

Dual Burden and Fertility Intentions in Italy: a Mixed Methods Analysis

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Extended Abstract

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Introduction

Italian women still do much more childcare and housework compared to women in other European countries (Bittman and Wajcman 2004; de Laat and Sevilla-Sanz 2003). Even when both domestic and non domestic (paid) work are considered, Italian women work an extra 24 hours per month compared to men (Rizzi et al. 2008), and this, again, is a larger gap than that found in most OECD countries (Bianchi et al. 2006; Bittman and Wajcman 2004). Thus, if women are bearing a "dual burden", as family providers and family carers, Italian women seem to be even more penalized than most of their peers. In this paper we combine statistical analysis of a recent national sample in Italy (FSS, 2003) with analysis of our own large primary data set examined through text-based qualitative methods. Our objective in this mixed methods analysis is to better understand the spectrum of role-set distributions in Italy and its implications for contemporary gender relationships and family building patterns.

Several previous studies have considered the relation between the dual burden and fertility (Mills et al. 2008; Rizzi et al. 2008; Mencarini and Tanturri 2004; Cooke 2003; Olah 2003), typically finding a negative effect of the unequal role-set on fertility, or on fertility intentions. These results are partially confirmed by Torr and Short (2004) who find a U shape effect in which both the more traditional and the more modern families are more likely to have a second child. One problem these studies confront is the means to operationalize dual burden and gender gap. Should we consider only domestic time or non-domestic time as well? Which indicator better captures the gender gap? Moreover, the same indicator can be a continuous measure with different cutoffs for categorization of the role-set. Some interpretative difficulties can be overcome if a substantial description of role-set is given. However, most work is limited to a traditional versus modern role-set dichotomy; intermediate role-sets have been rarely explored. We conducted a previous quantitative study on hours spent working both inside and outside home (Rizzi et al. 2008). In order to standardize for the amount of total hours and to make comparison possible, we calculated a *partners' work gap* indicator. We drew on each partner's reported data on hours worked (H), reflecting the total effort (household plus external work) contributed by the woman (f) and the man (m). The index in any given household i is defined as:

$$WG_i = \frac{H_{i,f} - H_{i,m}}{H_{i,f} + H_{i,m}}, \text{ for } H_{i,f} \text{ and } H_{i,m} \text{ the woman and man's work time (household plus external}$$

work). The index varies between -1 and 1, and assumes positive values when the woman's total hours exceed the man's total hours. In order to identify the different role-set typologies, we calculated two Partner's Work Gap Indicators: one for domestic work (Domestic Work Gap) and one for paid labor (Labor Work Gap). We then combined results from the two indexes in order to obtain the specific couple's role set with regard to paid and unpaid labor. We determined the following role-sets typologies:

Couple's role set according to partners' gap in domestic and paid labor

Gap in Domestic Work Hours	Gap in Paid labor Hours	The couple's role set	%
F > M	M > F	Traditional role set	64
F > M	=	Woman extra hours in domestic work (Super-woman)	21
F > M	F > M	Woman extra hours in paid labor and domestic work (Ultra-woman)	3.4
=	=	Egalitarian role set	2.1

=	M > F	Man extra hours in paid labor (Super-man)	1.5
M > F	M > F	Man extra hours in paid labor and domestic work (Ultra-man)	1.3
M > F	=	Man extra hours in domestic work (Post-modern super-man)	1.0
M > F	F > M	"Reversed" traditional role-set	0.5
=	F > M	Woman extra hours in paid labor (Post-modern super-woman)	0.5

Source: Rizzi et al. 2008

Family organization ranges from the traditional role-set, which sees the specialization of activities by gender, to the egalitarian role-set, where there is no specialization by gender. In contrast with previous research, the egalitarian role-set definition is not confined to the domestic sphere, but rather takes into account the entire burden, domestic and non-domestic. Between the traditional and egalitarian role-sets, intermediate situations present extra work of one of the partners inside and outside home (ultra-woman, ultra-man), or extra work in just one domain (super-woman, super-dad, post-modern super-woman, post-modern super-man). Situations which see a specialization of activities by gender, but which reverse the traditional role-set, were also recorded ('the reversed traditional role-set' - in the table). The traditional role-set is the arrangement most prevalent in Italy, accounting for 64% of couples. Also common is the super-woman role-set (21%), where a woman works the same number of hours as her partner outside home, but more inside home.

We found an association of couples' role-set with their fertility intentions through use of a multivariate analysis. The egalitarian role-set and the ultra-dad role-set show a positive relationship with fertility intentions, compared to the traditional role-set.

However, some issues remain unresolved. How does partners' interaction determine their role-set? What impact does culture have (super-woman myth, familistic and gender attitudes)? How does a role-set shape fertility intentions and vice versa? Do these aspects vary across regions and generations? In order to gain insight into these questions, we analyze data from more than three hundred in-depth interviews.

Data & methods

For our quantitative analysis we employed data from the 2003 national survey: *Famiglia, soggetti sociali e condizioni dell'infanzia* (Family, social subjects, and childhood conditions - Istat). We use a sub-sample of 4,825 Italian couples, who are either married or cohabiting, in which the woman is less than 45 years of age.

The qualitative analysis is based on 362 in-depth interviews with women aged 20-45 collected between 2005 and 2006 in four Italian cities. In one fourth of the cases we have also interviewed the woman's current partner, if she was cohabiting, and the woman's mother. All interviews include a detailed reconstruction of the respondents' life course development from adolescence to adulthood, information concerning the respondents' family of origin and peer group, the major events and transitions related to employment, partnerships, unions, and family formation. Particular attention was given to employment and the household division of tasks between partners, as well as reciprocal influence with childbearing. In addition, we asked all respondents to report on their parents' division of tasks when they were in their teens. Women were selected through personal contacts gained by a complex indirect snowballing procedure with multiple entries (independently selected initial contacts) in order to avoid a clustered

sample. Interviewers were trained anthropologists with whom the authors regularly interacted before and during the fieldwork over a two-year period. The sample includes substantial variation in respondents' ages, social background characteristics, education, employment, couple and parity statuses, as well as the kinds of living arrangements.

The quantitative and qualitative data collection efforts were originally undertaken for separate purposes. However the qualitative analysis can fruitfully be nested within the quantitative, especially with regard to its ability to examine aspects that cannot be quantified (Creswell 2003), and, more generally, to help in elaboration and interpretation (Rossman and Wilson 1985). Our methodological approach thus consist of applying a multivariate statistical analysis to our 2003 FSS data, and augmenting this quantitative approach with analysis – employing text-analysis software -- of the in-depth narratives.

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