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A THEORY-DRIVEN AND DYNAMIC APPROACH TO INCOME SUPPORT POLICIES EVALUATION

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Abstract

Since income support policies goals are often vague and not explicit, evaluators are used to concentrate their attention on perverse effects such as welfare dependence. But there are other aspects to take into account. Social workers use some “theories” in dealing with claimants and claimants implement some strategies to overcome poverty. Theories and strategies have to be explicitly developed in order to perform a more accurate evaluation. Moreover, the dynamic character of poverty calls for a longitudinal methodology, in particular Event History Analysis. This technique can be applied to the administrative data collected by social services regarding the duration of benefits and the characteristics of claimants. An evaluation “exercise” will be developed regarding the income support policies of the Council of Turin from 1991 to 1996.

1. Poverty and longitudinal analysis

In this paper I support the idea that income support policies evaluation could take advantage from adopting a theory-driven and a dynamic approach. There are two basic ideas: the dynamic character of poverty calls for a longitudinal analysis; because theory is underexploited in income support policies evaluation, this kind of programs could benefit from a theory-driven approach. I will begin with the first of the basic ideas which seems plainer.

Poverty is an extremely heterogeneous phenomenon in many respects. First of all, there are many different events that mark the fall into poverty: the family head's earnings can decline as well as the earnings of wives or other household members, unearned income can change when the family loses some benefits (unemployment, disability, etc.) or the aid from others (child support, gifts from relatives, etc.). The fall into poverty can also be due to a family change as a transition to a female-headed family, a movement of a young man or woman out of a parent's home into an independent household, the birth of a new child. Likewise there are many heterogeneous events which can end the poverty state: the family head can find a job and so his/her earnings can rise as well as the earnings of wives or other household members can change, people can marry or remarry, transfer payments can increase, etc. (Bane and Ellwood, 1986).

As events beginning or ending poverty are different, also the duration is heterogeneous: some people live in poverty for a very long time while others get out of it very quickly and there are various durations in between. These differences are crucial because they reflect different poverty experiences and dissimilar chances to escape from it (Saraceno, 2002). The experience of poverty made by short-term or long-term poor people are very different as well as the meanings they attach to them: for example, the situation of a young man who lives a short spell of poverty moving out of a parent's home into an independent household is not comparable to the situation of an old worker unable to find a stable job. So the key question is not if the individual is poor at a given time but how long s/he has been poor.

Poverty is not a state but a duration, that's why it is important to adopt a dynamic approach. This adoption has many corollaries. The large number of people who experience a short-term poverty is a strong evidence against the widespread

stereotype “once poor, always poor”. For example in the data used in this paper, which refer to the social assistance dynamics in Turin from 1991 to 1996, more than half of the recipients (54,5%) experience just one spell of social assistance and after a year almost three quarter of the people (70,8%) have already left the first spell. So as people get into poverty, people are able as well to get out of it and this represents a first evidence against the “vicious circle” and the “welfare dependence” hypotheses. It is difficult to support that poverty is a path impossible to escape from once taken: the cumulating of negative factors can be broken by virtuous mechanisms; it is necessary to stop describing poor people as passive automatons and start considering them as social actors with their own agency (Leisering and Leibfried, 1999). Similarly, also the “welfare dependence” hypothesis vacillates according to which social assistance would discourage employment and other virtuous behaviours. This is “good news”, but there is also some bad ones: till now the static approach has underestimated poverty. The reason is quite basic: «only a small fraction of those who enter poverty in any given year will be chronically poor. But people who will have long spells of poverty represent a sizable portion of the group we label “the poor” at any one time» (Bane and Ellwood, 1986, p. 11). This means that many people who experience poverty even for a short spell are not caught by a static approach.

A lot of different techniques falls under the label “longitudinal” (Bijleveld and Van Der Kamp, 1998): repeated surveys, panel data analysis, multilevel analysis, time series, sequence analysis, etc. For the purpose at hand, event history analysis (Allison, 1984; Blossfeld and Rohwer, 2002) is surely one of the most relevant: regression models are applied to duration data, i.e. information on the time spent before the happening of an “event”. The event has to mark a sharp change and to happen at a specific point in time: examples of this can be finding a job, getting married, getting social assistance, etc. So event history analysis considers not only the change from one state to the other (employed/unemployed, unmarried/married, on/off social assistance, etc.) but also the time spent before the change takes place. For this peculiarity this technique is particularly useful to study the processes of entry and exit of unemployment and poverty. Event history analysis allow to model these processes according to variables which can be time-constant (e.g. gender) or time-varying (e.g. number of children).

2. Income support policies and evaluation

Among the Italian income support policies I will concentrate on *vital minimum* (*MV – Minimo Vitale*). MV is both a threshold which is considered necessary to satisfy the basic needs of the individual or of the family and the benefit which is accorded by the councils to reach that threshold. It is administered at a local level so that its application is very different from council to council. MV is addressed both to older and disabled people and to able-bodied young people and adults and their households¹ even if with big differences as we will see (Eardley et al., 1996).

The evaluation framework for this kind of policies is often based following this set of assumptions. At the beginning the focus is on what is considered to be the main objective of income support policies, i.e. the coverage of the basic needs. However this objective is assumed to be accomplished with the simple according of the benefit. The change implied by income support policies is assumed not to be of the same kind implied, for example, by active employment policies². So the priority is shifted to the major drawbacks of this kind of policies, in first place welfare dependence. The evaluation objective is to assess if the policies allow welfare dependence.

Obviously this is an important topic for the evaluation, but it is reductive of the goals and objectives of income support policies. In order to reconstruct what it is assumed to be a much more complex picture I consider the “understanding the program” lesson by Weiss (1998). It is necessary to extend attention from the program’s *formal characteristics* to its *substance*, i.e. the stakeholders’ theories that make it work. The advantages of this shift are many but the main one is to bring out theories from the black box. Similarly, according to Pawson e Tilley (1997), it is necessary to move from a simplified conception of the programs to a complex one which takes into account the stratified nature of social reality (ideas, individuals, institutions and infra-structures). Consequently, programs can not be reduced to a set of mechanical operations, they are multifaceted social systems. So it is crucial to deepen the knowledge of the program and of the interactions shaped by the social actors who struggle with ideas, institutions and infra-structures.

¹ In the case of Turin MV is distinguished by *alimentary minimum* (*Minimo Alimentare*): the first is addressed to older and disabled people while the second, which is less generous, is directed to able-bodied young people and adults (Saraceno, 1998).

In order to bring out the theories implied by income support policies, I have focused on two categories of stakeholders: social workers and recipients³. Beginning with the first ones, the essential element from which to start is the social workers' discretion: they decide whether to accord a benefit and which one, its amount, how long, etc. (Eardley et al., 1996). Such discretion has been highlighted by empirical analyses performed on the same data about Turin I will use later: «The great variability observed reveals the extent to which local welfare functioning is conditioned by the considerable element of discretion of the operators, in view of the ambiguity of the rules [...] There is a strong evidence in favour of the existence of sub-local nonwritten rules employed by the services that provide granting. This result also shows that the local system does not operate on the basis of a single model. It is possible to assert that several income support policies co-exist in the territory, all of which operate by linking an assortment of instruments in various ways: *minimo vitale*, *minimo alimentare*, loans, extraordinary support, etc. Also, in the view of the severity of the local means tests, [...] it would be plausible to assert than these policies can be aggregated in two groups: those that are in fact more sensitive to the principle of according to the need and those more concerned with the possibility of opportunist calculations of the able-bodied that may induce them not to emerge from their state of hardship in order to take advantage of the relatively favourable mix of assistance and income from irregular work» (Bosco et al., 1999, pp. 253-254).

So it is possible to assume that there are two policies adopted by social workers which I termed “gravity policy” and “merit policy”⁴. Both of them behave in the same way in respect of old, handicapped, disabled people and in general in respect of the individuals who are not able to support themselves. For these people there is no way to cover their needs other than social assistance and social workers can not do anything else than granting it. Things change for the able-bodied people. Social workers adopting

² Moreover it is extremely difficult to define the needs and to survey if they are really covered.

³ As we will better see later, this paper is not based on an original research. Consequently I have tried to surface the theories not on the basis of primary interviews but using secondary research material. Obviously there are many limitations, however they are justified by the aim of the present work which is methodological and not substantive.

⁴ The label “gravity policy” derives from the use of the *gravometro* (“gravitometer”) to measure how serious the situation of the person asking for social assistance is (reported by a social worker to Prof. Chiara Saraceno during an interview). The label “merit policy” derives from the distinction between deserving and not deserving poor.

a merit policy believe that all poverty tends to be permanent. So they are worried about the recipients' opportunism and fear their passivity and dependence. Social workers limit themselves to grant social assistance as less as possible and are not interested in integrating the benefit with other measures (vocational training, vocational guidance, counselling, etc.). On the other hand, social workers adopting a gravity policy assume that part of the poverty is temporary. They think that there are some poor people who have good chances to get out of it and so they decide to concentrate their efforts on them: the income support benefit is not enough and has to be integrated with other measures which allow the poor to overcome his/her disadvantages⁵.

As to recipients, it is necessary to surface the strategies they adopt dealing with social assistance. Usually the only concern is with opportunism and the complex framework of strategies put into action by recipients is overlooked. Unfortunately the research material about Turin to bring out recipients' strategies is not enough. So I have taken advantage of the work of Leisering and Leibfried (1999) who surveyed the subjective conceptions of time spent on social assistance in Bremen with some qualitative interviews (see Table 1). Obviously this work is not representative of Turin, but it is extremely useful in outlining the strategies at disposal.

At this point the problem is to convert social workers' policies and recipients' strategies in theories of change (Weiss, 1995). Here I will opt for the realistic variant – later I will explain in detail why –: Context-Mechanism-Outcome (CMO) configurations are the realistic theories of change (Pawson e Tilley, 1997, p. 77), they rise from the various and plausible combinations of three key elements of the realistic formula: Outcome = Mechanism + Context⁶.

⁵ For these reconstructions I principally used Saraceno (1998).

⁶ Here I can not go in detail about the logic of realistic evaluation, I refer to Pawson and Tilley (1997) and Pawson (2000).

Table 1.
Subjective conceptions of time spent on social assistance
(Leisering and Leibfried, 1999, pp. 89-102)

Types and subgroups	Description
<i>A. Subjective bridgers</i>	<i>People who see receiving social assistance as a temporary and restricted phase of their life.</i>
1. Support while waiting for a prior benefit to be paid	These claimants are waiting for unemployment benefits or old-age pensions to start, or for unemployment benefits to be reinstated after a period of disqualification.
2. Support until an event in fixed time occurs	These are the cases where the duration and termination of the spell are fixed in advance, for example when one has to use social assistance to bridge the gap until higher education or training starts or continues.
3. Support until a predictable but not precisely fixed event occurs	These people have fallen into a situation of having to claim social assistance unwillingly and without planning, for instance because of a separation or an increasing disability. They are claiming social assistance until an employment tribunal has reached a decision, or until they are fit after another operation.
4. Support during a period of biographical reorientation	Here one finds people who want to change their careers, for professional development or retraining, such as a young woman whose education was interrupted, or a younger man who wants to be retrained because security and stability have become increasingly important to him.
5. Support during the child care years	This group consists of women, chiefly single parents, who claim social assistance because they want to care for their children themselves.
<i>B. Unsuccessful bridgers</i>	<i>At the outset, the 'unsuccessful bridges' were using social assistance as no more than a temporary expedient. But whatever their initial time perspectives when claiming started, they ended up with a continuous (or occasionally discontinuous) long claiming career.</i>
<i>C. Subjective long-term claimants</i>	<i>These were the respondents who, in absence of any alternatives or for reasons of convenience, accepted living for a long time on social assistance, or could imagine doing so and said so explicitly.</i>
1. Voluntary or calculated long term claimants	These respondents could see life as a claimant as among the acceptable options available to them in making their life choices.
2. Resigned or constrained long-term claimants	These respondents no longer saw any escape routes from dependency and/or had been compelled to accommodate themselves to life as a claimant.
3. Quasi-automatic long-term claiming through pension supplementation	These are people who claimed social assistance continuously for years (or with only minor breaks) simply because their pension for either age or disability was too low.

My hypothesis bases on three general mechanisms – “bridge”, “viable road”, “fixed road” – from which many particular CMO configurations can derive. The “bridge” mechanism refers to the choice made by the recipient to use social assistance to fill the gap between two periods of affluence. On the basis of *micro-context* (aspirations and personal resources) and *macro-context* (opportunities and ties of the social service system and of the more general socioeconomic system), individuals

decide to rely only temporarily on social assistance. As I said before, the “bridge” is a general mechanism, but many particular CMO configuration are possible. If social workers adopt a “gravity policy” (macro-context), integrative programs (vocational training, child care services, etc.) will be offered to the able-bodied people (micro-context). These context can activate a “bridge” mechanism in many different ways: recipients improve their job skills strengthening their position on the labour market; individuals improve their self confidence and make more effort to seek a job; recipients widen their relational networks in order to obtain more information about available jobs, etc. Even in a “merit policy” macro-context, some micro-contexts can activate “bridge” mechanisms: in a married couple with children one member can be in charge of child care while the other can actively look for a job; individuals living in a family can feel a greater responsibility compared to people living alone, a woman just separated might want only the time to reorganise her life, etc. All these are CMO configurations which have a quicker exit from social assistance and a more difficult return to it as an outcome.

The second general mechanism is what we called “viable road”. Here I am referring to the choice of the recipient who find social assistance a legitimate income source like the others. The benefit is not seen as a temporary choice but as a “viable road” to exploit as much as possible. If there is an insufficient coordination among the organisations providing services to the poor (Council, religious institutions, non profit organisations, etc.) (macro-context), the able-bodied individuals (micro-context) might try to get some other benefit and then go back to social assistance. This could be labelled “revolving door” CMO configuration. In a local (macro-)context with political patronage and particularistic traditions, fraud episodes could even occur.

As to the last general mechanism – “fixed road” –the role of the micro-contexts (illness, handicap, disability, old-age, etc.) is particularly relevant. Due to these situations the claim for social assistance is “the only thing to do” and the only strategy to keep afloat. The obvious outcome will be a long period on social assistance. For these individuals the choice is almost compelled but it is anyway a choice as the case of homelessness shows.

Up to this point I have surfaced social workers’ theories and recipients’ strategies and changed them into many CMO configurations, i.e. small chunks of

theories (Weiss, 1998, pp. 69-70; 1997a, p. 513). The problem is now their empirical “test”.

3. An evaluation “exercise”

Before continuing I would like to clarify the character of what I am doing. What will follow is not a *proper evaluation* of the income support policies implemented by the Turin Council. I am instead “training” to perform such evaluation and I want to show the possibility of an evaluation which merges a theory-driven approach and longitudinal analysis. In this sense what follows represents an *evaluation exercise*.

The data here analysed are part of ESOPO (Evaluation of Income Support Policies at the Local Urban Level), a project financed within the TSER Programme of DG XII of the European Union (Saraceno, 1998)⁷. The Turin data are based on the computerized administrative register (*Archivio socioassistenziale informatizzato del Comune di Torino*) of all social assistance recipients in the city. The data of the administrative archive have been linked with the national census (1991) and the data held by the Turin registry office (all the covariates are time-constant). The observation window lasted from December 1989 until June 1996. For the ESOPO project specific households were selected: only those whose first time reciprocity started between December 1990 and December 1992. The analyses, performed with the program TDA (Transition Data Analysis) (Rohwer e Pötter, 1999; Blossfeld e Rohwer, 2002), are based on 1270 households.

In particular I have analysed survivor functions and transition rates of the first cash and non cash episodes (by “non cash episode” I mean the time out of welfare following the first cash episode). On the basis of these estimates (see Table 3 in Appendix) it is possible to calculate some parameters for groups of individuals defined by specific values of the covariates (Blossfeld e Rohwer, 2002). This is particularly interesting for our point of view because it gives the chance to shape the CMO configurations’ contexts and to analyse whether the mechanisms were activated or not.

⁷ I thank Prof. Chiara Saraceno and Prof. Nicola Negri of the University of Turin who made the data available for this secondary analysis.

Table 2.
Median duration and survivor function value after one year for some contexts

	First cash episode		First non cash episode	
	Median duration	$G(t)$ value after one year	Median duration	$G(t)$ value after one year
A1) Able-bodied married couple with children living in Vanchiglia with reference person 30-44 years old, non Italian (reference person male, 4 components family)	2,2	2	43,1	82
A2) Able-bodied married couple with children living in Vanchiglia with reference person 30-44 years old, Italian (reference person male, 4 components family)	2,7	5	55,0	86
A3) Able-bodied married couple with children living in Vanchiglia with reference person 45-64 years old, Italian (reference person male, 4 components family)	4,0	13	61,3	87
A4) Able-bodied married couple with children living in Lingotto, Mercati generali with reference person 30-44 years old, Italian (reference person male, 4 components family)	4,4	15	32,1	77
A5) Married couple with disabled people with children living in Vanchiglia with reference person 30-44 years old, Italian (reference person male, 4 components family)	5,5	22	29,7	76
A6) Married couple with old-aged people with children living in Vanchiglia with reference person 30-44 years old, Italian (reference person male, 4 components family)	5,7	23	33,2	78
B1) Married couple with a child (reference person male, 18-29 years old, Italian, able-bodied family, living in Vanchiglia)	2,3	2	61,7	87
B2) Lone mother 18-29 years old Italian with a child (separated/divorced, able-bodied family, Vanchiglia)	3,0	6	39,1	81
C1) Married couple without children (reference person male, 18-29 years old, Italian, able-bodied family, Vanchiglia)	1,7	1	63,3	88
C2) Lone man (18-29 years old, unmarried, Italian, able-bodied family, Vanchiglia)	4,1	13	52,1	85

In Table 2 I have hypothesised three different situations (couples with children, lone mothers, lone men) and their variants. Starting from the first one I want here to emphasise the differences between the contexts A2, A5 and A6. The first context refer to the situation of an able-bodied married couple with minor sons living in Vanchiglia. The reference person is an Italian male 30-44 years old, the family has four components. This couple has a median duration of the first cash episode equal to 2,7 months and a

value of the survivor function one year after the beginning of the cash equal to 5. This means that after one year just 5% of this kind of recipients are still on cash. The estimate of the median duration for the first non cash episode is 55,0 months and the value of the survivor function after one year 86. Again, one year after the beginning of the first non cash episode 86% of these couples are still out of welfare. Now, for a family with the same characteristics but with one of the members disable (A5) or old (A6) things change dramatically. The median durations of the first cash episode become more than twice (5,5 and 5,7) while the survivor functions values quadruple (22 and 23). Inversely the durations of the first non cash episode are shorter (see Table 2). So there is evidence for the activation of a “fixed road” mechanism.

The second situation focuses on a lone mother with a minor son. She is 18-29 years old, Italian, separated/divorced, able-bodied and living in Vanchiglia (B2). Her first cash episode median duration is equal to 3,0 months and a year after the beginning of the episode 6% of these lone mothers are still on cash. Things change if a father is added to this family. The median duration falls to 2,3 months and the survivor function value to 2. Likewise the parameters for the first non cash episode show the better chances of B1 compared to B2. It seems that a “bridge” mechanism has been successfully activated. Compared to the lone mother the married couple has the advantage of sharing the household duties, one member can be in charge of child care while the other can actively seek a job.

The third situation compares a lone man (18-29 years old, unmarried, Italian, able-bodied, living in Vanchiglia) (C2) to a man with the same characteristics but married (C1). The first has a first cash episode median duration equal to 4,1 months and one year after the episode’s beginning 13% is still on cash. For a married man the situation is very different. The median duration is less than a half (1,7 months) and after one year only 1% of the married men are still on cash. As to the first non cash episode the differences are not so large but express the same pattern. So there is evidence for the activation of a “bridge” mechanism for the married man. He feels a greater responsibility and works harder to get out of social assistance.

These are just examples: some of them are more trivial, some more interesting. What I want here to emphasize is the potentiality of the procedure: surfacing stakeholders’ theories, changing them into CMO configurations, shaping contexts to

analyse the outcomes and then to infer the activation (or not) of mechanisms. If we are interested in more challenging results and evaluations, the problem is data availability. For example, between the contexts A2 and A3 there is just one difference: the reference person is older, 45-64 years old instead of 30-44. The family of the younger reference person has a median duration of 2,7 months against the 4,0 of the older; one year after the beginning of the first cash episode 5% of the younger family is still on cash against the 13 of the older. What is age a proxy for? Human capital squandering (work skills worn out, inadequate education), social capital dissipation (progressive isolation), or what? With suitable data it is possible to operationalise these concepts, to shape the appropriate contexts and to check for the activation of mechanisms.

If the problem is not this merging of theory-driven approach and longitudinal analysis but data availability, what is the information necessary to look for? Firstly, it is really important to pay attention to the program characteristics: which income support measure are we dealing with? How much is it? Besides income support measure what other services are offered to the recipient (vocational training, apprenticeship, child care, etc.)? Secondly, as we have already seen, recipients and socio-economic system characteristics have to be extensively surveyed. Finally, it is necessary to ask the reasons for social assistance entry (unemployment, family reasons, immigration, addictions, etc.) and exit (work, other benefit, marriage, no more entitled, etc.). Then the crucial point is to give the theory the chance to drive the evaluation design according to the root idea of “theory-based evaluation” (Weiss, 1997a, p. 501; 1998, pp- 58-59).

4. Eclecticism in evaluation

As I have already said, I preferred translating stakeholders’ theories in the realist CMO configurations rather than in the Weiss’ theory-based framework. The main reason of this choice is related to context. As we have seen at the beginning, poverty is an extremely heterogeneous phenomenon: many different events mark the fall into and the exit from poverty; durations, experiences and meanings attached to poverty are heterogeneous; socio-graphic characteristics related to all this are different. In regard of this heterogeneity it is crucial to take into account contexts which permit to distinguish the different situations: for example, a vocational training program could be extremely useful for a middle-aged man who wore out his skills while it could turn out to be a

form of social workers' control for a lone mother who has simply a child care problem. Even theory-based evaluation pays attention to the context: «One can also include contingencies in the theory – that is, conditions under which one thing will happen and conditions under which something else will happen. [...] Similarly, one can envision a theory that makes distinctions among subgroups of people» (Weiss, 1998, p. 64; see also Birckmayer e Weiss, 2000, p. 428). Anyway it does not play the crucial role it plays in the realistic formula⁸.

Notwithstanding this difference it seems to me that the underlying framework is the same so that it is possible to translate the CMO configurations in program theories and vice versa. For example, there is a program theory widespread in the income support field that it is possible to label “resources theory”. This theory focuses on those individuals whose poverty is directly linked to unemployment: the hypothesis is that poverty is a direct effect of unemployment and this is due to an inadequate resources provision. By resources it is meant not only the economic capital (rented/owned house, previous saving, etc.) but also the human (education, work skills, etc.) and social one (relational networks). Income support policies can meet the basic needs and avoid a condition deterioration but can not be enough to produce an effective change. They have to be integrated with activities that enable to accumulate human and social capital. This way individuals strengthen their position on the job market enhancing their chance to find a stable job and to exit from poverty. Resource shortages are of different kinds as well as the activities to fill them: therefore, it is possible to generate different combinations and to translate them in many CMO configurations as some of the “bridge” mechanisms presented at the end of the second paragraph. From a program theory it is then possible to obtain different CMO configurations.

Besides this correspondence, it seems to me that there are many similarities between the realistic evaluation of Pawson and Tilley and the theory-based evaluation of Weiss. At the beginning of the second paragraph I have already stressed the importance of programs exploring both for realistic and theory-based evaluation. Other similarities – unfortunately it is not possible to explore here– are: theory as means to open the “black box” (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, pp. 30-54; 1998, p. 84; Weiss, 1997a,

⁸ Related to this see the critique to program theory diagrams by Rogers (1999, p. 382).

pp. 514-515); the emphasis on mechanisms whose definition is almost the same (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 66; Weiss, 1998, p. 57); the conception of knowledge development and accumulation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, pp. 123-124; Pawson, 2000; Weiss, 1998, pp. 67-70; 1997b, pp. 51-52); finally, the way to surface theories (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, pp. 153-182; Weiss, 1998, pp. 61-62). Obviously differences are not missing: theory-based evaluation pays less attention to context but more attention to implementation (Weiss, 1998) and looks for a consensual theory while realistic evaluation does not (Pawson e Tilley, 1998, p. 84). Anyway theory-based and realistic evaluation seem more specification of a common core suitable for different evaluation tasks.

Due to this common core I termed the approach developed in this paper “theory-driven”. I do not refer directly to the approach by Chen e Rossi (1981) who are anyway at the beginning of such a tradition; instead, I chose it to highlight the differences of a theory-driven evaluation against a method-driven one. In this paper realistic and theory-based evaluation led me along the same direction. Other theory-driven evaluations are the “theory of change” approach – which arises out of the work of *Aspen Institute Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives* (www.aspenroundtable.org) – and the logic models (see references in Weiss, 1997b, p. 43; Birkmayer and Weiss, 2000, p. 409). All of them have strong commonalities and I believe important to combine them in an eclectic way more than preserving an abstract specificity.

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APPENDIX

Table 3.
Logistic regression models for the first cash and non cash episodes

<i>Covariates</i>	First cash episode			First non cash episode		
	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>Signif.</i>	<i>Δ%</i>	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>Signif.</i>	<i>Δ%</i>
Constant	-1,72	1,00		-4,52	1,00	
Gender (Male)						
Female	-0,15	0,96	-14	0,15	0,88	16
Age (18-29 years)						
30-44 years	-0,13	0,85	-12	0,18	0,89	20
45-64 years	-0,53	1,00	-41	0,07	0,41	8
65 or more years	-0,64	1,00	-47	-0,54	0,98	-42
Marital status (Unmarried)						
Married/living together	0,52	1,00	69	-0,30	0,93	-26
Separated/divorced	0,23	0,96	25	0,06	0,32	6
Widowed	0,52	1,00	69	-0,52	0,99	-41
Nationality (Italian)						
Non Italian	0,21	0,94	23	0,24	0,91	28
Typology of recipients (Able-bodied family)						
Family with old aged people	-0,75	1,00	-53	0,51	0,99	66
Family with disabled people	-0,71	1,00	-51	0,62	1,00	85
Number of components	-0,05	0,82	-5	-0,07	0,84	-7
Children	-0,23	0,95	-20	0,09	0,51	10
Family structure (Single person)						
Single parents	0,52	1,00	68	0,05	0,24	5
Couples with/without children	0,41	0,99	51	0,17	0,62	19
Other family structure	0,50	1,00	65	0,19	0,74	21
Event associated with the beginning of the first cash episode (Other)						
Work loss	-0,13	0,88	-12	0,42	1,00	52
First cash episode duration				0,02	1,00	2

District of residence (8. Vanchiglia, Vanchiglietta)						
1. Centro	-0,49	1,00	-39	0,32	0,93	38
2. San Salvario, Valentino	-0,46	0,99	-37	0,05	0,19	5
3. Crocetta, S. Secondo, Santa Teresina	<i>-0,34</i>	<i>0,82</i>	<i>-29</i>	<i>0,12</i>	<i>0,26</i>	<i>12</i>
4. San Paolo	<i>-0,40</i>	<i>0,94</i>	<i>-33</i>	0,61	0,98	84
5. Cenisia, Cit Turin	<i>-0,12</i>	<i>0,44</i>	<i>-11</i>	<i>0,00</i>	<i>0,00</i>	<i>0</i>
6. Campidoglio, San Donato	-0,56	1,00	-43	<i>-0,17</i>	0,50	-16
7. Aurora, Rossini, Valdocco	0,11	0,53	12	0,48	0,99	61
9. Millefonti, Nizza	<i>0,00</i>	<i>0,00</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-0,34</i>	<i>0,63</i>	<i>-29</i>
10. Lingotto, Mercati generali	-0,48	0,96	-38	<i>0,54</i>	<i>0,94</i>	<i>71</i>
11. Santa Rita	-0,44	0,98	-35	<i>0,03</i>	<i>0,09</i>	<i>3</i>
12. Mirafiori nord	<i>-0,26</i>	<i>0,71</i>	<i>-23</i>	<i>0,18</i>	<i>0,44</i>	<i>20</i>
13. Pozzo Strada	-0,44	0,99	-36	<i>-0,28</i>	<i>0,70</i>	<i>-25</i>
14. Parella	-1,14	1,00	-68	<i>0,05</i>	<i>0,14</i>	<i>5</i>
15. Le Vallette, Lucento	<i>-0,32</i>	<i>0,90</i>	<i>-28</i>	0,71	1,00	104
16. Lanzo, Madonna di Campagna	-0,88	1,00	-58	<i>0,14</i>	<i>0,39</i>	<i>15</i>
17. Borgata Vittoria	-0,58	1,00	-44	<i>0,10</i>	<i>0,30</i>	<i>11</i>
18. Barriera di Milano	-0,95	1,00	-61	0,10	0,34	11
19. Falchera, Rebaudengo, Villaretto	-0,85	1,00	-57	<i>0,06</i>	<i>0,16</i>	<i>6</i>
20. Barca, Bertolla, Regio Parco	-0,65	1,00	-48	<i>-0,07</i>	<i>0,17</i>	<i>-6</i>
21. Madonna del Pilone	-0,88	0,99	-58	<i>-0,14</i>	<i>0,23</i>	<i>-13</i>
22. Borgo Po, Cavoretto	-0,87	0,96	-58	<i>-0,93</i>	<i>0,64</i>	<i>-61</i>
23. Mirafiori sud	<i>-0,05</i>	<i>0,20</i>	<i>-5</i>	<i>0,06</i>	<i>0,16</i>	<i>6</i>
Likelihood ratio test	514,32		140,68			
Degrees of freedom	28		29			
χ^2 test significativity	0,00		0,00			

NOTES: $\Delta\%$ = percentage change in the transition rate given that the value of the covariate is increased by one unit; reference categories in brackets; coefficients significative at the level of 0,95 in boldface; parameters of categories with less than 50 cases in italic.

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