Parental leave uptake among migrant and native mothers: Can precarious employment trajectories account for the difference?

1. Introduction

In response to declining fertility levels and an increase of female labour supply, Western European governments have extended family policies geared towards the reconciliation of labour force participation and family formation since the 1980s (Rindfuss & Brewster, 1996; Thevenon, 2008). In addition to earlier established family policies such as family allowances, the availability of formal childcare and leave schemes has increased considerably (Klusener, Neels, & Kreyenfeld, 2013; RVA, 2012, 2013). The rising popularity of such policies, but also increased maternal employment and the changing relation between female labour force participation and fertility (Ahn & Mira, 2002) suggest that family policy has adapted to the needs of the growing share of dual earner couples. Although labour force participation among mothers in majority populations has increased in recent decades, maternal employment levels remain low in migrant populations across Europe (Bevelander & Groeneveld, 2012; Holland & de Valk, 2013; Kil, Neels, Van den Berg, & de Valk, 2015; Rubin et al., 2008). This contrast between native and migrant populations raises questions on migrants' uptake of family policies. This paper aims *to document differences in parental leave use between*

one-child mothers with and without a migration background, distinguishing different origin groups and generations, and to assess to which degree varying patterns can be explained by employment characteristics and eligibility, drawing on Belgian longitudinal register data (1999 – 2010). Belgium was among the first to develop family policy (Pfenning & Bahle, 2000) and is characterized by a relatively flexible parental leave system (Maron & O'Dorchai, 2008; Ray, Gornick, & Schmitt, 2010). In addition, Belgium has the largest employment rate gap between migrants and natives in Europe making insights into the processes leading to this gap essential for theory and policy alike (Corluy 2014).

Although parental leave schemes were introduced to enhance work-family compatibility, previous research on the effects of parental leave on labour force attachment and fertility is inconclusive. Despite the fact that parental leave supports mothers to keep a foothold in the labour force (Pronzato, 2009; Pylkkänen & Smith, 2004), leave also delays mothers' return to work (Matysiak & Szalma, 2014) and especially long periods of leave hamper future employment (Fagnani, 1999; Lalive & Zweimuller, 2009). With respect to fertility, reported effects are typically small and literature reviews identify the insufficient acknowledgement of population heterogeneity in the uptake of parental leave as a major source of bias (Neyer & Andersson, 2008). Recent research identifies various determinants of parental leave use at different levels

(e.g. individual, couple, company) ranging from economic determinants (e.g. eligibility, income) to attitudinal factors (e.g. preferences concerning work-family combination) (Bygren & Duvander, 2006; Geisler & Kreyenfeld, 2011; Lappegård, 2008; Lapuerta, Baizan, & Gonzalez, 2011). However, our understanding of differential uptake patterns for migrant groups is limited. Previous studies on parental leave uptake in migrant groups indicate small differences in Sweden, which is related to universal eligibility (Mussino & Duvander, 2016). In contrast, the assessment of ethnic differences in the uptake of parental leave for countries in which eligibility is connected to labour force participation (e.g. the Netherlands, Spain) indicates lower uptake for migrant groups (Lapuerta et al., 2011; Merens, Keuzenkamp, & Das, 2006).

Whereas the documentation of parental leave uptake among migrant groups informs policy-makers on the inclusiveness of work-family policies, the assessment of the extent to which these differences can be explained by employment characteristics and eligibility enhances our knowledge on the relative importance of labour market disadvantages. Furthermore, this contribution entails detailed insight into differential parental leave strategies by distinguishing full-time from part-time leave and assessing whether women return to the labour force afterwards. Results indicate that lower use of parental leave among migrant one-child mothers is largely explained by employment characteristics and eligibility. Although migrant-native differences in parental leave

uptake largely disappear when taking these factors into account, differences in part-time leave use and employment position following leave-taking persist.

2. Background

2.1. Parental leave in Belgium

Although the right to parental leave exists in all European Union Member States, large differences occur between countries. The design of parental leave varies among countries in terms of eligibility criteria, length, payments and employment guarantees (Anxo, Fagan, Smith, Letablier, & Perraudin, 2007; Moss, 2015; Ray et al., 2010). In Belgium, parental leave is an individual entitlement for parents and the right is not transferable (ACLVB, 2013). To be entitled to parental leave an employee needs to be working for the current employer for 12 out of 15 months prior to the application[1] and have a child younger than 12 years old[2]. While on parental leave parents receive a flat-rate benefit, 727 euro per month for full-time parental leave in 2010[3] (Merla & Deven, 2010). Three degrees of labour reduction are available: (i) a full-time interruption for three months, (ii) a 50% reduction of working hours for a period of six months and (iii) a 20% reduction of working hours for a period up to 15 months. The two last options

[1] Civil servants do not have to meet this condition.
[2] In the beginning of the 2000s, parents were entitled to leave for children younger than 4 years. This age limit was raised to 6 years in 2005 and subsequently to 12 years in 2009.
[3] Parents using 50% or 20% reductions of labour force participation receive an amount proportional to the rate of reduction (ACLVB, 2013). Parents that worked part-time at time of the application receive a benefit proportional to their employment regime.

are only available for full-time workers with some exceptions in the public or education sector. Parents are allowed to split up the periods depending on the sector of employment and previous work history (Desmet & Glorieux, 2007; Merla & Deven, 2013; Morel, 2007; Ray, 2008; RVA, 2012).

From a European perspective, parental leave uptake rates in Belgium are low with only 7% of all eligible parents using parental leave (Anxo et al., 2007; Plantenga & Remery, 2005). Moreover, parental leave uptake is strongly gendered. Results from the 2007 Labour Force Survey show that the proportion of employed mothers with a child under age 1 taking leave is around 20% while the proportion of employed fathers taking leave is close to zero (OECD, 2010). Given that parental leave can be used until the child is 12 years old, periods can be split up, varying degrees of labour reduction are available and the 20% labour reduction is most popular (Anxo et al., 2007; Desmet & Glorieux, 2007; Plantenga & Remery, 2005), the Belgian parental leave system is relatively flexible (Maron & O'Dorchai, 2008; Ray, Gornick, & Schmitt, 2008). However, eligibility criteria imply that only workers with a stable labour market position can take up parental leave and the income replacement level is low.

2.2. Migration to Belgium

As a result of active recruitment of migrant workers after the second world war and post-colonial migration, Belgium is an old immigration country. Furthermore, free

movement of people within the European Union, the gradual extension of the European Union and migration flows of asylum seekers has continued to shape Belgium's ethnic diversity (Corluy, 2014). In the 2000s Belgium in characterized by large minority groups both from European and non-European origins.

With respect to European migrant groups, Belgium recruited guest workers in Southern European countries such as Italy, Greece and Portugal to perform industrial labour after World War II (Phalet, 2007). The economic downturns related to the oil crisis led to a migration stop in 1974 but also disproportionately deteriorated labour market opportunities for previously migrated Southern-Europeans (Lesthaeghe, 2000). Despite the migration stop, migration from Southern Europe continued through family reunification in subsequent years. Also, since the European Union installed the possibility of free movement of people in the 1990s (European Commission, 2011) and gradually facilitated labour migration, Belgium increasingly receives Eastern European migrants. In addition to migration from Southern and Eastern Europe, a large proportion of migrants in Belgium originates from neighbouring countries, possibly facilitated by common languages.

Concerning non-European migration, Moroccan and Turkish workers were recruited for industrial labour in the 1960s. Notwithstanding the migration stop and economic crisis that followed in the 1970s, the permanent settlement of migrant families in the 1980s and 1990s gave rise to large Turkish and Moroccan communities. In contrast to

European migrant groups, a substantial share of second-generation Moroccan and Turkish migrants continue to marry partners from their parents' country of origin (Corijn & Lodewijckx, 2009). Also, post-colonial migration has given rise to a substantial Congolese minority group. Finally, Belgium has increasingly received refugees from outside of Europe since the 1990s further elevating the degree of ethnic diversity (Centrum voor gelijkheid van kansen en racismebestrijding, 2013).

3. Theoretical framework

Literature has shown that leave uptake typically relates to factors at the individual, household, employer and institutional level. First and foremost, uptake is only possible for parents eligible for parental leave. Given the eligibility criteria in Belgium, a relatively stable labour market position is a prerequisite to parental leave uptake. Research shows that migrant women are less attached to the labour market than native women (Kil, Neels, Van den Berg, et al., 2015). The difficult access to stable employment (Kil, Wood, et al., 2015) has been associated with strategies to become a parent as an alternative to developing a career (Friedman, Hechter, & Kanazawa, 1994; McDonald, 2000) and reduces the probability of meeting the eligibility criteria to parental leave.

Second, as the parental leave benefit in Belgium is limited, affordability is an important factor in the decision to take up leave on the individual as well as on the household level. Accordingly, research indicates a positive relation between mother's as well as father's earnings and father's parental leave uptake in Sweden (Bygren & Duvander, 2006; Lappegård, 2008). Since migrant workers and their partners are overrepresented in low income groups (Corluy, 2014), limited affordability may hamper migrants' parental leave use.

Third, the opportunity costs of taking parental leave in terms of foregone career opportunities are larger for parents with high human capital. For example, parental leave use may signal lower work commitment to the employer which has larger consequences for parents in rewarding career tracks (Evertsson & Breen, 2008; Evertsson & Duvander, 2011). On the contrary, Swedish and Spanish research indicates that education positively relates to parental leave uptake (Bygren & Duvander, 2006; Lapuerta et al., 2011). However, since migrants are overrepresented in low human capital groups (Corluy, 2014) and consequently face less opportunity costs when taking up leave, migrants may be more likely to take leave.

Fourth, with respect to work environment, parents enjoying stronger job protection (in terms of permanent contracts, higher seniority and jobs in public sector) and women that work in companies where procedures of leave uptake are institutionalized and socially accepted are more likely to take up leave (Anxo et al., 2007; Bygren &

Duvander, 2006; Geisler & Kreyenfeld, 2011; Lapuerta et al., 2011). Migrant women are, in general, overrepresented in temporary, unstable and low skilled jobs (Rubin et al., 2008) which possibly hampers their use of parental leave.

Finally, individual preferences (Hakim, 2000) as well as social norms regarding the ideal gender arrangement for raising children matter for the decision to take up parental leave (Pfau-Effinger, 1998). Women's parental leave uptake length is found to be positively associated with a stronger orientation toward family in Sweden (Duvander, 2014). As particularly non-European migrants in Belgium often originate from rural regions where roles of men and women are more separate in the private and the public sphere, they generally have more traditional views on the division of care and domestic work (Bernhardt, Goldscheider, & Goldscheider, 2007; Goldscheider, Goldscheider, & Bernhardt, 2011; Huschek, de Valk, & Liefbroer, 2011; Merens et al., 2006). This possibly stimulates parental leave uptake.

Based on these theoretical considerations, we expect parental leave uptake among migrant mothers in Belgium to be lower than that of native Belgian mothers. Since a substantial part of migrant women in Belgium are unemployed, have relatively low incomes and weak labour market positions in general (Corluy, 2014; Rubin et al., 2008), we expect a large share of variation in parental leave use to be explained by socio-economic differences.

Previous research on parental leave use among migrants has mainly focused on Sweden where all mothers are entitled to parental leave, independently of their previous labour market position (Mussino & Duvander, 2016; Vikman, 2013). For example, research by Mussino and Duvander (2016) shows that migrant mothers in Sweden more frequently use leave immediately following childbirth, whereas Swedish-born mothers exploit the flexibility of the parental leave system to a larger extent. Continuous leave uptake during the first year following childbirth is related to a higher prevalence of inactivity and unemployment among migrant populations. These observations differ considerably from the situation in many other European countries where eligibility is tied to labour force attachment. Research by Merens et al. (2006) on the Netherlands indicates that Moroccan, Turkish and Antillean working women exhibit lower leave uptake, but also that this is related to a lack of knowledge of regulations. Similarly, Lapuerta et al. (2011) find that parents of foreign nationality in Spain are less likely to take up parental leave than Spanish natives. Indicators of employment position (working regime, contract type, income position, seniority) and work environment (sector, firm size) were found to explain the disproportional non-uptake of leave among these women. Hence, both in countries where all mothers are entitled to parental leave on the one hand and countries where eligibility is tied to labour force attachment on the other, differential parental leave strategies among migrants are related to precarious employment trajectories.

4. Data & Methods

4.1. Data

We use data from the Belgian Administrative Socio-Demographic panel (ASD Panel) that was constructed using longitudinal microdata from the National Register and the Crossroads Bank for Social Security. The ASD Panel covers the period 1999-2010 and is representative of the female population aged 15 to 50 years that legally resides in Belgium between 1 January 1999 and 31 December 2010. To maintain the cross-sectional representativeness of the panel throughout the observation period, annual top-up samples of 15 year olds were drawn to guarantee the presence of the youngest age-group in the sample. Similarly, supplementary annual samples were drawn of women aged 16 to 50 years who settled in Belgium in the preceding year. Apart from the sampled women, the ASD Panel also includes all individuals officially being part of the household of a sampled individual on 1 January in each year. The panel provides detailed annual information on the household composition of sampled women, as well as detailed information on labour market positions, earnings and social security benefits of sampled individuals and household members on a quarterly basis. All samples of the ASD Panel are disproportionately stratified by nationality using sampling fractions of 1/40 for Belgian women and 1/20 for foreign women respectively. In addition, the Crossroads Bank for Social Security provides data on country of birth of both women and their (grand)parents, allowing to identify women of second and later generations.

Given the extensive information on household composition and labour market position and the oversampling of migrant populations, these data are well-suited for the analysis of leave-taking by migrant groups in Belgium.

The analyses document leave strategies across ethnic groups for 10,964 one-child mothers who had their first birth between the first quarter of 2004 and the fourth quarter of 2010. We observe these women until their second child is born, until their first child reaches the age of 7, until the end of the observation window in 2010 or until observation stops at an earlier moment as a result of death or emigration. As we aim to link the socio-economic position before parenthood to parental leave uptake patterns after the birth of a first child, we only select women for whom the labour market position one year before childbirth is known. We do not take into account women who were self-employed as this group is not entitled to parental leave. We start with a sample of 10,964 women, but after selecting one-child mothers eligible for parental leave[4] and employed a year before the first birth our sample consists of 6283 women.

Although this paper focusses on parental leave uptake, it was not possible to distinguish between parental leave and other leave schemes. Therefore the uptake of leave refers to

[4] A parent is eligible on parental leave when he or she has been working 12 out of 15 months with the same employer prior to the application. Civil servants are not restricted by this condition. As civil servants are not perfectly identifiable in our data, we apply the selection criterion of 12 months to all women, independent of sector of employment.

all types of Belgian 'Time Credit' leave schemes[5]. However, previous research (Desmet & Glorieux, 2007) shows that wanting to spend more time with their children is the main reason to take up leave for Belgian women. As our analyses focus on leave uptake among newly one-child mothers, we assume that most leave is used to take care of young children.

4.2. Analysis

Nesting mothers in pre-birth employers, three types of analysis are executed. First, mixed effects logit models of leave use (table 1) are estimated to assess the ethnic gradient in leave uptake. The variable leave uptake indicates whether a mother has ever used parental leave in the observation period. Second, mixed effects logit models are estimated distinguishing full-time from part-time leave use (table 2) to shed light on the way parental leave is used by different ethnic groups. Given that the data indicate that most mothers either mostly use full-time leave or predominantly rely on part-time leave[6], we estimate the odds of full-time leave use (100%) versus part-time uptake (50 or 20%). In this model we study the probability of taking full-time leave (100%) at least one moment in the observation period versus the probability of only taking part-time leave (50 or 20%). Finally, mixed effects logit models of employment directly after

[5] Parental leave schemes are embedded in a broader leave system called Time Credit. Within the Time Credit system, three more specific leave legislations exist: (i) leave in order to provide palliative care, (ii) leave to care for seriously ill relatives and (iii) parental leave schedules.

[6] 36% exclusively used full-time leave whereas 55% only relied on part-time leave. The amount of women that combines full-time and part-time leave is limited to 9%.

leave use (table 3) are estimated to assess the ethnic gradient in labour force participation following leave uptake. Full-time employment (100 percent) is distinguished from part-time employment (less than 100%) and unemployment/inactivity. Two separate models are estimated (i) comparing the chance to be unemployed or inactive to the chance to be employed and (ii) comparing the chance to be part-time employed to the chance to be full-time employed.

The main independent variable of interest in this study is origin group. We distinguish five groups: (I) Belgians, (II) European migrants of the first generation, (III) European migrants of the second generation, (IV) non-European migrants of the first generation, and (V) non-European migrants of the second generation. A woman is identified as a migrant when she or one of her parents is born outside of Belgium. When both parents are born in different countries, the most distant country is considered as the country of origin. Figure 1 illustrates the composition of the migrant groups used for analysis.

** figure 1 about here **

In the first model (model a), in addition to origin group, we take into account several dimensions of time. First, a linear as well as a quadratic term of age at first birth is considered, as previous research on female labour market participation after childbearing shows a positive effect of age at first birth that turns negative after the age of 30 (Kil, Neels, & de Valk, 2015; Kil, Wood, et al., 2015). Second, to control for

variability in terms of observation lengths, we include duration of the observation period (in quarters). We control for the year and quarter of childbirth. Since women whose child is born in the last quarters of the observation period exhibit particularly low leave uptake, dummy terms for the fourth quarter of 2009 until the fourth quarter of 2010 are included. To control for the gradual increase in parental leave use in tandem with increasing flexibility and institutionalization a linear term of quarter of childbirth is included. As the economic structure and parental leave legislation slightly differs between Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels[7], the analyses also control for region of residence. Furthermore we take into account several household characteristics: household position before childbirth (distinguishing cohabitation with a partner, living in the parental home, single or other), being partnered after the first child is born and having a partner that also takes up parental leave.

To assess the extent to which varying patterns of leave use can be explained by socio-economic positions at earlier stages of the life course, we subsequently control for employment characteristics of women one year before the birth of their first child. In models b-d we cumulatively control for employment regime, the number of jobs (model b), salary (model c) and employment sector (model d). Employment regime distinguishes five categories, based on the percentage of working hours of a standard

[7] The Flemish government provides an additional benefit for people living in the Flemish region (Desmet & Glorieux, 2007). In 2010 the benefit approximated €160 per month for a full-time break (Merla & Deven, 2010).

full-time job in the sector of employment: i) unknown position, ii) marginal employment (less than 46%), iii) part-time employment (between 46 and 80%), iv) near full-time employment (between 81 and 99%), and v) full-time employment (100% or more). With respect to income, we take into account salary measured in quintiles by employment regime. This operationalisation of salary does not represent the absolute income, but rather the relative income position compared to others working in the same employment regime. The variable sector is categorized in 10 groups: (1) agriculture and industry, (2) wholesale and retail, (3) logistics and energy distribution, (4) education, (5) public administration and extraterritorial organisations, (6) health services and social care, (7) recreation and other services, (8) finance and estate, (9) administration, support services and ICT, and (10) hotel and catering.

Models assessing the employment position after leave uptake (table 3), additionally control for the amount of cumulated quarters of full-time leave use and the amount of cumulated quarters in part-time leave use as previous research indicates that longer periods of leave hamper the return to work (Fagnani, 1999; Lalive & Zweimuller, 2009).

5. Results

5.1. Parental leave uptake by origin

Figure 2 shows the percentage of one-child mothers by origin group that used parental leave. In line with our expectations and consistent with results for the Netherlands and Spain (Lapuerta et al., 2011; Merens et al., 2006), we find a strong negative ethnic gradient in parental leave uptake (figure 2, N: 10,964). Whereas 34% of Belgian mothers used parental leave following the birth of their first child, this proportion is limited to 16 and 7% among European and non-European migrants of the first generation respectively. Although the proportion of mothers taking up leave is considerably higher among second-generation migrants – 24% and 25% among European and non-European migrants respectively - uptake does not approximate the degree of leave use by Belgians.

As migrant women are overrepresented in precarious labour market positions before the start of family formation, the differential uptake of parental leave following parenthood may partially reflect differential eligibility. When only considering one-child mothers who at some point in the observation period were eligible for parental leave (N: 7128), the ethnic gradient weakens considerably: among native mothers 41% use parental leave following the birth of their first child, compared to 34, 32 and 36% among first and second-generation European women and second-generation non-European women respectively. However, non-European women of the first generation continue to show a considerably lower uptake rate of only 24%.

Given that parental leave use is extremely low among women who were inactive, unemployed, or self-employed before the birth of their first child, we only select women who were employed one year before first childbirth (N: 6283). Controlling for pre-birth employment status and eligibility the ethnic gradient in parental leave use is largely explained. Differences in uptake rates between Belgian women (43%), first-generation European women (43%) and second-generation non-European women (41%) are now very small. Still, the uptake rates of second-generation European women (35%) and first-generation non-European women (35%) are relatively low.

** figure 2 about here **

Focusing on the 6 283 one-child mothers who were eligible for parental leave and engaged in an employment relationship before the first birth, models 1a-1d (table 1) indicate to which extent the ethnic gradient in leave uptake changes when controlling for pre-birth job characteristics. In line with the descriptive results, second-generation European migrants and first-generation non-European migrants show significantly lower use of parental leave with odds of uptake being 22% and 29% lower respectively compared to native women (model 1a). The other covariates show a reversed u-shaped effect of age at first birth, a positive effect of living in Flanders, a positive effect of cohabitation with a partner, and a positive association with leave use of the partner.

Models 1b to 1d additively control for pre-birth employment regime, salary and sector of employment. They show that the significant differences between migrant and native groups disappear. Variation in leave uptake situated at the employer level (rho) decreases from 16% to 10% when incorporating these socio-economic differences, which mainly results from taking into account employment sector. Model 1d shows moderate positive effects for first-generation European migrants and second-generation non-European migrants compared to native women, although the difference is not statistically significant. The incorporation of pre-birth employment characteristics in the model shows that labour force attachment and income are positively associated with leave uptake. The differential socio-economic position before the birth of the first child thus explains ethnic differences in leave uptake.

** table 1 about here **

5.2. Full-time versus part-time leave uptake by origin

With respect to 2614 out of 6283 one-child mothers who used parental leave we assess whether full-time or part-time leave was taken. As in Belgium part-time leave is not available for people that worked part-time, we only select women that worked full-time the quarter before taking parental leave (2236 women).

Results show that first-generation migrants are much more likely to use full-time leave, especially non-European migrants. Compared to native women, the odds of full-time

leave uptake are 139% higher among first-generation European women and 261% higher among first-generation non-European women. Second-generation migrants resemble Belgians more closely compared to the previous generation, with odds-ratios of full-time versus part-time leave uptake of 1.015 and 1.895 for European and non-European migrants respectively. Differences between European migrant women of the second generation and natives are not substantial nor significant.

Models 2b to 2d control for employment characteristics of women before the birth of their first child. Although the differentials between migrant women and natives are somewhat attenuated, the ethnic gradient does not change considerably when controlling for pre-birth employment regime (model 2b), salary (model 2c) and sector of employment (model 2d). The effects of pre-birth socio-economic position indicate that a higher income position is associated with lower odds of full-time versus part-time leave uptake. Variation at the employer level diminishes from 12% to 9% when taking into account pre-birth employment characteristics. Differences in socio-economic position before childbearing merely explain a small part of ethnic differences in the probability of full-time leave uptake.

** table 2 about here **

5.3. Employment position after leave use by origin

Finally, we assess the employment position one quarter after leave use for 2146 one-child mothers who used parental leave and for whom activity status is known after leave use. In general, the majority of one-child mothers who have used leave return to employment. However, migrants are more likely to be unemployed or inactive one quarter after leave use. Whereas 4% of the native mothers are out of employment one quarter after leave uptake, this proportion amounts to 9% and 6% among first and second-generation European migrants respectively and 18% and 9% for first and second-generation non-European migrants.

When holding constant household characteristics, quarters of leave uptake and pre-birth employment characteristics, only differences between first-generation non-European mothers and Belgian mothers with the same profile remain significant (table 3). In comparison to Belgian mothers, the odds to be unemployed or inactive are 347% higher for first-generation non-European women. Women born outside of Europe thus face a disproportionally larger risk of being out of employment after leave uptake.

Naturally, working regime before childbirth is an important predictor of the employment position after leave uptake. As expected, women working part-time before childbearing have a larger chance of still working part-time after leave uptake. Further, a higher income before childbearing is negatively associated with unemployment/inactivity and part-time employment after leave uptake, while being positively associated with full-time employment. Employer variation in the probability

of unemployment/inactivity after leave uptake decreases from 30% to 0% when taking into account employment characteristics before birth, while the employer variation in the probability of working part-time diminishes from 24% to 10%.

More quarters spent in full-time leave are associated with a significantly larger risk of dropping out of employment. Accumulated periods of full-time as well as part-time leave are positively associated with the probability to work part-time rather than full-time following leave. In general, these results show that women that take leave for shorter periods and combine leave with labour force participation (part-time uptake), have the largest probability to be employed full-time after leave uptake.

** table 3 about here **

6. Discussion and conclusion

Family policies such as parental leave increasingly support the work-family balance. Yet maternal employment remains low in migrant populations, raising questions on family policy use among migrant populations. Available research indicates small migrant-native differences in Sweden where all mothers are entitled to parental leave (Mussino & Duvander, 2016), whereas countries in which eligibility is connected to labour force participation (e.g. the Netherlands, Spain) exhibit larger differentials (Lapuerta et al., 2011; Merens et al., 2006). Using unique longitudinal microdata for

Belgium, this study documents migrant-native differences in parental leave uptake, and is among the first to assess the degree to which precarious employment trajectories and eligibility can explain these differences (Lapuerta et al., 2011; Merens et al., 2006; Mussino & Duvander, 2016). Acknowledging the increased flexibility of parental leave legislation, this contribution entails detailed insight into differential parental leave strategies by distinguishing full-time from part-time leave and assessing labour force participation following leave.

Results indicate a strong ethnic gradient in the uptake of parental leave among one-child mothers in Belgium, with particularly low use among first-generation non-European migrants. This finding corroborates previous research indicating differential parental leave strategies for non-European groups (Merens et al., 2006; Mussino & Duvander, 2016). However, when controlling for eligibility and pre-birth employment characteristics, the ethnic gradient largely disappears. Hence, this study identifies the combination of difficult access to stable employment and non-universal eligibility as a major explanation for migrant-native differentials in parental leave use. In line with other studies focussing on social inequality in the uptake of work-family policies in Belgium (Ghysels & Van Lancker, 2009a, 2009b, 2011), the Netherlands (Merens et al., 2006) and Spain (Lapuerta et al., 2011) our paper shows that the Belgian parental leave legislation perpetuates social inequalities by mainly supporting the balance between work and family for those who already attained an advantageous position in the labour

market before the birth of their first child. Future research should address ethnic differences in the uptake of other work-family policies (e.g. formal childcare) in order to broaden our understanding of the inclusiveness of social policy.

Despite the increased flexibility of parental leave legislation, this study shows that migrant mothers exploit this flexibility to a smaller extent than natives do. Non-European migrant women are more likely to take up leave on a full-time basis, while Belgian women and European migrant women more often exhibit part-time leave uptake. Similarly, Swedish research (Mussino & Duvander, 2016) shows that migrant mothers exhaust their right to parental leave as soon as possible, while natives stay connected to the labour force when taking up leave. This observation possibly relates to differential preferences or a lack of knowledge on parental leave regulation (Merens et al., 2006; Mussino & Duvander, 2016). As non-European migrants in Belgium often originate from contexts where roles of women are mainly situated in the private sphere, a stronger preference for childcare in the household context possibly stimulates the choice for full-time over part-time leave. In addition, language problems and cultural distance may entail a lack of knowledge on parental leave regulation.

With respect to employment after leave use, the overwhelming majority of one-child mothers participates in the labour force. Since stable employment is an eligibility criterion for parental leave and mothers enjoy job protection during leave, this observation is not surprising. However, non-European first-generation migrant mothers

exhibit lower employment after leave use compared to the other ethnic groups. This discrepancy persists controlling for pre-birth employment characteristics and the type as well as length of leave uptake. This is consistent with previous research (Kil, Neels, Van den Berg, et al., 2015) indicating that non-European first-generation migrant women exhibit relatively unstable labour market trajectories around childbearing. A stronger retreat from the labour force for these groups, may be related to differential attitudes to childrearing but also to differential access to childcare after the exhaustion of parental leave.

To conclude, this paper provides a detailed picture of migrant-native differentials in parental leave strategies with particular attention to precarious employment trajectories and eligibility requirements. In a context where eligibility is connected to labour force attachment, parental leave maintains labour market disadvantages by providing work-family reconciliation for those already established in the labour force. In Belgium, a country characterized by a large migrant-native employment gap, migrants are particularly underrepresented among the beneficiaries of subsidized leave schemes. Furthermore, our results highlight the importance of acknowledging within-country population heterogeneity concerning parental leave strategies. While natives more frequently exhibit an immediate work-family combination through part-time leave use, migrant women more often temporarily exit the labour force or even retreat from employment after leave use. In order to safeguard the inclusiveness of social policy, the

accumulation of labour market disadvantages as well as population heterogeneity in parental leave use needs to be acknowledged.

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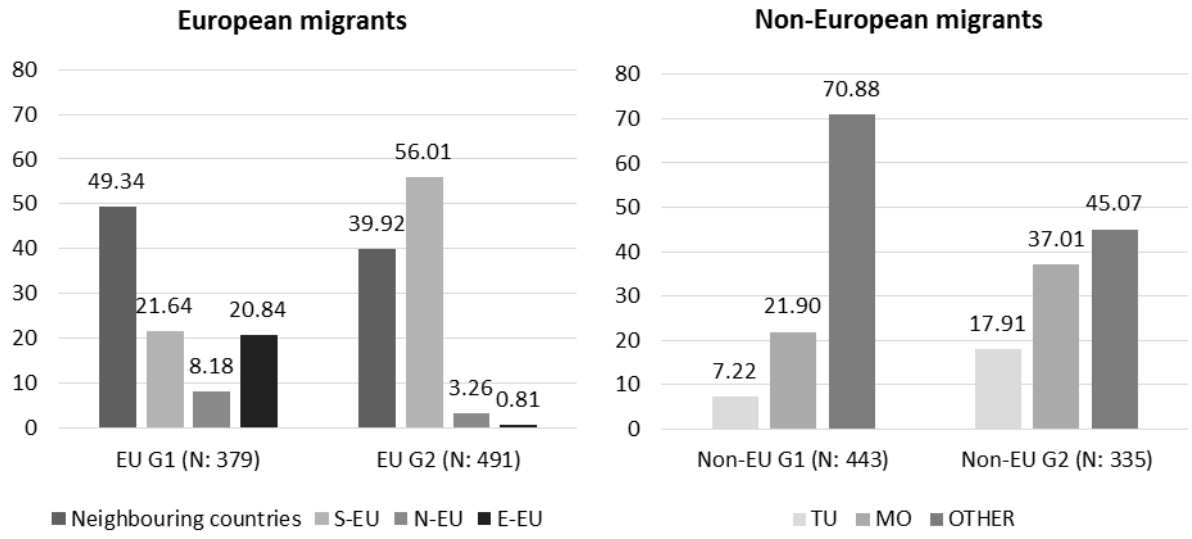
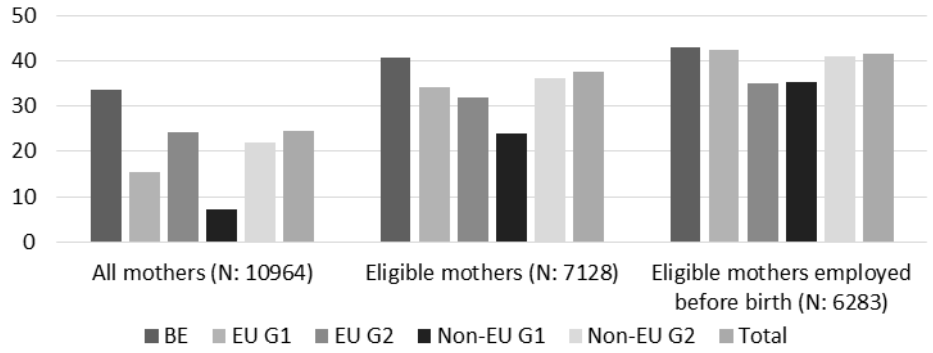
8. Figures

Figure 1: Origins (in %) of migrant one-child mothers (2004_{Q1}-2010_{Q4}), Belgium



Source: BASD Panel 1999-2010, calculations by authors

Figure 2: Leave use (in %) by origin of one-child mothers (2004 - 2010), Belgium



Source: BASD Panel 1999-2010, calculations by authors

9. Tables

Table 1: Exponentiated coefficients from logit models of leave use, one-child mothers that worked before their child was born, Belgium (2004 – 2010, N: 6 283)

	Model 1a		*Model 1b*		*Model 1c*		*Model 1d*	
	e(b)	*sig.*	*e(b)*	*e(b)*	*e(b)*	*sig.*	*e(b)*	*sig.*
				Individual-level covariates				
Ethnicity *(ref. Belgium)*								
European, first-generation	1.047		1.107		1.221		1.258	
European, second-generation	0.792	*	0.798		0.812		0.827	
non-European, first-generation	0.715	**	0.814		0.861		0.905	
non-European, second-generation	1.074		1.097		1.123		1.129	
Age at birth								
age at birth linear	1.456	***	1.330	***	1.190	*	1.182	*
age at birth square	0.995	***	0.996	**	0.998		0.998	
Region *(ref. Flanders)*								
Wallonia	0.554	***	0.572	***	0.585	***	0.592	***
Brussels	0.613	***	0.599	***	0.624	***	0.633	***
Quarter of childbirth								
quarter linear	1.018	**	1.019	**	1.019	**	1.019	**
2009Q_4	0.923		0.897		0.861		0.849	
2010Q_1	0.690	*	0.689	*	0.674	*	0.656	*
2010Q_2	0.584	**	0.587	**	0.583	**	0.579	**
2010Q_3	0.271	***	0.265	***	0.286	***	0.293	***
2010Q_4	0.018	***	0.018	***	0.018	***	0.018	***
Duration of observation								
duration linear	1.020	**	1.022	**	1.023	**	1.022	**
Household position before birth *(ref. cohabiting with partner)*								
not cohabiting (parental home)	0.653	**	0.666	**	0.711	**	0.708	
not cohabiting (single)	0.677	**	0.697	**	0.724	**	0.730	
not cohabiting (other)	0.696		0.725		0.720		0.719	
Having a partner during parity 1								
partnered	1.151		1.118		1.146		1.149	
Leave use by partner								
leave use	1.478	***	1.489	***	1.459	***	1.459	***
Employment regime before birth *(ref. full-time)*								
unknown			0.295	***	0.372	**	0.365	***
marginal			0.329	***	0.496	**	0.515	**
part-time			0.552	***	0.759	**	0.761	**
near full-time			0.676	**	0.768		0.767	
Amount of jobs before birth *(ref. 1 job)*								
multiple jobs			0.522	***	0.504	***	0.554	***
Salary before birth *(ref. first quintile)*								
second quintile					2.202	***	2.116	***
third quintile					2.513	***	2.325	***
fourth quintile					2.618	***	2.397	***
fifth quintile					1.514	**	1.419	**
Employment sector before birth *(ref. health services and social care)*								
agriculture, industry							0.787	
wholesale, retail							0.771	*
logistics, storage, distribution							1.136	
education							0.375	***
public administration, extraterritorial organisations							0.733	*
art, recreation, other services							0.700	*
finances, estate							1.128	
administration, support services, academia, ict							0.831	
hotel, catering							0.564	**
				Random parameters				
Rho(employer)	0.156	***	0.137	***	0.142	***	0.103	***
				Model parameters				
N Persons	6283		6283		6283		6283	
-2LL	7916.280		7810.700		7695.849		7659.221	
Df.	22		27		31		40	

Significance levels: * p< 0.05; ** p< 0.01; *** p< 0.001
Source: BASD Panel 1999-2010, calculations by authors

Table 2: Exponentiated coefficients from logit models of full-time leave use versus part-time leave use, one-child mothers that worked before their child was born, used parental leave afterwards and that were full-time employed the quarter before leave use, Belgium (2004 – 2010, N: 2 236)

	Model 1a		*Model 1b*		*Model 1c*		*Model 1d*	
	e(b)	*sig.*	*e(b)*	*e(b)*	*e(b)*	*sig.*	*e(b)*	*sig.*
				Individual-level covariates				
Ethnicity *(ref. Belgium)*								
European, first-generation	2.390	***	2.374	***	2.337	***	2.320	***
European, second-generation	1.015		1.030		0.991		1.021	
non-European, first-generation	3.608	***	3.635	***	3.399	***	3.262	***
non-European, second-generation	1.895	**	1.914	**	1.851	**	1.869	**
Age at birth								
age at birth linear	0.625	**	0.633	**	0.738	*	0.760	*
age at birth square	1.008	**	1.007	**	1.005	*	1.005	*
Region *(ref. Flanders)*								
Wallonia	0.546	***	0.542	***	0.528	***	0.535	***
Brussels	0.745		0.744		0.746		0.763	
Quarter of childbirth								
quarter linear	0.996		0.996		0.999		0.997	
$2009Q_4$	0.807		0.820		0.869		0.867	
$20010Q_1$	1.439		1.465		1.554		1.576	
$20010Q_2$	1.046		1.025		1.093		1.118	
$20010Q_3$	2.164	*	2.180	*	2.036		1.997	
$20010Q_4$	0.332		0.257		0.184		0.203	
Duration of observation								
duration linear	0.997		0.997		0.993		0.993	
Household position before birth *(ref. cohabiting)*								
not cohabiting (parental home)	1.210		1.256		1.250		1.210	
not cohabiting (single)	1.548		1.663		1.596		1.534	
not cohabiting (other)	1.046		1.095		1.117		1.066	
Having a partner during parity 1								
partnered	0.664		0.673		0.729		0.760	
Leave use by partner								
leave use	0.811		0.799		0.831		0.841	
Employment regime before birth *(ref. full-time)*								
unknown			0.642		0.531		0.645	
marginal			2.042		1.178		1.138	
part-time			2.076	**	1.630		1.602	
near full-time			1.167		0.920		0.917	
Amount of jobs before birth *(ref. 1 job)*								
multiple jobs			0.598		0.678		0.625	
Salary before birth *(ref. first quintile)*								
second quintile					0.895		0.893	
third quintile					0.580	*	0.621	*
fourth quintile					0.406	***	0.443	***
fifth quintile					0.442	**	0.499	**
Employment sector before birth *(ref. health services and social care)*								
agriculture, industry							1.147	
wholesale, retail							1.246	
logistics, storage, distribution							0.615	*
education							1.550	
public administration, extraterritorial organisations							1.066	
art, recreation, other services							0.690	
finances, estate							0.708	
administration, support services, academia, ict							0.843	
hotel, catering							2.741	*
				Random parameters				
Rho(employer)	0.124	***	0.117	***	0.112	***	0.090	***
				Model parameters				
N Persons	2236		2236		2236		2236	
-2LL	2849.459		2838.931		2803.290		2779.128	
Df.	22		27		31		40	
BIC	3019.133		3047.167		3042.376		3087.626	

Significance levels: * p< 0.05; ** p< 0.01; *** p< 0.001
Source: BASD Panel 1999-2010, calculations by authors

Table 3: Exponentiated coefficients from logit models of employment status one quarter after leave use, one-child mothers that worked before their child was born and used parental leave afterwards (2004 – 2010)

	Not employed VS employed				Part-time employed (<100%) VS Full-time employed (100%)					
	e(b)	*sig.*	*e(b)*	*sig.*	*e(b)*	*sig.*	*e(b)*	*sig.*	*e(b)*	*sig.*
					Individual-level covariates					
Ethnicity *(ref. Belgium)*										
European, first-generation	0.971	*	2.464	*	1.772		1.307		1.282		1.126	
European, second-generation	0.690		1.668		1.470		0.942		0.950		1.059	
non-European, first-generation	2.141	***	5.980	***	4.468	***	1.042		1.021		0.689	
non-European, second-generation	0.945		2.016		1.852		1.183		1.099		1.011	
Age at birth										
age at birth linear	0.243		1.013		1.226		0.725	*	0.738	*	0.982	
age at birth square	0.004		0.999		0.996		1.005	*	1.004	*	1.001	
Region *(ref. Flanders)*										
Wallonia	0.222		0.811		0.892		1.173		1.171		1.089	
Brussels	0.362		1.068		1.309		0.912		0.934		1.081	
Quarter of childbirth										
quarter linear	0.021		1.000		0.996		1.049	***	1.049	***	1.036	**
Duration of observation										
duration linear	0.024		1.011		1.000		1.062	***	1.055	***	1.044	**
Household position before birth *(ref. cohabiting)*										
not cohabiting (parental home)	0.460		0.873		0.946		1.170		1.110		1.190	
not cohabiting (single)	0.631		1.686		1.495		0.758		0.726		0.741	
not cohabiting (other)	0.355		0.406		0.539		0.519		0.501		0.460	
Having a partner (parity 1)										
partnered	0.345		0.528		0.559		0.463	*	0.454	*	0.638	
Leave use by partner										
leave use	0.299		0.748		0.816		0.654	*	0.662	*	0.676	
Quarters of leave uptake (parity 1)										
full-time leave uptake			1.332	***	1.216	**			1.250	***	1.102	
part-time leave uptake			1.035		1.042				1.032	*	1.085	**
Employment regime before birth *(ref. full-time)*										
unknown					0.588						0.447	
marginal					0.000						14.793	***
part-time					0.969						15.261	***
near full-time					1.060						13.894	***
Amount of jobs before birth *(ref. one)*										
multiple jobs					0.318						2.355	*
Salary before birth *(ref. first quintile)*										
second quintile					0.653						0.717	
third quintile					0.756						0.641	
fourth quintile					0.669						0.466	*
fifth quintile					0.348	*					0.329	***
Employment sector before birth *(ref. health services and social care)*										
agriculture, industry					3.186	**					0.806	
wholesale, retail					2.904	**					1.098	
logistics, storage, distribution					1.854						1.257	
education					0.924						1.136	
public administration, extraterritorial organisations					1.147						0.599	*
art, recreation, other services					2.330						2.421	*
finances, estate					0.945						1.341	
Administration, support services, academia, ict					3.680	***					1.550	*
hotel, catering					2.094						0.830	
					Random parameters							
Rho(employer)	0.163	***	0.301	***	0.000	***	0.250	***	0.236	***	0.104	***
					Model parameters							
N Persons	2146.000		2146.000		2146.000		2028.000		2028.000		2028.000	
-2LL	859.527		841.834		805.894		2368.428		2353.470		1903.944	
Df.	17.000		19.000		34.000		17.000		19.000		34.000	
BIC	989.941		987.590		1089.734		2497.879		2498.153		2185.692	

Significance levels: * p< 0.05; ** p< 0.01; *** p< 0.001
Source: BASD Panel 1999-2010, calculations by authors