardi, Lia and Silvia De Zordo, eds.
2013 *La procreazione medicalmente assistita e le sue sfide: generi, tecnologie e disuguaglianze.* Milan: FrancoAngeli.

Luciano, Adriana
2012 Dalle società di mutuo soccorso alla mutualità. Risposte alla crisi del welfare, *Euricse Working Paper*, N.032 12 http://euricse.eu/sites/euricse.eu/files/db_uploads/documents/1334324057_n2047.pdf

Maltoni, Andrea
2002 The Principle of Subsidiarity in Italy: Its Meaning As A "Horizontal" Principle And Its Recent Constitutional Recognition. The International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law 4(4), July. Electronic document, http://www.icnl.org/knowledge/ijnl/vol4iss4/art_3.htm, last accessed May 25, 2010.

Mandel, Ruth
1994 "Fortress Europe" and the Foreigners Within: Germany's Turks. In *The Anthropology of Europe: Identities and Boundaries in Conflict*, Victoria A. Goddard, Josep R. Llobera and Chris Shore eds. pp. 113-124. Oxford: Berg.

Marchesi, Milena
1997 The Lega Nord: a Study in Identity Construction. Unpublished Honors Thesis. University of Colorado at Boulder.

Marcus, George E.
1995 Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography, *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 24:95–117.

Mauss, Marcel
1990 *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. New York: W.W. Norton.

McLaren, Margaret A.
2002 *Feminism, Foucault, and Embodied Subjectivity*. Albany, New York: SUNY Press.

Mbembe, Achille
2003 Necropolitics. Translated by Libby Meintjes. *Public Culture*, 15(1): 11–40

Mencarini, Letizia
2012 Soddisfazione e uso del tempo nelle coppie italiane. In *Uso del tempo e dei ruoli di genere. Tra lavoro e famiglia nel ciclo di vita.* Argomenti n. 43. Maria Clelia Romano, Letizia Mencarini e Maria Letizia Tanturri, eds., pp. 41-64. Roma: Istat.

Miles, Robert
1993 "The Articulation of Racism and Nationalism". *Racism and Migration in Western Europe*. Eds. John Wrench and Solomos John, pp. 35-52, Providence, RI: Berg

Mills, Melinda, Letizia Mencarini, Maria Letizia Tanturri, Katia Begal
2008 Gender equity and fertility intentions in Italy and the Netherlands, *Demographic Research,* 18 (1): 1-26, http://www.demographic-research.org/volumes/vol18/1/18-1.pdf

Ministero del Lavoro, della Salute e delle Politiche Sociali
2008 *La vita buona nella società attiva: Libro verde sul futuro del modello sociale*, http://www.governo.it/GovernoInforma/Dossier/libro_verde_welfare/libro_verde_welfare.pdf, last accessed August 30, 2010.
2009 *Libro Bianco sul futuro del modello sociale: La vita buona nella società attiva,* May. www.lavoro.gov.it and www.ministerosalute.it.

Ministero della Salute
2010a Relazione del Ministro della Salute sulla attuazione della legge contenente norme per la tutela sociale della maternità e per l'interruzione volontaria di gravidanza (legge 194/78), Rome, August 6, http://www.salute.gov.it/imgs/C_17_pubblicazioni_1312_allegato.pdf
2010b Relazione al Parlamento IVG 2010, Tabelle 2010, Tabella 16 - IVG e luogo di certificazione, 2008 http://www.salute.gov.it/imgs/C_17_pubblicazioni_1312_ulteriorialleg ati_ulteriorealleg ato_0_alleg.pdf
2012 Relazione del Ministro della Salute sulla attuazione della Legge contenente norme per la tutela sociale della maternità e per l'interruzione volontaria di gravidanza (Legge 194/78). Tabelle 2012. http://www.salute.gov.it/imgs/C_17_pubblicazioni_1824_ulteriorialleg ati_ulteriorealleg ato_0_alleg.pdf

Ministry of Interior
2007 *Charter of Values of Citizenship and Integration.* Scientific Council. Official Translation. April 23, Rome. http://www.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/assets/files/14/0919_charter_of_values_of_citizenship_and_integration.pdf

Mishtal, Joanna Z.
2012 Irrational non-reproduction? The "dying nation" and the postsocialist logics of declining motherhood in Poland, Special Issue, "'Irrational' Reproduction: Population Politics and Practices at the Intersection of North and South," *Anthropology & Medicine*, 19(2):153-169.

Modood, Tariq and Pnina Werbner
1997 *The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe: Racism, Identity, and Community*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Molé, Noelle J.
2010 Precarious Subjects: Anticipating Neoliberalism in Northern Italy's Workplace. *American Anthropologist* 112(1): 38-53.

Morgan, Lynn M.
2002 "Properly disposed of": A history of embryo disposal and the changing claims on fetal remains. *Medical Anthropology* 21(3-4):247-74.
2003 Embryo Tales. In *Remaking Life and Death: Toward an Anthropology of the Biosciences.* Sarah Franklin and Margaret Lock, eds., pp. 261-91. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.
2009 *Icons of Life: A Cultural History of Human Embryos*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Muehlebach, Andrea Karin
2007 The moral neoliberal: Welfare state and ethical citizenship in contemporary Italy. Dissertation, University of Chicago.
2009 Complexio Oppositorum: Notes on the Left in Neoliberal Italy. *Public Culture* 21(3):495-515
2012 *The Moral Neoliberal: Welfare and Citizenship in Italy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mulkay, Michael
1994 The Triumph of the Pre-Embryo: Interpretations of the Human Embryo in Parliamentary Debates over Embryo Research. *Social Studies of Science,* 24(4): 611-639.

Nadesan, Majia Holmer
2008 *Governmentality, Biopower, and Everyday Life*. New York: Routledge.

Novas, Carlos & Nikolas Rose
2000 Genetic Risk and the Birth of the Somatic Individual. *Economy & Society*, 29(4): 485-513.

Nuzzo, Pina
2007 Doppia origine. Archivio Centrale, Storia dell'Udi. *Intervento convegno CIRSDe, Università Torino,* 24-26 ottobre, http://www.udinazionale.org/donne-in-italia/storia-delludi/doppia-origine.html

Official Journal of the European Communities
1998 Directive 98/44/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 1998 on the legal protection of biotechnological inventions, L 213/13, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:1998:213:0013:0021:EN:PDF
2000 Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. C 364/1. December 18, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf

O'Malley, Pat
2001 Genealogy, Systemisation and Resistance in "Advanced Liberalism." *Rethinking Law, Society and Governance: Foucault's Bequest.* Gary Wickham and George Pavlich, eds., pp. 13-25. Portland, Oregon: Hart Publishing.

Ong, Aihwa
1995 Making the Biopolitical Subject: Cambodian Immigrants, Refugee Medicine and Cultural Citizenship in California. *Social Science and Medicine,* 40:1243-57.
2006 *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Parente, Maria
2012 Donne in movimento: la condizione lavorativa delle donne migrant in Italia, Osservatorio Isfol n. 3/2012, http://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it/Documenti/Documents/Donne_pari%20opportunita/parente.pdf

Paris, Ettore
2000 "Dietro Malossini e la Compagnia delle Opere," QT Questotrentino, n° 21, November 25, http://www.questotrentino.it/2000/21/Malossini.html, last accessed August 30, 2010.

Parvez, Fareen Z.
2011 Debating the Burqa in France: the Antipolitics of Islamic Revival. *Qualitative Sociology* 34: 287–312/

Petchesky, Rosalind Pollack
1984 *Abortion and Woman's Choice: The State, Sexuality, and Reproductive Freedom*. Longman Series in Feminist Theory. New York, NY: Longman.
1987 Fetal Images: The Power of Visual Culture in the Politics of Reproduction. In, *Reproductive Technologies: Gender, Motherhood, and Medicine*, p. 263-292, Michelle Stanworth, ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Petryna, Adriana
2002 *Life Exposed: Biological Citizens after Chernobyl*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Plesset, Sonja
2006 *Sheltering Women: Negotiating Gender and Violence in Northern Italy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Pojmann, Wendy
2005 Emancipation or Liberation?: Women's Associations and the Italian Movement. *The Historian,* 67(1): 73-96.

Portanova, Mario
2009 Commistione e lottizzazione. In occasione del meeting di Rimini, l'inchiesta sugli interessi di Comunione e Liberazione. *Altraeconomia. L'informazione per agire*, n. 108, August 25, 2009, available at http://www.altreconomia.it/site/fr_contenuto_detail.php?intId=2060, last accessed August 20, 2010.

Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri
2012 *Piano Nazionale per la Famiglia. L'alleanza italiana per la famiglia.* Dipartimento per le politiche della famiglia. June 7, available online, http://www.politichefamiglia.it/primo-piano/approvato-il-piano-nazionale-per-la-famiglia-uno-strumento-di-indirizzo-per-le-politiche-familiari.aspx

Prozorov, Sergei
2007 The Unrequited Love of Power: Biopolitical Investment and the Refusal of Care, *Foucault Studies* 4: 53-77.

Pugliese, Enrico
2000 Demografia, immigrazione, salario, Per uscire dai luoghi comuni. *La Rivista del Manifesto*, n.11, November.

Putnam, Robert D.
1993 *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Rabinow, Paul and Nikolas Rose
2003 Thoughts on the Concept of Biopower Today, paper presented at the conference, 'Vital Politics', London School of Economics.

Ranaldi, Rita and Maria Clelia Romano
2008 Conciliare lavoro e famiglia: Una sfida quotidiana. Argomenti n. 33, Rome: Istat, http://www.istat.it/dati/catalogo/20080904_00/arg_08_33_conciliare_lavoro_e_famiglia.pdf

Rapp, Rayna
1999 *Testing Women, Testing the Fetus: The Social Impact of Amniocentesis in America*. New York and London: Routledge.

Rastello, Luca and Stefano Parola
2011 How Italy Is Adjusting. Op-Ed Contributor, The Opinion Pages, *The New York Times*, August 21, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/22/opinion/how-italy-is-adjusting.html?_r=0

Ratzinger, Joseph and Alberto Bovone
1987 Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation. Replies to Certain Questions of the Day. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, February 22, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19870222_respect-for-human-life_en.html.

Regione Lombardia
2008 Legge Regionale 12 marzo 2008, n. 3, "Governo della rete degli interventi e dei servizi alla persona in ambito sociale e sociosanitario," March 17, http://www.provincia.milano.it/export/sites/default/affari_sociali/Normativa/ds_legge_reg03-2008.pdf
2010 4.500 euro alla mamma che rinuncia ad abortire. Lombardia Notizie, May 31, http://www.regione.lombardia.it/cs/Satellite?c=News&childpagename=Regione%2FDetail&cid=1213360190994&pagename=RGNWrapper.

Rinella, Angelo
n.d. Sussidiarietà. Treccani.it. *Enciclopedia del Novecento*, III Supplemento, http://www.treccani.it/Portale/elements/categoriesItems.jsp?pathFile=/sites/default/BancaDati/Enciclopedia_del_Novecento_-_III_Supplemento/VOL13/ENCICLOPEDIA_DEL_NOVECENTO_VOL_13_000576.xml, last accessed January 14, 2011.

Roberts, Elizabeth F.S.
2006 God's Laboratory: Religious Rationalities and Modernity in Ecuadorian In Vitro Fertilization, *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry,* 30: 507–536.

Rose, Nikolas
1996 The Death of the Social? Re-figuring the territory of government. *Economy and Society*, 3: 327-356.
2001 The Politics of Life Itself. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 18(6): 1-30.
2007 *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Rossi, Giovanna
2005 Servizi alla persona e sussidiarietà. In, *Welfare Community e sussidiarietà*, Sergio Belardinelli ed. pp. 91-110. Milano: Egea.

Rubio, Sónia Parella
2003 Immigrant women in paid domestic service. The case of Spain and Italy. *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, 9(3): 503-517.

Ruhl, Lealle P.
2002 Disarticulating Liberal Subjectivities: Abortion and Fetal Protection. *Feminist Studies* 28 n.1 (spring): 37-60.

Sacconi, Maurizio
2010 "Perché ci vuole meno Stato e più società": Welfare e privato. *Corriere della Sera*, Idee e Opinioni, pg. 44, June 17.
2008 "Prefazione." In, *La vita buona nella società attiva: Libro Verde sul futuro del modello sociale*. Ministero del Lavoro, della Salute e delle Politiche Sociali. Online document,

http://www.governo.it/GovernoInforma/Dossier/libro_verde_welfare/libro_verde_welfare.pdf, last accessed August 30, 2010.

Salih, Ruba
2002 Recognizing Difference, Reinforcing Exclusion. A "Family Planning Centre for Migrant Women and their Children" in Emilia-Romagna. Grillo R.D., Pratt J. eds. Pp. 139-58. *The Politics of Recognising Difference. Multiculturalism Italian-Style*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Samek Lodovici, Manuela and Renata Semenza
2008 The Italian Case: From Employment Regulation to Welfare Reforms? *Social Policy and Administration*, 42(2): 160-176.

Santarelli, Elisabetta and Francesco Cottone
2009 Leaving home, family support and intergenerational ties in Italy: Some regional differences, *Demographic Research* 21(1): 1-22.

Saraceno, Chiara
1994 The Ambivalent Familism of the Italian Welfare State. *Social Politics* 1(1): 60-82.
2002 Social Assistance Dynamics in European Welfare States. Bristol: Policy Press.
2011 Crocifisso, un paese a laicità limitata. *la Repubblica.it*, March 16. http://temi.repubblica.it/micromega-online/crocifisso-un-paese-a-laicita-limitata/.

Sayer, Derek
1994 Everyday Forms of State Formation: Some Dissident Remarks on "Hegemony." In *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Regulation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, G. Joseph and D. Nugent, eds., pp. 367-377. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Schoepflin, Lorenzo
2012 Tra provetta e freezer, la vita precaria dell'embrione," *Avvenire.it*, April 5, http://www.avvenire.it/Vita/Pagine/tra-provetta-e-freezer-la-vita-precaria-embrione.aspx.

Severino Francesca and Maurizio Bonati
2010 Migranti e salute: tra diritto (alle cure) e reato (di clandestinità). *Ricerca e Pratica*. 26: 50-61.

Schneider, Jane, ed.
1998 *Italy's Southern Question: Orientalism in One Country*. Oxford: Berg.

Shenfield, F., J. de Mouzon, G. Pennings, A.P. Ferraretti, A. Nyboe Andersen, G. de Wert, and V. Goossens
2010 Cross border reproductive care in six European countries. *Human Reproduction* 25 (6): 1361-1368.

Shore, Cris
1990 *Italian Communism: The Escape from Leninism*. London: Pluto Press.
2000 *Building Europe: The Cultural Politics of European Integration*. New York: Routledge.

Siddique, Juned, Diane S. Lauderdale, Tyler VanderWeele, and John Lantos
2009 Trends in Prenatal Ultrasound Use in the United States: 1995 to 2006. *Medical Care*, 47(11): 1129-1135.

Sossi, Federica
2006 *Migrare. Spazi di confinamento e strategie di esistenza*. Milan: Il Saggiatore.

Soysal, Yasemin Nuhoglu
1994 *Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Postnational Membership in Europe*. Chicago: University of Chicago
1998 Locating European Identity in Education. In*, Fabricating Europe: The Formation of an Education Space*, pp. 55-66. António Nóvoa and Martin Lawn, eds. Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Spinelli A., Forcella E., Di Rollo S., Grandolfo M.,
2006 L'interruzione volontaria di gravidanza tra le donne straniere in Italia*, Rapporti Istisan*, 06/17, Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Roma.

Stolcke, Verena
1995 Talking Culture: New Boundaries, New Rhetorics of Exclusion in Europe. *Current Anthropology*. 36 (1):1-24.

Storey, Andy
2004 The European Project: Dismantling Social Democracy, Globalising Neoliberalism, Paper for presentation at the conference "Is Ireland a Democracy?", Sociology Department, National University of Ireland Maynooth, 2nd/3rd April 2004.

Sweetapple, Christopher
n.d. Homo-land Security: Islamophobia, Sexuality and Citizenship in Berlin, Germany. Unpublished Master Thesis. University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Tambini, Damian
2001 Post-National Citizenship. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24:195-217.

Taylor, Janelle S.
1992 The Public Fetus and the Family Car: From Abortion Politics to a Volvo Advertisement. *Public Culture,* 4(2):67-80.

Ticktin, Miriam
2006 Where Ethics and Politics Meet: The Violence of Humanitarianism in France. *American Ethnologist* 33(1):33–49

Tolstokorova Alissa,
2007 Impact of International Migration on Livelihood of Ukrainian Family: "Poisoned Gift" or "Dream Realized?" Paper presented at The Second Workshop of the EAPS Working Group: The Anthropological Demography of Europe. Beyond National Boundaries: Migration and Transnationality in Europe, Paris.

Turner, Bryan S.
2001 The erosion of citizenship. *British Journal of Sociology* 52(2): 189–209.

van Zanten, Agnès
1997 Schooling Immigrants in France in the 1990s: Success or Failure of the Republican Model of Integration? *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*. 28 (3): 351–374.

Vecchi, Gian Guido
1999 La Compagnia delle Opere: riforma sanitaria da bocciare. Convention al Palalido sulla sussidiarietà. Vittadini: cerchiamo un punto di equilibrio. *Corriere della Sera*, July 4, pg. 49, http://archiviostorico.corriere.it/1999/luglio/04/Compagnia_delle_Opere_riforma_sanitaria_co_7_9907045559.shtml.

Vicarelli, Maria Giovanna and Micol Bronzini
2009 From the 'expert patient' to 'expert family': A feasibility study on family learning for people with long-term conditions in Italy, *Health Sociology Review*, 18(2): 182-193.

Willen, Sarah S.
2005 Birthing "Invisible" Children: State Power, NGO Activism, and Reproductive Health among "Illegal" Migrant Workers in Tel Aviv, Israel. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 1(2):55–88.

Wimmer, Andreas and Nina Glick Schiller
2002 Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation-State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences. *Global Networks* 2(4): 301-334.

Yazc, Berna
2012 The Return to the Family: Welfare, State, and Politics of the Family in Turkey. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 85(1): 103-140.

Zahidi, Saadia and Herminia Ibarra
2010 The Corporate Gender Gap Report 2010. Geneva: World Economic Forum, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_CorporateReport_2010.

Zincone, Giovanna, ed.
2006 *Familismo legale come (non) diventare italiani*. Roma-Bari: Editori Laterza.