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More time parenting in Spain: A possible change towards gender equality?

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Abstract

Several studies have reported that time spent by fathers on childcare has increased in recent years. This paper focuses on the involvement of Spanish fathers and mothers in childcare and it explores the socio-demographic reasons behind changes in parental time use. To this end, it analyzes couples with children under 12 in Spain, using data from the Time Use Surveys carried out in 2002-2003 and 2009-2010. The results reveal that greater male involvement in care is related to the education level and employment status of both partners, although independently. In other words, it is the socioeconomic situation of the caregiver and not of their partner that influences their participation. The paper concludes that the increasing involvement of men in childcare is not directly related to an improved gender-equal distribution of paid work and care work.

Keywords: paternity, childcare, time use, gender equality, work

Introduction

Women have been in the labor market since the very beginning of the industrial revolution, although their presence in the past was not considered crucial by either the employers or even the women, who often considered themselves to be almost exclusively mothers and wives (Borderías, 2007; Nash, 2010; Torns, Carrasquer, Parella & Recio, 2007; Candela, 1997; Candela & Piñon, 2005). Over 20 years ago, Hochschild (1989) judged that there had been no change towards a more equal society, because despite women's increased presence in and commitment to the labor market, men's involvement in housework and childcare had not increased. The same author referred to this phenomenon as the 'stalled revolution' and identified the absence or lack of men's involvement in housework and childcare as one of the outstanding tasks for achieving greater equality.

There is abundant empirical evidence showing that the increased presence of women in the labor market has not been matched by better distribution and greater involvement of men in housework and childcare. However, several studies have reported that the time spent by fathers on childcare has increased in recent years, according to some factors such as education level and employment status (Abril et al., 2015; Ajenjo & Garcia, 2014; Bianchi, 2011). This paper focuses on Spain and has two aims: to study the involvement of fathers and mothers in childcare and to explore the socio-demographic reasons behind changes in parental time use. The initial hypotheses are two. First, the increased involvement of men in care tasks has not led to a decrease in the involvement of women. Second, the factors that explain the greater involvement of fathers are to be found mainly in individual socio-demographic factors (education level and employment status) rather than in the time arrangements of couples.

In order to respond to these questions, this article analyzes data from the Spanish Time Use Survey carried out in 2002-2003 and in 2009-2010 by the National Statistics Institute of Spain (INE). The first part of the paper presents the theoretical framework regarding the involvement of fathers in childcare, and it reviews the research on the situation in Spain. The second part presents the methodology, data and results. Finally, the discussion and conclusions refer back to the theoretical framework and discuss gender equality.

Theoretical framework: The involvement of fathers in childcare

The literature puts forward several explanations for the greater involvement of fathers in childcare and its relationship to mothers' commitment to the labor market. Both material and symbolic aspects are involved, although in many cases they are related.

With regard to the material socio-demographic aspects, there is a fairly widespread consensus that the participation, dedication and status of the two partners in the labor market are key elements in the unequal distribution of housework and childcare (Prieto & Pérez de Guzmán, 2013). Studies that take an economic approach consider that the unequal participation in this unpaid work is due to the relative resources of and time available to each partner, and they further believe in equal gender values (Julià & Escapa, 2014). This is an approach that individualizes and decontextualizes gender relations.

Studies carried out in the United States (U.S.) show that the greater dedication to paid work by mothers over the last 40 years has not been at the expense of childcare time and that, in addition, the increased participation of women in the labor market has not meant a decrease in participation by their male partners (Bianchi & Mattingly, 2004; Bianchi 2011). Indeed, there has been a growth in dual-earner couples and an increase in childcare by both sexes. The data analyzed by Bianchi (2011) clearly show a decline in the dedication of U.S. mothers to housework but an increase in their dedication to childcare, which runs parallel to an increase in time dedicated to childcare by the fathers. These

studies are relevant to our case, because they provide empirical evidence for one of our hypotheses: the increased involvement of men in care tasks has not led to a decrease in the involvement of women. This is a trend that depends on the social, economic and political context of each country; therefore it is not a uniform trend across the US and Europe. For this reason, it is interesting to analyze this trend according to the specific characteristics of the case of Spain.

The research by Sullivan, Billari & Altintas (2014) on the countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) with low fertility rates shows that, despite the inequality in the dedication of parents to childcare, the involvement of fathers in housework and childcare has increased. The same study reports that young parents with a high level of education are those who dedicate the most time to housework and childcare, especially at a time of changing fertility patterns. The authors note that interrelationships exist between the changing fertility pattern, the education level of parents, more egalitarian gender attitudes and greater involvement of fathers in housework and childcare. Our study follows along the same lines in showing how this tendency toward greater parental participation in care is also occurring in Spain.

According to the symbolic aspects, academics over recent years have shown interest in the phenomenon of intensive parenting. Lee, Faircloth & Macvarish (2014) describe the intensification of parenting as the contemporary process by which childrearing has become a much more labor-intensive and demanding task for adults. The authors explain that nowadays the cultural turn towards intensive parenting has not been uniformly experienced by all parents (it depends on gender, class, race and geography), but it remains an idealized standard against which many parents assess themselves. In this context, some research focuses on parenting and gender. Shirani, Henwood, & Coltart (2012) have explored the ways in which expectations around what it means to be a good

parent have affected men differently than women. With regard to the increase in fathers' involvement, they argue that it goes beyond their increased physical presence. For this reason, the authors defend that the social idea of good fathering is related to men who are being involved with and emotionally present for their children (Lee et al., 2014). What is widely considered to be the ideal father is one who is child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor-intensive and financially expensive (Shirani et al., 2012). From this approach, the analysis of fatherhood and motherhood may consider that they are experienced differently because the standard norms and expectations are socially constructed. The distribution of care tasks between men and women is evidence of these social differences. Craig (2006), in his Australian study of the dedication of parents to childcare, shows that the time men report spending on care is more pleasurable than the time women report spending. One of the explanatory factors is the fact that mothers spend much more time on the more constrained and less flexible activities (e.g., feeding, bathing, etc.), whereas men do the less essential but more creative activities (e.g., playing, reading stories, etc.). Gutierrez and Domenech (2007) noted the same type of inequality in their research on Spain: mothers spend three times longer than fathers on basic childcare time, which is spent doing everyday tasks to meet basic needs. By contrast, a practically equal amount of time is dedicated by both mothers and fathers to more recreational activities, which the authors call 'quality time'. The type of childcare provided by mothers is disadvantageous for them because they end up spending more time on rigid, everyday activities.

Gender identity is an important factor for explaining the differences in the care tasks that men and women carry out in the home. The main focus of male identity, as noted by Connell (2005), is paid work. Men's participation in childcare can be analyzed separately from their position in the labor market, but this analysis would be incomplete. The

construction of masculinity and fatherhood—the role of the father as a caregiver or how he reconstructs and identifies himself as a father—is linked to paid work. Many fathers find themselves in a position that compels them to rethink their paternity as a result of failure to be the main breadwinner or an inability to provide sufficient income (Marsiglio & Roy, 2012). However, from these observations it cannot be concluded that the presence of spouses and partners in the labor market is experienced as a challenge to fathers' masculinity. Indeed, many men feel some degree of release from the pressure of being the only or the main breadwinner (Reid, 2012).

As noted above, the men who participate most in childcare are those with higher levels of education. However, some material aspects may force a greater involvement of other male profiles. The material and economic difficulties in working class families may encourage more involvement of men in childcare. Shows and Gerstel (2009) report the case of some men who adapt their working hours to take care of their children: their inability to pay for childcare forces them to take responsibility for these tasks. Although these men are ideologically closer to traditional gender patterns, in practice they turn out to be more egalitarian than some of the men in the middle or upper classes (Deutsch, 1999; Pyke, 1996). It is similar in the U.S, according to Bianchi (2011), who stresses that men working at night are more involved in the routine tasks of childcare while women working at night do less than their counterparts who work during the day. Working hours are also found to be a key factor for changes in the distribution of care time in Spain: earlier quitting times for fathers favor greater dedication to childcare by men (Borràs, Moreno & Recio, 2009). By contrast, situations of unemployment do not appear to favor greater involvement of fathers in care tasks. Legerski and Cornwall (2010) show that the absence of paid work due to forced unemployment does not lead to a change in the patterns of men's behavior in the U.S. Their qualitative study therefore challenges the

idea that economic restructuring favors changes in the distribution and negotiation of domestic work. Abril et al. (2015), in a qualitative study on the distribution of care among first-time parents in Spain, conclude that traditional arrangements persist despite egalitarian ideals. They noted that in many couples both partners aim to continue working after the birth of the child but, when problems arise in work-life balance, women show greater willingness to adapt their working lives to family needs.

Aguiar, Hurst & Karabarbounis (2011) analyzed data from the Time Use Surveys in the U.S. in order to find out how foregone paid work hours (i.e. not occupied) in recession periods are used. The results show that 50% of the foregone working time is spent sleeping, engaging in leisure activities and watching television; while 10% is spent on personal care and civic and religious activities. Job searching and informal work occupy a small portion of the time, and the increase in time spent on childcare is even smaller. This U.S case study reports that lower participation in the labor market due to the crisis does not necessarily entail greater dedication to housework and childcare.

In addition to the material conditions and their influence on the symbolic aspects, there are cases of couples whose traditional gender care roles are inverted. Merla (2007) demonstrated sociocultural difficulties encountered by Belgian men who decide to dedicate themselves exclusively to housework and childcare while their spouses have full-time paid work and are the main breadwinners. Holter (2007) also studied fathers who choose to work part-time because they do not want to give up their exercise of paternity, which becomes a priority. Although these are minority models that do not appear to contribute to greater equality in general terms, they illustrate how caregiving tasks related to one sex are a social construction and that men are perfectly capable of performing them.

In short, the literature review suggests that the time men spend on childcare has increased substantially since 1985, but the time that mothers spend on childcare has also increased. Women spend more time on their children today than in the 1960s, even though they have a greater presence in and commitment to paid work. The reasons behind the greater involvement of fathers in childcare are diverse and the explanation for this phenomenon is very complex. The theoretical framework shows that, from a material perspective, the main reasons are socio-demographic, including changes in fertility patterns, and the educational level of fathers (Marsiglio & Roy, 2012; Reid, 2012). Another material reason pertains to economic considerations at the family level (i.e. Julià & Escapa, 2014). From a symbolic perspective, we have on the one hand reasons related to gender identity (Connell, 2005; Craig, 2006; Gutierrez & Domenech, 2007). On the other hand, recent research uses the concept of intensive parenting in reference to the contemporary process by which childrearing has become a much more labor-intensive and demanding task for adults (Lee et al., 2014; Shirani et al., 2012). From this approach, it should be recalled that fatherhood and motherhood are currently more intensive but experienced differently because of the standard norms and expectations that are socially constructed around gender identity. Moreover, the analysis should be made by relating mothers and fathers, since it is important that paternal care has to be understood in relation to maternal care (Lamb, 1987).

The theoretical perspective that guides our analysis of Spanish fathers' and mothers' involvement in childcare is based on the relative importance of material and symbolic factors. Employment status, working conditions and education level emerge as some material socio-demographic variables, which should be considered in combination with symbolic aspects that are predominantly of a sociocultural nature. That is, the

intensification of parenting has not emerged individually and spontaneously from parents themselves without any context, but rather as a product of sociocultural developments.

Childcare time in Spain

This paper measures care time as an indicator of parent's involvement in childcare and it uses data from the Time Use Survey that the National Statistics Institute of Spain (INE) has carried out since 2002 in two editions (2002-2003 and 2009-2010).

Previous studies using the same data show increased dedication to childcare by fathers. Ajenjo & García (2014) found that men dedicate more time to childcare, although it is still less than the time spent by mothers. Dual-income couples are the most equal. However, Prieto and Pérez de Guzmán (2013) claim that the consensus on dual-income couples being the most egalitarian often hides another reality: the men focus on paid work but help in the home and the women work hard in the market but also take care of housework and child care. Regarding the parenthood and domestic division of labor, Domínguez (2015) shows that couples with children have more traditional gender roles than couples without children. The effect of parenthood is greater for women than it is for men: mothers dedicate more time to domestic work and less time to paid work than fathers. However, the author argues that the domestic division of labor is also affected by the age of children: women with older children dedicate more of their time to carrying out routine tasks than their partners. Regarding the age of children, Gracia (2014) analyzed the influence of male level of education and female employment situation in childcare involvement. He found that, in couples with children aged 0–5 years, the father's education had a significant positive effect on his physical care (i.e., feeding, bathing, and watching over). Meanwhile, for a couple whose youngest child was aged 3–5 years, education was significantly correlated with the father's interactive care, especially in teaching activities. Gracia (2014) argues that Spanish highly educated

fathers disproportionately adhere to the figure of the ‘new father’ and that the mother’s employment has a strong positive effect on the father’s physical care in families with children under school age, specifically when these activities are central to gender equality in the home.

All of these studies raise some interesting questions about the time spent on childcare in dual-income couples within a context of economic crisis¹. One interesting question concerns the reasons behind the increased male involvement in care tasks. As explained in the Introduction, this paper aims to study the involvement of Spanish fathers and mothers in childcare and to explore the socio-demographic reasons for changes in parental time use. The initial hypotheses are two. First, the increased involvement of men in care tasks has not led to a decrease in the involvement of women. Second, the factors for explaining the greater involvement by fathers are to be found mainly in individual socio-demographic factors rather than in the time arrangements of couples.

Data and Methodology

The data used in this article come from the Spanish Time Use Survey carried out by the INE (2002-2003 and 2009-2010). In the time-use surveys, both members of the couple write in a diary the activities of all household members over 10 years of age in 10-minute intervals.² The information is collected over 24 hours, from 6:00 am to 6:00 am of the next day. These activities are collected on a specific day of the week and are the same for all household members. The survey also includes information on socio-demographic characteristics, as well as the relationships among the household members. Having

¹ Other authors focus on the economic crisis in order to explain how the austerity measures of the Spanish government have unintended negative consequences for gender equality policies related to childcare time (Lombardo, 2013). Considering the importance of this macro approach, we propose an analysis from a micro approach.

² For further information on both surveys see:

<http://www.ine.es/jaxi/menu.do?type=pcaxis&path=%2Ft25%2Fe447&file=inebase&L=0>.

information about all family members on the same day allows men and women to be compared without significant bias. The information of both partners is collected on the same day of the week, so there is no risk of conditioning the information according to the day that the diary is collected.

Heterosexual couples with a child under 12 years of age were selected. The age of 12 was chosen because it is an important age in the Spanish education system, where children transition from primary to high school. In addition, homosexual couples were excluded due to the low prevalence of homosexual couples with children under the age of 12 in the two samples. In this sense, the statistical models introduce the concept of life cycle to analyze the influence on childcare time of both age and number of children under 12.

The change in time spent on childcare by the father and mother were the dependent variables that we used. The activities that childcare includes are: physical childcare and supervision of children; teaching the children; reading, playing and talking with children; accompanying children; and other childcare. The analysis has not considered the different types of care work because it focuses on global changes regarding the gender approach to involvement in childcare. The time-use survey is not a panel, so the analysis cannot be longitudinal. However, the two time frames analyzed (2002-2003 and 2009-2010) take households with similar characteristics and, in the theoretical framework section, they are controlled by the influence factors on the division of time according to the variables described above.

The technique employed to estimate the evolution between the two time frames is ordinary least squares linear regression. Other studies use Tobit regression because it is a very consistent technique when the presence of 0 is important, especially if there is a selection bias. We decided not to use it because some of the variables analyzed, such as the time spent by women with children under 12 years of age, do not have the value 0.

The ordinary least squares linear regression facilitated comparability and simplified interpretation of the data.

The models merged data from the two surveys to build a variable that identifies the year to which the observation belongs. This variable serves to contrast the evolution between the two time frames. First, we created a model for all couples with a child under 12, regardless of their employment status (Table 2)³. In addition to this general model, we wanted to verify that the observed differences were not due to factors intrinsic to the sample design or to changes in life cycle or employment status, which are determining variables in time use. Therefore, we generated a second model in which day of the week, employment status of both partners, number of children under 12 living with both parents and age of the youngest child were used as control variables (Table 3). The sample was 3,725 couples in 2002-2003 and 1,710 in 2009-2010.

Before continuing, we would like to make a brief commentary to facilitate comprehending the values of the different tables, using as an example the ‘parents’ column in Table 2. The value of the Intersection (0.941) corresponds to the time associated with the reference category, so that in 2002-2003 parents dedicated 0.941 hours (56 minutes) to care. On the other hand, the value associated with the 2009-2010 category (0.541) must be read as the difference between both years, so that in 2009-2010 parents spend 0.541 hours (32 minutes) more than in 2002 -2003. Consequently, we can deduce that in 2009-2010 parents dedicated a total of 1,482 hours (1h 29m) to care.

The strong impact of employment status on general time and particularly on childcare time (both described in the literature and observed in previous models) made it necessary to assess childcare time based on the employment status of similar men and women. It should not be forgotten that the two time frames analyzed were separated by a strong

³ In all tables, the unit of analysis shown is hours per day.

economic crisis and that the brunt of job losses were borne by men, so some of the changes observed may be due to a lower relative employment of men in 2009-2010.

To control for this effect and for the recent trend towards a generalization of dual-income couples, we generated several models in which only dual-income couples with a child under 12 years of age were analyzed (Tables 4 and 5). In this case, the sample was reduced to 1,781 couples in 2002-2003 and 874 couples in 2009-2010.

To estimate the net change in the time that men and women spend on childcare, we added to the previous models by generating a third model that included all available variables that the literature considers of major importance (Table 6). In addition to the edition (2002-2003 and 2009-2010), day of the week, age of the youngest child, and number of children under 12, it therefore included the age of the parent, educational level, nationality, presence or absence of domestic service, whether parents work a split shift or a continuous working day, ability to work flexible hours, and end time of the working day⁴. This last variable is considered especially relevant and has been divided into two categories in which the working days end either before 5:00 pm or later. The reason for establishing the cut-off point at this time is that, in Spain, most primary schools finish their day at 5:00 p.m.

We generated a model with all the above variables and then removed the non-significant variables one by one so that the final model included only those with a significant contribution to childcare time ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$). We made one exception: as we claim to obtain a comparable model for men and women, the variables that were significant for at

⁴ The variable income has not been included in the models, first because it was not homogeneously collected in the two surveys and, second, because it has a significant number of missing cases.

least one of the two parents were maintained. In this case, age and day of the week⁵ in which the survey was carried out were not significant for the fathers but were included in the models because they were significant for the mothers (see Table 1 for a distribution of the significant variables in the analysis of dual-income couples).

[Table 1]

Results

Table 2 shows how childcare time of couples with children under 12 evolved during the periods 2002-2003 and 2009-2010. Two notable facts are observed. First, the time that both parents dedicated to childcare increased: the increase for fathers was 0.541 and the increase for mothers was 0.256. Second, as a result of this increase, the gender gap in total dedication was reduced but did not disappear. Women still spent more time caring for children (2.738) than men (1.482), although the gap was narrowed: the ratio of time spent by women caring for children to time spent by men fell from 2.6 in 2002-2003 to 1.8 in 2009-2010.

[Table 2]

In view of these results and according to the theoretical background, we wondered whether the reduction in gender differences in childcare time was an adaptive change (contextual factors) or structural change (structural factors). Contextual factors were therefore incorporated into the data analysis. First, the economic crisis that was present in 2009-2010 had a strong impact on the labor market. During the early years of the crisis, the sectoral nature of job destruction resulted in more male unemployment. As noted in the literature, the absence of job responsibilities may partly explain the increased time that fathers spent on childcare. It is therefore important to control for these aspects, taking

⁵ In the design of the sample and following the harmonised European time use survey, INE considered that Friday, Saturday and Sunday were days of greater variability in the use of time. For this reason, it strengthened the sample of housing in these three days.

into account the employment status of the partners. This variable has proven to be very explanatory in another study evidencing the positive influence of female employment on the time fathers spend on childcare (Gracia, 2014). Second, the studies underline the importance of life cycle in the uses and distribution of time spent on childcare (Borràs et al., 2009; Domínguez, 2015). These studies report that the age and number of the children are explanatory variables: the smaller and more numerous the children, the greater the time spent on care. Finally, other studies take into account the day of response to the questionnaire, because there are differences in time use patterns between working days and weekends, especially in the case of men, who, in the absence of paid work responsibilities, spend more time on care (Domínguez, 2009).

Table 3 presents a model that takes into consideration the employment status of both partners, two variables relating to life cycle (age of the youngest child and number of children) and the day of the week on which the interview was carried out. The data show that, when these variables are controlled, the time that the father (0.381) and mother (0.316) spend on childcare also increases, although the gender gap is reduced. The increase is lower than in the previous model for men, while the increase is higher for women. When the importance of each variable of the second model is analyzed, some interesting patterns are observed. On weekdays, the dedication of mothers rises and that of fathers hardly changes. With regard to the employment status, in couples in which only one of the two members is employed, working time and childcare time are interdependent, with little variation by sex. Compared to mothers who are not employed (0.885) and whose partners are employed, the greater dedication to childcare by fathers who are not employed (0.964) and whose partners are employed could be related to female job insecurity (worse times, less flexibility). This influence of factors related to the labor market would seem to be an important hypothesis, because the difference between single-

income and dual-income couples is not significant for fathers (0.019) but is very important for mothers (0.463). Finally, although the life cycle factor affects both partners, it is observed that both the age and number of children have greater influence on mothers: as the age of the youngest child increases, the time that mothers spend on childcare decreases; and as the number of children increases, the time that mothers spend on childcare increases. This trend also occurs in fathers but to a lesser degree.

[Table 3.]

On the basis of these results, we considered it necessary to analyze dual-income couples with children under 12 to neutralize the impact of the cyclical factors that could be introduced by the crisis. We wondered whether the increase in time spent by fathers on childcare is due to an adaptive strategy to the new context or to a structural strategy with changing values and priorities. Therefore, three models relating to dual-income couples are presented (Tables 4, 5 and 6). First, Table 4 shows the absolute data without control of variables. It is observed that when both partners are employed, the time they spend on childcare also increases: 0.357 in fathers and 0.283 in mothers.

[Table 4]

Following the logic presented so far, Table 5 analyzes the case of dual-income couples with children under 12 while controlling for the variables: day of the week, age of the youngest child and number of children. Initially, it appears that once these variables have been controlled for, almost no changes are observed in the time spent on care by fathers and mothers in dual-income couples. Broadly, when the specific influence of each variable is analyzed, the trends are the same as those for all couples. While employed women continue to increase their childcare time greatly during weekdays (although this increase is much smaller than when the employment status is not controlled), the differences for men between working days and weekends are not significant. In addition,

even though the childcare time of both partners (especially that of mothers) decreases as the youngest child becomes older, the number of children has a completely different effect: a greater number of children involves greater equality for dual income couples, unlike the other couples.

[Table 5]

Since there are differences in the time use of dual-income couples with children under 12, it is necessary to introduce other variables that were identified as explanatory in the literature review (age, educational level, nationality, presence of domestic servants and characteristics of the working day).⁶

Table 6 shows the model generated for dual-income couples with children under 12, maintaining the variables that have a significant contribution to childcare time for at least one of the parents: day of the week, age of the parent, educational level, end time of the working day of the father and mother, age of the youngest child, and number of children. It is observed that when all these conditions are controlled for, care time also increases for both fathers (0.312) and mothers (0.199), following the trend noted in the previous models. More specifically, the variables incorporated into the previous model behave similarly, and the new variables (educational level, end time of the working day and age of the parent) help refine the overall trend. It appears that the contribution of educational level is significant for both parents but is expressed differently in each one. For men, the data show a double cut-off point: first, between compulsory education and upper secondary school and, second, between upper secondary school and university. That is, men with upper secondary education spend more time caring for their children (0.244) than men with only compulsory education and less time than men with a university education. This double cut-off point is absent in the case of women: those with a

⁶ Other variables that the literature identifies as interesting, such as income level, are not well reflected in the two surveys.

university education are the only ones who spend more time caring for children (0.372). It is thus seen that educational level is a greater indicator of involvement in men than in women. In general, all women spent more time caring, but women with university degrees spent even more time. In contrast, men spent less time caring, but their educational level led to a greater increase, which is noted even between compulsory and upper secondary education.

Analyzing the other variables, we see that the end time of the working day is also related to the childcare time of parents, and the differences are greater in women. When the two partners finished work before 5 p.m. the time spent on childcare was, in both cases, significantly higher than when they both finished later (about 25 minutes). However, when one of the two partners finished before 5 p.m. and the other later, the first one to finish (most often mothers, see Table 1) spent about 40 minutes more than their partner on childcare. Finally, the variable 'age of parent' is only significant for the mother, showing that mothers older than 44 years spend more time caring for their children. It seems possible to relate the behavior of this variable to the working conditions of employed mothers, hypothesizing that the younger the mother, the more likely she is to have an unsecure job and therefore more availability for work and less availability for childcare.

[Table 6]

Discussion and Conclusions

This study used time-diary data from Spain to analyze the involvement of fathers and mothers in childcare and to explore the socio-demographic reasons for changes in time use by parents. Previous studies (Bianchi, 2011) show a decline in the dedication of mothers to housework but an increase in their dedication to childcare, which run in parallel to an increase in time dedicated to childcare by the fathers. Other studies put

forward several explanations for the greater involvement of men and women in childcare based on material and symbolic aspects. Sullivan et al. (2014) notes that the changing fertility pattern, the education level of parents, more egalitarian gender attitudes and greater involvement of fathers in housework and childcare are related. By contrast, other studies focus on cultural change. In recent years academics have shown interest in the phenomenon of intensive parenting as a contemporary cultural process (Lee et al., 2014). Our study has contributed to the literature by focusing on the relationship between the involvement of fathers and mothers in childcare in Spain, specifically among couples with children under 12. It is based on the relative importance of material and symbolic factors. Employment status, working conditions and education level emerge as some socio-demographic variables to consider in combination with symbolic aspects of a predominantly sociocultural nature. We consider that the distribution of paid and unpaid work (domestic and care) is neither stable nor fixed in time and that, furthermore, it is independent of historical, economic and socio-cultural contexts. That is, involvement in childcare depends on individual resources, each partner's available time and sociocultural factors.

As we have explained in the data and methodology section, the time-use survey is not a panel and therefore the analysis cannot be longitudinal. It is important to keep in mind this methodological purpose for drawing the conclusions. Moreover, the two time frames analyzed were separated by a strong economic crisis. We develop an analytical focus on time use according to socio-demographic factors. However, it is important to keep in mind that, during the economic crisis, the brunt of job losses were borne by men, so some of the changes observed may be due to men's lower relative employment in 2009-2010.

Three general findings can be summarized. Firstly, the data analyzed for the period 2002-2003 and 2009-2010 in Spain show that the time that both fathers and mothers dedicated

to childcare increased, so the greater male involvement has not led to a decrease in female involvement. Despite the increase in time dedicated by both parents, mothers continue to spend more time caring for children. Regarding the first hypothesis, both fathers and mothers increase the time spent on care. These results evidence that the intensification of parenting is the process by which childrearing has become much more labor-intensive.

Secondly, having determined that fathers spend more time on childcare, it is necessary to understand the factors that influence this change in trend. The literature stresses socio-demographic factors such as changes in fertility patterns as well as increases in dual-income couples and the educational level of both parents (Sullivan et al., 2014; Aguiar et al., 2011; Legensky & Cornwall, 2010; Shows & Gerstel, 2005). Accumulated research findings point to factors such as the number and age of children, working hours and economic difficulties, all of which help clarify the circumstances in which fathers and mothers increase the time spent on childcare. Regarding the proposed hypothesis, the results suggest that the individual socio-demographic factors are more important than the time arrangements of couples in explaining their greater involvement in childcare. For dual-income couples with children under 12, the increase in time spent by men and women on childcare is largely independent of the employment status of their partner and is more subject to their individual circumstances. The results reveal that greater male involvement in care is related – although independently – to employment status and to the working time of both partners. In other words, it is the employment status of the caregiver and not of their partner that influences their participation. It is therefore necessary to qualify specific situations in which the explanatory variables are comprised of gender, number and age of children, educational level and working hours.

Thirdly, the aspects that improve the dedication of fathers are: having a secondary and a university education, ending the work day before 17:00, a young age for the youngest

child and a low number of children. The aspects that increase the dedication of mothers are: fewer working days, university education, young age for the youngest child and, to a lesser extent than men, a low number of children.

In summary and to return to our hypothesis, the results confirm that the greater participation of men in care tasks has not led to a decrease in the participation of women. Furthermore, these changes are found mainly in the individual socio-demographic factors and not in the time dedicated by the couples. Given that the increase in parental time dedicated to childcare is independent of a woman's work situation, we wondered whether this increase is due to both socio-demographic and cultural factors, which may also explain the greater commitment of mothers. In view of the results and according to the theoretical background, it is possible to suggest that promotion is more a product of cultural change than a shift to gender equality in terms of time distribution, paid work and care. Just as the greater time spent by women in paid work has not been linked to a reduction in the time spent by men, the increasing involvement of men in childcare is not directly related to a more equal distribution of domestic and care work. In conclusion, the increasing involvement of men in childcare is not directly related to an improved gender-equal distribution of paid work and care work. The reduction in gender differences in childcare time would be the consequence (adaptive change) and not be the cause (structural change).

As the literature explains, this cultural shift towards intensive parenting has not been uniformly experienced by all parents, and it depends on socio-demographic reasons such as class, gender, or race. In this sense, the concept of intensive parenting is useful for explaining the differences between parental involvement in a global context, in which good parenting implies physical and emotional presence for the children. In the case of

Spain, educational level and working conditions emerge as key factors for explaining the increase in time that men spend on childcare.

Over and above the data analyzed, taking a symbolic perspective allows us to see how the phenomenon of intensive parenting (Lee et al., 2014) has given rise to expectations around what it means to be a good parent, which in turn have affected men differently than women (Shirani et al., 2012). The expectations and desires of fathers and mothers have changed. Today fathers feel pressured for their children to have a high degree of well-being, and this is linked to their greater participation in childcare. Their female partners also have different expectations than their mothers on how parents should be involved in bringing up their children. However, the ideal held by fathers is that they not give up their role as the main breadwinners. Previous research focuses on the case of Spain (Borràs et al., 2012) and shows that paid work is still what mainly defines what is considered to be a good father and a good husband. The greater involvement of fathers in childcare has not involved less dedication to childcare by mothers: in homes where fathers are more collaborative, women do not spend less time on childcare. It seems that childcare is a project shared by the couple and represents a style of parenting based on the greater involvement of both partners in the activities of their children (Julià & Escapa 2014). Men find that they can assume the responsibilities of fatherhood without failing as breadwinners. But this change involves sharing the joys of fatherhood rather than the household tasks (Gratell, 2007; Brandth & Kvande, 2003, cited in Bjornholt, 2011). Instead, fathers participate more in childcare, following a trend of both sexes to see children as central elements. Consequently, motherhood and fatherhood are experienced and perceived as essential elements in the couple's project, which could also help explain the time spent on childcare.

Some limitations of this study should be considered. First, the type of care tasks is not analyzed. Previous research has highlighted the segregation of childcare between men and women: the more rigid and less valued tasks are performed by women and the more flexible and visible tasks are performed by men (Borràs et al., 2012). The different importance given to the day of the week seems to point clearly in this direction. Second, the data are not analyzed according to the sex of the child. Other studies have shown that the childcare time of fathers is greater with sons than with daughters (Gracia, 2014). Third, the quantitative data offers some empirical evidence supporting the intensive parenting argument, but qualitative data will be necessary for empirically explaining this development.

These conclusions have academic and political implications. First, they recall the need to complement quantitative results with qualitative evidence on the imaginaries, representations and expectations of intensive parenting. Second, they show the importance of introducing equal, individual and non-shared parental leave for birth and adoption in order to ensure that men enter the domestic sphere through a door—that of fatherhood—of which they approve. This family policy should be accompanied by other provisions such as child care facilities and flexible work time in order to further promote the structural change toward gender equality.

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