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Female employment and the Mediterranean welfare regime

Family, State and Market

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to try to explain the differences in the female employment rates between the countries of the Southern European welfare regime: Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece. The reason for doing it is that, according to the theory on the Mediterranean welfare regime, the family is the central element of the regime. Considering that women are, in turn, the central element of the activity within the household, it is imperative to understand why are there such big variations in the female activity outside the household between the studied countries. This is done by exploring the three angles of the welfare state: the family, the state and the market. Each one of these angles is presented as a category that encompasses several variables that are directly related to it. Each of these variables is explored separately in the first place and then put together with the rest in search for possible patterns. The results show that there is a distinctive pattern in Portugal and, to a lesser degree, in Spain that favors female employment while the opposite happens in Greece and Italy.

1. Introduction

The welfare states of the South of Europe have been a subject of discussion for many experts in the field. One of the main debates is if these countries form a welfare regime on their own, instead of being part of the conservative one. The main argument for this distinction is that the levels of reliance on the family for welfare provisions are much higher in this region than anywhere else. Reliance on family means reliance on woman, as they are the one that perform the unpaid work necessary to sustain the family.

Based on this, my thesis will study the discrepancies in the employment rates of women in this regime. If women are supposed to dedicate their time towards household tasks and care giving, then they shouldn't have time to enter the labor market. Yet this is not happening, as some of the countries in the regime have relatively high female employment. Consequently, the understanding the reasons behind these differences will give insight into the question of the validity of the Mediterranean welfare regime. This will be done through a comparative analysis of the "welfare triangles" in each country. Each of the three parts will be studied separately and then a conclusion will be reached after putting them together.

2. The Mediterranean welfare regime

Esping- Andersen's (1990) classification of welfare states is one of the centerpieces of comparative study of welfare states. Widely used to discuss clusters of welfare regimes, the author differentiates countries according to two criteria. First, stratification is used as a measure of the influence of the particular welfare regime on the inequalities between citizens belonging to different classes or occupations. Second, de- commodification indicates the level of dependence that citizens have on the market for the acquisition of provisions. The end result is three welfare "families": The Social Democratic, the Conservative Corporatist and the Liberal. The Social Democratic regime includes the Scandinavian countries and is characterized by the primacy of the state as a provider. Stratification is relatively low and de-commodification is relatively high compared to the other regimes mainly because the state is effective at protecting workers from the negative aspects of the labor market. The state also assumes the provision of certain services like childcare and emphasizes the individualization of social rights. The Conservative Corporatist regime includes countries like Germany and Italy and is characterized by its reliance on the family and the state for welfare provisions. De- commodification is high as the state intervenes to protect workers (especially male-breadwinners) from the market but does not place any emphasis on reducing inequalities, which means that stratification is relatively high. The state doesn't play a very prominent role compared to the Social Democratic regime but it does actively help families with certain services and provisions. Finally, the Liberal regime relies on the market for most provisions and the state assumes a secondary role. On the stratification and de-commodification front, it's the exact opposite to the Social Democratic regime. Class differences are accentuated and workers are fully dependent on the market. Some provisions, considered as social rights, are publicly serviced like the NHS in Britain but there is little public interference. These three clusters offer a comprehensive classification of all the more developed welfare states like those in Western Europe, Japan or the United States among others.

This classification hasn't gone uncontested though. Several authors argue for additional type of regime, be it a Radical one (Liebfried 1992) that is composed of countries like Australia or the Mediterranean one (Lewis, 1992, Liebfried 1992, Siaroff 1994, Ferrera 1996, Bonoli 1997, Trifiletti 1999) that includes countries from Southern Europe like Spain, Greece or Italy. Our attention will be centered on the later as the paper will deal with welfare states from this regime. One of the main critiques leveled against Esping Andersen (1990) is that his criteria is too centered on how welfare interacts with paid work. Unpaid work a crucial element in the provision of the necessary goods and services, especially when the role of women in the family is taken into account. Essentially, by not acknowledging this part of welfare provisions the author underestimates the influence of women and thus doesn't provide a sufficiently precise typology. Authors like Ferrera (1996) and Trifiletti (1999) place special emphasis on this as they propose to include the reliance on families as a factor when differentiating between welfare regimes. De-familialization would be this factor (Esping- Andersen 1999), as it measure the reliance on family for provisions and services. With this, the previously mentioned Mediterranean regime can be differentiated from the Conservative Corporatist one as the "familialism" is more accentuated in Southern Europe, where the state has an even smaller role (Papadopoulos 1998).

The countries belonging to the Mediterranean regime have a specific set of characteristics. Generally speaking, the state assumes a subsidiary role (Tavora 2012), where it only intervenes when the family is not able to do its functions. This mainly translates into a male breadwinner model where prime aged man are strongly protected from the market through laws that grant them stability and relatively generous unemployment benefits. On the other hand, women and young men are left to fend for themselves, without protection from the state and occupying less stable and worse paid jobs. Essentially, there is a state of market segregation that enforces a male breadwinner model through the state (Ferrera 1996, Karamessini 2008a, Tavora 2012). The state is also less active in providing care services even though universal healthcare and pensions are established provisions. This relates to the subsidiary role of the state mentioned before, as those services are left to the family preferably.

Finally, the Mediterranean regime is also characterized by the substitution of certain private market activities, like banking, by the family.

Another important fact about the Mediterranean welfare state is its impact on women (Ferrara 1996, Trifiletti 1999, Mingione 2001). When speaking about families and their functions within the welfare state, the norm is that they are provided through unpaid work and this is usually done by women. The predominant male- breadwinner model enforced by the state creates incentives for women to stay at home instead of working. The lack of provisions and family policies regarding care are also tying women to the home. Additionally, the job market is not very open to working mothers and the state is not very supportive in this aspect. Part- time work is not readily available while self-employment and informal employment are high which renders work family conciliation harder. The public sector is not big enough to give employment to a great number women like in the Nordic countries (Esping Andersen 1999), especially because it doesn't provide many public care services. All in all, the countries belonging to the Mediterranean welfare regime are oriented towards the family in such a way that it doesn't provide many incentives for women to work, and instead is geared towards the male breadwinner model. At least this is true in theory.

2.1 Female employment patterns in Southern Europe

These countries that I will be studying here are all unequivocally members of the Mediterranean welfare regime. They all present segmented markets and low social spending compared to other countries in the EU. But there is a crucial difference in what would be one of the most defining aspects of this regime: female employment rates. Table 1 shows the last seven years of female employment in the studied countries is significantly different. Portugal has very high rates compared even to the EU, something which has been acknowledged by some authors (Mingione 2001, Tavora 2012) but is mostly considered an exceptional case. Italy is the polar opposite, with really low levels but also shows a certain level of resilience, as it is the only country that hasn't

seen its levels reduced since the beginning of the 2008 crisis. Spain falls in between, with lower rates compared to the EU.

Table 1: Female employment rates

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Italy	45.2%	46.3%	46.6%	47.2%	46.3%	46.1%	46.5%	47.1%
Portugal	61.6%	61.9%	61.8%	62.5%	61.6%	61.1%	60.3%	58.7%
Spain	51.1%	53.2%	54.7%	54.9%	52.8%	52.3%	52.0%	50.5%
Greece	46,1%	47,4%	47,9%	48,7%	48,9%	48,1%	45,1%	41,9%
EU - 27	56.0%	57.1%	58.1%	58.8%	58.3%	58.2%	58.4%	58.6%

Source. stats.oecd.org (OECD 2012)

There are other examples of indicators related to female work that show important differences between the countries. The gender pay gap is one of them. In table 2 we can see that Italy has a really low gender wage gap. Spain, on the other hand has five times as much, yet it is still lower than that of the EU. Portugal falls between the two. It is puzzling, then, that one of the cases has the lowest gap in Europe while the others is four time higher. Knowing that the welfare state influences the gender wage gap (Shalev and Mandel 2009) it is hard to see how supposedly similar welfare states have radically different outcomes.

Table 2: Gender pay gap

	2006	2007
EU- 27	17,7%	17,6%
Spain	17,9%	17,1%
Italy	4,4%	5,1%
Greece	20,7%	21,5%
Portugal	7,5%	7,5%

Source: Gender pay gap in unadjusted form in % - NACE Rev. 1.1
(Structure of Earnings Survey methodology)

As in any welfare state, there are three providers of welfare services and goods: the market, the family and the state. Even though family is the most important one in the Mediterranean regime, all three should be considered as they interact and influence each other (Abendroth 2012). First, the labor market is a key aspect in this research because it has direct ties to female employment patterns. Factors like the existence of well developed service sector or a good amount of public employment can condition the work of women (Esping Andersen 1999, Tavora 2012). Essentially, it is logical to consider that if the (labor) market offers adequate conditions, the rate of employment will increase for women. Second, the state offers the supporting services that help the family cope with its responsibilities so it is useful to have an overview on how was this done in the past decades. Knowing what the state is doing regarding policies that help women reconcile work and family and what has it done before is crucial (Ferrara 1996, Trifiletti 1999). Finally, differentiating how families work in these countries gives us insight into the workings of the most important institution in this regime. This is a very broad concept though, so I would like to take a look at the cultural part to see how female employment is seen and accepted (or not) (Kremer 2005). Citing Kremer (2005: 229): “‘To work or to care’ is above all a moral predicament.”

In conclusion, it has been established that there is an unanswered question regarding female employment patterns in Southern Europe and that the answer might lie in the market, the family and the state institutions.

3. Research design

3.1 Choice of methodology

Now that the research question has been established and explained it is time to take a look at how it is going to be answered. The nature of the problem that this thesis will try to solve already points to some requirements that the chosen methodological approach will have to fulfill. First, explaining why there are differences in female employment in the selected countries is a complex endeavor and requires looking at it from different angles. This complexity calls for an approach that can provide in-depth answers. Second, since there will be several explanatory variables, the relations between these variables need to be accounted for. It is probable that the answer will not lie in one of the variables but in a combination of them. Finally, the available cases are small in number, only four, and there is no way around it without missing the point of the research. All in all, these three requirements point towards a qualitative research, so this will be used as a starting point.

Cue in grounded theory (Strauss and Glaser 1964). This comparative qualitative method based on abductive logic offers the required tools for analyzing the problem that this thesis is investigating. The central point of this method is that it allows for the theory to “emerge” from the data. For the “emergence” to happen the researcher must establish little to no theoretical framework so that the “categories” in the data can be observed. What this means is that the influence of theory on the analysis of the obtained data has to be kept at a minimum as to avoid disruptions. Once this minimum theoretical framework is established the next step is to find “concepts” within the data. “Concepts” are the data points that are identified as part of a phenomenon and, as such, are the basic unit of analysis in grounded theory. The purpose of these units is to refine the raw data that the researcher is using into precise and well-defined elements. Next are the “categories”. These are groups of similarly themed “concepts” that form a more abstract level of analysis. Their function is to act like cornerstones of the theory that is being produced (Corbin and Strauss 1990). In other words, “categories” are conceptualized data that is put together

into theoretical or analytical groupings. During the whole process two other things have to be taken into account: that there has to be constant comparison between cases and that the patterns and variations have to be accounted for at all time. This means that comparison is happening both between cases and between “categories”. The end result of this process is a theory that solves the studied problem and has its basis in the data initially collected.

In the case of this thesis, these guidelines will be used but with some slight changes and variations. First, grounded theory is a qualitative method so it is oriented towards the use of qualitative data like interviews. But this thesis is going to be based on information acquired from international databases, which is clearly of a quantitative nature. This is not necessarily a problem, as the chosen methodology can still be applied with this kind of data yet it requires some changes. Instead of parsing through the raw data to find the previously explained “concepts”, each of the presented variables will represent a “concept”. To be clearer, the “concepts” to be studied will be chosen based on relevant theory. This might seem like a big divergence from what is grounded theory but it is necessary since the research question is essentially theoretical in nature. Thus, the problem cannot be approached without some previous theoretical assumptions. This doesn't mean that it is not a grounded theory approach. The final theory will “emerge” from the data and the later will be the basis of the explanation, not just the support (Kelle 2005).

In conclusion, it can be said that the methodology will be a modified version of grounded theory but that these changes won't run against the premises of the approach, as the authors defines it is as flexible in this aspect (Corbin and Strauss 1990).

3.2 Structure of the research

The structure of the next chapters will be based on the three “angles” mentioned in the problem statement and the research question. The exploration of the data will be divided in three chapters, each corresponding one of the possible explanations: one for the market, one for the state and one for the

families. After these three chapters will come one based that will put together all of the findings and where the possible patterns and variations will be explained.

The first chapter will deal with the economic side of the explanation. Here the variables or “concepts” belonging to the market “category” will be presented, their selection justified and then used to compare the countries. Specifically, it will be centered on the prevailing economic sectors, the gender pay gap and the percentage of part- time work (Tavora 2012). These three variables will be comparatively analyzed separately and then together to see what the differences in the markets are and how it affects female employment. In terms closer to grounded theory, the three “concepts” will be presented and analyzed so that the theory of the “category” can emerge. This theory will be necessarily incomplete, as the definitive one lies in the conjunction of all of the three categories and their respective theories, but it will act as a cornerstone for the final one. The second chapter will deal in the actions of the state. The three variables will be labor market protection, social protection and public employment. Analyzing the state will show the different actions that the state takes that can influence female employment. Finally, the third chapter will study the households and families. The two concepts within it will be about multigenerational households, the perception on the division of household chores and marriage. Finally, the fourth chapter will take the conclusions of each of the previous chapters and present them in a coherent way. This will be where the definitive answer will be provided and the ramifications analyzed.

4. Research question

The problem that this paper is going to try to solve is now clear: there are differences between countries in an aspect, female employment, which is defining for the welfare regime that these countries belong to. Consequently, to solve this problem it is necessary to know the reasons behind these differences. The research question would they be:

Why are there differences in female employment between Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal when the regime that these countries belong to has female work as one of its defining aspects?

What can be seen here is that the question is essentially theoretical nature. The empirical observation that female employment is different between the cases is not relevant and does not warrant a research by itself. To be worth investigation it has to be in the context of the Mediterranean welfare regime which is essentially a theoretical construct. When taking that into account it can be concluded that to some extent this thesis is questioning the existence of the Mediterranean regime. If a key component of this regime's definition might be faulty then it has to be thrown away or redefined.

Sub-question nº 1: What theoretical implications does this have for the Southern European countries as a separate regime? Are changes in the definition of the Mediterranean regime necessary?

Finally, there are the different ways to explain the difference in female employment. As it has been explained in the previous chapters, the analysis will be done from the three different angles that form the welfare state triangle: the market, the family and the state. Each of this angles separately and all of them put together will create a detailed picture of women's work in each of the Southern countries, thus providing an explanation on why are there differences.

Sub- question n° 2: How relevant is the market in the explanation of these differences?

Sub- question n° 3: Can the problem be explained through the analysis of the state and the social policies it implements?

Sub- question n° 4: Is the family structure and its characteristics the real cause of the problem, seeing that this is the central element of the familialistic regime?

Sub- question n° 5: Can it be that the answer lies in a combination of all of the three angles: market, state and family?

These sub-questions cover the core of the research.

5. The labor market

5.1 Economic sectors

Understanding why women choose to work (or not) requires knowing what jobs they can choose. Different economic sectors offer different conditions and women will gravitate towards those that are more convenient to them. Within the service sector, female workers can find jobs that are sufficiently flexible or require skill sets that some women already have, especially in the terrain of care giving. This is especially true for countries with familialistic models, where the household responsibilities constrain the choices of women (Trifiletti 1999; Mingione 2001). Thus, analyzing the distribution of the prevalent types of economic activity can give insight into these constraints. Obviously, it is not enough to know about the sectors to be able to predict female employment rates, but it a necessary part of the explanation and, in combination with other variables, can provide the sought answer.

Table 3: Distribution by economic sector of workers as a% of total employment

	Agriculture		Industry		Service	
	2000	2008	2000	2008	2000	2008
Greece	17,0%	10,9%	19,8%	19,9%	63,2%	69,2%
Italy	4,8%	3,9%	29,3%	28,4%	65,9%	67,7%
Portugal	12,1%	11,0%	32,7%	27,8%	55,1%	61,2%
Spain	6,0%	3,9%	30,0%	25,7%	64,0%	70,3%
EU-27	7,0%	5,4%	26,8%	24,8%	66,2%	69,8%

Source: Eurostat, Population and Social Condition database

The first step in the analysis is to see the size of the economic sectors. Table 3 shows the percentage of the total workforce in each of the sectors in the years 2000 and 2008. Service is the sector that has the greatest amount of workers and has been growing at the expense of the other two sectors during the last decade. When compared to the EU, Italy and Spain have very similar percentages in all three economic sectors, while the other two countries have significant outliers. Greece trades industry for agriculture, although by 2008 the later is reduced in favor of the service sector. Portugal started the decade with a

relatively small service sector and big agriculture and industry, but the differences with Europe are much lower by 2008. Overall, in the 2000- 2008 period there is a process of convergence towards the EU-27 average over the, with the exception of Greece's industry which remains stable.

Now that the percentages for the total have been presented, the next step is to see female representation by sectors. Table 4 indicates the distribution of all female workers among the different types of activity. The percentages are as expected, with an overrepresentation of women in the service sector at the expense of the other two. The outliers are the same as those of the total workforce and there is the same process of convergence towards the EU- 27 average.

Table 4: Distribution by economic sector of female workers as % of total female employment.

	Agriculture		Industry		Service	
	2000	2008	2000	2008	2000	2008
Greece	18,7%	11,2%	10,5%	8,3%	70,8%	80,6%
Italy	4,0%	3,0%	18,9%	15,0%	77,1%	82,1%
Portugal	13,5%	11,6%	21,5%	15,8%	65,0%	72,6%
Spain	4,2%	2,5%	13,9%	10,1%	81,9%	87,4%
UE-27	6,3%	4,6%	15,1%	12,5%	78,6%	82,9%

Source: Eurostat, Population and Social Condition database

In conclusion, it is hard to distinguish in the recent years any significant differences between the Mediterranean countries that can point to an explanation for the differences in female employment rates. However, if the information pertaining to the beginnings of the last decade (and before) is analyzed, the differences are more prominent and this can be used to (partially) answer the research question. The reasoning here is that, even though the divergences have been significantly reduced, a culture of higher female participation in the labor market can exist due to the previous decades of prominent industrial sectors. If women participating in what is usually a male dominated type of economic activity is a common sight, then their participation them in "male" jobs of the service sector will also be common. This line of

thought will be further explored at the end of this chapter, when it will relate with the other two variables.

5.2. Gender pay gap

In the countries of the Mediterranean welfare regime women assume many responsibilities in the household. These responsibilities make it more difficult to participate in the labor market, but even when they manage, they face lower remuneration than men. This is, in great part, caused by the career interruptions that they have to face, like motherhood or other care work (Lips and Lawson 2009). By abandoning or reducing their dedication to their careers to spend time attending to their families, women lose potential work experience which in turn causes lower remuneration. In contrast, men are not expected to assume the unpaid tasks that their families generate so they do not suffer this loss in experience. As a result, it is to be expected for women to have less reason to go back to work if they are going to receive insufficient remuneration, especially if the male breadwinner in the family is able to provide sufficient income. Consequently, gender wage gap and employment rates of women should be correlated, because the women that would work low-paying jobs would choose to abstain from participating in the labor market (Petrongolo and Olivetti 2006).

Table 5: Gender pay gap

	2006	2007
EU- 27	17,7%	17,6%
Spain	17,9%	17,1%
Italy	4,4%	5,1%
Greece	20,7%	21,5%
Portugal	7,5%	7,5%

Source: Gender pay gap in unadjusted form in % - NACE Rev. 1.1
(Structure of Earnings Survey methodology)

At first glance, the data in table 5 shows that the gender wage gaps percentages are substantially different between the four Mediterranean

countries. Italy and Portugal have a gender pay gap four and two times (respectively) smaller than the European average. The former is the clear example of the negative correlation between employment and pay gap while the later indicate otherwise, as it is the country with the highest level of female employment but has a relatively small pay gap. Contrary to the rest, Greece is above the EU- 27 average even though it has levels of employment among women comparable to Italy. Finally, Spain is very close to the European average.

5.3. Part time work

With all the unpaid work that the family generates that has to be taken care of, usually by women, little time is left for them to engage the labor market. When they do decide to find a job, balancing responsibilities becomes a concern and one of the main ways to do it is to work a reduced amount of hours. Part- time jobs provide a secondary source of income while leaving enough time to attend to family tasks, like care giving or motherhood (Coverman 1985; Charles and Höpflinger 1992). In a familialistic context this stands even truer, as the gender division of paid and un-paid labor is bigger due to the male breadwinner family model and the market segmentation applied by the state (Ferrara 1996, 2007; Trifiletti 1999; Esping- Andersen 1999). Under these conditions, part time work becomes the only option to obtain additional income without renouncing to household tasks. Consequently, exploring the part time rates, and the reasons why part time employment is chosen, will show if the market offers jobs that are adequate to female needs.

Table 6 shows part time work as a percentage of total employment for both genders. By European standards, the Southern countries have a relatively small amount of part-time jobs. Greece is an outlier with it's very low percentages of part time work but the rest of countries are relatively close together even though they have widely different female employment rates. The percentages for female part time work (see Eurostat database) are higher across the board, as it is expected, and retain the differences between country totals. All in all, it is hard to extract any theory from the data alone.

Table 6: Part-time employment as a percentage of total employment, age 15+

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Greece	4,6%	4,1%	4,4%	4,1%	4,6%	5,0%	5,7%	5,6%	5,6%
Italy	8,8%	9,1%	8,6%	8,6%	12,7%	12,8%	13,3%	13,6%	14,3%
Portugal	10,8%	11,3%	11,4%	11,8%	11,2%	11,2%	11,3%	12,1%	11,9%
Spain	8,1%	8,1%	8,1%	8,3%	8,9%	12,4%	12,0%	11,8%	12,0%
UE-27	16,4%	16,3%	16,2%	16,6%	17,3%	17,8%	18,1%	18,2%	18,2%

Source: Eurostat, Part-time employment as percentage of the total employment, by sex and age
Bolded: break in time series.

Table 7: Reasons for choosing part time work for women over 15; 2007

	Care of children or incapacitated adults	Other family or personal responsibilities	Could not find full time job	Other
Greece	16,2%	4,3%	42,4%	37,1%
Italy	33,2%	10,0%	35,5%	21,3%
Portugal	6,1%	25,9%	31,9%	36,1%
Spain	19,4%	13,6%	31,7%	35,3%
UE-27	29,1%	19,6%	19,8%	31,5%

Source: Eurostat, Main reason for part-time employment - Distributions by sex and age

By digging deeper into the subject some interesting information can be found. Eurostat provides some very useful information on the reasons women have for choosing part time over other modalities of work, as seen on table 7. Not being able to find a full time job is the main reason for working part time in the Mediterranean regime countries and in this aspect is significantly different from the EU. Motherhood and care giving don't seem to be that relevant except in Italy, while other family and personal responsibilities only show high percentages in Portugal. Without entering into too much detail in this part, it seems that the family is not such a big burden for women when it comes to deciding how much time to spend on their paid jobs and, instead, it's the

market's inability to provide adequate full time jobs that has which has the biggest influence.

5.4. Conclusions for the labor market category

The purpose of studying the labor markets in Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal is to understand the “playing field” in which employment happens. Different labor markets will provide different kinds of jobs, so the choices of women who want to work will necessarily be determined by this. If the employment options that women might find attractive do not exist in sufficient number, then they will simply not participate in the labor market. When this is analyzed on a comparative level, it can explain the variations in employment rates as a matter of economic differences and not as a difference in welfare regimes.

The first concept that is analyzed in this category is the distribution of jobs among economic sectors. There are some important differences between the countries in this aspect, but the trend of service sector growth at the expense of the other two is present in all four, as well as in the rest of the EU. The most prominent outlier is Portugal, with its relatively small service sector and relatively great participation of women in the industrial sector. As mentioned before, the abundance of women in the industrial sector indicates that the Portuguese model does not emphasize the role of women as caregivers as much as it is emphasized in other Mediterranean regime countries. The industrial sector is not friendly towards workers that have to take care of family responsibilities like the service sector might be, so the whole dynamic of gender labor division must be different. Furthermore, the gender pay gap is low even by European standards, which can be tied to the participation of women in what are usually male-predominant jobs that tend to be prevalent in industry. Finally, the percentage of part time employment is nothing exceptional but the reasons why it is chosen indicates that there are only small constraints coming from motherhood or other care giving duties on female careers. All in all, the Portuguese labor market does not tend to provide as many of the jobs that are supposedly convenient for females because those are not the ones that

Portuguese women are looking for. Comparatively speaking, they do not need as much flexibility as those of other countries because their household responsibilities take away less time.

Italy is another interesting case in regards to its labor market. Female workers are concentrated in the service sectors at the expense of the industrial sector, which is similar to what happens in the rest of Europe. This is strange because with this distribution of economic activity, female employment should be higher. Service jobs are supposed to be easier to combine with family responsibilities. The clarification for this contradiction can be found in the main reason that women give for choosing part time work, which is their care giving burden. Having to take care of their children and incapacitated adults reduces their availability for work so, in addition to reducing full time work, it reduces employment rates. The gender wage gap data can help to further explain this conundrum. The low percentages indicate that Italian women choose to renounce to working when the remuneration is not adequate. When these three factors are put together, the conclusion is that in Italy the breadwinner model is strongly reinforced. Women only access the labor market when they receive male- level compensations and opt to fully dedicate themselves to their families when it is not possible.

As for Greece, the previous confusion caused by the big service sector and the low female employment happens again. This time, though, it can be explained by the extremely low part time employment rates. The service sector does employ women but is not as flexible as it is supposed to be. Furthermore, the main reason for Greek women to choose part time is that they can't find full time jobs. It can be concluded that the service sector does not generate enough part time jobs to attract women who can dedicate smaller amounts of time to working nor does it generate enough full time employment for those who can. Finally, the gender pay gap is the highest of the four countries even though the female employment is low too. This can be interpreted as a sign that when they look for employment, women accept anything they can find. Essentially, it can be said that the Greek labor is not adjusted for females, creating inadequate jobs that don't pay very well.

Finally, Spain does not have any labor market characteristics that can be seen as exceptional. In the economic sector distribution and gender pay gap the

percentages are close to the EU average, while in the part time rates the results are closer to the Mediterranean average. This lack of any outliers does, to some extent, provide an explanation for the studied differences. Female employment rates in Spain are already pretty close to the European average so it is not strange that the factors that affect it are similar too.

The exploration of the labor market category has shown that the differences between Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal do exist. Each of the labor market has particularities that distinguish it from the rest, indicating that the “playing fields” are different. This implies that some of the factors that condition their entrance into the labor market are in the labor market and not only in the family or state.

6. The State

6.1 Social Protection

One of the most important aspects of the Mediterranean regime is the solidarity that happens inside families. When a member of it is facing difficulties related to social risks, they can rely on other members for support, be it in form of transfers or care services (Moreno 2002; Ferrera 2005). The provision of care within the family is usually performed by women, as they are the ones assuming the unpaid work within the household. Since this family solidarity is a key aspect of Southern welfare, interventions by the state in the form of social benefits could interfere with the normal functioning of the familialistic model. These interventions can offer an additional source of income that does not come from the male breadwinner and is directed towards family members that require care and their caregivers. Thus, social protection could have a positive effect on female employment rates because it substitutes or compensates the care giving burdens of women. But, knowing only about the total amount of resources used for social protection would not show a complete picture. State money dedicated towards disability provisions or family/child allowances is directly impacting care giving while unemployment insurance are not that relevant for it. Some authors might even consider unemployment insurance provided by the state as negative for female employment in some circumstances, as it enforces the role of the male breadwinner and relieves women of the need for paid work (Lewis 1990, Knijn and Kremer 1997).

Starting with the general spending on social protection it is possible to see a couple of things about the studied countries from these numbers. Table 8 shows the percentage of total GDP dedicated towards social protection in the 2000- 2008. Italy is the only one that is in line with the EU- 27 average while the other three are below it. Spain trails behind the rest by being 5 points below the European average. In general it can be said that the Mediterranean regime countries are behind in social protection compared to the rest of Europe, with the exception of Italy.

Table 8: % of GDP dedicated to Social protection

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Spain	20,0%	20,4%	20,7%	20,7%	20,9%	20,9%	21,0%	22,7%
Italy	24,9%	25,3%	25,8%	26,0%	26,4%	26,6%	26,7%	27,8%
Greece	24,3%	24,0%	23,5%	23,6%	24,6%	24,6%	24,5%	26,0%
Portugal	21,9%	22,9%	23,3%	23,9%	24,6%	24,6%	24,0%	24,3%
EU- 27	26,6%	26,9%	27,2%	27,1%	27,1%	26,7%	25,7%	26,4%

Source: Eurostat

As for the distribution of social protection among risks, there are some interesting observations that can be made based on data from Eurostat. The two social risks that receive nearly two thirds of total social benefits are old age pensions and health/sickness provisions. In those two, Southern European countries have equal or higher averages compared to those of the EU- 27, with few exceptions. Spain shows some particularities, with a comparatively high level of expenditure on health care and low on old age pensions, while Italy has exceptionally high levels in the later. Disability provisions don't show a pattern among the studied countries, with Portugal being over the European average, Italy being on the same level, Spain slightly below and Greece significantly below. Family/child allowances are the similar in all four and are below the EU average. Unemployment benefits are different across the Mediterranean regime countries. Spain has very high levels while Italy spends a very low amount on it. Finally, survival benefits are generally higher than in the rest of the continent, especially in Italy and Spain, but very low in Greece. The rest of benefits are distributed among housing and other types of social exclusion but they are a minor part of the total budget and it is impossible to distinguish any kind of patterns.

All in all, it is hard to find coherency in Mediterranean social protection. For starters, it is hard to say if Spain's social protection scheme reinforces familialism or not. It prioritizes unemployment benefits, thus covering the breadwinner's income, but does not do the same for retired workers by having a low percentage dedicated towards old age pensions. There are benefits for survival which means that women don't need to access the labor market if their

partner is not available, but caregivers receive help for children and sickness risks. Portugal's case is clearer, because it covers all risks that require care with an emphasis on disabilities. The Italian system is confusing with its low unemployment, healthcare and survival benefits contrasting the extremely high old age pensions. Neither is protection oriented towards the caregiver's tasks nor it is oriented towards guaranteeing the male breadwinners income. Finally, Greece is also hard to situate because it doesn't really focus on any provision, thus not leaning towards any side.

6.2. Labor market protection

The definition concept of employment protection implies many interventions by the state in the labor market. From protection from dismissal to minimum income, laws are put into place to defend workers from the uncertainties of the market. This is especially important in the Mediterranean regime countries because they rely on a core group of male breadwinners in their prime working age to support the familialistic model (Ferrera 1996, 2005). By putting into place protections for the incomes of this group, the state enforces the dependence of women on their spouses. Furthermore, those groups that do not belong to this core are relegated to temporary, unstable contracts and women are one of those groups. With this separation of genders by type on contract in mind, an influence on female employment rates can be established. A higher level of employment in a one kind of contract will provide more incentives for working to the groups that tend to work under them. If temporary work is not protected then women will have fewer reasons to join. Furthermore, if permanent contracts are better protected, then families that depend economically on the income of a male breadwinner will not need to put women on the labor market. Consequently, understanding employment protection in the Mediterranean regime is necessary to the understanding of the female employment rates.

Table 9: Strictness of protection from individual and collective dismissal: permanent contracts

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Spain	2,76	2,76	2,76	2,76	2,76	2,76	2,76	2,76	2,76
Portugal	4,10	4,10	4,10	4,10	3,98	3,98	3,98	3,98	3,69
Italy	3,15	3,15	3,15	3,15	3,15	3,15	3,15	3,15	3,15
Greece	2,93	2,93	2,93	2,93	2,93	2,93	2,93	2,93	2,93

Source: OECD

OECD data on protection from individual and collective dismissal (Table 9) shows the high levels as it is expected. However, where Spain and Greece are closer to conservative regime countries like Germany and France or even Sweden in this aspect, Portugal and Italy are significantly above the rest. Portugal's 4, 10 rating can be easily described as extreme because it doubles most UE countries. Italy is not that exaggerated but is still higher than any other European country.

Tabel 10: Strictness of protection from individual dismissal: temporary contracts

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Greece	4,75	4,75	4,75	4,75	2,75	2,75	2,75	2,75	2,75
Italy	3,25	3,25	2,38	2,00	2,00	2,00	2,00	2,00	2,00
Portugal	2,81	2,81	2,81	2,81	2,56	2,56	2,56	2,56	1,94
Spain	3,25	3,25	3,25	3,25	3,25	3,25	3,25	3,00	3,00

Source: OECD

Temporary contract are also highly protected in these countries, although not in the same countries. Spain, Italy and Portugal are among the European countries that provide the most coverage, sharing the spot with many Nordic countries and France. On the other hand, Greece beats all records in this aspect and is the country with the highest result among the OECD countries. But compared to the other type of contract, there has been a decrease over the

years. Over the 2000- 2008 period, dismissal of temporary workers has become progressively easier in all four countries, especially in Greece. By 2008 the Mediterranean regime countries are in line with the rest of Europe.

In conclusion, it can be said that the Mediterranean states tended to protect their workers no matter their type of contract but by the second half of the last decade temporary workers lost most of their state- provided stability. All in all, the results tend to be similar to those of conservative- corporatist regime countries like France and Germany with some extreme cases. These similarities between regime types are probably due to the stratification that both favor by creating core groups of workers.

6.3 Public employment

Of all the possible actions that the state can take to change female employment rates, creating public sector jobs is the most direct one. The jobs the state offers are on average much more flexible when it comes to motherhood or similar events than those in the private sector, while still being relatively well paid. This makes combining work and any family responsibility an easier task, thus facilitating female attracting women (Esping Andersen 1990, 1999; Okun, Oliver, Khait-Marely 2007). Exploring the size of the public sector will show the availability of what are essentially ideal positions for women, which necessarily have a positive influence on female employment. This positive effect can be observed in the Scandinavian countries, where the public sector contains most working women.

Table 11: Employment in General Government and Public Corporations as % of total employment 2005

Greece	14,1%
Italy	14,2%
Spain	13,0%
Portugal	13,4%
OECD	14,4%

Source: OECD, *Government at a Glance 2009*

The data on public employment indicates that, overall, the percentages are close to the OECD average and are, overall, very similar in the four studied countries. Spain and Portugal, the countries with the highest rates of female employment have the smallest public sectors. This can be seen as an indicator that female employment can be found in the market for the most part and not in the public administration. This might be caused for the most part by a lack of social programs in the Southern countries that might employ caregivers, which tend to be women. Yet this doesn't explain why Italy and Greece have higher results. Thus, it probably lies in the in the family, although that answer will be left for later. Compared to the rest of Europe, public employment is much smaller than in the one in Scandinavia and France, although it's higher than Germany or the Netherlands. All in all, the nearly- equal levels make it hard to establish a clear connection with female employment in the Mediterranean regime.

6.4. Conclusions for the state category

In the exploration of the effect of state actions on female employment three variables have been measured: public employment, labor market protection and social protection. Each of these is a way the state influences female employment rate. LMP is how the state conditions the labor market to protect specific groups of workers, social protection is how it helps families with their functions and public employment is a way of direct intervention. These are not always deliberate actions with the sole purpose of improving (or not) female employment rates, but there is a significant effect.

Starting with the social protection in Portugal, it can be said that it does have a positive effect on female employment. The amount dedicated towards social protection is average by the regime's standards but it is oriented towards the right measures, like disability care and childcare. Yet it also dedicates a significant amount towards unemployment coverage which, considering that LMP for permanent contracts is very high, should have a very protective effect on the core group of workers. Temporary contracts were never much protected and they suffered erosion over the years, so it can be said that there is

substantial market segmentation and that the conditions of those in the non-core group are precarious. Finally, public employment is slightly smaller than the Mediterranean average, but the difference is just not big enough.

Italy's situation is in many ways similar, although there are some differences when it comes to the distribution of social protection. Italy dedicates a substantial amount of resources towards income protection by targeting unemployment, survivor benefits, healthcare and old age pensions. It seems that the main target is the paid worker, as all of the emphasized types of protections are insurances against interruptions in employment. In contrast, disability care and child care do not receive much attention. LMP at the beginning of the century was very high for both permanent and temporary workers but the latter suffered from erosion over the last decade like the rest of European countries. Nevertheless, this further reinforces the argument that the Italian state is primarily dedicated towards protecting workers and their incomes.

In the case of Greece, the observations on the analyzed state actions are hard to put together in coherent "picture". Nearly a quarter of the total GDP is dedicated towards social needs but disability and survival are underemphasized. This is a pretty strange choice, at least from a female employment perspective, because the former helps with the burden of care while the later helps them stay away from the labor market if their partner is not present. Other types of protection receive a moderate amount of resources. As for LMP, the protection of temporary workers went from exceptionally high to high in the last decade. Coupled with high LMP of permanent workers, it indicates that the labor market segmentation is relatively small. Overall, it seems that the Greek state tends to protect all workers while leaving out the social protection for some types of care.

The remaining country is Spain. In the social protection department it shows a very strong dedication towards guaranteeing income against unemployment and health issues. Survivor benefits are high too, but the low expenditure on old age pensions undermines any assumption on the protection of workers as a clear primary objective. Another thing worth noticing is the lower percentage of total GDP dedicated to social protection. As for LMP, Spain has the lowest levels of protection for both kinds of contracts, although they are still

very high by UE standards. Spain has also the lowest percentage of public employment. All in all, it seems that the state is not as implicated as the ones in other countries due to the reduced social protection and public employment. When it does act, it is to reinforce income security, but with a strange underrepresentation of old age pensions.

After reviewing the state intervention in the four countries a few things can be concluded. Portugal is the only country that clearly orients social protection towards care while the rest tend more towards income protection. LMPs do not indicate significant labor segmentation, although the progressive reduction of the safety of temporary contracts might have created it. Finally, public employment rates are too homogeneous to really provide any significant insights.

7. The Family

Household composition

To see the impact of the family, the key element of the Mediterranean regime, on the employment rates of women it is important to understand the composition of the households. Specifically, two generations of family members are important: the children and the elderly. On the one hand, children generate an increase in household work, thus reducing the availability of women for paid work as they have if they cannot find other childcare options. The more children are present the greater the disruption on their careers. On the other hand, the impact of elderly people in the household is harder to discern. They require care and attention, especially when health issues are present, but they can also perform some the tasks at home. Consequently, the presence of the older generation in the family might have both a positive and a negative influence on female employment. For the purpose of this paper, the presence of older generations will be treated as positive factor due to the fact that the elderly in these countries tend to be more engaged in the household tasks. Essentially, what is interesting here is to see if there are any compensatory effects of the effects of the two generations of the employment outcome. (Ferrara 1996, Trifiletti 1999; Kuhltau and Mason 1996; Vandell et al. 2003; Hank and Buber 2007).

First thing first though, it is important to know the size of the households before making any exploration of the composition. As table 12 shows, the subject countries are on par or above the European average. This bigger size of the family unit confirms that it has more weight in these countries than in the rest of the continent, although Italy is closer to the conservative regime countries than to those of its own regime.

Table 12: Mean size of the household

Italy	2,4
Spain	2,8
Portugal	2,8
Greece	2,7
EU-25	2,4

Source: EU- SILC

The “Household structure in the EU” report from Eurostat measures the rate of childlessness of women aged 33 to 37, stating that at this age the future prospects of having any children are greatly diminished. The results are on table 13 and they indicate something quite surprising: women in Italy and Spain are the ones with the highest levels of childlessness in the EU. Contrasting this, Greece shows rates close to those of the EU-25 while Portugal’s are one of the lowest in the Union. It is hard to fit this information in the general picture of female employment, as it seems, at a glance, that having children increases employment. A potential answer for this is that the costs of raising children push women to the labor market with the objective of increasing the income of the household. Furthermore, fertility rates are on the low end of the spectrum in all four of the countries. This should translate into a higher number of families with a lot of children in Italy and Spain as to average out the high rates of childlessness. Again, the data from the Eurostat report shows something apparently contradictory. It indicates that the compensatory effect from numerous families is very weak or nonexistent so the answer must lie elsewhere. In this case it’s probably the general postponement of the formation of families among young adults. Overall, it can be said the effect of children on female employment is hard to discern, at least when presented on its own.

Table 13: Childlessness and fertility

	Women aged 33-37 % childless	Total fertility rates
Italy	34,2%	1,3
Spain	33,4%	1,4
Portugal	16,4%	1,4

Greece	25,0%	1,4
UE- 15	29,2%	-

Source: EU-Silc

As for the elderly, the information on them is clearer and closer to the theoretical expectations of the regime. The data from the EU-SILC database (Table 14) points to a presence of the elderly in the household that is above the EU-27 average, with the exception of Italy. Portugal is the country with the highest of presence of the older generation at 5,5%, followed by Spain at 4,5%. Seeing that these are the countries with the highest female employment of the four, it can be said that having additional adults that can help around the house allows women in their prime working age to access the labor market more freely.

Table 14: Presence of the elderly in the household

Italy	2,6
Spain	4,5
Portugal	5,5
Greece	3,9
EU-27	3,2

Source: EU- Silc

Overall, there are some observations that can be extracted from the household composition of the Southern European countries. Italy stands apart from the rest of the studied countries by having a household size and configuration closer to the EU average than the Mediterranean regime average. The high rates of childlessness together with the low availability of grandparents for help around the house indicate that Italian women tend to postpone their exit from their parent's household and, when they manage to do it, have to assume the full responsibility of childcare. This contrasts with Portugal, where childlessness is not a big factor while the presence of elderly people is. In this context women either don't postpone leaving their parents house or just decide to have children because they have the full support of their parents. Spain and Greece fall between these two extremes. In the end, it can be said that

household composition does have some impact on female employment but it depends on when young adults start living on their own.

7.2. Perception of division of household chores

The last concept to be introduced in the family category and in the research is going to be about the perception of household chores in Southern European families. The opinions on the subject matter because the respondents will later put their answers into practice, when they have to make a decision on how to divide tasks. Furthermore, this is a good way of gauging the culture of the country in regards to the division of labor on grounds. The Mediterranean regime might be reliant on women staying at home to perform the necessary unpaid work generated by families, but that doesn't mean that the perception of it will be the same, which should translate into different female employment rates.

Table 13: Perception on importance on sharing household chores, 2008

	Very	Rather	Not
Italy	35,2%	41,6%	23,25%
Spain	45,1%	43,1%	11,8%
Greece	40,2%	40,25%	19,65%
Portugal	42,15%	46,8%	11,05%

Source: European Value Study 2008

At first glance, Italy seems to be an outlier due to its population giving less importance to this aspect of the family. To a lesser degree, Greece is also less interested in an equitable division of household chores. In the European context, these percentages tend to be on the average-to-high end of the spectrum, with Scandinavian countries having higher results while most of the conservative countries have similar or lower results.

7.3 Marriage

The last facet of the family that will be studied in this paper is marriage. Getting married has a potentially negative effect on a women's willingness to work, as they gain access to an alternative source of income that is their partner's employment (Cohen and Bianchi 1999). Furthermore, marriage entails a division of labor that, if done on gender lines, might cause leave less time for paid work. Consequently, when the marriage is formed and how stable it is will influence the willingness of women to find a job. Directly, because the later it happens the more established will be their career and, indirectly, because prospects of divorce will increase the necessity for economic independence through employment. Exploring these factors will allow will present a clearer view on how Southern European women engage and disengage from their families, which is necessarily important in a familialistic regime.

Table x: Marriage and divorce rates in 2009

	Marriage rates	Divorce rates
Spain	3,8	2,1
Italy	3,8	0,9
Greece	5,2	1,2
Portugal	3,8	2,5
UE- 27	4,5	1,9

Source: Eurostat, Crude marriage rates and crude divorce rates (per 1000 habitants) 2009

The data on marriage rates shows the exact same results for three of the four countries. The outlier is Greece, with a significantly higher amount of marriages per 1000 habitants than the other Southern European countries and the EU-27. Based on this, it can be said that the women in the countries of the Mediterranean regime have it harder to establish a stable household than the rest of Europe, which is strange considering that the whole regime relies on this stability. Less marriages means that it is harder to make gendered divisions of paid and unpaid work because it makes relying on partners for income more complicated. But, at a glance, there is no apparent correlation with female employment. Italy and Portugal are at 3,8 marriages per 1000 but are on

opposites ends of the spectrum regarding employment rates of women. It is, thus, hard to extract and preliminary conclusions from it.

Divorce rates offer a more varied picture. Italy has the lowest divorce rates of the four and is significantly below the EU-27 average. It is followed by Greece, Spain and Portugal, in that order. The last two are also above the EU-27 average, making them countries with relatively unstable marriages by European standards. This indicates that women in these two countries can rely less on the income of their partners in the long run, meaning that they have to work. There is also the inverse effect, as women who are economically independent from their partners will have fewer obstacles when divorcing.

In conclusion, marriage is a strange beast in the Mediterranean regime countries, as it apparently contradicts the theory. It seems that differences in marriage rates can't really explain differences in employment rates among women, pointing to a more discreet role of marriage stability in the work decisions. Also, divorce rates do seem to have some relevance, although the causation probably goes in the other direction, meaning that employed women are less dependent on their partners. All in all, it is hard to point to anything conclusive, although it can be said that a higher propensity towards divorce might push women to not abandon their careers so they can fully assume the tasks of the household.

7.4 Family conclusions

Now that the composition, attitudes and establishment of the household units has been explored, some conclusions can be taken from it all. The four studied countries have different ways of configuring the household, resulting in four different configurations of the division of the unpaid work generated but it

Starting with Italy, there seems to be little support for women inside the family. The division of the household tasks is deeply unequal, as shown by the opinion of the Italians of the need for equality in this aspect. Furthermore, there is less extended family inside the household, which reduces the number of possible workers. Consequently, the whole burden falls on women, leaving them little time for work. Another particularity of Italian families is that they are

formed at a later stage in life for most people but is quite stable once it happens, as shown by the low divorce rates. Furthermore, the Italian family unit is the smallest of the four studied countries. All in all, the characteristics of the family in this country clearly don't facilitate female employment.

To a certain extent, Greece has the same characteristics but without being so extreme. For starters, the presence of the elderly in the household is significantly higher. There are also lower rates of childlessness and higher marriage rates. This points to better conditions for female employment, as they have both better support from extended family and better support from a stable union with their partners.

Spain families show even better opportunities for female employment. Households are bigger with a greater presence of the older generations and the division of chores is more equitable. Women, thus, have greater support from inside the house which frees them to find paid employment. Divorce rates are higher indicating greater economic independence from their partners.

Finally, Portugal has the best characteristics of the four when it comes to helping women pursue their careers. The opinion on the division of chores tends towards equality and the presence of the elderly is more important than in the rest of cases. Divorce rates are high thanks to this equality, as they are not necessarily outside the labor market at any point during the marriage. Childlessness is low but is compensated by the supportive family structure.

8. Final Conclusions

After having analyzed the four countries of the Mediterranean welfare regime it is time to make the final conclusions and to answer the research questions. This will be done by first presenting the relation between family, state and market for each country, thus unifying the conclusions previously made for each of these categories. After going country by country, it will be possible to answer the research question: *why are there differences in female employment between Greece, Portugal, Italy and Spain?*

Starting with Portugal, this country has the highest female employment rates of the four and is even in the top European positions. It manages to achieve this feat by having all three categories oriented towards making it happen. First, the market provides similar work opportunities to men and women. Full time employment is open to both genders, breaking thus the market segmentation on gender lines that is characteristic of Southern Europe. Moreover, the gender pay gap is very small, which means that Portuguese workplaces do not discriminate their workers based on the studied parameter. But there are also opportunities for women who do not want to dedicate themselves fully to paid work. Part time employment and public employment are present for those who want to assume more responsibilities at home. Social protection is oriented towards the right policies, which further incentivizes employment. The family is structured to remove some of the burden of household chores from female backs. Essentially, the Portuguese welfare state offers women the freedom to choose whichever option they prefer. They can opt to stay at home or find work or any combination of those two things. In the end, in Portugal the weight of gender in the labor division is not influenced that much by gender considerations and it translates into higher female employment.

Italy is the opposite of Portugal, female employment wise, but the two countries share some characteristics that have to be put into context. As in Portugal, the segmentation of the market is present and is reinforced by the LMP and the structure of the market. But in this case the segmentation has a clear gender component, as the core group is composed of men in their prime working age. Under these conditions, there are little incentives for women to

enter the labor market. The push to stay at home does not come only from the workplace; it also comes from the family. The households are structured in a way that makes very hard for women to not dedicate themselves fully to the tasks generated by the household. Women find unsupportive partners when it comes to dividing house work and extended family is rarely present to bring additional support. Marriages are very stable institutions indicating that once women enter into a partnership they will rarely exit, in good part thanks to their economic dependence on their partners. Finally, the concept that shows the strangest results is the gender pay gap one. It can be explained due to the lack of options between the extremes of working full time or not working at all. Italian women cannot find ways to combine their responsibilities with work as part time work and public employment is scarce.

Third, Greece is a special case and is harder to classify than the previous two. The Greek state does dedicate a significant amount of resources towards social protection, including care, the market seems to not be adjusted for female workers. The scarcity of part time work for those that have to balance work and family and the scarcity of full time employment for those who don't have seems to indicate that women are not meant to work. The fact that workers with all types of contract enjoy strong LMPs means that the Greek state does to some extent support working women. The observations on family don't seem to offer much clarification. It seems that the slightly higher percentage of multigenerational households is compensated by the slightly worse perception on the division of household chores. The final result is a confusing system where female employment receives some support from the state but that is overridden by an unapproachable labor market.

Fourth and last, Spain seems to have almost no exceptional characteristic, which is an exceptional characteristic in itself. The labor markets are close to the EU standards, both in economic sector distribution and gender pay gap. Part time work is lower than in the rest of the continent but is coherent with the Mediterranean percentages. The only real outlier in the Spanish case is the low percentage of the GDP dedicated to social protection. In spite of it, unemployment insurance and healthcare are really high; this seems to point towards an emphasis on worker protection. Family factors like the household composition and household chore division don't show anything outstanding

either. Based on all of this, it can be said that Spain's "averageness" indicates a balanced approach to female employment, with a moderate amount of labor market segmentation that, nevertheless, leaves some space for female employment.

Now that the situation of the relevant elements and patterns of the welfare state in each of the cases has been described, it is time to see what they have in common and what are the differences that cause the disparity in female employment rate. The first and most obvious observation that comes to mind is that there are hardly any characteristics that are shared by all four cases. The variables in the market, state and family categories never a coherent group when it come to the role of woman in the household and the workplace. It is as though they were altogether completely different regimes. But one thing remains common to all of them, and that thing is familialism. One way or the other, family remains the main provider of welfare. The state acts as a support for the family, providing social expenditure and LMPs to guarantee its functioning. This intervention also causes segmentation in the labor market that makes unable to freely develop itself as a central provider of welfare. So what do these differences indicate then?

They indicate not what the regime does but who does it. Italy and Portugal share the centrality of the family but the difference ultimately lies with the role of women in this social order and what options do they have. The emphasis here is on the options, as the analysis done in this paper has proven that women have more freedom in some of the countries than they do in others when it comes to choosing how they combine household and professional responsibilities. Italian women are definitely able to dedicate themselves to their careers, and they even have optimal conditions from the pay equality perspective, but they do not have is "intermediate" options. Lack of part time employment and supportive family structures eliminates options of doing both family and work tasks. In the end, the choice is between a full dedication to work and a full dedication to family. To some extent, Greece replicates a this model but in a more moderate way. Spain and Portugal fall on the other side, with Portugal being the extreme case. Here women can chose from a range of options that include part time work, full time employment with the support rest of the adults in the family or even public employment that offers flexible conditions.

In conclusion, and as an answer to the research question, it can be said that **the differences in female employment rates can be by the variation between countries in the availability of options for reconciling work and family. These options exist thanks to a supportive structure based in the family, the labor market and the state.**

What do these findings say about the concept of the Mediterranean welfare regime? They certainly weaken it on a theoretical level, as this disparity is not something that can be overlooked. Yes, the family is central in all the studied countries, but the way this is put into practice shows some differences that beg for a reformulation. The female employment rates in Portugal are closer to those of the Scandinavian countries than those of its own regime and that is in good part caused by the fact that they share the supportiveness of women. Now, this does not mean that Portugal should be considered as a member of the Social democratic regime, mainly because the state does not have such an important role, but they do share the promotion of female economic independence through all of the facets of welfare triangle. This promotion does not exist to such an extent in Italy or Greece. Consequently, this disparity indicates a lack of coherence in the Mediterranean regime, which then puts into question the differentiation from the conservative regime that authors like Ferrara make.

8.1 Recommendation

The possible policy recommendations are many, but they all have the same objective: increasing the possible ways women have for reconciling work and family. The policies would have to act on all three aspects of the welfare regime, as to maximize the impact.

First, the state should strive towards “professionalizing” care by providing a wider range of social services that help relieve the burden of the family. The effects would be twofold: the reduction of household responsibilities and the increase in public services that that are a potential source of female employment. The issue with this angle of actions is that it would be quite a burden on public finances, especially now that the EU is going through a severe financial crisis. A less expensive option would be to try to reduce the market

segmentation that causes the severe difference in working conditions. Reducing temporality and increasing the offer of full time work would go a long way towards attracting more women.

Second, some changes in the market should also be introduced. An increase in the availability of part time is a crucial step towards more female employment. Furthermore, laws regarding maternity and paternity leaves should be put into place as to not generate a disadvantage for women.

Third and finally, part of the issue is caused by a problem with values. The distribution of household chores between partners is a question of values. The gendered profile of some careers is also, in part, a question of values. Changing this requires long term educational projects that would promote equality in the workplace and at home. Ultimately, the objective of this would be to eliminate the notion that staying at home is exclusively a thing for women.

8.2. Comments on the research and its limitations

Writing this thesis was no easy task. The main complication happened when deciding which concepts would enter in each of the categories. It was impossible to include every single relevant factor, so a good amount of time was spent on deciding which ones were the most important. It ended up being three concepts per category for a total of nine concepts. This way, all three categories are equally represented, which facilitates the search for patterns that them all into account. From this decision to limit the number of variables to be used comes the main problem, from my point of view. Each of the categories is enormously rich in potential variables and there was no way of finishing the thesis without the feeling that something was missing. With more time and a bigger paper the range of variable could have been bigger, but the circumstances were what they were. Nevertheless, the choices were appropriate and adding complexity would have made it more suitable for a PHD student than for a master student. All in all, the main problem with this research is that the subject requires a more extensive format.

Another, smaller issue with the research is in the way the cases are compared to a bigger group of countries, like the UE or the OECD. It would have been better if the comparison was only made with the UE-15, as this is the group of countries Esping-Andersen took into account in his typologies. Unfortunately, in many cases the data was simply not available, especially when taking the data from the OECD.

Finally, there was a problem with finding some of the required data. Specifically, it was hard to find good data on public employment, especially one that showed what percentage of it was composed of women.

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