

Are cohabiting couples better parents than the married ones? Evidence from the Italian Time Use Survey

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DRAFT PAPER (15.11.2013)

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ABSTRACT

The process of union formation and, consequently, the context of childrearing has deeply changed in Italy in the last decades. The increase in non-marital cohabitation has been accompanied by an impressive spread of out-of wedlock births. The possible consequences of these changes on gender roles set within couples are quite unknown in this country. Moreover, there is no clear evidence whether (and how) Italian married and unmarried parents differ in childrearing practices. In this paper, we aim to verify whether a more egalitarian gender roles set is found among childless cohabiting couples in Italy and if this is true also for those having a pre-school child. The use of the most recent data, of the Italian time Use Survey (2008-09) allows to obtain an up-date picture of the Italian context. Our analysis shows that cohabiting women reduce the time devoted to housework compared to the married ones, while for men no significant differences are observed, net to the other characteristics (such as education, employment status, area of residence, economic situation). Unexpectedly, both cohabiting men and women seem to dedicate more time to childcare, than the married parents, *ceteris paribus*.

Key words: cohabitation, time use, gender roles, unpaid work, child-care, Italy

Gender roles and parenting practices among married and cohabiting couples: evidence from the Italian Time Use Survey

1. Introduction

The process of union formation and, consequently, the context of childrearing have deeply changed in Italy in the last decades. Although with a delay compared to other European countries (Kiernan, 2002), recently, cohabitations start their diffusion also in this country (Di Giulio & Rosina, 2007; Salvini & De Rose, 2011): the prevalence of non-marital couples raised from 1.6% in 1993-1994 to 5.9% in 2009 (Istat, 2006, 2011). The increase in non-marital cohabitation has been accompanied by an impressive spread of out-of-wedlock births: their proportion almost triplicates in the last decade from 8.9% in 1997 to 25% in 2010 (data from Istat, Italian Statistical Yearbook 2001, 2011).

The possible consequences of these changes on gender role-set within couples are quite unknown in this country. In particular, there is no clear evidence whether (and how) Italian married and unmarried parents differ in childrearing practices. Previous literature has shown that cohabiting couples are more egalitarian in gender roles with reference to household labor than married ones (Shelton & John, 1993; Baxter, 2005; Davis et al., 2007). The evidence, however, has frequently been limited to domestic work or unpaid work, without distinguishing childcare specifically (see the discussion in González et al., 2010), even though recent studies have shown that the determinants of participation in childcare and domestic activities are quite different (Deding and Lausten, 2004). Only few studies considered differences in parenting between married and unmarried parents (Hofferth and Anderson, 2003; Kalenkoski et al., 2005, 2007), and there are not studies referred to Italy.

In this paper, we aim to verify whether women and men in cohabiting couples dedicate less time to domestic production than the married ones also in Italy and if the same can be said once the couples have pre-school children. It is evident that individuals with children and those without are at different stages of their life course and that the presence of children usually requires a larger amount of domestic work to the parents on the whole (Tanturri 2012, Anxo et al. 2011). It is not clear however whether the reduced investment of cohabiting men and women on household production translates also to a scarcer investment on childcare. The focus on this aspect is worthwhile since most literature on the differences between *de facto* and *de iure* couples

considers unpaid work in general without distinguishing child-care and domestic work, for those having children.

Since patterns of contribution in childcare and in unpaid work in general may be different, we aim to assess if cohabiters adopt both different parenting practices compared to the married peers, and different allocation of unpaid work. It is well known, indeed, in previous studies that transition into parenthood implies a crystallization or even a deterioration of gender role-set (Anxo et al. 2011), but this result has never assessed specifically for cohabiting couples in Italy. This is particularly important for the implication on children well-being and outcomes, and for the intergenerational transmission of gender roles.

In order to explore individuals' time in unpaid work and parental time investment in children, we consider the daily time (in hours and minutes) spent by individuals in domestic tasks and by parents in child care, using a sample from the most recent 2008/09 Time Use Survey, just made available. The focus on childcare is particularly worthwhile since the time that parents devote to care their children is an important investment for children's safety, health, and development (Crockenberg and Leerkes, 2000; Hofferth, 2006; and the discussion in Hofferth and Anderson, 2003) and not only mothers, but also fathers are important figures in their children's life (Marsiglio et al., 2000; Aldous and Mulligan, 2002).

The focus on Italy is motivated by two main reasons. First, Italy represents a context where gender roles - both in household labor and in childcare allocation - are still shaped in a quite traditional fashion. Second in Italy the diffusion of cohabitations is rather recent, and therefore there are no previous studies concerning this specific topic.

In Italy gender roles are still shaped in a quite traditional way, characterized by the importance of the male-breadwinner family model and by an unbalanced gender system in the family especially for dual earner couples (Del Boca et al. 2004; De Rose et al., 2008). This may be seen in the asymmetric gender division of household tasks in Italy in comparison with other countries: Italian men are the least collaborative in household labor among Europeans, whereas Italian working women have the highest workday hours considering both paid and unpaid work (Eurostat, 2004; Anxo et al., 2010). Another distinctive feature of the Italian gender system is the low level of fathers' involvement in child care (Smith Koslowski, 2008; Tanturri 2012, Mencarini and Tanturri 2010), with mothers carrying the main responsibility in child care activities. The quite conservative gender context in this country might lead to hypothesize that cohabitation may be a particularly egalitarian union (Domínguez-Folgueras, 2012).

The second motivation for a focus on Italy regards the only recent diffusion of non-marital cohabitation in this country. Last decades have seen, indeed, an increase in the phenomenon of non-marital unions in many European countries (Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Smock & Manning, 2004), but the situation was heterogeneous across countries (Kiernan, 2002). In particular, only recently, cohabitations start their diffusion also in Italy (Di Giulio & Rosina, 2007; Salvini & De Rose, 2011). Thus, as highlighted in a recent comparative study (Domínguez-Folgueras, 2012), Italian context is peculiar: according to the classification by Heuveline and Timberlake (2004), cohabitation in this country could be defined as *marginal* and, thus, it is highly selective of individuals who choose to deviate from the traditional family formation process.

The reminder of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 presents the background and hypotheses on the allocation of unpaid work and childcare across different couples. Section 3 describes the data and research method used, presenting also some descriptive evidence. Results are presented in Section 4, and Section 5 offers a final discussion.

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses

Several theoretical approaches have been offered to explain the higher household labor contributions of women in comparison with men (Bianchi et al., 2000). Two main groups of theories can be identified: those focused on relative resources, and those on socialization processes.

According to the *relative resources perspective*, household labor allocation within a couple is defined through negotiation: in general, individuals who can negotiate a more favourable allocation of household labor for themselves are those with more resources in comparison with their partner (Mannino & Deutsch, 2007; Knudsen & Wærness, 2008). If women's negotiation power is higher than men's, specialization models which are alternative than those based on women's specialization in household tasks could emerge. In fact, though some empirical evidence supported the importance of women's resources for the domestic division of household labor, some studies debated this perspective (for a review, see Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010). A related theory, the *time-availability* perspective, suggests that family members allocate household tasks according to the time they have available after paid work time is subtracted (Arrighi & Maume, 2000): thus, in general, since men spend more time at work, they have less time to spend on household labor (Artis & Pavalko, 2003). In fact, empirical evidence showed that, even when

women spent as many time as their male partners in paid work, they assume the larger proportion of household tasks (Bartley et al., 2005; Pailhé and Solaz 2008).

According to *socialization processes*, women's higher participation in unpaid work is due to their own gender equity. Women, as well as men, spend different amounts of time in household labor depending on what they believe appropriate for men and women (Arrighi & Maume, 2000). Empirical evidence of this theory showed that couples with more egalitarian gender values share household labor more equally than couples with traditional gender ideology (Bianchi et al., 2000), though some authors found mixed results (Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010).

With the diffusion of new family forms, literature has paid attention also to the allocation of unpaid work across different couples, and a more egalitarian division of household labor has found among cohabiters than among married individuals (Shelton & John, 1993; Baxter, 2005; Davis et al., 2007). Several economic and sociological theories have been offered to explain this pattern (Kalenkoski et al., 2007). Most of them are based on socio-demographic characteristics and values selecting cohabiters as less prone to specialization. For instance, since cohabiting women participate more in the labour market than married ones (Shelton & John, 1993), they may report a lower involvement in domestic tasks according to the relative resources and time availability hypotheses. In addition, cohabiters are more likely to refuse traditional values (Baxter, 2001) and, as a consequence, they will not adopt traditional gender allocation of household labour according to the gender theory. Also some characteristics of the relationship in itself may imply a lower specialization of partners and thus a more equal arrangements among cohabiting than among married individuals; for example, the duration of cohabitation, which is usually shorter than that of marriage, may reduce women's interest in specializing in domestic work (Clarkberg, 1999).

This means that differences in the allocation of household labor between cohabiting and married individuals should decrease or completely disappear after controlling for potential selection due to these pre-existing characteristics. In fact, most recent literature has shown that differences in the domestic division of labor persist even after controlling for potential confounders (Baxter, 2005; Davis et al., 2007).

These results supported the hypothesis of cohabitation as a more egalitarian union in itself. This may be due to the fact that cohabiters assign more value to individualism and personal autonomy (Lesthaeghe and Surkyn, 1988; Brines and Joyner, 1999) and by the *incomplete institutionalization* (Cherlin, 1978) of cohabitation (Baxter, 2005; Kuperberg, 2012). If marriage has clear institutional norms and legal status, the same is not true, indeed, for cohabitation. In

particular, cohabitation is not subject to all traditional norms of marriage regarding the gendered division of household labor in terms of appropriate behaviours for husbands and wives and, thus, cohabiters may be free to negotiate new rules and meanings for more egalitarian division of labor than in the case of marriage (Cherlin, 2004; Baxter, 2005).

In fact, previous remarks depend also on the role of cohabitations and on the meanings that individuals attribute to them in their partnership biographies: in context where cohabitation is indistinguishable from marriage, no effect of cohabitation on the allocation of unpaid work is found; instead, cohabitation is a more egalitarian couple than marriage in those countries where it is not common and it is highly selective of individuals choosing to depart from traditional processes of family formation (Domínguez-Folgueras, 2012). As mentioned above, and as found in some studies (Domínguez-Folgueras, 2012), this is the case of Italy.

All these remarks suggest the following hypothesis:

HP 1: Childless cohabiting individuals present a more equal allocation of unpaid work than their married counterpart, also net of socio-demographic characteristics of individuals and of couple. This implies that cohabiting women are expected to spend less time in household labor than married ones; and, at the opposite, cohabiting men should contribute to unpaid work with more time than married ones.

Most of previous empirical studies on the household labour division among cohabiting and married individuals have considered mainly unpaid work as a whole without distinguishing between childcare and mere domestic work. Some other studies have even not considered childcare at all, with justifications based on the fact that individuals valued differently childcare and domestic work, the former having an emotional component, the latter being performed only for necessity (Domínguez-Folgueras, 2012) - in fact, it is clear that also childcare includes some routine tasks, not necessarily seen closer to leisure, whereas domestic work may include pleasant occasional tasks (e.g. gardening). Studies focusing on child care allocation usually considered only marriages, and when they included both married and cohabiting couples they made no distinction between the two (see, for example, Hallberg and Klevmarken, 2003).

Although studies specifically focused on this topic are not common, some hypotheses may be made. According to the theory of more individualism of cohabiters in comparison with married individuals and of the “incomplete institutionalization” of cohabitation, a more egalitarian division of childcare is expected among cohabitations than among marriages, also net of socio-demographic characteristics. Married individuals are, indeed, expected to have more conventional

views and should have established more specialized roles that designate a greater proportion of the involvement with children to mothers. In fact, empirical evidence is mixed: some authors found that married and cohabiting parents allocate their time similarly (Kalenkoski et al., 2005). In the same line, other studies found no significant difference between child care time allocation of married and cohabiting parents after controlling for differences in personal and household characteristics (Kalenkoski et al., 2005, 2007). Whereas, Hohmann-Marriot (2011), focusing only on men, found that unmarried fathers are more involved in their child's life than married ones, also net of other characteristics. Lastly, Hofferth (2006) presented some descriptive evidence showing that both married mothers and fathers spend more time with their children than their cohabiting counterparts, even if this does not imply a more or less egalitarian pattern among marriages or cohabitations.

In fact, opposite results should be observed according to family sociological perspectives, which claim that the legal tie and the public commitment of marriage (the so called "enforceable trust" by Cherlin, 2004) should circumscribe the roles of parents, and particularly of fathers, to invest in children (Townsend, 2002). In the same perspective, a lack of institutionalization within cohabitations (Nock, 1995; Kuperberg, 2012) may lead to some parental role ambiguity, particularly for fathers. Empirical evidence is mixed (Landale and Oropesa, 2001; Hofferth and Anderson, 2003; Gibson-Davis, 2008).

As said above, Italy is just in an initial phase of diffusion of cohabitations, and thus cohabiters are highly selected; this is particularly true for parents living in non-marital unions. Thus their incomplete institutionalization may suggest the following hypotheses:

HP 2a: A more egalitarian gender pattern in child care allocation should be found among cohabiters than among married parents. In particular, cohabiting mothers are expected to spend less time in childcare than married ones, and cohabiting fathers are expected to invest more time in childcare than their married counterpart.

HP 2b: The same pattern of HP 2a should be observed considering unpaid work (excluding childcare), with cohabiting spending less time in domestic work than married ones, and cohabiting fathers doing more domestic labour than their married counterpart.

3. Data and research methods

Data come from the most recent Italian Time Use Survey conducted in 2008-09 by the Italian National Institute of Statistics on a sample of 44,606 respondents (belonging to 18,250

households), 40.944 of them filled in the daily diary. Time-use surveys represent a unique source of information on daily activities. Individuals report their time use during a period of 24 hours in one day providing extremely detailed information on the activities performed during that day, based on a grid of 10-minute time intervals. Besides these data provided in a diary of activities, rich sets of information on the background and socioeconomic situation of individuals and households are provided.

One of the major strength of Time Use data is that both men's and women's fill in the booklet. This is particularly important for couples with children, since fathers' reports have often been unavailable in parenting research and many studies of father involvement rely on the mothers' report. In this paper, parenting practices consist directly of mothers' and fathers' reports.

The focus of the present paper is on men and women between 18 and 50 living in heterosexual marital or non-marital union without children or with at least one child under 6 (in one family household, but without isolated members¹).

In fact, different samples are referred to according to the hypotheses to be verified. In order to verify HP 1 on whether cohabiting men spent more time in unpaid work than their married counterpart and whether the opposite happen for women, the sample consists of childless individuals. They are 3,296 individuals (1,453 men and 1,843 women): among them only 11.8% (388 individuals) are in non-marital unions. The key variable is the daily time (in hours and minutes) dedicated to unpaid work (+ transport related to the family) without childcare.

For the analyses aiming to study HP 2 on whether cohabiting parents have different allocation of childcare and domestic labor than married parents, individuals with at least one child under age 6 are considered, given the importance of very young children in determining child care time. This second sample consists on 3,150 individuals (1,569 men and 1,581 women): cohabiting

¹ Among individuals living in one family household, 215 childless individuals living with a partner with isolated members, and 114 individuals living in couple with at least one child under 6 and other isolated members are excluded. The presence of isolated members can be indicator of additional household labour or, on the opposite, of help, but due to their relatively small sample size, their role cannot be considered in detail. In addition, we exclude from our analyses individuals with severe limitations in activities of daily life: 157 individuals in couples without children and 49 individuals in couples with at least one child in pre-school age. Clearly, they are less likely to do unpaid work and childcare, independently of the type of couple: again, their relatively small sample size does not allow to consider them in the analyses due to the difficulties associated with achieving statistically significant and meaningful results from analyses on such small groups.

fathers and mothers only represent 9.6% of all parents with at least one child in pre-school, while the other 90.4% are in marital unions. In this case, time spent in childcare (+ transport related to children) is distinguished from that dedicated to mere domestic tasks.

In both samples, the number of hours and minutes spent in the different activities (by men and women, separately) are considered in the analyses instead of the percentage contribution of each partner of a couple. The former measure takes into account the amount of time devoted to the different activities, and thus, women's and men's investments in each activity. In the case of childcare, this may be particularly important for the implication on children well-being and outcomes.

In order to verify differences across couples, the other key information is the type of couple: cohabitations vs. marriages. It is clear that simple descriptive analyses showing differences between cohabiters and married individuals in time spent in each activity is a good starting point, but it may be confounding since the extent to which differences are attributable to the type of couple or to personal or couple characteristics cannot be disentangled in descriptive analyses. Multivariate regression techniques should be used, instead. One main problem when analyzing time use data in regression analyses is that some individuals may not spend any time in some activities. If this is true, the dependent variable defined by the time spent in a certain activity is not normally distributed (for observations with value equal to zero), and simple linear regression analysis may be problematic. A common solution used in some previous studies is the choice of a Tobit regression. In fact, its advantages in comparison with ordinary least squares (OLS) are also in discussion (Domínguez-Folgueras, 2012).

4. Descriptive findings

4.1 Childless individuals

Table 1 report the participation in unpaid work by childless men and women according to the type of union. Women in both marriage and cohabitation participate and spend more time on unpaid work than men, but, as expected, those in cohabitation devoted less time to this activity than their married counterpart. On the contrary, not only men in cohabitation participate in lower proportion than their married counterpart in unpaid work, but, when they participate, they also spend less time in this activity.

Table 1. *Unpaid work for childless men and women in the different types of couple.*

	Men		Women	
	Married	Cohabitors	Married	Cohabitors
% participating in unpaid work (doers)	74.8	56.0	98.3	98.7
Daily average hours and min. in unpaid work (for doers)	2.41	2.07	5.23	4.00
Daily average hours and minutes in unpaid work (for all)	2.00	1.11	5.17	3.57
N	1,262	191	1,646	197

Clearly, there may be many composition effects producing these results. For example, Table 2 shows that employed women are in higher proportions among cohabiters (80.2%) than among married women (38.8%), and women's labour force participation may influence both women's and men's levels of participation in unpaid work. Thus, as said above, the extent to which differences in the amount of time individuals spend on unpaid work and on child care are attributable to personal or couple characteristics or to the type of couple should be analyzed through multivariate analyses. In particular, besides variables reported in Table 2, other variables controlled for in multivariate analyses are housing tenancy (as an additional measure of economic condition) and the day of the week (since time use is likely to differ considerably between weekdays and weekend days).

Table 2. *Descriptive statistics of the sample of childless individuals.*

	Men		Women	
	Married	Cohabitors	Married	Cohabitors
Age (mean)	37.80	35.52	37.98	37.82
% employed	94.1	100.0	69.2	88.7
% with an employed partner	69.8	87.4	91.4	97.5
Education				
High	14.3	15.2	20.2	22.7
Medium	43.9	34.5	42.9	42.1
Low	41.8	50.3	36.9	35.2
Partner's education				
High	23.1	23.8	12.8	15.1
Medium	45.3	41.1	42.0	34.6
Low	31.6	35.1	45.2	50.3
% with economic resources perceived as scarce	33.3	37.0	33.4	37.7
Area of residence				
North	50.0	72.8	49.3	72.9
Centre	14.9	17.9	14.6	17.0
South	35.1	9.3	36.1	10.1
Type of municipality				
Metropolitan area and suburbs	22.0	21.9	21.7	21.4
Medium town	40.0	41.7	40.0	44.6
Small town (less than 10,000 inhabitants)	38.0	36.4	38.3	34.0
N	490	151	548	159

4.2 Individuals with at least a child under 6

Table 3 report the participation in childcare by gender and type of union for individuals with at least one child under 6. Even if women in both marriage and cohabitation participate and spend more time on childcare than men, fathers in cohabitation (even if with slightly lower percentages of participation) spend more time in unpaid work and in childcare than married fathers. Mothers show, instead, lower time in unpaid work in cohabitations than in marriages, in the direction of a more egalitarian gender role-set among cohabitations, but, at the same time, they present higher childcare (as fathers).

Table 3. *Unpaid work and childcare for men and women in the different types of couple. Individuals with at least one child under 6.*

	Men		Women	
	Married	Cohabitors	Married	Cohabitors
% participating in unpaid work (childcare excepted) (doers)	68.3	60.3	98.6	97.0
Daily average hours and minutes in unpaid work (childcare excepted) (for doers)	1.42	2.09	4.52	4.03
Daily average hours and minutes in unpaid work (childcare excepted) (for all)	1.10	1.18	4.48	3.56
% participating in childcare (doers)	72.5	69.9	95.2	94.6
Daily average hours and minutes in childcare (for doers)	1.38	1.55	3.04	3.48
Daily average hours and minutes in childcare (for all)	1.11	1.20	2.55	3.36
N	1,418	151	1,430	151

As observed above with childless individuals, these figures may be due to different characteristics of fathers and mothers in cohabitations and in marriages. Table 4 shows the percentages distribution of some variables in men and women according to their type of couples. As observed among childless women, also among those with at least one child in pre-school age, percentages of employed women are in higher proportions among cohabiters (61.6%) than among married women (55.1%). Thus, as said above, multivariate analyses should be used to control for the potential influence of these and other individual and couple characteristics.

Table 4. *Descriptive statistics of the sample of individuals with at least one child under 6.*

	Men		Women	
	Married	Cohabitors	Married	Cohabitors
Age (mean)	37.98	37.82	35.09	34.24
% employed	96.5	97.3	55.1	61.6

% with an employed partner	55.1	60.5	96.0	96.0
Education				
High	14.3	10.2	19.8	15.9
Medium	37.2	33.3	41.1	36.4
Low	48.5	56.5	39.1	47.7
Partner's education				
High	19.8	13.6	14.3	11.3
Medium	41.0	36.7	37.4	33.1
Low	39.2	49.7	48.3	55.6
Number of children				
One child	39.4	59.9	39.7	60.9
Two or more children	60.6	40.1	60.3	39.1
% with insufficient household economic situation	38.1	44.9	38.3	43.7
Area of residence				
North	43.6	66.0	44.2	66.2
Centre	15.8	18.4	15.5	19.2
South	40.6	15.6	40.3	14.6
Type of municipality				
Metropolitan area and suburbs	19.6	19.1	19.1	19.2
Medium town	43.2	42.8	43.6	44.4
Small town (less than 10,000 inhabitants)	37.2	38.1	37.3	36.4
N	1,379	147	1,429	151

5. Results

Results of OLS separate analyses for men and women, and for the hours and fraction of hours spent in unpaid work and childcare are reported in the following Tables. Analyses are divided into two steps. First, we estimate an initial model containing only the key independent variable on the type of couple; in the second step, we add all other controls.

5.1 Time spent in unpaid work by childless men and women

Results referred to unpaid work for childless men and women are reported in Table 5.

Cohabitations appear to be more egalitarian in the division of unpaid work than marriages, net of other control factors, but this is due only to a lower participation of cohabiting women to unpaid work; whereas cohabiting men do not show significant differences with respect to married ones.

Table 5. OLS estimates in models describing time (in hours or fraction of hours) in unpaid work for childless men and women.

	Men		Women	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept (reference married)	1.897***	0.022	4.468***	2,343***
Type of couple (reference: marriage without children)				

Cohabitation without children	-0.098	-0.207	-	-0,442*
Marriage with one child	0.765***	0.841***	0.925***	2.213***
Cohabitation with one child	1.159***	1.098***	2.351***	2.222***
Marriage with more than one child	0.939***	1.130***	2.380***	2.963***
Cohabitation with more than one child	1.179***	1.227***	3.483***	2.733***
Age		0.007		0.028**
Employment status (reference: full-time employed)				
Part-time employment		--		0.366**
Unemployed		1.359***		2.112***
Partner's employment status (reference: unemployed)				
Employed		0.405***		0.417
Education (reference: Low)				
High		0.214		0.298
Medium		0.317***		0.144
Partner's education (reference: Low)				
High		0.194		-0.605***
Medium		0.105		-0.192
Household economic situation (reference: Sufficient)				
Fine		0.208		-0.505
Scarce		0.308***		0.359***
Area of residence (reference: North)				
Centre		-0.104		0.256**
South		-0.627***		0.263**
Type of municipality (reference: ??)				
Metropolitan area		0.199		0.045
Small city		-0.046		0.094
Home ownership (reference: no)				
Yes		0.365***		0.214
Day of the week (reference: week day)				
Saturday		1.674***		0.257*
Sunday		0.897***		-1.206***

Significance levels: *** = 0.01; ** = 0.05; * = 0.1

5.2 Unpaid work and childcare by individuals with at least a child under 6

Among individuals with at least a pre-school child, results confirm descriptive findings of a higher time in childcare both for cohabiting men and women with respect to married ones, and a lower time in unpaid work for cohabiting mothers than for married ones, other things being equal.

Future research should examine if this means a more egalitarian gender roles set among cohabitations than among marriages; what can be seen here is, however, an unexpected greater time spent in childcare among cohabiting both fathers and mothers than among married parents.

Table 6. OLS estimates in models describing time (in hours of fraction of hours) in unpaid work (except childcare) for men and women with at least one child under 6.

	Men		Women	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept (reference married)	1.420***	-0.341	4.755***	3.007***
Type of couple (reference: marriage)				
Cohabitation	0.093	-0.017	-0.787***	-0.549***
Age		0.017*		0.029**
Employment status (reference: full-time employed)				
Part-time employment		--		0.174
Unemployed		0.957***		1.473***
Partner's employment status (reference: unemployed)				
Employed		0.259**		-0.261
Education (reference: Low)				
High		0.089		-0.204
Medium		0.159		-0.208
Partner's education (reference: Low)				
High		-0.017		-0.561***
Medium		0.004		-0.222*
Number of children (reference: Only one child)				
Two or more children		0.089		0.432***
Household economic situation (reference: Sufficient)				
Fine		0.423		-0.169
Scarce		0.318***		0.214*
Area of residence (reference: North)				
Centre		-0.037		0.101
South		-0.388***		0.339***
Type of municipality (reference: ??)				
Metropolitan area		0.082		-0.066
Small city		0.093		0.085
Home ownership (reference: no)				
Yes		0.305***		0.203
Day of the week (reference: week day)				
Saturday		1.282***		0.541***
Sunday		0.523***		-0.841***

Significance levels: *** = 0.01; ** = 0.05; * = 0.1

Table 7. OLS estimates in models describing time (in hours of fraction of hours) in childcare for men and women with at least one child under 6.

	Men		Women	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept (reference married)	1.319***	1.449***	2.725***	3.309***
Type of couple (reference: marriage)				
Cohabitation	0.206	0.208*	0.347**	0.472***
Age		-0.019**		-0.043***
Employment status (reference: full-time employed)				
Part-time employment		---		0.019
Unemployed		0.698***		0.742***
Partner's employment status (reference: no)				

unemployed)			
Employed		0.166**	0.395
Education (reference: Low)			
High		0.158	0.765***
Medium		0.220**	0.473***
Partner's education (reference: Low)			
High		0.233*	0.326*
Medium		0.188**	0.099
Number of children (reference: Only one child)			
Two or more children		0.229***	0.428***
Household economic situation (reference: Sufficient)			
Fine		-0.093	-0.396
Scarce		-0.008	0.017
Area of residence (reference: North)			
Centre		-0.137	-0.216
South		-0.373***	-0.263**
Type of municipality (reference: ??)			
Metropolitan area		-0.049	0.067
Small city		-0.191**	0.009
Home ownership (reference: no)			
Yes		0.153*	0.094
Day of the week (reference: week day)			
Saturday		0.376***	-0.506***
Sunday		0.524***	-0.798***

Significance levels: *** = 0.01; ** = 0.05; * = 0.1

6. Discussion and Future Research

This paper has considered the differences in gendered allocation of unpaid work and childcare between cohabiting and married individuals in Italy, with data from the most recent 2008/09 Time Use Survey, just made available.

Results referred to childless individuals have shown that cohabitations appear to be more egalitarian in the division of unpaid work than marriages, net of other control factors, due to a lower participation of cohabiting women to unpaid work; cohabiting men do not show, instead, significant differences with respect to married ones. Thus HP 1 is confirmed, even if only partially.

Among individuals with at least a pre-school child, from one hand a lower time in unpaid work for cohabiting mothers than for married ones has been observed, in the direction of HP 2b of a more egalitarian allocation among cohabitations than among marriages. From the other hand, other things being equal, an unexpected higher time in childcare has been found both for cohabiting men and women with respect to married ones: future research should examine if this means a more egalitarian gender roles set among cohabitations than among marriages.

Some limitations of this study must be acknowledged.

One is related to the type of data. Information given by time-diary data does not allow us to explore the family dynamics: thus, we can only compare individuals who cohabit and those who

are married at the time of the interview. We cannot, for example, distinguish married couples who cohabited before the marriage. However, besides this limitation, many strengths of these data should be addressed. First, the data could allow us to examine differences in the child care across union type in detail: time diaries are especially important for measuring child care activities (see the discussion in Kalenkoski et al., 2007) and this is the only recent national data set to contain this information. In future work we intend to distinguish the types of activities mothers and fathers perform with children. In addition, it should be highlighted that this is the first study using so recent data: also the most recent paper with this type of data refers to previous available survey conducted in 2002-2003 (Domínguez-Folgueras, 2012). Particularly in Italy, where cohabitations start their diffusion only recently, it is important referring to very recent data.

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