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## **Working fathers' available time for childcare in Spain**

Tiempo disponible para el cuidado de los hijos de  
los padres trabajadores en España

**IRINA FERNÁNDEZ LOZANO**

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Tesis dirigida por Teresa Jurado Guerrero  
Departamento de Sociología II  
Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociología  
UNED

## ABSTRACT<sup>1</sup>

This dissertation explores the available time that working fathers in Spain have for their children from different empirical approaches. The theoretical starting point is the time availability perspective: time is an invaluable resource for parents, as childcare is, among other characteristics, time consuming. Then, I draw from Barbara Risman's three-level theory of gender as a social structure to frame the Spanish working time regime within the gender but also the economic structure: long working days are embedded in the macro, interactional and individual levels of these structures.

The first empirical chapter assesses the relationship between gender, parental status, occupation and available time in Spain, and proposes and analyses a classification of working schedules from a work-life balance perspective. The second empirical chapter analyses to what extent the time availability hypothesis contributes to explaining how working fathers and mothers in Spain share routine childcare within heterosexual couples, along with other relevant possible explanations (status, relative resources, need to be involved). The third and fourth empirical chapters explore the structural obstacles that fathers may face in the Spanish labour market if they seek to have more available time to care, using, in one of the cases, an experimental design (a vignette study).

This dissertation contributes with evidence on the 'persistent conflict between leadership and child care involvement' (Gasser, 2015) and against the 'myth' that fathers' involvement in childcare comes hand in hand with socioeconomic status. Those fathers who are more involved are not necessarily professionals or those with college education, but those who have more available time at particular moments during the day, especially if the mother is *not available* at that moments.

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<sup>1</sup> This dissertation has been written within the research project IMPLICA ('Working time, paternity and childhood. How can business policies promote father involvement in care and maintain gender equality?', CSO2014-58754-P), led by Teresa Jurado-Guerrero, which had associated the grant BES-2015-07427 for the hiring of doctoral candidates, both funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness.

## RESUMEN<sup>2</sup>

Esta tesis explora la disponibilidad de tiempo que los padres trabajadores en España tienen para cuidar desde diferentes aproximaciones empíricas. El punto de partida es la perspectiva de la disponibilidad de tiempo: el tiempo es un recurso valioso para los padres y madres porque cuidar de los hijos/as requiere, entre otros recursos, mucho tiempo. A continuación, parto de la teoría de Barbara Risman del “género como estructura social” (con sus tres niveles analíticos) para enmarcar el régimen de horarios de trabajo en España dentro de la estructura de género pero también económica: las largas jornadas están embebidas en las dimensiones macro, interaccional e individual de estas estructuras.

El primero de los capítulos empíricos analiza la relación entre género, paternidad /maternidad, ocupación y tiempo disponible en España, y propone una clasificación y análisis de los horarios de trabajo desde el punto de vista del equilibrio familia-trabajo. El segundo capítulo empírico analiza hasta qué punto la hipótesis del tiempo disponible contribuye a explicar cómo los padres y madres trabajadores en España se reparten el cuidado rutinario de sus hijos/as en el seno de las parejas heterosexuales, en relación con otras explicaciones posibles (el estatus, los recursos relativos, la necesidad de implicarse). Los dos últimos capítulos empíricos exploran los obstáculos estructurales que los padres pueden encontrar en el mercado de trabajo español cuando busquen disponer de más tiempo para cuidar, utilizando para ello, en uno de los capítulos, un diseño experimental (un estudio “vignette”).

Esta tesis aporta evidencia sobre el “conflicto persistente entre liderazgo e implicación en el cuidado de los hijos/as” (Gasser, 2015) y en contra del “mito” de que la implicación de los padres en el cuidado viene de la mano del estatus socioeconómico: aquellos padres que están más implicados en el

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<sup>2</sup> Esta tesis ha sido escrita en el marco del proyecto I+D+i IMPLICA (*Tiempos de trabajo, paternidad e infancia ¿Cómo promover la implicación de los padres en el cuidado y mantener la igualdad de género desde las políticas empresariales?*, CSO2014-58754-P) cuya investigadora principal es Teresa Jurado-Guerrero. Asociada a este proyecto se concedió la ayuda para la contratación de Formación de Personal Investigador (FPI) BES-2015-07427, ambos financiados por el Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad.

cuidado no son necesariamente los profesionales o los universitarios, sino aquellos que disponen de más tiempo en momentos particulares del día, especialmente si la madre *no está disponible* en esos momentos.

# Contents

<b>PART I. INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAME- WORK</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1 Research aim: why available time, for working fathers, in Spain . . .	7
1.2 Overview of the research structure and empirical chapters . . . . .	14
1.3 Methodology . . . . .	19
1.4 References . . . . .	21
<b>2. Theoretical framework</b>	<b>23</b>
2.1 Introduction: fathers and childcare. Identities, social expectations and policies . . . . .	23
2.2 The time availability perspective: care requires time . . . . .	27
2.3 Working time within the gender and class structure . . . . .	31
2.3.1 The macro level: overloaded workers in a 24/7 services econ- omy . . . . .	32
2.3.2 The interactional level: norms and stereotypes in organiza- tions . . . . .	35
2.3.3 The individual level: a competition for time? . . . . .	36
2.4 References . . . . .	39
<b>PART II. EMPIRICAL CHAPTERS (<i>abstracts</i>)</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>3. Finding Time For Children. Fatherhood, Jobs and Available     Time in Spain, 2003-2010</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>4. Fathers sharing solo care in Spain: he is <i>available</i>, or she <i>is</i>     <i>not</i>?</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>5. The Hidden Cost of Flexibility: A Factorial Survey Experiment     on Job Promotion</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>6. If you dare to ask: self-perceived possibilities of Spanish fathers     to reduce work hours</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>PART III. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>7. General conclusions</b>	<b>56</b>
7.1 Do working fathers need more available time? . . . . .	57
7.2 Competing responsibilities? . . . . .	58
7.3 Jobs, roles, status . . . . .	59
7.4 Limitations of the study and prospects for future research . . . . .	61
7.5 References . . . . .	63
<b>Agradecimientos/Acknowledgements</b>	<b>64</b>

# **PART I**

## **INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

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# 1 Introduction

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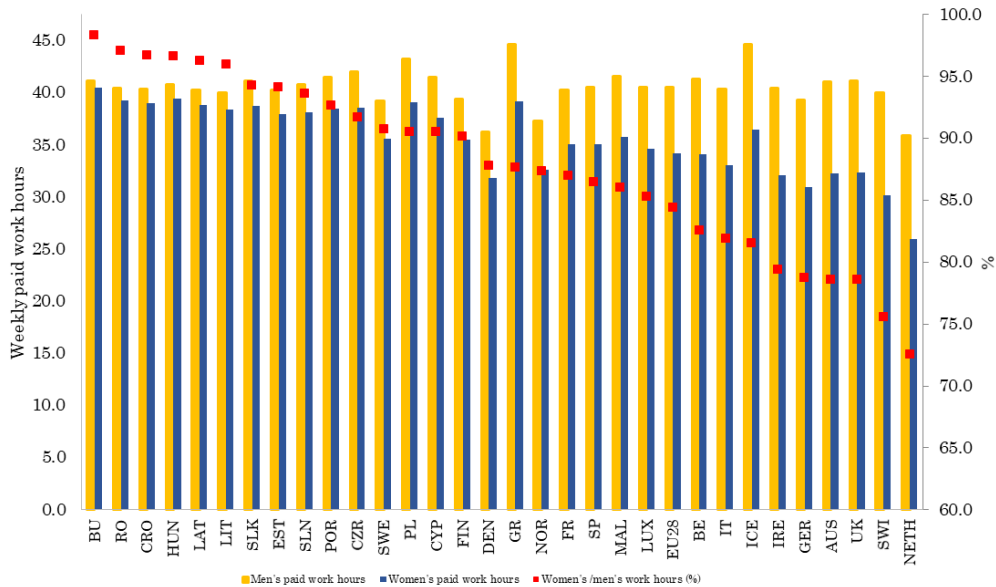
## 1.1 Research aim: why available time, for working fathers, in Spain<sup>1</sup>

The difficulties that mothers in contemporary societies have to face to meet at the same time family and work demands are well-known and are usually depicted in the popular media. The asymmetrical assumption of care work by men and women (and particularly fathers and mothers) and its negative social and economic impact (in terms of the gender gap in participation in the labour market) is currently in the European agenda (European Commission, 2017). Mothers reduce their participation in the

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<sup>1</sup> This is a summary version of the thesis, and includes only the abstract for the empirical chapters (chapters 3-6). Those chapters which have been published as academic articles are accessible online (see subsection 1.2).

labour market while fathers do not. In line with this, a big gender gap in week work hours is a common pattern in most western societies (as shown in **Figure 1-1**, this gap is remarkable in all Europe excepting the former Soviet Union countries).



**Figure 1-1:** Women’s and men’s paid work hours (absolute time and ration women’s/men’s). 2017. Source: Eurostat.

The obligation of spouses to share care responsibilities over dependent people (as well as domestic work) is however legally sanctioned by the Spanish Civil Code since 2005 (article 68).

This thesis focuses on available and working time as key factors for work-life balance (WLB) and gender equality. An initial theoretical puzzle inspired this thesis, which is analysed theoretically and empirically in the pages that follow:

- i. Despite the resistances that structure(s) impose to social change (Risman, 2017), and however slow its pace may be, there is evidence that **social change** is happening with regard to the distribution of care work: many men are responding to the urgent need to reverse the unjust situation in which women perform most of the unpaid work



generated by society. Sociologists speak now about **'new fathers'**, in opposition to 'absent fathers'<sup>2</sup> (Abril et al., 2016). However, assuming care responsibilities requires time and is therefore rather incompatible with the 'long hours culture' (Allard, Haas, & Philip Hwang, 2007) that prevails in many workplaces, especially among men.

- ii. **Time is therefore an invaluable, however scarce, resource for fathers.** Having enough available time on a daily basis is crucial in order to provide equitable, sufficient quality time to children. This is so, first of all, because the 'invisible' tasks of 'thinking, organizing and managing' (Moreno Colom, 2015, p.154) a family daily life require time and cannot be externalized. Secondly, because externally provided services can neither totally replace parent-child time. Therefore, fathers (and other male caregivers) *require*, above other resources, more *available time*. Ultimately, work-life conflict is a conflict *with* and *for time*.
  
- iii. However, reversing the current working time regime requires overcoming **obstacles from both the occupational and the gender structures**. If we consider *available time* for children as a *resource*, it

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<sup>2</sup> Without entering into a philosophical discussion on what defines a father (or a mother), it seems relevant to justify why the focus of this work is put on fathers within heterosexual couples. Of course, this is not the only type of fathers in today's wide variety of western families, and therefore nor the only one that is worth research attention, but it is the one that allows a more straightforward adoption of a gender perspective. Fatherhood is therefore analysed in the light of the social changes that could ultimately lead to a more equal division of paid and unpaid work and care between men and women. The empirical chapters in this thesis explains how fatherhood has been defined in operational terms.

can be argued however that it is embedded in the gender and class structure in a particularly complex way:

- a. Up to date, most of this time is *provided* by women (mothers more particularly), who, in coherence, perform significantly fewer hours of paid work than men in most western societies. Women happen to be those with a greater *availability of time for the family*. This is so because organizations, and more particularly working time regimes, are completely embedded in the **gender structure**.
- b. As a resource, available time also differs from others such as education or income for its presenting a particular, complex relationship with the **class structure**. Qualified professionals (the ‘superordinate working class’, according to Gershuny & Fisher, p.31, 2014) seem to be, for a series of reasons, those who are subject to higher work to family conflict, as the ‘stress of the higher status hypothesis’ posits (Schieman & Young, 2010). They have, however, more control over work time and receive higher rewards from a high involvement in their jobs than in the case of lower level jobs (Acker, 2006).

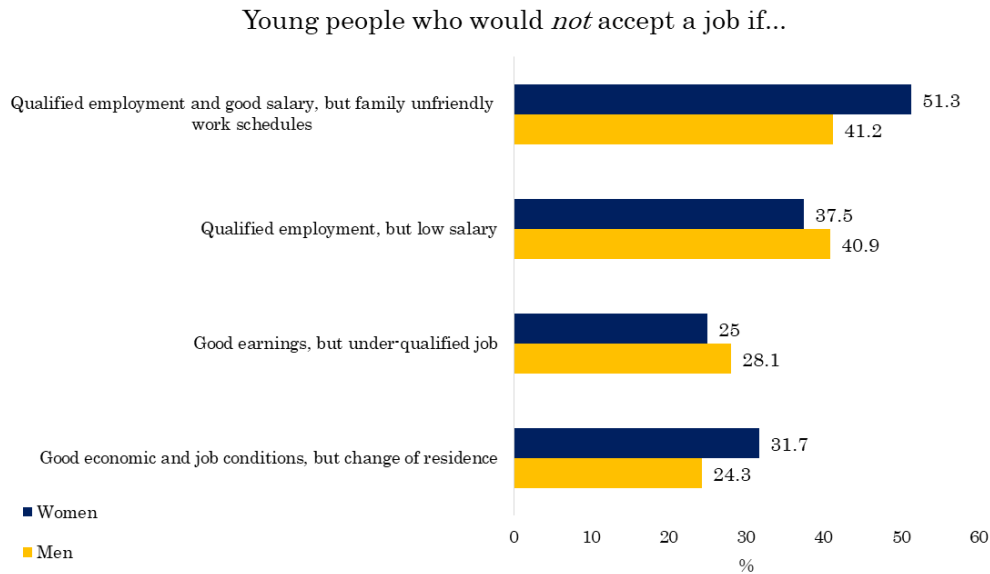
In sum, while there seems to be mixed evidence about the increase in individuals’ paid work hours in recent decades (Gershuny, 2011; Jacobs & Gerson, 2001), what is undeniable is that families taken as a whole have much less available time than they did decades ago (Jacobs & Gerson, 2001). While the model(s) of western families has dramatically changed during the last decades, the social norm about the ‘ideal worker’ has remained fairly unchanged (Williams, Blair-Loy, & Berdahl, 2013). From this evidence rise the concerns about the sustainability of the model, in terms of well-being of society and even demographic replacement. Spain, a service economy in which long workdays and non-standard schedules (associated to leisure activities and tourism) are quite frequent, represents an interesting setting to study how fathers’ schedules adapt to their real needs, and the public

debate over the working time regime is already in society and the media<sup>3</sup>. Spanish men seem more concerned than their European counterparts with their lack of time: 26% of Spanish men (vs. 20% of men in Europe) believe that their current work schedule adapts 'not at all well' or 'not very well' to their family and social commitments (figures for women are 22% and 16% respectively<sup>4</sup>). The inability to adapt family commitments to work commitments seem also to be one of the main reasons why Spanish young men would not accept a job, as shown in **Figure 1-2**, even in a country with a relatively late age of family formation.

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<sup>3</sup> See for example the work of the Commission to Rationalise Spanish Work Schedules (ARHOE) (<http://www.horariosenespana.com/>) or the book *21 horas. Una semana laboral más corta para prosperar en el siglo XXI (21 hours. A shorter work week to prosper in the 21<sup>st</sup> century)*, by the New Economics Foundation, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> In all EU28 countries excepting Finland, Luxemburg, France, Cyprus, Bulgaria and Slovakia, the percentages are higher for men than for women. Eurofound: 6<sup>th</sup> Working Conditions Survey, 2015.



**Figure 1-2.** Reasons to refuse a job by young people in Spain. Source: 2nd wave of the ‘Spanish Youth Study 2009’ (*Sondeo de la Juventud Española*), study n.2822, Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS). Sample: people aged 15-29 living in Spain.

One general assumption in this work is that the dichotomous division of full-time vs part-time work is useful as it reflects a legally sanctioned regime, but, at the same time, sociological research on work time should recognise the wider range of explicit and implicit strategies (e.g. from vocational choices in the first place to daily individual decisions) that people can adopt to obtain more available time along their life cycle. In this sense, in this thesis, work time is examined empirically, assuming that the statutory 40 hours operates only as a normative reference in many occupational or organizational contexts (e.g. freelance workers). In this sense, working mothers are used to find very different ‘creative’ ways to combine working and caregiving, and fathers pioneering change are doing so too (Doucet, 2006). Completing the ‘ongoing’ revolution on the ‘accepted politics of time’ (Williams et al., 2013, p.214) would require thus to overcome at least partly this resistance imposed by the dynamics of the capitalist and patriarchal systems. Not only gender equality is at stake, but also the benefits that men’s adoption of a more nurturing role can provide to them, to their children and to society as a whole.

All of the empirical chapters that form this thesis analyse time from different perspectives. Time is considered a resource which can be used but also a powerful symbol in today's society—a symbol which communicates to others what we do with our life and what we are. This thesis analyses empirically the working time regime in Spain and its embeddedness in the gender and class structure, how available time can contribute to gender equality within heterosexual couples and obstacles and opportunities for change. Assuming a structural perspective implies acknowledging the contribution of the working time regime to the unequal distribution of *power* among the members of society, without denying the diversity of forms that power can adopt, as well as the potential of individual action to change the conditions that allow the access to it.

In sum, this work addresses the following puzzle: while Spanish fathers *need* more time to care, and many of them actually *want* it, they still have to *struggle for* this time. Also, depending on their position within the occupational structure, not all fathers have the same available time to care — a fact which may in turn push changes in the gender structure forward.

The structure of the thesis, research questions and hypotheses are presented in detail in the following section.

## 1.2 Overview of the research structure and empirical chapters

This thesis is presented as a compendium of four independent empirical articles (Chapters 3-6). This is the reason why these chapters/articles present their own format and pagination. The articles follow the overarching theoretical framework (Chapter 2). Finally, Chapter 7 presents some general conclusions that have emerged from the empirical and theoretical work. Every chapter includes its own references section.

The first two empirical chapters examine the time availability perspective and its embeddedness in the gender and occupational structure, using nationally representative data from the Spanish Time Use Survey (STUS). **Chapter 3 (*Finding Time for Children: Fatherhood, Jobs and Available Time in Spain, 2003-2010*)** represents an overview on the Spanish working time regime from a work-life balance perspective and fathers' *available time for children* in Spain. The relationship between parenthood, gender, occupational status and available time is analysed. 'Time availability' is defined in this work as the number of hours the person is potentially available for the family or social life (i.e. not working), that is, time out of work, excluding the core business hours between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. on weekdays, when childcare is more easily available. This definition assumes that social schedules (i.e. those of schools or childcare centres) impose parents the need to be available in the afternoon, evenings and weekends, despite the widespread presence of non-standard schedules in today's economic structure. Therefore a special focus is put on what has been called a 'tight time schedule' (*jornada intensiva* in Spanish), that is, one with clear 'borders' (Clark, 2000) between family and work time, as a potential work-life balance resource. **Chapter 4 (*Fathers sharing solo care in Spain: he is available, or she is not?*)** examines how the time availability hypothesis contributes to the distribution of routine care among dual-earner couples in Spain. It does so in the light of other relevant alternative explanations. In doing so, this research ultimately aims at identifying the job-level, individual level and couple level

characteristics of fathers who can be considered 'equal sharers'.

The third and fourth articles turn the focus to workplaces and the structural obstacles that fathers face when seeking to have a more balanced distribution of work time and care time. The third study (**Chapter 5: *The Hidden Cost of Flexibility. A Factorial Survey Experiment on Job Promotion***), is an experimental design which tries to bring to light the stereotypes and attributions associated to work hours and parental status, from the employers' perspective. This research tries to advance knowledge on the extent to which long working hours (and its reverse, flexible schedules) are a key factor in determining the gender gap in career advancement, targeting respondents with potential responsibility for the promotion of employees within their companies. The last empirical chapter (**Chapter 6: *If you dare to ask: self-perceived possibilities of Spanish fathers to reduce work hours***), explores the difficulties that fathers face at their workplaces when trying to 'escape' the 'long hours' culture' and it does so from the perception of employees themselves, using a nationwide sample.

At the moment of submitting this thesis, two of the empirical chapters had been published in academic journals while the other two were being revised for their publication:

- (1) Fernández-Lozano, I. 2018. "Finding Time for Children. Fatherhood, Jobs and Available Time in Spain, 2003-2010", *Revista Internacional de Sociología*, 76 (3): 1-16. <http://doi.org/10.3989/ris.2018.76.3.17.84>
- (2) Fernández-Lozano, I. 2018. "Fathers sharing solo care in Spain: he is available, or she is not?" (*under third revision for publication by academic journal*).
- (3) Fernández-Lozano, I., González-López, M.J., Jurado-Guerrero, T. & Martínez-Pastor, J.I. 2018. "The Hidden Cost of Flexibility: A Factorial Survey Experiment on Job Promotion" (*under second revision for publication by academic journal*).

- (4) Fernández-Lozano, I. 2018. "If you dare to ask: self-perceived possibilities of Spanish fathers to reduce work hours", *Community, Work and Family*, 21 (4): 1–17. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13668803.2017.1365692>. Available here: <https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/CtD5Tnh8Yces4Zw62X3z/full>

The research questions and hypotheses proposed are summarized below.

**Overview of the empirical chapters. Research questions and hypotheses.**

**Chapter 3. *Finding time for children: fatherhood, jobs and available time in Spain, 2003-2010***

**RQ: What is the relationship between gender, parenthood, occupational status and available time in Spain? To what extent has the economic recession changed this relationship?**

H3-1. Men have less available time and make a lower use of the ‘tight-time’ schedule than women, even if they are not parents

H3-2. Parental status increases the gender gap in available time (i.e. the difference in available time is bigger between mothers and fathers than between childless women and childless men).

H3-3. There are not any significant differences between fathers’ available time in the two periods compared (before and after the onset of the recession).

H3-4. Men with a higher occupational status (i.e. managers and professionals) have less available time, even if they are fathers.

H3-5. The difference in available time between managers and professionals, on the one hand, and the rest of employees, on the other, has increased after the beginning of the recession.

**Chapter 4. *Fathers sharing solo care in Spain: he is available or she is not?***

**RQ: To what extent is mothers’ and fathers’ available time associated to a more equal distribution of routine childcare? What other explanations can be provided?**



H4-1. Fathers perform more routine solo childcare when they have lower relative resources than their spouse, i.e. when they have a lower educational attainment, when they earn less or when their spouse is a manager or a professional but they are not.

H4-2. Fathers with a college degree perform more routine solo childcare.

H4-3. Fathers in managerial positions perform less routine solo childcare than the rest of employees, even after controlling for their time availability.

H4-4. Fathers with middle level jobs (white collar employees, technicians) perform more routine solo childcare than the rest of employees, even after controlling for their time availability.

H4-5. Fathers perform more routine solo childcare the more available time they have.

H4-6. Fathers perform more routine solo childcare the less available time their spouses have.

H4-7. Once fathers' time availability is controlled for, the association between relative resources and occupational status, on the one hand, and fathers' involvement in routine solo childcare, on the other, is much weaker.

H4-8. Once mothers' time availability is controlled for, the association between relative resources and occupational status, on the one hand, and fathers' involvement in routine solo childcare, on the other, is much weaker.

**Chapter 5. *The hidden cost of flexibility. A factorial survey experiment on job promotion***

**RQ: Are mothers penalized in promotion processes in Spain, compared to childless people and fathers? How far does a flexibility stigma exist for people who use workplace flexibility, which makes them less promotable due a perception of a lower commitment?**

H5-1. Mothers are less likely than fathers and childless women to be considered for a promotion to an intermediate supervisory position, as they are considered to be less competent.

H5-2. Supervisors with more traditional gender attitudes will favour fathers over mothers for promotion, because they consider fathers to be primarily providers and mothers primarily carers.

H5-3. The longer one employee works, especially from the office headquarters, the greater his/her opportunities to be considered for a promotion, irrespective of other characteristics, as they are considered to be more committed to work.

**Chapter 6. *If you dare to ask: self-perceived possibilities of Spanish fathers to reduce work hours***

**RQ: What are the workplace characteristics that hinder or enable that employed fathers perceive that they have real possibilities to work fewer hours for family reasons?**

H6-1. *Hypothesis of the 'male flexibility stigma'*: Mothers perceive less difficulty to reduce work hours for family reasons than fathers do.

H6-2. *Hypothesis of the 'undoing gender of middle class fathers'*: Fathers in middle level occupations in the service sector (technicians and associate professionals, and clerical support workers) find it easier to reduce work hours for family reasons.

H6-3. *Hypothesis of the exposure to the market*: Fathers working in the public sector perceive less difficulty to reduce work hours for family reasons than those working in the private sector.

H6-4. *Hypothesis of the high workloads*: Fathers working long hours (i.e. more than 42 hours a week) perceive it is more difficult for them to reduce work hours.

H6-5. *Hypothesis of the economies of scale*: The bigger the size of the company, the smaller the difficulty found by fathers to ask for a reduction in their work hours.

H6-6. *Hypothesis of gender segregation*: The ‘male flexibility stigma’ of work-family policies (H6.1) is reduced when the effect of workplace related variables (occupation, size of company, economic sector, doing overwork) are considered.

### 1.3 Methodology

This thesis analyses *time* from different perspectives, using different quantitative techniques, which are more thoroughly explained in each of the empirical chapters. Three of the empirical chapters use official nationally representative databases (Chapters 3, 4 and 6), while Chapter 5 is an *ad hoc* experimental study (a *vignette* study).

The databases/techniques used are briefly summarized below:

**Chapters 3 and 4** address time through its probably most important dimension: its *use*. The Spanish Time Use Survey (STUS) in its 2003 and 2010 editions has been used with this purpose. The STUS is nationally representative diary-based survey which collects the activities performed within a 24 hour period in ten-minute intervals. In the case of paid work time, the STUS asks respondents to indicate their effective work time during a whole week. Diary-based surveys are the main instrument to obtain empirical information about unpaid work. They also avoid perception bias over the time individuals spend on activities (i.e. paid work) that may be introduced by stylized questions in opinion surveys, which may be overestimating those people working the standard schedule (40 hours in Spain).

In addition to the general advantages of time-use surveys, the STUS presents several design features that are worth highlighting. First, it includes data for all members of the household, which is crucial to understand domestic arrangements regarding distribution of activities. Second, data for paid work time is tracked over a whole week, and therefore it provides a more accurate indicator for long-run work schedules than information based on

only one day, allowing to see how work time is distributed on different work days within a week.

**Chapter 5 is an experimental study (*vignette*).** By presenting different fictitious scenarios, vignette studies aim to avoid the desirability bias which may be introduced by opinion questions, particularly with respect to sensitive issues (e.g. opinion about particular social groups). In our case, an email survey was administered to employees in charge of supervising at least another employee inside companies belonging to three industries in Spain (a male-dominated one, a female-dominated one and a mixed one), during the second trimester of 2017. Respondents had to rate different fictitious candidates for a promotion. The final sample included 71 supervisors in 50 companies from all Spain (which represents a sample of 426 rated fictitious candidates).

**Chapter 6** draws on an analysis of a **nationally representative survey on work conditions** carried out by the Spanish Ministry of Employment and Social Security, the Spanish Survey on Quality Life in the Workplace (2010). More specifically, this work assesses parents' own opinion on how difficult or easy it would be for them to reduce work hours for family reasons. This survey offered several advantages. The first one would be its considerable size (8.061 individuals, representing the whole Spanish workforce). Another one would be its offering a wide range of variables related to work conditions, including several subjective assessments. The use of this database contributed to the work in several ways. In the first place, it helped put in context the real constraints that limit the possibilities to 'challenge' the 'accepted politics of time', from employees'/fathers' own perspective. This kind of individual assessment can provide a kind of 'synthetic indicator' of many other individual and environmental variables (e.g. assessment of relations with supervisor or work environment), and in this way it contributes recognizing the 'power relations underlying working arrangements' (Abigail Powell & Cortis, 2017, p.163). This survey also served to identify the job-level characteristics that may be particular sensitive to the issue of work time flexibility, at the Spanish national level.

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# 2 Theoretical framework

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Barbara Risman's three-level conceptualization of gender as a social structure (Risman, 2004, 2017; Risman & Davis, 2013) has inspired the analysis of the working time regime as a structural element in our society. However, the three level analysis framework that she proposes (*macro*, *intersectional* and *individual* levels) will be applied not only to gender as a social structure but to the occupational and economic structures too, where working time regimes find also their roots.

## 2.1 Introduction: fathers and childcare. Identities, social expectations and policies

-[...]I am desperate. I begin to feel I have no personality. I am server of food and a putter-on of pants and a bedmaker, somebody who can be called on when you want something. But *who I am?* (Friedan, 1963)

-See for example me: above everything else, *I am a father.*

The previous statements were pronounced with a difference of around half a century. The first of them was the expression of a mother of four who left college at nineteen in the US in the fifties, when Betty Friedan's famous essay explored testimonies<sup>1</sup> of the 'problem that had no name'. The latter was a personal anecdote that called my attention years before I started this thesis. When trying to encourage patients to express themselves about their own identity, this Psychologist reported using his own example— despite a successful professional career, he preferred to be *identified as a father*. At the time I wondered how many fathers actually felt like that, even if most of them did not make it explicit. Increasingly visible public images of caring fathers prove that men are demanding to be 'known and recognised' as fathers (Knijn, 1995).

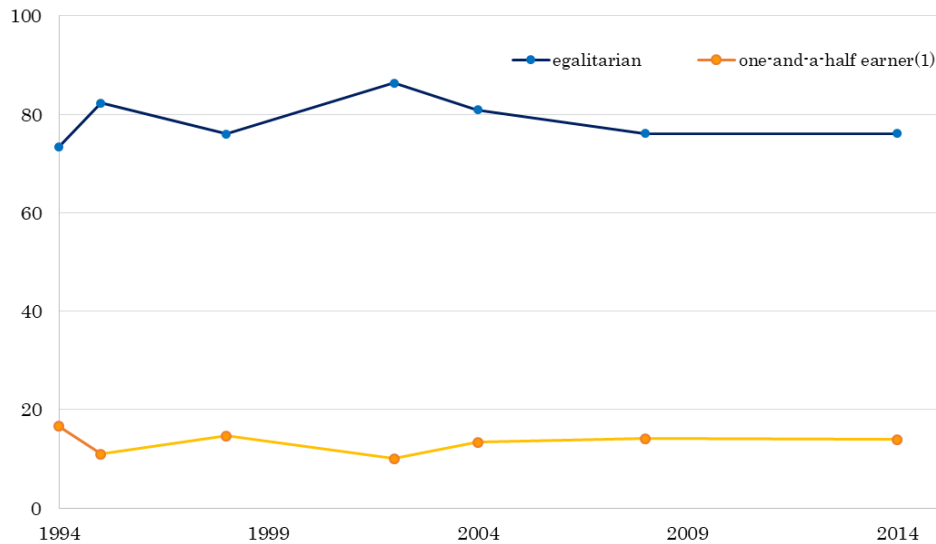
Housewives as those pictured by Betty Friedan (or their daughters) had obvious powerful reasons to leave their home, go to University, find a job and have a career. The multiple effects triggered by acquiring presence in the public sphere justify that the changes that have taken place during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be really defined as 'revolutionary'. To start with, one can think about the enormous change that the possibility to scape 'undesirable marriages' introduced in women's lives (Goldscheider, Bernhardt, & Lappegård, 2015, p.219). In contrast, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, 'stable marriages' are probably depending on men's involvement in the domestic sphere more than in anything else. As shown in **Figure 2-1**, young women overwhelmingly prefer an egalitarian model of family (in which both paid and unpaid work is shared in equal terms by spouses) over the 'one-and-a-half'

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<sup>1</sup> The lack of identification with one's role in life seemed to produce a mixed of anxious symptoms along with apathy ('I seem to sleep so much. I don't know why I should be so tired'). Probably today, this kind of suffering 'that has no name' could be found in other situations in which precarious, unsecure, intermittent jobs do not offer possibilities to build strong identities, as in the case of the (sometimes extreme) over-qualification of young graduates in countries such as Spain.



earner model (Hook & Wolfe, 2013) (in which the woman works part-time and does more unpaid work).



**Figure 2-1.** Percentage of Spanish women (age 25-34) according to their preferred model of family. Source: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS), studies n. 2107, 2194, 2292, 2448, 2556, 2766 and 3009. (1) The formulation of the question has changed over time. From 2008 onwards, the different options referred generically to 'spouses' rather than attributing to men and women, respectively, their traditional roles.

The widely acknowledged reality that men have not incorporated themselves to the domestic sphere the way that women have incorporated to paid work justifies that some authors have pessimistically referred to the 'gender revolution' as a 'stalled revolution' (England, 2010; Hook, 2006). However, some authors support the hypothesis that changes in the gender division of labour and gender roles may in fact be 'in transition' rather than stalled (Esping-Andersen, 2013; Goldscheider et al., 2015). In fact, research is starting to prove how the traditional relationship between gender equality indicators and demographic ones such as higher rates of divorce and lower rates of family formation and fertility may be starting to reverse in some contexts (Goldscheider et al., 2015).

In this context, policies have the potential to change the ‘social expectations’ over care (Castro García, 2016, p.108) and therefore to enhance social change. In particular, the design and outcomes, in terms of gender equality, of paternity and maternity leaves are receiving increasing attention in recent years (Bünning, 2015; Castro García, 2016; Fernández-Cornejo, Escot, Del-Pozo, & Castellanos-Serrano, 2016; Patnaik, 2015; Romero-Balsas, 2015). These analyses have empirically proved that initial parenting experiences have long-lasting effects on men’s involvement in childcare (and to a lesser extent in domestic tasks) and, in consequence, that the design of parental policies has a great potential in promoting equally shared parenting practices. This long-lasting effects happen through different mechanisms, such as learning processes, changes in preferences, setting behaviours that are costly to change, or changes in public images and individual identities (see Patnaik, 2015, for a more detailed review of these economic and sociological explanations). At the micro-sociological level, men are simply *transformed* by the time they spend out of work taking care of their babies, acquiring a greater sensitivity to the need to combine work and family life in the way that women usually do (Doucet, 2006):

‘He [a father who stayed at home taking care of his children for 5 years] speaks from his recognition of the benefits of close and sustained connection with his children and the loss that occurs if parents do not take this “chance in your life to do that”’ (Doucet, 2006, p.208).

Paternity leave ‘may be the starting point that allows men to live up to their parenting ideals’ (Ladge, Humberd, Baskerville Watkins, & Harrington, 2015, p. 166), but would also have a great potential in terms of social change, by sending a particular message to society about men’s rights and responsibilities over care work. The *responsibility* dimension turns out to be very relevant. In Spain, fathers who take a longer leave tend to judge this time off from work as a *duty* to their families, and not only as an individual right (Romero-Balsas, Muntanyola-Saura, & Rogero-García, 2013).

However, if gender bias is a general characteristic of the design of WLB policies, this is especially true in the case of paternity and maternity leave. Undoubtedly, the entitlement to a specific paternity leave creates a labelling effect (Patnaik, 2015) which has a greater impact on gender equality than the entitlement to be *transferred* a leave which originally 'belongs' to the mother<sup>2</sup>. In general, social change can be fostered by resources and programmes specifically directed towards fathers (Doucet, 2006), and, in the case of parental leaves, non-transferrable and well remunerated (Castro García, 2016). Also, compulsory leaves foster organizational change (Castro García, 2016) by eliminating the male flexibility stigma suffered by those men who seek flexibility at their workplaces.

A review of empirical evidence of changes in fathers' involvement and how childcare is distributed within couples in Spain can be found in **Chapter 4**.

## **2.2 The time availability perspective: care requires time**

A good (involved) father would be an *interactive, responsible, available* one, according to a foundational work on parental involvement (Lamb, Pleck, & Levine, 1985). While the availability of free time probably influences only indirectly how much interaction and responsibility a father can and is willing to assume, a father's availability (his accessibility to the child, 'whether or

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<sup>2</sup> In Spain, fathers can use three types of leave in case they want to take time off work after a childbirth: maternity leave, paternity leave and unpaid parental leave, none of which is compulsory for fathers. Maternity leave comprises a maximum of 16 paid weeks, of which the first 6 weeks have to be taken compulsory by the mother to recover from labour while the rest of it can be transferred to the father. Since 2018, paternity leave (that is, the 'daddy quota', to which exclusively the father is entitled) has been extended to five weeks. Unpaid parental leave can take up to 3 years (for each parent) after the childbirth.

not direct interaction is occurring', Lamb et al., 1985, p.884) is much more directly conditioned by his capacity of being at home, free from work responsibilities. Only by *spending time* taking care of their children can fathers really perform the social practice of fatherhood which, at the same time, contributes to building their identities as fathers (Doucet, 2006). The time spent on parental leave when the child is born can contribute to the creation of strong boundaries that may condition the father's future involvement (Fernández-Cornejo et al., 2016). In this work I am, however, interested in how men's jobs allow them to have available time on a daily basis, to spend regular time with their children in the medium and long term. Empirical research has found how work time arrangements can have an impact on when and how fathers spend time with their children. Also, some research (for the US) has found that feelings of spending little time with children are similarly affected by work hours for mothers and fathers (Milkie, Mattingly, Nomaguchi, Bianchi, & Robinson, 2004), so, as fathers usually work longer hours, they show more concerns about this, according to these authors. A summary of different working time as well as other WLB policies is presented in **Table 2-1**.

1. Time policies				2. Space policies	3. In kind benefits (including counselling or information)	4. Work organization
1.1. Availability of daily time	1.2. Control over work time	1.3. Alternative work time arrangements	1.4. Periods off work to care			
General reduced hours (e.g. 35 hours) for all staff	Choosing between different fixed shifts decided by company.	Compressed work week	(Paid or unpaid) Parental leaves	Teleworking	On-site care provision (children, elderly)	Job sharing
Switching off time (e.g. 6 p.m.) <sup>1</sup>	Autonomy in deciding shifts (rotatory)	Meetings during core hours	Leave to take care of children or disabled adults		Pre-tax spending accounts for dependent care	Job alternation leaves
Reduced schedule <sup>2</sup> /Voluntary part time work	<i>Flexitime</i> (starting /ending time)	Term-time working			Informational and referral accounts to find care	
Part-time leave	<i>Flexihours</i> (bank of work hours).  <i>Flexidays</i> (bank of hours with possibility of days off)  Flexible holidays				Counselling relevant to balancing work and family.	

**Table 2-1.** *Different types of work-life balance policies.* Source: own elaboration from Chung, 2014 and Fagan, 2003. These are potential work-life balance policies, as long as they are employee-driven. (1) Since 2017, the labour law in France recognises the workers right to disconnect (Teruel, 2017). In Spain, there have been recent attempts (in 2016) to promote that working days end at 6 p.m., but no new legislation or policy has been implemented yet ('Báñez recupera la propuesta de que la jornada laboral acabe a las 18 horas,' 2016). (2) For a review of the use and legislation of the reduced schedule in Spain, see **Chapter 6**.

The time availability perspective has also received critiques with regard to the extent that it really contributes to explaining men's involvement in the domestic sphere. On the one hand, it seems plausible that other circumstances (such as a real motivation or need for it) have to occur simultaneously with time availability to guarantee a greater involvement in childcare. On the other hand, available time (and thus time spent at work) can also be functioning as an endogenous variable of others such as orientation to the family or relative resources. Time spent in paid work, for men and women, would therefore be a consequence of the domestic responsibilities they assume, and not just a limitation to them. At the same time, both domestic and professional responsibilities assumed can be the consequence of how preferences, personality and roles are materialized in decisions throughout the life cycle. As Francine Deutsch very clearly points out:

Parents decisions about which jobs to take, how many hours to work, and how to interpret the demands of their jobs often created constraints to which they were then bound. In short, parents' decisions about employment, which were profoundly affected by their genders, influenced the equality or inequality between them both at home and on the job (Deutsch, 1999, p.126).

Endogeneity issues are therefore acknowledged for in the empirical analyses carried out (in **Chapter 3 and 4**), as they can only be partially addressed with time-use data, which is usually cross-sectional. Longitudinal data or, in a different way, qualitative research, can shed light on the casual relationship between time spent in the domestic and work spheres. What time-use data can and do prove is the trade-off between daily time spent in the domestic and the work spheres, irrespective of how individuals arrived to a particular arrangement. Work time imposes a clear material limitation on involvement at home:

‘Why she does? ...just because...I don’t *physically* have the time and I’m not *physically here* I guess’ [working father, on why the mother did more parenting]. (Deutsch, 1999, p.127).

In this sense, as early as 1977, the sociologist and expert on masculinities Joseph H. Pleck anticipated that changes in men’s involvement in the family would ultimately be dependent on men’s work demands, but once, and only once, cultural schemas that ‘excluded’ men from the domestic sphere were got over. This paramount cultural change at the private level would be the one that pushes changes in the work sphere—where there are probably greater incentives to resist change than in the family sphere:

Thus, it would be misleading to state that men’s role work is the primary determinant of the limited family role men typically hold at present. It would be more accurate to say that the objective demands of the male work role are now a latent and secondary constraint, but will emerge as the primary constraint on men’s family role if and when ideological support for the traditional division of family labor by sex is weakened. (Pleck, 1977, p.421).

These words were written, however, four decades ago. Section 2.1 already discussed how the weakening of the ‘ideological support for the traditional division of family labor by sex’ should not be ignored as a reality. The ‘time availability perspective’ will be more thoroughly explored theoretically and empirically in **Chapters 3 and 4**. **Chapter 4** also presents a more thorough revision of empirical evidence of an association between work time and distribution of childcare between mother and father.

### **2.3 Working time within the gender and class structure**

Employed people face many more constraints than those that legal norms impose at their workplace: those derived from the organizational culture or its position in the market, that is, the symbolic and material rewards

attached to work *time* in a particular context. Irrespective of what they are legally or contractually obliged to work, employees feel that everyone has to 'lend a hand' when *bad times* come, as this mother states referring to her spouse's trials attempting to work fewer hours:

'He tries to but he doesn't manage [...], he..., now it is a very hard time for companies, they are having a bad time. It is so difficult because they have to be with the people [...]he tries to but it is impossible and it comes a time when I just adapt to it [...]' (Abril, Botía Morillas, & Jurado Guerrero, 2015, p.219)

The debate on the effect of the structural vs the individual factors that herald the prevalence of the long-hours culture has been particularly relevant in the US (Lewis, 2003). This thesis acknowledges, however, that all these sets of factors are perfectly distinguishable only in theoretical terms. If it is true that individuals build their identity through paid work (and this strongly depends on the individual's preferences, choices or personality) it is also true that identity is constructed only in social terms and is subject to strong external demands and expectations. Once a particular social role is chosen (if this choice is possible at all) not respecting the culture and norms of that particular social group may come at the expense of severe social penalizations. In other words, given the frailty of individual freedom, no attempt to explain differences in work time patterns can overlook its structural elements. In the same sense, the 'long hours' culture' cannot be understood without acknowledging the economic importance for the capitalist system of individuals' 'devotion' to their work. In sum, and as proposed by intersectionality perspectives, different structures of domination (e.g. class vs. gender) constrain individuals' supposedly free choices (Acker, 1990; Risman, 2004).

### **2.3.1 The macro level: overloaded workers in a 24/7 services economy**

'How would you define commitment?' Manager: 'I don't think you can get commitment with less than fifty or sixty hours a week. That's



what other corporations are doing. To be competitive, that's what we need to do. In my gut, I can't believe we can do it very different' '. (Hochschild, 1997, p.70)

Highly competitive organizations in post-industrial societies usually trade workplace resources (from job level control to the provision of 24-hour call centres to support with personal affairs<sup>3</sup>) for high levels of engagement from their employees in order to survive. As a consequence, work usually 'invades' private or personal lives, ultimately giving as a result that work becomes 'one's life' in particular cases.

Working time is not only a symbol or a closure strategy, it can be considered a material resource too. When employees of a British airline were asked why they worked such long hours (e.g. more than 9 hours a day) most of them cited workloads as the main reason<sup>4</sup> (Rutherford, 2001). The long hours' culture is, to a great extent, the consequence of employees having to

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<sup>3</sup> Highly competitive companies are increasingly providing errands running services to their employees. Evidently, employers' discourse on the reasons to provide these in-kind benefits (basically arguing a growing demand for work-life balance resources) subtly reveal also their concerns about their top professionals wasting their valuable time doing small, unrewarding things they are 'overqualified' for. Well established professionals are themselves extremely conscious about the value of their time —probably this is the main reason why it seems difficult to visualize a top executive writing a long, careful email in response to a work inquiry or (particularly in the case of a man) changing his baby's nappies. However, as we will propose later on, this situation could be reversed if and when the incentives (e.g. emotional rewards and identity construction) found in these activities can 'compete' with the rewards provided by professional activities with the same 'strength' for men and women (even if not in equal terms with their high-rewarding jobs for any of them).

<sup>4</sup> There are other different reasons why employees (especially managers) work long hours: workloads, enjoyment, signal of commitment, etc.

work ‘against the clock’, pressed by tight deadlines derived from the sometimes overwhelming business commitments that companies assume.

At the same time, the inertia of global markets and its changes on employment has obvious effects on other schedules’ patterns: while ‘overloaded professionals’ increasingly acquire in the market those services that they no longer produce at home efficiently, more employees in the service sector are consequently subject to non-standard schedules. Economic downturns and a relative higher growth of labour supply with respect to demand have an impact on the capacity of workers to negotiate benefits, among which WLB policies (Chung, 2014). Processes of deregulation or privatization of particular sectors /companies (e.g. Stock Exchange or airlines) have had as a consequence the introduction of higher workloads and the long hours culture (Rutherford, 2001). After the Great Recession, many employees in Europe have to face ‘dramatically rising workloads’ in ‘chronically understaffed organizations’ (Kossek, Lewis, & Hammer, 2010, p.8).

‘As workloads are intensified and boundaries increasingly blurred in the contemporary context, expectations of the ideal worker correspondingly expand’ (Lewis, Gambles, & Rapoport, 2007, p.365). Recent quantitative and qualitative studies support the hypothesis that Spanish employees may be suffering a special pressure to be particularly committed to work in these ‘hard times’, and therefore that working time matters more than ever (González & Jurado-Guerrero, 2015; Grau-Grau, 2013). More details of the Spanish working time regime are presented in **Chapter 3** and **Chapter 6**.

In this context, the fact that highly-competitive organizations shift to more sophisticated indicators of employees’ performance than a strict control of work hours does not necessarily mean that pressures on how much time people have to work are eliminated at all, as the achievement of high performance still requires time as a valuable resource. However, the efficacy of work time as a symbol is not limited to a ‘survival strategy’ inside organizations—it also has a reflection at the macro, cultural level. Hurriedness is valued in today’s societies, as a sign of being specially attached

to and required by the world, especially for those holding more creative, qualified jobs. Work time has replaced leisure time as a symbol of status today (Gershuny & Fisher, 2014). It is not surprising then that qualified, service professionals (the 'superordinate working class' according to Gershuny & Fisher, 2014) are those who are subject to higher work to family conflict (Schieman & Young, 2010).

### **2.3.2 The interactional level: norms and stereotypes in organizations**

Examples [of actions associated to the 'ideal worker' belief] include a willingness to drop everything at a moment's notice for a new work demand, to devote enormous hours to 'face time' at work, and to work late nights or weekends. While it has often been observed that 'face time' and long hours are not necessarily associated with actual worker performance or productivity (e.g., Epstein et al. 1999), in the contemporary organization of work, they function as a cultural sign of the effort component of performance capacity (Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007, p.1306).

There are social expectations on how much time people should work — and therefore employees' efforts to remain 'visible', either physically present at the office or 'connected' in the case of remote working. The existing cultural expectations on work time are made explicit in more or less subtle ways— from employees' feelings that they have to explain themselves if they leave work at an unexpected time to 'offhand comments about working time (e.g. 'Just getting in?')' (Kelly & Moen, 2007, p.498).

The ideal worker norm is a key cultural element of the gender structure operating at the interactional and macro level. If women want to advance within organizations, they are expected to put their work before family responsibilities, and to follow the ideal worker norm: 'eight hours of continuous work away from the living space, arrival on time, total attention to the work, and long hours if requested' (Acker, 2006, p.448). The long hours'

culture can be considered in fact a strategy of patriarchal closure (Rutherford, 2001). When adopting flexibility measures, women are violating the ‘ideal worker’ prescription and are therefore penalized in terms of career rewards and excluded from decision-making (Williams, Blair-Loy, & Berdahl, 2013). Meanwhile, those men who seek to trade off time at work for time at home would be violating a double social prescription<sup>5</sup> (Rudman & Mescher, 2013) —they would be neither ‘ideal workers’ nor ‘ideal men’, that is, they are no longer the main breadwinners. **Chapter 5** reviews in more detail, theoretically and empirically, how negative stereotypes and plain discrimination operate against those individuals breaking the ‘ideal worker norm’.

### 2.3.3 The individual level: a ‘competition’ for time?

‘If I’m at home, it is more than likely that I will be doing what I’m doing here, because it’s my hobby. The first thing I do when I get home is turn on the computer’ [*entrepreneur*]. (Valenzuela, Reygadas, & Cruces, 2015, p.200)

In the knowledge economy, qualified jobs may represent not only a source of status and identity (Lewis et al., 2007) but also of satisfaction (Gershuny, 2011), to the extent that some authors question if post-industrial work is not actually the ‘new leisure’ (Gershuny, 2011; Hochschild, 1997; Lewis, 2003).

As Clark’s border theory on WLB states (Clark, 2000), if employees feel a stronger identification with the work domain than with the domestic one, then they will tend to allocate more time to the former than to the latter. This

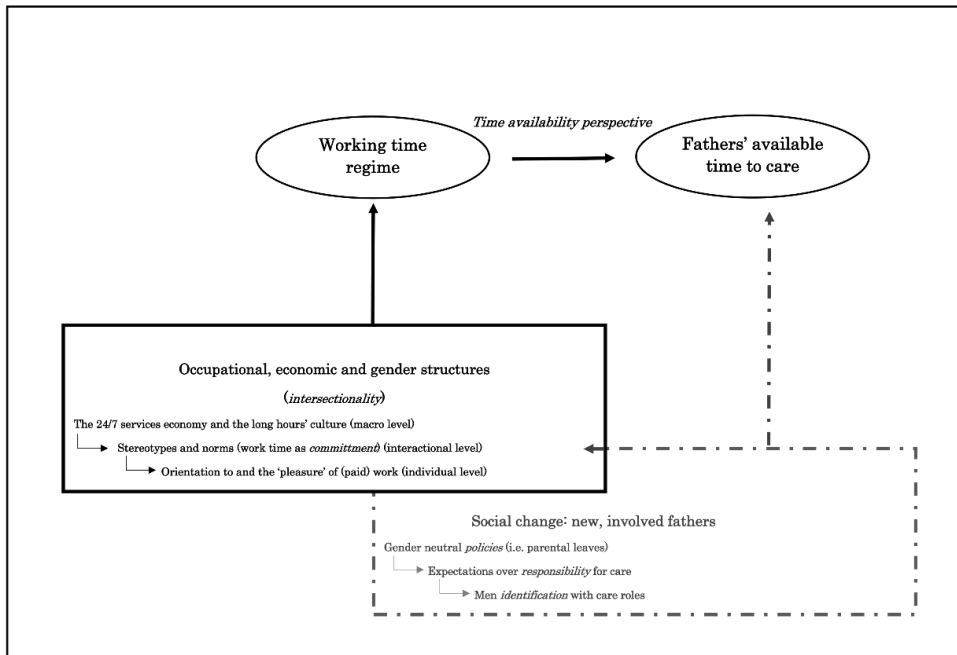
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<sup>5</sup> For empirical evidence on men suffering a higher penalization when making use of WLB policies, see Wayne & Cordeiro, 2003, as well the special issue on the ‘male flexibility stigma’ published by the *Journal of Social Issues* (vol. 19, n.2, 2013): Coltrane, Miller, DeHaan, & Stewart, 2013; Rudman & Mescher, 2013; Vandello, Hettinger, Bosson, & Siddiqi, 2013, among others.

is true especially if the 'borders' (i.e. schedules) between both spheres are relatively flexible (Lott & Chung, 2016), which is especially the case of qualified jobs, as employees have a greater discretionary capacity over how much time they spend working. The nature of the work may introduce a difference in this orientation to or identification with the work sphere. To some extent, therefore, 'work-family conflict' could be understood as a struggle between two 'competing devotions' (Blair-Loy, 2003) for a scarce resource (time)—a struggle that is growingly affecting those men concerned with the need and benefits of a more involved fatherhood.

Apart from non-monetary rewards of high-status jobs, in private companies, employees normally have more or less explicit economic incentives to do overtime, not only when compensation schemes contemplate the reward of overtime and/or performance achievement, but also as a way to avoid the risks of a dismissal in the most precarious situations. Again, the 'frailty' of individual's freedom to choose would be put in evidence— even pleasure in the work can be itself an invisible way of organizational control (Acker, 2006), not to mention material incentives.

The theoretical framework is summarized in **Figure 2-2**.



**Figure 2-2.** *Overarching theoretical framework*

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# PART II

## EMPIRICAL CHAPTERS

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# 3 Finding time for children. Fatherhood, jobs and available time in Spain, 2003-2010

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## **FINDING TIME FOR CHILDREN. Fatherhood, Jobs and Available Time in Spain, 2003-2010**

IRINA FERNÁNDEZ-LOZANO

UNED

[irina.fernandez@poli.uned.es](mailto:irina.fernandez@poli.uned.es)

ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4310-5526>

## **ENCONTRAR TIEMPO PARA LOS HIJOS. Paternidad, ocupaciones y tiempo disponible en España, 2003-2010**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Parents of young children are supposed to be *interactive* with, *responsible* for and *available* for their children (Lamb, Pleck and Levine 1985). This study aims at shedding light on how work schedules allows Spanish fathers to be available to take care of their children when they are not at school or childcare centres. By using time-use data, this study seeks to contribute to previous research by providing a nuanced description of how much and when work takes place throughout the day, as well as how this is associated to occupational and parental statuses, gender and the incidence of the economic recession. 'Available time' for the family is analysed, understood as time away from work excluding the core business hours (i.e. 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.). Results show that being a mother has still a direct reflection on time availability, while fatherhood does not. Also, time availability presents a complex relationship with the class structure, which does not seem to have been altered by recession. Finally, there seems to be a gender convergence in time availability, only due to its reduction in the case of women.

### **KEYWORDS**

Fatherhood; Time use; Working time; Work-life balance.

### **RESUMEN**

Los padres de niños pequeños deben ser interactivos, responsables y estar disponibles para cuidarlos (Lamb, Pleck, y Levine 1985). Esta investigación pretende arrojar luz sobre hasta qué punto los horarios de trabajo en España permiten a los padres estar disponibles para sus hijos cuando estos salen del colegio o la guardería. Usando datos de uso del tiempo, se pretende contribuir a la literatura ofreciendo un análisis detallado de cuánto y cuándo se trabaja a lo largo del día, así como su relación con el estatus ocupacional y parental, el género y la incidencia de la crisis. Se analiza el "tiempo disponible" para la familia, entendido como el tiempo en que no se está en el trabajo, excluyendo las horas estándar "de oficina" (de 8 a 17). Los resultados muestran que ser madre aún tiene una relación directa con el tiempo disponible, no así la paternidad. Además, el tiempo disponible presenta una relación compleja con la estructura de clase, que la crisis no ha alterado. Por último, se comprueba una tendencia convergente entre hombres y mujeres, debido a la reducción del tiempo disponible de estas últimas.

### **PALABRAS CLAVE**

Conciliación; Horas de trabajo; Paternidad; Uso del tiempo.

# 4 Fathers sharing solo care in Spain: he is *available* or she *is not*?

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# Fathers sharing solo care in Spain: he is *available*, or she *is not*?<sup>1</sup>

**Irina Fernández-Lozano**

## **Abstract**

The increase in fathers' involvement in childcare in western societies has not translated into a shared distribution of childcare among parents. While some couples actually manage to 'undo gender' when the first child arrives, the characteristics of these couples are not yet clear. This article aims at identifying how four different explanations contribute to understanding how parents share solo routine care in Spain, using a sample of dual-earner, heterosexual parents from the Spanish Time Use Survey 2010. The results show that fathers are more likely to be 'equal sharers' when they earn less than their spouse, they do not hold traditionally masculine jobs (e.g. managers or blue collar workers), they have available time and, more importantly, their spouses are not available from 5 p.m. In line with previous research, this research shows evidence against the 'myth' that higher status employees or those with college education are more egalitarian in practice.

## **Keywords**

Gender & Family, parenting, time availability, Spain, time use, work-life balance

## **Acknowledgements**

I have to thank Killian Mullan for providing me with very enriching insights on how to understand spouses' 'togetherness' in relation to childcare and to operationalize it using time use data, pointing out the differences among perceptions of 'where' individuals are and those of 'with whom' they are. I would also like to thank Teresa Jurado-Guerrero for very useful feedback on this manuscript.

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# 5 The hidden cost of flexibility: A factorial survey experiment on job promotion

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# The Hidden Cost of Flexibility: A Factorial Survey Experiment on Job Promotion<sup>1</sup>

**Fernández-Lozano, Irina**

**González, M. José**

**Jurado-Guerrero, Teresa**

**Martínez-Pastor, Juan Ignacio**

## **Abstract**

In this article, we analyse the role of gender, parenthood and work flexibility measures on the likelihood of internal promotion in Spain. Based on theories of discrimination and labour market signalling, we hypothesise that employers favour fathers more than mothers for promotion, as well as those employees who do not make use of flexibility measures (telework or reduced schedule). Hypotheses were tested using data from a survey experiment, in which 71 supervisors from private companies evaluated short vignettes of six different candidates for job promotion into positions that required decision-making and team supervision skills. Several candidate characteristics were experimentally manipulated, while others were kept constant to avoid a lack of information and minimise statistical discrimination. Contrary to the stereotype content model, fathers were not perceived to be more competent than mothers and did not receive higher scores for promotion. However, flexibility led to lower promotion scores, partly due to being associated to less commitment. Although the statutory right to reduce working hours for care reasons seems a major social achievement, this experiment shows that mothers may be indirectly penalised in terms of their likelihood for promotion, as they are the main users of this policy.

## **Keywords**

Stereotypes, discrimination, flexibility stigma, promotion, factorial survey

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**6** If you dare to ask:  
self-perceived  
possibilities of Spanish  
fathers to reduce work  
hours

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## If you dare to ask: self-perceived possibilities of Spanish fathers to reduce work hours

Irina Fernandez-Lozano

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## If you dare to ask: self-perceived possibilities of Spanish fathers to reduce work hours

Irina Fernandez-Lozano

Department of Sociology II, UNED, Madrid, Spain

### ABSTRACT

Time scarcity is a reality for most mothers and fathers of young children who work full-time. Though the Spanish law recognizes a specific right to a reduced schedule for care reasons, fathers very rarely make use of this policy. Many of them simply think that, in their current employment circumstances, they 'can't' cut down on work hours. This analysis focuses on the subjective perception that employees have of their difficulty to reduce work hours. Using a nationally representative sample of Spanish employees in charge of young children, and drawing on intersectionality perspectives, we propose that several stratification systems (e.g. gender and economic structure) overlap framing the subjective experience of how easy or difficult it is to adopt a reduced schedule. We confirm that fathers in middle-level service occupations (e.g. clerical workers) may be those most likely to be 'undoing gender' at work, as they differ significantly from other fathers in their perception that for them it would be easier to reduce their work hours.

### RESUMEN

La escasez de tiempo es una realidad para la mayoría de padres y madres de niños pequeños que trabajan a tiempo completo. Aunque la legislación española reconoce el derecho específico de reducir la jornada por motivos familiares, raramente son los padres (varones) quienes hacen uso de esta política. Muchos de ellos simplemente piensan que, en sus circunstancias laborales, 'no pueden' trabajar menos horas. El presente trabajo se centra en el análisis de la percepción subjetiva que los empleados tienen sobre su dificultad de reducir su jornada de trabajo. Usando una muestra representativa de la población empleada española que está a cargo de niños pequeños, y partiendo de las teorías de la 'interseccionalidad', se propone que diferentes formas de estratificación social (como el género o la estructura económica) se superponen, dando forma a la experiencia subjetiva de los individuos sobre su dificultad para reducir el horario laboral. Se confirma que los padres que tienen ocupaciones de servicios de nivel medio (como los empleados administrativos) podrían ser aquellos que estén 'deshaciendo el género' en el trabajo, ya que difieren significativamente en su percepción de que para ellos 'es difícil' reducir su jornada.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 12 November 2016  
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### KEYWORDS

Family-friendly companies;  
gender roles; WLB; working  
time; Spain

### PALABRAS CLAVE

empresas familiarmente  
responsables; roles de  
género; conciliación; tiempo  
de trabajo; España

# PART III

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

# 7 General conclusions

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This thesis was motivated by the suspicion that there is a lagged adaptation of men's working schedules to today's social reality— while we claim that today's fathers are 'new' or 'involved' fathers, their involvement in paid work is essentially the same than their fathers' was, with the exception of their taking some weeks off when their child is born. That means they have adopted new responsibilities at home without renouncing to daily professional responsibilities. Is it possible at all? Why do men still work under a 'long hours' culture' pattern, while most women do not?

Spain was a suitable setting to study the relationships between fatherhood and the long hours' culture: most fathers (over 80 per cent) work at least some hours beyond 5 p.m., out of official school and public childcare centres opening hours. Spanish working time regime is contested for being inefficient and definitively family-unfriendly, and yet no substantial change is introduced at the policy level. Four empirical studies have tried to analyse



the interrelation between *gender, parenthood, occupation* and *work hours* in Spain, in order to identify obstacles as well as opportunities for social change, under the light of structural sociology and a gender perspective.

The following final conclusions have emerged after the results of the four empirical studies have been put in the perspective of other empirical and theoretical contributions to the subject.

### **7.1 Do working fathers need more available time?**

If we randomly chose *a day in the life* of a dual-earner Spanish heterosexual couple with at least one child up to 12 years old, the most probable scenario would be that the mother spent 3 times more minutes than the father feeding, bathing or supervising their children. On average, these mothers work (for pay) around 33 hours a week, while fathers work around 43. Some parents work under an 8-to-5 pattern (around 16 per cent of mothers and 11 per cent of fathers) but this does not mean they distribute childcare in a more egalitarian way. Fathers who have more available time definitely do more care work than fathers who do overwork—even if still less than mothers who work the same hours.

The analyses carried out have shown that it is important to distinguish between absolute time taking care of children and distribution of childcare among spouses. Fathers who have more available time spend relatively more time doing ‘solo care’. However, what really seems to make a difference in terms of equality at the couple’s level is that *she is not available* at particular moments, especially after 5 p.m. on weekdays. While this thesis started by proposing that it was time for men to ‘complete’ the gender revolution, the former facts evidences that gender can be constructed only in relational terms (Kaufman, 2013).

From a policy perspective, it would be important to define clearly the objectives when addressing childcare and work-life balance related needs. Both a family where father and mother reduce work hours to spend more time with their children and one in which parents rely on childcare centres during the day or a live-in nanny can be gender-egalitarian models of family. What

are the available alternatives to the one-and-a-half earner model, where the mother ends up being the main caregiver, and how are these alternatives adapted to families' preferences? What childcare model do we want to promote as a society? Does this model encompass gender equality and children's wellbeing at the same time?

## 7.2 'Competing responsibilities'?

This research has also contributed with evidence on the 'persistent conflict between leadership and child care involvement' (Gasser, 2015, p.17): managers are not only those who spend longer hours at the workplace, but also those who share childcare in a less egalitarian way with their spouses. What is more important, they do so *irrespective of* their working hours. As Gasser accurately points out, time availability is not the only way that workplace characteristics can shape fathers' involvement. Work cultures and (gendered) individual identities also play a major role. This research has brought to light not only that fathers with managerial responsibilities spend little time taking care of their children—the most relevant evidence is that their spouses *do not*. Male managers seem to systematically rely on their spouses to provide basic, daily care to their children, and managers are overwhelmingly men.

This fact evidences the difficulties that people have to face when assuming higher levels of *responsibility* in such demanding spheres as the workplace and the home *simultaneously*. As Pleck et al. reminded us (Lamb, Pleck, & Levine, 1985), being a parent requires not only time, but also *interaction* and *responsibility*. Responsibility (at home and at work) is time and energy consuming and requires decision taking, problem solving, flexibility, anticipation and, above all, being *ever available* for the *unexpected*. Managers, self-employed workers and many professionals (as mothers) can hardly disconnect, because they assume a great deal of responsibility (the difference being, however, that mothers normally do the *tough work* too). Responsibility cannot be externalized. From a policy perspective, therefore, all initiatives which foster a shared responsibility

within couples can enable mothers to acquire more responsibility at the workplace and to develop their careers to the best of their potential.

This thesis also proposed that a 8-to-5 or 9-to-5 pattern was probably one of the most family friendly patterns given our current social schedules—in our knowledge and services economy, it seems, however, that fixed schedules are an ideal unachievable by most service employees, excepting many subordinated white collar ones<sup>1</sup>.

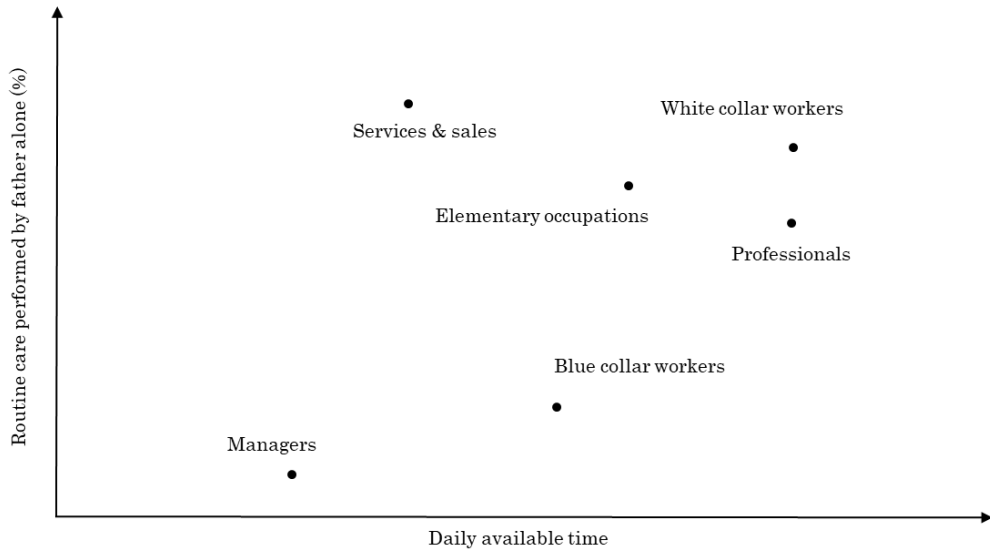
### 7.3 Jobs, roles, status

This work has also presented evidence against the ‘myth’ that gender equality comes hand in hand with socioeconomic status or educational attainment. Neither college education nor holding a higher level occupation implies performing a more egalitarian distribution of primary childcare, even if schedules are not particularly family-unfriendly. What seems plausible is that gender egalitarian practices derive from *material constraints*, as other authors have suggested (Deutsch, 1999), like spouses desynchronized schedules. *Earning less* than the mother has also proved to be a predictor of being relatively more involved in routine childcare (it could be argued, though, that this constraint is *symbolic* rather than material).

As show in **Figure 7-1**, fathers working in services and sales (e.g. sales assistants) seem to *do their best* out of their family unfriendly schedules — probably because their jobs fall far from the masculine ideal of power, status or competitiveness.

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<sup>1</sup> At the other side of the occupational spectrum, there are other mechanisms, different to responsibility, why the working class can neither adopt fixed, standard schedules, such as objective based pay or being paid by the hour (Kaufman, 2013). Fortunately, these are not the most frequent schemes in Spain.



**Figure 7-1** Occupations, time availability and shared parenting. Notes: based on results in chapter 4 (average scores, i.e. not controlling for other variables). Daily available time: from 5 p.m. to 8 a.m. next day, during weekdays.

In this sense, as the empirical evidence in this thesis has shown, fathers perceive higher penalty associated to reducing work hours not so much because they are men but because of the jobs they have. In fact, other things being equal, penalties for adopting a reduced schedule do not seem to be higher for men than for women. In sum, occupational segregation seems to account for much of the gender gap in the use of family-friendly strategies. As suggested by Deutsch (Deutsch, 1999), vocational choices in the first place prepare the way for co-responsibility at home.

From a policy perspective, this leads us to think in terms of structural changes. Fortunately, gender is a dynamic structure (Risman, 2018). While providing schedule flexibility does not seem to be sufficient to achieve equally shared parenting, the existence of a critical mass of fathers who share an intrinsic identification with their roles as nurturers, carers, advisors, homemakers or multifaceted fathers can foster the development of new policies under a new social contract on working time.

‘Femininity has been somewhat masculinized. There is no reason, in principle, why gender equality could not be achieved from the other

direction. Masculinity could be somewhat feminized (...). Fathers could organize 'Show Your Son How to Babysit' day.' (Folbre & Weisskopf, 1998, p.187)

## **7.4 Limitations of the study and prospects for future research**

For the analyses of the use of time carried out in this research I have used the most recent Spanish Time Use Survey data available, from 2010. These analyses, therefore, have to be put in the perspective of the eight years that have passed since the data were gathered. From a methodological point of view, other limitations such as endogeneity of time-use analyses or the difficulties to simulate real scenarios of vignette studies have been developed in the empirical chapters.

This thesis has analysed available and working time in Spain from a mainly quantitative, cross-sectional perspective. A qualitative and/or longitudinal perspective could shed some light on questions such as: how does decision-taking take place at the couple level for mothers and fathers who reduce their schedule? How does the long hours' culture materialize in different work environments (e.g. small vs. large companies)? Also, this thesis has focused on just one of the dimensions of work-life balance: time. Assuming diverse roles or responsibilities can also be a source of conflict and strain. Lack of income, rather than time, can be the main work-life balance issue for working class families (Warren, 2015). While introducing a class perspective in the analyses, this thesis has not addressed the specific work-life balance and childcare needs of the most vulnerable families.

From a gender perspective, I believe there is much ground to dig deeper in the work-family interface for fathers and mothers, and particularly how responsibilities as parents and as professionals /workers are balanced. It is not possible to directly address responsibility with time-use data, but if I had to continue the work started, I would probably turn the analysis from time to responsibility as the central issue. What kind of working time arrangements

are useful for people with higher levels of responsibility both in the domestic and the work spheres? How is responsibility associated to (blurred or tight) time boundaries between spheres? Those women (and men?) who manage to be at the same time managers at home and at work are probably the best role models to lead change in today's organizations.

‘Actions alter the world we have entered; institutions are powerful but not determinative. And often institutions and the choices they offer conflict with one another. Such conflicts spark individual and collective mobilization that changes the status quo’ (Risman, 2018, p.31).

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En el ámbito de la Universidad he encontrado siempre amabilidad y buen trato, y personas que de una manera u otra han contribuido altruistamente a mi quehacer investigador. Tengo que destacar sin duda al departamento de Sociología II de la UNED al completo; un equipo acogedor y brillante intelectualmente. María Miyar y Héctor Cebolla fueron las primeras personas con quienes compartí docencia, y debo agradecerles su comprensión y generosidad. Con María José González y Juan Ignacio Martínez Pastor he tenido el gusto de escribir uno de los artículos de esta tesis. Su naturalidad, generosidad conmigo y sentido del humor a la hora de trabajar han hecho llevadero un proyecto largo y no siempre sencillo. No puedo dejar de mencionar al resto de compañeros doctorandos “FPI” de la Facultad (ahora también, compañeras), por su apoyo y compañía.

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más tiempo del que quizás previeron (si ello se debe a causas individuales o estructurales, podría ser quizás objeto de otra tesis doctoral).