

Title: Gender inequality in the life course. The effect of parenthood in the division of unpaid work

Joan Garcia Roman
Minnesota Population Center

Marc Ajenjo Cosp
Centre d'Estudis Demografics

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to test if younger generations are more egalitarian or if the more similar behavior among younger generations is due to factors associated with the life cycle. Data used in the analysis are from the two editions of the Spanish time use surveys carried out in 2002-2003 and 2009-2010. These surveys allow the comparison the use of time of different generations at two moments in time. The unit of analysis is the couple and we measure the grade of equality within the couple using differences in time devoted to unpaid work (housework and caregiving) between the spouses.

We analyze differences at both moments for generations born between 1982 and 1963. We focus on changes observed when there is a transition from 0 to 1 child and from 1 child to 2 children. According to previous literature, parenthood reinforces traditional gender roles and is a trigger for inequalities within couples. So we expect that the arrival of children will increase the inequality in couples and their difference in time use will be larger.

Preliminary results confirm what we expect. There is greater difference in time devoted to unpaid work with the arrival of a newborn. However this pattern is not the same in the transition from 1 to 2 children, which may suggest a smaller impact of the second child on couples' division of unpaid work.

Background

Differences in the use of time between men and women are manifested throughout the life cycle (Anxo et al, 2011; Colom Moreno, 2009). Individuals learn their gender roles from childhood and develop their gender identity throughout their lives (Wight, 2008). However, differences are not constant at all ages and family situations, but vary with age and certain circumstances and events (Anxo et al, 2011; Baxter et al, 2008). In this sense, marriage, parenthood and participation in the labor market are important factors in explaining differences in the use of time.

Gender differences in time use are evident among children and as children transition into young adulthood and co-resident romantic relationships. Among youth, girls usually do more household work than boys although the total amount done by both is small (Blair, 1992; Gupta, 2006; Wight, 2008). However, emancipation and singlehood suppose a reduction of gender

differences in the use of time (South & Spitze, 1994). Entry into union increases gender differences in time use (Gupta, 1999). Differences depend on the characteristics of the couples as type of union (cohabitation or marriage), educational attainment and wages of couples' members and participation in the labor market (Batalova & Cohen, 2002; Baxter, 2005; Domínguez, 2012, Blau, 1998, Bianchi et al 2000, Gershuny, 2000).

Work and family have pronounced effects on couples' time use. Parenthood is one of the main triggers of inequalities in the use of time of the couple (Anxo et al, 2011; Baxter et al, 2008). The arrival of a child is associated with a reinforcement of gender roles and it increases the time that mothers spend in domestic and care work (Hallberg and Klevmarcken, 2003; Moreno Colom, 2009). Regarding the labor market, the usual pattern shows an increase of time spent by men while women can reduce their time in many cases and sometimes can temporarily abandon (Blossfeld and Drobic, 2001). Combining parenthood and paid work seems more difficult for women than for men and the coping strategies they develop differ (Anxo et al, 2011). Motherhood aggravates the double burden or second shift that women must cope with since they are usually the primary caregivers. The greatest inequalities are given in the first years after the birth of the children because older children require less attention and mothers usually reenter the labor market (Moreno Colom, 2009). Another consequence of motherhood is the emergence of disparities in leisure time. In this sense, the presence of children under three years is associated with a lower valuation of leisure time by women (Nazio and MacInnes, 2007). In addition to women's reduction in individual leisure time, they experience an increase in multitasking activities where they perform various activities simultaneously (Bittman and Wajcman, 2000; Bianchi et al 2006).

We must take into account that the effect of parenthood on gender inequalities in time use can be mitigated by work policies that encourage greater parental involvement in the tasks of parenting (permission, flexibility in the day) and also the availability of childcare outside the home. The effect of motherhood on women's time use in the long term is more important and more difficult to reverse in less egalitarian societies where the policies implemented by the state are less developed (Dribe & Stanfors, 2009, Bühlmann et al, 2010). In Spain, policies to balance work and family life are scarce (Torns et al, 2011).

Objectives and Research question

The reduction of gender differences in the use of time in the last decades has been widely documented (Bianchi et al. 2006; Sayer 2005; Gershuny 2000). Part of the reduction is a consequence of a more egalitarian society while other part can be associated with a more egalitarian behavior between young people.

In the case of Spain, gender gap in unpaid work was 3.41 hours in couples where woman was younger than 35, 4.07 when she was between 35 and 49 and 4.39 when she was between 50 and 64. Seven years later, the differences decreased to 2.40, 2.91 and 3.41, respectively¹.

¹ Estimates from the Spanish Time Use Surveys 2002-2003 and 2009-2010.

These data confirm the premises exposed above: couples are more egalitarian and young couples are more egalitarian than older ones. However, while the first assumption is clear in the sense that there is some unanimity in the scientific community that the trend is towards some greater equality, it is not as clear in the second one. And this is the question addressed in this paper, which aims to clarify how to evolve the differences between men and women with increasing age, an increase which leads to changes in the life cycle, especially for younger couples with the appearance of children. The presence of children in the household increases inequality, reinforcing gender roles in the sense that the woman is often who reduces her working hours to reconcile with the care of their children (Bittman & Wajcman, 2000; Blossfeld & Drobnic, 2001; Hallberg & Klevmarcken, 2003; Bianchi et al, 2006; Anxo et al, 2011; Baxter et al, 2008; Moreno Colom, 2009).

Our research question is: are young couples more egalitarian in a generational change or why they are in a stage of their life cycle that favors this equality? The consequences of one or another response on the evolution of equality between men and women are diametrically opposed: the first case would involve a rapid evolution towards equality in society as a whole, while in the second case the future evolution towards equality would be much slower.

Data and Methods

Unfortunately, a longitudinal survey about time allocation of the same couples in different moments of the life cycle is not available. However, two time use surveys have been carried out in Spain in the last decade. Both surveys (2003-2003 and 2009-2010) follows a similar methodology and collect information about all the household members 10 years old and more by means of a diary of activities. Although information gathered is not for the same individuals, we have selected characteristics from both surveys that are similar in order to work with population as similar as possible.

Heterosexual couples are our population target, independently of the presence of other members. Gender gap in unpaid work is our dependent variable to measure the grade of equality in the couple. As unpaid work we have considered domestic tasks as well as care activities.

To test the effect of the arrival of a child, we compare differences between couples without children for different generations in the first moment with couples of the same generation 7 years later (years between both surveys) who has had a children between the first and second moment. In a similar way, to test the arrival of a second child we compare couples with a child in 2002-2003 with couple with 2 children in 2009-2010 (it is one child older than 7 and other child between 0 and 7). We control the estimates by other variables as employment status and level of education.

Table 1. Sample size

| Generation | Ages | 2002-2003 | 2009-2010 | 2002-2003 | 2009-2010 |
|------------|---|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| | | 0 children | 1 child | 1 child | 2 children |
| 1978-1982 | 20-24 in 2002-2003 & 27-31 in 2009-2010 | 107 | 117 | | |
| 1973-1977 | 25-29 in 2002-2003 & 32-36 in 2009-2011 | 423 | 198 | 215 | 59 |
| 1968-1972 | 30-34 in 2002-2003 & 37-41 in 2009-2012 | 328 | 104 | 471 | 93 |
| 1963-1967 | 35-39 in 2002-2003 & 42-46 in 2009-2013 | | | 295 | 27 |

Preliminary results

Table 2. Transition from 0 to 1 child. Difference in unpaid work. Woman-Man

| | 2002-2003 | 2009-2010 |
|----------------|------------|-----------|
| | 0 children | 1 child |
| Born 1978-1982 | 1.80 | 2.64 |
| Born 1973-1977 | 1.34 | 3.11 |
| Born 1968-1972 | 1.66 | 3.32 |

Transition from 0 to 1 child shows that arrival of a child supposes a higher inequality in the division of tasks for all the generations analyzed. The increase in the inequality is more relevant for the generations born in 1973-77 and 1968-72 that presented a more egalitarian behavior in the first observation.

Table 3. Transition from 1 child to 2 children. Difference in unpaid work. Woman-Man

| | 2002-2003 | 2009-2010 |
|----------------|-----------|------------|
| | 1 child | 2 children |
| Born 1973-1977 | 4.30 | 3.38 |
| Born 1968-1972 | 4.17 | 3.52 |
| Born 1963-1967 | 3.51 | 2.07 |

Contrary to what we expected, the transition from 1 to 2 children reduces inequality in the couple. For all the generations the difference in unpaid work was higher when they have only one child than in the second, where they have 2 children.

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