

***ENABLING THE CREATIVE TENSION: LONE MOTHERS, KIN SUPPORT AND
BASIC INCOME***

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INTRODUCTION

The rise in the number of lone parent families in industrialised countries has been one of the most dramatic manifestation of the changes that are taking place in the family domain. This has called for a response at the policy level. Yet, rather than attempting to turn back the clock, the policy response needs to go hand in hand with such change, that is simply an outcome of wider macro social changes, if its aims is to support family responsibility, intended at the nuclear and extended level. Moreover if the final aim is an inclusive citizenship for women, men and children alike, then such policy needs to reflect and support the current trend towards a detraditionalisation and democratisation of gender and parent-child relations in family life. (Allan 1999; Finch and Mason 1993; Kiernan et al 1998; Smart and Neale 1999)

This paper is drawn from my PhD research on the significance of kin support for lone mothers' citizenship. Traditionally the main focus of investigation has been the negative side arising out of engaging with one kin. The literature indicates a causal link between women's sole responsibility for care, and their dependency, poverty and social exclusion. (Ungerson 1987) Notwithstanding the significance of this and the need to challenge women's sole responsibility for care, the focus needs to broaden, to take account of another dimension of interdependency, which seems to have attracted far less interest. Evidence suggests that kin is also an important source of childcare and financial support for women, partly responsible for their welfare, autonomy and social inclusion. The first aim of the research was to endorse both liberating as well as constraining processes characterising kin relationships. The second was to investigate the strategies that lone mothers develop to balance such tensions.

The aim of this paper is to reflect on the impact that the introduction of a basic income scheme would have on the lone mothers ability to engage in such strategies. A Participatory Partial Basic Income would be more beneficial in this respect than the current social security measures available to the lone mothers in the two countries in question: England and Italy. Nevertheless such ability is partly derived by the interaction of the time and/ or material poverty that the lone mothers experience. PPBI affects lone mothers differently in their diversity, thus I conclude that PPBI needs to be accompanied by other measures. Nevertheless in its direct recognition of care PPBI constitutes a small but very significant step towards enabling a creative tension between lone mothers' autonomy and mutual interdependency with their kin, which is beneficial for their full citizenship.

1. FINDINGS

1.1 Costs and benefits

Kin support generates material and moral costs and benefits in relation to lone mothers' material welfare and autonomy, which affect their chance of participation in public and private life domains, as well as the balancing of the dual role of sole breadwinner and mother.

Figure 1. Typology of benefits and costs of kin support

BENEFITS	
MATERIAL	AUTONOMY
Avoid debt and survive	More choice and freedom over their main source of reliance
Maintain a certain living standard	More choice and freedom over their gender identity
COSTS	
MATERIAL	AUTONOMY
Unreliability	Dependence
Overload	Interference
Reciprocity	Loss of autonomy

Economic and practical support, allow some lone mothers to avoid debt. For others kin support allows to maintain a lifestyle that they are accustomed to. Lone mothers suffer from material poverty but also from time and energy poverty. Time and material poverty interact and obstruct these women autonomy. The ability to be supported by one's kin can have profound implications. Ultimately, it means that they have more of a choice over their main source of reliance, and their gender identity, whether this means being a worker and mother, or a full time mother.

The following quote from a lone mother that has just decided to go from full time into part time work, I think illustrates this particularly well:

*“is a question of not getting into debt, having a standard of living and I am able to go out. [...] being able to get clothes or when Jem needs new shoes or a coat and I can't afford it. [...] that makes a real difference to my being and my confidence and everything, you know because, whatever happens at the end of the day I know that I am always going to be ok. And there was something about me being independent yeah, but then you know I have worked full time sort of thing since Jem was 8 months old, got up to earning, you know I was earning £ 19.500 until a few months ago and at the end of the day I decided to give that all up because you know, it I don't know it I don't know
Question: Was it a question of time?*

Well, it's a question of yeah having more time and what's more valuable really [...] because I was so stressed out, and being knackered and getting up and just going on

and on being low and, it isn't worth the money! I much rather, you know, get have help of my parents and work part time, give quality time to my child and myself.

Yet kin support is also costly in a material sense as well as constraining lone mother's autonomy. Costs derive from the dynamic and unreliable character of kin support. Particularly in the case of scarce resources which can result in overload. (Edin and Lein 1997; Saraceno 1994) Moreover costs can arise in having to conform to some extent to the principles for negotiating the exchange of support. (Finch 1989) A prime example of these are the costs attached to the need to reciprocate support. Finally there are moral costs that have to do with dependence, interference from others, loss of control and autonomy.

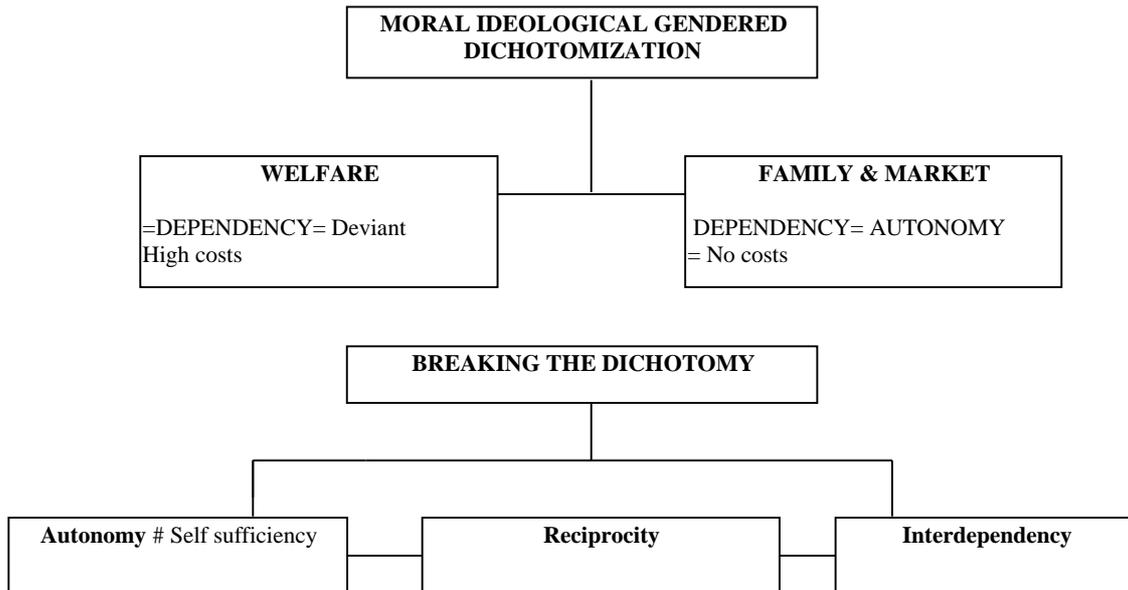
1. 2 A creative tension between autonomy and mutual interdependency

The significance of kin support is therefore characterised by a tension between the need for support and for autonomy. The first step in understanding the tension between support and autonomy is to acknowledge that the latter is not possible without the former. In turn this requires recognising interdependence as the core human condition and distinguishing the concept of autonomy from that of (in)dependence.

Contemporary policy discourse on the issue of autonomy and independence conceive the two as positive and in opposition to the negative dependency. Dichotomising (in)dependence fetishes some dependencies into processes of autonomy and obscures the need that we all have to be dependent on others. In other words it subverts interdependency as the core human condition. (Dean and Taylor-Gooby 1992; Fraser and Gordon 1994; Goodin 1998) If we accept that we all need to be dependent on others to gain the resources that makes us free then autonomy rests in creative tension with interdependency. (Lister 1997).

Yet the difficulty remains in trying to unpick the conditions that can render the creative tension an equal one. In the case of kin I have found that first it is important, at the conceptual level, to distinguish autonomy from the concept of self-sufficiency. *"autonomy: within the bounds of justice, to be able to make choices about one's life and to act on those choices without having to obey others, meet their conditions, or fear their threats and punishments"* (Young 1995 p. 548). It is the latter that is in creative tension with interdependency, not self-sufficiency. Moreover the key to render the tension a positive and equal one rests in rendering interdependency mutual.

Figure 2 Breaking the dichotomy



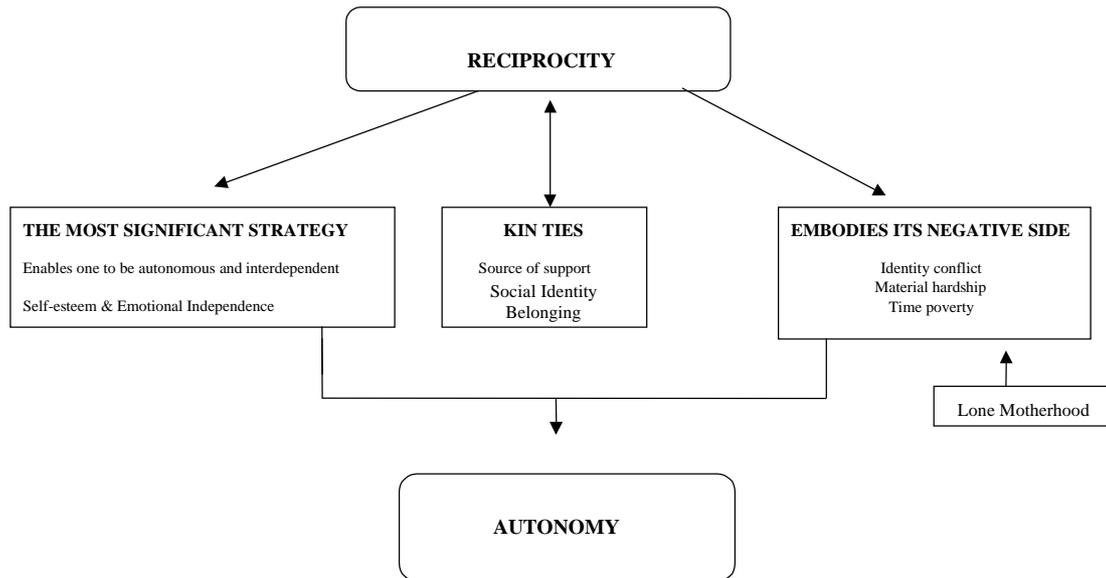
1. 3 Reciprocity

Reciprocity enabled the lone mothers in my study to be autonomous as well as interdependent. Reciprocity is not done to make sure that one gets back exactly what she has put in. Reciprocity means that one is not left at the receiving end, but is needed by others. Reciprocating that support means benefiting each other, materially and morally. It means that one is not taking advantage of others.

It also means belonging to a group in which people help each other out. Which for that group is the right, just thing to do. Finch (1989) argued that kin ties have a special moral character. They define a social group which is demarcated by the rest by a sense of social and moral responsibility. This is very important for our sense of belonging and identification. In interaction with this special social group we develop part of our social identity and reputation. The ability to maintain a good reputation can enhance one sense of belonging, identity and self-esteem. The notion of self-esteem is very important to achieve autonomy. James (1992) argues that is self-esteem rather than impartiality that provides us with emotional independence.

Autonomy emerges as relational, growing out of the experience of giving and receiving. (Sevenhuijsen 2000) Autonomy cannot be achieved by evading, mutual interdependency. On the contrary it is enhanced by engaging in it.

Figure 3 Reciprocity as the pivot of kin support



The following quotes illustrate some example I have found of the creative tension between autonomy and mutual interdependency.

Clare tells us about her experience with her sister Sally:

In my experience it has been a good thing and it has been a good thing for everyone concerned on the whole. Because before I had Paul I was very very independent and I probably would have said 'I don't need any help or support in any way'. And uhm it's made me more accepting that uhm I do need it. Also is made my relationship with my sister closer I think, probably, because we have both been in a similar situation and we have given each other mutual support. [...] I suppose as well there is a lot of burden and responsibility ongoing if you like. Beyond my immediate circumstances which you don't have if you are relying lets' say on paid childcare or whatever. So you have got more sort of ongoing issues to deal with that you would have just with your own immediate family.

Question: In terms of control over your life

Oh well it has helped me I suppose have more control over my life. Uhm it has made it easier for me. I mean and there are certainly times stressful times when I might have just, well I can't do this.

Gina has decided to return to live with her father after the relationship with the father of her child broke up.

“ Question: What has been the most important support you have received from your family?

Well a bit of everything. It is difficult to distinguish. I do the shopping. But even if my father asked me to share the bills I wouldn't have a qualm about that. Now he says he can manage with his pension and he pays the bills and I do the shopping. That is fine. These are all elements that give you security. I am not homeless, I don't have to move to a single mothers' institute, I don't have to look for a tiny flat and pay a fortune in rent and baby-sitter.

Question: and the disadvantages?

I can't see any, because I feel free. Indeed here I can be free, if I was living in my own place, on my own with my son, I wouldn't have all this freedom. For example tomorrow I am going out because I want to. I couldn't do that if I was on my own. Unless I was an executive and earned millions, I couldn't afford a rent, a baby-sitter, and then the baby-sitter on a Saturday to go out. [...] I would have to cook anyway and to cook for my father too is no sweat. I would have to clean a house anyway, so to clean this or another. [...] My friends tell me " why don't you go and get your own place?" But why? I am happy here with my father. We get on well, Fabio adores him. [...] If I had to find a home it would have to be in another area where I did not know anyone. My friends live here and we would not be able to help each other with swaps, like we do now. Why should I have moved? In the name of what? In the name of a freedom that does not exist? Why the hell would I go and live in a bed sit on my own maybe in the centre of town? What would I do with that freedom? That is no freedom, that is slavery. Why so I can have the house free? For the moment is fine, I have no man to bring back! Even if I did I could always go to his place! "

1. 4 Juggling

The ability to reciprocate becomes particularly important at particular life stages or situations in which the need for support is very strong. (Finch and Masons 1993; McKee 1987; Jones 1995; Quereshi and Simoni 1987; Smith et al 1998) Lone motherhood is one of these. Yet reciprocity on its own is not enough. Another main strategies that the lone mothers in my study engaged in to balance the tension between interdependency and autonomy was that of juggling of a variety of formal and informal support. The need to package and juggle resources is partly due to a reliance on limited material resources: for example low state benefits, irregular maintenance, poor kin network expensive, rigid and limited childcare etc. But this careful juggling act is also done to balance the moral elements involved. Relying on formal and informal support as well as spreading it amongst a number of relatives and friends, means not overburdening them as well as not feeling too dependant on them. Whilst at the same time one is allowing for grandparents to bond with the grandchildren for example.

The significance of juggling formal with informal resources is also related to the issue of inequality. There is an issue about the commitments and needs of the support giver, which in the case of childcare at least tend to be mainly women. Mutual interdependence to be in creative tension with autonomy requires a balance between the need of the recipient and of the giver.

1. 5 A diversity of experience

In order to juggle lone mothers need to be able to access alternatives sources of support. Furthermore although reciprocity is a fluid and diverse practice in order to reciprocate individuals need resources. Lone mothers time and material poverty

interacts to make reciprocity particularly difficult and at times almost impossible. In my study some mothers worried about being unable to reciprocate and this prevented them from asking for support.

Hence there is a strong risk of jeopardising the tension between autonomy and mutual interdependency, be it because one is unable to reciprocate, or juggle kin support with other formal or informal support, or in the case in which kin support is the only option available. The power of our kin members is strong because of the threat to one's sense of belonging, moral approval, love, and also one's safety net. Being black mailed, having to meet our parents/relatives conditions, or at worse having to give up one's life plan in order to maintain that personal reputation, or in order to obtain that support from them, can go a long way to undermine our autonomy, and not just at the emotional level. Or it can simply take a lot of effort in order to maintain one sense of autonomy.

Finally reciprocity and juggling do not override all the complexity involved in negotiating kin interdependency. Other factors such as distance, or more idiosyncratic factors such as a bad history of relationship can also jeopardise the chance of balancing the tension between interdependency and autonomy. In this case lone mothers might choose not to rely on kin support at all. Indeed in my study I have found a diversity of experiences ranging from those of mutual interdependency on kin which enchanted autonomy, to one which lessened autonomy, to no interdependency

When Marisa moved in with her mother and sister she was worried about the difficulty that she might encounter. She had moved away from home many years before and the relationship with her mother and her sister wasn't particularly good. Her mum's flat is also very small and Marisa and her child are living in the living-room. Yet she had very little alternative but to move in with them at least temporarily. I think this illustrates very well the importance of the history of reciprocity.

"The disadvantages are about their criticism and interference with the way I decide to bring up my child.[...] We argue often about that and they accuse me of spoiling him in front of him. [...] At times during those arguments my mum has said "well go back to your own house then" in front of him. This I think is very dangerous for him as it my create some insecurities. [...] I understand the pressures on my mum, physically there is no space for all of us, I guess arguments are almost inevitable. [...] Now I have started doing theatre rehearsals again and the old jealousies between me and my sister have started again, and she is making me pay for the past. [...] Last night when I got back she said "that's it. Now you have to manage by yourself" because the child had been whining for me. [...] That is enough to make the past resurface. The fact that I left home. Coming back gave them a chance to accuse me for what I didn't do in the past, that I was not around then "You were never here, only now that you need us". Maybe I did not worry to much about my mum's health then. But I had a sister that lived with her, who drives and has a car, she was the one that looked after her, took her to the hospital. How could I have taken her? I didn't have a car, I lived in the other side of town. Yes of course if things had been very critical I would have been there but"

Barbara is a teacher in her forties, lives on her own with her daughter who is seven. She has been relying on her parents financial support and her mother for a lot of childcare. I think the quote illustrates the impact of unavailability of alternatives at a cultural and policy level.

“They have helped me out in renovating the flat. They bought me the pram, the push chair, the medicines for my daughter. They have helped financially and they still do. Obviously my salary wouldn’t be enough. Now for example they are paying for my daughter’s dental fees, that will cost around 2000 pounds they will pay for at least ½ of it, I am sure. Given that the state won’t. The financial support is fundamental.[...] I could make it with my salary but that would mean giving up the life style I was accustomed to before I had my daughter. For example I always travelled and 5 years ago I started again with my daughter: Indonesia, The east. This I don’t want to give up. Like I don’t want to give up the car, nice shoes for my daughter and I.[...] I don’t want my daughter to live a difficult situation. She has had enough sorrows in her life.[...] My mum helps me practically. She picks up my daughter from school, gives her lunch, and then helps her with her homework. My mum is my daughter’s baby-sitter, almost full time.[...] I used to have a paid child minder, before she went to school, because at nursery she was getting ill all the time. Then my mother started because I couldn’t find anymore childminders and also I did not trust them. Also my mum was offended so I said ok “ while you are still healthy [...] Having economic support from them at the emotional level equals dependence. [...] Asking my mum for help makes me feel like a child, not an autonomous adult woman..[...] The childcare help is even worse because the fact that I have to go to my mum’s house every day and stay there and often I end up eating there, is almost as if I moved back home.[...] I often argue with my mother about my daughter’s homework, she makes her do a lot every day, and I’d rather she played and relaxed more. This daily relationship with my mum is not positive. I tell my mum and she gets upset, she won’t accept it. I can’t pretend that she understands it. Yes she is of great help but the other side of the coin is too dangerous.”

2. HOW DOES BASIC INCOME FIT IN ALL OF THIS?

What clearly emerges from the above is the importance of the policy context in providing access to the resources necessary to lone mothers for undertaking the strategies of reciprocity and juggling, or indeed rely exclusively on alternative sources of support. The 3 main resources are money; time and services. Evidence indicates that the 3 main alternative sources of such resources available to lone mothers are the market, the state and the father(s) of their children. The variation in patterns of reliance on these sources across different European countries, is partly determine by the lone mothers gender moral rationalities (Duncan and Edwards 1997), but such choices are also constrained by different policy logics about gender roles and family responsibility which are embedded in the development of welfare states (Lewis 1997). Such variations in access to resources partly determine the extent of the lone mothers' time and/or material poverty. Basic Income is not presently available in the two countries in question: Italy and England. In what follows I reflect on the effect that its introduction could have in relation to lone mothers' material and time poverty which constrains their engagement in a positive mutual interdependency with their kin.

2. 1 Participatory partial basic income

There are many types of basic income advocated. The following reflections relate to the Participatory Partial Basic Income version (PPBI). This is not a full basic income, full substitute of all other benefits, high enough to live on. It's tax free, lower then the minimum guaranteed, not withdrawable and can be added to existing social security benefits, contributory benefits and social assistance (although the latter would be reduced to take account of PPBI). To finance it tax will start from the first £ earned and will be raised.(Van Parijs and Salinas 1998) Although putting the condition of 'active citizenship' involves the difficulty of distinguishing active citizens from inactive ones, a participatory income is more favourable then the unconditional. If active citizenship is defined as broad as to include, those involved in: caring; studying; training; engaged in paid as well as voluntary employment; and community and informal politics, this provides a direct recognition for these activities. While an unconditional income does not.(Goodin 2000)

Van Parijs and Salinas (1998) comparison of PBI with negative income tax, and in work tax credits, shows that although it achieves the same effect in reducing the unemployment trap, in relation to increase disposable income and reduced marginal tax, it favours better in reducing dependence from work income, and in combining with income from informal work and with non-labour income. Therefore a PPBI scheme would be more helpful in enabling the creative tension between autonomy and kin interdependency.

2.2. PPBI, reciprocity and juggling

PPBI and income from informal work.

Childcare or any other practical support that one provides for one's relatives, friends, neighbours, which one can be paid for, or exchange for significant in kind support such as accommodation, is a type of income from informal work which was very important for some of the lone mothers in my study.

As the authors argue (ibid) in a sense this might seem to make no difference given that because of its nature one could get away without declaring it. Moreover having PPBI or not does not make any difference, as this is lower than Income Support and other means-tested benefits. Yet there is a difference. Means-tested benefits are discretionary in their nature and therefore they do take into account types of income that contributory benefits or taxes do not. In the case of Italy where social assistance is left to the discretion of social workers and local authority committees relatives contributions is precisely the kind of thing that gets taken into account. (Giullari 2000a) Moreover one can argue that those who do gain income from informal work, would be happier to be able to declare it and still be eligible to PPBI and less means tested benefit, or even give means tested benefit up all together and build PBI and a combination of income for formal and informal work.

The advantage would be avoiding the stigma, intrusion and insecurity attached to means- tested benefits, or some of it anyway, while also benefiting from a lower marginal tax rate than one faces if in between Income Support and WFTC in the case of England. In Italy a PPBI would be extremely beneficial for those lone mothers engaged in low paid p/t work or those who just do a little informal work and combine it with living with relatives or their economic support.

PPBI and non-labour income

What's more the same authors argue that many of those who rely only on low non-labour income would favour a lot better on PBI. They would be able to reach quicker a higher level than minimum income, even though all income would be taxed to finance PBI. (ibid) Non labour income includes interest on capital and savings but also contributory pensions and maintenance. Hence this can be important for lone mothers in relation to combining maintenance, which is the case of England is currently disregarded on WFTC but not for Income Support, and in Italy where there is no minimum income guaranteed. In the latter case there is also an higher % of lone mothers in receipt of widow's pension too.

Reducing working time

One of the most significant resource that lone mothers need to combine the role of sole carer and breadwinner and to engage in mutual support is time. Because PPBI acts as a damper it is easier to voluntarily reduce working time even below the minimum level guarantee, because the loss of income would be slower. (ibid) Clearly in the case of England this does not apply, at least for the moment, as lone mothers are entitled to Income Support, even if they leave their job voluntarily. In Italy this would be however very beneficial. Clearly this could provide more time for studying or engaging in a temporary reciprocal support with one's relative. The dampening effect would be also particularly useful in the current flexible market, as movement from WFTC to Income Support, housing benefit and Council tax might take a while to process.

2.3 PPBI and inequality

Lack of time for working mothers is often resolved by either buying other's women time, usually low paid poor and/or migrant women, or sisters and mothers. This is an

inequality issue. PPBI could be added by low-paid women to their income without the stigma and problem of WFTC, so it would help in this respect. (Citizen Income Trust, June 1998) An ample literature in both countries, recognises strong gender inequalities in pensions levels both in relation to the amount of pension received, and in the differential entitlements to different types of pension, which are due to gender inequality in caring responsibility and the financial costs that that entails. (Glendinning and Millar 1992; Niero 1996; Pascall 1997) PPBI could be combined with low contributory pensions. This, by recognising the caring involved, would address some of that inequality, which in turn would enable a better balance between the lone mothers' need and those of the giver. It would at least be an improvement from the current climate in which the work of such sisters or mothers is totally taken for granted. The WFTC Child care tax credit cannot be used to pay relatives. (HMSO 1998)

The example of Clare and Sally, indicates how paying for care enabled the reciprocity and the juggling strategies which allowed their mutual interdependency to be equal, hence beneficial for their autonomy. Although Sally only cared for the child a few hours a week, her sister support was vital to her in maintaining the very fine balance of formal and informal childcare arrangements. The latter included a regular and reciprocal arrangements with friends. The knowledge that her child was being cared by trustworthy and loving kin members enabled Clare to reconcile the tension between their identity as a worker and as a mother. For Sally this meant being able to be a full time mother and at the same time having a little bit more income. This was very important in that one of the main conflict characterising their gender moral rationality was the inability to provide their children enough materially. (Duncan and Edwards 1997) Yet Sally was cagey about the possibility of being accused of fraud. Yet she could add the payment from Clare and the maintenance that she received to the PPBI and be completely legal.

“ Sally and I have been very supportive of each other in different ways. Sally has been very supportive of me with childcare particularly, and I have been more supportive of her financially because I have always worked full time. So It's kind of worked like I have paid her to have Paul, which is been and equal you know thing, because she'd need the money and I need the childcare so it's worked fine”

To reiterate in enabling a combination with income from informal work, and non-labour income, PPBI renders the juggling of formal and informal resources easier, which benefits the tension between autonomy and mutual interdependency. For those who choose to be mainly full time mothers, it could allow them to add occasional extra earnings maybe derived by actually being paid for the childcare or other support they provide for their relative, without having to worry about fraud. The participatory condition would enable a direct recognition and reward for relatives that engage in the care and support of the lone mothers and her children, hence balancing to some extent the needs of givers and receivers. As well as contributing, although to a small extent, to the inequalities between the women that engage in the public sphere of paid formal work and those who enable this participation by caring for their and their children social need. A better combination with non-income labour, and the damper effect that enables a slower decline of income for those that want to reduce their working time, (same as WFTC) as well as for those that can afford to reduce it below the minimum, can provide lone mothers with more time to engage in mutual interdependency.

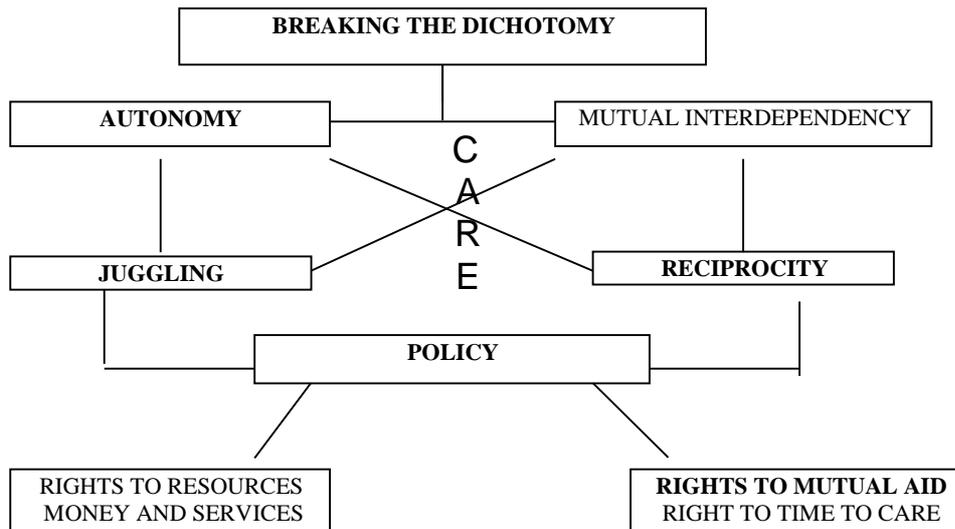
Yet a voluntary reduction of working time below the minimum level, or indeed above it is only possible for those who can afford it and perhaps combine it with substantial non labour income. Yet it certainly does not provide a solution for those lone mothers that are working full time and cannot afford a substantial drop in income, and for those that have no informal income or non-labour income. Hence women would still be left with a substantial time poverty.

2. 4 Diversity

Robeyns (1998) argues that in order to understand the effect of basic income on women, it is necessary to take a gendered analysis, and focus on women diversity in terms of labour attachment and earning capacities. My study also indicates a diversity of experience in relation to reliance on kin and its outcome. Adding the two cases together it is possible to come up with the following typologies. Those lone mothers with no labour market attachment and low earning capacities, would benefit from it, as they could add income from informal work, and non-labour income to it. Hence by using their time to engage in reciprocal arrangements and be paid for it, like in the case of Sally. Also an individual benefit which recognises their caring work, would improve their self-esteem, emotional independence. Hence improve the tension between autonomy and interdependency Hence it favours better then discretionary and temporary social assistance like in the case of Italy, or stigmatising Income Support in England. Those with temporary weak labour market attachment but high earning capacities will have more of a choice to reduce their time in work, by combining non-labour income to it (maintenance, savings, widows pensions) and use the time to care for their children or reciprocate their kin, that previously might have been very involved in proving childcare. For this group in particular PPBI favours much better then means-tested benefits.

Then for those with strong market attachment and high earning capacities PPBI doesn't do much, as their position probably mostly rob them of time, and taking considerable time out might create too costly long term effects for their career prospects. Yet for them kin support is probably a choice, they could afford to pay for care, or juggle it. Moreover high earnings also gives them the chance to reciprocate with money. Still money is not always enough to reciprocate. Therefore they risk loosing the beneficial effects of engaging in mutual interdependency with one's kin such as bonding and intimacy. Finally we have those with strong labour market attachments but low earnings which are in the worse position because of the interaction of time and material poverty. Moreover these mothers are more likely to need both material support and childcare from kin, as well as having poor kin networks. Thus the tension between autonomy and mutual interdependency can be very strained. PPBI helps in building on formal income like WFTC, and also allows a better combination of income with formal and informal work. As for all others on low incomes a damper that does not carry stigma with it but recognises one's hard work is very significant. Yet a reduction in work time, is only possible in the case of high maintenance. Hence in most cases these lone mothers would not be able to take time out, or indeed have enough money to reciprocate support, or buy marketised care. Their relatives adding of PPBI to their pension or low earnings, might go some way to equalise the balance, but certainly not enough to make up for the extensive support that they might have to provide.

Figure 4 Enabling the creative tension



CONCLUSION: PPBI a small but significant step at the ethical and political level.

The latter typology of lone mothers more than all others highlight the necessity to combine PPBI with other measures. As Knij and Kremer (1997) argue in order to degender care and created a framework of inclusive citizenship for women and men we need “a right to time for care and a right to receive care”. Services for child and adult care are clearly very important in providing mothers with more time, in allowing a proper juggle of formal and informal resources, and balancing kin support giver and receiver’s needs.

Child care tax credit are a way of supporting parents in buying marketised rather than public provided services. Yet they need to be more flexible in allowing payment for relatives providing child care. My conceptual findings indicate that many parents prefer to rely on their relatives for childcare. Hence we need a flexible approach that allows the combination of formal and informal provisions.

Indeed services cannot totally make up for our social needs, particularly our need for bonding, intimacy with significant others. This is when the “right to time for care” comes into play. PPBI conditional on care is an important part of this. Yet we need also work leave policies, that need to be paid to guarantee an equal right. Part/ time work and its recognition for social security, as well as other forms of reduced work time for those with caring responsibility. Moreover we need payments for care, care credits for social security entitlements, as well as exemptions from work obligations in social security benefits for those that care. In both countries in question we find only some of these measures, in a limited version, not enough services or not paid leave etc.

Furthermore the current trend suggests a prioritisation of formal work over care work in the definition of active citizenship. This along with the increase in working time, rather than addressing gender inequalities in caring responsibility suggests that both men and women will find it more and more difficult to engage in the outside work sphere.

What's more in the current citizenship discourse the contractual relationship between rights and obligations, centred around paid work, and embedded in a self-interest-altruism dichotomy, (Williams 1999) does not capture the moral and relational strategies that individuals develop to engage in mutual support with their kin members. Therefore it fails to recognise how a lack of 'space' and inability to participate in mutual interdependency can go a long way to undermine autonomy. This might even weaken family responsibility, and result in losing kin as a very significant source of material support, vital in the combination of sources of support that lone mothers rely on.

Relational concepts such as responsibility, mutual interdependency and autonomy emerging out the experience and practice of giving and receiving care are more useful in this respect. A key issue therefore is the recognition and rewarding of care as an ethic. (Sevenhijusen 2000)In this respect PPBI would be a small and yet very significant step at the ethical and political level in the recognition of care work. Ultimately the degendering and valuing of care would only be possible if work is reorganised so that care work and social needs are not sacrificed to the interests of the market.(Offe 1992)

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