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Abstract

Recent decades have seen an increase in women's employment rates and an expansion of egalitarian values. Previous studies document the so-called "motherhood penalty", which makes women's employment more difficult. Demands for greater shared child-rearing between parents are hindered by a normative climate that supports differentiated gender roles in the family. Using data from the Center for Sociological Research [Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas] (2018), this study shows that the Spanish population perceives that differentiated social images of motherhood and fatherhood still persist. The "sexual division in parenting" index is proposed and the profile of the individuals who most perceive this sexual division is analyzed. The results show that women and younger people are the most aware of this social normativity that unequally distributes child care, making co-responsibility difficult. The political implications of these results are discussed.

Keywords

Mothering; Fathering; Socialization; Family roles; Gender culture

Introduction

In recent decades, Spanish society has witnessed two phenomena that have had profound social consequences: a notable increase in the involvement of women in the labor market and a rapid expansion of egalitarian values in the area of gender, which implies the weakening of traditional gender roles, in which men and women performed completely

differentiated functions (the man as the main worker in the public sphere and the woman as the manager of the private sphere).

Both phenomena have led to a change in the distribution of household tasks and child care in heterosexual couples. However, although this evolution is taking place, the pace is slow and women are suffering from the so-called “double shift” (García-de-Diego et al., 2015), in which they not only work in the public sphere for pay, but also spend more time than men on household tasks and caring for the children in the private sphere. This study investigates the population’s perception of the tasks that society links to being a father or a mother. The perception of what others think, that is, the normative contexts of social groups, has a strong impact on the attitudes and behaviors of its members. Throughout the text we will show how this perception continues to clearly distinguish between the tasks that correspond to a father or a mother, reproducing traditional gender roles and thus making it difficult to move towards a more egalitarian division of care tasks in Spanish families.

Theoretical framework

1. New forms of motherhood: mothers working in both spheres

In the last few decades in Spanish society, the involvement of women in the labor market has intensified¹ and there has been a rapid expansion of egalitarian values in the area of gender. Debate in the social sciences has focused on the factors that explain whether or not women work in the public sphere and the conditions under which they do so. Studies show that one of the most influential variables for a woman to remain active in the labor market or to interrupt her activity is having children, especially if the children are young, which has become known as the “motherhood penalty”. The three main approaches to explain the decision of women in general and mothers in particular to work are: microeconomic, individual preferences and

¹ In 2018, for the first time, the female employment rate exceeded 60% and reached 61% in Spain, according to Eurostat data, although it is still below the European average (67.4%). This rate is one of the lowest in the EU and only exceeds those of Italy, Greece, Croatia and Romania.

structural factors, whether they are of an institutional nature (mainly family policies and the labor market) or cultural, since both are closely related. The microeconomic approach assumes that women with a higher level of education and more work experience incur a greater cost if they decide not to work, since they give up better jobs than those with a lower level of education or experience. In Spain, education has been shown to be a more influential variable than in other countries in determining the characteristics of women's employment and labor trajectories (Bould, Crespi and Schmaus, 2012; Hook, 2015; León and Migliavacca, 2013; Moreno Mínguez, 2010).²

In contrast to the microeconomic approach, one of the most influential —and controversial— proposals among those that highlight the role of attitudes is Hakim's so-called "Preference theory" (2000, 2003). According to this author, women can be divided into three groups based on to the importance they place on working and caregiving in their lives: the largest and most heterogeneous group is what she calls adaptive women, including women who do not prioritize either aspect, as opposed to work-centered women, whose ideal is to work full time continuously, and those focused on the home, whose priority is family life.

One of the most widespread criticisms of Hakim's approach to individual preferences stems from the third group mentioned: many women experience constraints that prevent them from freely choosing what they want to do when they have children, which justifies inconsistencies between attitudes and behaviors (Crompton and Lyonette, 2005). One of these constraints is the institutional context, especially family policies, although labor policies also have an impact on women's employment. For example, Kremer (2006) suggests that welfare regimes reflect and promote certain "ideals of care" that define what good care is and who is a good caregiver.

² One not inconsiderable factor that may explain why preferences cannot be fulfilled is economic necessity. On many occasions, only the possibility of having two salaries allows for the maintenance of a minimum standard of living in the family, a situation that occurs more frequently among laborers (Shows and Gerstel 2009, Martín-García 2010).

Along these lines, Pfau-Effinger (1998) proposes the concept of “gender culture” to refer to the norms and values concerning the “correct” forms of gender relations and the division of labor between men and women. Proponents of the cultural approach, for their part, stress that these gender cultures explain, especially in the case of international comparisons, why certain family policies are implemented in a given context while others are not (Hennig et al., 2010). Culture can influence both defining that what is appropriate for a woman is her role as a caregiver (Olson, 2002), as well as encouraging all adults to work and that not only women should provide care (Hakim, 2004; Janus 2013a, 2013b). In both cases, cultural factors are limiting the freedom to choose to work in the public sphere (or not). Advocates of a more institutionalist approach believe that changes in public policy can promote a shift in attitudes and preferences towards employment when women have young children (Gangl and Ziefle, 2015). The conclusion is that even in a context such as the current situation, where there is a process of individualization and privatization of family behaviors that allows for greater freedom of choice (Ayuso, 2019; Meil, 2011), social norms and institutions can influence the decision to work or not (García-Faroldi, 2017).

Of particular interest in this regard is the research by Eicher and colleagues (2016), in which they propose the term “*social normative climates*” to refer to the influence of society on the attitudes of individuals. Norms are social prescriptions or proscriptions that tell us what activities or roles are appropriate or inappropriate. The authors comment that many studies have demonstrated the importance of social norms in shaping people’s attitudes and behaviors. However, it cannot be assumed that these normative expectations (of an individual nature) are completely shared within a society or individually accepted without any questioning. An individual’s perceptions of the attitudes of others are therefore based on many factors, from interpersonal interaction to observation of the environment and information in the media. The

researchers define the concept of “social normative climate” as the sum of different perceptions and interactions in a given society and assume that it is associated with individual attitudes. The novelty of this work is that in their analysis they include both normative (individual) expectations and the social normative climate, an innovative strategy that guides the present research.³ Their results show that normative climates affect people’s attitudes towards the legitimacy of a mother’s full-time employment when her children are young, even controlling for individual normative expectations.

To conclude the review of these studies, it should be noted that it is difficult to differentiate between institutional and cultural effects (Uunk, 2015), and both types of effects are crucial to understanding the employment of women who are mothers (Boeckman et al., 2015). It should also be taken into account that the relationship of influence between attitudes and behavior is bi-directional, as longitudinal studies have shown: the effect of attitudes on women’s employment is as strong as the effect of such employment on attitudes (Corrigall and Konrad, 2007).

2. New forms of fatherhood: beyond the role of economic provider

The gender system is relational and interdependent (Scambor et al., 2014) and therefore the incorporation of women into paid employment has directly affected men. The traditional role of the father as the economic provider began when the industrial revolution ended the home as a place of production and reached its peak in the 1950s (Katz-Wise et al., 2010). In this conception, the father’s authority is derived from his paid work, so being a “good father” is associated with ensuring a level of economic well-being for his children. Opposite to this

³ It is not possible in our case to include both variables in the model since it is not a question of an international comparison of different normative climates, as in the case of the authors mentioned, but their concept of social normative climate is closely related to our dependent variable, as will be seen in the Methods section.

“provider father” appears the “new fatherhood” figure, more involved in the day-to-day nurturing and care of their children, maintaining closer and more intimate relationships, sometimes even sacrificing career advancement and organizing their working lives to accommodate their family responsibilities (Ranson, 2012).

Other authors, however, warn that this image of a “new fatherhood” often hides the fact that it is still primarily women who adapt their working day and life when they become mothers and who carry out the more routine and less rewarding tasks of child care (Azpiazu Carballo, 2017). For example, Kotila and colleagues (2013) warn that the greatest gender differences in care involvement occur in areas that are strongly associated with a particular gender, such as routine care (feeding, bathing, diapers).

The study of other forms of fatherhood, such as “involved fatherhood,” has shown that the involvement of fathers in the care of their children has increased in younger and more educated generations (Gatrell et al., 2015; Kaufman and Uhlenberg, 2000; McGill, 2014; Sullivan et al., 2014). There is empirical evidence that a change is taking place in how parenthood is understood and experienced, with care and nurturing becoming more important (Henwood and Procter, 2003; Thomas and Bailey, 2006).

Caring for children also has implications beyond the domestic sphere. Studies show that when men participate in unpaid care and household chores, gender equality increases (Holter 2014), as well as satisfaction with family life (Miguel-Luken, 2019). The concept of “caring masculinity,” which includes - but is not limited to - caring for their children, allows men to challenge hegemonic masculinity (Elliott, 2016; Hanlon, 2012; Holter 2014) and move towards more equal participation between both genders in various spheres (Scambor et al., 2014). In this sense, egalitarian family policies aimed at increasing men’s participation in care contribute to the development of this type of masculinity (Esping-Andersen, 2009;

Langvasbråten and Teigen, 2006; Scambor, Wojnicka and Bergmann, 2013; Walby, 2009), as in previous decades these policies facilitated maternal employment (García-Faroldi, 2020).

Research on new forms of fatherhood highlights the importance of normative contexts and social pressure in pursuing the type of fatherhood desired. Many authors have shown that there is a discrepancy between the type of fathering that men express wanting to provide, more involved and caring, and the type of fathering they actually carry out, constrained by social expectations to be the family's main economic provider (Gatrell et al., 2015; Gerson, 2010; Kotila et al., 2013; Townsend, 2002).

Given the proven importance of social expectations in the behavior of fathers and mothers (García de Diego, 2019), this study examines what these expectations are in Spanish society today, thus analyzing the social normative climates with respect to being a father and mother in Spain. To do this, data are drawn from a recent survey by the Center for Sociological Research [Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas], in which questions are asked about the activities that those interviewed believe that Spanish society links to the father image and to the mother image. This is both a descriptive and explanatory analysis that aims to achieve three objectives:

- 1) To compare the predominant father and mother images in Spanish society and whether or not these images differ.
- 2) To determine whether the images differ significantly between men and women.
- 3) To analyze the profile of Spaniards who perceive that in Spanish society there is a sexual division in parenting based on traditional gender roles.

The main hypothesis of this research is that sociodemographic characteristics of the population, such as sex and age, are the variables that most influence the recognition that the tasks involved in raising children continue to be socially linked to a separation based on the gender of the parents. Currently, women (who suffer most from the consequences of this division in parenting) and younger people (who are more egalitarian) are the groups most aware of the social normativity towards gender inequality in these tasks.

Finally, this study brings three important new features: first, it uses a nationally representative survey with recent data to analyze the social image of Spaniards regarding fatherhood and motherhood, a type of question that is not usually found in surveys that address family issues; second, the survey itself is innovative because it uses the same formulation for the question and the response categories for the father image and the mother image, making it easier for the person interviewed to distinguish (or not) the different expectations of Spanish society towards each of the parents; third, the “sexual division in parenting” (SDP) index is proposed to analyze the distribution of child-rearing tasks and activities according to traditional gender roles.

Methods

To undertake this project, we used data drawn from the Spanish General Social Survey published in 2018, conducted by the Center for Sociological Research (CIS). The national sample obtained was 5465 interviews, representative of residents of both sexes aged 18 years and over. The sampling error for a 95.5% confidence level was $\pm 1.4\%$ for the sample as a whole and in the case of simple random sampling.

The methodology for this research was conducted in several phases:

- 1) Creation of 20 indicators: First, we used the questions that collect information about the activities that those interviewed believe society links today mainly to the father and to the mother image in the first and the second place. There were eight response categories included in the questionnaire, in addition to “Others” and “All”: (1) Spending time with their children; (2) Playing, engaging in leisure activities with their children; (3) Taking care of their children when they are sick; (4) Providing economic resources; (5) Teaching them manners and instilling values; 6) Knowing their schedules, homework; (7) Taking care of their basic needs (hygiene, meals, etc.); (8) Offering support, being close, knowing their concerns, friends; (9) Others; and (10) All. These two questions were recoded into twenty indicators (ten for the father and ten for the mother) that add up all the original response options that were chosen whether in first or second place - for the father and for the mother (see Figure 1).
- 2) Analysis of the indicators: Once the 20 indicators were created, a statistical analysis verified in which activities there were greater proportional differences when the image was linked to the father and not so much to the mother and vice versa. In this analysis substantial differences were confirmed in four activities (see Table 1): two were indicated more often in the case of the socially accepted mother image (“knowing their schedules, homework” and “taking care of the children when they are sick”) and another two when referring to the father (“providing economic resources” and “playing, engaging in leisure activities with the children”).
- 3) Creation of the variable “Sexual division in parenting”: A final index called “**sexual division in parenting**” (SDP) was created as the dependent variable. This index gives the percentage of three possible options (0- No, 1- In one of the two sexes and 2- Yes).

- **No:** Comprising individuals who did not indicate some of the activities described in the previous point, or if they did, they linked them to both the father and the mother image.
 - **In one of the two sexes:** Comprising individuals who believe that society links the activity of taking care of basic needs and/or caring for children when they are sick to the mother and not to the father, or indicated that the father is associated with providing resources and/or playing with children and not the mother.
 - **Yes:** Comprising individuals who believe that socially there is a sexual division in parenting in the activities linked to both the father and the mother. This group maintains that society associates the mother and not the father with the activity of taking care of basic needs and/or caring for their children when they are sick, in addition to indicating that the father and not the mother is associated with providing resources and/or playing with the children.
- 4) Classification tree analysis: The purpose of this type of analysis is given a population of elements, to identify homogeneous subsets with respect to certain characteristics (Luque, 2015), which makes it ideal for exploring which independent variables show the greatest differences with the dependent variable gender division in parenting. A dendrogram is thus obtained from the socio-demographic variable of the population with the greatest weight in the responses for the constructed indicator. From the subgroups obtained, the other characteristics are entered, according to their degree of importance and which have statistically significant differences with the analyzed variable.
- 5) Logistic regression: Finally, the sexual division in parenting variable created was recoded to become a dichotomous variable (0 and 1) and so determine which variables

have the greatest impact on indicating that there is sexual division in parenting, regardless of whether this is for both sexes or only for one of them. The value 0 continues to be the option that there is no sexual division in parenting, while the value 1, merges the possibilities “Yes” and “in one of the two sexes” of the SDP index. This new indicator is analyzed through a binary logistic regression analysis, which will make it possible to determine the effect of each explanatory variable while maintaining *ceteris paribus* the rest of the independent variables.

The independent variables used, both in the dendrogram and in the regression, are sociodemographic characteristics: age, sex, educational level, employment situation, religion, whether they have children in their care and individual monthly income.

Results

The social construction of parenting according to sex has not only been underpinned by the biological differences between men and women, but it has also been fundamentally legitimized by constructed normative models that have shaped people’s behavior. Thus, it is necessary to understand people’s perception of the activities they believe society associates mainly with the image of the father or the mother according to the sex of the person interviewed.

Initially, it is interesting to note, as can be seen in Figure 1, that people believe that the father image involves specific activities related to his role, and these particularities are even more noticeable for women (in all the specific activities associated with the father image there are statistically significant differences according to the sex of the person interviewed). The father image is associated mainly with providing economic resources (55.6% for women interviewed and 49.3% for men interviewed), followed by teaching manners and instilling values (38.3% for women and 41.5% for men), and, third, spending time with their children (25.5% for women and 29.3% for men).

In the case of activities associated with the mother, unlike with the father image, none presents statistically significant differences according to the sex of the person interviewed, except for spending time with their children, which is indicated more by men. Another notable difference is that providing economic resources is not one of the most important tasks (less than 15%), rather the weight of the activities is more evenly distributed than in the case of the father image. At least one out of every three people indicates that the tasks socially linked to the mother include teaching their children manners and instilling values, spending time and taking care of their basic needs, and one out of every five people indicates caring for them when they are sick.

The results of the 20 indicators therefore appear to confirm the social validity of the role of the father fundamentally as a provider, while the mother image is not primarily based on a single task. Some of these tasks are also notable as activities that are socially linked to the father image (although always below those linked to the mother), as is the case of teaching manners or instilling values and spending time with the children. Other activities linked to the mother are much less important in the case of fathers, such as caregiving when children are sick, taking care of basic needs, or knowing the schedules and needs of their children.

This confirms that the more routine parenting tasks in Spanish society are still linked to the mother, while leisure activities are more associated with the father image. These perceptions correspond to a great extent to what occurs in many households (Horschild and Machung, 1989; Kotila et al., 2013; Mc Bride and Mills, 1993). Playing, singing and reading are considered activities with a very positive impact on children's development (Kotila et al., 2013) and, since today both parents are urged to intellectually stimulate their children (Quirke, 2006), they strive to meet these demands by prioritizing these types of activities before others (Kotila et al., 2013). However, the more routine activities are essential in daily life and fall

mostly on the mother, with the most rewarding and socially valued activities falling on the father.

FIGURE 1 AROUND HERE

Given the power of the social normative climate to shape the behavior of the group members, it is not surprising that Spanish women to a greater extent than men complete their work day between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday (one in six), in an attempt to make their paid employment as compatible as possible with the multiple activities related to child care that society considers they should perform. The alternative to this concentrated schedule is to work less than 30 hours, which makes it easier to fulfill the tasks assigned in the private sphere. In the case of men, not only do they have a concentrated work day to a lesser extent than women, but also the usual alternative is to work more than 40 hours (Fernández-Lozano, 2018). These data confirm that it is generally women who adapt their schedules (Presser, 1989), which leads to the conclusion, as Bernhardt (1993:36) points out, that motherhood and employment are incompatible precisely because work and fatherhood are.

Together with the exploratory analysis of the activities that the person interviewed believes society associates with the mother or father image, the difference for each activity was calculated according to whether it was linked to the paternal or maternal figure, again crossing the results obtained from these differences according to the sex of the person interviewed. These differences include the distance between the percentages in an activity that was linked to the mother or the father, together with the directionality of these differences. Figure 2 is a bar chart showing the differences and the relationship to the parental figure that is most closely linked. When an activity has a value of 0, this means that there are no differences in the percentage of people who link it to the paternal or maternal figure. When an activity has a positive value it is because this difference is in favor of the maternal figure, and when the value is negative the activity is in favor of the paternal figure. The above-mentioned tasks socially

linked to the father obtain an even greater difference for women, that is, men attenuate the construction of this task as masculine. With regard to the rest of the tasks associated with child care, which historically have been more linked to the mother than to the father, four are highlighted, with differences greater than 5 points, and these are: “taking care of their needs”, “knowing their schedules”, “taking care of them when they are sick” and “spending time”. Although these tasks have been indicated by men and women, the differences are somewhat greater in the first two activities for men, while the last two tasks are more notable for women.

FIGURE 2 AROUND HERE

Nonetheless, a more detailed analysis has been conducted of the indicators studied, which makes it possible to determine the weight of the parenting tasks assigned socially according to the sex of the parents. For this, the absolute distance for each of the ten activities was calculated when associated with the father and the mother figure, which together with the mean for each activity (sum of the percentage obtained linked to the father and mother image, divided by two), made it possible to calculate the relative weight of the distance according to the mean for the specific activity. This analysis allows a distinction to be made between various tasks with similar descriptive differences, an example of which is the activity of providing care when they are sick and taking care of basic needs. These described tasks have similar values in their differences; however, the weight of the distance is much greater for taking care of them when they are sick, because the mean obtained between the father figure and the mother figure is much lower than that of taking care of basic needs. In Table 1, the weight of the distances of all the activities related to the paternal or maternal role can be seen. Thus, the activity with the lowest weight (0.05 points) is “teaching them manners and instilling values”, while the activity that obtains the highest weight (1.2 points) is “providing economic resources”.

TABLE 1 AROUND HERE

The results of Table 1 highlight four tasks that obtained a higher weight difference (in the first tertile) in the social linkage towards strictly paternal or maternal activities. Two tasks are linked to the feminine figure, “knowing their schedules, homework” and “taking care of the children when they are sick”, and two to the masculine figure, “providing economic resources” and “playing, engaging in leisure activities”. These activities have been used to create the SDP index, which is the dependent variable of this paper and includes three options: *No* (when the activities described for the corresponding maternal or paternal figure have not been indicated); *In one of the two sexes* (when at least one of the activities is linked to the mother or the father); and *Yes* (when both paternal and maternal figures have been linked to one of the tasks that concern them).

The results of the SDP index were analyzed through the possible relationship that can be seen with the socio-demographic characteristics of the population, to determine which of these predictive variables has the greatest discriminating power in the values taken by the SDP. The sociodemographic variables introduced in the model are: the sex of the person interviewed, age group, whether he or she is the father or mother of a minor, religion, educational level, employment situation and net monthly income level. The result of this analysis is presented through the following dendrogram or classification tree (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3 AROUND HERE

The first group (Node 0) contains the values taken by the SDP for the whole population, where almost half of the population is placed in the *No* category (48.5%), for a little more than a third of the population the index categorizes them according to their answers in the *In one of the two sexes* category, and the remaining 17.1% maintains that there is a sexual division in parenting in both genders. The variable showing the greatest discriminating power in the values of the SDP was the educational level of the individual where, as the educational level of the population increases, the percentage of people who perceive a gender division in parenting in society

increases, either in one of the two roles or in both. Almost 53% of the people whose highest educational level is lower secondary education or who do not answer this question are categorized as no sexual division in parenting, while less than a third of the people who have a postgraduate degree are found in this category.

At the second level of classification only age has significant discriminating power. This variable divides the largest group in the first classification by educational level. These are the people with more than lower secondary education and less than postgraduate studies (more than 54% of the total population). The results obtained indicate that age in this group has an inverse relationship with indicating that there is a sexual division in parenting, that is, individuals under the age of 40 are more likely to perceive a complete sexual division in parenting (22.3%), while for those aged 60 or over this percentage is lower (12.2%).

In the third and last level of classification, two variables are statistically discriminating, sex for the group under the age of 40 years and the level of net monthly income of the person interviewed for the group between the ages of 40 and 59 years. Women report more sexual division in parenting than men. With respect to the economic variable, those who did not report their individual net monthly income level were those who most often did not report a sexual division in parenting (58%). This perception of finding a sexual division in parenting decreases as the individual net monthly income increases (46.6% for those earning up to 1,200 euros and 43.2% for those earning more than 1,200 euros).

However, the analyses carried out do not allow us to determine which variables studied have the greatest impact on the belief that socially there is a sexual division in parenting. For this reason, a binary logistic regression analysis was performed allowing us to assess the effect of each explanatory variable while maintaining *ceteris paribus* for the rest. For this purpose, the SDP index was dichotomized to obtain an indicator that measures the presence or absence of a social image towards a sexual division in parenting. Sociodemographic variables of the

population were introduced, whether or not they had been selected as predictors in the previous dendrogram, mainly for two reasons: a) variables that were not selected in the classification tree could have a greater impact in this new analysis, and b) the interest in carrying out a logistic regression in this study does not lie in its predictive capacity, but in knowing which variables introduced in the model confirm the hypothesis of the research.

TABLE 2 AROUND HERE

Table 2 shows the results of the binary logistic regression. The Hosmer-Lemeshow goodness-of-fit test allowed us to affirm, based on statistical hypothesis testing, that the model has a good fit to the observed data (the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, since the significance level was >0.05). Regarding the covariates introduced in the model, the sociodemographic variables that show no significant effect are: having a minor child, level of individual net monthly income and level of education completed. By contrast, the employment situation of the person interviewed is statistically significant at 90%, where people who are in any other situation than that of working seems to indicate to a lesser extent a sexual division in parenting. It should be noted that the sex, age group and religion of the individual are statistically significant variables at 99% in this model.

The variable that has the greatest impact on the indicator of the presence of a sexual division in parenting is sex (Exp β : 1,361), which indicates that men perceive this division to be less important than women. In second place is the age group (Exp β : 0.837), where people under 40 years of age more frequently indicate that society promotes a sexual division in parenting. Finally, religion is the variable with the third greatest impact on the indicator analyzed (Exp β : 1,152), where people who are Catholic are those who, to a lesser extent, conceive that there is a sexual division in parenting compared to people of other religions and those who are not religious.

Conclusions:

Throughout this work, it has been shown how the people interviewed consider that Spanish society continues to have a clear division of roles between fathers and mothers: fathers are, above all, responsible for providing economic resources and, to a lesser extent, for playing and sharing their leisure time with their children. Mothers are assigned multiple tasks related to caring for children, such as taking care of them when they are sick and knowing their schedules and homework, which are activities that are tiring and not acknowledged. At the same time, concerning other routine activities such as taking care of basic needs (meals, hygiene...) mothers are perceived as being primarily responsible. However, the activities that are more equally shared by both parents are teaching them manners and instilling values, spending time with their children and supporting them.

These clearly differentiated gender roles explain why, as Kaufman and White (2015) show in their literature review, empirical evidence suggests that men attach more importance to extrinsic values when evaluating employment, such as money and status. They face greater social pressure to play the role of the family's main economic provider. Fatherhood is an explicit identity of men, but not as acknowledged as their work identity. The role of men as economic providers is supported by society through better work opportunities and better wages (Hodges and Budig, 2010; Katz-Wise et al, 2010; Luhr, 2020), thus they achieve a higher status in the public sphere (Kimmel, 1993). Women, on the other hand, attach more importance to altruistic and social values when evaluating a job, in addition to giving importance to work-family balance. Considering that women are expected to be the primary caregivers for children, it is not surprising that the ability to reconcile public and private spheres is an important factor. The role of being a mother is seen by society as much more central to women's identity, to their self-conception (Katz-Wise et al., 2010; Simon, 1992).

This study proposed the creation of the "sexual division in parenting" index. Seventeen percent of the population recognizes that socially there is a sexual division in raising children.

In other words, they perceive that society associates the mother and not the father with the activity of attending to basic needs and/or taking care of the children when they are sick, in addition to indicating that the father and not the mother is associated with providing resources and/or playing with the children. Those who do not indicate either of these two options, almost half of the sample, are considered not to perceive a sexual division in parenting, while just over a third of the population, indicating one of the two possibilities, is in an intermediate position. The analyses have shown that those who most strongly indicate that Spanish society still supports a sexual division in parenting are women and younger people. This confirms the hypothesis presented in this study, that sex and age are the variables most important to perceiving this social normativity. This is not to say that these social categories are those that most agree with this division, but this normative climate nevertheless is perceived and exerts pressure on them. In the first place, women spend the most hours caring for children, so it is not surprising that they are the ones who perceive that they are expected to do precisely that. There may be women within this group who not only perceive this division but also see it as “normal” and approve of it, but there will most likely be other women in this group who are critical of this division. Second, younger people are characterized by more egalitarian values and therefore may be more aware of the gender roles assigned to parenting.

Unfortunately, since the survey does not include a question that asks directly about what the person interviewed personally considers to be the activities linked to being a father or being a mother, this interpretation cannot be confirmed, which is a limitation of this study. Nevertheless, the advantage of having a broadly representative survey (more than 5,000 cases), in which the social image of both fathers and mothers is formulated in the same way, is considered to be greater than the disadvantage of not having information on either the personal opinion or the actual behavior of the interviewee. It would be advisable, in future studies, to

have information on all three aspects in order to observe their degree of coherence: social image, personal image and behavior.

The data show that half of the population still perceives a sexual division in parenting. The constructivist approach to gender (the so-called “gender display”, Brines 1994) notes that the home is the main place where gender is produced and reproduced, because housework is symbolically “women’s work” (Ferree, 1990). Gender is a dynamic process that is created and recreated through daily interaction (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Individuals do not need to subscribe to “appropriate” gender attitudes in order to be influenced by them through interaction with others. Evertsson (2014) comments that this approach suggests that housework traditionally associated with women serves as an arena in which gender is created in a symbolic sense. To change this symbolism and achieve a more gender-neutral division of housework and child care, an articulated gender consciousness and/or a shared gender-equitable strategy is needed (Hochschild and Machung, 1989; Sánchez and Thomson, 1997).

Finally, the political implications of these results should be highlighted. As Schippers (2007) points out, it is not only a question of asking what social characteristics or practices are understood as masculine or feminine, but also what are the consequences of putting these ideals into practice, such as how resources, power and what is socially valued are distributed. If we apply this perspective to our results, it seems clear that the image that society attaches to the father is much more highly valued, since it is a matter of having a paid job in the public sphere, while the image of the mother is that of devoting herself to routine and less socially valued tasks. Kimmel (2010) stresses that value must be placed on caring for children, whether carried out by mothers or by “involved” fathers. Hanlon (2012) emphasizes that the construction of masculinity has traditionally left out care because it defined this care as feminine, with a subordinate position and an activity that men do not perform well. Changing this perception of care and masculinity is fundamental if the sexual division in parenting is to be weakened. For

example, the European project “The Role of Men in Gender Equality” states in its conclusions (Scambor et al., 2014) that establishing an exclusive quota for the father to care for his child encourages men to become more involved in care (Kotsadam and Finseraas, 2011) and to develop a more caring masculinity (Langvasbråten and Teigen, 2006; Scambor, Wojnicka and Bergmann, 2013).

The normative climate revealed in the analyses has clear consequences for fathers and mothers. For women, the expectation that they will be the main caregivers for children has an impact on both their professional career and their health. Concerning the former, statistical data repeatedly show that it is women who seek the most concentrated schedules, reduce their working hours, and request leave to care for family members, which has a negative impact on their income and their chances of promotion. In terms of the impact on health, Pujal, Calatayud and Amigot (2020), in their critical analysis of gender in the most widely used manual of mental disorders (DSM-5), show how gender roles, norms, expectations and status lead to difficulty in work-family balance, role overload, mental anxiety, sleep and psychosomatic disorders. In the case of men, social pressure to be the family’s economic provider causes stress, health problems, and long workdays, in addition to impoverished family relationships (Scambor et al., 2014). As Scambor and his colleagues note, stereotypes and attitudes towards men’s roles are a strong barrier to achieving gender equality. Public policies are needed to encourage a change in these perceptions (such as the recent extension of paternity leave in Spain), together with an effort by both businesses and the media to become involved in the dissemination of new, more egalitarian roles linked to fatherhood. Only in this way will it be possible to weaken the sexual division in parenting based on traditional gender roles that are perpetuated beyond the essential differences in our biology.

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TABLES

Table 1. Activities that the person interviewed believes society links to the image of the mother and the father, distance, mean and weight.

Type of Activities	Activity linked to the FATHER	Activity linked to the MOTHER	Absolute DISTANCE between the activity linked to the father and the mother (A)	MEAN of the activity linked to the image of the father and mother (B)	WEIGHT of the distance between father and mother (A/B)
<i>Spend time with children</i>	27.35%	37.98%	10.63	32.66%	0.33
<i>Play, engage in leisure activities with children</i>	16.86%	4.88%	11.98	10.87%	1.10
<i>Take care of children when sick</i>	8.61%	21.01%	12.40	14.81%	0.84
<i>Provide economic resources</i>	52.56%	13.12%	39.44	32.84%	1.20
<i>Teaching manners and instilling values</i>	39.86%	42.04%	2.18	40.95%	0.05
<i>Know their schedules, homework</i>	3.80%	10.81%	7.01	7.31%	0.96
<i>Take care of basic needs (hygiene, meals, etc.)</i>	18.18%	31.86%	13.68	25.02%	0.55
<i>Support, be close, know their concerns, friend</i>	13.12%	14.37%	1.25	13.74%	0.09
<i>Others</i>	1.25%	0.98%	0.27	1.11%	0.24
<i>All</i>	7.54%	10.81%	3.27	9.17%	0.36

Source: Spanish General Social Survey 2017-2018, ECIS3201, CIS. Own elaboration.

Table 2. Binary logistic regression of a socially existing sexual division in parenting according to different sociodemographic variables of the population.

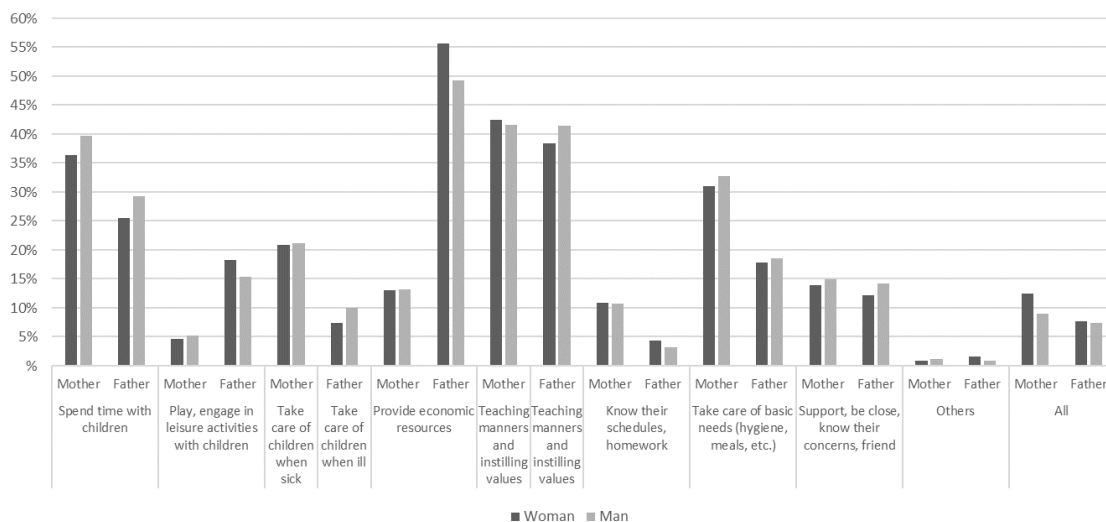
		There is a sexual division in parenting in society		
SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLE	REFERENCE CATEGORY	B	Sig	Exp(B)
Sex of the respondent	Man	0.908	0.000**	1.361
Age group	Under 40 years	-0.178	0.000**	0.837
Has a minor child	No	0.011	0.799	1.011
Net monthly income level	No personal income	0.019	0.327	1.019
Religion	Catholic	0.141	0.000**	1.152
Employment situation	Works	-0.005	0.099*	0.995
Educational level completed	Up to primary studies	-0.001	0.898	0.999
Nagelkerke's R²		0.021		
Hosmer-Lemeshow Test		0.787		
% Cases classified		76.9%		
N		5,365		

Source: Spanish General Social Survey 2017-2018, ECIS3201, CIS. Own elaboration.

* Significant at 90%. ** Significant at 99%.

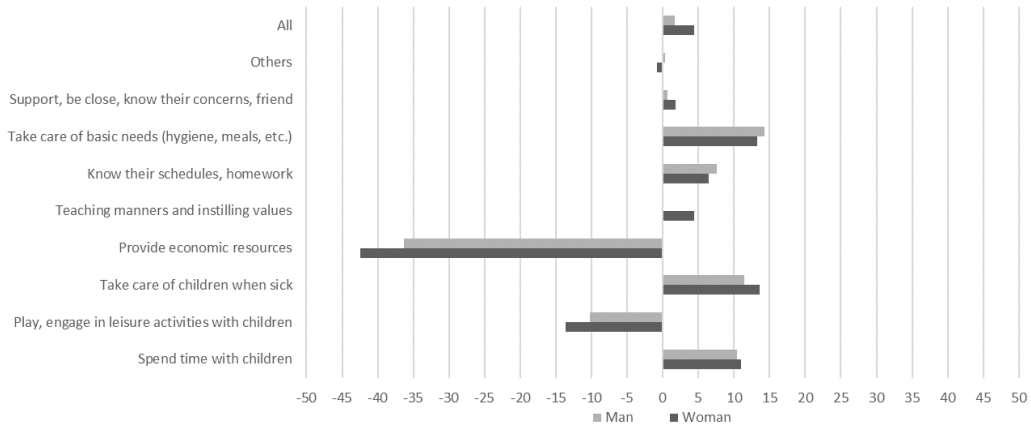
FIGURES

Figure 1. Activities that the person interviewed believes society links to the mother or father image according to the sex of the interviewee. Cumulative percentage of answers to the questions: Which of the following activities do you think society today links first to the mother or the father image? And second?



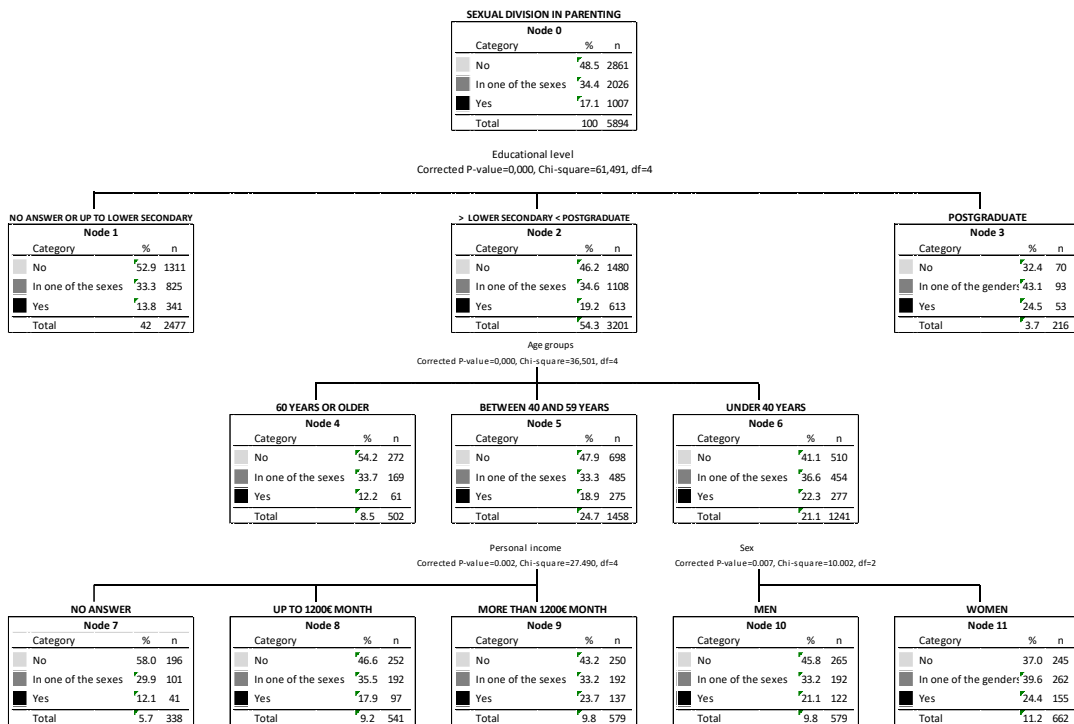
Source: Spanish General Social Survey 2017-2018, ECIS3201, CIS. Own elaboration.

Figure 2. Differences in the percentages indicated for each activity linked to the mother image and to the father image.



Source: Spanish General Social Survey 2017-2018, ECIS3201, CIS. Own elaboration.

Figure 3. Classification tree. Dependent variable: Sexual division in parenting



Source: Spanish General Social Survey 2017-2018, ECIS3201, CIS. Own elaboration.