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Do Women in Female-Dominated Occupations Exit the Labour Market More? Evidence from Italy, Spain, Denmark and the UK

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Abstract

Literature on sex occupational segregation has typically focused on the micro and macro determinants of it, on mobility patterns over the life course, on implications of segregation and mobility for gender inequalities. Rarely the link between sex-type of occupations and women's risk of labour market interruptions over family formation has been explored. In this article we analyse whether women who are working in female-dominated, male-dominated or integrated occupations have more or less chances to remain attached to the labour market, controlling for qualifications, class, sector and contract positions. By drawing from ECHP, and comparing Italy, Spain, Denmark and the UK, we consider whether the effect of the sex-type of occupations varies across countries with different institutional and cultural configurations. We find that, *ceteris paribus*, only in the UK the sex-composition of an occupation matters: women in female occupations are more likely to move to inactivity than women in mixed or male occupations. In the other countries considered the main determinants of women's labour market continuity lie elsewhere. In Italy what matters most is the sector of employment (public vs. private). In Spain the sector is relevant too, but also class and the type of contract held (permanent vs. temporary). In Denmark, where policies and culture universally support maternal employment, women's transitions to housework are largely independent of their human capital and their location in the labour market.

Keywords

Sex occupational segregation, women's labour market interruptions, public sector, type of contract, ECHP

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1. Introduction

In the second half of the twentieth century, women's employment rates increased in all advanced countries, largely due to the behaviour of married women and mothers. As compared with their mothers and grandmothers, younger women not only entered the labour market to a larger extent, they also exited in much smaller numbers, or shortened their family-care breaks. Although these trends have occurred everywhere, there is considerable variation across countries in the extent to which, and for whom, women's employment patterns over the life course have changed (Blossfeld and Drobnic 2001). The types of adjustment women make around family formation vary depending on a complex set of resources, material and symbolic, to which women and couples have access in different countries: resources of human capital, income, and time; and resources furnished by the women themselves, their partners, kinship networks or the state (through reconciliation measures). Moreover, the types of adjustment depend on women's position in the labour market: their class, type of contract, and sector of employment.¹ But rarely has been addressed the question of whether women who are working in a female, male or mixed occupation, have, *ceteris paribus*, greater or fewer chances of remaining attached to paid work over family formation (Trappe and Rosenfeld 2004; Stier and Yaish 2008). In this article we analyze the link between the sex-type of occupations and women's probability of employment interruption. By drawing from the European Community Household Panel (ECHP, 1995-2001), we study whether such a link varies across Spain, Italy, Denmark and the UK, i.e., countries with different labor markets, welfare policies and gender norms.

Given that we are interested in movements related to the gender allocation of family responsibilities, we concentrate on women aged 18-45 who have finished compulsory full-time education, and who are of childbearing age and who, therefore, can potentially form a family. We model their probability of moving from paid work to housework. Our aim is to capture how much of this probability depends on the sex-type of the occupation the woman is in, controlling for her family situation, education, class, contract, sector of employment (private vs. public), and hours worked. More generally, we ask: What are the main cleavages segmenting women's labour market continuity in these countries? Is it occupational segregation, class, hours worked, the sector of employment or the nature of the contract (permanent vs. temporary)? How does the salience of these different cleavages relate to the institutional and cultural setting of each country?

2. The theoretical debate

Classical accounts of women's labour market participation have not theorized explicitly the relationship between occupational sex segregation, employment continuity and family formation. But we can deduce their conclusions in this regard easily. There are two leading "classical" approaches to explaining occupational sex segregation: the human-capital perspective, and the employers' discrimination perspective. The first one offers a supply-side explanation. It focuses on the individual's preferences and rational maximisation of income over the life course. Women who are family-oriented and/or are aware of traditional gender allocations of domestic and care responsibilities anticipate intermittent labour force participation and, consequently, self-segregate into "women's jobs". Even though these jobs are less paid and qualified than others, women prefer them because they impose lower penalties for intermittent employment (Polachek 1985).

The second perspective offers a demand-side explanation. For employers, either because they prefer one sex over the other ("taste discrimination"), or because they believe that workers of one sex or the other are more costly or less profitable to employ ("statistical discrimination"), it is rational to segregate the workforce into occupations

¹ See Solera (2009: chap. 2) for a review of the debate surrounding the various factors affecting women's employment continuity.

of unequally valued skills, and with unequal turnover costs (Bielby and Baron 1986). Although they highlight different underlying mechanisms, these two classical accounts yield the same prediction on the link between occupational sex segregation, employment continuity and family formation: women in female-dominated occupations are more likely to exit the labour market around family formation than women in male or mixed occupations.

These two conventional accounts have been criticised on many grounds. First, England (1982) has shown that women with continuous employment histories are not more likely to work in predominantly male occupations than women with intermittent work histories. Also, England argues, the earnings of women in predominantly female occupations do not have lower penalties for intermittent participation. Choices of certain levels and types of education do not reflect preferences for future combinations of paid and unpaid work. Rather, as Bielby and Bielby also argue (2002), the education achieved reflects shared transmitted or negotiated views of gender roles, and definitions of what is masculine or feminine. Similarly, on the demand-side, segregation is maintained by social norms regarding what jobs are appropriate for men and women. Also, there is a process of cultural devaluation of predominantly female activities independently of the sex of the incumbent: men in feminised occupations have lower rewards than men in integrated and male occupations and, as the percentage of men in an occupation increases, wages rise (Reskin and Bielby 2005). The stress on socialisation, “doing-gender” and cultural devaluation helps develop explanations of sex occupational segregation that are different to the ones based on conventional economic accounts. Yet the resulting prediction is similar: women in female-dominated occupations do not necessarily have less commitment to their jobs, but they suffer worse working conditions. As a result, these women exhibit a weaker labour market attachment than women in more rewarding jobs.

Cross-country comparative research highlights another weakness of conventional accounts: the assumption that everywhere female occupations are worse than male or mixed occupations. Female-typed occupations also include clerical and professional jobs in public administrations. In some countries, such as the Scandinavian ones, the public sector accounts for nearly half of female and mixed occupations. These public sector jobs might not offer higher incomes, but they offer “better jobs” in other respects: protection, flexible schedules, shorter working hours, and good opportunities for promotion (Gornick and Jacobs 1998; Okun et al. 2007). That is, they offer a career ladder with stability and family-friendly working conditions; as a result, these jobs encourage women’s continuous labour market attachment (Solera and Bettio 2013). On the other hand, some female jobs in the private sector do not offer such favourable conditions, and are precarious and badly paid. Still, they can offer flexible or reduced working hours, and/or easy transitions between jobs, all of which can have returns in terms of women’s reconciliation of their working and family lives. For example, Taniguchi and Rosenfeld (2002) have shown that the sex-type of occupations has a positive impact on women’s attachment over the life course: a higher percentage of women in an occupation is associated with a slower rate of employment exit. On the basis of this finding, a different prediction can be derived: since female-dominated occupations tend to offer family-friendly conditions, especially in the public sector, women in female-dominated occupations have the lowest risk of exiting the labour market.

Cross-country comparative research has also highlighted the fact that the crucial issue is vertical segregation and labour-market segmentation, rather than horizontal segregation. The sex-type of the occupation is not the main line of division in the labour market everywhere and in the same way. Employment and occupation-related conditions and achievements vary across education and skills groups, classes, across part-time and full-time workers, public and private employees, employees with temporary or permanent contracts. These latter divisions might overlap with the sex-typed divisions. Occupational segregation may be less relevant than the difference between public and private employment. The qualification, responsibility and satisfaction in a job might overcome the disadvantages resulting from not being a family-friendly job, encouraging women’s continuity. For

example Stier and Yaish (2008) find that in Israel stability of employment is higher in both female and male-type occupations than in mixed-type occupations. The fact that male-dominated occupations are more demanding and rewarding implies that female incumbents tend to interrupt work less often.

Cross-country comparative research also shows that the degree to which education, class, sector or contract polarise women's labour market continuity depends on how the work-family combination is culturally accepted and institutionally supported. The relative risk of interruption is connected to the type of jobs and the segment of the labour market in which women work (see, *inter alia*, Bratti et al. 2004; Saurel-Cubizolles et al. 1999). This connection is strong in countries with few policies intended to "defamilialize" caring responsibilities and child costs, and where gender norms are traditional (Gornick and Meyers 2003; Naldini and Saraceno 2011). By adopting an institutional perspective, the prediction changes: each national labour market is segmented along different lines. A woman's labour market position has greater salience in shaping her continuity in countries where universal reconciliation policies are weaker, and where mothers' labour market participation is not generally accepted.

3. Italy, Spain, Denmark and the UK: Different contexts

Italy, Spain, Denmark and the UK have different levels of female employment, and the characteristics of their female labour force are also different. As discussed in the next section on Data, our observational window starts in 1995. That year, women's activity rates ranged from 74 percent in Denmark to 66 percent in the UK to around 43 percent in Italy and 45 percent in Spain (OECD 2001). The level of education achieved made a difference in terms of activity rates everywhere, but especially in the Mediterranean countries. Italy and Spain exhibit an "opt in/opt out" participation pattern. In these countries fewer women start a labour market career, especially if low-educated and in older cohorts, than in Denmark and the UK. But among those who do, the majority pursue full-time continuous participation. Continuous participation is also the norm in Scandinavian countries. In contrast, discontinuous employment around childbearing is the typical pattern in the UK, where the age of the youngest child affects strongly women's labour market participation. However, younger women have increased their labour-market attachment by reducing exits (especially the highly educated) or, if exiting, by returning to work more often between births and more quickly after childbearing (EIGE 2011; Fondazione Brodolini 2011; OECD 2002; Solera 2009).

Female labour market continuity is influenced by education, but also by other factors. The position of the worker in the public or private sector of the labour market is crucial (Bettio 2002). The public sector has offered women job opportunities in fields such as education, health and social services. Typically it has offered stable jobs with conditions that enhance work-family compatibility with little wage penalty. For these reasons, many jobs in the public sector are highly feminised, thereby they contribute to enhancing women's labour market participation but, at the same time, occupational gender segregation and the wage gap between men and women (Gornick and Jacobs 1998; Mandel and Semyonov 2006). For example, in Denmark, one of the reasons why continuous participation is the norm lies in the fact that nearly half of all female and mixed occupations are found in the public sector. In Denmark continuous participation is also favoured by the existence of universal reconciliation policies, especially in the form of childcare services. As far as maternal and parental leave schemes are concerned, Denmark is in an "intermediate" position among comparable developed countries. In contrast, childcare rates and quality are the highest (Grunow and Leth-Sørensen 2006). In 2000 64% of children under three were in formal childcare services, compared to 34% in the UK and only around 7% in Italy and 5% in Spain. (Although we should note that in Spain, over the last decade, care policies towards children have advanced more than in Italy; see Naldini and Jurado 2013). Moreover, the so-called flexi-security of the Danish system (that is, the combination of high levels of labour market flexibility and trade openness with high levels of

social security and social services) helps keep women in the labour market. Flexi-security and generous family policies translate into a high rate of transitions between work, education, family care and leisure which rarely imply complete withdrawals from the labour market (Grunow and Leth-Sørensen 2006; Madsen 2002).

The UK offers quite a different picture. Compared to Denmark, it has similar female employment rates among the highly educated, and a similar degree of gender segregation (Bettio and Verashchagina 2009: table A1). Yet, in the UK tertiarisation has not been driven by the state, as in Denmark, but by the market. This fact has entailed less employment and pay protection, and it has stimulated the growth of low-paid feminised part-time employment (Crouch 1999). In 1995 in the UK part-time employment accounted for 44% of female employment vs. 35% in Denmark (European Commission 2007: Annexe 2). Part-time employment has expanded within a liberal family policy framework with limited reconciliation policies. In the 1990s British maternity benefits were among the lowest in Europe, and until 2003 there were no statutory provisions for it (Plantenga and Remery 2005). Conservative governments understood childcare arrangements as a private matter. New Labour launched the National Childcare Strategy in 1998. But the main achievement of Blair's government has been a tax-credit system aimed at low- and middle-income families (Lewis 2003). With this liberal policy framework, being able to have a continuous career around motherhood depends on the women's own resources (Solera 2009). In the UK in the 1980s and 1990s the difference between, on the one hand, highly-educated women in high-income jobs and, on the other, women with low education qualifications in low-paid jobs, increased. The latter type of women take more and longer breaks, and return to employment through part-time jobs more often (Dex et al. 1998; Solera 2009). In the absence of universal and generous reconciliation policies, in the UK part-time work has served as a *the facto* reconciliation strategy for many women, especially the low-educated. Yet, part-time employment, as noted by O'Reilly and Fagan (1998), tends to entrap because it forms a secondary labour market in the UK.

In Italy and Spain tertiarisation and gender segregation have followed another path. Tertiarisation has arrived later than in Northern Europe, and it has been partial. Also, tertiarisation has been limited by a family-centred welfare regime, which has inhibited the externalisation of female-intensive goods and services (Bettio and Villa 1998). Moreover, in these countries there has traditionally been the widest gap in employment rates between highly and poorly educated women. Also in Italy and Spain there is one of the largest gaps in women's shares of employment in the public sector depending on level of education (Solera and Bettio 2013). Simultaneously, there is a low level of gender segregation. At least until the 1990s, fewer Mediterranean women worked than Northern European women. But the women who did work were highly self-selected: they were the highly educated and/or the ones who could enter in the public sector. In Italy and Spain the public sector is smaller than in Denmark, but it is still a major employer of the female labour force. Given the weak demand of high qualifications in the private labour market and the scarce universal reconciliation policies, the convenient work-family conditions in the public sector have been particularly attractive for highly educated women, especially in Italy (Solera and Bettio 2013). Among the convenient work-family conditions stands out the *de-facto* short full-time workday given the relatively little diffusion of part-time jobs: in 1995 part-time employment accounted for only 6-7% of total employment in Italy and Spain (European Commission 2007: Annex 2).

In Italy and Spain there is also a cleavage distinguishing the informal and official sectors, small and big firms, and employees vs. self-employed workers. In the post-war decades, work protection was built around the industrial worker, typically a man with a full-time and permanent contract. This Fordist regulation left large sectors of the population unprotected. The deregulatory reforms of the 1980s and 1990s further deepened the segmentation of the labour force eroding employment protections for new entrants. Segmentation by type of contract is particularly relevant in the Spanish labour market. In 1995 in Spain fixed-term contracts accounted for 35% of employees, compared to 11% in Denmark and 7% in Italy and the UK (European Commission 2007:

Annexe 2). Women and young people have been particularly affected by this flexibilisation. But the worker's level of education has an important effect in this regard: for the better-educated workers, temporary contracts tend to be stepping-stones towards permanent positions, whereas low-educated workers tend to remain entrapped in them (Barbieri and Scherer 2009; Casquel and Cunyat 2004).

Denmark, Italy, Spain and the UK differ not only in the structure and regulation of the labour market and in the reconciliation policies in place. They also differ in terms of the gender norms regarding the division of domestic and care work. The harmonised European Time-Use Survey (HETUS) of 14 countries reveals that the narrowest gender gap in the amount of daily time spent on unpaid work among dual-earner couples is in Spain and Sweden (together with Belgium and France). There the gap stands at roughly one and a half hours, rising to two and a half hours in the UK and to four hours in Italy (Fagan 2010). According to other data, in Denmark, as in Sweden, fathers' time devoted to unpaid work, as well as fathers' take up rate of leaves, is one of the highest in Europe (Esping-Andersen et al. 2007).

Attitudes seem to go in the same direction as behaviour and policies. Attitudinal data from the 1990s show that in Britain there is a high level of agreement with the opinion that married women without small children should work full-time. However, the level of agreement drops markedly for women with small children. In Scandinavian countries approval of mothers' involvement in full-time paid work is general. By contrast, in Italy gender and education polarise strongly attitudes. According to the cluster analysis performed by Treas and Widmer (2000) on the basis of the 1994 ISSP, if only men were considered, Italy falls into a "motherhood-centred" attitudinal regime; whereas, if only women were considered, it would fall into the "work-oriented" regime, as Nordic countries do. By taking the overall population, Spain in the 1990s would fall in the "motherhood-centred" category. Yet, as shown by Naldini and Jurado (2013), in the last decade Spain has moved away from Italy in gender models, having witnessed strong changes in approval of mothers' involvement in paid work, and of fathers' involvement in unpaid work.

In light of these cross-country differences, we expect the liberal British labour market to be strongly segmented by gender and part-time. Given that, in the UK, women working in female-dominated occupations form a secondary segment of the labour market, the risk of employment interruptions should be higher for them. Also, given that support for reconciliation is minimal and intergenerational family solidarity is weaker in the UK than elsewhere (such as in Spain and Italy), class should also mark a strong difference there. In the other countries, sex-type of occupation should matter less, *ceteris paribus*, in shaping women's exits from employment. In Italy the main line of division is expected to arise from the sector of employment (public vs. private) and, in Spain, from the type of contract (temporary vs. permanent). In Denmark, where maternal employment is fully accepted and there are "flexi-secured" work arrangements that are not segmented along occupation lines, we expect women to remain attached to paid work regardless of their position in the labour market.

4. Data and variables

Our empirical analyses are based on the European Community Household Panel (ECHP) from 1995 to 2000.² ECHP is relatively old and a more recent European panel, the EU-SILC, is available. Yet, we use the ECHP because it follows the respondents over 8 years, whereas the EU-SILC over only 4 years. More importantly, the ECHP has information on sector of employment (public vs. private) and the EU-SILC does not. As discussed in previous sections, in many countries the public/private divide is very relevant for our research topic. Especially

²The ECHP starts in 1994 but one of the covariates, whether the respondent's contract is fixed-term or permanent, is missing in 1994. We also lose 2001, the final year in the ECHP, because our dependent variable is a lead dummy.

in contexts where universal reconciliation policies are weak, transitions from work to inactivity differ largely on account of the distinction public vs. private sector. So, in order to study the cleavages in the labour market that influence women's labour market continuity, we needed a dataset with a variable for sector of employment.

Our sample consists of non-student women aged between 18 and 45 at any given wave in the observational window – that is, they are women in a moment in their life course when family formation, and in particular childbearing, is possible. Our dependent variable takes the value of one if the respondent moved from work to inactivity from one year to the next; else it takes the value of zero. In other words, we study labour market exits to the “housewife” status. We disregard transitions from work to unemployment because our interest lies in the gender division of family responsibilities. Moreover, Bernardi (1999) has shown that women's transitions from work to unemployment respond to different causal mechanisms.

We do not take into account the parity number of transitions for two reasons. First, and although women can experience more than one transition from work to inactivity, in our data most women experience just one transition during the observation period. Second, distinguishing between first and higher-order transitions would be misleading because the ECHP is left-censored. Consequently, we do not have any information on what happened before the observation period started. What we would have labelled as first transition could have actually been an n-th order transition in the life course of the woman.

Although we are interested in the labour market behaviour of women who are forming a family, there are two reasons why we do not restrict our sample only to women in partnerships or to women who give birth. First, we want to avoid the sample selection problems inherent in research that studies only specific groups of women. As Drobic argues (2000), if we analyse data on only women with children, or only married women, it is not possible to distinguish the impact of other factors that may affect all women similarly. Second, reducing the sample size would negatively affect the statistical analyses of countries with a small number of transitions from work to inactivity such as Denmark where continuous employment is the norm.

Table 1 shows the sample size and descriptive statistics for the outcome variable. The UK is the country where there were more transitions from work to inactivity on average in the period considered (1995-2000): almost 6.5% of all person-year observations. In Spain the corresponding figure was 4.9% and in Italy 3.9%. As expected, the Danish case is in stark contrast: only 1.3% of the person-years made the transition. Thus, the two countries with the highest rates of labour market participation among the sampled women (66.6% and 80.9% in the UK and Denmark, respectively, in 1995), and of permanent presence in work over the observational period (among British women present in seven or more waves, 38.4% were observed in work always vs. 50.2% among Danish women), have an opposing pattern in terms of the probability of exiting from the labour market. In Italy and Spain an “opt in/opt out” participation pattern emerges: 33.8% of women in Italy and 27.3% in Spain have never worked in the years we observe. All these figures are in line with the findings of previous studies on women's labour market entry and permanence over the life course, as mentioned in section three.

As mentioned earlier, our interest lies in the effect of sex-type of the occupation on a woman's probability of moving from work to inactivity. Occupations are grouped into three categories: male-dominated, integrated and female-dominated. Masculinised occupations have a workforce whose percentage female is ten percentage points below the average percentage female in the labour force; feminised occupations have a percentage female that is ten percentage points higher; integrated occupations are in-between both.³

³The percentage female of occupations and of the labour market was derived by using the 1995 European Union Labour Force Surveys (EU-LFS). We merged this information with the ECHP dataset. We have checked that the feminisation of

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of observations and transitions from work to inactivity (column percentages in brackets)

	Denmark	Italy	Spain	UK
<i>Panel 1. Observations</i>				
N women	1,645	3,168	3,433	2,894
N women-year	5,932	12,192	10,983	11,934
<i>Panel 2. Transitions from work to inactivity</i>				
N women-year in work not making the transition from work to inactivity	4,486 (98.70)	9,453 (96.07)	7,838 (95.10)	9,089 (93.52)
N women-year in work making the transition from work to inactivity	59 (1.30)	387 (3.93)	404 (4.90)	630 (6.48)
<i>Panel 3. Permanence in the labour market - Women present in 7-8 waves</i>				
Never in work	23 (1.98)	1,534 (33.79)	1,007 (27.26)	349 (11.11)
Always in work	584 (50.17)	1,274 (28.06)	672 (18.19)	1,206 (38.38)
Changed between work and non-work	557 (47.85)	1,732 (38.15)	2,015 (54.55)	1,587 (50.51)
<i>Panel 4. Women's economic activity in 1995</i>				
In work	(80.94)	(49.06)	(43.02)	(66.64)
Unemployed	(13.56)	(15.67)	(19.49)	(3.63)
Inactive	(5.50)	(35.27)	(37.49)	(29.73)
<i>Total in 1995</i>	1,254	4,032	3,545	2,398

Note: Women aged 18-45 (students excluded)

Source: ECHP individual data; authors' calculations.

In our models we include other variables that inform us about women's position in the labour market: *class* (proxied by grouping the original 18 occupational categories into four categories: high professionals, associate professionals, routine white collars, manual workers in the industrial sector or unskilled service sector); *public sector* (public employee, private employee, self-employed); *type of contract* (permanent vs. temporary); and *working time* (full-time vs part-time). In the regression models we also include *labour market experience* (years since first job),⁴ *education level*, *net income* (logged) and *family situation* (number and age of children, whether the woman is in a partnership and, if she is, the education level of the partner).⁵ Table 2 provides descriptive

occupations remains largely stable during the observation period. Had we constructed a time-varying variable for percentage female, it would have been impossible to identify the effect of a change in occupation from the effect of occupations changing percentage female over time.

⁴ More information on previous labour market history would have been useful in order to better account for human capital accumulation or depreciation and for worker's weakness and potential discouragement due to various periods of not-employment, either "chosen" for family responsibilities or "not chosen" for unemployment. Unfortunately the only variable available is the one we have included, age at first job.

⁵ Other information on the partner could have been included, such as his employment status or income. Yet, this would have increased parameters to estimate in a context of quite small sample sizes. Since the role of the partner in pushing or preventing women's exits from the labour market is not the focus of this paper, and since there is abundant evidence that, over time, a partner's characteristics have lost relevance in favour of women's own characteristics (Blossfeld and Drobnic 2001), this exclusion should not be a problem.

statistics for all the covariates included in the models.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of covariates in the regressions for women in work in 1995 (percentages for all categorical variables; average values for years since first job and log income)

	Denmark	Italy	Spain	UK
<i>Human capital- education</i>				
- Tertiary educated	53.94	12.64	43.37	49.83
- not tertiary educated	46.06	87.36	56.63	50.17
<i>Human capital- labour market experience</i>				
-Average years since first job	15.35	12.07	12.66	13.73
<i>Children-age</i>				
- no children	24.38	49.22	50.40	55.62
- youngest child is 0-2 years	16.50	10.86	8.35	11.20
- youngest 3-5	16.94	11.89	12.53	8.85
-youngest 6-15	29.34	28.03	28.72	24.33
<i>Children- number</i>				
-Number of Children (mean in 1995)	1.07	0.84	0.97	1.02
<i>Partner</i>				
-No partner	23.62	36.99	43.08	37.32
- Has partner; with less than tertiary education	46.06	55.08	38.61	37.11
-Has partner; with tertiary education	30.31	7.93	18.32	25.57
<i>Sex-type of occupation</i>				
- male	9.82	16.03	10.4	19.14
- integrated	30.42	28.2	27.33	23.43
- female	59.76	55.77	62.27	57.43
<i>Class</i>				
- High professionals	17.15	12.06	23.08	24.33
- Associate professionals	24.60	13.73	10.77	15.07
- Routine white collar	44.55	46.41	42.49	48.86
- Manual workers	13.7	27.8	23.66	11.75
<i>Sector</i>				
- Self-employment	3.59	15.6	14.07	5.60
- Private employee	43.43	52.9	59.03	64.1
- Public employee	52.99	31.4	26.9	30.2
<i>Contract (among employees)</i>				
- Permanent	84.8	86.2	55.6	91.9
- Temporary contract	15.24	13.8	44.3	8.10
<i>Full-time/part-time</i>				
- Full-time job	86.2	90.5	85.1	71.8
- Part-time job	13.8	9.50	14.9	28.2
<i>Mean log of net income equivalised</i>				
	2.5	1.97	1.48	2.5
<i>N women</i>				
	927	1,741	1,365	1,447

Note: Women aged 18-45 (students excluded)

Source: ECHP individual data; authors' calculations.

5. The profile of sex-type of occupations

Table 2 includes the distribution of working women across four categories of class derived from the occupational classification; the modal class is common to all countries: around 42% to 49 % of the sampled women work in clerical occupations. Yet, the distribution shows some distinctive national trends. Spain and the UK have the highest percentage of women in the high professions (24% in both cases). Instead, the distinctive feature of Denmark is the high percentage of women in the associated professions, reflecting the importance of employment in teaching and health in this country. In fact, Denmark stands out as well because more than half of its sample was employed by the state. On the other hand, in Italy and Spain around one quarter of the sampled women work in manual occupations; whereas only around 1 in 8 women in Denmark or the UK do so.

Table 3. Class composition of sex-type of occupations for women working in 1995 (column percentages in brackets)

Denmark			
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Integrated</i>	<i>Female</i>
- High professionals	53.85	39.01	0
- Low professionals	0	46.81	17.33
- Routine white collar	0	0	74.55
- Manual workers	46.15	14.18	8.12
Total	91	282	554
Italy			
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Integrated</i>	<i>Female</i>
- High professionals	7.17	13.85	12.56
- Low professionals	0	48.68	0
- Routine white collar	0	29.53	68.28
- Manual workers	92.83	7.94	19.16
Total	279	491	971
Spain			
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Integrated</i>	<i>Female</i>
- High professionals	7.04	46.65	15.41
- Low professionals	0	39.41	0
- Routine white collar	0	0	68.24
- Manual workers	92.96	13.94	16.35
Total	142	373	850
UK			
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Integrated</i>	<i>Female</i>
- High professionals	55.96	35.1	9.39
- Low professionals	0	64.31	0
- Routine white collar	0	0	85.08
- Manual workers	44.04	0.59	5.54
Total	277	339	831

Note: Women aged 18-45 (students excluded)

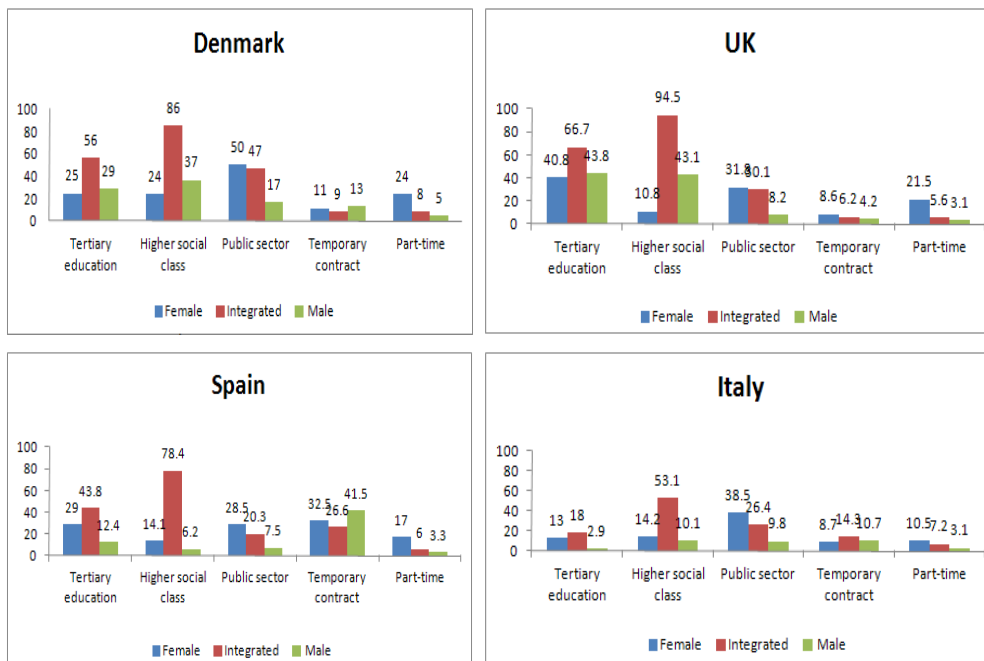
Source: ECHP individual data; authors' calculations.

Table 3 includes the distribution of sampled women through sex-typed occupations, which is remarkably similar across countries: there is a 10-30-60 percentage distribution through male, integrated and female occupations. Table 3 also shows that the class composition of female, male and integrated occupations has some

commonalities across countries, but also some distinctive profiles. First, in all countries white-collar occupations are the most common in the female sex-type. Also in all countries integrated occupations consist predominantly of teaching and health occupations--though in Italy they also include a large share of clerical services. More interestingly, a divide between Southern and Northern Europe emerges. On the one hand, there are the Spanish and Italian women in male occupations who work in the manual sector almost exclusively. In the main, these are occupations to do with the most menial jobs in sales. Instead, in Northern European countries women in male occupations are also found in professional occupations.

The rest of the work-related variables show important differences among countries (Table 2), signalling different ways in which their labour markets are structured and segmented. As said earlier, Denmark stands out because more than half its sample was employed in the public sector in 1995. Spain is an outlier in relation to the percentage of fixed-term contracts (44.3% of the sampled women in 1995). Also, Spain and Italy stand out in their levels of self-employment (14-15% vs. 4-6% in Northern Europe). Finally, the defining characteristic of the UK is its high percentage of part-time contracts (28% of our women).

Figure 1. The profile of sex-type of occupations by education, class, sector and contract



Source: ECHP individual data; authors' calculations.

Notes: All workers 16-65; % within female, integrated and male occupations.

Figure 1 shows the shares of all workers (in the 16 to 65 age group) in each sex-type that are tertiary educated, in the highest class made of professional occupations, that are working part-time, and that have a temporary contract. We note that everywhere tertiary educated or high-class workers tend to be employed in integrated occupations, although to a larger extent in the UK, and to a lesser extent in Italy. The public sector is a distinctive feature of both female and integrated occupations in Denmark (half of the workers in these sex-typed

occupations are employed by the public sector) and in the UK (30%). In Mediterranean countries from 30% (in Spain) to 40% (in Italy) of workers in female occupations are employed in the public sector. Part-time contracts are a distinctive feature of female occupations everywhere. By contrast, fixed-term contracts do not differentiate female from male and integrated occupations, except in Spain, where they are widespread in male occupations.

Summing up, everywhere integrated occupations are “the best” in terms of job quality. And, everywhere workers in female occupations are concentrated in routine white collar and manual occupations. However, the manual component weighs the most in Spain and the least in Italy. Indeed, in Italy female occupations are fewer, and better, than in other countries: half of them are clerks. Moreover, in Denmark and especially in the UK, one out of two manual workers is in a female occupation, mainly in the unskilled service sector. In this sense female occupations are worse than male and mixed occupations. Instead, in Mediterranean countries male occupations are the worst in terms of the education and class profile of their incumbents. Whereas in Denmark and the UK male occupations include a relatively equal share of manual and professional occupations, in Italy and Spain manual jobs account for more than 80% of male occupations. Finally, everywhere part-time is concentrated in female occupations, except in Italy where an equal share is in integrated occupations.

6. Moving from employment to inactivity

The effect of sex-type of occupations and of class

In Table 4 we show the results of random-intercept logistic models on the probability that the woman is out of the labour market, given that the year before she was employed. In particular we run, for each country, three models. In model one the only variable related with the labour market is the sex-type of the occupation. In model two we include the other labour market variables. In model three we include all labour market variables except occupational sex-type. This three-model strategy allows us to determine whether the effect of sex-type changes when other dimensions of the labour market are included (Model 2 vs. 1), and to what extent the effect of sex-type absorbs the effect of class (Model 3 vs. 2).

The main result of the multivariate regressions is that, as expected, the UK is the only country where the sex-type of the occupation makes a difference even after controlling for class and other factors. British women who work in female occupations are almost two times more likely to move to inactivity one year later than women in mixed occupations (Model 2 in Table 4). As discussed in Section 4, in the UK, compared to other countries, female occupations are “the worst”, while mixed occupations are “the best”. Controlling for the effect of sex-type, in the UK class has an effect in itself through manual occupations: the odds of moving to inactivity for women in these occupations are higher than they are for women in other classes.

Ceteris paribus, women in manual jobs have a higher risk of interruption also in Spain and in Italy. In Spain, before introducing class into the model (Model 1 in Table 4), women in male occupations are about two times more likely to move to inactivity than women in female or mixed occupations. However, with class this effect disappears. In other words, the effect of male-dominated occupations was reflecting the behaviour of women in manual occupations (Model 2). When sex-type is excluded, Spanish women in the higher professions have a lower risk of becoming inactive as compared to women in clerical and manual occupations. It seems that Spanish women at the top of the occupational hierarchy are the most protected against the risk of moving to inactivity. As discussed earlier, Spain is also the country, together with the UK, with the highest rate of women in these top occupations. In a context where social protection is segmented, reconciliation policies scarce, and approval of maternal employment is not general, at least until the 1990s, a self-selection effect is likely to be at work. Highly motivated Spanish women enter top occupations and remain attached to them, “enjoying” the level and quality

of these jobs. Their high incomes allow them to compensate for the lack of childcare, and to legitimise their career investments. In Italy the only class that seems to behave differently is the manual class, with the odds of moving to inactivity being 47% higher than those of women working as clerks or as professionals. In Denmark, as expected, neither sex-type of the occupation nor class matter.

Table 4. Year-on-year transition from work to inactive - odds ratios

	Denmark			Italy		
	M1	M2	M3	M1	M2	M3
Human capital						
<i>(Ref: less than tertiary)</i>						
Has tertiary education	0.46	0.72	0.72	0.35**	0.55	0.55
Labour market experience	0.97	0.99	0.99	0.97*	0.99	0.99
Children						
<i>(Ref: no children)</i>						
Youngest child under 2	1.84	2.69	2.53	2.73**	2.27**	2.26**
Youngest child aged 3-5	1.64	2.29	2.20	1.47	1.17	1.17
Youngest child aged 6-15	0.62	0.88	0.84	1.70	1.35	1.35
N. children under 15	0.7	0.61	0.63	0.92	0.94	0.95
Partner						
<i>(Ref: not in partnership)</i>						
Partner: less than tertiary	0.71	0.72	0.73	3.08***	2.64***	2.67***
Partner: tertiary education	0.53	0.55	0.56	0.85	1.42	1.44
Work						
<i>(Ref: integrated occupations)</i>						
Male occupations	1.49	0.84		1.23	1	
Female occupations	1.26	0.49		1.12	1.17	
<i>(Ref: Routine WC)</i>						
High professionals		0.29	0.57		1.10	1.04
Associate professionals		0.34	0.51		0.80	0.70
Manual workers		0.78	1.14		1.47*	1.38*
<i>(Ref: public employee)</i>						
Private employee		0.87	0.92		2.41***	2.33***
Self-employed		4.43	4.31		1.76**	1.73**
<i>(Ref: working full-time)</i>						
Part-time		3.36**	3.21**		2.15***	2.18***
<i>(Ref: permanent contract)</i>						
Fixed-term contract		7.73***	7.61***		2.77***	2.81***
Log of net income equivalised		1.02	0.99		0.77***	0.78***
Constant	0.0083***	0.0086***	0.0043***	0.0063***	0.0060***	0.0071***
Model parameters						
Log-likelihood	-233.44	-211.23	-211.77	-1255.26	-1157.94	-1158.45
AIC	490.88	462.46	459.55	2534.53	2355.88	2352.90
Person-years	3589	3589	3589	8109	8109	8109
Persons	1183	1,183	1,183	2478	2478	2,478
Sigma level 2	2.02	1.68	1.67	2.04	0.94	0.92
Rho	0.55	0.46	0.46	0.56	0.21	0.21
Chi-sq. test	6.19	3.95	4.01	42.24	4.39	4.10

Table 4. Year-on-year transition from work to inactive - odds ratios (continued)

	Spain			UK		
	M1	M2	M3	M1	M2	M3
Human capital						
<i>(Ref: less than tertiary)</i>						
Has tertiary education	0.18***	0.55**	0.55**	0.68**	0.77*	0.77*
Labour market experience	0.98	0.99	0.99	0.98**	0.98*	0.98*
Children						
<i>(Ref: no children)</i>						
Youngest child under 2	1.38	1.56	1.56	2.05**	1.77**	1.74**
Youngest child aged 3-5	1.67	1.77	1.77	1.27	0.95	0.93
Youngest child aged 6-15	1.54	1.56	1.56	0.81	0.68	0.67
N. children under 15	0.92	0.80	0.8	1.52***	1.30**	1.31**
Partner						
<i>(Ref: not in partnership)</i>						
Partner: less than tertiary	9.35***	5.94***	5.94***	1.33	1.42*	1.41*
Partner: tertiary education	3.44***	4.04***	4.05***	1.64**	1.74***	1.76***
Work						
<i>(Ref: integrated occupations)</i>						
Male occupations	2.17**	0.91		1.82**	1.37	
Female occupations	1.38	1.14		2.10***	1.93*	
<i>(Ref: Routine WC)</i>						
High professionals		0.59	0.54*		1.28	0.91
Associate professionals		0.42	0.37*		1.2	0.62**
Manual workers		2.02***	1.81***		1.50*	1.21
<i>(Ref: public employee)</i>						
Private employee		1.74*	1.71*		1.95***	1.87***
Self-employed		6.12***	5.95***		3.24***	3.18***
<i>(Ref: working full-time)</i>						
Part-time		1.50*	1.57*		2.39***	2.42***
<i>(Ref: permanent contract)</i>						
Fixed-term contract		3.53***	3.56***		1.80***	1.81***
Log of net income equivalised		0.86***	0.87***		0.78***	0.77***
Constant	0.0040***	0.0022***	0.0025***	0.0177***	0.0154***	0.0307***
Model parameters						
Log-likelihood	-1166.61	-1079.03	-1079.46	-1870.91	-1780.88	-1783.61
AIC	2357.22	2198.07	2194.91	3765.82	3601.75	3603.23
Person-years	6934	6934	6934	8335	8335	8335
Persons	2485	2485	2485	2227	2227	2227
Sigma level 2	2.4	1.35	1.36	1.38	0.94	0.96
Rho	0.64	0.36	0.36	0.37	0.21	0.22
Chi-sq. test	74.25	19.35	20.04	46.51	15.90	17.08

Note: Women aged 18-45 (students excluded)

Source: ECHP individual data; authors' calculations.

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

The effect of labour market variables other than sex-type of occupations

In all countries, the variable indicating whether the woman holds a fixed-term or a permanent contract works in the expected direction: women with temporary contracts are more likely to leave the labour market than women with permanent contracts. Also the effect of working part-time or working in the private sector follows a similar pattern in all countries: women in this situation have a higher propensity to move from employment to inactivity. The only exception is Denmark, where working in the public or private sector does not matter. As we saw, also class and sex-type of the occupation have no effect. In other words, although these results need to be taken with caution given the low variability of our outcome variable in Denmark, they are in line with the existing literature: they suggest that in Denmark most of the cleavages structuring women's labour market participation have disappeared.

Instead, variables to do with the labour market position of women have strong effects in the other countries, though to a different degree. In all countries women in the public sector are the most protected from labour market interruptions. Yet, while in Spain and the UK the women more at risk of becoming inactive are the self-employed (especially in Spain), in Italy they are the employees in the private sector. This is probably due to the large share of family helpers among the self-employed, i.e., women working in small family business. As Bernardi argues (1999), these family firms offer women the flexibility of combining work and domestic demands.

The effect of family-related variables

In Denmark the number and age of children, and the marital status of women, do not affect their chances of moving to inactivity. The only influence on women's likelihood of moving from work to inactivity is whether the woman has a fixed-term or a permanent contract, and whether she works part-time or full-time. In contrast, and as expected, in the UK children-related variables have the strongest effect. In Italy and Spain the difference for women's chances of interruption occurs before the children arrive in general: when she forms a partnership. In effect, partnered women are more likely to exit the labour market than single women, especially if their partner is low-educated. This result signals the permanence of traditional gender models in Mediterranean countries.

7. Conclusions

This paper contributes to the scarce empirical literature that there is on the link between occupational sex segregation and employment continuity over the life course. By drawing from the ECHP and comparing different countries, we have assessed a) whether the sex-composition of an occupation matters in relation to women's likelihood of becoming inactive; or b) whether other labour market cleavages matter most, such as occupational class, contract, hours worked, and sector of employment.

Conventional accounts suggest that female-dominated occupations yield lower monetary rewards. Hence, the costs of moving in and out of economic activity are low. From this viewpoint it seems that feminised occupations suit the requirements of women with family responsibilities. Either because family-oriented women self-select into such occupations, or because employers discriminate, such accounts predict that women in feminised occupations have a higher probability of quitting the labour market. Yet, we have found that, *ceteris paribus*, during the 1990s only in the UK did the degree of feminisation in one's occupation influence women's odds of moving from work to inactivity. In the other countries considered, the sex-composition of a job seems not to matter. The main labour market cleavages lie elsewhere. In Italy what matters most is the sector of

employment (public vs. private). In Spain the sector is relevant too, but also class and the type of contract held (permanent vs. temporary). In Denmark women's transitions to inactivity are largely independent of human capital and job characteristics.

An institutional account seems appropriate to explain such cross-country variation. In Denmark, where policies and culture support maternal employment, and where labour market segmentation is low, women's decisions seem not to reflect their different locations in the labour market. In a liberal regime such as the UK, the labour market is strongly segmented, and the sex-type of occupations is one more cleavage together with class, contract, sector, hours worked and the human capital of women. In familistic regimes like Spain and Italy, where the "extended" family still compensates for the lack of welfare support, women's probability of becoming inactive is lower than in the UK. Yet, since career opportunities and social protection have been segmented around occupation lines, divisions among women exist: in Italy mainly between public and private employees; in Spain between temporary and permanent employees. As argued by Naldini and Jurado (2013), Italy and Spain have started to diverge also in social norms: the dual-earner model has become more accepted in Spain than in Italy. This has spilled over into behaviours. We find that young Spanish cohorts are permanently excluded from the labour market less often than their Italian counterparts; and the former reach high classes more often than the latter. When they enter the labour market, however, as Lapuerta argues (2012), a higher percentage interrupt in Spain. The greater diffusion of temporary contracts without protection in Spain is the main reason for this finding, which contrasts with the Italian case.

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