



# XVIII ISA WORLD CONGRESS OF SOCIOLOGY

横浜  
YOKOHAMA

FACING AN UNEQUAL WORLD:  
CHALLENGES FOR GLOBAL SOCIOLOGY



13-19 July 2014

Friday 18 July

17:30-19:20: 127 **New Roles of Men and Women and  
Implications for Society**

**What contributes to a satisfactory work-family balance? A longitudinal analysis of Egalitarian First Time Parents in Spain**

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# 1. Research questions

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- ▶ Is the satisfaction of couples with their reconciliation arrangements related to the extent to which these meet initial expectations?
- ▶ To what extent do first-time fathers anticipate the need to make adjustments to their daily routines in order to reconcile care and employment?
- ▶ Which institutional settings facilitate a more satisfactory work-life balance for egalitarian couples having made the transition to parenthood?



## 2. Background: Work-Life Balance, Gender Equality and the Transition to Parenthood

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- ▶ The work-family literature is dominated by a **conflict perspective** (**scarcity hypothesis**): it is assumed that individuals who participate in multiple roles (e.g. those related to work and family) inevitably experience conflict and stress that detract from their quality of life (Marks, 1977; Sieber, 1974) .
- ▶ Other authors emphasize that the **advantages of pursuing multiple roles** are likely to outweigh the disadvantages (**an expansionist hypothesis**) (Barnett & Baruch, 1985; Marks, 1977; Sieber, 1974).
- ▶ Researchers have also posited that **sex-role attitudes influence the experience of multiple roles**: individuals with traditional attitudes are more likely to experience strains, whereas individuals with egalitarian attitudes are more likely to experience role gratification (Barnett & Baruch, 1985; Gerson, 1985; Marshall & Barnett, 1991). E.g.: within a two-earner family, the man's attitude towards his partner's employment may also be important, at least for his own well-being (Kessler & McRae, 1982).



## (a) New insights in the discussion:

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- ▶ Variations in **paternal involvement** in the transition to fatherhood (Habib, 2012) as a means of understanding the emergence of **a new identity status**, that is, becoming a father (identity theory).
- ▶ Three dimensions of paternal involvement (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine (1985, 1987): (1) **engagement** (e.g. time in caregiving and play); (2) **accessibility** (availability time); (3) and **responsibility** (e.g. making decisions for the child). Implicit in these dimensions is the notion of positive paternal involvement, which is likely to promote a healthy development of the child.



## (b) New insights in the discussion:

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- ▶ Literature on **violated expectations**, which are found to be a stronger predictor of depression and relationship satisfaction than the reported division of labour (Biehle & Mickelson, 2012).
- ▶ Violated expectations may lead to less **satisfaction with the transition to parenthood** (e.g., Belsky, 1985; Khazan, McHale, & Decourcey, 2008): researchers have argued that the actual division of childcare is less important than whether the division meets one's expectations.



# 3. Hypotheses

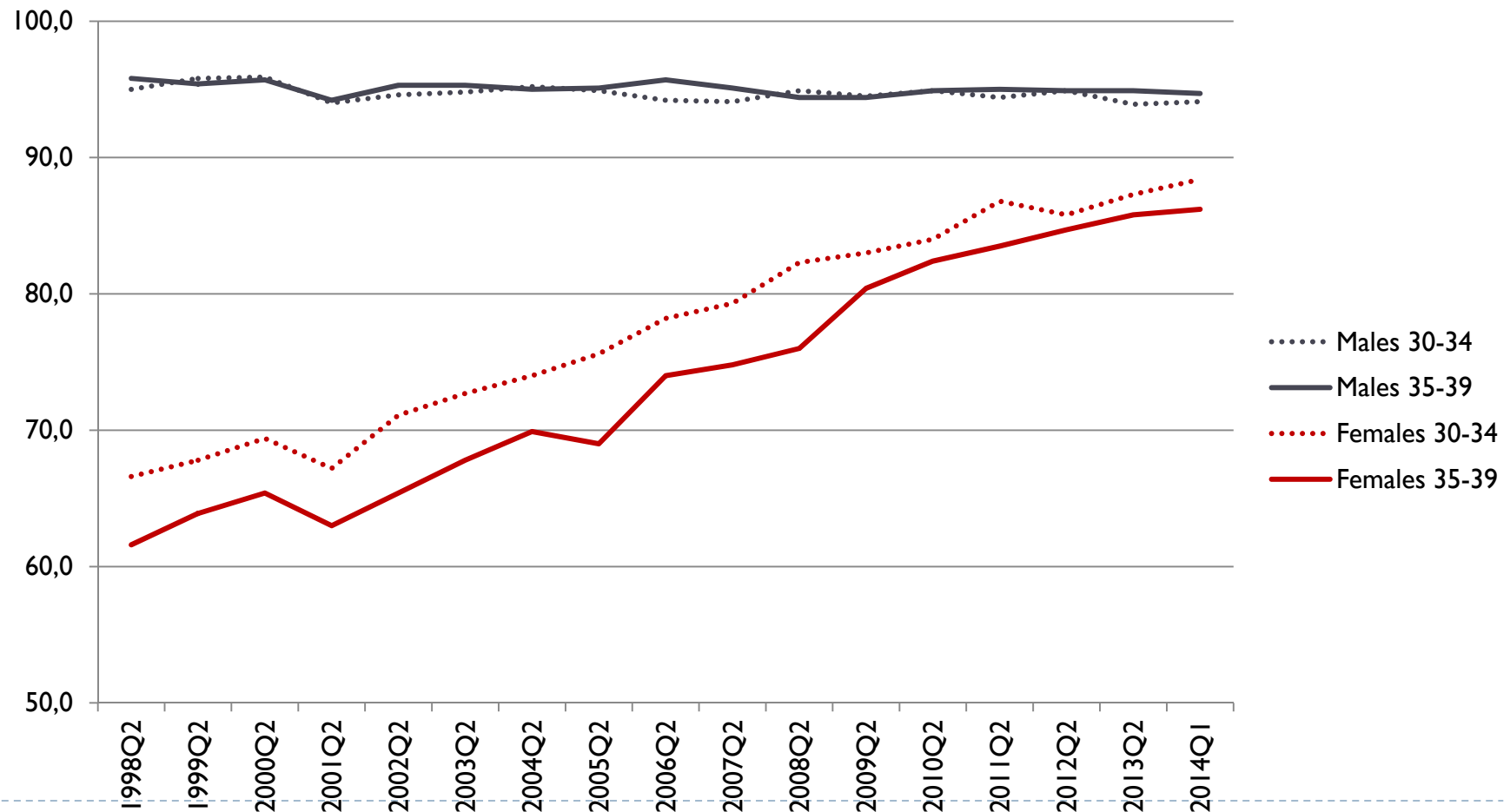
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- ▶ H1: The higher the degree of dissonance between expectations (the couples' ideal organization) and reality (the couples' actual time allocation to care and employment), the higher the degree of dissatisfaction (**Violated expectations**)  
-> **Longitudinal & relational hypothesis.**
- ▶ H2: Fathers-to-be who anticipate changes with the arrival of the child are more likely to develop a “positive paternal involvement”, which also favours marital satisfaction and satisfaction with the reconciliation strategy (**Paternal involvement**) -> **Longitudinal & relational hypothesis.**
- ▶ H3: Satisfactory reconciliation strategies (i.e. a high level of satisfaction within the couple) are largely explained by a favourable institutional context such as a friendly work environment, accessibility to services, time or other resources (**Institutional context**). -> **Cross-sectional & relational hypothesis.**



## 2. The Spanish case study in context

**Figure 1: Activity rates by gender and age groups (30-34 & 35-39) in Spain, 1998-2014.**



- High unemployment rates: 26% in 2014 (33% in the age group 25-29 and 54% under age 25).
- 24% women and 22% men with a fixed-term job (14% and 13% EU-28) -> 32.4% below age 40 (vs. 20.7% EU-28).
- Workplace practices: long working hours, low working-time flexibility & male enterprise culture in the private sector.
- Familist Welfare State: Only 1.5% of the social public expenditure is devoted to family (2,3% OECD average in 2009).





## 4. Sample

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- ▶ **32 Couples expecting their first child** (sub-sample from 68 couples from international research project TransParent).
- ▶ **Bi-active couples** (both partners in the labour market)
- ▶ **Egalitarian practices**: she does not do more than 60% of the housework and he does at least 40% (self-declared) excluding domestic help.
- ▶ **Longitudinal sample**: interviewed in 2011 (at the time of the pregnancy) and again in 2013 (child at pre-school age)



Table 1. Characteristics of the sample: egalitarian bi-active couples, first wave (2011): data sorted by women's income level

Basic socio-demographic characteristics:		
Her income	Household income	Relative resources (income differences)
<b>Very low income:</b>		
1 <500	1000-1749	Hipergamy
2 500-999	1500-2248	Hipergamy
3 500-999	2000-2998	Hipergamy
4 500-999	2500-3499	Hipergamy
<b>Low income:</b>		
5 1000-1249	2250-2750	Hipergamy
6 1000-1249	1249-2748	Hipergamy
7 1250-1499	3750-4500	Hipergamy
8 1250-1499	2750-3498	Homogamia
9 1250-1499	1750-2498	Hipogamy
10 1250-1499	2750-3498	Hipergamy
11 1250-1499	2500-2998	Homogamia
12 1250-1499	2500-2998	Homogamia
13 1250-1499	3250-3999	Hipergamy
14 1250-1499	2250-2748	Hipogamy
<b>Middle income:</b>		
15 1500-1999	4500-5498	Hipergamy
16 1500-1999	1500-1999	Homogamia
17 1500-1999	2500-3750	Hipogamy
18 1500-1999	3000-4000	Homogamia
19 1500-1999	2750-3500	Hipogamy
20 1500-1999	2500-3250	Hipogamy
21 1500-1999	2750-3498	Hipogamy
22 1500-1999	4000-4998	Hipergamy
23 1500-1999	2000-2499	Hipogamy
24 1500-1999	2750-3498	Hipogamy
<b>High income:</b>		
25 2000-2499	5000-6498	Hipergamy
26 2000-2499	4000-5000	Homogamia
27 2000-2499	4000-5000	Homogamia
28 2000-2499	3500-4498	Hipogamy
29 2000-2499	3500-4498	Hipogamy
30 2500-2999	3750-4498	Hipogamy
31 3000-3999	5000-6498	Hipogamy
32 >4000	6000-6500	Hipogamy

## 5.1. Main results (H1: Violate expectations)

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- ▶ **Most men in our sample are satisfied** with the reconciling strategy; half women are unsatisfied.
- ▶ **Satisfied couples** are those who meet their expectations concerning care & work
  - ✓ Some women are **satisfied with an unbalance work-family**: (1) different notions of parenthood (construction of motherhood/fatherhood); (2) mothers are resigned to the fathers work constraints when they exhibit at least engagement and accessibility.
- ▶ **Unsatisfied mothers** face strong dissonance: (1) gap between expectations and reality concerning fathers involvement (only engagement) -> dissatisfaction with the partner; (2) mothers with high level of marital satisfaction but unable to fulfill their own ideal of motherhood (they feel guilty): work constraints -> dissatisfaction with themselves.



High income couple (hypogamy), she university studies; he secondary studies; both top managers (he in small company; she in a large company) -> **unsatisfied mother (violated expectations)**

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1<sup>st</sup> wave:

TERESA: you know, I wish he could do the same... [caring] but, uh, uh, looking for the time, finding the time to be together the three of us... I guess he will, but it will definitely be harder for him than for me.

2<sup>nd</sup> wave:

TERESA: ... I'm really fed up, he does something at home [...] but I see that all the caring is on my shoulders, and I was talking to a friend and we realized that it has nothing to do with wages or your position at work or whether men do more hours at work, because we both work the same and the responsibility basically lies on me and if we talk about wages, I have a higher wage and still...



## 5.2. Main results (H2: Paternal involvement)

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- ▶ Few fathers-to-be anticipate a “positive parental involvement”.
- ▶ Fathers who anticipate changes (1<sup>st</sup> wave) in at least two dimensions, self-identity (they imagine themselves caring) and paid-work, are those who further develop a positive fatherhood (2<sup>nd</sup> wave).



## 5.3. Main results (H3: Institutional Context)

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- ▶ **The most satisfied couples combine considerable time-availability for care for at least one of the partners + flexibility for the other one** so that both can be involved: *more prevalent in public sector, with employment stability, and in private companies with good work atmosphere & relations between co-workers*
- ▶ In the **least satisfied couples** at least one partner **faces a family-hostile work environment**: culture of presentism, long work hours, masculinized environments leaving little room for flexibility or use of legal rights
- ▶ **Key role of the extended family (i.e. grandparents)**: can **compensate** for a negative institutional context & **increases satisfaction** when the latter is favourable.



## 6. Conclusions

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- ▶ Egalitarian couples???
- ▶ The arrival of the first child reveals major differences in the ideals about motherhood/ fatherhood
- ▶ Why so many fist-time fathers are satisfied & so many mothers unsatisfied?
- ▶ Mothers need to fulfil the three dimensions (engagement; accessibility and responsibility) = fathers are satisfied if they are engaged or accessible (less demanding parenthood)

