

Family life and working life in Uruguay: A qualitative approach to the articulation of gender relations in the construction of the domestic space

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Objective of the study: Analysis of the articulation of family and working life related to motherhood and fatherhood and its effects on spousal dynamics and domestic space construction

Methods: Qualitative methods based on in-depth interviews of women and men who:

- were born between 1955 and 1960
- from middle and upper-middle classes
- both members of the couple are inserted in the labor market

Socio-demographic context in Uruguay

- total fertility rate of 2.4 (1996), inversely related to the different socioeconomic sectors, below the replacement level in the more educated sectors
- rise of the divorce rate since the second half of 80s
- massive incorporation of women to the labor market since the 70s; discrimination against women in the labor market
- changes in households structures, family dynamics, gender roles and gender relations during the last few decades
- interviewed generation is the first one to experience these changes

Main questions

Main results

How is caring of children distributed inside couple dynamics?

In an unequal way, even though the relation is more democratic than before

Are cost different for men and women when rising children?

Yes, woman have more domestic load. They dedicate more time than men to rise their children and they take on more labor cost

How are family life and working life articulated?

There are important gender differences, women interrupt their studies and shorten their working day since they try to dedicate more time to family tasks. No men mentioned labor working costs related to the birth and rising of their children

Who takes care of the children?

During the first years mothers do; day care centers or nurseries (private in general) are generally limited and not used until the third year. Family (grandmothers, sisters) and domestic help also exist, generally supervised by mothers; help from men increases as children get older

Does the domestic space strengthen identity definition?

Yes, domestic space allows women to strengthen their identity

How much have women gave up their historic rights in relation to motherhood?

Not much. This is something that can be seen when there is a divorce

How many men have incorporated these rights?

Quite a lot, however it is not enough. Men have more participation in reproductive tasks, especially in relation to the reinforcement of the affective relationship with children but they don't participate in the domestic tasks of maintaining home dynamics

Conclusions

The generation interviewed –and more specifically the social group interviewed- is a transition generation. It is a generation where family changes are beginning to show up, but they are not yet crystallized. These couples constitute examples of what can be called “a transitional model” regarding gender relations: women work outside their home in the labor market but they still keep their preeminent role on the domestic sphere.