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Anticipating and Practicing Fatherhood in Spain

M. José González, Irene Lapuerta, Teresa Martín-García, Marta Seiz,

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CHAPTER 1

ANTICIPATING AND PRACTICING FATHERHOOD IN SPAIN

M. José González, Irene Lapuerta,
Teresa Martín-García and Marta Seiz

ABSTRACT

Using data from a qualitative longitudinal sample of 31 non-traditional fathers-to-be interviewed in 2011 and then again in 2013, when the child was about 18 months old, we examine the relationship between prenatal anticipation and the development of 'positive paternal involvement' (i.e. an engaged, accessible and responsible type of fatherhood). We expect differences with regard to the antenatal development of a non-normative father identity to explain variations in subsequent paternal involvement. While there might be – and there often is – a discrepancy between fathers' prenatal intentions and actual practices after child-birth, anticipating concrete needs and actively foreseeing particular paid work adaptations favour the development of a positive paternal involvement. Our analysis reveals the importance of anticipation during pregnancy – that is, the development of an identity as a father and of explicit plans for employment adaptations – in facilitating men's greater implication in care. The empirical findings also show that non-traditional gender attitudes and favourable working conditions facilitate

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fathers' involvement, yet are not enough in themselves to guarantee the development of a positive type of fatherhood covering the three noted dimensions of care. Achieving the latter in Spain will likely require the encouragement of shared parenting responsibilities through normative changes in workplaces, the revision of parental leave policies and the integration of fathers-to-be in prenatal education classes. Our research contributes to shedding new light on the elements that favour a positive paternal involvement, which has the potential to enhance both children's well-being and gender equality.

Keywords: Fatherhood; parental involvement; prenatal intentions; gender attitudes; qualitative longitudinal analysis; Spain

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the construction of fatherhood among first-time Spanish fathers, and, more specifically, the role of prenatal anticipation as a mechanism that encourages the development of a 'positive paternal involvement' as originally conceptualized by Lamb, Pleck, Charnow, and Levine (1987). These authors theorize three main components of a positive fatherhood – engagement, accessibility and responsibility – that allow us to explore the ways in which Spanish men are transforming their identities and practices as fathers.¹ We want to understand whether the early development of a non-traditional father identity and the elaboration of realistic plans to adapt their working time to care needs – both basic ingredients of prenatal anticipation – are crucial for the adoption of post-birth fatherhood practices that cover the three noted dimensions. In addition, we pay attention to the role of the institutional context – especially in terms of working conditions – in facilitating or hindering the development of positive fatherhood practices. Understanding what promotes the latter is particularly relevant because the empirical evidence has shown that this type of paternal involvement is beneficial for both gender equality and children's socio-emotional and cognitive abilities (Deutsch, Servis, & Payne, 2001; McMunn, Martin, Kelly, & Sacker, 2017; Pleck, 2010; Waldfogel, 2006).

Our study draws on a longitudinal qualitative analysis of 31 men who were interviewed – along with their partners – on two separate occasions: when they were expecting their first child in 2011 and when the child was approximately 18 months old in 2013. We selected these fathers from a broader sample of

men in dual-earner couples on account of their maintaining a non-traditional gender division of labour during pregnancy. We specifically expect them to be more prone to developing a ‘positive father involvement’ than men in more traditional couple configurations. In couples with a traditional gendered division of unpaid work, women tend to be the main carer provider, whereas the transition to the first child produces a ‘traditionalization’ effect even among couples with an egalitarian division of labour (Domínguez-Folgueras, 2015; Grunow, Schulz, & Blossfeld, 2012). It is therefore more appropriate to focus on non-traditional couples and analyse how they evolved over time. We are not interested in fathers who engage in childcare out of necessity, but in fathers who originally have all of the conditions to be fully involved but end up playing a secondary role. This study contributes to current literature by explaining the possibility of discrepancies between intentions and practices in caring among these non-traditional couples.

1. EARLIER RESEARCH AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Paternal involvement in childcare can be measured in multiple ways, depending on whether quantitative time-use surveys or qualitative data are used. The latter have also given rise to diverse and complex classifications of fathers’ engagement in care activities (see Habib, 2012; Hofferth, 2003). Among the most enduring ones to date is the approach that was developed by Lamb et al. (1987); see also Pleck (2010). These authors originally identified three components or dimensions of what has been labelled as ‘positive paternal involvement’: (i) *engagement*, which entails direct interaction with the child in the form of caregiving, play or leisure; (ii) *accessibility*, which entails time availability to be with the child and to respond to her or his needs and (iii) *responsibility*, which is defined as ensuring that the child is well taken care of and actively arranging for the necessary resources to do so (e.g. making medical appointments, determining when the child needs new clothes, arranging for non-parental care, etc.). This latter ability to take initiative and monitor what is needed has also been referred to as ‘process responsibility’ (Coltrane, 1996) or ‘parental consciousness’ (Walzer, 1996). It is particularly distinctive of non-traditional fatherhood, as fathers have proven to be generally less attentive than mothers to what needs to be done and more prone to waiting for instructions and explicit directions to perform certain tasks (Craig, 2006).

Interestingly, the recent literature has shown that men's and women's parental involvement not only differs in terms of total time investments and the dimensions of care in which they engage but also with regard to the mental and emotional processes that are experienced with respect to the anticipation of parenthood. In a qualitative study of childless young adult couples, Bass (2014) identified related gender gaps even within couples that hold egalitarian gender attitudes. Women proved to be more likely than men to consider parenthood when they were asked to describe their imagined work trajectories. Consequently, women were also more likely to express emotional stress in relation to balancing their career aspirations with the future parenthood. Crucially, the anticipation of work-family conflict came to affect their aspirations and career choices, which resulted in the relinquishment of certain occupational and professional opportunities. Men's ambitions and employment decisions, in contrast, were significantly less likely to be influenced by similar dilemmas. In summary, the gender differences that involve the anticipation of parenthood and its implications are one of the mechanisms that perpetuate post-birth inequalities in the gender division of labour.

Could it be possible that prenatal anticipation is a key for the development of a positive type of paternal involvement that covers the three dimensions noted above? This seems to be a particularly pertinent issue to explore in the case of Spanish fathers, as the earlier research on the determinants of their care involvement has been largely focussed on situational socioeconomic variables, such as both parents' employment dedication and educational level. It has been found that highly educated fathers in Spain and those with full-time employed female partners are most likely to adhere to 'new fatherhood' practices, engaging in the physical and routine care activities that are usually performed by women (Gracia, 2014). In recent years, some attention has been paid to the subjective processes that lead to the adoption of less traditional paternal models. Nevertheless, the focus has been on the weight of non-normative gender attitudes (Abril, Jurado-Guerrero, & Monferrer, 2015), without enough attention to the specific mechanisms through which such attitudes translate into innovative behaviours. Against this backdrop, it is of interest to examine whether the anticipation of fatherhood-related dilemmas and needs during pregnancy, which give rise to active preparation by fathers, encourage a greater and more comprehensive participation in care once the child is born. In fact, while it has already been acknowledged that paternal involvement may begin prenatally (Fenwick, Bayes, & Johansson, 2012; Marsiglio, 2003), the exact mechanisms through which this happens are not well understood (Cabrera, Fagan, & Farrie, 2008; Eastlick Kushner, Pitre, Williamson, & Breikreuz, 2014).

The qualitative evidence from the field of social psychology on early parenting experiences reveals that fathers who feel scant support and inclusion during pregnancy often lack confidence in their parenting abilities after child-birth (Kowlessar, Fox, & Wittkowski, 2015). The quantitative studies also find a positive association between fathers' prenatal involvement and later levels of care engagement (Cabrera et al., 2008, Cook, Jones, Dick, & Singh, 2005; Habib, 2012). Several explanatory factors have been proposed in this respect. It has been suggested that performing tasks in preparation for the baby and directly experiencing the unborn child (e.g. during medical appointments or prenatal classes) helps men to develop a relationship with the child (Cabrera et al., 2008). Some authors have found that fathers' prenatal expectations with regard to both their instrumental and affective involvement with the child predict post-birth engagement (Cook et al., 2005; Machin, 2015). Others have referred to pregnancy as a time for acquiring a father identity and making decisions about employment and personal behaviour (Cabrera et al., 2008; Roy, 2005). These two latter aspects, which are closely intertwined, might crucially explain differences in paternal involvement across men after transition to parenthood.

According to identity theory, individuals internalize identities that consist of sets of meanings, roles and expectations (e.g. provider, caregiver, etc.) that go together with particular statuses (e.g. being a father). Individual behaviour would, in turn, seek to validate the internalized identities through social interactions (for reviews of this theory, see Cabrera et al., 2008; Henley & Pasley, 2005). Since individuals will simultaneously have different statuses and associated identities, the concept of centrality – which reflects the hierarchical importance that is conferred by an individual to a given identity compared to others (Henley & Pasley, 2005; Rane & McBride, 2000; Stryker & Serpe, 1994)² – is a key in this theoretical framework. A central identity will be associated with a greater motivation to enact the roles that are connected with it. In the same line, other authors have underscored the importance of commitment to the identity, which translates into decisions to adopt the behaviours and make investments that are associated with it (Fox & Bruce, 2001).

Given the above, we expect that men who have internalized a non-traditional identity as fathers, demonstrate commitment to the latter and for whom it becomes central, should be more prone to prenatally *anticipate* the changes and adaptations that are needed to care for the child. This anticipation could express itself as active pre-birth behaviours and preparations, which are oriented towards facilitating the enactment of the roles that are associated with the father's identity and its combination with other statuses such as that of a worker. In summary, we expect that differences with regard

to the antenatal development of a non-normative paternal identity and the resulting anticipated behavioural adaptation to the needs of the child might explain why some men subsequently show greater paternal involvement than others. More specifically, we would expect them to develop a non-traditional, positive type of fatherhood that not only encompasses the engagement and accessibility dimensions but also that of responsibility. While there might be – and there often is – a discrepancy between a father’s prenatal intentions and actual practices after delivery (González & Jurado-Guerrero, 2015; Grunow & Evertsson, 2016; Höfner, Schadler, & Richter, 2011), we believe that anticipating concrete needs and actively foreseeing particular adaptations (e.g. in the workplace) may crucially favour the development of an engaged, accessible and also responsible type of fatherhood. Indeed, it has been noted that differences in the subjective centrality that the nurturing role acquires for fathers might explain divergences with regard to actual involvement (Rane & McBride, 2000). Prenatal anticipation and the ensuing active adaptations may be one of the mechanisms through which this happens. Gender values and the institutional context may be other relevant factors to add into the equation.

2. THE SPANISH CONTEXT

The Spanish institutional context has long been characterized by a lack of policies that offer support for families with children (Naldini & Jurado-Guerrero, 2013; Saraceno & Keck, 2011). However, over the past two decades, the expansion of dual-earner couples has continued (González & Jurado-Guerrero, 2015), gender egalitarian ideals have become widespread among younger Spanish cohorts (Castro-Martín & Seiz, 2014), and reconciliation and gender equality issues have timidly emerged in the political discourse (Campillo, 2014). As a result, some related policy reforms have seen the light, particularly during the period from 1997 to 2010 (León, 2016; León & Pavolini, 2014). This is also the case for an increased length of paternity leave, which was extended from the scant initial two days to two weeks in 2007 and four weeks (optional and paid at 100% of salary) in 2017. Nevertheless, in spite of the minor progress that has been made, most of the work-family reconciliation policies are still viewed as measures that are addressed to mothers rather than to fathers, which supports and legitimizes an unequal division of paid and unpaid work (Domínguez, Gonzalez & Lapuerta, 2018). Furthermore, there is a lack of studies, scientific debate and public reflection on the role of infancy experts and work organizations in Spain (see Chapter 5 on Spain).

Leave entitlements to take care of children are good examples of these gender asymmetries. Only a small proportion of men use these rights beyond the statutory weeks that are reserved for them through paternity leave, although they are entitled to four additional types of leave. First, fathers can use up to 10 transferable weeks from the 16 weeks of maternity leave.³ As in the case of paternity leave, maternity leave guarantees full wage replacement, return to the same position and uninterrupted contributions to the social security system. Second, fathers can resort to an unpaid parental leave of a maximum duration of three years that provides special labour protection and the legal guarantee of the job position for a year. Third, they also have a statutory right to reduce their working hours, until the child turns 12 years old, with the consequent salary reduction. Finally, they are entitled to a breastfeeding leave that consists of one hour break per day until the child is nine months old, or the equivalent accumulated time in days. This latter leave in fact extends the time-off work between two and three weeks for the parent – the father or the mother – who decides to use it.

In 2011, the year of the first interview, 1.8% of the fathers took advantage of the transferable weeks of maternity leave (Escobedo & Meil, 2012), and less than 1% used parental leave or reduced their working hours during the period from 2009 to 2011, compared to 10% and 20% of mothers, respectively (Lapuerta, 2012). The general pattern at that moment was that mothers usually accumulated holidays, maternity and breastfeeding leaves to stay with the new born for approximately five to six months, while fathers usually added paternity leave to holidays and spent approximately one month with the child (Abril et al., 2015). Accordingly, Spanish society is more used to seeing women rather than men as those who take longer leave periods or reduce their working time after childbirth. This reinforces the social and normative processes that naturalize the role of mothers as the main caregivers, and this affirms the secondary role of fathers.

In addition, the labour market conditions in Spain hardly support work-family balance and the co-responsibility of men in the care of children. Nearly half of employed parents have split shifts with long breaks for lunch in the middle of the day, and only 15% of them report having control over their work schedules (Gracia & Kalmijn, 2015). These facts, combined with a strong culture of presentism, extend the working hours of many parents, particularly fathers, until late in the evening. The prevalence of certain stereotypes in the workplace, such as the male employee who is perpetually available without outside priorities or responsibilities, also discourage men from making employment-related adjustments – many fear that they would be penalized or even dismissed if they were to do so (Escot, Fernández-Cornejo,

Lafuente, & Poza, 2012). Consequently, neither the institutional context nor the labour market culture facilitates fathers' involvement in childcare in Spain (see Chapter 5 of this volume for a closer look).

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The study is based on the Spanish data from the transPARENT⁴ project. For this project, we were interested in interviewing couples who were expecting their first child, thus contact was made through childbirth preparation classes at public and private health centres, as well as through sessions on epidural anaesthesia in public hospitals. To a lesser extent, we also recruited couples through personal contacts to attract underrepresented groups at both ends of the social structure (low and high income).

The study was longitudinal in design and consisted of two waves of interviews. The first was held at the time of pregnancy (2011) and the second when the child had reached the age of approximately 18 months (2013). In the first and second wave, the interviews had an approximate duration of two hours and were conducted by the same researchers who were involved in the project. Most of the interviews were performed at the couples' home at times that suited them, usually after work or on public holidays. The design and number of interviews generated a substantial amount of information (transcripts), which was coded using the collaborative features of Atlas.ti software, once the correct implementation of the codes by members of the research team had been ensured. The interviews were conducted following a semi-structured outline by thematic areas.

The sample consists of 31 dual-earner couples that showed non-traditional practices with regard to the division of housework in the first wave. We expect that most fathers-to-be in this type of partnerships will also resemble women in childcare practices in spite of the major tendency towards traditionalization in gender roles that has taken place with the arrival of the first child (Domínguez-Folgueras, 2015; Grunow et al., 2012). We considered that a couple had pre-birth non-traditional practices when the woman did not perform more than 60% of the housework and the man did not perform less than 40%. Tasks that were performed by an external person who provided services were not taken into account. The calculation was based on a self-statement that was made by the partners in the joint interview (they agreed on the proportion of domestic work that was performed by each individual on a typical day) and on the subsequent checking of the reliability of that percentage by the researchers. To this end, the actual practices that were undertaken were

analysed in individual interviews, particularly those sections in which the respondents were asked to provide a description of a typical day.

To examine the relationship between prenatal anticipation and the development of 'positive father involvement', in the first wave of interviews that were conducted when women were on average in their 33rd week of pregnancy among nascent fathers, the respondents were asked about their ideals, expectations and plans about childcare. They were also encouraged to express what it meant for them to be a good father in terms of commitment to childcare, how they prepared for fatherhood and how they would like their partner's commitment to be. The interviews covered breastfeeding plans and the couple's plans for allocating care (changing nappies, bathing the baby, etc.); their plans for combining employment and caregiving; the use of maternity and paternity leaves; the ability of the parents to take leave, reduce their working hours or telework; and their willingness to resort to a nursery, external carers or relatives.

In the second wave of interviews (conducted approximately 18 months after the baby's birth), the fathers were asked if they had realized their expected plans for childcare: which childcare tasks they performed on a daily basis, who cared for the baby when she or he was sick and the initiatives that were provided by their employers to ease the reconciliation of work and care. The respondents were also asked if they would change anything about their jobs to care for the child; if they were satisfied with how caring for the baby was organized between the couple; if they would like to change any related aspects; and how they perceived their role as fathers.

The sample of couples with non-traditional practices that was analysed in this study represents a fairly wide range of economic levels and relative resources: 9 men lived in couples whose monthly income level was under €2,500, 14 couples earned between €2,500 and €3,999 and 8 couples earned €4,000 or above. In terms of relative income, 5 couples were homogamous (having the same income level), 14 were hypogamous (the female partner earned more than the male partner) and 12 were hypergamous (the male partner earned more than the female partner) (see Appendix A for further sample details).

4. RESULTS

In this section, we examine whether paternal anticipation during pregnancy plays a role for later parental positive involvement. In particular, we try to ascertain the extent to which post-birth fatherhood behaviour and practices are related to two dimensions of prenatal anticipation: (a) the integration of

care in prospective fathers' masculine identity or the so-called 'adaptation of the self' (Habib, 2012); and (b) men's pre-birth plans to adapt their working time to the needs of the child. Paying attention to the institutional context – alone and in interplay with the previous dimensions – is also important. Accordingly, we simultaneously examine the degree to which the emotional and practical adaptations that are made by fathers-to-be already during pregnancy, as well as their subsequent behaviours, are affected by external circumstances and interact with them.

The analysis of 31 men who demonstrate a non-traditional division of unpaid work in the first (prenatal) wave of interviews allows us to distinguish three groups of fathers who are characterized by different levels of anticipation in the two noted dimensions.

Improvising Fatherhood

First of all, we find a group comprising four men who hardly anticipate and do not embrace a positive parenthood ideal at all. The result is an ensuing experience of fatherhood that is expressed in terms of engagement, which merely entails some time availability to care for and play with the child. We observe a correspondence between the lack of anticipation and adaptation on the part of these men during pregnancy and their post-birth traditional practices that have implications in care. By the first wave of interviews, these men share similar working conditions; they all have high occupational status and income, a permanent job contract and high skilled jobs that often entail long working hours (see Appendix A). In spite of their non-traditional gender division of labour, these men exhibited a strong professional orientation and plans of spontaneous adaptation to future changes. Almost none of them had prepared for the arrival of the baby, nor had they anticipated the need for any adjustments. This is, for example, the case of Txomin, who had not even attended the childbirth course and had completely delegated all of the baby-related logistics to his partner and his mother-in-law:

No, it's just that, um, I do not, I have not organized much, well, when I am a father, we'll see (laughs); some things have already been arranged, everything is being organized, but well, we'll see when the baby comes, I do not know now, right? (Txomin, 44 years old, manager building enterprise, individual interview, wave 1)

The fathers in this group explicitly declared that they did not want to become involved in childcare on an everyday basis, but rather planned to delegate care as much as possible either to their partners or external services.

In spite of the fact that all of them had jobs with a high degree of flexibility, they did not foresee any sort of change or adaptation at work beyond attempting to arrive home on time or to reduce the social activities that were related to their jobs – they shared the perception of being absolutely irreplaceable in their workplace. With regard to gender values, it is interesting to note that the men in this group generally showed non-traditional attitudes in terms of gender or towards work and family during pregnancy. However, by the time of the second interview, all of them believed that women were more naturally connected to the needs of the child; the men also embraced an identity as the primary breadwinners for the family. The majority of these men did not even make use of the whole paid paternity leave to which they were entitled nor would any of them restrict their demanding work routines, assuming that the mother would be more dedicated to the baby.

Samuel is an illustrative example of these men for whom pregnancy did not give rise to active paternal preparation and adaptation. He did not perceive childcare to be his direct responsibility and felt that it could be completely delegated to others. He knew that most days he would arrive home from work with just enough time to see his baby for dinner or at bedtime; however, he was fine with that. He claimed that reducing his working hours would not be compatible with his job responsibilities and his role of main earner. Moreover, he thought that such an adaptation would not be necessary because they had hired a nanny to look after the baby. In his view, the unequal distribution of care within their household had taken place naturally and was in line with his and his partner's preferences. Furthermore, his identity and priorities did not change with the arrival of the baby. Neither was he willing to sacrifice his individual leisure time to compensate for his absence in care, claiming that his hobbies were 'a valve of escape from work, from everyday routines, even from the baby (...)' and that they allowed him to feel better with himself and enjoy his family more. At the second interview, when asked whether the (unplanned) reduction of his partner's working time could have been avoided with greater time availability on his part, he answered:

No, no, no, in fact, it was not necessary for [name of his partner] to reduce her working hours because we have a person here who was hired precisely so that we would not to have any problem of that type, you know? That is, not at all, it was a particular decision of [name of is partner] to be able to enjoy being with the baby more (...) it is a personal preference, right? It was rather 'I prefer to have a lower salary, but to be able to get home every day at five in the afternoon and to play and to enjoy being with my daughter the rest of the afternoon', I think this is great, I support her. (Samuel, 37 years old, entrepreneur, individual interview, wave 2)

Poorly Planned Fatherhood

We find the second group comprising seven individuals who did not carry out complete anticipation in all of the dimensions, and envisaged, at best, an engaged and partially accessible but not responsible parenting model. The working conditions of this group are similar to the previous one; they are all self-employed or hold permanent contracts with extended working hours, although their level of responsibility at work and mean income is relatively lower. Interestingly, by the time of the first interview, all of these fathers-to-be were very excited about having a baby and exhibited at least a process of emotional adaptation during pregnancy. Most of the men mentioned the need to spend ‘quality time’ with their children, although few defined what ‘quality’ meant. Nevertheless, these men showed some commonalities with the previously mentioned group, although such features were less marked in the category of the men depicted here. Their discourse was also characterized by poor planning and spontaneous adaptations to post-birth work-family balance needs. Moreover, these fathers did not anticipate work-related adjustments because paid employment largely retained its centrality for them. Although they acknowledged that ‘in case of need, the child would go first’, their discourse conveyed ambivalences with regard to their own identity as parents. On one hand, they expressed that they wanted to become involved fathers. However, on the other hand, they had scarcely imagined all of the attention that was required by the baby, and they did not lower their job expectations in a realistic way.

This is, for example, the case of Carles. In the first interview, he expressed deep emotions about the birth of the baby and his desire to become involved in care: ‘I want to be with her, I want to be an active part, that is, I do not want my work to steal time from my girl’ (Carles, individual interview, wave 1). However, Carles did not formulate any realistic care plans. He assumed that he would easily combine looking after the baby with his job as self-employed:

I am lucky to have a flexible job, so if one day I have to take time from it, probably, depending on how things are going at the car repair shop, I will have to add that time later or maybe, maybe I can go and pick up the kid, come home, finish writing four emails, finish closing a budget, call two or three people to see how it is going with the two or three pieces that I may need later... So there is a lot of work that I can do from home. (Carles, 38 years old, industrial designer, individual interview, wave 1)

In general, the prospective fathers in this group imagined that they would dedicate time to their child when they got home from work. Thus, in spite of their having integrated care in their personality, they did not anticipate any

work changes that would allow them to devote greater time to care. These men's incomplete anticipation of fatherhood-related dilemmas and needs during pregnancy led to a comparatively reduced childcare involvement after childbirth. In fact, the fathers in this category in post-birth interviews expressed deep feelings of love for their children, while conveying a generally gratifying experience of fatherhood. However, their involvement was circumscribed to the moments when they were present, and they always showed less time availability than their partners. Most of them did not make any work-related adjustments beyond trying to leave their job at the stipulated time. As with the group of fathers described above, these men rarely took care of their children alone. Work-family balance within their households was based on the mothers' greater involvement as primary caregivers, while the men played the role of secondary caregivers and 'supporters' (Abril et al., 2015). Put differently, work-family reconciliation arrangements were based on women's use of extensive parental leaves – leaves of absence for childcare or reduced working hours – or on their better job conditions, for example, uninterrupted work days, which in turn reinforced the unbalanced distribution of paid work and care.

Embracing an Involved Fatherhood

In addition to above, we find the third group comprising twenty men, who are characterized by scoring high on anticipation in the two dimensions that are noted above. These fathers went through emotional and practical processes regarding the anticipation of parenthood, and they also became very involved in caregiving after the child was born. The working conditions of these fathers were more heterogeneous than in the previous groups in terms of occupations and educational levels. Half of them hold a university degree; however, they are more precarious (six were unemployed, and four had fixed-term contracts in the first wave) and have more unskilled jobs. This group is also diverse in terms of its parental involvement. Only twelve fathers embrace a 'positive paternal involvement' that covers the three dimensions as conceptualized by Lamb et al. (1987), while the remaining eight fail to engage in the accessibility (two individuals) or responsibility dimensions (six individuals).

For all these 20 men, pregnancy was a time for acquiring an identity of father that gave centrality to care, as well as anticipating fatherhood-related dilemmas and needs. By the time of the first interview, they all wanted to become involved fathers and expressed their desire to share care equally with

their partners. They were aware of the need to dedicate time to children, and many conveyed a will to oppose the ‘absent father’ model that they had experienced during their own childhood. This was the case of Odón, who declared that his ideal of egalitarian care was more in line with a newer, more modern form of fatherhood:

I am not saying that my father was always absent, but you know, sometimes I just saw my father when he came back from work at 22.30 at night or only when he did not work nights, so I would like, yes, I would like everything to be more balanced, right? (...) I also believe that I am much more comfortable in a situation in which both uh, contribute with our work and both contribute with our care (...) of course, I cannot do things that she is going to do but, but in principle I wish it was as balanced as possible, up to as much as possible, and then it will depend on our work, that is, in the end, if she is working and she finishes at six in the evening and I am done at three, I will obviously have to take on more work (...) the idea is to share it in the most balanced possible way (...) and to participate the two of us, right? (Odón, 44 years old, technician, individual interview, wave 1)

These fathers-to-be also planned to dedicate as much time as possible to their children, especially in the afternoons and, in a few cases, in the mornings when this latter option allowed them to alternate in care with their partners and delay the entry of the baby into day care. In the first interview, some even visualized themselves performing specific tasks, especially those of a more playful nature – such as bathing the baby or talking the child for a walk – but also routine activities such as changing diapers, going to the paediatrician or participating in the child’s meals. This is, for example, the case of Federico, who stated:

For me to feel fulfilled as a father I would like to participate in all the care she needs, that is, in anything from changing diapers to bathing her, going to the park with her, going to the doctor with her, that is, I would like to get involved, I would like to be able to get involved in everything, in everything she needs. (Federico, 29 years old, nursing professional, individual interview, wave 1)

Pregnancy is depicted as a time of identity investments (Henley & Pasley, 2005) regarding personal behaviour and employment. Most of these men were actively involved in the pre-birth preparation tasks. For instance, they had read about fatherhood, attended childbirth courses and accompanied their partners to medical visits and controls. Only a few faced their future fatherhood more spontaneously. At any rate, they all underscored the emotional dimension of becoming fathers, expressing expectations of affective involvement and a desire to establish a close paternal bond with their children (cf. Cook et al., 2005). It follows, accordingly, that they valued childcare

positively and showed willingness to actively participate in the upbringing of their children.

The adaptation of the self is also perceived in the pre-birth reorientation of these fathers' priorities. They gave precedence to the role of caregiver over the more traditional role of main provider. The case of Luis illustrates this reorganization of life priorities. Shortly before the birth of his baby, he had moved to another department within the company for which he worked, arguing that he had had enough of working overtime at the previous one. By the time of the second interview, he explained that he felt more comfortable in a family-friendly environment where many co-workers – including his boss – had children. In the first interview, he already emphasized the need to establish priorities and the fact that his child and his partner came first. In the second interview, he ratified the importance of his job in instrumental terms, but he also put his daughter's care needs ahead of it:

Work is important, let's see, if you have to choose between work and the girl, of course, the girl comes first, but work is important to be able to live, pay the mortgage and have the means to raise her. But she comes first, yes. (Luis, 43, computer technician, individual interview, wave 2)

The adjustment of the working day to family needs and the markedly instrumental view of paid employment are two crucial features that are shared by most of the fathers. They prioritized time with their children higher than paid employment. This prioritization led them to take a very active role in care, which they found to be both natural and rewarding. Nevertheless, even some of the fathers who described their jobs as being very vocational, involving working for long hours, envisaged maintaining a balance between work and family. After becoming parents, work continued to be very rewarding for them; however, they expressed that they wanted to balance parenthood with their careers, and they made it clear that the priority was the child's well-being. Baltasar, a father who exhibited a strong orientation towards employment in the first interview, exemplifies this evolution after childbirth. His identity and priorities did suffer a transformation with the arrival of the baby, as he already anticipated during pregnancy:

In general, I tend to be quite responsible because I have ups and downs at work, but there was a change of priorities, that is, I realized that work itself was not as important as it could seem, but because there is something now that is really important, so that's what has changed, I'm still responsible because I like to do things well and because I like to comply with my responsibilities, but I do not give as much importance to it [work] as before because now the important thing is something else, that's what has changed. (Baltasar, 37 years old, accounting professional, individual interview, wave 2)

In addition to this subjective dimension of self-adaptation, the fathers in this group are also characterized by their having made explicit pre-birth plans with regard to their jobs. In fact, some of them planned, by the time of the first interview, to use part of maternity leave – of which a maximum of 10 weeks that can be transferred to the father-, to change shifts, or to reduce or adapt their working hours. However, it is important to highlight that some had such advantageous employment conditions that they did not have to make any working time reductions or adjustments to facilitate their implication in care after childbirth. For instance, some of these men had a continuous working shift, which allowed them to have the afternoon free for caring for the baby. Others worked in the afternoons so that they could alternate in work and care with their partners. A considerable degree of flexibility at work also allowed many of them to distribute paid employment and care on an equal basis with the mothers.

Among the above-noted twenty men who embrace an involved fatherhood, we find the first group of fathers (two individuals, named Óscar and César) who failed to fully accomplish a positive fatherhood due to institutional constraints. Their labour market circumstances are key for understanding why these men, who had integrated care in their identity and envisaged work adaptations in wave 1, were unable to materialize their ideals in wave 2. In both cases, an adverse work context hindered the adoption of post-birth positive fatherhood practices by making it impossible to adapt working hours to care needs. The result was an engaged and fully responsible but hardly accessible paternity model. In the second interview, the two men were upset at their external conditioning factors and employment terms, which obliged them to give up their idea of equal care. However, in spite of their lack of accessibility due to their unfavourable institutional and work context, these two men maintained their planned responsible involvement in childcare.

The attainment of an engaged and responsible paternal involvement in this case is explained by some crucial features that are shared by Óscar and César – in particular, an instrumentalist view of paid employment and egalitarian gender values. César worked as a clerk in a private company with a split shift. In wave 1, he anticipated that he would take part of maternity leave and reduce his working hours. However, he was not able to obtain the job flexibility that he desired and was in fact improperly dismissed as a result of his flexibility request. By the time of the second interview, he had had to renounce his ideal of egalitarian and accessible care due to the extremely precarious employment situation of both parents. In turn, Óscar – a public sector employee who works in shifts that include nights and weekends – was trying to change to a morning shift by the time of the first interview. His ideal

of a 'good father' entailed adapting his working day to the child's school day to be able to spend the rest of the afternoon and the weekends with his child. However, his work centre's refusal to grant him a shift change prevented him from fulfilling his wishes. Óscar described his discomfort in the second interview:

[Being a father] I like it, it is touching, it is nice but I do not know, it is also a great responsibility, there are times when I feel scared, but hey, the truth is that I like it although it is true that there are times when, well, I feel overwhelmed, it gives me anxiety, there are many things that do not let you be the sort of father you really want to be. The work environment (...), the schedule, working on weekends, nights. (Óscar, 34 years old, nursing assistant, individual interview, wave 2)

As far as employment conditions are concerned, it should be noted that not all fathers who achieved a positive type of paternal involvement had favourable situations in the labour market. We find that post-birth practices that entail a higher level of involvement sometimes also emerge against the backdrop of poor work-related conditions such as unemployment. That is to say, we observe fathers for whom anticipation appears to encourage positive fatherhood behaviours regardless of their employment situation. In fact, most of the unemployed fathers-to-be in our sample (four of the six unemployed men) imagined themselves to be the main caregivers to the baby in the first wave of interviews, and they even conditioned their job search to having time to provide care. As to the other men within this group, they are characterized by a profound identity and priority change and post-birth identification with gender egalitarian roles. This is, for example, the case of Carlos and Karlos, both of whom were unemployed in wave 1 but were in paid employment in wave 2. Carlos found a part-time job, while Karlos imposed as a precondition in the job interview to have flexibility to care for his child. Another father, Ángel, who was unemployed in both waves, similarly expressed his preference for part-time work because of his desire to be a present father in spite of adverse economic circumstances:

Yes, yes, in fact, you see, we are considering, (...) you are going to spend five hundred [Euros] in a nursery, to have a salary that more or less compensates this you will have to work many more hours, so personally I would rather have a part-time job and enjoy being with my son; it is not only that, it is a matter of time, of being able to be with him. At least the first two years because placing him with only four or six months in day care the standard number of hours, I mean, most people go to work at eight and leave at five, and in my case it was from eight to seven, so what does it mean? It means that I would arrive at eight, kiss him goodnight and that's it, I have seen this happening for many people and as far as I can I want to try to avoid it, at least the first two years. (Ángel, 38 years old, intermediate officer, individual interview, wave 1)

These unemployed men were already aware in the first interview of the profound changes that paternity would bring to their personal and professional lives, and they were willing to adapt to the circumstances at all times, giving priority to their children's well-being. Accordingly, this anticipation, self-adjustment and job change planning seem to have been key for their development of a positive fatherhood after birth. An important factor in the process may have been the disenchantment with the labour market that they expressed. All of them had had work trajectories that included periods of unemployment, and they did not link their personal identity to their jobs to the same extent as other men. The relatively lower subjective salience of employment for these men is likely to have facilitated their actively seeking labour market conditions that allowed them to engage in egalitarian care and the three dimensions of positive fatherhood.

Interestingly, however, we observe that not even the combination of favourable labour market circumstances and high paternal anticipation during pregnancy are always sufficient to guarantee the fulfilment of positive paternal involvement. Among the twenty men who embraced an involved fatherhood, we also find the second group of fathers comprising six individuals who did not develop a positive fatherhood, although they had a priori propitious conditions for becoming engaged, accessible and responsible fathers. Four of them became significantly less involved than their partners in the dimension of responsibility, and two let the latter rest exclusively on the mother. All these men spent a great deal of time with their children and/or developed strong emotional connections with them. Nevertheless, they adopted an 'executive' profile in their careers, while their female partners were the ones who took initiative, planning arrangements and supervising tasks. The reasons for these fathers' post-birth evolution and lack of participation in the responsibility realm are likely to lie in couple dynamics. Aspects such as the possibility of maternal gatekeeping or differences in standards between the partners may, for example, be at play. Thus, while pinpointing the exact mechanisms that lead to the mentioned distribution of care dimensions deserves further research, here we only address the subjective and objective processes of anticipation that are undergone by fathers.

The above having been said, although paternal anticipation during pregnancy does not automatically ensure the full achievement of a positive fatherhood, our analysis reveals that it does favour it by facilitating men's childcare involvement. The development of a father identity and the planning of employment adaptations – which appear to be closely related – along with an instrumental view of paid work and/or labour

market conditions that provide time availability, crucially explain the gap between very involved fathers and those who show more limited participation in care.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The goal of this chapter was to examine under which circumstances prenatal anticipation among Spanish first-time fathers developed into a positive paternal involvement. This is a critical question because contemporary fathers are still far from approaching the overall time that mothers spend in childcare in western societies (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010; Craig, 2006; Miller & Nash, 2017), and Spain is no exception (González & Jurado-Guerrero, 2015). We selected a sample of prospective fathers with a pre-birth non-traditional gender division of housework, presuming that they would resemble women in childcare practices. Our expectation was that those men who developed a non-traditional father identity during pregnancy and made explicit prenatal plans for accommodating childcare and paid work requirements would be more prone to developing a positive paternal involvement. This type of fatherhood entails not only spending time with the children on a regular basis but also displaying availability with a pro-active attitude and taking responsibility for monitoring what is needed for the child.

As noted, three main groups of fathers-to-be emerged in our sample according to their anticipation process during pregnancy. First, some individuals in particular did not demonstrate any emotional or practical changes. They were simply *improvising fatherhood* as if it was something that could be easily accommodated in their future working life. All of them were ready to outsource childcare if necessary, felt irreplaceable in their jobs, viewed women as being more naturally connected to caring, and did not plan to use full paternity leave or make substantial changes to their work routines. Furthermore, they did not regard childcare as their main direct responsibility, and they were not willing to sacrifice their leisure time. They ended up becoming engaged fathers, but they were neither accessible nor responsible. Second, we distinguished a group of men who were characterized by a *poorly planned fatherhood*. Although these fathers experienced a process of emotional adaptation during pregnancy, they were in favour of spontaneous adaptations to their children's needs, did not anticipate any major changes at work, rarely imagined all of the attention that was required by the newborn child, and did not lower their job expectations in a realistic way. The result is an engaged and

partially accessible fatherhood but one that is not responsible. They could afford a relaxed approach to childcare because they relied on the mothers, as if childcare was something optional for men, but not for women (Miller, 2011). Finally, we found a group of fathers who *embraced an involved fatherhood*. Most of them anticipated routine care tasks, were actively involved in pre-birth preparations, anticipated the child's needs, viewed their paid job as being instrumental, depicted childcare as a rewarding task, and made explicit related plans.

Our analysis makes it possible to draw two main conclusions. First, a non-traditional gender division of labour is not directly related to egalitarian parenting. All of the fathers-to-be in our sample reported a high degree of involvement in housework by the time of the first interview (none of them did less than 40% of the daily chores); however, not all of them embraced an involved fatherhood after the birth of the child. Second, in accordance with identity theory and evidence from other contexts, the antenatal development of a non-normative paternal identity and the resulting anticipated behavioural adaptation to the needs of the child appear to be a major mechanism that leads to a higher degree of paternal involvement in Spain. Nevertheless, contrary to our expectations, these processes do not necessarily translate into post-birth practices that cover the three dimensions of positive parental involvement (engagement, accessibility and responsibility).

In our study, twenty of the thirty-one fathers who constituted our sample fulfilled the preconditions of integrating childcare into their masculine identity and making pre-birth plans to adapt their working time to the needs of the child. Based on their behaviour after childbirth, all of them can be regarded as men who *embraced an involved fatherhood*. However, only twelve of these men (and less than half of the original sample of non-traditional fathers) eventually developed a *positive parental involvement* that fulfilled the criteria that was theorized by Lamb et al. (1987). The remaining eight men failed to develop this fatherhood model, as they were not accessible (two individuals), assumed a secondary role compared to the mothers' role regarding responsibility (four individuals), or let the latter dimension rest exclusively on their female partners (two individuals). Among these men, the lack of accessibility appears to be strongly conditioned by the particular features of the Spanish labour market, which often imposes strong requirements of presentism and long working days. The reasons for their reduced involvement in the responsibility dimension are less evident, and further research should be conducted to ascertain whether it is contingent on intra-couple dynamics or internal subjective processes that have not surfaced in our interviews. Still, it must be highlighted that all of these fathers spent much time with their children

and/or had a strong emotional connection with them. Differently put, prenatal anticipation may not immediately lead to positive fatherhood; however, it surely seems to be related with more intensive involvement in child rearing.

To gain a deeper understanding of why some men did not undergo prenatal anticipation processes and why some of those who did could not accomplish positive paternal involvement, it is useful to consider the Spanish institutional and normative context, which poorly supports egalitarian work-family balance. In particular, attention must be drawn towards the very limited scope of policies that encourage fathers' involvement in childcare – for instance, paternity leave is much shorter than maternity leave. Parental leave and other parenthood-related social policies are based on care being ascribed primarily to the mother, which reinforces and legitimizes an asymmetric division of care for the newborn. In addition, at the societal level, we find very high normative standards for women and very relaxed ones for men regarding what it means to be a 'good mother/father' and what it means to provide the best care for a child.

The mothers in our sample often acknowledged that they ended up becoming more involved in childcare due to their having more demanding standards than their male partners. However, it is not only differences in standards that underlie this behaviour but also gender normative attitudes and beliefs that women are more naturally connected to the needs of the child and therefore more responsible for child's well-being. Consequently, even within the group comprising the twenty involved fathers, gender asymmetries are still visible and attributable to the Spanish normative and institutional context, which still hinders the role of the men as carers on a totally equal basis with women. Furthermore, within the Spanish labour market culture, men exhibit much greater resistance to making employment-related adjustments. They often fear that they will be penalized if they deviate from the ideal stereotype of the perpetually available male employee, who is not expected to have any outside priorities or responsibilities.

Our findings have major policy implications. They confirm, in line with the previous research, that fatherhood does not start with the arrival of the child, but at the very first moment at which men mentally prepare for the future. Preparing for fatherhood entails attaching meanings, roles and expectations to the anticipated status as fathers, reorganizing one's priorities not least in the labour market, and adopting active pre-birth behaviours in accordance with the internalized paternal identity. Childbirth preparation classes at health centres and medical institutions in general could instigate a normative change towards shared parenting by integrating fathers-to-be in prenatal education classes and enhancing fathers' childcare competences. However, this

normative change can only take place if it is accompanied by a transformation at the workplace level, which is critical in the Spanish context. Social policies should be designed to challenge the patriarchal culture that still prevails in most working environments.

According to the literature, ‘positive paternal involvement’ has the potential to enhance both children’s well-being and gender equality (Deutsch et al., 2001). It has been shown that an active fatherhood has positive outcomes for children’s cognitive, social and emotional development. Close relationships between fathers and their children are considered to boost the latter’s self-esteem; while egalitarian parenting relieves working mothers from the burden of family responsibilities and supports a fair model of shared family work and equal occupational opportunities. Against this backdrop, our research makes a major contribution by shedding light on the mechanisms for the construction of positive parental involvement.

NOTES

1. By ‘positive fatherhood’, we refer throughout the chapter to this specific conceptualization of fatherhood that was originally theorized by Lamb et al. (1987) and comprises the three noted dimensions that we use to analyse paternal involvement. We do not deny that less involved fathers may have a positive relationship with their child(ren), but here positive fatherhood mainly refers to an engaged, accessible and responsible fathering practice.

2. This concept is proximate to that of ‘identity status prominence’, which is similarly subjective and elicits greater motivation to enact the roles that are associated with it; see Habib (2012).

3. Mothers in Spain are entitled to 16 weeks of maternity leave; six of them are compulsory for the mother after the childbirth, and the remaining 10 can be used before or after it, or transferred to the father if this option does not entail risk to the mother’s health.

4. <http://www.transparent-project.com/info.html>.

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APPENDIX A: SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

Name	Paternal Involvement (Dimensions)		Age	Educational Attainment	Employment Status at Wave 1	Employment Status at Wave 2	Occupation	Employment Conditions	Household Income (€)	Relative Income
	(1)	(2)								
improving fatherhood:										
Camilo	Partially	No	38	Tertiary programme	Employed	Employed	Publishing manager	Permanent, private sector	5,000–6,498	Hypergamous
Samuel	Partially	No	37	University degree	Employed	Employed	Entrepreneur	Self-employed	6,000–6,499	Hypergamous
Txomin	Partially	No	44	Upper secondary	Employed	Employed	Manager building enterprise	Permanent, private sector	5,000–6,498	Hypogamous
Benjamin	Partially	No	40	University degree	Employed	Employed	Artist	Self-employed	2,250–2,748	Hypogamous
Poorly planned fatherhood:										
Alberto	Yes	Partially	No	42	University degree	Employed	University teacher	Permanent, public sector	4,500–5,498	Hypergamous
Roger	Yes	Partially	No	37	Upper secondary	Employed	Industry services	Self-employed	3,000–3,998	Homogamous
Pepe	Yes	Partially	No	35	University degree	Employed	Manager	Permanent, private sector	3,750–4,498	Hypergamous
Carles	Yes	Partially	No	38	Vocational training	Employed	Industrial designer	Self-employed	2,750–3,498	Hypergamous
Israel	Yes	Partially	No	34	Vocational training	Employed	Applications programmer	Self-employed	2,750–3,498	Hypogamous
Bitor	Yes	Partially	No	32	Vocational training	Employed	Shop supervisor	Permanent, private sector	2,000–2,998	Hypergamous
Roberto	Yes	Partially	No	40	University degree	Employed	Commercial sales representative	Permanent, private sector	4,500–5,498	Hypergamous

Involved fatherhood:

(a) Positive paternal involvement

Fernando	Yes	Yes	Yes	39	Basic education	Employed	Employed	Hospital assistant	Permanent, public sector	2,500–3,248	Hypogamous
Abel	Yes	Yes	Yes	27	Basic education	Employed	Employed	Maintenance operator	Self-employed	1,500–2,248	Hypergamous
Luis	Yes	Yes	Yes	43	University degree	Employed	Employed	Computer technician	Permanent, private sector	4,000–4,998	Homogamous
Mauro	Yes	Yes	Yes	38	Upper secondary	Employed	Employed, with reduced working hours	Office clerk	Permanent, private sector	2,750–3,498	Hypogamous
Sergio	Yes	Yes	Yes	32	University degree	Employed	Employed	Technician	Permanent, private sector	2,850–3,498	Hypergamous
Fermin	Yes	Yes	Yes	35	Vocational training	Employed	Employed	Warehouse operator	Permanent, private sector	2,249–2,748	Homogamous
Mikel	Yes	Yes	Yes	31	Vocational training	Employed	Employed	Technician	Permanent, private sector	3,750–4,498	Hypogamous
Javier	Yes	Yes	Yes	44	PhD	Employed	Employed	Researcher	Fixed-term contract, public sector	3,500–4,498	Hypogamous
Angel	Yes	Yes	Yes	36	Vocational training	Unemployed	Unemployed	Electrician	n.a.	1,750–2,498	Hypogamous
Carlos	Yes	Yes	Yes	29	University degree	Unemployed	Employed, part-time	Plant operator	Fixed-term contract, private sector	1,500–1,999	Hypogamous
Ángel	Yes	Yes	Yes	38	University degree	Unemployed	Unemployed	Intermediate officer	Fixed-term contract, private sector	3,250–3,999	Hypogamous
Gabriel	Yes	Yes	Yes	38	Vocational training	Unemployed	Unemployed	Bricklayer	Fixed-term contract, private sector	2,000–2,499	Hypogamous

Name	Paternal Involvement (Dimensions)		Age	Educational Attainment	Employment Status at Wave 1	Employment Status at Wave 2	Occupation	Employment Conditions	Household Income (€)	Relative Income	
	(1)	(2)									(3)
<i>(b) Non-positive paternal involvement</i>											
Oscar	Yes	No	Yes	34	Vocational training	Employed	Employed	Nursing assistant	Permanent, public sector	2,500–3,250	Hypogamous
César	Yes	No	Yes	28	University degree	Employed	Unemployed	Administration assistant	Fixed-term contract, private sector	1,500–1,749	Hypergamous
Baltasar	Yes	Yes	No	37	University degree	Employed	Employed	Accounting professional	Permanent, private sector	2,250–2,750	Hypergamous
Federico	Yes	Yes	No	29	University degree	Employed	Employed	Nursing professional	Fixed-term contract, public sector	3,000–3,998	Homogamous
Eneko	Yes	Yes	No	36	Vocational training	Employed	Employed	Plant operator	Permanent, private sector	2,500–2,998	Homogamous
Odón	Yes	Yes	No	44	PhD	Employed	Employed	Technician	Fixed-term contract, public sector	3,500–4,498	Hypogamous
Karlos	Yes	Yes	No	42	FP superior	Unemployed	Employed	Technician	Permanent, private sector	2,000–2,499	Hypogamous
David	Yes	Yes	No	32	University degree	Unemployed	Unemployed	Bank manager	Permanent, private sector	2,500–3,499	Hypergamous

Notes: Paternal involvement dimensions refer to (1) engagement, (2) accessibility and (3) responsibility. Age refers to the fathers' age at childbirth. Information for occupation, employment conditions, household income and relative income refers to wave 1 (prenatal). In the case of fathers who were unemployed, the information refers to their last job. Tertiary programme corresponds to three-year undergraduate degree. Homogamous: having the same income level; hypogamous: the female partner earned more than the male partner; hypergamous: the male partner earned more than the female partner.