

Innovative Fatherhood in Masculine Professions:

Spanish Rural Police Using a Leave Alone in Spain



Gerardo Meil*

Pedro Romero-Balsas*

Jesús Rogero-García*

*Autonomous University of Madrid

Contact: gerardo.meil@uam.es



UAM

UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA
DE MADRID

1 Introduction

2 Characteristics and use of leaves that can be
used by fathers in Spain

3 Sample

4 Aims

5 Results

6 Conclusions

Gender Equality Policy has used parental leave as an instrument to foster a greater involvement of men in reproductive work and in particular in childcare. Different models have been developed for this purpose, depending on the national leave system :

On one side we have the “daddy`s quota” in the Scandinavian countries (Eydal and Rostgaard, 2015) and on the other the paternity leave combined with a flexibilisation in the use of other leaves, so that they can be used by also men. Between both there are different models, some introduce specific bonus (Moss, 2015) as is the case of Portugal (Wall, 2014) or Germany.

Countries with a paternity leave, really don't foster men using parental leave as a instrument for socializing them in childcare, as fathers use it usually at the same time as the mother is in leave (just after the birth), what humpers that fathers take “full” responsibility on childcare. More effective is when men take any available parental **leave alone, ie**, when the mother returns to paid work. To analyse the experience of fathers who have taken a leave alone, Karin Wall and Margaret O'Brien have promoted a collective book : M. O'Brien, K. Wall (eds.), *Comparative Perspectives on Work-Life Balance and Gender Equality*, Springer, Life Course Research and Social Policies 6, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-42970-0_7

This presentation is framed in a national **Project about *Fathers on Leave Alone in Spain*** funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competiveness (CSO2013-44097-R)

Object of study: Analyse the experience of Spanish rural policemen (Guardia civil) who have taken at least one month of leave alone, focusing on:

1. Reasons to take a leave alone in a context where there are no public incentives which foster and legitimize such an option. Our hypothesis is that these men are particularly engaged with gender equality, as to ask for a childcare leave is a direct challenge to the core masculinity representations which are typical for the military.
2. Reactions of the social networks members, in particular at the work place, taken into account that this Police has a military structure (there is no collective agreement) and is a highly masculine profession: 93,5% of workers are men, with a culture characterized by “Homosociability” (Atherton, 2009) and a “Cult of hegemonic masculinity” (Dunivin, 1994), while the main organizational principles are: “service to the community”, “availability when needed” and “rule of law” (Fusulier et al, 2011; Tremblay et al., 2011).
3. Experience of caring alone.

Paternity Leave : only for men, 2 weeks full paid, although some (rare) collective agreements increase it in one or two additional weeks (for instance, the municipality of Madrid acknowledges 4 weeks). Can be taken at birth of the child (the perceived “natural” use of the leave) or after maternity leave. Fully paid by the Social Security

Maternity Leave: 6 weeks compulsory for women after birth + 10 weeks that can be transferred to the partner by the mother (some collective agreements recognize a longer leave). Fully paid by the Social Security

Breastfeeding Break: Two ½ hours a day till the 9th month (12th in the public sector). If established by collective agreement, it can be summed up to 2 additional weeks (4 in the public sector) of maternity leave (since 2012 also to paternity). Fully paid by the employer.

Full-Time Parental Leave (Ex): each parent can take leave until three years after childbirth, with no limit in the number of periods of leave. Unpaid (though some regions preview a lump sum in some circumstances).

Part-Time Parental Leave (RJ): each parent can reduce the working day by between an 1/8 and 1/2 of its normal duration to care for a child until the twelfth year. Unpaid.

Context of Use of Leave Alone in Spain

	Maternity leave			Paternity leave	Full-time Parental leave (to care children)		
	Women	Men	%		Women	Men	%
2008	353.585	5.575	1,6	279.756	36.300	1.471	3,9
2009	334.786	5.726	1,7	273.024	32.549	1.393	4,1
2010	326.752	5.805	1,8	275.637	33.239	1.573	4,5
2011	318.607	5.798	1,8	269.715	32.599	1.529	4,5
2012	293704	5028	1,7	245.867	28163	1488	5,0
2013	283.923	4.919	1,7	237.988	:	:	
Total	1.911.357	32.851	1,7	1.581.987	162.850	7.454	4,4

Source: Statistical Yearbook of the Ministry of Employment and Social Security

Total interviews to Spanish rural police: 15

Age: (32, 49) Age mean: 38,6

Number of children (1,2) Mean: 1,7

Age of children (1, 12). Mean: 4,3

Mean of weeks the men on leave alone: 12,3 (4,25)

Mean of weeks on leave shared with partner: 1,7 (Paternity Leave)

Mean of weeks the woman on leave alone: 9,3

Type of leave used alone by men: Breastfeeding break (9); Part of Maternity Leave (8), Full-time parental leave (3); Part-time parental leave (2); Studies leave (1)

Method: Semi-structured in-depth interviews by phone

Methodology: Analysis of discourse

Sample method: Snowball sampling

Software used: Atlas.ti

Taking as granted that they can't lose their job because they are civil servants and that they make use of their working rights, the reasons given by respondents were mostly instrumental rather than ideological and referred mostly to women's working conditions:

- 1) Only in 3/15 cases instrumental reasons were underpinned by ideological reasons. So, contrary to our hypothesis, an explicitly gender equality discourse was absent in all cases, but one, where the interviewed person (an official) explicitly referred that he took one month leave to protect the career of the spouse (also a civil guard). When ideological reasons were cited as an important reason, it was out of an understanding of "co-responsibility" (because he wanted a second child or wanted to "live the experience"). Contrary to reasons given in other countries (Behnke & Meuser, 2012) the discourse of self-fulfilment was not present in none of the interviews.
- 2) In most cases (13 out of 15) they stated only socioeconomic reasons related with family's welfare:
 - their partners ran their own business, with or without employees, that could not be left unattended without jeopardising the future viability of the firm and hence the family's financial future
 - to protect their wives' jobs where couples felt that the woman's leave-taking would lead to her dismissal.
 - and when they took working time reduction (2 cases), it was for balancing the working time schedules of both parents, so that no other person had to care the baby.

So, the dominant reason that can be identified then is the belief that:

parents should stay with the baby “the longest time **possible**”,

being this “possible time” defined mainly by the paid leave period, so that fathers shouldn’t waist this period if the mother can’t take the leave.

Public policy then shape not only the opportunity structures upon which individuals take their decisions (if the employment is protected, time, etc.), but also their perception of what is valuable and in which terms: leave policy fixes to a great degree the normativity of the time parents should stay with their children, and the do it not mainly through the duration of the leave, but though the duration of the paid leave.

Civil Guards motivations to take a leave alone are not different from the ones we found in other contexts.

Another aspect of interest in this context is that most fathers who took the decision to take the leave alone, didn’t do it because the mother pushed into this direction (only 3 cases), but mostly it was a joint decision that arrived when discussing the caring issue (6 cases) and in 5 additional cases because the father himself raised this option.

Negotiation at work

Worker's right

Struggle between two ideas:

**Work
diligence/expectations**

Administrative structure as shield
against superior

"We are very legalistic"
(P, 37 years, 2 daughters, 14 weeks
of leave alone)

Feeling of loneliness

Bureaucratic barriers:
Application form

Individual search of information about taking a
leave alone because of a male environment

Differences about process to ask for a paternity leave
and a leave alone

Results

Lack of knowledge about superior's opinion

Acceptance as a matter of fact

Acceptance as a matter of fact with criticism

Acceptance with explicit support, within a flexible WLB culture (Fusulier, 2013)

Reactions at work

Harsh and funny sexist comments, but also "holidays" by their colleagues

Acceptance with support

Women at work appears as image of support and understanding

Fear, stress, uncertainty and paramount responsibility of caring alone

Discourses of caring alone

Masculine idea of challenge, of being capable of success in childcare by themselves

Perception of creation of child bonding because they have cared them alone

However, not in all discourses appear the domestic tasks

It is common the idea of play, entertainment and “being there” as a task

Lack of personal time

Routines of childcare alone

In all discourses appear activities of childcare during the period alone, the most referred is nurturing

- Rural Police justify taking the leave by family needs: keeping income while taking care personally of the baby the “longest time possible”. Most reasons refer to the specific working conditions of the partner (self-employed or frail working conditions). Additional more expresiv / ideological reasons appear only in few cases, linked then most with “responsible fatherhood”
- Leave regulations and particularly paid leave regulations set the framework for the definition of what is considered the “longest time possible”
- Norms and rights as a shield to apply for an “unusual” leave in their traditional workplace
- They have to suffer sexist comments of his colleagues but is considered funny or sharp.
- Fear is expressed the situation of caring alone, maybe due to lack of experience. However, all express creation of child bonding afterwards

Innovative Fatherhood in Masculine Professions:

Spanish Rural Police Using a Leave Alone in Spain

Thanks for your attention!

Gerardo Meil (gerardo.meil@uam.es)*

Pedro Romero-Balsas (pedro.romero@uam.es)*

Jesús Rogero-García (jesus.rogero@uam.es)*

*Autonomous University of Madrid



UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA
DE MADRID