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Gender: A new political cleavage in the Welfare State?

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1. Introduction

Over the last 20 years there have been several “newcomers” to the area of welfare studies¹. We may highlight here just three of them: the study of the Welfare State from a gender perspective; the comparative approach that gave birth to welfare models; and the study of welfare legitimacy, i.e. of the attitudes people have towards the Welfare State (WS).

Although this paper fits into the last of those areas it also has some links with the other two. First, because rather than merely describing attitudes towards the WS, our objective here is to analyse to what extent men’s attitudes differ from those of women. Second, because in order to do so we will partially use a comparative methodology: We begin by looking at data from one particular country (Spain), and we move afterwards to the comparative arena presenting disaggregated attitudinal data (men’s and women’s answers to a set of questions about the WS) for 11 OCDE countries.

2. Some basics about the study of attitudes towards the WS

The study of attitudes towards the WS as a specific research subject began around the 80’s, and probably one of the reasons it began was that at that time some academics and OECD officials added a new layer of arguments against the Welfare State through the concept of “legitimacy crisis”. The idea was that the WS, in addition to being economically inefficient and socially disruptive, had lost the support of the population. Put it simple: people did not want to maintain public welfare programs anymore, nor did they want to rely on the state for their welfare provision. (Harris & Seldon, 1987; OECD, 1981²).

Given the spread that these arguments immediately gained it is understandable that the first studies on welfare attitudes were mainly focused on empirically testing the extent of this WS’s legitimacy crisis everybody was talking about.

The results of almost all those first studies unanimously pointed to the fact that, data in hand, there was no such legitimacy crisis of the WS to be seen. That was quite a surprise for some in those days but nowadays, when the wide support WS has among citizens is well known, some authors even refer to the legitimacy crisis idea as purely an OCDE invention (Abrahamson, 2000, p. 16).

That big debate ended, and thus research on attitudes to the WS began to focus (among other issues) on the determinants of attitudes to the Welfare State, that is, on the variables that explain why some individuals are more likely to support welfare policies than others. The literature on this subject is now quite extensive, including many national-case studies (Forma, 1996; Taylor-Gooby, 1983; Mouritzen, 1987; Hasenfeld and Rafferty, 1989; Peillon, 1995), small comparisons aimed to find out whether the same variables work similarly in different countries (Svallfors, 1999;

¹ For a review of the development of welfare state studies during the 90’s see Pierson, 2000.

² Quoted in Abrahamson, 2000, p. 16.

Andersen et al., 1999; Nordlund, 1997); and a few large cross-national comparisons (Svallfors, 1997; Andreß & Heien, 2001).

What can be drawn from these works is that a kind of consensus exists among authors on the fact that individual-level variation in attitudes towards the WS can be explained by a set of variables that cluster into two factors: “self-interest” and “ideology” (or justice beliefs).

Self-interest is understood in its more individualistic economic sense. In that sense, the more economically interested a person is in the WS, the more she/he will develop supportive attitudes towards the WS. Users of public services, recipients of public transfers, people very likely to be in need of the public safety net and in general people on a low income (who are the more benefited in the taxes/benefits trade off) show a strong tendency to support the WS³. On the other hand, people on a high income who are not directly –or not as much- benefited by the taxes/benefits trade off, users of private services⁴ and people very unlikely to be at risk of poverty, unemployment etc. tend to be less supportive of state welfare.

Ideology: Understood in a broad sense as values and beliefs about social justice. In that sense, people that hold more solidaristic/egalitarian values are more inclined to support the WS than those who hold individualistic/meritocratic values.

3. The (possible) effect of Gender on attitudes towards welfare programmes

3.1- Two theories about the effect of Gender on attitudes towards the Welfare State

When making assumptions about the effect of gender on attitudes to the WS almost all authors expect women to be more supportive of the WS than men. Two theories about that particular aspect are offered, each one based on one of the determining factors of attitudes towards the WS we have described in the previous section.

³ Even though many scholars use the “interest-ideology” explanatory schema, there is some debate about the interpretation of both factors. Pauli Forma (1999) has pointed out that the “interest” factor does not mean that people only care about its own welfare. They argue that this factor also includes some family-related “interests” (like the interest a grandfather can have in the existence of public childcare facilities for his grandchildren). From his point of view we cannot expect that only the direct recipients of welfare benefits support the existence of welfare programs; People who are not recipients of welfare benefits or transfers can be also “interested” in their existence. Albeit these comments are no doubt relevant, much of the research only takes into account individual direct interest in order to simplify the methodology.

⁴ There is an empirical relationship between being a user of private welfare provision and showing little support to the public provision (Brook et al., 1998). But, nevertheless, the authors point out that the direction of the relationship is not clear. Enjoying private provision of welfare can generate negative attitudes towards the WS for various reasons: people who does not use the public system can be less willing to pay taxes for it; can see public welfare recipients as laggards that do not want to make the effort to “help themselves” -as private welfare recipients do-; can be unaware of the problems/merits public services have, and so forth. But it can also be that the people who already have negative attitudes toward public provision are the ones that exit the system and buy private provision. So, does private provision generate negative attitudes towards the Welfare State, or do people who already have negative attitudes towards the WS go to private provision?

(a) The structuralist approach:

From a structuralist point of view it is expected that men and women differ in their attitudes towards the WS because, on average, men's position in the socio-economic structure tends to be more privileged than women's.

If we look at levels of labour market participation, occupational status, wage levels or rates of unemployment women tend to be -in general- in a worse situation than men.

The discriminated position of women is not only restricted to the labour market; they are also considered "responsible" for a large number of duties related to the welfare of family members, and since the WS takes on some of these duties (health care; education; elderly care...), it eases the burden on women allowing them to enter the labour market.

Labour market participation of women, even if not in the same conditions than men, promote women's autonomy and increase women's bargaining power inside the family. In Hirschman terms, it gives women *exit* -possibility to opt out of a situation- and *voice* -possibility to protest and negotiate- (Hobson, 1990, p. 237)

To sum up, women are more benefited by the Welfare State than men because: a) welfare programs specially benefit people on a low income, and women are over-represented in that group; b) the WS takes over certain duties that otherwise would have fallen on women. Given so, it is expected that on average women will support the WS more strongly than men.

In words of Stephen Svallfors, one of the pioneers in the study of welfare attitudes:

"Women are more dependent on the Welfare State, both as employees, as family members relieved of heavy and unrewarded care work and as recipients of benefits from the state. Women often have a more precarious labour position than men, leaving them either dependent on a male breadwinner or as more dependent on the state than men are. In many ways, the latter dependency can be regarded as more desirable" (Svallfors, 1997, p.290)

(b) The socialization approach:

But also from another perspective it is possible to make assumptions about the effect of gender on attitudes towards the Welfare State. Not only self-interest but also beliefs and values about social justice have a strong impact on shaping one's attitudes towards the Welfare State.

But then, as Andreß and Heien comment, *"Interpreting attitudes towards the welfare state in terms of values and norms, or more specifically justice beliefs, is nevertheless only a partial explanation, since the question remains: how do justice beliefs arise? On the one hand, they may be affected by the present interest of the individual, so that high-income groups will show a preference for anti-egalitarian individualism. On the*

other hand values and norms are the products of socialization processes” (Andreß & Heien, 2001, p. 340⁵)

Hence, we will expect to find differences in the values men and women hold to the extent that differences in their socialization processes exist.

It has been argued that one of the cornerstones of women socialization revolves around the role of women as “carers”(Murillo, 1996), and on the basis of this “caring role” we could expect to find gender differences in attitudes towards poverty, inequality and, also, in attitudes towards the Welfare State. As Svallfors (1997) suggest, the “caring” role could be translated into support for the “institutionalized care” the Welfare State provides, making women more supportive of welfare programs than men.

Findings in the closely related arena of attitudes to inequality seem to support this hypothesis: Scott et al. (2001) carried out a large social-psychological experiment and concluded that “women show a much stronger preference for equality than men” (p. 757), explaining this fact because of gender-specific socialization.

Therefore, either because of self-interest or because of gender-specific socialization values, it seems possible that women are more inclined to support welfare programs than men. The objective of this paper is to test until what extent this hypothesis holds true.

To begin with we will analyse the Spanish case, and afterwards we will look at data from different countries. The choice of Spain to start the analysis is not arbitrary. If both theories concerning women’s attitudes towards the WS are correct Spanish women should be particularly different from Spanish men in their attitudes towards the WS. First, because Spain ranks high in terms of economic gender discrimination⁶. Second, because Spain is a society of catholic majority⁷ where traditional socialization patterns and traditional gender roles are (still) more in use than in other western countries.

4. Data

The data we will use throughout this paper come from two surveys: The Spanish “Opinión pública y política fiscal” (*Public Opinion and Fiscal Policy*), fielded in 1999 by the Spanish Centre for Sociological Research (CIS). And the international

⁵ The underline is mine.

⁶ Spain is one of the EU countries with a larger gap between men and women participation in the labour force (1999). The overrepresentation of women in part-time jobs is higher than the EU average, and the country ranks high in the men-women wage differential gap. (“Highlighting pay differences between women and men”, report prepared for the Swedish Presidency of the EU, 2000). As Albert Recio says “There is a general consensus that women suffer discrimination in the Spanish labour market. All the items that are habitually used to measure the employment situation show women to be in a worse position than men: they have a smaller presence on the labour market; they suffer greater unemployment; they are over-represented in temporary employment; and they earn lower wages than men”. (Recio, 2001)

⁷ Catholicism is positively related with gender inequality. (Schmidt, M.G., 1993, p. 189)

survey “The Role of Government”, fielded in 24 countries (Spain among them) in 1996. This international survey was designed and coordinated by the International Social Survey Program⁸.

In both surveys we have general questions about the WS as well as questions concerning specific aspects of welfare programs. In our case-analysis of Spain (section 5) we will work in depth using many of these questions. We will look at questions concerning the satisfaction with the day-to-day running of welfare programs; questions about the desired extension of state intervention on welfare; about the desired intensity of this intervention (how much welfare expenditure on each program); and about the financing of the welfare state (the trade-off taxes/benefits).

In the comparative part (section 6) we will only focus our attention on a couple of questions, given that simplification is needed when working with many countries. In this section we will look at data from 11 OCDE countries: Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, United Kingdom, USA, Spain, and Sweden.

These countries are the “Western” part of the ISSP database. I decided to leave out of the analysis countries from Eastern Europe and the Pacific because for the kind of exploratory analysis I intend to do it is better to work with an homogeneous set of countries. On the other hand we can hardly find any WS’s among the Pacific countries.

5. Spanish women, Spanish men and the WS

5.1-Evaluation of welfare programs

We will begin by looking at a set of questions about the satisfaction of Spaniards with the functioning of the existing public services.

In the “Public Opinion and Fiscal Policy” survey (CIS, 1999) we have a question that reads as follows:

Q. “In what extent are you satisfied with the way in which the following public services work?: Education; health care in hospitals; health care in primary care facilities; the management of old age pensions; Social services; the management of unemployment benefits”.

⁸ For more information on ISSP surveys see <http://www.issp.org>

Table 1a

Women	Education	Health care in hospital	Health primary care	Management of old age pensions	Social services	Management of unemployment benefits
Very satisfied	4.25	6.37	5.56	3.24	2.52	1.57
Quite satisfied	47.24	47.82	47.95	48.43	55.85	39.83
Somewhat dissatisfied	41.92	35.48	36.25	36.82	35.89	44.34
Very dissatisfied	6.59	10.32	10.23	11.51	5.75	14.26
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table 1b

Men	Education	Health care in hospitals	Health primary care	Management of old age pensions	Social services	Management of unemployment benefits
Very satisfied	3.98	5.73	4.27	3.46	2.42	1.91
Quite satisfied	52.09	51.09	49.43	51.67	51.05	42.61
Somewhat dissatisfied	37.19	35.36	37.31	36.94	40.00	42.61
Very dissatisfied	6.74	7.82	8.98	7.92	6.53	12.86
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

At a first glance we can say that differences between men and women's evaluation of public services are minimal. χ^2 for all items is higher than 0.05⁹, meaning that these small differences we can see are not statistically significant, that is, with the data we have we can not say that men differ from women in their satisfaction with public services.

But still, only from these data we cannot conclude that the theories about the expected differences in attitudes towards the WS between men and women are empirically incorrect. The differences in attitudes, if real, could be reflected not in the evaluation of the existing services but in the desired extension of state intervention.

If women perceive that they benefit more than men from social services (structural theory), they should be more willing than men to support state intervention on welfare. Or, if women are more concerned than men about the state's caring responsibilities (socialization theory), there should be differences in the extension of the welfare programs than men and women may find appropriate.

⁹ The χ^2 test allows us to see if there is a correlation between the dependent and independent variables in the population. It is necessary to remember that we are working with sample data, and that the apparent correlation that a cross-tab can show can be due only to sampling error.

5.2 The desired extension of state intervention

In this section we will use a range of items from our other survey “Citizens and The State” (ISSP, 1996). The question is what kind of responsibilities the government should have, and it is aimed to learn what model of welfare state (more or less extensive) Spanish citizens want. And what is of particular interest to us: if women are more willing to support an extensive model of welfare provision than men are.

The question was worded as follows:

Q. 1: “On the whole, do you think it should or should not be the government’s responsibility to..?”

-Provide a job for everyone who wants one; -Keep prices under control; -Provide health care for the sick; -Provide a decent standard of living for the elderly; -Provide industry with the help it needs to grow; -Provide a decent standard of living for the unemployed; -Reduce income differences between the rich and the poor; -Give financial help to university students from low income families; -Provide decent housing for those who can’t afford it.

-Definitely should be

-Probably should be

-Probably should not be

-Definitely should not be”

Table 2a

Women	Provide jobs for all	Control prices	Health care	Standard of living for elderly	Support industry	Standard of living for unemployed	Reduce income differences	Financial help for students	Housing for those who can’t afford it
Definitely should be	65.06	61.36	80.90	80.16	65.05	61.61	57.60	75.53	71.09
Probably should be	28.37	32.27	18.32	18.83	31.34	33.20	34.40	23.36	27.80
Probably should not be	5.29	4.82	0.63	0.78	3.12	4.14	6.29	0.87	0.95
Definitely should not be	1.28	1.55	0.08	0.23	0.49	1.06	1.72	0.24	0.16
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table 2b

Men	Provide jobs for all	Control prices	Health care	Standard of living for elderly	Support industry	Standard of living for unemployed	Reduce income differences	Financial help for students	Housing for those who can't afford it
Definitely should be	57.34	56.17	80.94	78.93	61.91	56.64	56.29	75.11	68.49
Probably should be	30.63	32.87	18.30	19.97	33.28	36.21	31.74	23.03	28.61
Probably should not be	9.22	7.42	0.67	0.93	4.04	5.60	8.33	1.35	2.39
Definitely should not be	2.82	3.54	0.08	0.17	0.77	1.55	3.64	0.51	0.51
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

The first thing we have to say is that the χ^2 for almost all items that directly refer to welfare provision (health care for all; standard of living for the elderly; standard of living for the unemployed; financial help for students) is higher than 0.05, that is, there are no significant differences between men and women in their perception of government responsibility for these matters. Another item: “promote industrial growth” also shows non-significant differences between men and women. The differences we observe in the rest of the items are statistically significant (they do, in fact, exist in the Spanish society and are not the product of any survey errors). But *statistical significance* only tell us if the differences the table shows, derived from sample data, can be said to exist in the whole population. To decide to what extent these differences are also *sociologically significant* is up to the researcher.

Looking at table 2 we see that women are more supportive than men in almost all areas that refer to the government responsibility for the economy. More women than men want the government to create jobs, control prices, guarantee a decent standard of living for the unemployed and provide housing for low-income families. But these differences are only around a 5%¹⁰, so it is difficult to regard them as sociologically relevant.

Anyhow, what we can point out here is that by analysing the attitudes of men and women towards the role of the state no differences can be found concerning the role of the state as a provider of welfare services, though we find small differences in respect of the role of the state as a macroeconomic intervening institution: women are (slightly) more likely than men to support the intervention of the state in the economic field, no matter what this intervention means: regulation (control prices) or more direct policies (provide jobs).

¹⁰ Cramer's V (an association coefficient that measures the strength of the relationship) is very low for all significant items (between 0.07 and 0.10), which means that the relationship sex – attitudes to state intervention, when it exists, is weak.

A superficial overview of the relationship between gender and attitudes towards the WS in Spain could end just here, since we have found some evidence that this relationship is mainly characterized by its non-existence. But before closing the analysis I think it is worth to look a bit further. We have analysed a set of very general questions about the Welfare State and found no “attitudinal gender gap”. Yet, it could be possible that it is in more cognoscitive (and less moral) issues where differences between men and women are noticeable.

In terms of the welfare state, a quite cognoscitive issue is the desired level of spending on each welfare program, since we can expect that the people who feel more benefited by a welfare program will be more likely to support government expenditure on it.

Therefore, if women perceive that they benefit more than men from certain welfare programs, they should be more willing than men to put more public money on it. Or at least, they should be more concerned than men about any possible cutbacks in the programs.

5.3- How much expenditure in welfare programs?

In order to see the level of expenditure that Spanish citizens find appropriate for the Welfare State I have selected some questions from the “Citizens and The State” survey (CIS/ISSP, 1996)

In these questions respondents are asked if they would like to see more, the same or less expenditure in various areas of government spending. Although the wording of the question can seem rather vague, we have to take into account that it is difficult to ask about public finances in a direct and concrete way (like: how many millions euros?). And even an ‘balanced’ wording, such as “What percentage of increase/decrease in spending would you like to see in program X?”, will generate an inordinate amount of non answers, specially among the less educated, that will leave us with a smaller and biased sample. So, the wording of our question, however vague, is not a bad way to approach our inquiry.

Q. “Listed below are various areas of government spending. Please show whether you would like to see more or less government expenditure in each area. Remember that if you say “much more” it might require a tax increase to pay for it: -Health; - Education; -Old age pensions; -Unemployment benefit”

-Spend much more

-Spend more

-Spend the same as now

-Spend less

-Spend much less”

Table 3a

Women	Health	Education	Old age pensions	Unemployment benefits
Spend much more	23.74	20.94	17.21	12.60
Spend more	56.55	53.24	51.12	41.88
Spend the same as now	18.63	24.98	29.84	37.10
Spend less	0.91	0.76	1.58	6.69
Spend much less	0.16	0.08	0.25	1.74
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table 3b

Men	Health	Education	Old age pensions	Unemployment benefit
Spend much more	24.48	23.32	15.83	13.00
Spend more	54.41	51.17	50.78	39.43
Spend the same as now	19.64	23.32	30.52	36.16
Spend less	1.47	1.74	2.43	8.66
Spend much less	0.00	0.44	0.43	2.74
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Even if our theories about women's attitudes towards the WS were internally coherent, the empirical evidence does not seem to confirm them. With just a quick look at table 3 we have the impression that there are no differences in the attitudes men and women have towards welfare expenditure

The differences for the items about health, pensions and unemployment benefits are non significant; and, though statistically significant, it is just around a 2% variation in "education" ($\chi^2 = 0,04$).

Hence, the main conclusion for this section is, similarly than before, that we cannot find differences between men and women in their attitudes towards welfare expenditure.

Up till now we have gone through data about the responsibility of government in welfare issues and about the functioning and desired expenditure in welfare programs. To complete the analysis we may now have a look at another dimension of the Welfare State: the financing of welfare programs.

5.4- Taxation and the Welfare State

Our first question comes from the already mentioned survey “Citizens and the State, 1996” and is worded as follows:

Q. “If the Government had a choice between reducing taxes or spending more on social services, which do you think it should do?(We mean all taxes together, including wage deductions, income tax, tax on good and services and the rest)

–Reduce taxes even if this means spending less on social services.

-Spend more on social services even if this means higher taxes.”

Table 4

	Men	Women	Total
Reduce taxes even if this means spending less on social services	41.46	45.89	43.68
Spend more on social services even if this means higher taxes	58.54	54.11	56.32
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Pearson $\chi^2(1) = 3.8008$ Pr = 0.051
 likelihood-ratio $\chi^2(1) = 3.8022$ Pr = 0.051
 Cramer's V = -0.0447
 gamma = -0.0900 ASE = 0.046
 Kendall's tau-b = -0.0447 ASE = 0.023

Curiously enough, in this table we have women showing a stronger preference to lower taxes than men, although since we have a $\chi^2 = 0.051$ the differences can be due to sample errors. In order to dig a bit more in this matter we have chosen two questions from the Spanish survey “Public Opinion and Fiscal Attitudes” (CIS, 1999). Wording and answers are shown in tables 5 and 6.

Table 5 *What of the following statements better fits in with your opinion about taxes?*

	Men	Women	Total
Taxes are an instrument to redistribute wealth	11.19	9.61	10.38
Taxes are an obligation the state imposes on us the compensation of which isn't obvious to us.	27.46	33.79	30.69
Taxes are necessary in order that the state can provide public services, build roads etc.	61.36	56.60	58.93
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Pearson chi2(2) = 11.6302 Pr = 0.003
 likelihood-ratio chi2(2) = 11.6544 Pr = 0.003
 Cramer's V = 0.0695
 gamma = -0.0659 ASE = 0.037
 Kendall's tau-b = -0.0346 ASE = 0.020

The differences we can see on table 5 are statistically significant although rather small. The remarkable point here is that, contrary to what is expected, women's attitudes to taxation seem to be slightly more negative than men's. More women than men think that taxes are just an obligation, and less women than men see taxes as a necessary part of the Welfare State.

This particularly negative attitudes of women towards taxation also appear in table 6, where we can see that more women than men believe that in Spain we pay too many taxes. This difference (of around 12 percentage points) is no doubt the largest one we have found until now.

Nevertheless, we may note that in the wording of this question the WS was not even mentioned. In table 4 we had a question directly relating taxes with social services and we did not find significant differences between men's and women's answers, so we can conclude that although women are more negative towards taxation than men, these differences tend to disappear when thinking about taxes as a necessary aspect of the WS.

Table 6 “When it comes to taxes, Spanish people pay...”

	Men	Women	Total
A lot	54.03	65.71	60.01
Regular	43.49	32.85	38.05
Little	2.48	1.44	1.95
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Pearson chi2(2) = 33.5571 Pr = 0.000
likelihood-ratio chi2(2) = 33.6420 Pr = 0.000
Cramer's V = 0.1204
gamma = -0.2366 ASE = 0.039
Kendall's tau-b = -0.1193 ASE = 0.020

5.5- Conclusions for Spain:

Our results for the Spanish case contradict both general assumptions about women’s attitudes towards the WS. Neither their socialization in care-values nor their discrimination in terms of income makes them more supportive of welfare policies. Although we have seen that they are slightly more supportive than men of state intervention in the economy (something that –hypothetically- could be related to their discriminated position in the labour market) this tendency does not extend to welfare programs. On the other hand, women are slightly more prone than men to have negative attitudes towards taxation, something that surely needs to be studied with more detail even though the relationship was not strong.

In any case, the main conclusion we can extract from the previous analysis is that there are almost no differences between men and women in their attitudes towards the WS.

In contradiction to both of the theories we saw on section 2, the gender cleavage does not serve to explain attitudes towards the Welfare State in Spain. Does this pattern hold for other countries as well?

In the next section we will try to answer this question examining the relationship between gender and attitudes to the WS in 11 OCDE countries.

6. Gender and attitudes to the Welfare State in comparative perspective

Using a comparative perspective we can test the theories about women’s attitudes towards the WS in a different way:

a) If the discriminated position in the labour market make women more likely to welcome welfare policies than men, then the difference between men’s and women’s attitudes to the WS should be larger in the countries with the largest gender inequalities in terms of income and labour market situation.

b) If women’s socialization on care values (traditional gender socialization) makes them more supportive to the WS than men, we can expect this “attitudinal gender gap” to be larger in the countries where this traditional gender socialization processes are (still) more common.

In general this set of “traditionalist” countries are understood to be the ones in the Mediterranean area and Ireland.

We can contrast these assumptions with data from the ISSP compared survey. In order to do so Table 7 displays the 11 countries ranked in terms of their degree of gender inequality (data from Korpi, 2000); table 8 shows their ranking in negative attitudes to women’s employment¹¹ (that we will use here as a proxy for traditional gender values); and in tables 9 and 10 we have an index of the differences in support between men and women for different welfare programs¹². Positive values mean that women present more support to the welfare program than men.

Beside each country I have put a symbol of its position in tables 7 and 8 so it is easier to have an overall appreciation (+ for a high position; O for a medium position; and – for a low position). The first symbol refers to the country’s position on the gender inequality scale (table 7) and the second refers to the country’s position on the traditional values scale (table 8).

Table 7 (Korpi, 2000)

Country	Gender Inequality (GI)
N	Low
S	Low
CDN	Medium
UK	Medium
USA	Medium
NZ	Medium
AUS	High
DW	High
I	High
IRL	High
E ¹³	High

Table 8

Country	Traditional Values (TV)
S	Low
CDN	Low
N	Medium/low
UK	Medium
USA	Medium
NZ	Medium/high
AUS	High
DW	High
I	High
IRL	High
E	High

¹¹ Data for this index come also from Korpi, 2000. In this study we have the average percentage of people in each country choosing negative alternatives in response to nine questions about women’s employment. What we have done is merely to order the countries, and to arrange them in 3 groups.

More complex indexes of negative attitudes toward women’s employment do present the same picture (Sjöberg, 2000) and the same order of countries.

Spain is not included in Korpi’s work, but it is included in the survey from which data proceed (ISSP 1994: Family and Gender Roles). Looking directly at the Spanish data, we saw that in general Spaniards attitudes to women’s employment were very similar to those of Irish and Italians, so we have put Spain among these countries (high traditional values).

¹² To see how this index has been done see the Methodological Appendix at the end of the paper.

¹³ Spain was not included in Korpi’s study, but given the existing literature on the issue of gender inequalities and the data Korpi used in order to establish his classification I think it fits among the

Country labels: Norway (N); Sweden (S); Canada (CDN); United Kingdom (UK); United States (USA); New Zealand (NZ); Australia (AUS); Germany-West (DW); Italy (I) Ireland (IRL); Spain (E)

Table 9: Differences between men’s and women’s answers to the question:

“On the whole, do you think it should or should not be the responsibility of Government: -provide a decent standard of living for the elderly; provide housing for those who cannot afford it; -Provide health care for the sick; -Provide a decent standard of living for the unemployed; -Give financial help for university students from low-income families”

G.I. T.V.	Country	Elderly	GI TV	Country	Housing	GI TV	Country	Health
0 0	USA	18	0 0	USA	23	0 0	USA	14
0 0	NZ	13	0 0	GB	17	0 -	CDN	14
+ +	DW	9	0 0	NZ	16	+ +	DW	10
- -	S	9	- -	S	16	+ +	AUS	8
0 -	CDN	9	+ +	DW	15	+ +	I	8
0 0	GB	9	+ +	AUS	12	0 0	NZ	8
+ +	AUS	8	- 0	N	9	- 0	N	7
- 0	N	6	0 -	CDN	9	+ +	IRL	5
+ +	I	4	+ +	E	5	0 0	GB	3
+ +	IRL	3	+ +	I	2	- -	S	1
+ +	E	1	+ +	IRL	2	+ +	E	0

Survey: “The Role of Government” ISSP, 96.

Shaded cases : chi2 for differences between men and women >0.05

GI (gender inequality); TV (traditional values)

GI TV	Country	Unemployment
0 0	GB	18
+ +	I	16
0 0	USA	14
- -	S	13
0 0	NZ	13
0 -	CDN	12
- 0	N	9
+ +	E	7
+ +	DW	6
+ +	AUS	6
+ +	IRL	-2

GI TV	Country	Students
0 0	NZ	20
+ +	AUS	13
0 0	GB	10
0 0	USA	9
+ +	DW	8
0 -	CDN	5
- 0	N	5
+ +	I	3
+ +	E	1
- -	S	1
+ +	IRL	1

Survey: “The Role of Government” ISSP, 96.

Shaded cases : chi2 for differences between men and women >0.05

GI (gender inequality); TV (traditional values)

“high inequalities” countries. (Spain scores low in the % of women in the labour market (Abrahamson, 2000); have a high difference between men’s and women’s levels of unemployment (Abrahamson, 2000); show low levels of cohabitation, divorce and extramarital births (Hantrais, 1997), and so on.

Table 10: Differences between men’s and women’s answers to the question: “Listed below are various areas of Government spending. Please show whether you would like to see more or less government expenditure in each area. Remember that if you say “much more” it might require a tax increase to pay for it: -Health; -Education; -Old age pensions; -Unemployment benefit”

GI TV	Education	F-M
O -	CDN	26
OO	NZ	24
++	AUS	21
OO	USA	16
OO	GB	6
++	IRL	5
- O	N	5
++	I	5
-	S	2
++	DW	2
++	E	-1

GI TV	Health	F-M
O -	CDN	30
- -	S	27
OO	NZ	20
++	AUS	18
++	DW	18
++	IRL	18
- O	N	18
OO	USA	15
++	I	7
OO	GB	4
++	E	1

GI TV	Pensions	F-M
-	S	26
O -	CDN	19
- O	N	14
OO	USA	12
++	I	11
++	AUS	11
++	DW	11
OO	NZ	8
OO	GB	8
++	E	4
++	IRL	3

GI TV	Unempl.	F-M
- -	S	32
++	I	21
O -	CDN	20
OO	GB	14
- O	N	13
++	AUS	12
OO	USA	11
++	IRL	8
++	DW	8
OO	NZ	8
++	E	6

Survey: “The Role of Government” ISSP, 96.

Shaded cases : chi2 for differences between men and women >0.05

GI (gender inequality); TV (traditional values)

What we can see from these tables is that women do indeed present more positive attitudes towards welfare provision than men (almost all indexes show positive values), but that this relationship does not hold for all countries, nor for all welfare programs alike (shaded cells show cases where differences between men’s and women’s attitudes are not statistically significant).

And what is even more interesting is that if we order our countries by their level of differences in attitudes to the WS, they do not follow the pattern we expected. Neither countries with high gender inequalities nor the ones that rank high in the scale of traditionalist values (which are in fact the same) are the ones with higher differences in attitudes between men and women. The opposite, although not entirely true, would be closer to reality.

Although there is not a very clear pattern we can see that, in general, countries with high gender inequalities and high traditionalist values tend to be at the bottom half of our tables, that is, they tend to have middle or low differences in attitudes to the WS between men and women. The bottom of our tables is permanently occupied by some of these countries and none of the items display a high gender inequality/high traditional values country at the top position.

When in the first section of this paper we looked at the Spanish data, our conclusions pointed to the fact that women were not more prone than men to support welfare programs but they were slightly more prone than men to support state intervention in the economy. We can also see how our 11 countries fare in this respect looking at table 10.

Table 10: Differences between men and women in their answers to the question: “Do you think it should be the responsibility of Government to: Reduce differences in income between rich and poor?”

GI TV	Reduce income differences	F-M
- -	S	31
0 0	USA	27
- 0	N	25
0 0	NZ	24
0 0	GB	21
0 -	CDN	17
+ +	DW	11
+ +	IRL	9
+ +	I	8
+ +	E	7
+ +	AUS	5

It is interesting to note that the blurred pattern we have seen in tables 9 and 10 is much clearer here, showing that the smallest differences in attitudes between men and women towards state intervention in the economy (in this case towards income redistribution) can be found in the countries with higher gender inequalities and higher traditional gender values.

6. Conclusion:

I have presented here the first results of a work in progress, hence it can be adventurous to go very far in the conclusions and I consider more appropriate to end this piece of work merely stressing some points that the analysis done up till now shows.

First, whilst in general terms it is true that women are more inclined than men to support the WS, this tendency does not hold for all the countries.

Second, it is important to note that the countries which show more differences between men and women in attitudes towards the WS are not those that we had expected on the basis of our two theories.

Consequently, it seems very possible that the effect of gender on attitudes towards the welfare state follows a more complex path than expected. In this line, I would like

to suggest that the translation of traditional women's socialization onto support for the WS is an idea that should be seriously questioned.

On the one hand, because the countries that show less traditional gender values (Sweden and Canada) have for many items more attitudinal differences between men and women than the ones with high level of traditional gender values (Sweden and Canada are at the top of the tables in expenditure on health, pensions and unemployment)

On the other hand, because the "logical-theoretical" relationship between women's traditional socialization and support for the welfare state could be not so "logical".

Traditional gender values assume that the normal situation for women is out of the labour market, that they are not as good workers as men –and thus wage differences are not so unfair-, and that is natural for them to take care of the family members welfare.

Therefore, in countries where this kind of values are extended among women, many women will not perceive their different position in income, labour market, welfare duties etc as a discrimination but just as the normal "state of affairs". And so, they will hardly perceive that the WS specially benefits them in any sense.

I am not saying here that women's socialization of care values cannot make them more concerned about social welfare (it could be). What I am saying is that at the same time traditional socialization can diminish women's perception of the existing gender inequalities. And therefore also the perception that the WS can be an instrument to overcome these inequalities.

This mixed effect of women's traditional socialization could explain why countries with high gender inequalities are not the ones with the largest differences in attitudes between men and women towards welfare provision and state intervention in the economy. The spread of gender traditional values in these countries can "soften" women's perception of gender inequalities and then distort the translation of gender inequalities into women's attitudes.

To reach definitive conclusions in that particular we will need a more detailed work and no doubt a multilevel analysis to disentangle micro and macro level effects (like the effect of welfare regime we have not treated here).

Until then, I hope that the data presented here will make us more aware of possible misconceptions when considering the assumptions about women's attitudes to the welfare state and specially those related with the effect of women's traditional socialization processes.

Annexe I: Index of differences between men and women in attitudes towards each welfare program.

Since we are working with 11 countries, many items and 4-5 option of response for each item, we needed a way to a) summarize the information of the variables in order to make the general picture more comprehensible; b) make the information we have easily comparable across countries.

That is why we first built an “index of support” that serves us to summarize the answers of each question in only one number. Our index is calculated in the following way:

In each item we multiply the percentage of people answering “definitely should” by 4; the percentage who answers “probably should” by 3; the percentage who answers “probably not” by 2 and the percentage who says “definitely not” by 1. Then we add the 4 numbers. What we have is an index that goes from 400 (if 100% of respondents answered “definitely should”) to 100 (if all respondents answered “definitely not”)¹⁴. We think this is a better way to resume information than the collapsing of our data on two categories: one for supporters (“definitely should”+ “probably should”) and another one for opponents (“probably not”+ “definitely not”). The reason is that our index is sensitive to the strength of the consensus towards the WS, and will give a higher number for a country having a 50% in the “definitely should” category and 20% in the “probably should” category than for a country having a 20% in the “definitely should” and a 50% in the “probably should”. If we collapse the two categories of supporters in one, we will lose the information about the strength of the consensus.

On the other hand, our index is perfectly comparable across countries and among items. We can compare the index of support for the state responsibility of health in Ireland and in Norway; or we can compare the index of support for various welfare programs in the same country; or we can compare the index of support of different areas of state provision across different countries. In Table 1 we can easily see how the index is made:

¹⁴ In the second question, with 5 answer categories, the index is calculated in the same way. 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 multiplies the % in each answer category. The index goes in that case from 500 (100% of respondents answering “spend much more” and 100 (100% of respondents answering “spend much less”)

Table 1: Data for Australia. Answers to the question: “*On the whole, do you think it is responsibility of Government to provide health care for the sick?*”

Responsibility of Government in health (Australia)	%	
Definitely should	42.4	$42.4 \times 4 = 169.6$
Probably should	51.7	$51.7 \times 3 = 155.1$
Probably not	5.5	$5.5 \times 2 = 11$
Definitely not	0.4	$0.4 \times 1 = 0.4$
Total	100	$169.6 + 155.1 + 11 + 0.4 = 336.1$
Index		Index = 336

That is how we would do the general index of support for each country. But our interest is not to see the general support in one country but the differences in support between men and women in each country and for each welfare program. Then, using the same method, we built separate indexes of support for men and women (table 2). The indexes of differences in attitudes between men and women that we have shown in our tables have been done as table 2 shows. We begin with a normal cross tab (there we check if the differences between men and women are statistically significant), we calculate the index of support for men and women separately, and we subtract the male index from the female one.

Table 2: Data for Australia. Answers to the question: “*On the whole, do you think it is responsibility of Government to provide health care for the sick?*” x sex.

Responsibility of Government in health (Australia)	Men	Women	F-M
Definitely should	39%	45.0%	
Probably should	54.4%	49.7%	
Probably not	5.7%	5.2%	
Definitely not	0.8%		
Total	100.00	100.00	
Index	$39 \times 4 + 54.4 \times 3 + 5.7 \times 2 + 0.8 = 331.7$	$45 \times 4 + 49.7 \times 3 + 5.2 \times 2 = 339.8$	$339.8 - 331.7 = 8.1$
Index	332	340	8

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