



Published in final edited form as:

Parent Sci Pract. 2011 July 1; 11(2-3): 129–141. doi:10.1080/15295192.2011.585557.

Attributions and Attitudes of Mothers and Fathers in Italy

Anna Silvia Bombi,

Interuniversity Center for the Study of Development of Prosocial and Antisocial Behaviors,
Sapienza University of Rome, Via dei Marsi 78, 00185 Rome, Italy

Concetta Pastorelli,

Sapienza University of Rome

Dario Bacchini,

Second University of Naples

Laura Di Giunta,

Sapienza University of Rome

Maria C. Miranda, and

Second University of Naples

Arnaldo Zelli

University of Rome “Foro Italico.”

Anna Silvia Bombi: annasilvia.bombi@uniroma1.it

SYNOPSIS

Objective—The present study examined mean level similarities and differences as well as correlations between mothers’ and fathers’ attributions regarding successes and failures in caregiving situations and progressive versus authoritarian attitudes.

Design—Interviews were conducted with both mothers and fathers in 177 Italian families from Rome and Naples.

Results—Fathers’ attributions reflected higher perceived control over failure than did mothers’ attributions, whereas mothers reported attitudes that were more progressive than did fathers. Only the difference in progressive attitudes remained significant after controlling for parents’ age, education, and possible social desirability bias. Site differences emerged for four of the seven attributions and attitudes examined; three remained significant after controlling for parents’ age, education, and possible social desirability bias. Medium effect sizes were found for concordance between parents in the same family for authoritarian attitudes and modernity of attitudes after controlling for parents’ age, education, and possible social desirability bias.

Conclusions—This work elucidates ways that parent gender and cultural context relate to attributions regarding parents’ success and failure in caregiving situations and to progressive versus authoritarian parenting attitudes.

INTRODUCTION

Italian Culture

With a rich history, beautiful landscapes, and unique artistic endowment, Italy is nevertheless a country with contrasting features. It is a capitalistic country, ranking among the eight wealthiest Western societies in the world. Its precise ranking, however, varies widely depending on the economic criteria that are considered. Italy stands as the seventh wealthiest country in terms of gross domestic product, but is 21st in terms of gross national income, with a per capita income of nearly USD\$39,000. Despite this high average income, Italy is one of the European countries with wide economic inequalities (ISTAT, 2008).

Over the decades following the Second World War, state policies concerning public health and welfare have contributed to raising the quality of Italian citizens' living conditions. By law, all citizens can receive health assistance by a state health system. Mortality rates are lower than 4% within the first 5 years of life; life expectancy is 76.9 years for men and 82.9 years for women, among the highest worldwide (Ministero della Salute, 2008). Nearly all Italian citizens (99%) possess basic literacy skills, even though the level of education in the population does not compare well with other Western societies. For instance, only about 50% of the population in the 25–64 age range has earned a high school diploma, and only 10% of the population has earned a university degree (ISTAT, 2008), placing Italy last among European countries.

The popular portrait of Italy as a country in which “family matters,” and the insistence of personalities with high public visibility on the importance of family integrity, are not matched by concrete public state investments in support of families. Despite some recent signs of positive changes in this regard, Italy is one of the European countries with the lowest birth rates (1.3 per woman), and it is also the country where the number of children per family has remained below 1.4 for nearly 20 years (Sabbadini, 2005). In addition to economic factors, as evidenced by the higher incidence of denatality in Italian regions with lower income, studies promoted by the Italian government have reached the conclusion that there is an unfavorable climate for motherhood and fatherhood. In particular, mothers and working women experience considerable burden in coping with the many demands of family responsibilities, also as a result of imbalance in family responsibilities between mothers and fathers. Employment is inversely correlated to the number of children in the family (ISTAT, 2008), and childcare services for infants are still insufficient and expensive, even though children in day care increased from 9.6% in 1998 to 15.4% in 2003. Additionally, only one-third of men and women can benefit from work flexibility, a system of conditions allowing workers to enter the workforce or temporarily interrupt employment (as in the case of mothers and fathers who benefit from an extended period of leave) without losing the job. Furthermore, part-time work is not easy for men, and even less so for women, with the lowest rate in Europe. Finally, state financial resources for social services are below the European average, and resources for families and children are, together with Spain, the lowest of all European countries (ISTAT, 2008; Scott, 2006). In Italy, the informal social network is essential for working women, as is the family of origin, just as it has always been in the past.

Regional Differences

Italy was only unified as a nation in 1861 and became a modern republic after the Second World War. The relative recency of these political changes informs about differences in economic and cultural status still existing across the 20 regions of the country. It is important to point out that, historically, Italians' identity has been regional rather than

national. For instance, clearly distinct regional dialects still exist and characterize the linguistic identity of many communities across the country.

Since the 19th century, several historical and economic factors have contributed to sharp differences between the northern and southern regions of the country, with the North experiencing greater economic and societal growth than the South (Felici, 2007; Lynn, 2009; Tabellini, 2010). Central regions are in many instances more similar to the northern than to the southern regions. Thus, for instance, most of the Italian large-firm industrial economy resides in the northern and central regions, whereas the southern regions are still predominantly characterized by family-based agriculture and economic activities. As a result, the south is poorer than the center and the north. In the southern regions the net family income is lower than the national average, and nearly 40% of the southern families are in the poorest fifth of the population. The northern and central regions experience better economic conditions, as evidenced by relatively smaller percentages in the poorest level of the population (12.4% and 10.5% in the central and the northern regions, respectively). Furthermore, in northern and central Italy, the magnitude of social inequality is similar to that of France and Germany, whereas in the southern regions, the Gini index (the ratio between high and low income) is much higher (ISTAT, 2008). It is not surprising that a greater sense of citizenship and of community-based values has been found in the northern Italian regions, as compared to stronger family-based values and commitment in southern Italian regions (Putnam, 1993).

The Italian population has been very homogeneous in ethnicity (Caucasian) until recently. Immigration prior to the 1970s was negligible, but the presence of immigrants of different ethnicities has become relevant in the last 20 years, and currently 7% of Italian residents are foreigners. The highest percentages of non-Italians (9–10%) are found in the Northern and Central regions where there are more work opportunities, whereas the South experiences a much lower percentage of non-Italians (3%) (ISTAT, 2010).

Family Culture and Parenting in Italy

The concept of a “family culture,” as opposed to the integration in a larger and more impersonal system of values and obligations, was introduced about fifty years ago by Banfield (1958). Based on a study of a small community in the South of Italy, Banfield created the term “amoral familism,” meaning a behavior highly concerned with family needs, and a much lesser concern for larger social and political dimensions. Familism was afterwards studied not only by Italian social scientists but also by scholars from other countries (for a recent international contribution see Tabuchi, 2008).

Within the context of economic, cultural, and societal differences across northern and southern regions of Italy, it is plausible to hypothesize that there would exist regional differences in the ways families function and in the values and practices parents adopt in rearing and educating their children. For instance, the greater economic and modern growth of the central-northern regions has clearly contributed to dramatic changes in parents' working conditions, leading both mothers and fathers to have independent work experiences, contribute to family income, and promote social mobility. These relevant social changes plausibly affect family functioning and increase the differences between central-northern and southern families. Moreover, more disadvantageous economic and life conditions in the southern regions may influence family processes in which mothers still represent children's key parental figure and are the primary source for their education, growth, and social development (Ministero degli Interni, 2007; Sabbadini, 2007).

Existing parenting literature has addressed similar lines of inquiry and focused on broad themes such as, for instance, the meaning Italian parents assign to parenting and to child

growth and the importance of socialization, social maturity, and shared family practices (e.g., co-sleeping or living with extended family members), which may differentiate Italian parents from parents of other cultures or countries (Edwards & Gandini, 1989; Gandini & Edwards, 2000; New, 1989; Wolf, Lozoff, Latz, & Paludetto, 1996). Likewise, Italian mothers believe the key task for a parent is to take care of children and to rear them in a safe and protective family environment (Carugati, Emiliani, & Molinari, 1990; Edwards, Gandini, & Giovannini, 1993), and Italian mothers and fathers assign particular importance to children's emerging social skills and to dyadic affect-laden exchanges in which parents and their children can experience warmth and security (Senese, Poderico, & Venuti, 2003). A study by Bornstein and colleagues (2008), in which mothers from Italy, the United States, and Argentina were compared in their mother-child interactions, showed that the Italian mothers were more responsive and involved with their children than mothers from the United States and Argentina. This study does not have data about Italian fathers; however, it is possible to speculate that the high involvement of Italian mothers corresponds to their prevalent responsibility with children, as compared to their husbands.

Albeit scarce, there also exists parenting literature addressing differences across cultural/regional groups in Italy. Bornstein and colleagues (Bornstein, 1989; Bornstein, Cote, & Venuti, 2001), for instance, have examined differences in mothers' beliefs and practices across northern and southern regions of the country. In particular, this line of work focused on the general hypothesis that mother-child dyadic exchanges may reflect beliefs and practices through which parents of disadvantageous backgrounds (i.e., rural, poor, or less educated backgrounds) conform to the values of their families' local culture or, similarly, resist the temptations of modern life demands or models. Bornstein (1989) further argued that this adherence to local cultures may also emerge through mothers' favoring social parenting (i.e., mothers' engaging infants physically and verbally in dyadic interpersonal exchanges) as compared to a didactic parenting style (i.e., mothers' stimulating infants' attention to environmental objects, properties, or events outside of the dyad), through which mothers may display the endorsement of more modern values. These studies have only in part supported the guiding hypotheses and shown, for instance, that mothers from northern regions (i.e., presumably more educated and open to modern values) were those who displayed more communicative and social styles in their mother-child interactions, as compared to their southern counterparts. Other studies also have provided indirect support to these findings. For instance, one study showed that mothers from northern regions tend to be more verbally and physically responsive to their children and less controlling than are mothers from southern regions (Genta, Brighi, Costabile, & Wijnroks, 1995).

The Present Study

The present study stems from a general interest in gathering further data on Italian parents' beliefs and attitudes about parenting, as they find expression in their relationships and exchanges with their children, and in continuing the inquiry of possible differences in parenting across different regions of the country. Within this general framework, the review of the existing literature presented earlier has shown that some issues have not been fully investigated. Studies, for instance, have primarily involved Italian mothers. With the exception of a few Italian studies, which examined children's perception of parental authority and roles of mothers and fathers (Bombi, Bruni, & Saraceni, 1996; Bombi & Cannoni, 2001; Confalonieri et al., 2010; Lis & Zennaro, 1994), no study has simultaneously compared mothers and fathers within the same family unit. The present study directly addresses this issue and examines differences in mothers' and fathers' attributions regarding successes and failures in caregiving situations and progressive versus authoritarian attitudes as well as the degree of concordance in parenting beliefs and attitudes between the two parents. The present study also examines these issues in families living in

two important Italian cities, Rome and Naples. Rome is an urban context experiencing rapid economic and social growth that is reducing its unique character and making it more similar to northern cities, at least in socioeconomic terms. Naples is the largest urban context in one of the most representative regions of the south, namely, Campania. Thus, the data comparison between Rome and Naples in terms of mothers' and fathers' parenting attributions and attitudes may allow an examination of the possible relations linking regional and cultural differences to parenting and whether these relations vary across parents.

METHOD

Context

Participants were recruited in two sites: Rome and Naples. Rome is the capital of Italy and the country's largest and most populated municipality, with over 2.7 million residents (Oasi Association, 2008). Rome is located in the central-western portion of the Italian Peninsula. The city has often been nicknamed *Caput Mundi* because it was the capital of the Roman Empire and it is the home of the Roman Catholic Church and of Vatican City, an independent city-state run by the Catholic Church. Rome is a cosmopolitan metropolis, and it is Italy's capital of politics, economy, and media. Nearly 93% of its population is composed of Italy-born citizens. The largest ethnic minority groups come from other European countries (mostly from Romania and Poland; 3.14%), East Asia (mostly from the Philippines; 1.28%), and South America (mostly from Argentina; 1.09%). With a 2005 GDP of 94.4 billion (USD\$121.5 billion) (UNICEF, 2007), the city produces 6.7% of the national GDP, more than any other city in Italy. The economy of Rome is characterized by the absence of heavy industry, and it is largely dominated by services, high-technology companies (IT, aerospace, defense, telecommunications), research, construction and commercial activities (especially banking), and the touristic services that are extremely important for Rome's economy.

Naples is the most important city in the south of Italy with a population of over 1 million inhabitants in the city center and about 3 million in the suburbs. Although it is the third largest city in Italy in terms of population (after Rome and Milan) and occupies a central role within the south of Italy, Naples has sharp contrasts and serious social problems. The positive and stereotyped traits used to describe the city include the vitality and warmth of its inhabitants, the mild climate, and its splendid musical traditions. Nevertheless, Naples has the highest homicide rate and highest unemployment rate in Italy, and many children do not attend school after the age of 14. Organized crime is deeply rooted and is referred to in the press and media as the "camorra." This criminal organization not only controls drug-dealing and protection rackets targeted at shopkeepers but also invests its profits in legal activities and controls state tenders, thus either directly or indirectly influencing political life. The widespread presence of organized crime at all levels of society makes it a veritable illegal subculture that receives considerable popular recognition and approval and also acts as a normative reference point in terms of values and culture, especially for young people.

Participants

After obtaining university IRB approval and approval from the appropriate elementary school authorities (research review board and school principals), recruitment letters describing the study and asking parents to return a completed form with their contact information were sent home with students at two public elementary schools in Rome and three public elementary schools in Naples. To ensure a coverage of different social classes, in Rome flyers were also posted in a parish and in two public and one privately funded recreational centers in different metropolitan areas.

In response to our contact letters and posted flyers, a total of 385 families across the two sites responded to the request to participate in the research. Of these families, 203 families completed the study, including 103 families from Rome (103 mothers, 90 fathers) and 100 families from Naples (100 mothers, 88 fathers). For the present study, analyses were limited to the 177 families in which data were available from both mothers and fathers.

Compared to the families in which both parents did not provide data, the 177 families included in the present analyses were more likely to include married parents and more highly educated mothers. There were no differences on mothers' age, child age and gender, or number of children in the household. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 177 families. There were no differences across the two sites on child age and gender, parents' marital status, and number of adults/children in the household. However, both mothers and fathers from Rome were older and more highly educated than their respective counterparts from Naples, a finding that is in accordance with national and regional statistics (ISTAT, 2008). On this basis, our samples closely match the characteristics of the populations of Rome and Naples and also reflect to a certain degree the socioeconomic and cultural differences between the northern-central and the southern regions.

Procedures

Interviews were conducted in participants' homes or at another location (e.g., psychology department, children's school) chosen by the participants. Interviewers travelled to families' homes in teams of two or three, and each family member was interviewed by a different interviewer in a place out of hearing of other family members. They completed a demographic questionnaire, a measure of social desirability bias (Reynolds, 1982), and two parenting measures.

The analyses in this paper focus on constructs from two measures of attributions and attitudes (see Lansford & Bornstein, 2012). First, parents completed the short form of the Parent Attribution Test (Bugental & Shennum, 1984), which was developed to measure parents' perceptions of causes of success and failure in hypothetical caregiving situations. Parents are presented with a hypothetical scenario that involves either a positive or negative interaction with a child (e.g., "Suppose you took care of a neighbor's child one afternoon, and the two of you had a really good time together."). Parents then are asked to respond to a series of questions regarding reasons that the interaction was positive or negative. Parents rate on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all important*, 7 = *very important*) how important factors such as the child's disposition and the parent's behavior were in determining the quality of the interaction. The amount of power or control attributed to oneself versus children is the key dimension of interest. This measure yielded four variables: (1) attributions regarding uncontrollable success (6 items; e.g., how lucky you were in just having everything work out well); (2) attributions regarding adult-controlled failure (6 items; e.g., whether you used the wrong approach for this child); (3) attributions regarding child-controlled failure (6 items; e.g., the extent to which the child was stubborn and resisted your efforts); and (4) perceived control over failure (the difference between attributions regarding adult-controlled failure and attributions regarding child-controlled failure).

Second, parents completed the Parental Modernity Inventory (Schaefer & Edgerton, 1985), which assesses parents' attitudes about childrearing and education. Each of 30 statements is rated on a 4-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *strongly agree*). This instrument yielded three variables: (1) progressive attitudes (8 items; e.g., Children have a right to their own point of view and should be allowed to express it.); (2) authoritarian attitudes (22 items; e.g., The most important thing to teach children is absolute obedience to their parents.); and (3) modernity of attitudes (the difference between the progressive attitudes score and the authoritarian attitudes score). Alphas are presented separately for mothers and fathers in

Table 2. In general, alphas were .60 or higher for all attribution variables and most attitude variables. However, for both mothers and fathers, progressive attitudes showed alphas that were lower than other variables.

RESULTS

As shown in Table 2, on average, both mothers and fathers reported attributions near the scale midpoints. However, variability was greater for attributions regarding uncontrollable success than for attributions regarding adult- or child-controlled failure. Regarding attitudes, both mothers and fathers reported greater progressive attitudes than authoritarian attitudes. Finally, the two deviation variables (i.e., perceived control over failure and modernity of attitudes) revealed that score differences between mothers and fathers were more evident for the attitude scales than attribution scales. Thus, Italian parents are more polarized in their attitudes than in their attributions.

Gender and Site Similarities and Differences in Parents' Attributions and Attitudes

Repeated-measures linear mixed models with gender of parent as the within-subjects fixed factor tested for differences between mothers and fathers in attributions for success and failure in caregiving situations and progressive versus authoritarian attitudes. Test results are presented with and without controls for mothers' and fathers' ages, education, and possible social desirability bias. As shown in Table 2, there were significant main effects of gender on two of the seven constructs of interest, indicating that fathers reported higher perceived control over failure attributions than did mothers, and that mothers reported more progressive attitudes than did fathers. Corrections were made for the number of tests run. Only the latter parent difference on progressive attitudes remained statistically significant after controlling for parents' age, education, and possible social desirability bias. Moreover, a significant gender effect on parents' reports of uncontrollable success, with a higher mean for mothers, emerged after controlling for the aforementioned covariates.

As shown in Table 3, there were significant main effects of site on four of the seven constructs of interest. The two cities differed on parents' reports of attributions regarding uncontrollable success, with higher levels reported by parents from Naples. Parents from Rome reported more progressive and less authoritarian attitudes than did parents from Naples. Finally, modernity of attitudes was significantly higher for parents from Rome. With the exception of the site difference in progressive attitudes, these site differences held even after controlling for parents' age, education, and possible social desirability bias. Moreover, a significant site main effect on attributions regarding adult-controlled failure, indicating a significantly higher mean for Naples, emerged after the statistical control of the aforementioned covariates. There were no significant Parent gender by Site interactions.

Within-Family Correlations Between Parents' Attributions and Attitudes

The last two right columns of Table 2 show the bivariate correlations of mothers' attributions and attitudes with fathers' attributions and attitudes. As shown, four of the seven analyses revealed significant concordance between parents within a family; two remained significant after controlling for parents' age, education, and possible social desirability bias. Significant positive correlations were found for mothers' and fathers' attributions regarding uncontrollable success, progressive attitudes, authoritarian attitudes, and modernity of attitudes.

DISCUSSION

In our study, there were no gender of parent by site interactions, meaning that differences between mothers' and fathers' attributions and attitudes did not vary with parents' city of residence. There were, however, differences between mothers and fathers and differences between parents living in Rome and those living in Naples. Compared to fathers, Italian mothers were more likely to attribute parenting success to external factors rather than to personal control, a finding that may signify that mothers experience their parenting role and responsibilities as more taxing or demanding. This possibility seems plausible in light of a society that, in spite of little public and state effort to recognize and support mothers' key parenting role, still tends to consider mothers as the primary target of accountability for family and children's outcomes. In line with these considerations, it is also plausible that a greater tendency of Naples' parents to attribute their parenting successes to external factors may reflect similar taxing or stressful experiences with parenting, vis-à-vis the more disadvantageous social and economic life conditions they experience as compared to their counterparts from Rome.

Compared to fathers, mothers also show greater average levels of progressive attitudes, while showing no differences on authoritarian attitudes or modernity of attitudes. Overall, this pattern of results may signify that mothers have more daily contacts and opportunities with their children and, therefore, are more prone to recognize, give importance to, acknowledge, and deal with their children's requests and relationship needs towards their parents. This possibility is consistent with the conclusions of recent Italian studies that have examined parent-child relationships in early adolescence with respect to the ways parents and their children communicate. Young Italian adolescents find it easier to communicate about their worries and intimate thoughts with their mothers than with fathers (Cavallo & Santinello, 2004), possibly because the time spent by women with children in nuclear families allows mothers to become more sensitive to their children's points of view. At a broader cultural level, parents from Naples show greater levels of authoritarian attitudes than their counterparts from Rome, whereas the opposite pattern held for modernity of attitudes. As in the case of differences in attributions, these site differences may reflect a contextual effect, whereby more disadvantageous economic and social life conditions for Naples parents may elicit a parenting style in which obedience and clear role assignments are necessary to overcome a variety of challenges that family members may experience in their daily lives, ranging from economic hardships to crime-prone environments and life models. These latter considerations are also consistent with what Rudy and Grusec (2006) reported in their study of authoritarian parenting across collectivistic and individualistic cultures. Collectivistic parents tend to assign particular importance to family members' interdependence and, as a result, tend to endorse authoritarian attitudes to achieve their educational and parenting objectives. Naples parents may be more oriented to preserve their own families' interests and welfare (i.e., be more collectivistic) and, therefore, be more oriented to endorse authoritarian attitudes.

Most correlations between mothers' and fathers' attributions and attitudes were not statistically significant after controlling for parents' age, education, and possible social desirability bias, indicating largely unrelated views on parenting. However, paralleling the finding of similar mean levels across parents, mothers and fathers showed some degree of significant albeit small convergence or concordance in their authoritarian attitudes and modernity of attitudes. Overall, the lack of concordance in parenting attitudes across Italian mothers and fathers seems consistent with the common societal view that mothers and fathers must primarily comply with different and complementary parenting roles, rather than share parenting views or mandates (Lis & Zennaro, 1994; Sabbadini, 2005).

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

One limitation of this study is that, although we were able to examine two of the biggest cities in Italy, we were not able to include other sites across the country, and our samples cannot be generalized to the entire Italian population. In addition, future research should address not only parental differences, but child gender differences as well. Furthermore, as our focus was on examining relations between mothers' and fathers' attributions and attitudes, our analyses were limited to those families in which both a mother and father were available to respond to our measures. These families included parents who had never married or who had divorced. However, caution should be used in generalizing the findings to families in which only one parent is involved in parenting the child. Finally, the progressive attitude scale showed low alpha coefficients in our sample of fathers and mothers and, consequently, one must be cautious in interpreting the results concerning this variable.

Conclusions

Albeit primarily descriptive, this study addressed important questions. It examined parenting attributions and attitudes in both Italian mothers and fathers, allowing not only an assessment of differences in parents' own parental experiences and views, but also an examination of the degree of concordance between parents in parenting attributions and attitudes. Furthermore, the study permitted a comparison between two Italian cities, Rome and Naples, that represent important exemplars of different economic, social, and cultural contexts of the country. Given the dearth of prior studies on family processes and cultural or socioeconomic conditions in Italy, combined with the indication of differences in attributions and attitudes between Rome and Naples, it is important to articulate and assess the ways that culture and life conditions affect parenting and family processes in Italy.

Acknowledgments

This research was funded by the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development grant RO1-HD054805. This research was also supported by the Interuniversity Center for the Study of Development of Prosocial and Antisocial Behaviors and a grant of Sapienza University of Rome (Ricerca d'Ateneo, 2008) to Concetta Pastorelli.

References

- Bombi AS, Bruni N, Saraceni P. Scene di famiglia. La rappresentazione dei rapporti familiari in bambini dai 5 ai 10 anni (Family scenes: Children's representations of family relationships). *Scienze dell'Interazione*. Rivista di Psicologia, psicopsicologia, psicoterapia. 1996; 3:57–69.
- Bombi AS, Cannoni E. Triadi familiari. Uno studio sulla rappresentazione delle gerarchie di valore nella famiglia (Family triads: A study of representations concerning value hierarchy in the family). *Rassegna di Psicologia*. 2001; 18:5–13.
- Bornstein MH. Cross-cultural developmental comparisons: The case of Japanese-American infant and mother activities and interactions: What we know, what we need to know, and why we need to know. *Developmental Review*. 1989; 9:171–204.
- Bornstein MH, Cote LR, Venuti P. Parenting beliefs and behaviors in Northern and Southern groups of Italian mothers of young infants. *Journal of Family Psychology*. 2001; 15:663–675. [PubMed: 11770473]
- Bornstein MH, Putnick DL, Heslington M, Gini M, Suwalsky JTD, Venuti P, de Falco S, Giusti Z, Zingman de Galperin C. Mother child emotional availability in ecological perspective: Three countries, two regions, two genders. *Developmental Psychology*. 2008; 44:666–680. [PubMed: 18473635]
- Bugental DB, Shennum WA. "Difficult" children as elicitors and targets of adult communication patterns: An attributional-behavioral transactional analysis. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*. 1984; 49(1 Serial No. 205)

- Carugati F, Emiliani F, Molinari L. Being a mother is not enough: Theories and images in the social representations of childhood. *Revue Internationale de Psychologie Sociale*. 1990; 3:289–306.
- Cavallo, F.; Santinello, M. Rapporto sui dati italiani dello studio internazionale Hbsc, 2001–2002. (Life styles and health of Italian youth (11–15 years): Report on the Italian data of the international study HBSC, 2001–2002). Torino: Minerva Medica; 2004. Stili di vita e salute dei giovani italiani (11–15 anni).
- Confalonieri E, Bacchini D, Olivari MG, Affuso G, Tagliabue S, Miranda MC. Adolescenti e stili educativi genitoriali: Quale percezione? (Adolescents' perception of parenting styles). *Psicologia dell'educazione*. 2010; 4:9–28.
- Dunlap WP, Cortina JM, Vaslow JB, Burke MJ. Meta-analysis of experiments with matched group or repeated measures designs. *Psychological Methods*. 1996; 1:170–177.
- Edwards CP, Gandini L. Teachers' expectations about the timing of developmental skills: A cross-cultural study. *Young Children*. 1989; 44:15–19.
- Edwards, CP.; Gandini, L.; Giovannini, D. The contrasting developmental timetables of parents and preschool teachers in two cultural communities. In: Harkness, S.; Super, C., editors. *Parental cultural belief systems*. New York: Guilford; 1993. p. 270-288.
- Felici E. I divari regionali in Italia sulla base degli indicatori sociali 1871–2001 (Regional gaps in Italy on the basis of social indicators in the 1871–2001 period). *Rivista di Politica Economica*. 2007; 5:259–405.
- Gandini, L.; Edwards, C. *Bambini: The Italian approach to infant/toddler care*. New York: Teachers College Press; 2000.
- Genta, ML.; Brighi, A.; Costabile, A.; Wijnroks, L. Maternal interactive styles: A comparison between two groups of mothers in Central-Northern and Southern Italy. Paper presented at the VIIth European Conference on Developmental Psychology; Krakow, Poland. 1995.
- ISTAT (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica). Rapporto annuale. La situazione del Paese nel 2008. (National Institute of Statistics. Annual report. The situation of the country in 2008). 2008. retrieved from <http://www.istat.org>
- ISTAT (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica). La popolazione straniera residente in Italia dal 1° gennaio 2010. (National Institute of Statistics. The foreign population resident in Italy since January 1st 2010). 2010. retrieved from <http://www.istat.org>
- Lansford JE, Bornstein MH. Parenting attributions and attitudes in diverse cultural contexts: Introduction to the Special Issue. *Parenting: Science and Practice*. 2012; 12:xx–xx.
- Lis, A.; Zennaro, A. Parental relationships and infant observation. Paper presented at the 9th International Conference on Infant Studies; Paris. 1994 June.
- Lynn R. In Italy, north-south differences in IQ predict differences in income, education, infant mortality, stature, and literacy. *Intelligence*. 2009; 38:93–100.
- Ministero della Salute. Relazione sullo stato sanitario del Paese 2005–2006. (Ministry of Health: Report on the health state of the country 2005–2006). 2008. retrieved from <http://www.salute.gov.it>
- Ministero degli Interni. Rapporto sulla criminalità in Italia. Analisi, prevenzione, contrasto. (Ministry of Internal Affairs: Report on criminality in Italy. Analysis, prevention, policy). 2007. retrieved from <http://www.interno.it>
- New RS. The family context of Italian infant care. *Early Child Development and Care*. 1989; 50:99–108.
- Oasi Association. 1° Dossier Famiglia – Comune di Roma (1st Family Report – City of Rome). Assessorato alle Politiche di Promozione della Famiglia e dell'Infanzia (Department for Policies of Family and Children Promotion). 2008. Retrieved from <http://www.comune.roma.it>
- Putnam, RD. *Making democracy work*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; 1993.
- Reynolds WM. Development of reliable and valid short forms of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*. 1982; 38:119–125.
- Rudy D, Grusec JE. Authoritarian parenting in individualistic and collectivist groups: Associations with maternal emotion and cognition and children's self-esteem. *Journal of Family Psychology*. 2006; 20:68–78. [PubMed: 16569091]

- Sabbadini, LL. Conciliazione dei tempi di vita e denatalità (Life and time organization and its impact on birth rate). 2005. Retrieved from <http://www.istat.it/istat/eventi/2005/conciliazionetempidenatalita/>
- Sabbadini, LL. Gender violence, discrimination, economic, statistics: New challenges in measures based on a gender approach. Paper presented at the Global forum on gender statistics; Rome. 10 December 2007; 2007. Retrieved from <http://www.istat.it/istat/eventi/2007/globalforum/interventi.html>
- Schaefer, ES.; Edgerton, M. Parent and child correlates of parental modernity. In: Sigel, IE., editor. Parental belief systems: Psychological consequences for children. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum; 1985. p. 287-318.
- Scott, J. Family and gender roles: How attitudes are changing. Paper presented at the International Conference on Family Relations; Spain : University of Valencia; 2006.
- Senese, P.; Poderico, C.; Venuti, P. Credenze parentali sulla relazione genitori-figli: Confronto tra diversi gruppi etnici. In: Poderico, C.; Venuti, P.; Marcone, R., editors. Diverse culture bambini diversi. Milano: Unicopli; 2003.
- Tabellini G. Culture and institutions: Economic development in the regions of Europe. Journal of the European Economic Association. 2010; 8:677–716.
- Tabuchi R. Changing Italian families in the era of fertility decline. International Journal of Japanese Sociology. 2008; 17:63–76.
- UNICEF. At a glance: Italy. 2007. retrieved from http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Italy_statistics.html
- Wolf, AW.; Lozoff, B.; Latz, S.; Paludetto, R. Parental theories in the management of young children's sleep in Japan, Italy, and the United States. In: Harkness, S.; Super, C., editors. Culture and human development. Parents' cultural beliefs systems: Their origins, expressions, and consequences. New York: Guilford; 1996. p. 364-384.

TABLE 1

Demographic Characteristics of Children and Families

	Rome (n = 90)	Naples (n = 87)	F (1, 175)
Child's gender (% female)	47.8%	55.2%	.97 ^a
Child's age in years	8.31 (.77)	8.29 (.46)	.06
Mother's age in years	39.99(5.24)	38.37 (5.17)	4.29*
Father's age in years	43.56 (5.30)	41.11(6.07)	8.12**
Mother's education in years	14.40 (4.01)	10.57 (4.25)	37.98***
Father's education in years	13.93 (4.03)	11.16 (1.18)	20.15***
Parents' marital status (% married)	87.5%	93.0%	4.36 ^b
Number of children in household	1.99 (.83)	2.05 (.75)	.23
Number of adults in household	2.11 (.59)	2.29 (.64)	3.60

M (SD)

^a $\chi^2(1, n = 177)$.^b $\chi^2(5, n = 177)$.* $p < .05$.** $p < .01$.*** $p < .001$.

TABLE 2
 Parenting Attributions and Attitudes: Alphas, Tests of Gender Differences, and Correlations for Mothers and Fathers

	Mothers α	Fathers α	Mothers <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Fathers <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>F</i>	<i>F</i> ^a	<i>d</i>	<i>d</i> ^a	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i> ^a
<i>Attributions</i>										
Uncontrollable success	.71/.76	.64/.72	4.94 (1.09)	4.81 (1.04)	1.81	4.64*	.11	.20	.23**	.14
Adult-controlled failure	.85/.76	.78/.72	4.08 (.82)	4.18 (.78)	1.48	.47	-.05	-.02	.09	.09
Child-controlled failure	.78/.54	.52/.68	4.16 (.62)	4.06 (.57)	2.92	1.12	.22	.16	.01	.01
Perceived control over failure	--	--	-.08 (.99)	.13 (.99)	4.07*	1.39	-.17	-.11	.06	.06
<i>Attitudes</i>										
Progressive attitudes	.48/.43	.66/.44	3.13 (.29)	3.07 (.30)	4.43*	5.93*	.13	.17	.16*	.09
Authoritarian attitudes	.85/.86	.85/.89	2.70 (.42)	2.67 (.42)	.85	.78	.03	.08	.43***	.16*
Modernity of attitudes	--	--	.43 (.54)	.40 (.53)	.49	.89	.05	.04	.44***	.18*

Note. N s range from 176–177. Alphas before the slash are for Rome; alphas after the slash are for Naples. Repeated-measures linear mixed models with gender of parent as the within-subjects factor and site as the between-subjects factor. Cohen's *d* was computed using Equation 3 for paired samples in Dunlap, Cortina, Vaslow, and Burke (1996).

^aControlling for parents' age, education, and possible social desirability bias.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

TABLE 3

Site Differences in Parenting Attributions and Attitudes

	Rome <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Naples <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>F</i>	<i>F</i> ^a
Uncontrollable success	4.58 (1.01)	5.18 (1.03)	26.08***	13.33***
Adult-controlled failure	4.09 (.78)	4.18 (.82)	1.09	4.27*
Child-controlled failure	4.10 (.57)	4.12 (.63)	.03	.08
Perceived control over failure	-.02 (.95)	.06 (1.04)	.55	2.28
Progressive attitudes	3.14 (.29)	3.07 (.30)	4.35*	1.25
Authoritarian attitudes	2.54 (.37)	2.85 (.41)	42.36***	15.61***
Modernity of attitudes	.60 (.50)	.22 (.50)	38.00***	14.36**

Note. *N*s range from 176–177. Repeated-measures linear mixed models with gender of parent as the within-subjects factor and site as the between-subjects factor.

^acontrolling for parents' age, education, and possible social desirability bias.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.