

Do Dads Want to Be There?

Men's Intended Use of Unpaid Parental Leave in Spain

Xiana Bueno and Marc Grau-Grau

Harvard University

Abstract: Despite the availability of a gender-neutral unpaid parental leave system in Spain, men rarely use it. This study explores how men's intended use of unpaid parental leave creates different narratives, which may shed light on the underutilization of parental leave by men. The novelties of this research are its focus on only highly educated people and its analysis of not only men's voices but also women's narratives of their male partners' intentions. The data consist of 52 in-depth interviews of highly educated men and women in stable partnerships. The qualitative analysis reveals different narratives behind couples' decisions. Men with positive attitudes towards taking leave are not necessarily self-motivated to do so but are pressured by their partners. Narratives from men who do not plan to adapt their working hours are also diverse. Negative intentions do not necessarily mean lack of gender-egalitarian dynamics at home. When it does, these men often have partners who express their disappointment, while others have partners who believe in gender specialization. The results reveal that when considering women's views, men seem to overestimate the egalitarianism within their relationships by being highly predisposed to take unpaid leave.

Keywords: men, unpaid parental leave, higher education, qualitative, gender egalitarianism.

Acknowledgements: This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Grant Agreement No. 657030. We are grateful to Mary Brinton, Livia Olah and Pablo Gracia for their insightful suggestions on earlier versions of this paper.

Introduction

Despite the relatively recent efforts of some governments to encourage men to take parental leave, men rarely use it (Lammi-Taskula 2008; Meil 2013). Spain is no exception (Escobedo, Flaquer & Navarro 2012; Escot, Fernandez-Cornejo & Poza 2014; Lapuerta, Baizán & González 2011). The lack of wage replacement in the extended gender-neutral parental leave system makes most Spanish dual-earner couples unable to take longer leaves after the initial maternity and paternity allowance. Nevertheless, if such leave is taken, mothers rather than fathers are generally the ones who take unpaid leaves (Escot et al. 2014; Lapuerta et al. 2011). With this study, we attempt to use qualitative data to better understand men's reasoning regarding their intended use of parental leave.

The persistence of more traditional gender-role norms at the individual and institutional levels coupled with the gendered culture and rigidity in the labor market are the main reasons behind men's lack of involvement in using parental leave. Although Spanish society's gender-role ideology has substantially evolved towards more egalitarian attitudes (Arpino, Esping-Andersen & Pessin 2015), previous research has also shown that more traditional gender-role behaviors remain (Abril et al. 2015a). Indeed, once young couples become parents, gender inequality within the household increases (Domínguez-Folgueras 2015; Young and Schieman 2017). The role of the institutional dimension in individuals' decision making is crucial. In fact, the lack of work-family balance remains a pending subject for many post-industrial societies including Spain (Brinton et al. 2018). In addition, at the macro level, the role of the economic recession in Spain and the high levels of unemployment among young adults cannot be neglected (Simó 2002), making Spain a very engaging case study.

Within this scenario, previous research in Spain has identified an emerging pattern of gender egalitarian men claiming to be actively involved in fatherhood (González and Jurado 2015). However, active fathers still represent a minority in Spain and other postindustrial contexts (Deutsch 1999; Kaufman 2013). Neither gender socialization theories nor relative resources theories are able to fully explain this emerging behavior. Instead, human capital perspectives (Baizán, Domínguez, González 2014; Lareau, 2011) suggest that more highly educated men are more conscious of the positive benefits of their involvement in childcare. However, less is known about active fathers' reasoning and motivations, the couple and labor market circumstances surrounding such motivations or the aspects in which active fathers differ from other men.

To address these issues, we analyze the narratives of 52 urban, heterosexual, native-born, highly educated men and women aged 24-35 years and in stable partnerships. The in-depth personal interviews were conducted in 2012 in Madrid and Barcelona. We considered it crucial to contextualize respondents' narratives with both partners' labor force participation and working conditions, their gender-role attitudes towards parenthood, their gender-role behaviors in terms of housework and childcare, and their attitudes towards family policies. This study is novel in that we not only focus on men's voices to better understand their use of parental leave but also consider women's narratives regarding their partners' use of parental leave. By taking this approach, we gain insights into men's thoughts from the perspective of women that cannot be obtained from the perspective of men (Yancey-Martin 2001).

Qualitative methods are instrumental in exploring how men and women describe and make meaning from their decisions and behaviors (Goldberg and Allen 2015). A qualitative analysis is

not intended to reach statistical representativeness but to illustrate individuals' reasoning and subjective processes.

The Spanish Parental Leave System

Paid parental leave system. Paternity and maternity leave are both fully paid, and returning to the same job position is assured. Mothers are entitled to take 16 weeks of leave, the six first weeks of which are mandatory. The remaining 10 weeks can be taken by the mother or the father. Although fathers have been entitled to take four weeks of paternity leave since January 2017, fathers were entitled to 15 days when the fieldwork for this study was conducted. Paternity leave cannot be shared; therefore, as with the majority of so-called “daddy quotas”, if the father does not take it, this right is lost. From 1930s until 2007, paternity leave consisted in two days. (Escobedo 2009). It was not until 2007 that 13 more days were added.

Unpaid parental leave system. There are two types of gender-neutral unpaid parental leave in Spain: full-time leave and part-time leave. Full-time parental leave consists of up to three unpaid years of leave during which the company must maintain the same job position during the first year and the same job category during the second and third year. By contrast, part-time parental leave allows the parent to reduce his or her working hours by between 1/8 and 1/2 with a proportional salary reduction. At the time this study was conducted (2012), this measure could be applied until the child was eight years old. This study focuses on part-time leaves.

Fathers' Use of Parental Leave.

Although still insufficient and far from egalitarian (Flaquer 2004; Lapuerta et al. 2011), family policy development has positively evolved for men in Spain. Alongside this evolution, since Spain's political transition to democracy during the middle 1970s, gender-role ideology in Spain

has moved quickly towards a level of gender equity comparable to Northern European countries (Arpino et al. 2015), while the division of unpaid work continues to be significantly unequal (Sevilla-Sanz, Giménez-Nadal and Fernández 2010).

Previous quantitative studies in Spain have focused on both the use of paid paternity leave, including the use of part of the maternity leave by fathers (Escot et al. 2014; Flaquer and Escobedo 2014), and the use of unpaid parental leave (Escot et al. 2014; Lapuerta et al. 2011). Between 2008 and 2011, less than 2% of fathers used transferable weeks from maternity leave (Flaquer and Escobedo 2014). For the period 2005-2009, Escot et al. (2014) show that fathers started unpaid parental leave in only 0.3% of the births compared with 5-6% for mothers. These studies revealed that fathers with high educational levels working in a secure job or in the public sector were more likely to take the unpaid parental leave than other fathers. Indeed, a positive association between higher education and fathers' time spent on childcare has been found in the U.S. and European countries (Bianchi 2000; Gracia and Ghysels 2017) as well as in Spain (Baizán et al. 2014; Gutierrez-Domenech 2007).

An important qualitative precedent for this study is the TransParent project (Abril et al. 2015a, 2015b; González, Domínguez and Luppi 2013; González and Jurado 2015; Seiz et al. 2016) and its contributions to understanding the transition to parenthood in Spain. This project has documented the emergence of a “new fatherhood” in Spain and has labeled active fathers as *committed* fathers as opposed to the other categories of *helper* and *occasional* fathers. According to the TransParent project data, fathers who take or are willing to take a reduction in their working hours (unpaid parental leave) have different educational levels and hold very egalitarian attitudes. In general, these men have flexible working conditions and are less career oriented. They sometimes have precarious positions in the labor market, or they may be unemployed and

have partners with stable jobs. Recent qualitative studies in other country contexts have also noted the important role of the partner and the workplace (Almqvist 2008; Kaufman and Almqvist 2017) and the family policy provisions (Suwada 2017) with respect to men making parental leave decisions.

The 2008 recession has certainly had consequences for individuals' perceptions of flexibility and autonomy in the workplace (Grau-Grau 2013) as well as their willingness to take paid and unpaid parental leaves. Unemployment levels have been particularly high in Spain, even for highly educated young adults. Previous studies have revealed that during an economic recession in which employment destruction affects male employment sectors more than female ones, fathers' involvement in childcare increases (Casper and O'Connell 1998). This fact has also been identified in Spain by González and Jurado (2015). In line with others (Holter 2007; Deutsch 1999) they found that active fathers conform to two different profiles: those who are involved as a result of a personal commitment to gender egalitarianism and those who are involved as a result of their circumstances (i.e., unemployment, precarious job).

Multiple Theoretical Approaches

For couples, the transition to parenthood entails a significant change in everyday life, but this change has traditionally been different for men than for women. After a childbirth, women generally adapt their labor force participation and working hours to family needs, while the changes for men tend to be minor in this sense. The previous literature has revealed two interrelated factors that shape couples' decisions regarding their childcare logistics, including the use of parental leave: gender-role ideology and labor market conditions. These two elements are represented by two main non-competing theoretical approaches: theories related to gender socialization and theories based on resource availability.

Theories of gender socialization and cultural identity such as the “doing gender” approach ([West and Zimmermann 1987](#)) predict that the roles that both men and women play within the family are strongly rooted in traditional gender roles. Consequently, couples follow those gender identities once they become parents, resulting in the woman adopting the role of main caregiver by reducing her labor force participation, while the man assumes the breadwinner role and barely alters his time allocation ([Craig and Mullan 2010](#); [Kühhirt 2012](#)). There is evidence from the U.S. and other European countries regarding how the transition to parenthood reinforces traditional gender roles ([Bianchi et al. 2000](#); [Dribe and Stanfors 2009](#); [Hallberg and Klevmarken 2003](#); [Sayer 2005](#)). However, empirical evidence has shown that the higher a couple’s educational level is, the more egalitarian their behaviors will be and the more time both parents will spend with their children ([Bianchi et al. 2004, 2006](#), [Bonke and Esping-Andersen 2011](#)),. Therefore, education mediates the relationship between gender ideology and fathers’ involvement in childcare. We will return to this point.

The second theoretical lens considered is the theory of relative resources. Resource theory identifies trade-offs between partners regarding available time and economic resources ([Blood and Wolfe 1960](#); [Lundberg and Pollak 1996](#)). Applied to the use of parental leave, this theory can explain how parents make rational decisions based on the idea that the partner who has a weaker position in the labor market (i.e., lower income, less stable job) will be more likely to adapt his/her labor force participation by reducing working hours ([Blood and Wolfe 1960](#)). According to these “bargaining models”, fathers with partners who have a strong position in the labor market are more likely to devote more time to their children than other fathers are ([Gracia 2014](#); [Grau-Grau 2017](#)). A criticism of this approach is that it has been formulated under the assumption that the partner with greater “bargaining power” will try to avoid doing the more

unappealing tasks. However, it is necessary to distinguish here between housework and childcare activities. Previous research has shown how certain childcare tasks represent an exception to this postulation (Hallberg and Klevmarken 2003). Some scholars have noted how those fathers who have higher human and cultural capital are more aware of the benefits of greater father involvement to children's well-being and development and therefore devote more time to their children than less educated fathers do (Bianchi 2000; Gracia 2014). This requires us to consider the human and cultural capital perspective as a third theoretical approach to explain highly educated individuals' intentions regarding the use of unpaid parental leave.

At the macro level, it is necessary to consider another dimension, the institutional context, which plays a central role in this multilevel framework (Risman 1999). A key reason for cross-country variance is the institutional context, whereby couples receive support in the form of governmental social and family policies, such as paid parental leave, as well as labor market flexibility in working conditions (Brinton and Lee 2016; Craig and Mullan 2010; Hook and Wolfe 2012; Neilson and Stanfors 2014). Gender inequality persists in many European countries in which the mismatch between gender-egalitarian attitudes and traditional behaviors is found not only at the individual level but also at the institutional level (Bühlmann, Elcheroth and Tettamanti 2010). Spain is notorious for its gendered paid parental leave system and the lack of employment protections for workers in the private sector when they decide to take parental leave. In particular, many men encounter barriers because their work environment is not supportive in terms of allowing time for childcare (Grau-Grau 2017 for Spain; Holter 2007 for the European context; or Rudman and Mescher 2013 for the U.S.).

Within this scenario, we develop three expectations for our study that combine the micro and macro levels. First, according to the doing gender perspective, those men who hold less

egalitarian attitudes towards gender will not plan on taking unpaid leave, and their decision will be reinforced by the gendered paid parental leave system. Second, in the context of high unemployment and perceived economic uncertainty aggravated by the 2008 economic crisis, highly educated female partners acquire greater bargaining power in the couples' decision-making regarding the intended use of unpaid parental leave. Third, following the human capital perspective, only those highly educated men with a strong commitment with gender egalitarianism will be willing to take unpaid parental leave as long as they do not experience labor-market constraints.

Data and Methods

Qualitative research aims to understand perceptions, processes, dilemmas, and uncertainties; it is not intended to be used to make inferences regarding a wider population of similar individuals (Coast et al. 2009). However, by focusing only on highly educated people, we gain specificity in the analysis.

Participants. The data consist of 52 original in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with highly educated, heterosexual, native-born, urban men and women aged 24 to 35 and in stable partnerships. The data were collected in 2012 in Madrid and Barcelona. Approximately half of the sample (N=28) were childless, and the other half (N=24) had one child. Therefore, parental leave intentions refer to the first child for childless respondents and to the second child for one-child parents¹. The male and female samples were drawn separately; consequently, no participants were in a partnership with each other. The sample also excluded full-time students; individuals who were pregnant or had a pregnant partner; individuals who had children from a

¹ Parents in the sample already experienced the use of unpaid parental leave with their first child. After comparing their past use with their intended use in case they proceed with a second child, only four cases out of 24 reported a different strategy for the future.

previous relationship; and individuals who were separated, divorced, or widowed. We define higher education as the completion of a university degree or a post-secondary vocational program, as the analysis is sensitive to this distinction when it was identified.

Data collection. The recruitment of the interviewees was accomplished through snowball sampling. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in private to create an intimate atmosphere in which the interviewee could answer the questions openly. The interviews were conducted at the respondents' preferred venue: home (43%), a cafe (39%), or their workplace (18%); they were conducted in Spanish by the first author and lasted from 60 to 120 minutes. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed in full by a native speaker.

One of the strengths of this study is the shared status of the interviewees and the interviewer (who is also a highly educated, native-born Spanish female within the same age-range as the respondents), which enhanced mutual trust and made it easy to establish a rapport ([Bhopal 2010](#)).

Interview materials. To conduct this research, we have drawn primarily on individuals' answers to five sets of questions regarding the following: 1) couple's labor-force participation (i.e., job satisfaction, working conditions), 2) gender-role attitudes (using World Values Survey questions), 3) gender-role behaviors (housework and child care), 4) intended use of parental leaves, and 5) opinions towards family policies in Spain.

Data analysis. The coding was performed in several stages. In the first stage, we established structural codes to demarcate sections of the interview by topic. Thematic coding was done using qualitative software (*Dedoose*). In a second stage, we inductively coded and wrote extensive detailed memos about the narratives offered by participants. During the process, each author listened separately to the interviews and inductively generated categories, which were compared

and grouped. In a third stage, we shared our categorizations and had an in-depth discussion regarding the cases one by one, adapting the category definitions through cumulative knowledge of the data. The data were rigorously revisited as many times as necessary to ensure the correct categorization of each participant. The dual process of coding and categorization was performed separately by each author and served as a strategy for the cross-validation of the data analysis.

In the analysis, the respondents' narratives were complemented by other supporting materials such as the couple's sociodemographic characteristics and the interviewer's field notes regarding her impressions of each respondent (perceived feelings and emotions), which were written immediately after each interview.

The richness of the information gathered in the interviews together with the biographical and financial information forms provided us with a very textured view of the couple-level situation, allowing us to also approach men's intentions through the female interviews. Analyzing men through women's narratives provided new insights that would otherwise have been unavailable ([Yancey Martin 2001](#)).

However, this approach has some flaws. First, we know from the previous literature that men tend to overestimate the couple's level of gender equality at home ([Kamo 2000](#)). We account for this in our results. Second, by relying on female interviewees to explore their male partners' intentions regarding taking unpaid leave, we ran the risk that they would not be fully aware of their partners' intentions. Third, asking about intentions could result in unreliable responses due to the difference between intentions and facts. Furthermore, some respondents might have had different working conditions by the time they became parents, which would lead them to modify their intentions.

Analytical design. The first step was to classify respondents based on their reported intention to take unpaid parental leave as well as their partners' intention as reported by the respondents. Since leave is unpaid, the intention to take full-time leave is rare, especially in the context of an economic crisis. Therefore, the results focus on part-time leave (reduction of working hours). We distinguish three different parental leave use strategies: gender-egalitarian, gender-specialization, and pro-work. First, the gender-egalitarian strategy was followed by one-third of the sample, ten men and seven women. They basically reported that both partners would be willing to reduce their working hours with the arrival of their first/next child. Second, the gender-specialization strategy was reported by more than half of our interviewees (13 males and 17 females), making it the most common strategy on our sample. It consists of a gender-based childcare arrangement in which the female partner plans to reduce her working hours, while the male partner makes no such plans. Finally, a small group of respondents (three males and three females) reported a pro-work strategy in which neither partner would take unpaid parental leave and would continue working on the same basis. In the following section, we present the different narratives within each strategy.

Findings

Qualitative analysis permits capitalizing on the richness of individual reasoning behind a simple dichotomous answer, such as answering yes or no to whether an individual would take a part-time unpaid parental leave. In this section, we go beyond the *yes or no* question and have categorized the different narratives emerging behind the three intended parental use strategies mentioned above, summarizing them in Table 1.

Table 1 about here

Narratives with the Gender-Egalitarian Strategy.

Seventeen males from our sample of 52 couples would take a part-time unpaid parental leave, according to ten of the male respondents and seven female respondents speaking for their male partners. Their willingness to have a shared and active role in childcare is consistent with the emerging active fatherhood perspective. However, we need to distinguish between two very different narratives: those whose active role is a result of their *convinced egalitarian* position and those whose role results from a *passive egalitarian* position.

Convinced egalitarian narrative. Six males and five females in the sample, most of whom were childless (7 out of 11), characterized themselves as being in partnerships with a high degree of gender egalitarian attitudes and behaviors. The men engaged in a very proactive discourse, claiming their active fatherhood and their right to be part of all spheres of their child's development and daily life. Women also discussed their partners and their relationships as having a very gender-egalitarian dynamic. The respondents in this group consistently reported an equal division of housework with no apparent conflicts related to its distribution. Most of these men hold a university degree, as do their partners. Their higher education is consistent with the perspective of men with higher human capital showing a greater involvement in childcare for the sake of the child's well-being (Lareau 2011). In these cases, there is no preconception of which partner should do what, as the theory of doing gender posits. These cases also lack a bargain negotiation to determine the childcare implications of partners' time or income, at least at the intentional stage. However, this does not mean that time constraints do not emerge. One mechanism observed among half of the couples was the outsourcing of housework tasks (normally once a week). They argued that by doing so, they saved time, which they could then devote to their partner and/or child. Three out of the four couples in the *convinced* group who are

already parents outsourced housework tasks. However, since childcare seems to be more appealing than housework ([Hallberg and Klevmarken 2003](#)), it is possible that outsourcing is a way to mitigate possible gender inequality in housework distribution that would otherwise emerge.

Previous qualitative studies in Spain have related the dual-carer model to couples in which women have higher relative resources than their partners do and a leading position in the family economy ([González et al. 2013](#); [Seiz et al. 2016](#)). This is not necessarily the case in our sample, since it consists entirely of highly educated participants. However, despite their higher education, a significant number of partners were affected by unemployment, as the study occurred in a moment of deep economic recession, 2012. Previous studies suggest that unemployment presents an opportunity for fathers to develop greater coresponsibility in terms of childcare ([Abril et al. 2015b](#)). In this group, there were four unemployed females and two unemployed males, but by analyzing their narratives, we conclude that the unemployed males would have the same intentions regarding unpaid parental leave even if they had been employed. In other words, it is their ideational commitment towards egalitarianism that drives their involvement in childcare rather than being forced by the circumstances of their unemployment (i.e., time availability).

Among this group, we observed that the majority of the sample had jobs in the arts, education or social sciences and most of them expressed a high degree of satisfaction with their professional lives. These men have, or choose to have, jobs that allow them to have flexible schedules and, consequently, a good work-family balance. In fact, two of them already worked part time, while three more had the flexibility of being self-employed and working from home, which allowed them to establish their own schedule. Pablo was one of these men. When he and his partner had their daughter, they reduced their working hours considerably to spend as much time as possible

with their child until she went to daycare. When Pablo was asked about his intentions concerning unpaid leave for a second child, he stated,

I would... We would like to do the same, but then, it depends on whether the circumstances facilitate it or not. With the first child, it was possible, and we searched for the conditions to make it happen. I loved it. But now, we do not see each other with a second kid because I don't think we can do the same now.

Pablo truly enjoyed the involvement with his daughter during her first year, but it meant intensity, full attention, and some income reduction that would not be easily replicable for the second child, which is why they are postponing it. We found Federico's case to be similar. He affirmed that he and his partner would ideally prefer to take full-time leave so as not to miss any of their child's development. Nevertheless, he was aware that this would not be possible and that the ability to take such leave would ultimately depend on the jobs he and his partner have at the time they become parents. Pablo and Federico illustrate the importance of the institutional dimension – labor-market institutions and family policies – in shaping future behavior of using unpaid parental leave. Their narratives suggest that their behavior might ultimately be determined by their ability to achieve work-family balance without experiencing significant material deprivation.

Passive egalitarian narrative. The remaining respondents with dual-carer intentions – four males and two females – represent the second gender-egalitarian narrative. While we identified these men and women as having egalitarian attitudes and behaviors, the male partners in these narratives act from a *passive* position. In other words, these men seemed to know that gender equality is a moral imperative, but this egalitarianism did not come naturally to them. They recognized that their female partner occupied a leading position in the logistics and decision making of the household and were pressured to perform tasks in an egalitarian way. They were

far from claiming active fatherhood as the *convinced* group did but still expressed their intention, as well as their partners' intention, to reduce their working hours after having a first or second child. Half of these six couples were already parents.

In four out of these six cases, unemployment was present (two males and two females). Unlike the previous group, the *passive* nature of these men's narratives would suggest that the circumstances of unemployment pushed them towards more egalitarian behaviors and a positive intention to take unpaid leave with the arrival of a child, in line with what previous research suggests (Deutsch, 1999; Holter, 2007).

Female partners (except one) did have university degrees and apparently had better career prospects. However, despite these men having post-secondary education, only one held a university degree. A comparison with the *convinced* group would give support to the human capital perspective in which men with higher education become more involved in childcare. In addition, these men had more technical positions in the labor market and felt less fulfilled by their jobs, meaning that either the type of job or the working conditions were not as good as they wanted. Nevertheless, some of them still had a certain amount of job flexibility due to self-employment or working in the public sector. Guillermo and his partner had not taken any unpaid leave when they had their first child because they were both discouraged by possible penalties in their careers due to an unfriendly work environment. He regrets this and would prefer to reduce their working hours if they have a second child.

Guillermo: Yes, everything, I would take absolutely everything.

Interviewer: Would you also take unpaid full-time leave?

Guillermo: No, I don't think I would stop working for such a long time, but yes, I would take my fifteen days [paid paternity leave] and a reduction in working hours. I don't

know now for how long, but I know for sure I would take it. I would take it easy, and I especially want to spend more time with my child, so the workload does not all fall on my wife.

Guillermo's words again illustrate the constraints that interviewees perceived from labor-market rigidity and culture.

The narrative of *passive* male partners would suggest that even without a proactive gender attitude, their unemployment situation or their higher flexibility at work – compared with their partners – plays a role in the couple's negotiation on childcare strategies. Still far from the theoretical perspective of doing gender, these couples seem to discuss their intended use of leave based on their relative time availability rather than following a strong ideational commitment to gender egalitarianism as presented by the *convinced* men.

Narratives with the Gender-Specialization Strategy

As noted in Table 1, the gender-specialization strategy is the most common strategy in our sample (30 out of 52 participants). In this strategy, males do not plan to use unpaid parental leave, while females do. There are slightly more parents (16) in this group than childless respondents (14). As mentioned, one of the advantages of qualitative data is the opportunity to surpass simple categorizations, leading us to distinguish three different narratives that suggest interesting differences by gender. The first is the narrative of those respondents holding a *conservative* gender-role ideology. The second applies to a number of males who enjoy *flexible job* conditions. The third is an entirely female narrative based on *disappointment* in the couple's gender dynamic.

Conservative narrative. Seven men (four of them already fathers) and four women (three of them mothers) revealed a traditional gender-role ideology in their narratives. These men believed that

mothers are better caregivers than themselves, and they tended to justify their unequal division of labor by relying on a biological discourse and arguing that they could not breastfeed the baby were therefore less necessary during the early childhood. A detailed approach to this kind of reasoning can be found in [Seiz et al. \(2016\)](#). Some men in this group are aware of the uneven division of labor and reported some type of intra-couple conflict. They either openly recognized that their dislike of housework tasks or justified themselves by claiming that they lacked time because of their long working hours. A number of them, including those who were self-employed, worked more than 50 hours per week. For men in the *convinced* narrative, being self-employed was considered an opportunity to flexibly balance work and family, but self-employed men in this *conservative* group considered their jobs extremely demanding such that they could not spend more time at home. It was mostly in this group that some men informed us of their partners' desire to take full-time leave if they could afford it. Female respondents within the *conservative* narrative consistently believed in gender-role specialization and preferred to take full-time leave for themselves if the couple could afford it. Indeed, two of the mothers in this group were unemployed, and while they considered themselves active in the labor-market, they had voluntarily postponed their job search.

In this group, we found polarization regarding socioeconomic status. While half of the interviewees held university degrees and well-paid jobs (i.e., IT, liberal professionals), the other half did not (i.e., technical positions, staff positions). Juan, for example, worked between 50 and 60 hours per week in an important company and his wife worked full-time for another company. They became parents three months before the interview and were making plans for unpaid parental leave for her.

Interviewer: When you had your daughter, did this affect your work?

Juan: It didn't; my work hasn't changed... the truth is that I work the same hours.

Interviewer: How did it affect your partner's work?

Juan: Right now, she is on maternity leave. Our daughter is three months old. Thus, we are now considering different options like reducing her working hours or even full-time leave, at least until the baby starts at daycare in about a year.

The *conservative* narrative fits with the doing gender theory in which partners have a preconception with their gender roles. Men act as the main economic provider, whereas women act as the main housekeeper and caregiver with little or no negotiation in terms of their intended use of parental leave according to their relative resources. In line with previous research, the lower human capital of men in this group is associated with their reduced involvement in childcare. However, the presence of men with university degrees and a higher socioeconomic status suggests that higher human capital is not necessarily associated with greater male involvement in childcare.

Male's flexible job narrative. The second gender-specialized narrative corresponds to six male interviewees and one female who explicitly argued that the male partner did not believe he needed to reduce his working hours due to his high degree of flexibility at work, which allowed him to spend time on childcare when necessary. The fact that only one female respondent provided this reasoning to explain her partner's lack of intention to take unpaid leave leads us to consider whether male respondents use flexibility more as an excuse than as a real opportunity for active participation.

All of these men held a university degree and had relatively good jobs in which they reported being satisfied and having flexibility in their working hours. Two were civil servants. Their female partners had a weaker labor market position in common; four partners worked part-time,

one was unemployed, and another was a student. Alejandro, for example, expressed that mothers are better caregivers than fathers, and it is better if they work part time, as he revealed in the attitudinal questions on gender roles.

Interviewer: If you had a child, would you reduce your working hours?

Alejandro: No, I wouldn't. No, because I already have a relatively good working schedule, and, in addition, I work very close to home, then I could... [manage it]. Yes, I don't think I would ask for it. Well, for sure not!

Interviewer: And what about your partner?

Alejandro: I think she will ask for reduced hours, if she can, and if we can afford it. I think so.

Greater time availability from the female partner might explain the economic necessity of assigning the responsibility of household income to men by not taking unpaid parental leave. The gender dynamics (i.e., housework and childcare) among these couples ranged from fairly egalitarian to fairly conservative based on men's gender role attitudes and the reported division of labor at home. This pattern can be interpreted as an imposition of the couple's relative resources on the principles of their gender ideology in the decision-making process regarding whether or not to take unpaid leave.

Disappointed female. The third narrative within the gender-specialized group belongs entirely to female respondents. These were 12 women – half of them mothers – who explicitly expressed their disappointment about the unequal distribution of household (and childcare) responsibilities. All of them complained about these issues, but not all of them had non-egalitarian partners. Therefore, we need to discuss the two subnarratives in this group: *disappointed frustrated* and *disappointed with passive partners*.

Disappointed frustrated narrative. This narrative belongs to seven women who showed a certain degree of frustration regarding their inability to encourage their partners to become more involved in childcare. These women tended to believe that if mothers work, they should work part time in order to be able to combine their work and family duties, and a few of them mentioned that mothers are better caregivers than fathers. These were couples whose division of labor resembled [Hochschild's \(1989\)](#) “second shift” experience of women who participate in the labor market and are in charge of most of the housework (and childcare). Almost all of them referred to daily arguments at home regarding housework, and three of the mothers indicated that gender inequality had considerably increased with the arrival of their first child. However, they used the "help" discourse, a sign of their assumption that housework is more of a female responsibility and less of a male one. They expected their partners to "help" them but took for granted their main role in these responsibilities as mothers. As [González et al. \(2013\)](#) also reported for Spain, these women tend to “monopolize childcare” by supervising any childcare task in which their partner might engage ([Allen and Hawkins 1999](#)). The couples in this group had university and non-university degrees and were employed in a variety of jobs. Only one female and one male were unemployed. For some of these women, the unequal division of labor was due to their partners’ long working hours. It is significant that more than half of the respondents from this group had or expected to have some conflict in their workplaces related to taking childcare leave or adapting their schedules. Two of the fathers had not even taken their 15 days of paid paternity leave, one because of the possibility of losing his job and the other because of his long working hours, as he was self-employed. Pamela, for instance, did not have expectations about her partner reducing his working hours if they become parents.

Pamela: I think men do not change their work; the one who gives up something is always us, the women. I think it is true. I think that now, in his current job, he maybe could cut off certain responsibilities, so he could have some more free time, but I do not know....

Couples in this group illustrate an example of the *bargain model*, due to the male partner's long working hours, combined with the *doing gender* perspective since these female respondents, despite expressing certain disappointment when seeing the lack of involvement of their male partners, still assume the main role as caregivers.

Disappointed with passive partner narrative. As we anticipated, not all disappointed women who reported a gender-specialized childcare arrangement had non-egalitarian partners. Indeed, for five of these women, we found a similar narrative as the one we found among the *passive egalitarian* men: couples in which household chores are relatively equally shared but under primarily female management. It is significant that while men in such a relationship with this gender dynamic reported egalitarian intentions regarding using unpaid childcare leave, the women seemed to be less optimistic about their male partners. This is consistent with the previous literature showing how men's and women's perceptions of gender equity within the couple might differ (Kamo 2000). All women in this group had a university degree, but not all of the partners did. Nevertheless, these couples were characterized by having good job positions and stable economic situations; sometimes the men and women worked more than 40 hours/week. The women in these narratives had solid gender-egalitarian beliefs but seemed to have pushed their partners into a more egalitarian division of housework because they were full-time dual-earner couples, although they did not expect their male partners to adjust their working schedules to parenthood. Half of these couples outsourced some housework tasks. Outsourcing housework might work as a mechanism to avoid conflicts due to an unequal distribution of

chores and as a way to save time, as some respondents declared. It is important to recognize that by outsourcing the hardest tasks at home, it becomes easier to report a more egalitarian distribution for the rest of tasks. As we noted before, what we observed regarding the *passive egalitarian* narrative is that the males generally had gender-egalitarian attitudes, while their egalitarian behaviors, although they occurred, did not come naturally to them.

Having this gender-specific narrative inevitably leads us to wonder which kind of narrative these women's male partners would have if we had asked them. The narrative of disappointed women with passive partners is similar to the one of men with flexible jobs. In both cases, most of the couples have egalitarian dynamics. The difference is that female interviewees do not necessarily expect their partners to have flexible working hours in their daily life, as male interviewees did. The passive-egalitarian narrative and the disappointed women with passive partner narrative are also similar. In both of these narratives, household gender dynamics are egalitarian and female partners tend to have higher human capital – education and work prospects – than males. However, according to males' point view, it seems that the childcare experience will be equally shared by reducing both their working hours, while according to females' point view, the male partners will not reduce their working hours. Therefore, we interpret that the doing gender perspective prevails, though not without disagreement, under females' reasoning.

Narratives with the Pro-Work Strategy

Through their narratives, the three males and two females in this group positioned themselves as very gender-egalitarian in their attitudes and behaviors, though not necessarily within the “active fatherhood” discourse or a passive position within the couples. These men and their partners held university degrees. Moreover, four out of the five women also hold a PhD. These couples worked full-time and reported little job flexibility. However, respondents were confident that

they would be able to manage their work-family balance once they became parents without the need to apply for unpaid part-time leave. One example was Raul. He believed that he and his partner would keep working full-time whenever possible while taking their children to daycare directly after finishing the paid parental leave. However, this childcare arrangement requires work-schedule flexibility.

Raul: I will have to balance my work and personal life in a very different way [in terms of schedules]... Fortunately, I have job flexibility... and I can do an intensive work schedule, but it will also depend on my partner's job.... We will need to try and make our schedules fit well, so we can take care of the kid... I think we can manage it, both working full-time. Both sitting down and thinking carefully how to do it. It will also depend on whether or not your company facilitates it; some of them do it, but others don't.... Then, maybe if I can start working at 7 am until 3 pm, and she can start at 10 am and drop off the kids at daycare... then later I can pick them up and spend the afternoon with them until she is back from work. But again, it will depend on the employer's willingness.

This *pro-work* narrative comes mainly from childless couples (four out of five) with very gender-egalitarian dynamics at home and the highest human capital, especially for women. Both partners are consistently very career oriented. Their reasoning is far from the *doing gender* perspective but apparently also far from the *relative resources* argument, since none of them plan to reduce their working hours. Their high human capital is not directly associated here with an intended larger investment of time in childcare. However, according to their narratives, we would not expect from these couples to perform a gender-unequal distribution of childcare tasks in the future.

Conclusion

This paper has explored men's intended use of unpaid parental leave through the analysis of 52 in-depth interviews with highly educated men and women in stable partnerships in Spain. The aim of this study is to better understand the reasoning and evolving circumstances that make men intend or not intend to take unpaid parental leave by categorizing and comparing the narratives and couple characteristics of male and female respondents. The advantage of asking men and women about men's intentions allowed the identification of interesting gender patterns in their reasoning. Exploring individual narratives also permits the study to move beyond a simple categorization of behaviors, in this case, men's intentions to take or not take unpaid parental leave, and to understand the reasons behind the decision-making process. In doing so, we have embraced previous work from [Brinton and Lee \(2016\)](#) and [Knight and Brinton \(2017\)](#), which also allows us to move beyond the gender-role dichotomy of "egalitarian vs. traditional" and explore the different gradients existing between the two.

Individual narratives have been interpreted in line with the main theoretical explanations suggested by the literature at the micro and macro levels to explain the lack of men's involvement in childcare activities. Our first expectation was based on doing gender theory and suggests that those men who hold less gender-egalitarian attitudes will not intend to take unpaid leave, which is reinforced by the gendered paid parental leave system. Our results partially support this first expectation. The *conservative* narrative of respondents with traditional gender-role norms represents the doing gender perspective in which women are willing to fulfill the caregiver role by taking unpaid parental leave, while men remain economic providers. The narrative of *frustrated disappointed females* is similar, except that even though these females do gender by adopting the caregiver responsibility as mainly feminine, they wish to see greater

involvement in childcare from the male partners. However, as we will see, the narratives of some of the men who do not plan to take unpaid parental leave cannot be understood under the doing gender theory.

Our second expectation stated that in the context of high unemployment and perceived economic uncertainty aggravated by the 2008 economic crisis, highly educated female partners would acquire greater bargaining power in the couples' decision making with regard to intended unpaid parental leave use. However, our findings suggest that the greater female bargaining power that exists for many highly educated couples may turn into greater male involvement in housework and childcare tasks but not necessarily into a male's positive intention to take parental leave. We refer to such cases as *passive egalitarian partners*, those who hold gender-egalitarian dynamics at home but seem to be pushed by their female partners. Interestingly, when we found this narrative among male respondents (*passive male narrative*), they were willing to take unpaid parental leave, while most of the female respondents who recognize themselves within this gender dynamic at home (*disappointed female with passive partner narrative*) did not expect their male partners to take unpaid parental leave.

Our third expectation followed the human capital perspective to understand why the doing gender and relative resources theoretical viewpoints failed in explaining the division of labor of the highly educated. We expected that only those highly educated men with a strong commitment to gender egalitarianism would be willing to take unpaid parental leave as long as they did not experience labor-market constraints. The analysis done shows that, indeed, having higher education does not lead directly to having a gender-egalitarian ideology, and only those *convinced* men with greater commitment to such an ideology hold a pro-active discourse towards performing and active fatherhood and consequently intend to take an unpaid parental leave.

However, not all men who are willing to take unpaid parental leave do so *by choice* under the assumption of the human capital perspective; some do so *by necessity* under the bargaining rules of the relative resources perspective as applied to income and time availability when their female partners have better career prospects. In the opposite way, some men are also represented by the *male's flexible job narrative*; although they hold very gender-egalitarian values, they do not plan to take unpaid leave due to having a weaker job position than their partners have. These cases illustrate an example of the relative resources theory in which the necessity of maintaining the household's income, especially in times of economic crisis, determine the couple's parental leave strategy regardless of their gender-role ideology. In addition, the human capital perspective does not adjust to the *pro-work* narrative of those men and women who are highly committed to their work and careers, and even though they also hold very gender-egalitarian dynamics, none of those partners planned to take unpaid parental leave.

Two other findings need to be mentioned. First, many respondents highlighted how the ultimate decision beyond their current intentions of taking unpaid parental leave will be determined by both partners' labor market circumstances when they have a child. This suggests the strong role that labor-market institutions have on influencing individuals' parental leave behaviors.

Interestingly, our analysis shows that those men who represent the most proactive version of active fathers (*convinced* narrative) tend to prioritize their commitment to fatherhood and adapt their work careers to that priority. For instance, while self-employment served as a work arrangement for these men allowing them to have the flexibility to balance work and family, for other men, it meant long working hours that would hamper them from being more involved in childcare. Second, by contrasting men's and women's voices regarding men's intentions to take unpaid parental leave, we can conclude that some of their narratives diverge. In line with some

studies (Kamo 2000), men tend to overestimate the gender-egalitarianism level of the couple. As we have seen, male respondents are more optimistic about taking unpaid parental leave than female respondents are about their male partners.

In sum, this study has shown the complexity behind individuals' intentions to use parental leave and how different mechanisms hidden behind a simple positive or negative intention emerged in their narratives. Likewise, our results suggest the existing intricacy of the different theoretical approaches at the micro level combined with the institutional dimension at the macro level to explain men's intended use of unpaid parental leave.

What it is considered new in this study – having asked women about their partners' intentions – can also be considered a limitation since the subjective perception of women might not provide us with complete legitimacy to discuss their partners' intentions. However, the differences in their narratives provide an interesting starting point for future research. In this sense, follow-up interviews for this study are forthcoming and will allow intentions and behaviors to be contrasted.

Our results also suggest that a gap remains between fatherhood culture and fatherhood conduct (LaRossa 1988). As we have seen, some fathers express their intentions to devote more time to their children; however, important cultural, organizational and personal barriers limit their participation at home. In this sense, it seems that the current Spanish parental leave policies are not enough to encourage fathers to take unpaid parental leave. A paid gender-neutral parental leave system is key. We suggest innovative policies (like the 3+3+3 parental leave system developed in Iceland) to reward families with fathers who take parental leave. Policies such as that might reduce the gap between fatherhood culture and fatherhood conduct and increase gender equality in the Spanish households. This could lead to the normalization of the notion of

involved fathers while also reducing the stigmas that some involved fathers experience in their workplace.

References

- Abril, P., Amigot, P., Botía-Morillas, C., Domínguez-Folgueras, M., González, M. J., Jurado-Guerrero, T., & Seiz-Puyuelo, M. (2015a). Egalitarian Ideals and Traditional Plans: Analysis of First-time Parents in Spain. *Reis: Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, 150, 3–22.
- Abril, P., Jurado-Guerrero, T. & Monferrer, J.M. (2015b). Paternidades en construcción. In M. J. González & T. Jurado Guerrero (Eds). *Padres y madres corresponsables. Una utopía real*. (Vol. 154). Madrid: Editorial La Catarata.
- Allen, S., & Hawkins, A. (1999). Maternal Gatekeeping: Mothers' Beliefs and Behaviors that Inhibit Greater Father Involvement in Family Work, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 61(1), 199-212.
- Almqvist, A. (2008). Why Most Swedish Fathers and Few French Fathers Use Paid Parental Leave: An Exploratory Qualitative Study of Parents. *Fathering*, 6(2), 192-200.
- Arpino, B., Esping-Andersen, G., & Pessin, L. (2015). How Do Changes in Gender Role Attitudes Towards Female Employment Influence Fertility? A Macro-Level Analysis. *European Sociological Review*, 31(3), 370–382.
- Baizán, P., Domínguez, M., & González, M. J. (2014). Couple Bargaining or Socio-Economic Status? *European Societies*, 16(1), 3–27.
- Bhopal, K. (2010). Gender, Identity, and Experience: Researching Marginalized Groups. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 33, 188–195.
- Bianchi, S. M. (2000). Maternal Employment and Time with Children: Dramatic Change or Surprising Continuity? *Demography*, 37(4), 401-414.
- Bianchi, S. M., Milkie, M., Sayer, L. C. & Robinson, J. P. (2000). Is Anyone Doing the Housework: Trends in The Gender Division of Household Labor. *Social Forces*, 79(1), 191-228.
- Bianchi, S., Cohen, P., Raley, S. & Nomaguchi, K. (2004). Inequality in Parental Investment in Childrearing. In K. Neckerman (Ed.) *Social Inequality*. New York: Russell Sage, 189–219.
- Bianchi, S. M., Robinson, J. P. & Milkie, M. (2006). *Changing Rhythms of American Family Life*. New York: Russell Sage.
- Blood, R. & Wolfe, D. (1960). *Husbands and Wife: The Dynamics of Married Living*. New York: Free Press.
- Bonke, J. & Esping-Andersen, G. (2011). Family Investments in Children-Productivities, Preferences and Parental Child Care. *European Sociological Review*, 27(1), 43-55.
- Brinton, M. C., & Lee, D.-J. (2016). Gender-Role Ideology, Labor Market Institutions, and Post-industrial Fertility. *Population and Development Review*, 42(3), 405–433.

- Bühlmann, F., Elcheroth, G. & Tettamanti, M. (2010). The Division of Labour Among European Couples: The Effects of Life Course and Welfare Policy on Value–Practice Configurations. *European Sociological Review*, 26(1), 49-66.
- Casper, L. M., & O’Connell, M. (1998). Work, Income, the Economy, and Married Fathers as Child-Care Providers. *Demography*, 35(2), 243–250.
- Coast, E., Mondain, N., & Rossier, C. (2009). Qualitative Research in Demography: Quality, Presentation and Assessment. In: XXVI IUSSP International Population Conference, 27th September - 2nd October, 2009, Marrakech, Morocco. *Working Paper at LSE Research Online*.
- Craig, L., & Mullan, K. (2010). Parenthood, Gender and Work–Family Time in the United States, Australia, Italy, France, and Denmark. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72(5), 1344–1361.
- Deutsch, F. (1999). *Halving it All: How Equally Shared Parenting Works*. Harvard University Press.
- Domínguez-Folgueras, M. (2015). Parenthood and Domestic División of Labour in Spain, 2002-2010. *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, 149, 45-64.
- Dribe, M. & Stanfors, M. (2009). Does Parenthood Strengthen a Traditional Household Division of Labor? Evidence from Sweden. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 71(1), 33-45.
- Escobedo, A. (2009). *Leave Policies and Public Systems of Care for Children Under Three Years Old and their Families in The European Union*. Dissertation, Autonomous University of Barcelona. Spain.
- Escobedo, A., Flaquer, L., & L. Navarro (2012). The Social Politics of Fatherhood in Spain and France: A Comparative Analysis of Parental Leave and Shared Residence. *Ethnologie Française*, 42(1), 117-126.
- Escot, L., Fernández-Cornejo, J. A., & Poza, C. (2014). Fathers’ Use of Childbirth Leave in Spain. The Effects of the 13-Day Paternity Leave. *Population Research and Policy Review*, 33(3), 419–453.
- Flaquer, L. (2004). La articulación entre familia y Estado de bienestar en los países de la Europa del sur. *Papers: Revista de Sociologia*, 73, 27-58.
- Flaquer, L. & Escobedo, A. (2014). Licencias parentales y política social de la paternidad en España. *Cuadernos de Relaciones Laborales*, 32(1), 69–99.
- Goldberg, A. E., & Allen, K. R. (2015). Communicating Qualitative Research: Some Practical Guideposts for Scholars. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 77(1), 3–22.
- González, M. J., & Jurado-Guerrero, T. (Eds.) (2015). *Padres y madres corresponsables. Una utopía real*. Madrid: Editorial La Catarata.
- González, M. J.; Domínguez; M. & Luppi, F. (2013). Men Anticipating Fatherhood in Spain. In Gösta Esping-Andersen (Ed.) *The Fertility Gap in Europe: Singularities of the Spanish Case*. Volum 36. Social Studies Collection. 'la Caixa' Foundation.

- Gracia, P. (2014). Fathers' Child Care Involvement and Children's Age in Spain: A Time Use Study On Differences by Education and Mothers' Employment. *European Sociological Review*, 30(2), 137–150.
- Gracia, P., & Ghysels, J. (2017). Educational Inequalities in Parental Care Time: Cross-National Evidence from Belgium, Denmark, Spain, and the United Kingdom. *Social Science Research*, 63, 166-180.
- Grau-Grau, M. (2013). Clouds over Spain: Work and Family in the Age of Austerity. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 33(9/10), 579-593.
- Grau-Grau, M. (2017). *Work-Family Enrichment Experiences among Working Fathers: Evidence from Catalonia*. Dissertation: University of Edinburgh.
- Gutierrez-Domenech, M. (2007). *El tiempo con los hijos y la actividad laboral de los padres*. Documentos de Economía, La Caixa. Barcelona: La Caixa.
- Hallberg, D., & Klevmarcken, A. (2003). Time for Children: A Study of Parent's Time Allocation. *Journal of Population Economics*, 16(2), 205–226.
- Hochschild, A. (1989). *The Second Shift*. New York: Viking.
- Holter, Ø. G. (2007). Men's Work and Family Reconciliation in Europe. *Men and Masculinities*, 9(4), 425–456.
- Hook, J. L. & Wolfe, Ch. (2012). New Fathers? Residential Fathers' Time with Children in Four Countries. *Journal of Family Issues*, 33(4), 415-450.
- Kamo, Y. (2000). "He said, she said": Assessing Discrepancies in Husbands' and Wives' Reports on the Division of Household Labor. *Social Science Research*, 29(4), 459-476.
- Kaufman, G. (2013). *Superdads: How Fathers Balance Work and Family in the 21st Century*. NYU Press.
- Kaufman, G. & Almqvist, A. (2017). The Role of Partners and Workplaces in British and Swedish Men's Parental Leave Decisions. *Men and Masculinities*, 20(5), 533–551.
- Knight, C. R., & Brinton, M. C. (2017). One Egalitarianism or Several? Two Decades of Gender-Role Attitude Change in Europe. *American Journal of Sociology*, 122(5), 1485–1532.
- Kühhirt, M. (2012). Childbirth and the Long-Term Division of Labour within Couples: How do Substitution, Bargaining Power, and Norms affect Parents' Time Allocation in West Germany? *European Sociological Review*, 28(5), 565–582.
- Lammi-Taskula, J. (2008). Doing Fatherhood: Understanding the Gendered Use of Parental Leave in Finland. *Fathering*, 6(2), 133-142.
- Lapuerta, I., Baizán, P., & González, M. J. (2011). Individual and Institutional Constraints: An Analysis of Parental Leave Use and Duration in Spain. *Population Research and Policy Review*, 30(2), 185–210.
- Lareau, A. (2011). *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- LaRossa, R. (1988). Fatherhood and Social Change. *Family Relations*, 37(4), 451-457
- Lundberg S. & Pollak R A. (1996). Bargaining and Distribution in Marriage, *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 10, 139-158.
- Meil, G. (2013). European Men's Use of Parental Leave and Their Involvement in Child Care and Housework. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 44(5), 557–570.
- Munsch, C. L. (2016). Flexible Work, Flexible Penalties: The Effect of Gender, Childcare, and type of Request on the Flexibility Bias. *Social Forces*, 94(4), 1567-1591.
- Neilson, J. & Stanfors, M. (2014). It's About Time! Gender, Parenthood and Household Divisions of Labor Under Different Welfare Regimes. *Journal of Family Issues*, 35(8), 1066-1088.
- Risman, B. (1999). *Gender Vertigo: American Families in Transition*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Rudman, L. A., & Mescher, K. (2013). Penalizing Men Who Request a Family Leave: Is Flexibility Stigma a Femininity Stigma? *Journal of Social Issues*, 69(2), 322-340.
- Sayer, L. C. (2005). Gender, Time and Inequality: Trends in Women's and Men's Paid Work, Unpaid Work and Free Time. *Social Forces*, 84(1), 285-303.
- Seiz, M., Lapuerta, I., Martín-García, T., Monferrer, J., Jurado-Guerrero, T., González, M.J., Domínguez-Folgueras, M., Botía-Morillas, C., Abril, P. & Amigot P. (2016). The Transition to Parenthood in Spain: Adaptations to Ideals. In Grunow, D. & Evertsson, M. (Eds.), *Couples' transitions to parenthood: Analysing gender and work in Europe*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Sevilla-Sanz, A., Giménez-Nadal, J.I. & Fernández, C. (2010). Gender Roles and the Division of Unpaid Work in Spanish Households. *Feminist Economics*, 14(4), 137-184.
- Simó Noguera, Carles, Katrin Golsch, & Nikolei Steinhage (2002). Increasing Uncertainty in the Spanish Labor Market and Entry into Parenthood. *Genus*, 58(1), 77–119.
- Suwada, K. (2017). “It Was Necessary at the Beginning to Make This Whole Revolution”: Men's Attitudes to Parental Leaves in Sweden and Poland. *Men and Masculinities*, 20(5), 570–587.
- West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing Gender. *Gender & Society*, 1(2), 125–151.
- Yancey-Martin, P. (2001). Mobilizing Masculinities': Women's Experiences of Men at. *Organization*, 8(4), 587-618.
- Young, M., & Schieman, S. (2017). Scaling Back and Finding Flexibility: Gender Differences in Parents' Strategies to Manage Work–Family Conflict. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 80(1), 99-118.

Table 1: Narratives regarding the intended use of unpaid parental leave and sample distribution and characteristics.

		Gender-egalitarian		Gender-specialized				Pro-work
		Convinced (N=11)	Passive male (N=6)	Conservative (N=11)	Male's flexible job (N=7)	Disappointed female		Pro-work (N=5)
						Frustrated (N=7)	Passive partner (N=5)	
Sex of respondent	Male	6	4	7	6	--	--	3
	Female	5	2	4	1	7	5	2
Life-stage	Childless	7	3	4	4	3	3	4
	One-child	4	3	7	3	4	2	1
Education	Both university	7	1	5	3	4	4	5
	Male university	1	--	--	3	--	--	--
	Female university	3	3	1	1	1	1	--
	None university	--	2	5	--	2	--	--
Labor-market participation	Both employed	6	2	8	5	5	5	4
	Male unemployed	1	2	--	--	1	--	1
	Female unemployed	3	2	3	2	1	--	--
	Both unemployed	1	--	--	--	--	--	--

Source: Interview data.