

**GENDER AND CARE IN MEDITERRANEAN SOCIETIES, TWO CASE STUDIES (ITALY,
SPAIN): ANALYSIS, DIAGNOSTIC, NEW PROPOSALS**

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Resumen

Empezando en los años 70 y siguiendo las huellas dejadas por los movimientos por los derechos de las mujeres, los varones comenzaron a cuestionarse y reflexionar sobre su experiencia sexual, y el significado de ser masculino, su manera de desconstrucción de muchos de los roles dominantes de virilidad, y en su lugar la construcción de una demanda por libertad y de una redefinición simbólica de masculinidad. En su redefinición simbólica encontramos el rol del hombre cariñoso, opuesto al estereotipo predominante que le limita como el sostén de la familia en exclusiva. En este papel analizamos, en diversos niveles interpretativos, la situación real de la práctica del cariño, especialmente qué entienden por ello las sociedades españolas e italianas, con la ayuda de dos estudios de caso. Nuestra propuesta está basada en el deseo de verificar en el campo el alcance en las sociedades estudiadas (que podría ser plenamente representativa de las sociedades mediterráneas en general) de la asunción o no de la aproximación feminista, al objeto de ofrecer una propuesta innovadora basada en evidencias teóricas y empíricas.

Palabras clave: Género, cariño, educación, niñez, feminismo, sociedades mediterráneas.

Abstract

Starting in the 1970's and following the footprint left by women's rights movements, men started questioning themselves and reflected upon their sexed experience, and the meaning of being masculine, this way deconstructing many of the dominant models of virility, and building in its place a demand for freedom and a symbolic redefinition of masculinity in this symbolic redefinition we find the role of a caring man, opposed to the predominant stereotype that limits him to society's exclusive breadwinner in this paper we analyze, in several interpretation levels, the real situation of the practice of caring, especially what Italian and Spanish societies understand it to be, with the help of two practical case studies. Our proposal is based on the wish to verify on the field, the extent to which the societies studied (that could be completely representative of Mediterranean societies in general) assume feminist approaches or not, in order to offer innovative proposal based on empirical and theoretical evidences.

Key-words: Gender, care, education, childhood, feminism, Mediterranean societies.

In the last forty years, the confluence of tests in social sciences coming from developmental psychology and sociology, neurobiology and evolutionary anthropology, have demonstrated that human beings are able, by nature, of empathy and cooperation, and that our capacity of mutual understanding was –and very well could be– key to our survival as specie (Carol Gilligan, 2011)

1. Preamble

Trapped between the expression of diversity and the promotion of self-empowerment, feminism contemplates the ambivalence of institutional policies that for a long time have conjugated the affirmation of equality between women and men with policies aimed at confirming their specificities. This delicate junction is strongly reflected in the theoretical positions – that of difference and equality – different feminist movements assume in respect of the term *care*.

The theories of sexual difference put in context the feminine particularity, holding the existence of an essence based on reproduction: the feminine body (Cuadrada, 2009a). For Irigaray (1975), having the ability of carrying the fetus shows the host faculty of women. Breastfeeding becomes an indicator of being capable of giving oneself to another. According to Gilligan (1982), the fact that women are mothers (Cuadrada, 2009b) and dedicate their lives to others is a sign of the innate assumption of women of an ethic of care; Gilligan insists that masculine reason does not focus towards the care of others, but that it is mathematical and instrumental, in contrast with the expressivity and empathy typical in women. On the other hand, in gender feminism there is no place for a moral judgment about nature or the culture, although it is mentioned that what appears to be natural is in truth a cultural construction. All characteristics associated with sex, like the supposed predisposition of women towards care and housework, are a social theme, historical and political, and, as such, subject to change (Del Prete A., Cuadrada C. 2013). From this change comes the feminist struggle, given the fact that if these differences were irreconcilable and ontological there would be no reason to defend the policies for the transformation of reality.

Women are the ones that do the housework, and are also in charge of providing care, not because they are predisposed to it because of their *feminine* capacities, but because it is convenient for the masculine gender. Men, delegating care and housework activities, have

more time to dedicate it to more *prestigious* tasks, either in the employment field – to cover management functions – as in the political sphere, to dedicate to it full time. These same feminine characteristics, exaggerated by the feminists of difference, are for gender feminists, the cause of women oppression.

Feminism of difference – in relation to care and the problem women have being the only ones assuming responsibility for it – limits itself to denounce that the State doesn't provide enough and sufficient adequate services to satisfy the various demands of motherhood; they don't call on the *man* to actively participate in care activities and to share responsibilities. On the contrary, gender feminists focus especially on family dynamics, indicated by all authors, from Okin (1989) to Delphy (1995), as the cause of the unachieved equality between men and women. Gender feminists support the end of feminine family subordination to achieve equality between men and women, be it in the private as in the public sphere. This ambivalence is also manifested in the social organization plan and through institutional policies that on the one hand promote the massive incorporation of women to public life, while on the other hand channel their participation to specific sectors of the educational system or the labor market.

Both tendencies (equality, difference) take different biases in Italy or in Spain in Italy, the Law for the equality of opportunities was approved after similar initiatives in other European countries, through three steps in the 1960's the Law recognized the principle of equality in the different areas of social life and work. Attention was mainly focused on the protection of maternity and ending discrimination at work. Since the end of the 1980's interventions had the objective of promoting participation in the labor market and the active participation in the decision-making processes; the criteria of *abstract* equality was gradually replaced by that of equality of opportunities. The same way as the philosophers of the University of Verona, and those of the Women's Library in Milan have strongly influenced Italian feminism, profoundly marked by the theory of sexual difference, the opposite has occurred in Spain, where its projection has not surpassed the university environment, and where feminism of equality has impregnated the programs of political parties, to the point of formulating specific laws for such end¹. We must also stress that in Spain the exaltation of maternity as a feminine essence clashes with a an historical heritage – the awards for birth, for example, of the Franco Spain – that women's movements have had too present, and that

¹ Organic law 3/2007 of March 22nd, for the effective equality of men and women (Spain).

therefore have outright rejected. Nonetheless, we believe that despite the evident differences between feminist movements, one can find, in both countries, notable similarities in their societies about what men and women think about care, and more specifically, about who, where and why, is to practice it.

Given that the economic prosperity depends on high work and birth rate indexes, governments have shown – in order to increase the incorporation of women to the work force – for some time now, a great interest in expanding educational and preschool services. More concretely, European governments have and are still creating² family and children's care policies in order to motivate couples into having children, and for parents to share work and family responsibilities³. These initiatives, apart from including the provision for education and care for young children, are also closely linked to work and the equality of opportunities for women (Del Prete A., Cuadrada C., 2013). We intend to analyze, at various levels of interpretation, the real state of the implementation of care, especially in terms of how the Italian and Spanish societies view it, studying two case studies in Spain we have considered primary schools in Tarragona, from a quantitative test point of view. To refine the statistics we have seen fit to carry out a qualitative fieldwork in Caserta through focus groups and interviews to key informants, using the feminist research-action-participation. Our proposal is based on the will to check in the field the extent to which the societies being studied (that could be completely representative of Mediterranean societies in general) assume or not feminist approaches, in order to offer innovative proposals from theoretical and empirical evidences.

2. Theoretical framework: the concept of care

Not much is discussed about the meaning and reasons why care and educational work are attributed and mainly carried out – in some cases exclusively – by women. This fact seems *natural* and obvious, but in reality it is a tenacious stereotype that has always accompanied

² See EUROPEAN COMMISSION Brussels, 05.06.2012 – COM (2012) 318 final / 2 Recommendation of the Council on the Italian National Reform Program of 2012: an opinion is expressed by the Council on the Stability Program 2012-2015.

³ STARTING STRONG II: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE 18 – ISBN 92-64-03545-1 – © OECD 2006.

men and women history, as well as the creation of *being* and the place feminine and masculine individuals occupy in the world (Benvenuti, 2012). The two issues are linked, and the educational value of care is not deepened since care is considered a feminine *natural* quality and since care is *naturally* feminine, it is devalued and not recognized as a social and cultural value (Cuadrada, 2013). Thus, educational work is devalued because women are a majority carrying it out. We still live in a society where the feminine is less important, insignificant in the hierarchical structures that govern our collective life, the ones that form opinions and create prejudices, through which human activities and the value of people and their jobs is evaluated and underestimated (Paolozzi, 2012).

Joan Tronto (1993, 2006; Fisher and Tronto, 1991) argues that if we think of care giving as something more than the work directed towards attending vulnerable human beings, it can be used as a base for rethinking the moral limits that, in the present, conserve inequalities of power and privileges, that *degrade* “the work of care in our society” (1993:101, see also Tronto, 2006). Tronto (1993) points out that the concept of *care* involves doing something about the worries and needs of others – and not necessarily, or uniquely, other humans – a base for action. Therefore, it is a concept that has political implications and offers a challenge to mainstream thinking, favoring the stop o individualism and the promoting the sensibility towards environmental protection (Mann, 2002). Care giving is fundamental to human life – all people want and need it during some part of their existence (Noddings, 2002:11). When we recognize that we are all beneficiaries of care giving, we can begin to understand our interdependency, rejecting any notion of *care* that only places it within the family or close relationships. On the contrary, care giving is a social responsibility and must be recognized as such. So care giving must not be just understood as a *disposition*, but also as a practice (Tronto, 2006; Lawson, 2007).

An approach – that of constructed care giving – forces us to think about the real necessities and study how these necessities must be satisfied in turn, Tronto (2006) highlights the political question about what/who is valued in society, and the way by which resources or services are distributed (see, for example, Staeheli and Brown 2003, Williams, 2001). For this purpose, the OECD (2006) says that apart from training deficiencies like how preschool personnel receive wages barely over the established minimum wage, widening the wage gap between them and teachers, as reflected in figures of various countries. This is why the constant changes of personnel in this sector are no surprise. Good intentions aside, the majority

of countries fail when hiring enough male employees or members of minority communities for educational services and preschool attention⁴. There are some excellent integration programs in some countries, but unfortunately they tend to become isolated, and are rarely applied to the whole system (Del Prete A.C., Cuadrada C. 2013).

Since care giving is a *natural* human necessity, Noddings affirms that there are no empirically proven differences between men and women in this point (care), but rather this difference is rooted in a *feminine conception* centered in the belief that women have a greater receptivity, and a greater ability to respond to needs (*op. cit.*). This is evidence of how the persistence of a feminization of the care and education sectors, especially during the first stages of schooling, is attributable to different resistances to change, more than to a natural predisposition of women. Benvenuti (2012) says that a resistance category –to changes in the work organization and care tasks– is made between the ones (mostly men) that don't actively practice care tasks in the sense that, even if there are children, or parents that require some attention, they try to delegate –completely (or almost) – these services, and therefore are only capable of imagining a remunerated and familiar work model based on a rigid and dichotomous division of roles: the male breadwinner and the female caregiver.

Tronto (2006) describes men as being characterized for their *privileged irresponsibility*, an irresponsibility that is both cause and effect of the marginalization of work tasks in order to excuse themselves from the omitted basic responsibilities of care the claim to have a *more serious* work to do. It could be that this form of privilege is not noticeable, nor discussed nor commented, just because it is assumed correct. This is clear in the traditional male *material provider* –the *breadwinner*– to whom, comments Tronto (2006:12) “their responsibilities towards attention were recognized for contributing with a paycheck, stopping there”. Similarly, those capable of paying others to carry out care tasks can imagine that their family responsibilities are met, and can dedicate their time to *more important things*.

The conceptual framework used agrees, in substance, with the theoretical positions of

⁴ It is not an issue that occurs only in the Mediterranean region in Great Britain, for example, one out of four primary schools does not have a single male teacher. See:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/mar/31/primary-school-teachers>

If male presence in primary schools is rare, even stranger is finding men in nursery schools. Given this unprecedented situation, when there are men working as nursery school teachers or as *nurses*, they are susceptible of appearing in specific television programs such as *Men in Early Years Education*, where they share their work experiences in a completely feminized environment:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/video/2009/mar/30/men-primary-school>

studies and research that define gender identity as a socially constructed phenomenon, permanently unfinished and subject to multiple and diverse influences that exert the different frameworks of action in which people interact in their daily lives (Connell, 1995, 1998; Davies, 1993, 1994, 1997; Davies & Banks, 1992; Golden, 1996; Hallden, 1997; Jones, 1996, 1997; Jordan, 1995; Nilan, 2000; Swain, 2000; Walkerdine, 1990). From this, and taking some of the ideas established by Connell (1995) as a conceptual reference, we think a hegemonic masculinity exists, as well as a hegemonic femininity. Our own position points to the need to consider that society applies pressure to children to assume them as their own. So that they may be contemplated, not only by others but by themselves, as acceptable and normal members inside the established limits set by their culture. We think it is imperative to end with the image of a fixed and immobile gender identity, in order that care giving may be a right and duty without sexual discrimination.

3. Contextualization and Analysis

3.1. Schools in Tarragona

With the theoretical parameters from which we base our input already established, we will continue presenting the results obtained in the two case studies in the first place, we will have to take into consideration an empirical study carried out in 2007 (Cuadrada, Pastor, 2009: 91-129), which has been used as a basis, revised and updated with current and existing data. This study has centered in the coeducation and the perceptions of teachers about the transmission of equality values en schools of Tarragona (South of Catalonia, Spain) ⁵. The structuring conditions of professional and family life –unequal conditions in their roots– of male and females teachers influences in their professional practice, as well as in the configuration of the school *ethos* to which men and women are linked professionally, but to which children and students are also linked. Therefore, school is not a place alien to inequality for gender reasons neither has it been alien to other inequalities further studied by social

⁵ Statistics, tables, graphs, and percentages are ignored in this article for reasons of space availability. They can be consulted in the study published by the Women's Institute (see reference in the bibliographic listing).

sciences, for example, social class, ethnicity or race. The heuristic renewal introduced particularly in social sciences, history and sociology in terms of *gender*, has opened new horizons in which approximations and perspectives have multiplied, confirming a plural vision of the *work* phenomenon, of the construction of work experience, and with it that of care giving in connection with the circumstances of individuals.

In this search we have tried to approach as faithfully as possible to the perception of female actors, to their meaning and importance, to the work they carry out, their pay, remuneration, and visibility as teachers, and that which is in its fundamentals, in the infrastructure of their support and social reproduction, as well as their own. We have tried to observe and know the discourses teachers make in relation to gender images, their stereotypes and professional practices in relation to the transmission of values, since we understand that in this transmission there are implicit conformant ideas about the concept of care giving. Research has studied the transmission of teachers' equality values in primary education, in relation to the conciliation of professional and family life, and therefore to the division of work, of all work – the one paid and the one of assistance and care –, that different individuals in every family carry out on a daily basis.

Beyond the mere description of the socio-occupational reality of teaching staff, the results of this search can help design what policies need to be implemented to fight discriminatory attitudes that perpetuate, consciously or not, the double workday carried out exclusively by the feminine collective. We understand that this double (and sometimes triple) workday is a consequence of the different implication of men and women in care giving activities, both in the domestic as in the school environment. If we focus on this aspect it is not to denounce the inequality existing in a double-triple workday for them, this is not the objective of our study, but that this indicators helps us verify the permanence of hegemonic masculine-feminine roles in teachers. Its unquestioned internalization derives in the emission of differentiated values towards boys and girls, assigning them unfair stereotypes taken from a very traditional conception of the role to be carried out by future women, in which the main axis is attention and dedication towards others.

To achieve this objective, we needed to know in the first place and in a more descriptive manner, how male and female teachers assume certain tasks and share out others in their daily lives. We start with the assumption that less conciliation means a greater transmission of traditional roles. Thus, we still had to know if teachers promote, in the first person, the

conciliation between personal and work life in order to obtain this information we needed to answer several questions: How is work distributed (understood as all necessary activities needed to develop a daily family and social life)? In the case of primary teachers, is there a balanced distribution of domestic (or not paid) and non-domestic (or paid)? How is this partition in the case of men and women? This task has been addressed through the implementation of a questionnaire given to teachers in educational centers.

School is probably one of the most decisive spaces in which cultural changes can develop for new generations. There is a stream that puts the educational institution in permanent contact with society; the school is the depository of trust for society in the education of children, who will afterwards be part of the society of the future. Through this institution we get a permanent *feedback* by which the actions of the school in terms of equality is directed back to society, helping it introduce changes in consciousness to the population, eliminating stereotypes and gender prejudices, as well as motivating behavioral changes that slowly achieve a reality in which all can enjoy a better equality of opportunities and an holistic education. We cite the text extracted from the Strategic Plan of Equality of Opportunities 2008-2012 (2011: 34-42) of the Women's Institute, when it says:

“Taking into account that one of the fundamental pillars of socialization from an early age is education, this becomes one of the basic strategies to achieve a significant advance in equality between men and women in all areas of education. The educational system must contribute to overcome the stereotypes limitations of roles, allowing a more free and balanced development of personality, and the access to the same opportunities, helping build relationships between the sexes on respect and responsibility, encouraging participation of men and women in all areas of society”.

We have received answers from 638 teachers from nursery and primary educational centers in Tarragona. 45.2% of the interviewed people work in schools that have between 26 and 49 teachers, 22.2% of schools having between 11 and 25 teachers, and 21.5% of schools with 50 or more teachers in smaller schools (up to 10 teachers) 11% of the sample studied work. The following statements are highlighted as the main points deriving from the study conducted:

- The majority show some vision that gender equality is guaranteed on its own with the existence of mixed schools;

- Female teachers bear most of the house chores in their families.

The school environment is probably one of the social spaces where the need to reflect on gender relationships is essential, as well as of the marked androcentric characterization of our society. Hence the importance of producing quality materials directed to the teachers to implement interventions with students and teachers in educational centers. The interventions in the area of gender relationships must be in line with the efforts to achieve a greater involvement in coeducation tasks, given that family and school are the two main socializing agents at these ages. Fighting for the eradication of sexist stereotypes in school means investing in the future, in which such stereotypes in societal culture can also be eliminated. It is clear that in our society there is a division of tasks and roles based on sex. This is what we call the sexual division of work. The processes of masculine domination of women award, as we have seen before, a certain type of tasks depending on the sex, economically and socially valuing some of these tasks (basically the ones that men have traditionally carried out) while devaluing others (basically the ones that women have traditionally carried out). To achieve the objective of gender equality it is necessary that the school regains an essential importance through awareness and sensitization of the whole educational community, through coeducation tasks that contribute in establishing a community consideration towards:

- The need for an equal division of all domestic tasks between all members of the family unit, men and women,
- The co-responsibility in the education of descendants, educating in values that will allow them to assume responsibilities regardless of gender, to join society conditions of equality,
- The responsibility when fulfilling basic affective and emotional needs of all people living together,
- The distribution of leisure time, so that it can be enjoyed by everyone,
- The co-participation in decision making that affects the family unit.

In order to achieve these objectives, the school must be a leader in the implementation of conducive actions that focus on the eradication of gender differences. Because of this, educational centers should incorporate a center for the equality of gender opportunities as a programmatic principle. Child education female teachers exercise an ethic of care very similar to the role played by mothers at home. Female teachers say the girls talk to their dolls the same way mothers talk to them, and even the teacher. Their discourse shows that they have internalized the hegemonic femininity scheme by noting that the role of the mother and female

kindergarten teacher is the same: to attend and care for the other (Acker, 1995; Hubbard & Datnow, 2000; Vogt, 2002). Reaching this point, we must underline a point of vital interest such as the importance of the role played by the mother in the first years of life, since the care of children is in their hands the process of interaction established with them influences the configuration and establishment of identity. The position of mothers is very attractive to girls, reason why they spend so much time acquiring the emotional and corporal aptitudes associated with such position in relation to this point, the ideas of Davies are highlighted, stating that:

“The most meaningful experience to many girls before starting their preschool education is located within their domestic sphere in this area, the person that tends to care for them is the mother....their idea of what a feminine gender person means is learned...by this relationship” (Davies, 1994: 211).

On the contrary, the case of males is different due to the lack of close and significant masculine persons that carry out care giving and help conducts. This means that there should be a promotion of the inclusion of male teachers in nursery and primary schools, although we must know that their sole presence is not enough to change stereotypes and discriminatory deviations related to gender and care giving. As highlighted before, the results of the empirical work show us that teachers think that equality is promoted by the sole fact of the existence of mixed schools, later affirming that they (women) have a double workday, denoting a *contradictio in terminis*. We, on the contrary, think that it is not enough that boys and girls share a classroom, but a true co-education. And furthermore: if we do not tend towards numerical equality between male and female teachers, we see it difficult to achieve the transmission of care giving values without an unequal bias.

3.2. Fieldwork in Caserta (Italy)

The analysis⁶ has been carried out in Caserta (Southern Italy), a territory highlighted by the persistent feminization of care giving tasks, and for the absence of effective State initiatives on assistance and care. Thus, we observe the persistence of the *feminization of care giving and*

⁶ The testimonies in detail, along with their transcripts, are part of the press article: Annachiara Del Prete, Coral Cuadrada (2013) “Cura e accudimento” *CADMO Giornale italiano di Pedagogia sperimentale*.

teaching phenomenon. This can be defined as an historic and cultural phenomenon, linked to the low social prestige and the inadequate financial remuneration of the profession, this being a direct consequence of the progressive introduction of women in said occupational sector⁷. Having said this, we can deduce that the difference in presence and participation of women and men in care giving activities are closely linked to other factors such as the different resources present and purchasing power, present and more efficient national and regional policies, different cultural background, and a different strength and rootedness of gender stereotypes in the social imaginary.

From these premises, our attention has focused on analyzing the concept of care giving in the social imaginary. The interest has been in determining the extent to which this concept has changed in men and women throughout two generations. To answer this question we decided to create a debate group of 9 men and 11 women aged between 55 and 75, inheritors of patriarchal policies and witnesses of the political achievements of feminists, and the development of social values that took place throughout their lives. The topic of discussion was: the role of men in care giving in early childhood. The objective has been to evaluate if there has been a change in stereotypes, and if there has been a break in gender roles in a generation that has experimented being boyfriend/girlfriend, husband/wife, worker (male/female) and grandfather/grandmother. At the same time, we conducted in-depth interviews to 6 neo-mothers, aged between 33 and 38, active participants in the workforce and un-separated wives. The central theme of the interviews was the care of children and family conciliation. The purpose was to determine to what extent stereotypes attributed to gender roles persist and reproduce, as well as suggesting improvements.

The discussion group established unanimously that care giving work is a cultural imposition that has represented an obligation for women from an early age. They were educated in care giving and submitting to this with a natural attitude was always expected of them. Despite the recognition of this *imposition*, there is a general agreement about the idea of a *natural* difference between the sexes, which means that women are more *able* for certain tasks, while men are not. The results of the debate are as follows:

⁷ We mention a note from Sullerot about this phenomenon: learning cannot be considered as a feminine conquest, but a void left by men for social and economic reasons. He frequently said, "Women have entered where men have wanted to let them", in Sullerot, *Women and Work*, London: Simon and Schuster 1977 (ed. orig. 1970), p. 319.

- The access women have to a remunerated job is seen as a social goal for many, interpreted by others as a need for manual labor in the capitalist system. For all it implies assuming a double workload;

- Various interventions have emphasized on how gender stereotypes continue to exist, especially in the relation between family roles and the care capacity women possess;

- We found a resistance, especially from men, on considering gender roles as something linked to the past and as something unnatural. Despite of these resistances it is accepted that there is something that still makes women assume all responsibility regarding family and children in spite of all the changes felt in new generations, there are still many women that work day and night, carrying out care giving tasks.

How can we escape from this system that still makes us victims of stereotypes? How can we draw men closer to take charge in certain issues and make part of certain professions until now occupied exclusively by women? The answer: there is still time for things to change, *following a natural rhythm*. But there were also those who signaled that the absence of men in certain sector is due to a lack of social and economic recognition of certain professions. We can conclude by stating that in spite of the resistance to gender models and stereotypes, justified and to a certain extent naturalized, the start of an openness to change was felt. Everyone agreed that a greater presence of men in certain professions and jobs that involve care giving would make them grow, but they also admitted that things need time to occur.

From the analysis of six in-depth interviews we have defined to common profiles. The first profile can be seen in María Teresa (37 years old), pharmacist and mother of two girls (2 years old and 6 months old), who denies there is a significant difference between men and women that justifies the persistence of beliefs and stereotypes. She accepts feeling free from any stereotyped role, yet recognizing the existence of roles and sectors still strongly characterized by gender roles. Being unable to recognize tendency to different functions means that men still refuse to leave their thought, work, and social ideas. She argues that an increase in men involved in care giving tasks and professions would only bring benefits. Asked about how care giving should be re-conceptualized in the long term in order to eliminate these resistances, she answers: 1. Allow homosexuals to adopt and care for children. 2. Force men to spend time with the baby when he/she is born. The woman is forced into taking care of the child, not the man. A man taking care of the baby would, after an initial shock and resistance,

later adapt and maybe finally admit even to liking this task, even showing his great ability to give care. But, above all, we must recognize the value of paternity, understanding this as care. This way we could help men accept their capacity to provide care, and for women to admit that maybe they do not.

The second model can be represented by Ángela (35 years old), a chemical researcher with a 2 year old son. Ángela has no problem practicing her profession, a profession that makes her be absent from home most of the time, because her husband's job allows him to take care of the child. She is firmly convinced that there is a biological difference between men and women, and that women are naturally able to provide care in spite of different postures regarding a presumed ontological purpose of women towards their inclination to care for others, all the women interviewed have recognized a positive element in the increase in the presence of men in these areas in the different profiles of the women interviewed, the proposed answer has been the same, that to change the current state of things, one must *impose* in order to make things happen, by convenience or fear of recognizing their few skills... This last opinion is completely different to those of the previous generation, obtained by group discussions, where women were more inclined to wait for things to slowly change... But, one way or another, they must change.

4. Epilogue

An frequently addressed aspect in sociological psychology is the major feminist extraction in the teaching profession, especially in the nursery and primary levels, which is determinant in the gender socialization process starting in early childhood education (Acker, 1995). It would be positive if there were more men carrying out educational tasks at this level, for this would allow children to initiate in discursive and interactional practices with adults that are involved in tasks far from the hegemonic masculinity prototype, elements that have been underlined and emphasized in testimonies from the interviews conducting during fieldwork in Caserta in summary: it is important, to our eyes, to start policies so that women are in all aspects of society, but we understand that in order to achieve an effective equality, men must also be in spaces that are completely feminized, as we showed when we collected and interpreted the survey results in the Tarragona schools.

Men must therefore be there, but it is not only a question of presence. Women teacher build a speech about hegemonic femininity centered on the ethics of care, allowing them to give coherence and consistency to the world surrounding them. From this perspective, even if we completely agree with the attempts that have been made to help young children transcend gender dualisms (Davies, 1993, 1994; Francis, 1998; Jacklin & Lacey, 1997), in this moment we want to emphasize on the need to work beforehand with teachers (Golden, 1996) so that negative stereotypes are no longer transmitted by women teachers (that are currently are a majority), as well as later on with new teachers slowly incorporating into schools. An important aspect to take into account is why the majority of men do not care. What obstacles exist so men cannot care regularly, now that it has been accepted and normalized that women may also work? We could at least mention three: knowing, being able, and willing.

Resistance to learning is, on occasions, a masculine strategy to enter into the world of care (Tobío, 2005:209-214). Sometimes men cannot fundamentally care because they have a saturated work schedule and long commutes from home to work, longer than women (Tobío, 2012). They also don't have a social environment that understands that in certain moments in life there are things more important than work. Understanding care as a right that men also have helps them in experimenting that part of life, as well as accessing a field of work until now almost exclusively feminine, as evidenced by teachers interviewed in England (see *supra*). The third reason why men don't generally care is because they don't want to, something that has a lot to do with their gender identity. This is because they think it is not a man's job, it doesn't concern them, and they don't feel challenged nor alluded including men in the world of care of people requires a new context, a new social and family model like the one Fraser (1997) named *universal caregiver model*. This is a model that adequately integrates gender equality, work and care activities, and demands a deep restructuring of the domestic world and the school. It is also coherent with the model Italian and Spanish women say they wish to have.

Let's also consider that according to psychoanalysts and psychology professionals, the first three years of life are fundamental in the identity configuration of future men and women. Therefore, if only the mother provides care at home, the baby learns from the beginning that attention from others is provided from the feminine sex. If to this we add the almost absolute presence of women caregivers in nursery schools as well as the majority of women teachers in primary schools, the internal image built by children, conscious or not, will be that of attributing the exercise of care to women. This is why we emphasize in the need to generate

equality policies, not just for the promotion of access of women to predominantly male areas, but also directed to men with the opposite objective, that is, to motivate their entry into spaces until now reserved for women. It is clear that in order to achieve a cultural change of this magnitude changes will not only have to occur in school, but also in homes, where a 180° change is needed. And maybe we will have to wait as long as what our Caserta grandparents predicted in this sense, we have to mention that in Spain there are organizations of men supporting gender equality, among them AHIGE⁸, whose motto is: “every man is a pending interior revolution” in a similar manner, in Italy, the thought of sexual difference receives in their congresses more men every year...

It doesn't just happen in Italy or Spain indeed, starting in the 1970's and following the footprint left by women's rights movements, men started questioning themselves and reflected upon their sexed experience, and the meaning of being masculine, this way deconstructing many of the dominant models of virility, and building in its place a demand for freedom and a symbolic redefinition of masculinity in what we know as *men's studies* (Cuadrada, 2005:43-50) developed in the Anglo-Saxon region and tracing the most notable *gender studies* (which substantially share the constructivist approach). The last phase in the process of sexual and gender deconstruction point to a gender *proliferation*, from the exclusion of what is rejected as its assertion from rupture strategies of the sexual order, as stated by Butler ([1990] 2001). To what point does it decrease its analytical capacity in the sexual category as with gender is a matter of debate, as well as its extension in the perception of what people have from its identity. On the other hand, it seems certain that there is a growing diversification of identities, derived or not from biological features, and the greater individual creativity in its creation (Hearn, 2002a and 2002b). The questioning of the binary concept of sex, as a deterministic dichotomous opposition from the most recent tendencies in feminist and gender studies (Cuadrada, 2009c) reinforces the concept of care as a universal responsibility. It loses weight as a feature and indicator of sexual difference, but gains as a necessary and common activity in men and women, corresponding to both. Men that care will be different, but no doubt more holistic, ecological and harmonious with the world, i.e.: happier.

⁸ <http://www.ahige.org/>

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