

Workshop

Men Roles in a Gender Equality Perspective: National and Cross-National Secondary Data Analysis

Lisbon, November 2015

Parental leave system, stratification and father's involvement in childcare in Spain: a brief notes

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My presentation will contain two brief ideas. First, a general conception regarding the current parental leave system in the southern countries. Second, a very quick presentation of some of the previous results of the work carried out in my research team and my PhD thesis.

The government supports men and work-family balance through three main ways. First, the educational services for children from 0 up to 3 years old. Second, the regularization of the working hours. Third, the parental leave. I am going to focus on the latter and what impact it can have in the potential stratification of the society.

Since there exists a gap between maternity and paternity leaves in terms of time and resources, we are creating legislation pro gender inequality. In the Spanish case, fathers can take two weeks while mothers take sixteen weeks. This gap has an extremely important impact in the life course of every family member. For mothers, due to that they spend more time at home with the child after the birth. During that time they develop a stronger link with the baby. However, the father-child contact is reduced, due to the father's return to their work position. At the same time and also due to childbirth, another similar process starts in the labour market. The time that mothers are out of the labour market is reducing their human

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Workshop

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capital. The opposite occurs for fathers: while mothers develop and improve their care skills, fathers continue progressing in their professional career. This process ends in a vicious circle between the private sphere –home- and the public one –workplace-.

It is impossible to analyse what is happening in the labour market without taking into account the unpaid work done within the households. One determines the other and vice-versa. Once the child was born, mothers have higher probability to lose value in the labour market than fathers. Largely because how the parental leave system is created. But also the employers usually prefer a man instead of a woman in a reproductive age: employers anticipate the future maternity leave and how that impact in the productivity of the company. This anticipation occurs also for mothers: a relevant amount of them leave their careers because they already are aware about the difficulties in the reconciliation of care and work. All these questions are in the source of the gender inequality at the micro-level analysis.

In the macro-level, we have to see how important is the endogenous relationship between policies and attitudes. Policies change a consequence of the change in the attitudes of the population. But at the same time policies impact strongly in the attitudes' changes. So in order to move toward gender egalitarian values in our societies, we need equal shared parental leave systems.

I would like to finish this first general comment remarking another inequality that the current parental leave system that we have is creating: the social polarization. We have a group of population highly educated in stable jobs that can negotiate with their employers and access easily to the parental leave and public services. At the same time there is another group of population formed by low educated people in precarious jobs and without power to

Workshop

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negotiate with their employers that cannot easily access to the parental leave and public services. Recent research (Lapuerta, 2013) has discovered how the architecture of our current parental leave system is even increasing this social polarization.

The second general comment will be focused on our actual research. My main aim is to answer the following question: under what conditions fathers became more involved in childcare? The most involved fathers we have seen are the unemployed ones. The reason is not very complicated to suspect: they have more time. One of our most recent interesting findings is that when we split up the unemployed fathers into two different categories: short-term unemployed (less than one year without job) and long-term unemployed (more than one year), the latter are less involved than the first one. Two possible causal mechanisms are at play. First, the learning process: the same task –e.g. changing nappies- that at the beginning they used to spend one hour, one year later they spend half an hour. Second, the depression: it is well known that unemployment and depression are highly connected. Once time goes on, unemployed fathers start to lose motivation, engagement and excitement. These are some of the results of a paper written with Lluís Flaquer and Almudena Moreno and already finish that will be published by Palgrave-MacMillan in the book *Balancing Work and Family in a Changing Society: The Fathers' Perspective*.

I would like to comment briefly another result of a working progress paper where we are right now working on in London. The previous one was based in a cross-national survey data. But when we take into account the dynamics of the population, using two or more points in

Workshop

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time, we can see how, indeed, fathers are involving in childcare more and more in the recent years. That is true. However, using Spanish Time Use data we can see that yes, they are becoming more involved, but mainly in the *interactive* –and more enjoyable- part of the childcare (play with children, etc.). Nevertheless, the gender inequality remains: mothers continue bearing with the most routine and time-tied type of care (changing nappies, feed up, etc.). That, again, has really important consequences for the outcomes in the labour market for mothers and fathers. In conclusion, we can say that the increase in recent years of this involvement for the case of the fathers is due to several factors, such as the switch of the gender values towards more equality or the progression of our policies, but mainly is an effect of the extremely high unemployment rates that we are suffering of. That is, is mainly a composition effect.

All that I have said mean that we are moving in Europe towards a polarised society divided between two main groups: time-rich/income-poor and income-rich/time-poor. Into the first group we could include a new group of people that has grown especially since the Great Recession and is formed mainly for young people: the working-poor group. This group is formed for people who work a huge amount of hours per week, with low income salaries and with extremely precarious conditions. For them there are no possibilities to plan the future: they are trapped in a hard present.

Finally, taking into account that in this forum there are several politicians, I would like to conclude my presentation making one suggestion: we need more data. In countries like Portugal and Spain there does not exist good databases for the analysis of the childcare. For example, we do not have any longitudinal database where we can follow the children since they born to the maturity. Without it, we cannot response to extremely important questions

Workshop

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such us: what happened for the child development when the father loses the job? What impact have for the future children outcomes the current Great Recession? We need more data, because better data means better policies. And even more: better data means better lives.