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Cita:

Pavez Soto, Iskra (2010). *Las niñas y niños peruanos como actores de la migración familiar en Barcelona: Relaciones generacionales y expectativas*. *Migraciones internacionales*, 5 (4), 69-99.

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Peruvian Girls and Boys as Actors of Family Migration in Barcelona: Generational Relations and Expectations

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ABSTRACT

Migration radically changes children's lives, as well as affecting affinities and generational conflicts in Peruvian families, and spheres of exchange and generational meeting between members that had remained distanced, at times during years. The projects of familiar migration are increasingly associated with children's well-being and development. This paper examines children's participation in migratory processes as social actors in their daily lives and the construction of the family relations when they are regrouped in Barcelona.

Keywords: 1. generations, 2. immigrant childhood, 3. family reunification, 4. Peru, 5. Barcelona.

Las niñas y niños peruanos como actores de la migración familiar en Barcelona: Relaciones generacionales y expectativas

RESUMEN

La migración transforma radicalmente la vida infantil e impacta en las afinidades y conflictos generacionales al interior de las familias peruanas, así como en los espacios de intercambio y encuentro generacional entre los miembros que habían permanecido distanciados, a veces durante años. Los proyectos de migración familiar cada vez más se asocian al bienestar y desarrollo de la infancia. Este artículo reflexiona sobre la participación de las niñas y niños en los procesos migratorios como actores sociales en su vida cotidiana, y en la construcción de las relaciones familiares una vez que son reagrupados en Barcelona.

Palabras clave: 1. generaciones, 2. infancia migrante, 3. reagrupación familiar, 4. Perú, 5. Barcelona.

Introduction¹

International Peruvian migration has various social, political, economic and cultural causes. The decision to leave generally forms part of a plan of the family group in search of greater wellbeing for its members. These factors have influenced the feminization of the migratory flows and networks originating from Peru. During the 1990s² many women emigrated in response to the economic, labor, and educational needs of their family groups. Although some of these women have high educational attainment, the majority work in domestic service or other low-skilled jobs in their destinations (Escrivá, 2000, 2004).

In the current situation of feminization of migration and emergence of migration as family strategy, children and adolescents appear as new actors in the family migration process.

Educational and labor expectations for girls and boys depend, among other factors, on the socioeconomic origin of the family, the educational attainment of the mothers and fathers, and the opportunities available in the receiving country. These elements also influence the intergenerational relations that develop within the family group in this period of reunification, given that they constitute the motivation for the move (Labrador, 2001). The Peruvian families that arrive in Barcelona originate from diverse social strata, most often from middle and middle-upper sectors, with a diversity of family structures (Altamirano, 2000).

This article reflects on child participation in the migratory projects of Peruvian families in Barcelona, relational dynamics, and the spaces of generational encounter undergone once the group is reunited in the destination, all from points of view of the migra-

¹The present essay is an extract from the author's Doctoral Thesis in Sociology (in process) directed by Doctor Sònia Parella at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. The objective is to study child participation from the gender perspective in Peruvian migratory processes toward Santiago de Chile and Barcelona. The author is grateful to reviewers for their valuable comments on the presentation of this paper.

²In 1995, the feminization index in Peruvian flows toward Spain was 64 per cent (MTAS, 2008).

tory experience of girls and boys who have been reunited by their families in Barcelona.

The objectives of the present work are to explore the generational affinities and distances among family group members and to identify the concerns and issues relevant for the nucleus in general and for girls and boys in particular. Through this exploration, the paper analyzes the possibilities and spaces of generational encounter effectively available to the reunited families. The time and activities shared by the family are fundamental in the reencounter and reconstruction of generational relations. The paper also delves into the issue of the children's expectations (educational, labor, and possibilities of their return to Peru versus settlement) in relation to the migratory project in accordance with gender and age, taking into account the vision of childhood present in each migratory context, which contributes to create new models of "being an immigrant child."

The information was gathered through a semi-structured, in-depth interview. This technique offers the biographical dimension and the more intimate perception of the migratory process. This procedure facilitates the personal reflection of the interview subject, in our case regarding the modification of intergenerational relations in the family reunification.

Three girls and five boys were interviewed, with ages ranging from 7 to 17. The majority of the children were students in the Compulsory Secondary Education system and only one was in the process of applying for Higher Education studies. The amount of time they had lived in Barcelona varied from six years of residence in a few cases to others in which the family had been reunited for less than one year. Seven mothers and one father were also interviewed, most with middle-level and some with higher education. These parents had held various occupations in their places of origin, ranging from merchants to housewives to health professionals. In Barcelona, the women work in cleaning and care services, and the men work in surveillance and security jobs, usually at night. All of those interviewed have legalized migratory statuses in Spain.

The participation of girls and boys in the research favors their vision as subjects. It is an affirmation of their right to participate and to be informed,³ and it allows us to question the silence that surrounds a large part of childhood and to provide new perspectives on the phenomenon under study. Children are the utmost experts on their own lives (Laws and Mann, 2004).

The inclusive vision also implies protecting the interests of those who participate, as well as guaranteeing informed consent and the confidentiality of the information obtained. To balance the power relation produced between the adult researcher and the girls and boys consulted, it is necessary to recognize the rights of the children to be informed of all the issues related to the research, and to use suitable techniques and respect their points of view. With this in mind, the interviewers first contacted the mothers and fathers to give them the information about the proposed interview and to request their consent. The Peruvian children in Barcelona were then informed about the process and the objectives of the research, the uses to be made and the confidentiality of the data gathered, and the possibility to participate freely in the interview as well as their right to deny participation.⁴

A New Approach to Understanding Childhood

Different political movements may be observed during the 20th century oriented to promote children's rights and freedoms. New

³On November 20, 1989, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Resolution 44/25), considered the Magna Carta of children. This Convention enjoys a high level of support, and has been ratified to date by a total of 191 countries, with only two countries, the United States and Somalia, yet to do so. The Convention went into effect on September 2, 1990, coinciding with the World Summit in favor of Children. Article 12 of said Convention recognizes the rights of children to express their opinion, to be taken into account, and to participate in their own lives. See <<http://www.unicef.org>>.

⁴A Consent Form was employed to formalize this collaboration agreement and to guarantee the child's knowledge of the details of the research and the identity of the researcher, as well as the child's willingness to participate, in an informed and free manner. The child completes and signs the form which is registered as an empirical material forming part of the study. (Laws and Mann, 2004).

theoretical trends also emerged in the Social Sciences regarding children's issues.

From a historic point of view, childhood is always “invisibly” present in the large events of the “adult world.” The modern idea of girls and boys controlled by school discipline and the authority of the father of a nuclear family is relatively recent; other more communitarian family forms used to occur in Europe, as well as South America. The emergence of this idea coincides with welfare and religious programs developed to attend to excluded children, together with massive obligatory schooling processes (Ariès, 1987; Qvortrup, 1992).⁵

For its part, within Sociology, childhood is a diffuse and disperse object of study, parceled between Sociology of Education and Sociology of the Family. A New Sociology of Childhood is slowly beginning to take shape with the mission to integrate the contributions of other scientific fields and make the position of childhood visible as a social category in structure and in society (Gaitán, 2006b, 2008; Rodríguez, 2007).

With these elements, we understand that girls and boys are social actors in every present space and time; in the same way, they act “invisibly” in the migratory processes initiated by their families. In this work, they are considered to be actors, and critical distance is taken from the vision that “*they will be, but they are not yet.*” Childhood acts in different ways in the diverse family activities and in the social events in which it participates.

Given children's capacity to reflect, they participate in their issues and in those of their communities. As social group, they are in permanent contact with other social groups. However, this

⁵According to Qvortrup (1992:177), formation and education are part of the production process in the current labor market of knowledge. But the role played by boys and girls as reproducers of the labor market is not recognized or acknowledged, and they are seen more as a cost for society than an input for the economy. Even if their school work, in an information and knowledge-producing society, is the only immanent activity they undertake. Even today, only the manual activities carried out by children—in fact more representative of the pre-industrial period—are considered *useful* and taken into account as *child labor*. Obligatory schooling is not considered to be work or a contribution to the economy.

role is rarely recognized by society, in general due to the economic dependence that relegates them to situations of subordination and paternalization (Gómez-Granell *et al.*, 2004; Liebel, 2007). Children participating in migratory processes are “half” subjects, because while they develop actions and influence their lives and the surroundings in which they live, which is the first condition of being a subject, this action is not “acknowledged” by the other social actors—the family, the sending society, and the receiving society—which would be the second condition required to be a subject (Gaitán, 2008).

Childhood is a social construction and a relational process, which exists, although not solely, in relation to adulthood and the other coexisting generations, and bears the traits of a classic minority. In this sense we understand that childhood—as well as youth—exists permanently in the social structure, although its members are constantly renewed, and therefore it is a social and historic phenomenon (Qvortrup, 1992; Gaitán, 2006b, 2008).

Childhood is not a homogenous group; internal inequalities exist based on gender, class, and ethnic origin, among others. Differences also exist within the child immigrant group, related to class, gender, nationality, or cultural or religious origin. The characteristics of the family migratory project mark childhood experiences and expectations, be they regarding plans to return, definitive permanence, or family reunification, all elements of a dynamic process undergone by families (Pedone, 2007). The child’s age also influences the experience, given that as the child grows he or she acquires greater power and capacity to express opinions within the family (Gaitán, 2008).

To understand children as social actors, we must register their daily activities as behaviors within the minority framework of power they have in which to develop, as well as the constant negotiation with the others within the family group (Gómez-Granell *et al.*, 2004). Girls and boys “comprise a generation” (in the same way that women and men “re-produce gender”) and thereby constitute, represent, and transform their generational position and space through relational activities (Gaitán, 2006b).

The transformation itself of relations in the migratory context impacts the actual form of experiencing childhood, just as new housing or urban conditions, school settings, and the communication, information and entertainment media steadily configure new expressions of childhood.

In this article, “childhood” is considered to be a common social space shared by individuals who have not yet reached 18 years of age. According to Lourdes Gaitán (2006b), this allows us to understand children with a real generational pertinence in the moment they live given their simultaneous participation in the phenomena of childhood and of migration. Although this social space is renewed with new members, the niche of childhood in itself forms a *generation* (like youth). The daily practices carried out by the subjects are a reproduction of the generational order in accordance with the context in which they occur. The sociological possibility thereby emerges to analyze events from the point of view of age, which would be the basic category of differentiation (García, 2006). The generation is a historic experience that creates a common framework of life experiences and interpretations during childhood or youth, and facilitates a similar comprehension of the world (Mannheim, 1993). Migration is without any doubt a point of reference shared by its participants. The political, social and economic moment, the networks in which a human group participates, and the relational patterns, form part of “the migratory experience” of each generational cohort (Eckstein, 2002).

Childhood and Generations in Migratory Studies

Upon initiating the study of gender inequalities in migration, other family and social aspects are revealed which had remained hidden, such as those related to childcare, the educational and social insertion of girls and boys, couple relations, the impact of remittances, and transnational ties in relation to care, among other topics (Pedone, 2003; Carrasco, 2004a, 2004b; Solé, Parella and Cavalcanti, 2007).

Existing studies on children of foreign origin in both the United States and Europe have focused primarily on school results, real opportunities for labor insertion, linguistic uses, and strategies of upward mobility in the destination societies, while others address racial discrimination, housing segregation, economic changes, or migratory policies (Portes, 1996; Portes, Fernández-Kelly and Halles, 2006; Aparicio, 2001; Aparicio and Tornos, 2006; Levitt and Waters, 2002; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, 2003; García, 2006). Growing conceptual debate exists in the academic sphere as to who the subjects of immigrant childhood are: the so-called “second generation.” Are they those who emigrate at very young ages or who as adolescents are reunited with their family members, or those who are born in the destination country? This debate remains far from settled (Aparicio and Tornos, 2006).

In this research, a “generation” is understood as the children who participate in the migratory processes with a determined generational pertinence established primarily by age. The extrapolated use of the concept of the “second generation” of immigrants reflects the influence of the United States studies, and their visions and classifications regarding children of foreign origin (García, 2006). We recognize that the critical use of the concept of “second generation” has an ethnocentric bias given that it views the children from the perspective of the receiving society through its classification of the population as *immigrant* (Aparicio and Tornos, 2006; Suárez, 2006; Torrabadella and Tejero, 2005; Carrasco, 2004a, 2004b; Terrén and Carrasco, 2007). This “second generation” concept also has an adult-centric slant given that it situates childhood in a determined category based on the migratory experience of the parents, even in cases in which the children themselves have not experienced any territorial transfer, for example when they are born in the destination. It is certainly in appropriate to denominate those who have not migrated as migrants. However, we cannot ignore the practice (albeit limited) in the academic sphere of recognition that children living in families of foreign origin “share” certain cultural, social, and

legal elements that can hardly be abstracted from their childhood condition. The fact of being the son or daughter of a foreigner endows certain identities, opportunities, and discriminations in the receiving society that need to be made visible, so that a “theoretical” assimilation will not hide the real life situations of this sector of children.

The children are identified as key actors bearing large responsibility, with the capacity to make decisions and influence the family migratory project when their mothers or fathers emigrate. Child participation in migratory questions is observed with certain ambivalence, given that in some cases their opinions are never consulted, although in others they may be highly considered. Migration radically transforms children’s lives. Although the migratory project has the end goal to improve educational opportunities, children sometimes experience many changes and losses in a very solitary manner (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, 2003; Pedone, 2007; Gaitán, 2008).

In the specific case of Peruvian migration in Spain, motivations for the reunification of children in the destination have an affective dimension, in addition to educational expectations. Many of the expectations that their mothers and fathers have been unable to attain in the destination are deposited in the children (Labrador, 2001:149; Solé, Parella and Cavalcanti, 2007).

The experiences of immigrant children are differentiated from those of adults, given that the age at which a person experiences certain events largely determines the interpretation of the same. According to Eckstein (2002:212), the experiences of the second generations are differentiated from the previous in the child’s perception and participation themselves during the migratory process.

Migration is inscribed in a generational historic framework, while at the same time being lived in a particular intra-family sphere. A concept that historically connects the generations explains the differences and similarities between the first and second generations, while a more biological concept accentuates traditional ties (García, 2006). The political and economic moment, the networks in which a human group participates, and

the relational models of the family all form part of “the migratory experience” of each cohort (Eckstein, 2002).

In the new Sociology of Childhood, the “generation” concept has been employed to suggest differences in the position of distinct age groups by virtue of their concrete location in a period of life, as well as succession of activities carried out by the social actors from a historic perspective. The family, in this sense, may be seen as a structured and structuring system of relations that links the positions of its members and thereby affects the actions of those who hold these positions from the viewpoint of power (Gaitán, 2006b).

Within families, relations are unequal, resources are distributed according to generational privileges, and latent or explicit abuse is suffered primarily by women, girls and boys (Gómez-Granell *et al.*, 2004; Brullet and Torradadella, 2004). The family is where private life and intimate and everyday relations unfold, in comparison with the public world. Nevertheless, the household is also where the gender and generational orders in place in our societies are palpably felt. Girls and boys participate in the division of labor in this sphere: they carry out their school work as contribution to the organization of work in general, and they also carry out domestic work, care for themselves, and occasionally care for or accompany other members; in sum, they are unrecognized contributors of “family wellbeing” (Gaitán, 2006b).

In this research we assume a “relational” sociological approach (Gaitán, 2006b)⁶ for our study object. We repeat that childhood is considered a relational occurrence that exists, although not solely, in relation with adulthood and the other coexisting generations. Children are the actors of this social space.

Relations are also experienced in the family sphere among children and adolescents, who share a “fraternal” space due to the kinship among siblings, cousins, or nieces and nephews. Such fraternal relations are framed in a generational order in their participation in a same *generational position*, developing alliances

⁶This author in turn identifies two other research approaches in the new Sociology of Childhood: Structural and Constructionist. See Gaitán, 2006b.

or competitions regarding determined questions. It is a specific intra-childhood relational space, in which power inequalities in function of gender, class, or even age may be reproduced (Gaitán, 2006b). It is therefore not unusual to observe that some adolescents “abuse” certain privileges in relation to their younger siblings. In some cases, immigrant families share household spaces with other groups or relatives, situation which unleashes diverse spaces and generational dynamics among all the integrants.

Generational research offers us the possibility to unveil those interactions that have remained hidden behind the curtain of private life in migratory research, and shows us the universe of relations and spaces of generational encounter lived by the immigrated family groups. We have seen that childhood corresponds to a social and historic construction that forms part of the generational structures of society, while at the same time particular lives exist of girls and boys that slowly begin to appear in the international migratory scenario.

When adult migration occurs and children remain in the place of origin, grandmothers or aunts traditionally assume responsibility for childcare, although mothers and fathers participate from a distance in household management, through economic assistance, joint decision making, and permanent exchange of information. Intergenerational relations change during this period; forms of communication and the exercise of caregiver and authority roles begin to be experienced in new ways (Pedone, 2007; Solé, Parella and Cavalcanti, 2007; Parella, 2007). In some families, the older sisters, and in fewer cases brothers, must assume maternal roles as caregivers of their younger siblings (Pedone, 2003; Gaitán, 2008).

Some children may experience the transnational period as a traumatic event or as abandonment, in particular if they do not participate in the elaboration of the trip, do not know the dates of reunification, have an unhealthy relationship with those responsible for their care in their place of origin, or have little intra-family communication. On the other hand, if the process is lived with planning and the children’s participation, it may be a painful but tolerable experience, given the permanent support of other persons

who accompany them in their place of origin (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, 2003:123; Pedone, 2003, 2007; Parella, 2007).

When the children are reunited with their parents, “in general they are happy, but they also feel the loss of their loved ones [such as the grandparents who took care of them in the country of origin] and friends. The benefits of immigration for them are tainted by the loss.” (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, 2003:125). Mothers and fathers are often faced with children who they have not seen in several years and with whom they must relearn to dialogue and to address and negotiate daily vicissitudes (Terrén and Carrasco, 2007; Pedone, 2003, 2007). For their part, the children must re-acquaint themselves with their mothers and fathers after having interacted with other meaningful adults in Peru, such as the grandmother or aunt. The adults may feel they have lost legitimacy *vis-à-vis* their descendents. This situation challenges them to reconstruct the filial link without falling into authoritarian practices or maternal/paternal indifference (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, 2003:136; Solé, Parella and Cavalcanti, 2007).

Return versus settlement are issues continually revisited by the family, based on labor or school situations and the circumstances of the children’s lives. The family migratory project is a dynamic process that is not subject to *a priori* determinations. It is a fact that childhood and youth results provide a certain yardstick of the success of the project, but the possibility of return and back-and-forth trips are ideas that circulate permanently in family spaces and dialogues (Labrador, 2001; Parella, 2007; Pedone, 2007).

*Generational Relations in Peruvian Families in Barcelona
from the Children’s Point of View. Relational Dynamics*

The affinity among household members is directly related to the generational position they occupy (Gaitán, 2006b). It is important and necessary for children to maintain close affective relations with their family members once they have reunited. This closeness is influenced by various factors, including the type of transnational relation, gender and age, and characters and prefer-

ences that facilitate greater or lesser harmony with determined persons. As may be deduced from the children's interviews, the mother figure constitutes a strong link of attachment and alliance within the families, given that she represents in some way the pillar of the group, as well as the connection with the new place of residence in the cases in which she was the pioneer emigrant.

From time to time I get along better with my brother when we play. We're not much for talking, we don't tell each other things or stuff like that much, but we do share things about the dancing group we're in, we talk. Sometimes I talk with my mother about Peru, about our family, about how they are there, about my brother. We think about things and do things together, we also help the family there. (Julieta, age 13).

Family migration affects the relations and dynamics of affinity or conflict. It is a situation that can itself alter the previous relational patterns. In some cases it may bring together persons who were previously not as close, but it can also reopen conflicts that date prior to migration (Parella, 2007). Generational relations are not static or permanent over time; they are living links that continually transform and adapt to the diverse contexts of the family group (Pedone, 2007).

In many types of things I get along well with my mother, because she is the one who is mostly at home. But in informatics and all of that my dad is better. Well there we have it, each has their moment. (Marcelo, age 15).

The space of exchange between sisters and brothers constitutes a sphere of generational interaction, given that they are the ones who share the same position *vis-à-vis* the adult collective. But differences and similarities among its members also emerge within this fraternal space (Gaitán, 2006b).

She [the little sister] gets along better with me, because any girl like her wants any little thing she sees, and when I had money I would

give it to her. I think that's why she gets along better with me than with him [the other brother]. As for me and my brother, I try to make sure we get along well, I try, but with my siblings' ages, everyone gets along better with those of their own age. When my two parents traveled we started to spend more time together; we learned to do many things together. If one of us got into trouble, the two of us worked it out. (Adrián, age 17).

In cases where adult migration requires the sisters and brothers to be left in the care of relatives in the place of origin, relational dynamics also impact and transform the fraternal group, bringing siblings closer together and creating a certain complicity among those who are left to support each other in the light of maternal or paternal absence.

Situations of opposition or certain relational difficulties within the fraternal collective may also emerge. These distances between sisters and brothers may occur out of differences of gender, age, or simply different interests. It may be observed that in the period of permanence in Peru, after the mothers and fathers had emigrated, fraternal relations were also different:

I mostly bother my sister, and she bothers me. It's back and forth between the two of us, but we have been together since we were small. Each of us was on our own, each of us lived our life. I think that we have gotten a little closer over the years. For example, two years ago I was more bothered by my sister, but not so much any more. One changes in life, we have all forgotten our siblings. (Marcelo, age 15).

Regarding the distances within Peruvian families, more rifts are observed with adult male figures. Fathers symbolize authority *par excellence*, a situation that converts them into beings removed from the daily lives of the girls and boys, unlike the traditional role of mothers with their closer attachments to the children (Brullet and Torrabadella, 2004; Pedone and Gil Araújo, 2008).

There is more distance with my dad, I don't know if it's because he's a man and older. I'm different too. He's more old-fashioned,

he is educated more in the old-school style. My mother, since she has worked with children from here, has also already learned things from here. One gradually catches on to life here. So my Mom understands me better, but my father not yet. (Julieta, age 13).

The women's labor insertion in local domestic settings can facilitate their understanding of relational dynamics inside the local families. This in a sense transforms the mothers into intermediaries of different childrearing styles, creating a transition between determined childcare models from the homes in which they work and the dynamics of their own families. However, mothers are not the optimum "bearers of social integration." This is a gender stereotype that only overburdens them with tasks and demands (Pedone and Gil Araújo, 2008).

In the cases of family reconstitution, when the mother or father had established a new partner in Barcelona, the children may first meet the new stepmother or stepfather upon the children's arrival in Barcelona. It is therefore a relation just beginning to be built and precisely for that reason still full of rough spots.

I get along better with my mother. It's that my father, that is, he's not my real father. But I have begun to gain trust with him, and that's because I just started to get to know him here, I just started to see how he is, but I do get along well with him. When the three of us are there, sometimes joking or talking about something serious, the three of us get along. (Víctor, age 13).

The "fun" relation appears as a form of intergenerational connection. The children's interviews reveal it as an outlet that serves to relax tensions, address difficult topics, or form part of the family dialogue.

I get along better with my mother; I have more, how do I say it, more trust with her than with him, because I am embarrassed to tell my father something, but not my *mommy*, because we take it more jokingly, like friends, but with respect and all of that. (Juan, age 14).

Topics of intergenerational communication within the Peruvian families vary among those related to daily family activities and school and labor tasks, and the experiences lived during the separation, which have a strong significance during the first months of the reencounter. The group needs to re-gather and re-acquaint with one another, not only due to the physical distance and duration of the separation, but also because the concerns and experiences of the children progressively change in the different scenarios of the migration.

I talk more with my mom, because my dad is around less than she is; sometimes I talk more with her, although they both ask me about anything that comes up. We joke, we see something and we talk. My father used to help me when he could with my homework, but mostly I do it alone. (Juan, age 14).

Mothers and fathers also present differences according to gender. The mother emerges as a confidante: someone upon whom the children can rely and from whom they are sure to receive unconditional support. This vision emerges from the children's interviews and is very coherent with the abnegated devotion to their children expected from mothers (Brullet and Torradadella, 2004; Pedone and Gil Araújo, 2008).

I converse with my father, with my mother, with my sister, about anything. Well, I always go to my mother first, I tell it to her, and then I go to my father. With my mother I talk about everything, about everything with no exception, and with my father not everything. Some things, my mother always covers up some things for me, for that reason sometimes I tell her everything. (Eduardo, age 17).

Relevant issues vary. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that intergenerational dialogues within the family do not necessarily respond to the children's interests, given that these remain somewhat unknown by the adult world (Qvortrup, 1992). In the case of the girls, closeness to the mother may be favored precisely

by the fact that they are women and receive gender socialization, and therefore can share experiences and topics that are difficult to address with the father, such as sexuality for example.

I converse more with my mother, because we talk about women, about us, about the experience she has had, that I should take care of myself, in all types of issues. I mean all of those that are important to me, I mean no. (Julieta, age 13).

Help with school work emerges in the children's interviews as a sphere of generational encounter; mothers and fathers show notable attempts to assist with academic work. Accompanying the children in their school activities may be a means through which to reinforce the ties of those who are still being accepted and finding their positions within the families.

*Spaces of Generational Encounter of Children
in the Peruvian Families*

Spaces of generational exchange appear to be reduced to the household sphere. The long school and work days of immigrant families limit possibilities for generational exchange. The child vision sees mealtimes as representing a daily space of gathering and exchange, while weekends are characterized by visits to relatives, activities with different social networks, or excursions with the whole family or with friends.

On weekends we go to visit our relatives, and sometimes we go out somewhere to eat. Around the table we talk, sometimes about the culture of Peru and the culture here, what we know, we also talk within the family. (Julieta, age 13).

On weekends, the only time the three of us are together is for lunch and dinner. During the week we tend to go out for excursions, we go shopping, sometimes we go out with their friends, we go to the countryside, things like that. (Juan, age 14).

The children feel the effects of the lack of time. The work schedules of many mothers and fathers often prevent them from sharing time and spaces on a daily basis or on the weekends (Labrador, 2001; Pedone, 2003; Brullet and Torrabadella, 2004; Parella, 2007). In this scenario, outings pursued during free time oriented to consumption, such as trips to shopping centers, represent a space of encounter, while at the same time satisfying the needs and expectations of child migration itself. Free time activities within the house on the weekend may also constitute moments of generational exchange, such as watching television or a movie together.

She [the mother] works almost all day. Our hours cross and from Monday to Friday we only see each other at night; that's when we talk a little and that's it. She's very tired. On Saturdays we almost always go out, to stores, to look at clothes and other things, to walk around. On Sundays hardly ever, never on Sundays. (Beatriz, age 15).

The children realize the importance of family and social networks as meeting spaces among the families originating from Peru and friends or relatives. Participation in Peruvian community organizations represents a form of socialization and friendship ties. This participation may occur in a formal manner such as through membership in the Peruvian or Latin American Dance Groups, and informally as a group of friends who get together on the weekends to cook and play games.

Migration toward Barcelona is part of the city's complex economic and labor process, characterized among other things by its tourist attractions. The lack of time and economic limitations prevent reunited families from using the services or visiting the sites offered by the tourism market. The interviews reveal the frustration produced by living in a city that they feel they do not know and are unable to enjoy as a family as they would like.

More than anything else, we sometimes go out on the weekends, or they accompany us to some events we have, if and when my dad

has the day off of work. Because he's working, sometimes he has to work Saturdays, even Sundays. Then we go out to some presentations or to visit someplace, or we go around here somewhere to eat out. (Eduardo, age 17).

Conclusions may be derived from the children's interviews regarding the need for more and better spaces of intergenerational encounter. Insofar as labor, housing (including homes as well as parks, etc.), school, and economic conditions allow, subjects can mutually grow toward relations of generational exchange and cooperation, fostering the decrease of conflicts and distances among the family members themselves. Good family relations, permanent dialogue, and common activities are fundamental to strengthening the filial ties that can be seriously damaged after years of distance (Pedone, 2003; Pedone and Gil Araújo, 2008).

Child Expectations Regarding the Family Migratory Project

Migrant children have already accumulated multiple experiences and opinions in the course of their busy lives (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, 2003; Gaitán, 2008). They were born and raised in Peru and therefore are connected with many cultural elements of that society: they are Peruvian. But they have also lived with the permanent impact of remittances, the values of a receiving society, and the trips of their relatives back and forth from abroad. At the moment of their family's reencounter, they are capable of discerning those aspects that form part of their values and identity, as well as those new references they begin to collect from Barcelona.

The fact of having been socialized in Peru offers the possibility of comparative parameters between experiences lived and those just beginning. This comparison helps them make distinctions regarding the norms and values they want to preserve from their Peruvian education and those they anticipate adopting and adapting from Catalan society. The children's narratives express conflicts and opportunities offered by the fact of having been

socialized in Peru. They may experience some confusion at first in response to their peers who think and act in different and unknown ways, but this nonetheless allows them to evaluate their own ways of living their childhood, to question some values, and to reaffirm their identity. The young people of Peruvian origin tend to pursue university careers, in which the Peruvian women achieve higher levels than their male peers, coincident with the educational level of their mothers and fathers (Aparicio and Tornos, 2006:69 and ss.).

It's another type of education there, and here is different. I think it is better that I had stayed there, like it happened. I'm better this way, this way I'm not like those from here. I feel good having grown up in Peru, according to the education my grandmother gave me and all of that. I think it has been better this way, because if I had been raised here things might have been different. (V́ctor, age 13).

Upon comparing the situations of childhood in Peru and in Spain, the children discover the advantages or disadvantages implied by each context. For example, in the sphere of the education system, some feel that there is better quality and access to new areas of knowledge in the destination city compared to the context in Peru:

I would have liked to have been born here for several reasons. In history, in Peru they teach the history of America when the Spanish went to discover and conquer America. In contrast, here they teach European history and then the history of Spain, the kings, what they conquered, Napoleon and all of that. The good part is that I have already seen these topics and I can keep up while I adapt. Another advantage is the Catalan language, here they speak Catalan and they already understand it. (Marcelo, age 15).

In accordance with the understanding of childhood as a social phenomenon that occurs according to the context (Gaitán, 2006b), it is necessary to review the children's perceptions regarding the different manifestations of childhood in their places of

residence. The appraisals formulated by the children are related to diverse factors, such as the motivation for the trip, the personal and social experience of migration, as well as personal values. The initial difficulties in the local context of Barcelona may cloud the common characteristics of childhood in general, ending up producing a negative evaluation of the local children. The interpretation is that the local children have experienced a loss of traditional values that Peruvian immigrant children feel they preserve:

There the children are in the street all day, you speak to them and they say "hello," you communicate, it's not like here, there it is different. At recess my schoolmates, when I go out, they say "get away fatty," they taunt me, they push me, "stay away." They're not like that in Peru, if they hurt you they apologize, "sorry." (Alejandra, age 7).

Based on these narrations, an image emerges of childhood freedom associated with outdoor play, which is not lived the same way in Barcelona, be it because of the urban conditions or the restrictions of the family itself. Immigration implies this loss of freedom and they resent the loss with nostalgia. In this sense, the circumstances of childhood "there" appear more favorable, given the freedom that does not exist "here."

I have lived almost everything here more than there. But there they let them stay longer outside than me, they leave them more freely outside. In contrast, not me, I think maybe they let some be out longer or they let them go out, some have more freedom than others, they don't have the same problems and the same... (Juan, age 14).

Some children's opinions identify expressions of filial affection as a characteristic trait of Peruvian family relations, in comparison with the local context that does not maintain this type of actions.

We were used to that if we were walking down the street with our father, we would give him a kiss or a hug. People are amazed to see

that here. For a Spanish kid to do that to his father would be unusual, out of the ordinary. In that way it's clear that the people here are very distinct from the people there. (Adrián, age 17).

Other visions emphasize the attitudes of "moral license" they perceive in Spanish adolescents in comparison with the traditional values of Peruvian society. The Peruvian children think that a "sexual liberalism" exists in the receiving society, which they see reflected in the tolerance toward diverse sexual desires or the legislation on homosexual unions.⁷ Nevertheless, these permissions are also positively considered by another girl, who offers a comparative reflection on underage pregnancies in Peru and the ways to avoid them. She concludes that freedom exercised in an autonomous and responsible manner is best:

Yes, because there they give the girls freedom, they let them and the girls do what they want already. For example, they are 14 years old and they already have children; they are 13 and already have children. And I think that is something very heavy at that age, something that shouldn't be. And here, well, they give them freedom, but at the same time the girls know how to take care of themselves, and not all of them, some too. I think that they give them freedom but at the same time they know how to be careful and I think it is good that they know how to take care of themselves on their own. (Julieta, age 13).

Even the most reckless adolescents there are not as liberal as here. You see things here, they screw in the ass and all of that, you see gays who are kissing as normal. They are not as liberal there, or if someone does something it is seen as a scandal, I don't know if it's different for a girl. Here there are a lot of immigrants and there in Peru there are only Peruvians, you hook up only with your own people, here you hook up with any type of person, many cultures cross. (Beatriz, age 15).

⁷The Spanish State approved a Law of Civil Unions for lesbians and homosexuals in July 2005.

The children reveal the range of differences or similarities that exist in the childhoods of two territories: their places of origin and Barcelona. The narratives illustrate the diversity of expressions we can identify within the child collective, in other words, among the persons who share the same generational position and inhabit the same territory, but with very different destinies. Nevertheless, in these expressions, the absence is denoted of the common characteristics that exist among those who share the common position of childhood. Perhaps the permanent anxiety of identity also ends up excluding those who form part of the community itself. This idea is particularly revealed in the constant linguistic play of “there” versus “here.” In general, the Peruvian children identify themselves more with the childhood of “there.”

The migratory project is measured as two opposing images. In many cases, the migration strategy aspires to obtain academic and labor opportunities, which are not always achieved. Child expectations form the basis of the family migratory project (Portes, Fernández-Kelly and Halles, 2006; Aparicio and Tornos, 2006).

The intention is be deduced from the children’s interviews to study a professional degree in Spain and achieve social mobility. Some indicate having the motivation for the possibility of formal study even before their arrival. In general, they link academic achievements with subsequent labor success, suggesting the possibility of more stable residence (Aparicio and Tornos, 2006).

Right now I’m researching, because I would like to be an architect, but I’m still thinking about it. I already knew I was coming to study, but what I wanted to do before was something in graphic design or something like that, because my father also knew something about that and I liked it a lot; I came with that idea. (Eduardo, age 17).

The narratives show that the children have the possibility of exploring and reflecting on different areas of study or specialization, as is necessary before making an academic decision. Some appear sure of their knowledge and skills, or of studying a certain profession and settling permanently in Barcelona. They approach

the issue with a view of broad options. The ideas regarding study, work and residence –childhood expectations in general– are related to the previous economic position of the family in Peru, and the social position held or expected to be obtained in Barcelona:

For now to study the area of dental prosthetics and from there to get into the university to study dentistry and focus myself here, live here, establish my life here, nothing more. (Adrián, age 17).

On the other hand, some of the interviews also illustrate certain vacillations around the final decision regarding their studies, even when the children's future plans consist of studying. The confidence in the idea that formal study will foster the social mobility of the families of immigrant origin is part of the ideas and myths that revolve around the places of migratory tradition (Portes, 1996; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Portes, Fernández-Kelly and Halles, 2006). The Catalan scenario begins to be perceived as having many opportunities for the reunited children, who anticipate these ambitions being fulfilled. Regarding the possibility of definitive future settlement, there are other somewhat more nuanced opinions that warn of the inherent uncertainty of a decision such as this:

I want to study systems engineering, that's what I want to study, because I have liked informatics and the computer and all of those things since I was little. I suppose first I have to study, and then I can look for work. I imagine myself here in Spain until, I don't know, maybe I will see if I can go back or not. (Víctor, age 13).

From the gender perspective, males tend to be drawn to fields that maintain traditional gender identities, with their aspirations revolving around the sphere of technology, mathematics (architecture), and the medical sciences. Girls, on the other hand, present broader vocational callings combined with the search for other options they are able to glimpse in the academic panorama.

Back then I liked children and I would have liked to be a teacher of small children, but now I'm thinking it over better and I've decided no, they are very tiresome [...] Regarding what to do or what job, I like interior design for example. I like it a lot, I don't know, I would like to pursue that, too. But it depends; as you grow you think more about things, some doors are opened to you while others are closed. You think all the time about what you want. (Julieta, age 13).

All told, the interviews reveal the diverse expressions of the girls and boys regarding the opportunities they consider on the educational horizon. These expectations are basically included in the migratory project and family reunification.

Conclusions

The emergence of generational exchange spaces fosters the reconstruction of filial ties. New concepts emerge in the family sphere that transform power relations in dynamics of cooperation, accompaniment, negotiation, opinion, and participation among its members.

Within the family, affinities and distances are produced in relation to the generational pertinence and the gender of the individuals. Sisters and brothers grow closer together or apart according to the experiences undergone in their place of origin and their current interests. The period of physical distance experienced by the family group may affect the filial relation, provoking an emotional distancing that must be reversed during the reunification. The maternal figure is perceived as more kindred and unconditional than the paternal, which is viewed with indifference and as a reflection of authority. This relational dynamic responds to predominant gender stereotypes that determine family roles.

Long school and work days complicate opportunities for generational exchange. Nevertheless, some daily activities such as the evening meal or recreational or leisure activities such as watching a movie are transformed into spaces of encounter. Outings to shopping centers are additional collective activities that rep-

resent an opportunity to verify the degree of mobility the family has acquired through migration. These occasions of generational interaction are the moment to discuss topics of interest of each member, such as issues of concern for the girls and boys. In other words, they may be the moment to identify key issues for the children issues and to support them regarding their concerns. These spaces also assist in the reconstruction of filial ties. With all of these elements, we may conclude that the time limitations and consumption patterns of Peruvian immigrant families seem to be similar to those of local families, perhaps more than might appear. In this sense, public policies oriented towards the harmonization of labor and family life should also take into account those specific family situations among the foreign population, by facilitating this conciliation and offering family and child support.

The reunited children are characterized by having shared their early years of socialization in Peru. However, this experience signifies the learning of the values and norms of that society, which are reviewed and may be modified following the children's arrival to the destination city. The possibility of this flexibility questions the traditional values of Peruvian children, who perceive the differences in the ways of being in each context, but remain doubtful regarding the possibility of gradually assuming and at the same time resisting the childhood models predominant in Barcelona.

The adult expectations regarding their children's futures center on the academic and labor success that would foster the social mobility of their offspring. For their part, children expect to complete their formal education and achieve a university degree, which they assume to be the ultimate objective of family reunification. All this is coherent with the vision anchored in migrant families that the progress of the migratory project is measured through the social mobility of the new generations.

Girls and boys originating from migrant families are the object of a theoretical debate within academia, resulting in determined political strategies for educational and social interventions with this group. The different approaches and conceptual options in response to this phenomenon reveal the diversity of situations and

dimensions that must be considered in any attempt to study the conditions of life of migrant children. The current study has opted for the conceptual approach to childhood as a social phenomenon, which allows us to explore the migratory experience through the generational perspective of the subjects who undergo it.

From the methodological perspective, we conclude that the use of the interview methodology within the child collective allows flexibility and openness; at the moment of information collection we have been able to obtain a vision from the subjects themselves regarding their migratory experience. The methodological option of including participation and revealing the childhood narrative reflects the aim of appreciating it from its generational dimension. The theoretical and methodological approaches reveal this coherence. Although this implies a theoretical and methodological challenge for academic research, it provides a response to the absence of the children's perspective in social studies in general and migratory studies in particular.

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Date of receipt: June 10, 2009.

Date of acceptance: August 19, 2009.