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Immigrants' Access to Public Childcare and Family Benefits in Italy

By

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PRELIMINARY DRAFT

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Abstract

The paper analyses the immigrant parents' (barriers towards) access to the existing child care and family policies (e.g. parental leaves, childcare services, child benefits).

Whilst the political debate on the 'welfare tourism' hypothesis has grown, also in a relatively new immigration country such as Italy, studies on the patterns of immigrants access and use of public supports as child care and family policies are still lacking.

Several indicators, including the over-representation of immigrants in the lower-skilled and lower paid jobs (Reyneri & Fullin, 2011; Istat, 2015), the high unemployment rate of foreign women (OECD, 2016) and the high poverty risk of children born to immigrant families (Saraceno, Sartor & Sciortino, 2013), suggest that the socio-economic disadvantaged position of immigrant families in Italy may hamper their access to work-related benefits (Bonizzoni, 2014). Moreover, further legal and socio-cultural barriers may emerge due to the parents' migration background.

The paper relies on two different research projects. First, by analysing the findings of an EU project (*bEUcitizen – Barriers towards European Citizenship*), an overview of the legal and social barriers towards the immigrants' access to work-family balance and child care policies in several EU countries is offered. The main focus is on the interrelation between migration and caring regimes in Europe (see Van Hooren, 2012; Williams, 2012).

Second, on the basis of an Italian funded project (*Practices and Policies around Parenthood. Work-family balance and childcare in multicultural contexts*), the paper investigates the care arrangements of EU and Third Country national migrants in transition to parenthood as well as the possibilities and impediments that migrant families experience in their access to public childcare family benefits. This part of the paper is based on 44 qualitative semi-structured interviews with 36 fathers and mothers, born in Morocco, Peru and Romania and living in Italy.

The access to social policies and services seems to be particular important in the case of transnational families which can not rely on intergenerational informal child care support. However, unequal outcomes emerge both from the point of view of care recipients (immigrant children) and their families (immigrant parents).

As a matter of the fact, comparatively, the Italian "unsupported familialistic" welfare regime (Saraceno & Keck, 2010) results in a scant offer of care services, especially for children aged under 3, and scant support to working parent. Moreover, access to these measures in many EU countries depends on meeting requirements, which may be related to the applicants' employment position and migration status. Therefore, migrant families in Italy, because they are employed in disadvantaged labour market positions, and because of the absence of public policy for supporting working parents are at greater risk of encountering obstacles in accessing some family benefits if they do not fulfil certain requirements, or do not have enough information to claim for the existing public supports.

KEYWORDS: Childcare Policies, Inequalities, Barriers towards Public Family Benefits, Immigrant Families

1. Introduction

The paper analyses the immigrant parents' (barriers towards) access and use of the existing child care and family policies (e.g. childcare services, cash benefits and parental leaves) in Italy.

Whilst the political debate on the 'welfare tourism' hypothesis has grown in Europe (Eurofound, 2015), and also in a relatively new immigration country such as Italy 'welfare chauvinism' emerged, studies on the patterns of immigrants access and use of public supports as child care and family policies are still lacking (Id.).

Several indicators, including the over-representation of immigrants in the lower-skilled and lower paid jobs (Reyneri & Fullin, 2011; Istat, 2015), the high unemployment rate of foreign women (OECD, 2016¹) and the high poverty risk of children born to immigrant families (Saraceno, Sartor & Sciortino, 2013), suggest that the socio-economic disadvantaged position of immigrant families in Italy may hamper their access to work-related benefits (Bonizzoni, 2014). Moreover, further legal and socio-cultural barriers may emerge due to the parents' migration background (Santero, 2016).

The paper is based on two different research projects. First, by analysing the findings of an EU project (*bEUCitizen – Barriers towards European Citizenship*²), an overview of family policies as well as the legal and social barriers towards the immigrants' access to work-family balance in 6 different countries is provided. The countries included in the comparison with the Italian case are those part of EU project which are considered to be representative of a variety of family and social policy models and of different immigration regimes (Denmark, the Netherlands, Hungary, Croatia and a non-EU country, Israel). The main focus is on the interrelation between migration and caring regimes in Europe (see Van Hooren, 2012; Williams, 2012).

Second, on the basis of an Italian funded project (*Practices and Policies around Parenthood. Work-family balance and childcare in multicultural contexts*), the paper investigates the care arrangements of EU and Third Country national migrants in transition to parenthood as well as the possibilities and impediments that migrant families with children 0-6 experience in their access to public childcare and family benefits. This part of the paper focuses on work-care arrangements of immigrant working parents with children 0-6 born in Morocco, Tunisia, Peru and Romania and living in Piedmont (North Italy). In particular, through an integrative approach which pays attention to both to how structure shapes individual choice and social interaction and how human agency

¹ <https://data.oecd.org/migration/foreign-born-unemployment.htm>.

² The article could not be written without the support provided within bEU citizen project (Grant Agreement N° 320294 SSH.2012.1-1) and the support of partner of WP9, for further details see <http://beucitizen.eu/>

creates, sustains, and modifies current structure (Risman, 2004) the paper investigates migrant's parent practices of work-care arrangements as family strategies. It looks at reconciliation "strategies" as dynamic and provisional means (Hochschild, 1989; Musumeci, Naldini e Santero, 2015) to cope with gaps between (individual and family) ideals and practices. These strategies are shaped by the specific institutional and cultural context, within which parents mediate and frame their discourses to justify the gap between ideals and practice and within which they act.

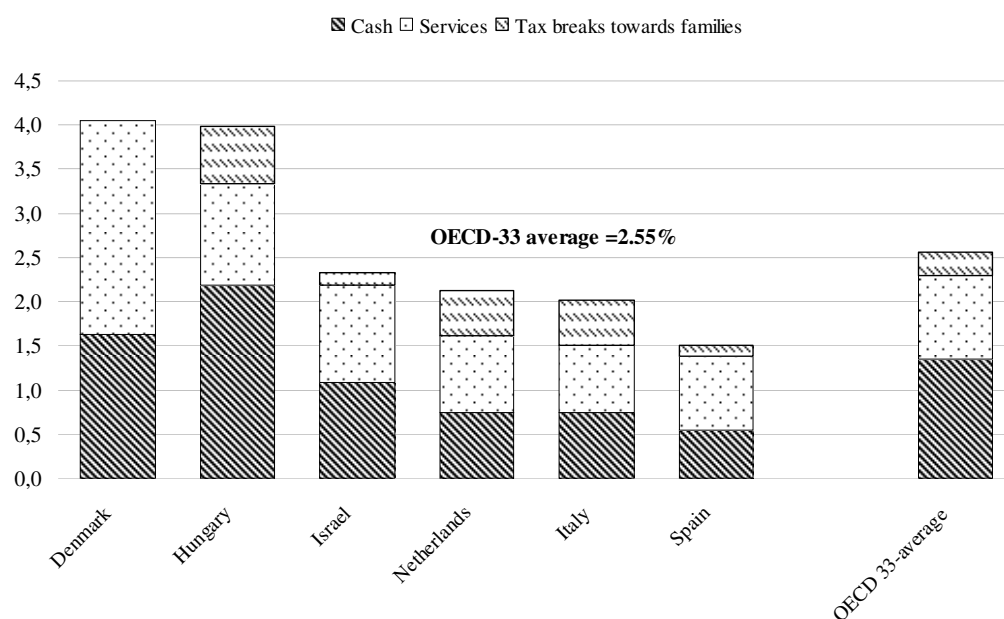
Two main research questions are raised in the paper: 1) How does the legal and institutional context, and in particular work-family reconciliation policies, may shape the resources and constraints for migrant parents with children 0-6? 2) How do EU and Third Country National (TCNs) migrant parents incorporate public family policy in their work-care arrangements?

2. Childcare and Family Policy in Italy: a comparative perspective

In the last two decades most European welfare states have tried to readjust old welfare programs to new social risks. New policy paradigms, "activation policies" and "social investment" (Ferrera, Hemerijck and Rhodes, 2000; Esping-Andersen et al., 2002; Hemerijck, 2015) have further stressed the relevance of individual responsibilities and individual social rights (Daly and Scheiwe, 2010) while at the same time expanding family policy. In this direction, EU level policy has had a central role, emphasizing the need to increase employment for all, but especially parents' employment (i.e., maternal employment) and encourage the enhancement of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) policies (Jenson, 2008; Morgan, 2013, Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser, 2015). In this context, the social investment approach, launched officially by EU in 2013, supports the development of ECEC and the EU has directed the development of childcare by setting criteria for the percentages of childcare provisions for pre-school children (Esping-Andersen et al. 2002; European Commission, 2013).

However, differently from what has occurred in most European countries, and also in several OECD countries, Italy is emerging in the European context for not having adopted a Social Investment approach, nor having recalibrate its welfare state to New Social Risks (Ascoli and Sgritta, 2015; Morel, Palier and Palme, 2012).

Fig. 1 – Public spending on family benefits in cash, services and tax measures, in per cent of GDP, 2011



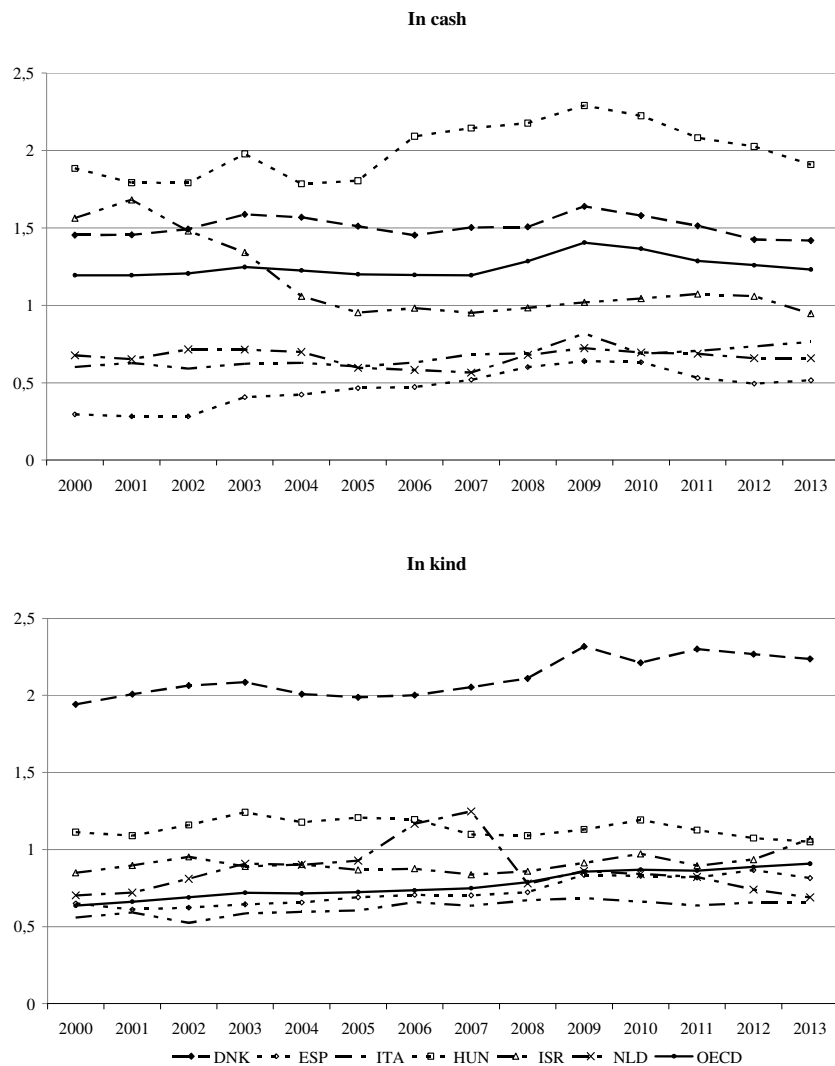
Note:

Public support accounted here only concerns public support that is exclusively for families (e.g. child payments and allowances, parental leave benefits and childcare support). Spending recorded in other social policy areas as health and housing support also assists families, but not exclusively, and is not included here. Coverage of spending on family and community services may be limited in the case of services which are often provided, and/or co-financed, by local governments. Data on Croatia are not available.

Source: OECD Family Dataset <http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm> (Accessed 12.06.2016)

According to the OECD Family Dataset (<https://data.oecd.org/social/exp/family-benefits-public-spending.htm> accessed on 23 March 2017) a trend in the increase public spending for family benefits *in kind* (services) is observable in OECD countries, in the period 2000 to 2015. Nevertheless, important cross-country differences emerged. Whilst Denmark, followed by Hungary and Israel have maintained public spending levels higher than the OECD average, Italy did not follow this path and still keeps comparatively lower in kind family benefits public spending. On the other hand, from 2008 the Netherlands decreased its investments and in 2013 they are slightly below the OECD average, as in the case of Spain (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2 - Family benefits public spending – OECD indicator (% GDP) 2000-2013



Note

Child-related cash transfers (cash benefits) to families with children, including child allowances, with payment levels that in some countries vary with the age of the child, and sometimes are income-tested; public income support payments during periods of parental leave and income support for sole parents families.

Public spending on services for families (benefits in kind) with children, including direct financing and subsidising of providers of childcare and early education facilities, public childcare support through earmarked payments to parents, public spending on assistance for young people and residential facilities, public spending on family services, including centre-based facilities and home help services for families in need.

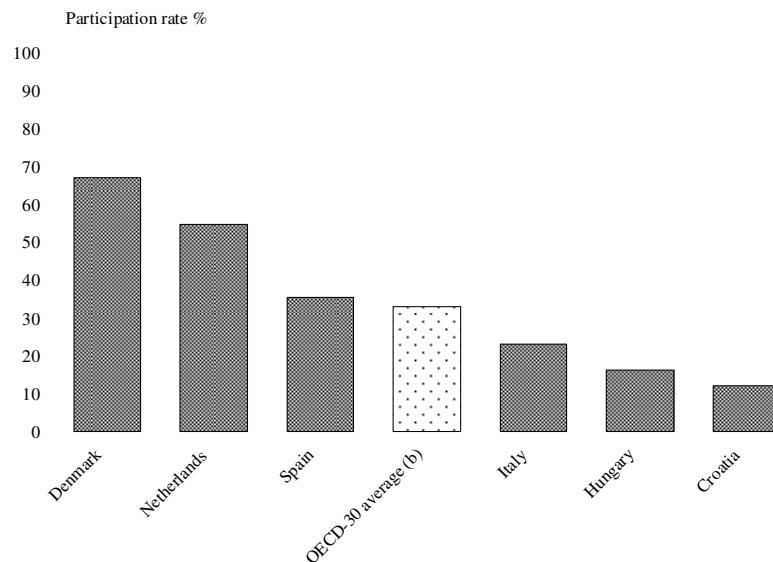
Financial support for families provided through the tax system, including tax exemptions (e.g. income from child benefits that is not included in the tax base); child tax allowances (amounts for children that are deducted from gross income and are not included in taxable income), and child tax credits, amounts that are deducted from the tax liability. This indicator is broken down by cash benefits and benefits in kind and is measured in percentage of GDP.

Source: OECD (2017), Family benefits public spending (indicator). doi: 10.1787/8e8b3273-en (Accessed 27.02.2017)

Moreover, the different degree of increase in enrolment rates of small children in day care services across Europe (Fig. 3) partly contradicts the thesis that supporting work-family balance is crucial in all European welfare state agenda (about the Netherlands and Italy see for example Knijn and Saraceno, 2010). Slowdowns in Spain and inertia in Italy emerged (Naldini and Jurado, 2013), also influenced by austerity policies (León and Pavolini, 2014). In other words, during the

economic downturn the fiscal space available to re-calibration is further tightened especially in those countries which were already behind in terms of public support to families and in terms of work-family reconciliation policies.

Fig. 3 – Participation rates for 0-2 years olds in formal childcare and pre-school services^a, 2013



Note:

- a) Data generally include children in centre-based services, organized day care and pre-school (both public and private) and those who are cared for by a professional childminder, and exclude informal services provided by relatives, friends or neighbors. Exact definitions may however differ slightly across countries.
- b) Unweighted average for the 30 OECD countries with data available.
- c) Data on Israel not available.

Source: OECD Family Dataset <http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm> (Accessed 12.06.2016).

Also countries variations in legislation on parental leave and paternity leave in term of entitlement, length, flexibility, and compensation rate are all evidences that harmonization in UE legislation is not near³ and the cross-country variation is high (see Tab. 1).

³ For a review of the variability in parental, maternity and paternity leaves across EU countries see Koslowski, Blum and Moss (2016).

Tab. 1 – *Total paid maternity, parental and home care leave available to mothers in weeks, 2015^a.*

	Length, in weeks	Average payment rate ^b (%)	Full-rate equivalent, in weeks
Denmark	50	54,1	27
Hungary	160	44,5	71,1
Israel	14	100	14
Italy	47,7	52,7	25,2
Netherlands	16	100	16
Spain	16	100	16
Croatia	56	69,4	38,9
OECD average	54,1	-	-

Note

a) The table refers to paid leave entitlements in place as of April 2015.

b) The "average payment rate" refers the proportion of previous earnings replaced by the benefit over the length of the paid leave entitlement for a person earning 100% of average national (2014) earnings. If this covers more than one period of leave at two different payment rates then a weighted average is calculated based on the length of each period. In most countries benefits are calculated on the basis of gross earnings, with the "payment rates" shown reflecting the proportion of gross earnings replaced by the benefit. Additionally, in some countries maternity and parental benefits may be subject to taxation and may count towards the income base for social security contributions. As a result, the amounts actual amounts received by the individual on leave may differ from those shown in the table

Source: OECD Family Dataset <http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm> (Accessed 12.06.2016)

Moreover, OECD Family Dataset shows nationally-based differences in fathers' entitlements for parental leaves and allowances, shaping both the fathers concrete "capabilities" (Hobson and Fahlén, 2009) and resources around conciliation between paid work and care responsibilities, and the "fatherhood regimes" which include norms, rights, duties and expectations defined by laws, policies, labour market and family (Gregory and Milner, 2005). In Italy only recently the fathers' responsibilities and involvement as caregiver have been recognized and supported by public policies, and implementation remains scant (Murgia and Poggio, 2013; Musumeci, Naldini and Santero, 2015).

The lack of recalibration of Italian Welfare State and in particular the lack of adaptation to family and labour market changes, so as a institutional resistance to encourage father's sharing responsibilities for childcare make it difficult for working parents (mothers) to combine work and family (ISTAT 2011a; 2011b; 2014a). Particularly difficult is to combine family and work for those women and those families who have fewer economic resources, fewer social network resources, and this is exactly the case in point of immigrant family living in Italy.

3. Institutional Barriers: Immigrants Access to Public Childcare and Family Benefits

Barriers to immigrants' access to family policies in Italy emerged from the intersection of the Welfare, Migration and Employment Regimes (cfr. Van Hooren, 2012; Williams, 2012). In principle, in Italy access to most of the public support for parents, i.e. public childcare and family benefits, is equal for all workers, regardless of whether they are nationals, EU-citizens or TCNs. Similarly to what is occurring in other European countries, for example the Netherlands (Halevly, Lepianka and Santero, 2016), the disadvantaged position of migrant workers when compared to Italian workers is thus not related to their (employment) status per se and/or the absence of rights but to whether or not they have a chance to become eligible for the provisions considering: a) the (often) temporary nature of their employment and b) the legal status and the length of stay in the country. These two aspects are interconnected, since different types of residence permit are work-related. On the other hand, due to decentralization organization and provision of benefits in kind and in cash, the concrete access to non-insurance based provisions (such as social assistance) varies according to policies implemented by the regional and local administrations. As a matter of the fact, the length of registered residence (in a given region or local area) has become one of the central criteria (Biondi Dal Monte, 2013, Gargiulo, XX). Moreover, further restrictions related to the type of residence permit may be implemented for specific policies.

In Italy, the entitlement to “*bonus bebè*”, which is a **child benefit** means-tested (although the majority of middle class Italian families are entitled to it), is foreseen for TCN's only if holding a long-term/permanent residence permit. A further condition is that the child must cohabit with the parent in the receiving country. Thus “left behind children”, the so called “children of global migration” (Parreñas, 2005) are excluded. Italy and Israel are similar in this respect, whilst in other countries for example in the Netherlands the benefit can be paid to parents even if their child resides in a different country.

Pregnancy, Maternity and/or Parental Leave in Italy in general is (mainly) a contribution based benefit, i.e. paid to working mothers/ parents (salaried or self employed) to compensate them for pregnancy and maternity time. In Italy, TCN regular workers are entitled for maternity leave. However, limitations are articulated in various ways in different countries. In Italy there is a variety of types of work contracts which dictate the conditions and level of maternity and parental leave. The employment of TCNs and immigrants with non-permanent permits is often characterized by the lack of work-related entitlement to maternity and parental leave (Bonizzoni, 2014). For instance, self employed mothers and mothers registered with the separate contribution system (*Gestione Separata Inps*) may take only three months of leave in the first year after the child's birth at 30

percent of a daily salary, while according to different work contracts the total period can go up to six months.

As for *Childcare allowances and the education system*, it is important to remember that typically in OECD countries, all children regardless of their legal residence status are entitled to compulsory education. No equal treatment between citizens and non-citizens are found in other aspects, such as the concentration of ethnic groups in specific areas and therefore schools, as well as in ethnic inequalities in school performance. Variations in entitlement are more apparent in the young ages (babies and toddlers). In the case of care for babies and toddlers (in Italy between the ages of 6 months and 36 months), there are formal and informal mechanisms that differentiate between citizens and non-citizens. In several Italian municipalities after 2010, there were some legal barriers, beyond the practical ones. Moreover, long waiting list may discourage couples who are unemployed (or irregular workers) to apply (Santero, 2016), since, in several municipalities having a (or two) regular job contract(s), together with other criteria, are considered a preferential criteria for have access to childcare. Whilst working migrant parents are more likely than their Italian counterparts to use the public crèches (Solera and Bergamanti, *forthcoming*), the pre-school services opening hours are shorter than a normal working day, which make it necessary to complement them with other informal or paid care arrangements.

To sum up, the comparatively weak public support for parents in the Italian context make it particularly thorny to combine family and work to those families: 1) who lack informal (family) social support; 2) whose members have no-standard work contracts; 3) whose members work in sectors which have atypical and often “asocial” working time; 4) whose members lower negotiation power with their employers. Everywhere migrant families with small children are more likely to experience the 4 above-mentioned constraints. But more than in other EU countries migrant families managing work and childcare in Italy do not benefit of public resources targeted to supporting working parents. In the following paragraph thus we investigate how migrant parents combine work-care arrangement in this institutional and legal context.

4. Work-care arrangements of Migrant Parents with children 0-6

4.1 The qualitative study

This part of the paper draws on a qualitative study on the parenthood and reconciliation strategies of families living in the city of Turin and its surrounding area.⁴ It involved both mothers and fathers, either employed or looking for paid work. This empirical material makes it possible to

⁴ Interviews conducted within the Research Project *Practices and Policies around Parenthood. Work-family balance and childcare in multicultural contexts*, P.I. Manuela Naldini, based on the comparative Transparent Project.

analyze how public supports for parents are (not) contributing to define the wider migrant parents' conciliation opportunities.

The qualitative study was based on 44 qualitative semi-structured interviews with 36 fathers and mothers, born in Morocco, Peru and Romania and living in Italy. We analyzed in particular: 26 longitudinal interviews with 9 couples interviewed separately before, and in the case of 4 couples also after, the birth of their first child in Italy, and 18 interviews with parents with at least one child under six years of age, of which three single mothers. Couple interviews took place at least 4 months before, and around one year and half after (4 couples), the first child's birth. The partners were interviewed separately.

The interviewees were reached through associations, NGOs, cultural mediators, and random sampling in places such as markets and underground stations.

All interviews were conducted between February 2012 and July 2015.⁵ Even if the majority of the interviewees have higher qualification, in our sample as in the migrant population living in Italy, most of the fathers were manual workers in the construction or manufacture sectors, whilst most of the mothers worked as care or domestic workers for Italian families.

4.2 Migrants' work/care arrangements between breadwinning and mothering

The work/family strategies of migrant parents with young children (0-6) varies greatly according to occupational status, the working conditions of the parents, the age and the number of children, the availability of informal resources, and finally the accessibility to formal childcare services.

When the child is very young (0-3) it is quite difficult for migrant families to maintain the *dual participation model* (both working full time). Being a dual-earner couple is more difficult for migrant families than for Italian families.

Firstly, this is because they are very often not entitled to maternity and parental leaves, and have quite limited network resources. Secondly it is because of the very unfriendly nature of their jobs. As we saw in the previous section, care-work – the main sector of employment for the mothers – has demanding working hours. Blue-collar work with 'long' and 'asocial' hours was the main occupation of the fathers in our sample. These types of jobs are not easily balanced with intensive baby care-needs and with the cost of formal childcare services.

A *work-centred reconciliation strategy* is the most widespread way to deal with work/family balance issues for migrant families when the baby is over 2 years old. However, even when the interviewees' ideal mother's role was the maternal intensive care model during the baby first 2

⁵ The first wave of the couple interviews took place between February 2012 and October 2013; the second wave between January and May 2015; and the individual interviews between February 2014 and July 2015

years, a work-centred reconciliation strategy was frequent. This situation is exemplified by Adela, who had migrated from Romania for work reasons in 2008. She was married and the mother of a 3-year-old child. She had two part-time jobs as a domestic worker and carer. Adela and her husband were a dual-earner family which reconciled work and childcare by using public crèches and through the support of their cohabiting paternal grandmother. Adela had a very pragmatic and gender flexible approach to the childcare arrangement :

if I'm working, it's my husband who picks the kid up from the crèche, and if he's working, it's me who goes to pick her up (Adela, Romanian).

This gender flexible work-care arrangement was in tension with Adela's ideals. She would have liked to stay longer at home caring for the child. As she declared: "If I were in Romania, I would have the option of staying at home for two years".

For many migrant couples, the transition to parenthood means the transition from a dual-earner couple to a male breadwinner, especially during the first years of the new baby's life.

Male breadwinner families after the arrival of the baby, whether they were the result of a 'choice' or of a 'lack of alternatives', cross-cut all ethnicities. They were based on a child-care strategy that was very much *mother-centered*, the mother being the main provider of care together with the sporadic help of the social network and of the father when not at work. Those families in which the women migrate for family reunification purposes, even when marked by high expectations of an extra-domestic life, are more likely to have mother-centred reconciliation strategies. In these cases – especially frequent among Moroccan mothers – isolation tended to be one of main difficulties, with the consequent requests to have places to socialize with other parents.

Because the transition to parenthood is a crucial phase in the biographies of individuals and of families, it more clearly highlights potential and actual gender gaps between values and behaviours, and between plan of care-work arrangement and care-work practices.

Mr and Mrs Burat were a mixed couple. She was a Romanian child-minder and domestic worker. Mr Burat was a labourer. This was a couple less gender asymmetrical than other Moroccan couples. Moreover, before childbirth Mrs Burat had been for some time in a stronger economic position than that of her husband (like Mrs Aloui), and she did not plan to stay at home after the baby's arrival.

After the child's birth, they had become a (almost) male breadwinner couple. She felt that she had to give up any job because she had to provide alone for the baby. Both felt it was necessary for her to return to work because of economic needs and she wanted to find a job:

also to have a bit of time off, since I'm there all day, in the morning and in the evening, all day always the same... routine (Mrs Burat, Morocco, II wave)

However, even soon after the baby's arrival, there were mothers who decided to keep their jobs because they had no other 'perceived' options – as in the story below of Clarissa.

As a matter of the fact, *breadwinner mothers and Involved fathers* due to nuclearized family was the third type of arrangement identified. It occurred when fathers were involved in care because of their employment fragility and the 'lack of grandmothers'. These factors, given the context which does not support fathers' work/family balance, 'push' also the natives towards involvement (Musumeci Naldini & Santero 2015). Our study showed that for TCNs these practices are more common when the migrant mother had arrived in the destination country before her partner, or autonomously from him, when she had a proper residence permit, work-related and independent from the husband. As in the case of Clarissa.

Clarissa had emigrated alone from Peru in 1999, because her family needed her remittances. She had a baby of 4 months. She worked part-time in the morning, although she would like to work full time as a domestic worker. Her partner was Brazilian and had arrived in Italy in 2006. Unfortunately, he was unemployed, and in the effort to increase his professional skills he was attending a training course. After the baby's arrival, since Clarissa was the main breadwinner, she and her partner had decided she returned soon at work. She worked in the morning from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., and before going work she left the baby with a friend who looked after him for free. In the words of Clarissa, this was the "only solution" that they had.

As shown by several studies (Attias-Donfus et al. 2005; Blome et al. 2009; Naldini, Wall and Bihan, 2013), the extended family network, particularly grandparents, is a crucial resource for combining childcare and work (especially in the case of very young children) in Italy.

The availability of informal resources for migrant families, as the case of Clarissa shows, makes a huge difference in the ability to manage care and work. In particular, informal resources make the difference in supporting the mother's employment, and especially in the case of single mothers. Together with the availability of social networks, however, it is important to see the reasons and the ability of individuals and families to activate them.

Transnational resources – in particular, commuting grandmothers – provide crucial emotional and practical support to mothers after childbirth and without local support. When the social network is available, its activation varies in relation to the couple's reason for migration, and to the mother's and parents' work trajectories.

As shown for Italian parents (Bertolini et al. 2014; Musumeci, Naldini, Santero, 2015), unemployment fathers might constitute an opportunity towards a more shared balance of the baby care within the couples. Indeed, the father's unemployment and the need for the mother's

employment push families towards *multiple child-care arrangement strategies* which include not only the father's care but also a higher care mix and extensive care delegation.

The use of formal childcare services is quite intensive for those mothers who want remain in the paid labour market. But combining work and care quite often requires a mix of formal and informal resources. Informal resources may be internal and stem from household strategies of living together with relatives, or they may be based more on the friendship community: this was particularly evident in our sample of Peruvian parents. Overall, what distinguishes informal resources is their gender nature. Social support and social network mobilize for managing care and work is women-centered. In the case of social support provided by relatives, these latter are primarily mothers and mothers in-law, sisters, or sisters in-law often living in the extended household. In the case of social support provided by neighbours and the community, the help is given mainly by female friends of the mother or female neighbours.

Conclusion

The access to social policies and services seems to be particular important in the case of transnational/immigrant families which can not rely on intergenerational informal child care support. However, unequal use and outcomes emerge both from the point of view of care recipients (immigrant children) and their families (immigrant parents).

As a matter of the fact, from a comparative perspective, the Italian “unsupported familialistic” welfare regime (Saraceno & Keck, 2010) results in a scant offer of childcare services (for under 3s) and scant support for working parents. As we have shown, access to these measures in many EU countries depends on meeting requirements, which may be related to the applicants’ employment position and migration status. Therefore, migrant families in Italy, because they are employed in disadvantaged labour market positions, and because of the scant institutional opportunities offered to working parents are at greater risk of encountering obstacles in accessing some family benefits if they do not fulfil certain requirements, or do not have enough information to claim for the existing public supports.

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