Analysing informal social support in the Spanish culture

This investigation explores the informal social support in Spain as a relevant part of the family relations. It analyses the family social function of care as a key issue for understanding the stability of the Spanish welfare regime. Although the experts predict an unprecedented change of the care needs of the population in the developed countries it is important to note that the academics have not paid enough attention to it yet. Using data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP 2001), we examine the factors that explain the three more common informal social support offered by Spaniards (emotional, domestic and economical). The general hypothesis is based on the supposition that in a familistic welfare regime the variables that refer to ascribed status will exert an important influence on the predisposition of the individual to offer different sort of informal support what will contribute to offer a special protagonist, in this process, to certain members of the family such as women. It is also presumed that the different kinds of informal social support offered by Spanish individuals are differentiated by the social factors that determine that behaviour.

We developed an initial descriptive analysis to obtain a preliminary general view and then a second explanatory analysis to understand the factors that determine the different kinds of aid granted by Spaniards. The general explanatory analysis includes three logit analyses for each kind of aid granted.

Principal results: the kind of aid that Spaniards offer most is the emotional one. The Spaniards most likely to provide emotional aid are young people, women and those who belong to a large family network. The results of this study allow us to reflect on the effects of distribution of the informal social support what could help to anticipate possible not desirable consequences that would question the stability of the present social system. It could be affirm that in Spain, nowadays, the family is the best network of social protection.

*** This is a paper under a process of review at this moment. So, it is not posible for us to submit the complete text now. In any case, we undertake to present the principal results in the GT 11 at the XII Congreso Nacional de Sociología.