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Nations' Different Families? Contrasting Comparison of Finnish and Spanish 'Ideological Families'

Eriikka Oinonen

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Nations' Different Families? Contrasting Comparison of Finnish and Spanish 'Ideological Families'

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The International Project on Family Change and Family Policies, co-directed by Prof. Flora (University of Mannheim, Mannheim Centre for European Social Research) and Profs. Kamerman and Kahn (Columbia University School of Social Work, New York), analyses changes in family structures and family policies in long-term and comparative perspectives in 20 countries in Europe and overseas. Primary output will be publication of a 7-volume-series on family changes and family policies, including five volumes with country studies and two comparative volumes. Another major objective is building up a family policy database which will include regularly updated time series. The project is supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG). Related to this project, the European Commission finances a training and mobility program of young researchers, which concentrates on recent developments of families in European welfare states in comparative perspective.

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Editorial Note:

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Abstract

Northern and Southern welfare states form different families of nations, and it is claimed that the families typical of each nation are profoundly different. Family structure in Northern nations is described as modern and deinstitutionalised, whereas the Southern family structure is traditional and institutionalised. The stereotypical notions also indicate that the family ideology is modern in the North and traditional in the South. This paper questions these stereotypical notions and their validity by formulating and analysing Finnish and Spanish cases as representatives of Northern and Southern families. The cases are built of sets of laws and policies which are directly targeted at families, family formation and family life. Laws and policies are treated as representative of family ideological discourses and analysed from a contrasting comparative perspective based on the understanding that discovering similarities helps to place differences in proper perspective. As the focus is on ideologies and because ideologies are historical, social and cultural creations, the historical time span reaches from the early 20th century to the present day, although the stress is on the past few decades. Out of this context I bring up dichotomies that are behind the stereotypical notions of Finnish and Spanish ideological families. By deconstructing these dichotomies I claim that the differences between Finnish (Northern) and Spanish (Southern) families are exaggerated and oversimplified due to the fact that most comparative family studies are based only on quantitative data and methods, and concentrate on differences, thus producing unidimensional comparisons. I conclude that Finnish and Spanish families are different, though not so radically different as usually claimed. Fundamentally the family ideologies are the same, the ideological foundation of each nation's families is the same and the evolution of family ideologies has moved in the same direction. Thus Finnish and Spanish families are simultaneously modern and traditional, individual and collective, secular and religious, public and private. The ways these qualities have been shaped and the reasons for it lie in historical, social and political developments.

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1. Introduction

Are Northern and Southern families as different as usually assumed, and if so, in what ways and why?

These questions are the inspiration for the present study.

The aim of this study is to provide some answers to these questions and to justify the doubts by formulating and analysing Finnish and Spanish cases as representatives of Northern and Southern families. The cases are built of selected sets of Finnish and Spanish laws and policies which are directly focused on and targeted at families, family formation and family life. Another selection criterion has been that the laws and policies are nationally applied. This is very important for comparative purposes because unlike in Finland where laws and policies are national, in Spain laws and policies may be either national or regional.

Accordingly, the main problem of comparing Finland and Spain is the fact that Spain is very heterogeneous in cultural, social and economic terms, whereas Finland is clearly more homogeneous. For this reason, it is risky or even erroneous to talk about the (uniform) Spanish culture, although it is risky also in the case of Finland, but perhaps less so.

Therefore, I want to stress that this study is not about real Finnish and Spanish families and their lives nor is it about laws and policies as such. It is about ideologies of families that laws and policies reflect. But why ideologies? Because the conceptions of Northern and Southern family types arise out of ideologies and stereotypical notions which affect our comprehension. Ideologies and stereotypical notions function as standardising forces that provide mythical and universal representations of social structures and systems of social relations (Thompson 1986). They operate like stamps which label the families of different nations according to dichotomies such as modern/traditional, individual/collective, secular/religious, public/private.

Ideologies do not just hang in the air. They are historical, social and cultural creations which do have links with material circumstances. Ideologies have been imposed on us through political power, education, social policy and religion, among other things. They influence and determine the ways in which laws and policies are formulated and implemented, and consequently influence people's behaviour and lives. Family ideologies do not actually dictate our lives but they do give us hints about how a proper, normal and respectable life should be lived (cf. Gittins 1985). But since ideologies are historical they must alter to correspond to the prevailing circumstances.

In consequence, shedding light on the historical, social and cultural dimensions leads to discussions about the modernisation process in connection with the family institution, the modernisation processes of Finnish and Spanish societies, the development of family legislation and policies, and the transformation of values. Therefore, the historical time span of the study reaches from the early decades of the 20th century to the present day, although the stress is on the past few decades.

The sources are comprised of sociological, anthropological, cultural, historical, political, social political and legal studies and publications. However, I have stressed studies by Finnish and Spanish scholars in order to highlight the national viewpoints and characteristics. In order to find answers to my underlying questions I will look for both differences *and* similarities that are related to Finnish and Spanish family ideologies. To accomplish this I use a contrasting comparative perspective which is based on the understanding that discovering and giving attention to similarities among apparently 'disparate phenomena' helps to place differences in proper perspective (see Rappaport 1999).

2. Family and modernisation: myth and ideology

Family is a *historical and ideological institution with cultural symbolic value*. To have a family, to be a member of a family, has traditionally been an indicator of normality, respectability and social acceptability. Family is also a very complex concept due to its multiple forms. A family is not just a collection of individual members but a social, cultural and historical construct and as such it is a part of the larger constructs (Camps & Hernández 1997; Segalen 1997; Vosler 1996). Family, like all other structures and organisations, changes over time. In other words, the changes that occur in the society affect families and families, in turn, affect the society.

It has become necessary to admit that family is endlessly varying because it is not a thing but a process both in historical terms and in terms of the individual life-course (see Bernardes 1987; Hareven 1994). Yet, myths about 'The Family' are persistent both in common and in scientific conceptions. The myth produced by theorists has underpinned most social scientific writings about family from the mid-19th century to the 1960s and even further. According to this myth, industrialisation or its associate, modernisation, changed the family in an inevitable and dramatic manner. In particular, the sociological argument has been that in pre-modern societies the dominant family (household) form was an extended family, often involving three co-resident generations. It was assumed that age of marriage as well as age of childbirth was low, pregnancies were unlimited and the sense of collectivity was strong. Then in the course of industrialisation the familial harmony and community life was destroyed and the new creation was the modern nuclear family living their private lives in isolation from kin and other meaningful social relationships (Anderson 1994; Hareven 1994; Häggman 1996; Jallinoja 1984; Takala 1992).

Recent family historical studies have been tearing down this myth piece by piece. Extended families were indeed more common in the past, but in Western Europe the most dominant family form was the nuclear family (see Hareven 1994; Laslett & Wall 1972; Takala 1992). Even though most households were nuclear they differed considerably from the nuclear family that we know. Families were larger and included more children as well as non-relatives like servants, boarders and lodgers. They also contained different age configurations because of later marriage, later childbearing (cf. above), higher fertility, and lower life expectancy. Furthermore, second marriages, reconstituted families and lone-parent families were common because of high mortality. And rather than being isolated, nuclear

families or households had close kin ties to those relatives who did not share the same house and household (Anderson 1994; Gittins 1985; Hareven 1994).

In short, industrialisation did not have such a dramatic impact on family forms as has long been assumed. The kind of nuclear family described above existed long before industrialisation took off. And, on the other hand, in the post-industrial era as reconstituted families become more common, the family circle widens again somewhat resembling the enlarged family circle of pre-industrial times. However, in contrast to its pre-modern counterpart, the contemporary enlarged family circle is not clearly based on blood and working relationships and on belonging to the same household. Instead, spouses, their relatives and their possible mutual children, their children from previous unions as well as ex-spouses and their relatives and their possible new families constitute a large and complex social network. Furthermore, even though the emotional importance of the family has gained emphasis, the family has not lost its economic significance. Grownup children depend on their parents' economic support, e.g. because of youth unemployment, long periods of study and lack of housing facilities. Parents' economic and material support seems to be quite important also to adult children with their own families and own small children (see Hareven 1994; Oinonen 1998b; Segalen 1997).

Modernisation did not change the family by creating family forms that did not exist before, but rather created an *ideology of the family*. Thus, the ideology of the family is an historical creation. In fact, the very concept of family, as we understand it now, was not used until the late 18th century. Development of the concept of the family as well as the ideology of the family is inseparably linked with the *modernisation process*: the rise of industrialisation, the bourgeoisie, science, secularisation and the increasing role of the state, particularly the welfare state (Gittins 1985). Therefore, as we are investigating family ideology from a comparative perspective, it is particularly important to shed some light on the paths of modernisation of the countries in comparison.

3. Finnish and Spanish paths to modern societies

Finland and Spain are regarded as belonging to different families of nations, and the nations' typical families are assumed to be different. Indeed, both the popular and academic understanding of differences between the Northern and Southern European welfare states are focused on the family. Finland represents the Nordic welfare states with allegedly modern and/or de-institutionalised family structure. Spain belongs to the Southern group of welfare states where the family structure is institutionalised and/or traditional (Martin 1997). Due to these characteristics, it is also assumed that the family is less important in Finland than in Spain because of the more developed welfare state and stronger stress on individuality (see Alestalo & Flora 1994; Castles 1993; Cousins 1995; Esping-Andersen 1990; Ferrera 1996; Kosonen 1992, 1994, 1995; Lewis 1997; Tyrkkö 1997).

Southern and Nordic, whether they refer to welfare state or family types, refer to different histories, cultures, systems and structures. These qualifying terms highlight the great differences generally assumed between countries representing different families of nations (see Castles 1993). However,

despite these differences, there might also be some similarities. From this point of view, the selected countries Finland and Spain provide a possibility to see how accurate the stereotypical notions of Southern and Northern families are.

3.1. Socio-economic modernisation

There is hardly any specifically European form of modernity, but the modernisation processes do differ between central and peripheral areas in Europe. In central areas (e.g. the United Kingdom, Germany and also Sweden) the modernisation process developed from agrarian to industrial and further to a service society. The mode of development in peripheral areas did not follow a similar path (Sapelli 1995; Therborn 1995). Both Finland and Spain are late-bloomers where modernisation is concerned, but when they set off they developed at enormous speed. The industrialisation process was late and weak, and agriculture remained strong until the 1950s and the 1960s. In the course of the 1960s and 1970s the Finnish and Spanish societies experienced rapid and profound changes transforming them from more or less backward agrarian societies into fully industrialised ones (Niemelä et al. 1996, 1998).

The take-off of industrialisation, growth of the service sector and modernisation in agriculture all happened simultaneously, which increased population mobility. As a result the countryside emptied, urban areas filled, and as well as moving to urban areas, Finns moved to Sweden and Spaniards to Central Europe (Niemelä et al. 1996, 1998; Riquer y Permanier 1995). Suburbs were built and public services had to be developed, a new urban, highly-educated middle class emerged as did a new working class largely made up of those of rural origin, and women entered the labour market to an increasing degree. The oil crisis slowed economic growth in the mid-1970s. Spain's economic development was interrupted also by the transition period from Franco's dictatorship to democracy, and thus the late 1970s and 1980s were times of political uncertainty, economic crisis and growing unemployment. From the end of the 1970s to the end of the 1980s Finland experienced a period of stable economic and employment growth, but in the early 1990s Finnish society faced a banking crisis, collapse of Soviet trade and mass unemployment. The recession also hit Spain and in fact Finland and Spain have had the questionable honour of leading the European unemployment rates in the 1990s (see Carr 1980; Niemelä et al. 1996; Riquer y Permanier 1995; Sapelli 1995; Shubert 1992; Taskinen 1998).

From the socio-economic point of view, perhaps the greatest difference between the countries has to do with the degree of wage work. Compared to Spain, Finland is more clearly a wage-work society where a larger part of the population works in an official economy. As we compare the figures representing the share of total labour force from total population aged 15–64, in Finland it has been from 70 to 80% during the whole period in question (1960–1990), whereas in Spain the percentage has changed from slightly over 60% in 1960 to around 58% in 1990 (Niemelä et al. 1996: 11). However, in Spain part of the population works in the unofficial sector and therefore does not show up in statistics (see Cousins 1995; Guillén 1997).

The Finnish peculiarity is the high percentage of women's labour force participation, and their engagement in full-time employment. The share of women in the labour force has risen continuously between 1960 and 1990 and is still rising. Between 1960 and 1990 the share of women in the total labour force has been between 40–50%, whereas in democratic Spain it has grown from 20 to 30%, remaining below the OECD average. One explanation given for these differences is historical. During the Second World War there was a labour shortage in Finland since men were at the war and thus were replaced by women. When the war ended, there were widows who had to support themselves, and also the struggle to pay reparations to the Soviet Union needed both men and women. In Spain the Second World War did not cause such need because Spain managed to keep out of the war (Niemelä et al. 1996: 11–12). However, even though the Second World War did not affect Spaniards directly, their Civil War (1936–39) did. The Civil War meant that Spanish women were needed to keep the society going while the men were fighting. Perhaps the main difference was that in Spain it was strongly stressed that women's work in the public sphere during wartime was an exception, and their wartime contribution aimed at re-establishing traditional norms and values according to which women's real duties lay in the domestic sphere (see Graham 1995: 109–11). So the historical reason for the different levels of women's labour force participation in Finland and Spain may not be derived from war histories but e.g. from legislation and from family and gender ideologies.

Economic growth together with the safety net of the modern welfare state has produced higher levels of economic security than ever before in history. Along with this general prosperity and security people's behaviour and attitudes have changed, which has influenced the structures of families. Children are not needed to support the family financially, at least not to the same extent as before, while on the other hand, the modern way of life is expensive and thus one source of income in a family is seldom enough. Moreover, social status is not based on family relations as it used to be, but on education and professional career.

3.2. Demographic modernisation

What then happened to family structures and behaviours? Despite the pro-natalism of the Franco regime, fertility and marriage rates fell in Spain, and only when the economy started to recover and general living standards improved did the rates begin to rise in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Cousins 1995). In the Northern countries, Finland included, the decline of fertility rates started in the 1960s, but a decade later Southern countries followed the same path and actually overtook the North. Virtually the lowest rates nowadays are found in Spain and Italy, whereas the highest rates are in Northern European countries, namely Finland, Denmark and Ireland (Ditch et al. 1998b: 5–7).

Like procreation, marriage does not seem to attract Europeans to the same extent as it used to. In all countries marriage rates are declining, as are remarriages. The fact that the age at which people marry has increased is often given as an explanation for falling marriage rates, but it seems that fewer people are marrying overall (Ditch et al. 1998b: 10). Yet there are differences between countries in behaviour of family formation and dissolution. Now the marriage rate in Finland is lower than in Spain,

but this was not the case in 1970 nor was the difference very marked in 1980, either. Greater differences are found when we look at the divorce rates and the amount of births outside marriage. Even though divorce rates have risen in almost all Western European countries, there is a clear south–north division. In Southern European countries divorces are still quite rare. In fact, the lowest rates are in Italy and Spain, while the highest rates are found in Belgium, the UK, Sweden and Finland (ibid.: 13).

The same pattern is repeated in the case of births outside marriage. Again Sweden, Denmark, France, the UK and Finland hold the top positions, while the lowest rates are found in Southern countries (ibid.: 15), though the rates have been increasing in every country. High numbers of births outside marriage in Finland indicate that cohabitation is common and a widely-accepted way to start a family, whereas in Spain the foundation for family formation is marriage. Again it should be noted that most of the cohabiting couples in Finland do marry after a child is born (Taskinen 1998). According to Kiernan and Estaugh (1993), there are three groups of countries in relation to the prevalence of cohabitation. Countries such as Sweden and Denmark where cohabitation is an established relationship form belong to the first group. The second group is composed of countries where cohabitation is a transitional phase preceding marriage, such as Finland, Austria, France, Germany, The Netherlands and the UK. The Southern European countries together with Ireland form the third group where cohabitation is relatively uncommon altogether.

Thus with respect to demographic data on family formation and dissolution Finland and Spain seem to belong to different groups. There are some features worth pointing out. Regarding fertility, the rates in Spain started to fall at the same time when recovery took place in Finland. The Finnish rates were lowest during the 1980s when the economy and consumption were growing. A similar kind of growth took place in the Spanish society in the second half of the 1990s. Marriage attracts Finns less than Spaniards. The Spanish rates are around the Western European average and the Finnish rates are under the average. The most remarkable differences are in divorce rates. The difference may be explained by divorce legislation, the influence of the Catholic Church in Spain and by the fact that Spanish women are not as economically independent as Finnish women, as the percentages of women's labour force participation indicate.

The welfare state is often accused of causing these demographic changes in the modern, industrialised countries because it has taken over familial tasks. In the following I will take a brief look at the Finnish and Spanish welfare states and their development and emphases.

Welfare state as an element of modernisation

Being fully aware that it is debatable whether the use of welfare state typologies is valid or accurate in comparing different countries, I will refer to Nordic and Southern welfare state types when I describe and compare the Finnish and Spanish welfare states. Finland and the other Scandinavian countries are at the top of the hierarchy when it comes to total social expenditure as a proportion of GDP, and Spain and the other Southern countries are low on the ladder. When we look at who pays for social

protection, employers are the principal payers in Spain, while in Finland the costs are almost equally divided between the public sector and employers (Abrahamson 1997: 156–9). Personal social services in Finland are mainly public and thus provided by the public sector. In Spain public social services are financed through general taxation and through social security contributions, but there are also other service providers financed privately. On the whole the service sector in Finland is the core of social policy, whereas in Spain it is poorly developed even though the public supply of personal social services has increased during the last decade (Guillén 1997; Sipilä 1997).

When we consider at whom social security and services are targeted, there appears to be a very clear ideological difference. The most important principles of the Finnish system are universalism and egalitarianism. Everybody regardless of income and social status is entitled to social security and services, though several benefits are means-tested. According to Martin (1997: 327), social welfare systems in Southern Europe in general give hardly any protection at all to those who lack money or status. Therefore, access to rights is neither universal nor egalitarian, but based on personal connections, selection and 'patronage'. So, in contrast with Finland, social security and services in Spain are targeted to workers and to those in special need (with the exception of universal health care). As in all Southern countries the aged and those who are or have been employed in the formal sector are well protected, but those working in the irregular or informal economy and the unemployed are weakly protected (Abrahamson 1997; Ferrera 1997; Guillén 1997; Nygren et al. 1997).

These differences are explained by economic, political and cultural factors. Ingelhart (1995) has studied cross-national variations in the values emphasised in different societies, and his analysis indicates that the clearest cultural differences exist between Northern and Southern Europe. The important factor here is the role played by religion. Finland is a purely secular state, where religion and the Church have no influence in politics or government, neither explicitly nor formally (Rauhala et al. 1997). But in Spain religion and the Catholic Church do play an influential role, although the Constitution of 1978 abolished the Church's formal role in state affairs (Cousins 1995). Southern and Catholic countries are still very traditional and less individualised compared to Northern and Protestant countries. For example, families in Spain have a more critical role both in care and material provision than in Finland. In Spain family solidarity promoted by the ideology of the Catholic Church (Social Catholicism) means more than just a commitment to help each other. That is, generations are more likely to belong to the same household or at least live close to each other, and family members of different generations are dependent on each other in a very real way (Flaquer 1998; Guillén 1997; Lewis 1997).

The Northern countries are more affluent than their Southern counterparts and their welfare systems have been developed in a way that enables people to be less dependent on family and community (see Halman 1995; Ingelhart 1995). The level of affluence is at least partly connected to the employment structure. As noted earlier, Finland is clearly a wage-work society where people are engaged in the formal labour market and thus the state's tax revenues are assured. In Spain the black market economy as well as seasonal work is much more common and therefore the state's loss of

income from taxes is greater. Also the absence of a tradition of public services and of administrative culture has hindered the development of the Spanish welfare state. Further, the timing of welfare state development in Spain coincided with the economic crisis in the mid-1980s, whereas in Finland the developmental phase in the late 1970s and the 1980s occurred at time of steady economic growth (Guillén 1997; Sipilä 1997; Rauhala et al. 1997; Valiente 1997).

From a political point of view, stability has been greater in the North than in the South, and the greater stability has presented more solid ground for the modernisation process in all its manifestations. In Spain the long history of political instability and repressive authoritarian rule have left a legacy of distrust towards the state (Cousins 1995). By contrast, Finns have a very positive attitude towards the state, largely due to the extraordinarily stable political conditions during the past decades (Sipilä 1997). Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the Spanish welfare state regime is that the period of dictatorship delayed the (re)gaining of civil rights. It was as late as 1978 when both men and women gained equal rights. In particular the late (re)entry of women into policy-making and public life in general has meant that the establishment of civil rights has been the first priority, and social rights are lagging behind (see Cousins 1995). This has affected the development of family policy in particular as will be seen later on in the paper. In Finland equal civil and political rights for both sexes date back to the early decades of the 20th century. Finnish women gained access to policy-making in 1906, earlier than anywhere else in Europe. Since then social policy and particularly family policy and social services have been women's arena as they have been creating them, developing them, using them and being employed by them (Rauhala et al. 1997; Sulkunen 1989).

The Scandinavian states have been characterised as woman-friendly whereas the Southern counterparts are said to be deeply influenced by 'machismo', which sees women mainly as dependent wives and mothers instead of independent individuals (Jones 1995; Montero 1995). Indeed, there is a strong woman-friendly element in Finnish society, for strategies of social policy are targeted to further women's efforts to connect private and public spheres, family and paid work (and to choose between them). In other words, women have gained a chance at individualisation, and men's burden as breadwinners has been relieved. On the other hand, the Scandinavian welfare state model can also be described as a reorganised patriarchy, where male dominance has moved from the private sphere of marriage and family to public institutions. From this point of view the welfare state is an established machinery to control female sexuality, reproductive capacity and labour force. And instead of freeing women, the welfare state has increased women's dependence on the state by making them welfare employees, clients and service recipients (Rauhala et al. 1997).

As this short and very limited review shows, Finnish and Spanish welfare states are different, although a certain degree of institutional convergence can be detected as the South is inspired by the North and vice versa (Abrahamson 1997). The recession in the 1990s aroused economic and ideological debate on and criticism of the Finnish welfare state, and in practical terms, social policy expenditures, particularly those targeted to families with children, have been cut considerably (Forssén 1998). The 1990s recession also affected Spain. According to Cousins (1995: 194) the deep recession brought an

economic and ideological reaction against the expansion of social rights and further development of Spanish welfare state in a more universal and egalitarian direction.

Regardless of the type of welfare state and the underlying principles, and whether they are converging or not, women are those who are primarily responsible for taking care of dependent family members. Furthermore, with respect to the similarities and differences between Northern and Southern welfare states (read Finnish and Spanish), the family has remained the most important provider of welfare.

4. Marriage and family in the light of legislation

According to traditional Christian doctrine, the prime purpose of marriage was procreation and the rearing of children. Parents might limit the size of their families but the only acceptable way was periodic abstinence for married couples (and absolute abstinence for the unmarried). Furthermore, marriage was a sacrament indissoluble except by church annulment, and any expression of sexuality outside marriage was a grave sin. With regard to gender roles, women were to remain at home and men were given the authority over their wives, children and other dependants in the household. These principles remained the doctrines of Protestant churches up until the 1920s and of the Roman Catholic Church until the 1960s. Protestant churches did loosen their principles in the 1920s when the Conference of Protestant Churches declared that contraception was a legitimate option for married couples, and acknowledged and accepted divorce and women's right to work outside the home. The response of the Catholic Church to the secularising principles of Protestants was the *Casti Connubii* (on Christian marriage) which consolidated the traditional Christian doctrines concerning marriage and the family (D'Antonio & Aldous 1983).

The secularisation and modernisation of legislative principles started gradually in the late 1920s and the early 1930s both in Finland and in Spain. However, the remarkable difference is that in Finland the process has continued steadily up to the present, whereas in Spain political changes rudely interrupted the modernisation process. Besides religion, the most important factors that have shaped Spanish culture and society and thus the family ideology are the dictatorship, which was supported by the Catholic Church, and extremely rapid social and cultural changes that took place after General Franco's death in 1975. The political circumstances in Finland have been fairly stable compared to Spain. Besides political developments, very important factors that influence both the family and the social legislation are gender and civil rights. In this respect, Finland and Spain stand in clear contrast to each other. In the Spanish case authoritarian rule meant that civil rights and egalitarian principles (re)emerged very late, in the second half of the 1970s. In Finland both men and women gained full and equal civil rights in 1906.

4.1. The Finnish case

Finnish legislation on marriage was founded in Christianity and in fact, the laws contracting marriage have changed surprisingly little since the Middle Ages. The rules on who may marry have not changed, with the exception of the minimum age of marriage, which was lowered from 21 to 18 years of age in 1756. Further, only monogamous and heterosexual marriages are accepted and marriages between close relatives are forbidden. Until 1917 religious ceremonies were obligatory because marriage and thus the family were seen as institutions of divine origin. The 1917 Marriage Act made civil ceremonies an option. The law also legitimised dominance of the husband. He managed common property and the wife could not use or decide on her own property without her husband's permission. In addition, the wife was expected to be obedient and humble in every respect (Mahkonen 1978). The legislation from 1756 to the early 20th century could be characterised by subordination. As humans were subordinate to God's will, so wife, children and other household members were subordinate to the male head of the household. The family or household and relationships within it were like a miniature copy of the divine world order; sexual behaviour, division of labour, hierarchy, economic power, etc., within the household were all legitimised and justified by religious teachings and the Bible.

The legislation concerning marriage and the family was strongly patriarchal even though the social and legal position of Finnish women had started to change in the 1860s when they were granted limited proprietorship and entrepreneurial rights and a right to represent themselves in legal matters. Also education and lower public posts e.g. as teachers became available for (some) women. Since then single middle-class women were able to live and function outside the family and free from the patriarchal power of father or husband (Ollila 1998). However, women had to wait for their full civil rights until 1906. Women's movements started to get organised in the 1870s basing their ideology on egalitarian liberalism which argued that social life and social development had to be founded on individual freedom. Every person must be able to realise his or her own abilities, skills and potential as fully as possible, and to that end all the restricting elements and circumstances had to be abolished from the society and from the state (Helén 1997: 147).

By the 1920s a fraction of these demands for individual freedom was reflected also in the legislation concerning marriage and family. Also science, political and cultural independence movements, equal civil and political rights, independence in 1917 and the building of the nation-state as well as diversifying lifestyles caused by gradually emerging industrialisation and urbanisation, and the ideas of love and equality as the basis of marriage and the family all influenced the conceptions of and the roles given to the family (cf. Aalto 1991; Häggman 1996; Räisänen 1995).

The new Marriage Act in 1929 made spouses equal and gave married women juridical independence. Thus husbands' legal dominance over mutual and wives' property and within the marital relationship was abolished. However, the law was based on the idea of a breadwinner husband and homemaker housewife who were expected to live together and be sexually faithful to each other (Gottberg 1996; Helén 1997; Mahkonen 1978). As far as *divorce* is concerned, it was recorded already in the 1734 Marriage Act but in a very strict form. Divorce was allowed mainly on the basis of proven adultery

(Mahkonen 1978). In 1929 a separation of at least one year become an acceptable reason for divorce in addition to fault grounds (Aarnio et al. 1985; Gottberg 1996).

Legalisation of abortion was a subject of fierce debate from the beginning of the century until the 1970s. Pro-natalism was the prevailing ideology in Finnish society particularly between the world wars and therefore abortion was legalised only in 1950. According to this law, a pregnant woman could apply for abortion. If the application was accepted by two doctors, the abortion could be performed in certain hospitals approved by the Ministry of Health. Abortion remained a heated issue until 1970 when the new abortion law came into force. Unlike the previous law, the new one acknowledged a woman's right to decide about her own body and life (Helén 1997).

As we come to the present day, the scope of juridical regulation of marital and familial life has changed remarkably. According to the Marriage Act of 1987, marriage, from the juridical point of view, is now merely an economic contract which can be dissolved without the other party's consent and without an announced reason after a six-month reconsideration period. Personal matters concerning e.g. fidelity, living arrangements and intimate relationships are considered private matters of the family (Gottberg 1996).

The nature of marriage as an economic contract between two individuals becomes apparent also in the case of divorce. After division of mutual property both parties are expected to be financially independent after divorce which means that spousal alimonies are rare. With regard to children's maintenance, both parents continue to be responsible for the maintenance of their mutual children, and the parent (usually the father) who does not live with the child has to pay child support (Aarnio et al. 1985).

The marriage institution has defined children's legal position, too. The principle has been that all children have a right to maintenance regardless of the circumstances of their birth. According to the law of 1734, a child had a right to be maintained by his/her parents until he/she was able to support him/herself. Inheritance rights, however, differed between children born in or out of wedlock. Only children born within marriage were rightful inheritors up to 1878 and it was as late as 1984 when all inequalities between children born in and out of wedlock were removed (Forssén 1998; Mahkonen 1978).

This improvement in children's rights was connected with increasing cohabitation and thus with increasing non-marital births. Even though cohabitation has increased steadily from the 1960s and become a commonly accepted way of life, it is not comparable with marriage in Finnish civil legislation. Unlike in the other Scandinavian countries, separate statutes do not regulate the mutual relationship of men and women living together without being legally married. Therefore, those who live in consensual unions lack the right to inheritance, family property and family pension as well as economic protection in case the relationship ends (Gottberg 1996).

The emphasis on religious and ethical grounds of marriage has remained strong even though the marriage institution has been secularised, attitudes towards alternative lifestyles have become more permissive and the forms of couple unions and families have diversified. For instance, religious marriage

ceremonies have remained popular. Only 5–7 % of those who can choose either religious or civil marriage ceremonies have chosen civil marriage (Suhonen 1997). Moreover, when the public discussion started in the mid-1990s about whether homosexual unions should be legally recognised and whether homosexual couples should have a right to adopt children, the argumentation revolved very much around the unethical and unnatural nature of homosexual unions and around fears for the institution of heterosexual marriage. Partly arising out of the general emphasis on religious and ethical grounds of marriage as the basis of the 'proper family', neither homosexual unions nor consensual unions have been granted equal status with the marriage institution.

Consequently, the marriage-based definition of the family is still very persistent in Finland. The most common family form still is the conjugal family with children. According to Statistics Finland, in 1997 69.4% of all Finnish families were based on marriage and 68% of all families with children were composed of married couples and their children. Nevertheless, the changes have been remarkable in recent decades. In the 1960s marriage was the only acceptable way for a man and a woman to live together; in the 1990s the majority of first unions were consensual unions. Nowadays Finns start their life as a couple earlier but marry later than before. At the same time the age of women at the birth of the first child has risen. As a result of these changes, childless cohabitation has become a very common and quite long period in the life cycle. Despite these changes, most children are born within unions but increasingly within consensual unions. In 1975 around 10% of children were born out of wedlock, whereas the corresponding figure in the mid-1990s was around 30%. However, many of these cohabiting couples do marry after a child is born (Gottberg 1996; Statistics Finland 1998).

By the 1980s the nature of marriage as legal foundation of the family had changed from holy matrimony to a business contract. The modern values of individualism, personal freedom and freedom of choice and modern society's demand for free agents are reflected in the legislation. Family formation is no longer based on a contract with God or even with society but on a contract between individuals, and in consequence, laws cannot regulate the inner life and relationships of the family (cf. Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 1995; Jallinoja 1997).

4.2. The Spanish case

Until the 1931 Constitution, the matrimonial system was conditioned by Catholicism which was the state religion. According to *canon law*, only canonical marriage was allowed. Monogamous and heterosexual Christian marriage was a sacrament and indissoluble. The only exception was that the Church could grant an annulment if the marriage was not consummated, or a separation if a married woman committed adultery. As the purpose of marriage was procreation, it was presumed that all children born to a married woman were always legitimate and consequently, a husband was responsible for the children even if he had doubts concerning his fatherhood. Children and wives were subordinate to the *patria potestad*, that is, absolute patriarchal power. The Civil Code (*Código Civil*) of 1889 stated that the father had legal authority over his legitimate children, and children had the obligation to obey him. Similarly, a wife was a legal minor and she, too, was obliged to obey her

husband; the husband's duty was to protect his wife and children (see Alberdi 1995; Flaquer 1998; Iglesias de Ussel 1998; Shubert 1992).

The short period of The Second Republic (1931–36) made a great difference and produced a *progressive* set of legislation. According to the 1931 Constitution (*Constitución*), Church and state were separate and women were legal equals with men. The legal majority for both sexes became 23 years of age and for the first time women were able to vote, stand for parliament, act as witnesses and guardians, sign contracts and administer estates. Furthermore, women could not be dismissed from paid work because they had married (1932). The constitution also produced the most innovative and liberal laws of the time, such as divorce by consent, regulation of abortion and equality between legitimate and illegitimate children. The marriage institution was secularised and civil marriage became an option also for Catholics (see Alberdi 1995; Cousins 1995; Graham 1995). However, the formal equality and liberalism did not have great effects on everyday life mainly because of its short existence.

When General Franco and his authoritarian regime came into power in 1939 this progress was replaced by *regression* which lasted until Franco's death in 1975. After the Civil War the Church demanded the abolition of divorce and family law returned to the Church. Religious marriage for baptised Catholics was made obligatory, the Church was given the right to pronounce a decision of matrimonial separation and annulment, and divorce was no longer an option. Equality between illegitimate and legitimate children was removed, and adultery and the use of contraceptives were penalised (Cousins 1995: 184). Legally speaking, there was a return to the 1889 Civil Code that once again made women juridical inferiors and married women minors before the law. The Franco regime and its ally, the Catholic Church, made the patriarchal family an image of the state. It also promoted an 'ideal' image of womanhood. The 'Perfecta Casada', the dedicated, submissive and self-sacrificing spouse and mother was the model woman, and motherhood was considered a duty to the fatherland. Thus, women were to stay at home and identify themselves with the family, not as individuals. The husband regained his full patriarchal powers over the wife and children. A married woman could not open a bank account, apply for a passport or even take a paying job without her husband's approval. And if the husband allowed her to work, he had the right to claim her salary (Cousins 1995; Graham 1995; Montero 1995; Shubert 1992).

At the dawn of democracy the Civil Code was reformed in 1975 giving women equal rights with men. The total change started along with the 1978 Constitution which was based on *egalitarian* principles and granted freedom of ideology and religion. Sexual discrimination as well as discrimination based on descent were abolished. In other words husband and wife became juridical equals and the authority of *patria potestad* changed into parents' authority over and responsibility for their children. Furthermore, all children regardless of their descent gained equal status and rights. And the law also enabled paternity tests. Adultery and the sale of contraceptives were decriminalised but legalisation of divorce and abortion met with great opposition from the Church and from right-wing politicians. After a fierce debate, the new divorce law finally came into force in 1981 and abortion was legalised in 1985. The

Constitution also guarantees the social, economic and juridical protection of the family (Alberdi 1995; Cousins 1995; Flaquer 1998; Montero 1995: 381–2; Picontó-Novales 1997).

The 1981 law reintroduced divorce but it also included the juridical systems of separation, nullity and dissolution. The actual divorce has two stages in the sense that divorce cannot be requested directly, neither in the case of mutual agreement nor in the case of fault by the other spouse. Before divorce is granted the spouses need to be officially separated for 1 to 5 years (Picontó-Novales 1997: 113). The fierce debate concerning the divorce law revolved around the fear that the possibility of divorce would make the divorce rate rise like a rocket and destroy the Spanish family institution. But this fear was needless since the divorce rates are still the lowest in Europe. Picontó-Novales (1997) points out that one explanation for these low rates is the fact that it is not possible to apply for divorce directly. In fact, most of those whose marriages have broken down are separated, which means that they cannot remarry (Alberdi 1995: 204; Flaquer 1998: 160–1.) The ‘popularity’ of separation instead of divorce is one notable factor that explains the relative rarity of reconstituted families in Spain. In consequence, the (re)legalisation of divorce did not reflect the increased desire of people to get out of their marriages, as Alberdi (1995: 206) notes, but it showed that society accepts and acknowledges the individual’s right and freedom to search for personal happiness and well-being.

The modern legislation has focused much on children and their rights. As noted earlier, all children are equal and have equal rights before the law. According to the Constitution and to the principles of ‘modern’ *patria potestad*, parents are obliged to maintain and take care of all their children, whether born within or outside marriage, until they reach maturity at age 18. However, parents are obliged to pay for the education also of those children who are no longer minors (Flaquer 1998: 138–9; Picontó-Novales 1997: 113). In the case of separation and divorce parents’ duties towards their children do not change and both parents must continue to contribute to the costs of the children according to their economic capacities. Children also have a say in decisions about their custody or guardianship, and have the right to visit and be in regular contact with the parent with whom they do not live (Alberdi 1995: 394). Custody is almost always given to the mother and so far shared custody is not legally admitted. As a result, the courts are gradually starting to favour fathers concerning parental authority and visiting rights. In addition to the lack of shared custody, another problem that divorced or separated women face is the lack of set maintenance allowances paid by separated or divorced men (Fernández Cordón 1998: 82).

In this context a few more words about maintenance liability are in order. In countries like Spain where the legislative system is based on Roman law, the maintenance liability is more extensive than in countries with an Anglo-Saxon legal tradition. In the latter, in legal terms the course of liability goes from parents to their minor children. This is the case also in Finland. In Spain, however, family/kin members have a legal obligation to support each other financially (*la obligación de alimentos*). In addition to parents’ liability towards their minor (and sometimes mature) children, children are liable to take care of their parents if the need arises. These *alimentos amplios* (broad support) means that parents and adult children must provide each other all the necessary support to maintain their living

standards. Furthermore, siblings have an obligation to provide each other 'restricted support' (*alimento restringidos*), that is, basic needs if there is a temporary and exceptional need. Failure to fulfil these obligations may actually lead to criminal prosecution (Alberdi 1995; Flaquer 1998). On the whole, we may say that parents are responsible for their children and family members are responsible for each other, and the state's right to intervene in the private life of the family occurs when the family is dysfunctional and children's economic, moral, mental and/or physical well-being is in jeopardy (Picontó-Novales 1997).

Even though the political and legislative changes started in the late 1970s, the family as an institution began to change during the 1960s when the authority of the official orthodoxy and traditional values as basis of the family started to be replaced by personal values (Flecha Andrés 1998). As Iglesias De Ussel (1998: 23) notes, the behaviour and attitudes of the majority of the people transformed the Spanish family before the transformations were acknowledged by legislators. While family forms have been and are diversifying, Spanish families are still quite traditional compared to most other Western countries. Marriage is the principal foundation of the family, divorce rates are among the lowest in Europe, and single-parent families, reconstituted families and cohabitation are still relatively rare.

The special feature of Spanish heterosexual cohabitation is that it is not particularly young people's way of life or a pre-matrimonial phase. Instead, most cohabiting partners have one marriage behind them. In Spain cohabitation is not a mode of family formation since the vast majority of children is born within marriage (Flaquer 1998: 84–6; Iglesias de Ussel 1998: 54–5). The legal status of cohabitation has been much debated and the majority of Spaniards would grant the same rights to cohabiting couples as married couples. Legally speaking, there are no precise nation-wide regulations concerning the mutual relationship of men and women who live together without being married other than that children's rights are secured by the law whether their parents are married or not (Alberdi 1995: 432–6).

However, recent legislation and jurisprudence tend to give cohabiting (heterosexual) couples the same rights as married couples, and cohabiting heterosexual and homosexual couples can register their unions in municipalities. The debate over the law regulating the rights of cohabiting couples has surprisingly focused on very controversial issues, namely the treatment of homosexual couples, especially their right to adopt children (Fernández Cordón 1998: 83; Guerrero & Naldini 1996: 12). The new law (*La ley de parejas de hecho*), which treats heterosexual and homosexual couples the same concerning their rights to inheritance, pension and compensation in the case of the break-up of the relationship, came into power in Catalonia in late 1998 and in Aragon in 1999. Yet homosexual couples still lack the right to adopt children (*El País* 11.11.1998, 13.3.1999.)

4.3. Family law and family ideologies

Until the late 1920s and the early 1930s the family in both countries was conceptualised according to Christian doctrines. As structural changes swept over the societies and the new 'social issues'

emerged from e.g. industrialisation, urbanisation, secularisation as well as the changing class positions and demand for women's rights, the new ideology of the family overtook both the upper-class and peasant family ideologies. The idea of marrying for love, the demand for egalitarianism and new scientific and political ideas changed the conceptions of the family and backed up the new ideological creation of the middle-class nuclear family based on intimacy and emotional ties. Even though the 'old' family types existed long after the new family ideology emerged, it became a model for everyone to strive for, which was also reflected in legislation (Gittins 1985; Räisänen 1995).

The idea of love marriage as the basis of the family, together with the liberal voices demanding equality, disrupted the patriarchal tradition and created the idea of home and the family as an emotional rather than economic unit. In fact, in this respect, the Spanish family law during the Second Republic (1930–36) was the most liberal and egalitarian in Europe, but it was soon brutally swept away by authoritarian rule which turned back to the repressive and extremely patriarchal ancient family ideology. In Finland, legislative development has been more constant, moving from a patriarchal family ideology towards an egalitarian one. Perhaps it is possible to say that Finnish legislation concerning marriage and family has gradually changed to correspond to the demands of the people and the society. In Spain, however, the long authoritarian period used marriage and family institutions as political weapons and means of control.

Despite the stereotypical claims of the great differences between families in contemporary Finland and Spain, I would say that from a legal perspective the contemporary conceptions are more similar than different. In both countries marriage is still the principal basis of the family. The rights of family members are egalitarian, emphasising individuality. The divorce procedure is simpler in Finland, which is reflected in the higher divorce rate. As the statistics show, the actual divorce rate in Spain is low, but statistics do not take into account the peculiarity of Spanish divorce law and therefore hide the amount of separations. The greatest ideological difference is reflected in the statutes regarding maintenance liability. From that perspective and officially speaking, the Finnish family is clearly defined as a nuclear family composed of parents and their children, particularly minor children, as mature children do not belong to the family if they live in a separate household. The definition of the Spanish family is broader, consisting of parents, children and siblings even if they live in separate households. The modern conception of the Spanish family does not, however, correspond to the enlarged family because fewer and fewer families actually are composed of three generations living in the same household. Instead, it is more like a network, as Flaquer (1998) points out.

Comparing modern Finnish family ideology to the traditional Spanish one, there is a very surprising legal detail. In Spain where cohabitation is a rare phenomenon, cohabiting couples (and even homosexual ones) are, at least to a certain extent, taken into account in the legislation. Conversely, Finnish civil legislation does not yet recognise cohabiting couples (not to mention homosexual ones) even though cohabitation is common. From this point of view it seems that in Spain the development of modern legislation is ahead of people's actual behaviour, whereas in Finland the actual behavioural patterns are eventually taken into account in the legislation.

5. Family in the light of family policy

In the following I will continue the historical look at Finnish and Spanish families and family ideologies but now from the point of view of family policies. Family policy, as it is understood here, is a collection of various laws, statutes, services and ideologies that are targeted at families or, better yet, at people's everyday lives through the family.

5.1. The Finnish case

In pre-modern, agrarian society, the family, kin and the house were the main providers. The master of the house was obliged to provide and secure maintenance for his own family and kin members as well as for his servants and tenants and their families. This obligation towards servants and tenants extended also to times of sickness and old age. General poor relief was also the duty of the village community. The well-off houses of each village were supposed to take care of the poor of the community (Jaakkola 1991; Takala 1992).

Stronger emphasis on personal responsibility for one's own maintenance emerged at the beginning of the 20th century. The Poor Relief Order (1922) obliged every man and woman who was fit to work to maintain him/herself and his/her children. Furthermore, a person was not to set up a family if he/she was not able to take care of it. The aim of the public poor relief and other measures targeted to families was to keep the poor alive rather than to support the family in fulfilling its obligations. According to the 1920 Income and Property Tax Act, only poor families were entitled to child deductions although in 1924 this right was extended to all taxpayers. Unlike the state, the private religious and upper-class women's charity organisations saw the family and family life as social issues and problems. Material deprivation was considered to originate from asocial behaviour that could only be tackled by teaching new civic virtues, housekeeping, and hygiene and by improving education (Takala 1992).

In the 1930s the family and its reproductive capacities became an issue due to the concern over declining birth rates. The Finn Gunnar Modeen and Swedes Alva and Gunnar Myrdal started the public discussion about society's responsibility to support families in their reproductive duties. According to them, the structural change in society caused by industrialisation created a hostile environment for families and now the society should be made family-friendly again. The measure was a social policy programme that included housing allowances, free school meals, day care centres, various instruction, advice and education services and family income benefits for indigent families with children. This kind of programme did not gain much support in Finland at that time, for it was considered too expensive and inadequate. What was really needed was training of attitudes to create 'willingness to procreate' (ibid.).

Even though the social policy programme was not supported, some new legal measures were enacted that were also targeted to the poor. In 1933 Rural Allotment Parcels were instituted to give social aid to poor rural families to increase their self-sufficiency. These agricultural parcels expanded in 1937 allowing also child support. The National Pension Act came into force in the same year and in addition to old age

and invalidity pensions (based on compulsory savings), it also included a pension for poor people with dependent children. The most important new laws launched in the 1930s were the Maternity Grant Act (1937) and the Law on Municipal Midwives (1937). The former was the first step towards equalising family expenses even though it was first targeted only to poor mothers. However, from 1949 onwards all mothers received the grant regardless of their socio-economic position. The latter law was important for public health and was the predecessor of the public health programme as it gave poor mothers a right to free aid at childbirth (Forssén 1998).

Family policy at that time was clearly population politics. Apart from increasing population growth, the aim was to improve the health and educational level of the population. The Population and Family Welfare Federation, founded in 1941, underlined the family's and especially mothers' roles in creating socially acceptable new citizens, a healthy and decent home environment and preventing social ills such as divorce. Marital guidance centres and sex education campaigns were designed by the Federation to give support and guidance to mothers to meet their duties. Also legislation was enacted to reduce child mortality and thus the Municipal Maternity and Child Care Guidance Centre Act was established in 1944. These Guidance Centres became part of the public health care centres' services in 1972 when the law was replaced by the Public Health Act. As mentioned above, the need-assessment of the Maternity Grant was removed in 1949, and as it also made all pregnant women undergo physical examination, the reform was important particularly for public health. Perhaps the most important reform at the time was the 1943 Family Benefit Act granting benefits to indigent families with at least five children. This was an in-kind benefit including e.g. furniture, household articles, livestock, and children's clothes. The benefit was abolished in 1974. The 1940s were also a time of promoting marriage and family formation since in 1944 the Act on Home-Making Loans for Young Married Couples was introduced. The original grounds for eligibility were that the man served a minimum of one year in active military service and that both spouses were under 35 years of age. The conditions were changed already in 1945: the couple had to be under 30 years of age, without means, and their banns had to have been announced (see Forssén 1998; Gauthier 1996; Karisto et al. 1985; Takala 1992).

The ideology of population politics was that the family was the basic cell of organised society. As long as the family was well it would naturally fulfil its tasks and produce well-socialised and adaptable citizens. Nevertheless, the dominant view seemed to be that everyone should master his (or her) own life and his (or her) own family, as the family policy reforms adopted in the 1930s and the 1940s were still targeted only to those families without adequate means. At that time, the idea of the family was extremely familistic. The aspirations of family members were subordinate to the family's stability and functional abilities as a unit. Even though family welfare was promoted, the family did not play the leading role. Instead, it played a supportive part in pursuing interests of the society.

By the 1950s and the 1960s the actual welfare of the family became the main reason and justification for family and social policy reforms. The principles of social rights and universalism emerged, that is, the benefits and services were not only for those with limited means but for all. The Child Allowance Act (1948) serves as a good example of this change. The idea behind the law was that costs of raising

children should be equal for each family. Or, in other words, the purpose of family policy in general was to ensure that the consumption level of families with children would correspond to that of childless families. Following the Scandinavian model, child benefits were not paid along with the salary of the principal provider of the family, that is, the man. Consequently, the new child allowance system weakened the familistic emphasis by rejecting the one-provider model. The ideological change concerning women's roles in the society was reflected also in Municipal Home Help (1951) which offered municipal home-helper's assistance in regular household tasks primarily to poor families with children. With the reform in 1966 home-help services became available for all families in times of illness or birth. The legislation of the 1960s included Maternity Allowance (1964) which was first paid for 54 days, and the Special Child Allowance (1960) which was paid mostly to single parents but also on the basis of a child's illness. This allowance was abolished in 1974 when survivor's pensions were included in occupational pension schemes (Forssén 1998; Karisto et al. 1985; Kuusi 1961; Takala 1992).

The 1970s were a time of changes both in society and in the family. The greatest single change was the increasing labour force participation of married women. At the same time families became smaller, divorces and reconstituted families became more common, the number of single parents increased and consensual unions became acceptable. The idea of the modern nuclear family was in crisis. Thus, by establishing *child guidance and family counselling centres* experts were called on to support and further positive development of families (The Child Guidance Centre Act 1972). These changes in family forms and family life had inevitable effects on family policy. Policy-makers were forced to take into account the multiplicity of family forms and family situations. The 'social issues' were the questions of gender equality and of fathers' role in family life in general, and in children's lives in particular.

Arising out of this, fathers also gained the right to stay home with a small child and receive paternity grants (Paternity Leave since 1978 and Parental Leave since 1985). The Children's Day-Care Act (1973) and Children's Home-Care Support Act (1980, 1985) also reflected the changes in society. According to the former, all children may receive day care. Since 1990 it has been a subjective right for all children under 3 years of age, and since 1996 day care is a subjective right for all children under age 7. The latter law is intended to support children's home care after the parental allowance period; between 1985 and 1990 it extended to all children under 3 years of age. From the beginning of 1997, the home care support was replaced by a municipal care allowance system. The period from the mid-1970s to the present has been devoted to reconciling family and wage work. Besides these statutes, the Child Home Care Leave (1985) grants one parent the right to stay at home to take care of a child until the child is 3 years of age without leaving her/his job. Parents are also entitled to Partial Child Care Leave (since 1988) which allows for a shorter work day for a parent of an at-home child under 4 years of age or when the child is just starting school. From 1991 onwards a parent has also had the right to a shorter work day during the child's first school year. Finnish family policy is characterised by the strong efforts to secure women's possibilities to work outside the home. It has also enabled parents to choose the form of day care for their children and granted the right to public day care (see Forssén 1998).

The changing conceptions of the family are very clearly pronounced in the development of the *family pension* system. In the 1960s the family pension system was based on the idea of the modern nuclear family. Only children and widows could receive family pension, whereas men could not be recipients because their income level was not in jeopardy if their wife died. Twenty years later the family pension reform (1989) was built on equality, which means that besides children now beneficiaries are all surviving spouses regardless of their sex (Karisto et al. 1985; Takala 1992).

Unlike the civil legislation, the social legislation treats cohabiting and married couples in the same way. For example, social benefits and services are determined by the mutual income of cohabiting partners even if they do not have mutual children and even though they are not obliged to support one another according to civil legislation. The social legislation assumes that people who live together also share their economic resources. Consequently, the actual cohabiting has replaced the marriage-based definitions of the family in the social sector. The main principle behind this view is that people living in consensual unions should not be in a more advantageous position than married people (Gottberg 1996; Mahkonen 1984).

With regard to taxation, both married and cohabiting couples are taxed individually. From the 1980s, tax deductions to families with children included municipal tax deductions for children, single-parent deduction and child-care and child maintenance deductions in state taxation. Also additional child allowance for mortgage loan interest deduction, additional child allowance for health care expense deductions, child maintenance deduction and spouse deduction were tax measures until 1994 when all deductions related to family policy were discontinued. However, the amount of child allowances was raised significantly and a supplement for single-parents was established (Forssén 1998).

Nowadays egalitarian individual rights are probably the most important factors behind the Finnish family ideology. This individualisation process is particularly obvious when we glance at children's position within the family and the development of their rights. The traditional subordinate relation between a child and his/her parents has been replaced by equality, at least in principle. The Law on Child Custody and Visiting Rights of 1984 started to treat children as persons with their own rights and not as parents' property. For instance, according to the law, a child has the right to be guaranteed opportunity for balanced development and well-being according to his/her individual needs and desires. Further, a child must be treated as an independent individual whose needs and desires have to be taken into account when custody decisions are made. Therefore, a child has a right to participate in decision-making that concerns him/herself. In other words, children have gained principal autonomy and hence, the idea of the autonomy of the family is crumbling away (see Alanen & Bardy 1990; Forssén 1998; Takala 1992).

According to the Law on Child Maintenance (1976), the child has a right to adequate maintenance and parents have the duty to support their minor child according to their ability. When parents are unable to meet their support obligations, the municipality must pay the maintenance of the child (see Takala 1992). Parents are not liable to maintain their mature children (18 years of age and older). However, they are obliged to cover the educational expenses of their mature children to a reasonable extent. Students are entitled to receive student loans guaranteed by the state and monthly student grants, which are larger if

the student lives by him/herself. A municipal maintenance allowance which guarantees the minimum income is available mainly for unemployed young people, and housing allowance is granted if the person lives away from the parental home (Korkeimman hallinto-oikeuden muistio 16.6.1997). However, in reality young people have become increasingly dependent on their parents' support during this decade. Due to the recession, the municipalities have tightened their grounds for granting allowances, youth unemployment rates are high, etc. Therefore young people stay longer in the parental home and are financially dependent on their parents whether they still live at home or on their own (see Oinonen 1999).

Egalitarian civil and social rights were initially men's prerogatives. Then they gradually became women's rights too and finally they have been granted also to children. Curiously enough, at the same time when these rights ceased to exist only for men, the state's role and responsibilities as guarantor and distributor of resources and welfare have increased. Nonetheless, the primary producer and distributor of welfare in Finland is the family.

5.2. The Spanish case

Most family programmes in Spain were created and developed during Franco's rule and not before. Family policy was an inseparable part of the propaganda and official discourse of the authoritarian regime. Welfare rights including family policy programmes were used as a means of social control. All benefits were paid to the husband, a deliberate strategy to promote the cult of masculinity and reinforce male authority in the family (Cousins 1995: 178–9; Valiente 1997).

Family allowance (Subsidio Familiar) was first introduced in 1938 and affected most employed people and civil servants. It was financed by the state, employers and workers and the amount was same for all families (except large ones), varying according to the number of children. From 1941 onwards married couples were rewarded with *marriage loans*. The amount of the loan was doubled if the working woman gave up her job after marriage and became a housewife as long as her husband did not become unemployed or disabled for work. The repayment was also reduced when children were born. The loan was converted into a one-time marriage bonus in 1948. During the same period, Spanish families with the largest amounts of children were awarded annual prizes. Large families were defined as having four or more dependent children. Large families had other remissions, too. Their family allowances were higher and taxation was lower. They also received preferential treatment on public transportation, loans, public housing, school fees and admissions, etc. (Valiente 1997: 366–7).

The 1945 *Family Bonuses (Plus de Cargas Familiares)*, which were financed by employers, were paid to most employed people as a supplementary wage included in the paycheque. The amount of the bonus varied from 5% to 25% of the wage depending on the number of children. If beneficiaries also supported a dependent spouse, the bonus was higher. In 1954 another type of family allowance (*Ayuda Familiar*) replaced the existing family programmes for civil servants. It was a monthly payment that varied according to the number of dependent children and if the beneficiary had a dependent spouse. In 1968 the payment amount was standardised (ibid.: 366–8).

In 1966 family allowances and bonuses were replaced for most beneficiaries by contributory benefits, which meant that the receivers were employed taxpayers who contributed to the social security system. This new benefit was a monthly payment for each dependent child and for a dependent spouse. The benefit also included one-off bonuses at marriage and at the birth of each child (ibid.: 368).

The level of all these benefits was the same for all families regardless of their income level, with the exception of large families. They were paid to the breadwinner who usually was the father/husband; if both spouses worked, only one of them (usually the man) received benefits. The only exception to this was the one-off marriage bonus which was paid to both spouses. In addition to these benefits, there were also tax exemptions. Taxpayers could reduce their taxes if they had dependent children and/or a dependent spouse. Several of these exemptions increased along with the income level (ibid.: 368).

The family programmes clearly reflected the main object of Francoist family policies, namely pronatalism. Marriage was encouraged and most of the benefits for children were only for legitimate ones. Large families were prized and, as a rule, the benefit recipient was the father/husband. Family programmes explicitly favoured one-earner families, as the benefits were higher if the other spouse (wife) stayed at home. Consequently, family policies during the first decades of the Francoist regime were in line with the other measures against married women's labour market participation such as marriage bars (prohibitions from working in some companies or sectors of the economy after marriage) (Cousins 1995; Valiente 1997).

The economic importance of family programmes was considerable because actual wages were low. However, by the 1960s and the early 1970s the value of these benefits fell due to inflation and to the fact that the programmes were seldom updated. Most of the programmes of Franco's time remained practically unreformed until 1985 and by that time their economic importance was almost nil. In 1985 the most obvious antifeminist benefits which were paid for a dependent spouse were cancelled; the argument behind this was that the state should neither extol the status of housewives nor discourage women's labour market participation. Further, the one-time bonuses at marriage and the birth of each child were abolished. Subsequently, the monthly payment for dependent children became the main family benefit for employed people, while other family allowances, e.g. for lone parents or at childbirth, ceased to exist (Valiente 1997: 370).

Family benefits were modified in 1990 to make child allowances a means of protection against poverty. Thus, a *means-tested contributory benefit* for each dependent child was introduced. In addition, there is now a *means-tested system of non-contributory benefits* for family allowances, health care, pensions and invalidity benefits. According to the 1990 law, child allowance is granted for dependent children under age 18 if they are economically dependent on their parents and live in the same household with them, and for disabled children. *Benefits for large families* remained practically untouched except that now large families are defined as those with at least three children (or two if one of them is disabled) under 21 years of age or under 25 if they are still studying. The economic importance of the benefits for large families has decreased since 1975 for two reasons: there are

fewer and fewer large families, and inflation has done its job (Cousins 1995: 193–4; Fernández Cordón 1998: 85; Valiente 1997: 371).

As for taxation, the regressive Francoist system was replaced by the new and progressive income tax (*Impuesto sobre la Renta de las Personas Físicas*). This new system granted tax reliefs to families if the couple was married (until 1987), for each dependent child and for child-care expenses (since 1992) (Valiente 1997: 371). Tax reliefs are also granted if there are dependent grandparents and/or legally incapacitated dependants over 18 years of age in the family unit (since 1997). Until 1989 married couples were taxed jointly but since then they have had the right to choose either individual or joint taxation. The joint declaration must include all members of the family unit, defined as married spouses (not legally separated) and their minor children, or a lone parent and minor children. A cohabiting couple does not meet the definition of a family unit (Fernández Cordón 1998: 84–5).

In short, the present measures of family policy in Spain are tax reliefs, benefits for large families and non-contributory and contributory child allowances for those with low or no income. Valiente (1997: 372) describes the Spanish family policy as low-level in terms of spending and institutionally invisible. But the absence of family policy is family policy, as Iglesias de Ussel (1998: 58) aptly points out. Political powers tend to see the family and family-related issues as citizens' private matters, and they fulfil their legal duties by offering a minimal level of protection to families. However, family policy also has great symbolic value in creating a family-friendly climate in the society corresponding to the present needs (see Flaquer 1998: 147). While women's social role continues to change, and more and more women no longer see home as their natural base but are participating in the labour market, need and demand for family policies and services rises.

Compatibility between family and work has only recently been considered a social problem; consequently, one of the most important objectives nowadays is to reconcile family with wage employment (*Boletín Oficial de las Cortes Generales* 1997). The 1989 legislation extended maternity leave, established parental leave and developed publicly-provided child care for children from 3 to 6 years of age. Both mother and father can take *parental leave* if they both work. The maximum duration is three years and the leave is unpaid. Parental leave is considered 'forced leave' (*excedencia forzosa*), which means that one cannot lose one's job (since 1994). The unpaid parental leave is taken into account in the old-age pension of the person who took the leave. Furthermore, a short leave to take care of a small child at home e.g. in case of illness is possible but this *child-care leave* is also unpaid. Until 1989 the paid *maternity leave* was six weeks before and eight weeks after childbirth. Now maternity leave (which can partly be taken by fathers) is 16 weeks; during that time the mother is entitled to an allowance (Cousins 1995; Fernández Cordón 1998).

The fact that parental leave is unpaid reduces its effectiveness in reconciling family and work, but this is not the only difficulty that working parents with small children have to face. The provision of public preschool/nursery services for children over 3 years of age is quite high, but the supply of child-care facilities for children under 3 years of age remains insufficient (Cousins 1995). Today's grandmothers still belong to the generation of housewives and are very important providers of child-care services.

But in the future grandmothers will also be working women without possibilities or even the desire to take care of their grandchildren. Public services targeted to families, in general, are an exclusive domain of *Comunidades Autónomas* (Autonomous Regions) and therefore vary widely between regions. The programme of Minimum Guaranteed Income (*Renta Mínima de Inserción Social*), which is very important especially for lone-parent families is, however, implemented in most regions (Fernández Cordón 1998: 86–7; also Naldini 1998).

5.3. Family policies and family ideologies

In the course of the 1930s and 1940s concern over declining birth rates placed the family in the centre of societal and political debate all over the Western world. Family policy at that time was population politics in both Finland and Spain. The simple aim of population politics was to increase population and, therefore, the public measures encouraged marriage and family formation. The family, particularly in the form of housewife, breadwinner father and their children, was put on a pedestal. Women's mothering role was no longer solely a self-evident natural truth but also their patriotic duty.

The ideology behind the Finnish population/family policy was to protect mothers and children from societal and domestic hazards, and the female politicians had a very important role in developing the policies. Irrespective of their political outlooks, they all emphasised motherhood, but the ideas about its essence separated the right wing and social democrat groups. For the right-wing women the only foundation for motherhood was marriage and harmonious and private family. According to social democrats, the essence of motherhood was the inseparable bond between a mother and a child. Their aim was to provide protection for both married and unmarried mothers and for all children born in or out of wedlock. Right-wing women also demanded protection, but only for 'legitimate' mothers. According to them, the state should not secure the position of 'illegitimate' mothers for it would encourage immoral behaviour. Even though both parties agreed that woman's proper place was at home, the reality was that many married women and mothers had to work. Therefore, the social democrats also demanded that the state help working women by providing a maternity welfare programme including maternity leave, allowance, health care and child care (Sulkunen 1989). Consequently, the development of family policy led to the deterioration of patriarchal family ideology and strengthened the division between public and private spheres and gender roles within the family. The family and home became very matriarchal, and the benefits such as child allowances were not paid to fathers but to mothers. The fathers' role as the master of the house was reduced to that of provider.

In contrast, the Spanish population/family policy was designed to strengthen the patriarchal family ideology. Men's mastering role was promoted in many ways; the allowances and benefits were paid to the breadwinner of the family (the man), married women's labour force participation was discouraged and even prohibited in some sectors, and the amount of benefits was reduced if the wife worked. Due to the general lack of civil rights, men's possibilities to act in the public sphere were limited, but they had absolute authority in the private sphere although women's roles as mothers and *amas de casa*

(housewives) were highly valued. Getting married and having as many children as possible were rewarded. Due to the cult of housewives no services were developed even though some women had to work outside the home. Child care and other services that working women needed were expected to be provided by other female family members, kin or neighbours. Spanish family policy remained practically unchanged until the mid-1980s when the most antifeminist features were removed, and still today the level of benefits and services is low. Nevertheless, the family ideology continues to change. The patriarch has lost his power and family members are supposed to be equal. Women increasingly have a life also outside the home, and men are expected to do their share of domestic duties. The Spanish family is also moving away from the one-earner family ideology. However, Spanish family policy regards family as a conjugal family, whereas Finnish policy treats married and cohabiting couples and their families in the same way.

There is a paradox concerning family policy in Spain. The family is considered to be the most important thing both by the Constitution and by the people and yet family policy is still relatively underdeveloped even though there have been advances during the past decades. Why is this? According to Flaquer (1998: 146), no political force, syndicate or social movement has demanded family policy. The reason is the strong force of familism in Spanish society which, in practical terms, means that those functions that are state's responsibilities in the more advanced welfare states are family responsibilities in Spain. *Amas de casa* have provided services and care, but this is changing as the women of younger generations are working outside the home and their identities are not anchored to home and to providing services for other family members.

Valiente (1997) points out that the most crucial reasons for the underdevelopment of Spanish family policies today can be traced to the political history. During the authoritarian regime family policy was a means of political propaganda and, consequently, post-authoritarian policy-makers have wanted to distance themselves from the policies of the former regime, which is why family issues have been taboo or at least touchy issues. Spanish feminists have also been accused for the state of family policy. Their lack of interest in developing or even demanding family policy is an often-mentioned reason for the underdeveloped family policies. But feminists, like the post-Francoist politicians, rejected the system of beliefs that had inspired Francoist policy-makers and for that reason, most Spanish feminists considered a non-policy as the best family policy. Their argument was that the state should not promote such a social unit as the family, in which inequality between sexes exists (Valiente 1997). In the Spanish context, it is quite understandable why family policy has not been the first issue on feminists' agenda. The late timing of the (re)gaining of citizenship rights and especially the late (re)entry of women into policy-making has meant that the first task of female politicians has been to establish civil rights, and that is why social rights and social services including family policies have lagged behind.

6. An interpretation of nations' families: questioning dichotomies

Certain ideas force themselves onto the intellectual landscape and establish themselves as fixed ideas or self-evident things. They seem to resolve the fundamental problems and clarify obscurities. They are like the 'open sesame', the conceptual cornerstone on which a comprehensive analytical construction can be built. Such *grandes idées* are due to the fact that everyone attempts to exploit them: trying them in every connection, for every purpose, using them for generalisations (Geertz 1973). Forceful ideas often turn into ideologies, as did the idea of the modern nuclear family which eventually developed into an all-Western family ideology. However, after we have become familiar with the new idea, when it has become one tool in our tool box of theoretical concepts, our expectations concerning its usefulness become more realistic and its excessive popularity starts to fade, but it remains a permanent part of our intellectual armoury and still explains something. Instead of being all-promising, it becomes a seed giving rise to new ideas (ibid.). The grandiose Western family ideology based on the idea of the modern nuclear family has become a tool among other tools and a seed for new ideas. While it has become evident that the model of the modern nuclear family (in its structural functional form) does not clarify obscurities in different social and cultural contexts, new ideas have emerged such as Northern and Southern families in Northern and Southern families of nations. These new ideas may not (yet) be ideologies but stereotypical notions; nevertheless, they can also produce new views if they are analysed using a critical gaze and thick description.

The stereotypical notions of Finnish and Spanish families do hold some truth but they are based on thin descriptions of statistics, laws and policies. In this chapter, however, I try to go deeper and formulate thicker descriptions of Finnish and Spanish families by questioning and contextualising implications.

There are several dualistic notions behind the 'typical Finnish and Spanish families'. As noted earlier, the Spanish family is considered traditional, familistic, tight and based on religious (Catholic) values. The Finnish family, by contrast, is supposed to be modern, individualistic, loose and secular. The stereotypic notions of Southern and Northern families indicate that the family ideology in Spain may be described as traditional and the Finnish one as modern. These characterisations allude to dualistic counterparts as components of these ideologies. At least the following dichotomies are present: traditional/modern, collective/individual, religious/secular, private/public. In the following I will analyse Spanish and Finnish family ideologies through these dichotomies.

6.1. From traditional/modern...

Traditional/modern is an umbrella pair of concepts under which all the other dichotomies mentioned above belong. In sociological vocabulary, tradition is used to refer to pre-modern societies, and modern is a concept to describe societies that have evolved through industrialisation, urbanisation and capitalism. Apart from these structural changes, modern also means a change in attitudes and beliefs and, correspondingly, tradition is also used to refer to those elements of the past that are important

and kept alive in the present (Tonkiss 1998: 47). The latter meanings of traditional/modern are relevant here, for surely nobody can claim that Finland and Spain are anything but modern societies.

Traditional and modern contain ideas of continuity and change. Continuity refers to the idea that there are certain things in the society that we can rely on from one day to the next, and change refers to the idea of discontinuity between historical moments (ibid.). When we think about the family institution from this perspective, it appears ambiguous in its nature, for it represents both continuity and change. In other words, if modern equals change, we can say that family has always been modern in its nature, since it has never been a static institution. And, if tradition equals continuity, we can say that family has always been traditional too, since it is an institution that has always been and will continue to be there in one form or another.

When we look at 'official' Finnish and Spanish ideologies of the family, they are very much in accordance with the model of the modern nuclear family composed of a married couple and their children. This type of family is best protected by the law in both countries. The centrality of the modern nuclear family ideology is manifested in the fact that neither cohabiting heterosexual couples nor homosexual couples have the same rights as married couples in the eyes of the law. However, in this respect we may say that Spain is more 'modern' than Finland since the Spanish legislation has started to grant rights also to these 'unconventional' living arrangements, whereas the Finnish civil legislation does not yet recognise them at all. Nevertheless, in Finland cohabitation is a common way to start a family while in Spain it is not. From that perspective the Finnish family seems to be more modern than the Spanish one.

Children are central qualifiers of the family in all Western societies (Gittins 1985). Both Spaniards and Finns tend to think that it is a child or children who make the family. A childless married couple is not regarded as a 'real family' since they are frequently confronted with the question of 'when will you start a family?' (Alberdi 1999; Iglesias de Ussel 1998; Reuna 1997). But when we glance at the patterns of family formation, it is possible to say that in Spain the family is couple- (marriage-) centred since very few people have children before they are married. In Finland, however, many people tend to have a child before they marry, and from that perspective the Finnish family may be called child-centred (cf. Segalen 1997; Schultheis 1997). Nevertheless, most of the Finnish couples do marry and therefore it is accurate to say that marriage has not lost its position as a central social and cultural institution. The couple- and child-centred gravity of family formation and the conception of the family is visible in the family policies. In Finland, even though the civil legislation puts emphasis on marriage, the social legislation acknowledges 'unofficial' living arrangements as families, especially if there are children involved. The Spanish social legislation rests more clearly upon the idea of marriage as a foundation of the family.

The most striking difference in the legal definitions of the family has to do with the maintenance liability, that is, who is liable to provide for whom. As noted previously, in Finland the liability goes from parents to their minor children, whereas in Spain the liability relationships stretch further: from parents to children, from children to parents and even from one sibling to another. From this perspective we

may say that the official definition of the family in Finland corresponds to that of the nuclear family and the Spanish definition of the family is 'enlarged'. In reality, however, the liability is not based only on legal obligations but also on moral ones. That is, in Finland parents continue to provide maintenance also for their mature children, especially if they still live in their parents' house. The studies also show that adult children with their own families receive financial and material, not to mention emotional, support and services especially from their parents, but also from their siblings and vice versa. However, actual financial help is asked from family/kin members only in very acute circumstances, in the form of a loan which is usually paid back (Oinonen 1999; Segalen 1997). The greatest practical difference between the countries in question is that in Spain this extended liability is prescribed by the law and in Finland it is a matter of morals. But no matter what the law says, the feelings of responsibility and care do not vanish when the children leave the nest and have their own families (see Oinonen 1998b).

To return to the structural functional interpretation of the family, the most functional family form in modern society is claimed to be the modern nuclear family because it is small and unattached to a larger kin group. Therefore, it is geographically mobile, which in practice means that the family can easily move to where the jobs are (e.g. Goldthorpe 1989). Flaquer (1998) claims that in this respect the Spanish family is dysfunctional (traditional) because the adult children tend to establish their own households near those of their parents and siblings, due to the multiple obligations they have to each other and to their strong sense of togetherness. In contrast, families in Northern Europe, for example Finland, are functional (modern), as the individual households of kin members are often scattered all over the country; this is possible because of the stronger stress on individual values over collective ones and of the loose family and kin relations in contrast with the tight ones in Spain and in other Mediterranean countries.

Does the physical and geographical closeness or distance of family and kin members really correspond to close or distant relations or to the level of attachment? Studies on Scandinavian families show that relations between nuclear kin members (parents, children and siblings) have remained close even though they often live far from each other. These relations are characterised by 'intimacy at a distance' (Gaunt 1997). My own study on Finnish families with children also revealed that relations to family and kin are the most important and closest social relations. Family and close kin members provide friendship, company, roots and a sense of belonging (Oinonen 1999). In his study on Swedish families, Gaunt (1997) points out that vacations and especially summer homes are the opposite of 'intimacy at a distance'. As in Sweden, in Finland summer homes are often owned and maintained collectively by relatives. These can be a farm or another type of childhood home in the country or an inherited summer house or cottage. As free time and vacations have become longer, people have more time and possibilities to use summer houses which are often distant, and kin from all over can gather there. Several generations may live there sharing the house, food and time. To avoid lapsing into too much romanticism, it is also true that as the summer place is often the most valued and the only form of common property, it may also lead to disputes and problems between the owners.

Aside from this 'collective summer life', valued principles are freedom and intimacy of an individual and a nuclear family in relation to the kin/family. However, many studies show that services are exchanged, and when it comes to caring for the aged, relatives and especially daughters do most of the caring (Gaunt 1997; Sipilä 1997). This 'intimacy at a distance' is possible because the public welfare programmes (e.g. child care and old-age care) relieve families of the burden and tension of care and economic support within the nuclear kin group. Thus, the welfare society gives greater space for friendship within the family/kin group (cf. Gaunt 1997).

For this reason, it is possible to say that in Finland emotional solidarity has replaced the duty of filial solidarity; further, we may assume that the sense of togetherness in the Spanish family is based more on filial solidarity. Yet, in real life the sense of togetherness is a mixture of both sorts of solidarity regardless of the actual space of intimacy. However, the study conducted by Camps and Hernández (1997) concerning the modern 'pairalism' (stem family) in urban Catalonia indicates that the idyllic picture of close Spanish families has another side, too. That is, that when 'personal realisation' becomes more important than 'family life' there is a severe contradiction between kinship/family obligations and personal freedom. When 'intimacy at a close distance' is expected and when family and kin members are in many ways (economically, materially, and for services) truly dependent on each other, the family, from the individual's point of view, may represent support and/or oppression. One may feel that interventions of the other family members into one's life are excessive and the obligations towards others are overwhelming.

6.2. ...to collective/individual...

Previous paragraphs have hinted at the *collective/individual* dichotomy. In family studies collectivism is in most cases associated with the traditional way of life and with enlarged families of the pre-modern era. It has somewhat romantic overtones, like a longing for the good old days. Collective also refers to both emotional and economic attachment. Individualism, on the other hand, is considered to be a modern phenomenon which has both negative and positive connotations. On the one hand, it is connected with selfish, consumerist, egoistic and narcissistic behaviour that undermines the solidarity in society. On the other hand, individualism is also associated with freedom which is a fundamental, positive value (see Bauman 1996; Giddens 1991). Individualism, according to Turner (1991), is the doctrine of individual rights which may be expressed in a variety of religious, political, economic and legal forms. It is associated with Protestantism, which emphasises individual responsibility of action. Collectivism is often associated with Catholicism, whose doctrines emphasise collective obligations between individuals and collective responsibility of individual's actions.

Comparisons between different families and family lives provide several indicators of collectivism and individualism. High divorce rates, frequency of cohabitation and singleness, low birth rates, leaving the parental home at a relatively young age and children's self reliance as the main objective of family upbringing are associated with a higher level of individualism. In turn, low divorce rates, low levels of cohabitation and singleness, high fertility, leaving the parental home at higher ages and lack of

emphasis on self-reliance in bringing up children are connected with culturally prevailing collectivism. Le Bras (1997) criticises the use of birth rates as indicators of different trends of family values and practices. According to him, family systems that are over-exacting and demanding (collective) have the effect of restraining fertility, which may offer one explanation for the spectacular fall of birth rates in Mediterranean countries, Spain included. In contrast, in Finland which is regarded as individualistic, the birth rates are among the highest in Western Europe together with such countries as Denmark, Sweden and the UK which are regarded as overtly individualistic (see Ditch et al. 1998b).

Cohabitation is much more common in Finland than in Spain, but does it really indicate individualism? The relationships are often very long, many of them end in marriage and cohabitation is a way to start a family, so how could it be a more individual way of living than marriage? To be sure, it is more easily dissolved than marriage, but break-up is emotionally as difficult as divorce and financially even harder. Both cohabitation and marriage demand devotion and willingness to make a commitment. I would say that the all-Western phenomena of increasing cohabitation, singleness and divorce are not a question of individualism as such, nor are they a question of immorality or deterioration of collective values, but rather a question of the changing nature of communities and the sense of community. According to Bauman (1996), today's communities can be characterised as 'imagined communities' because instead of institutionalised rules, norms and laws, they are principally based on a strong emotional desire to commit to a community. Therefore, imagined communities, families among others, exist as long as their members believe in them and are devoted to them. In fact, the 'imaginativeness' is becoming and has become formally recognised as, for example, divorce has become more easily attainable than before and modern legislation grants children the same status and rights whether they are born in or out of wedlock.

When it comes to raising children, self-reliance, 'being oneself', finding oneself and creating one's own identity are central values in the Northern countries. Further, we may say that they are common values in Protestant countries (Gullestad 1997; Schultheis 1997). By contrast, in the Southern and Catholic countries individuality is not a stressed educational value and overall the degree of individualisation of the family members is low (Flaquer 1994; Reher 1996). Schultheis (1997) suggests that valuing children's self reliance is directly reflected in the habit of leaving home relatively young. Following his argument, we may assume that the reason Spanish young people stay at home longer than Finnish ones is that self-reliance is not a core value of their upbringing. This may very well be part, though not all, of the truth. First of all, historically speaking, in the northern parts of Europe, such as Finland, young people left the parental home to work, whereas in Spain and in other Southern European countries they left only for marriage. Thus in Finland it has been customary to lead an independent life before marriage. This difference is still prevalent today. The fact that Spanish young people leave the parental home later is due to extended studies, unemployment and shortage of housing. These factors hinder both marriage and other ways of gaining independence and forming a household of one's own. Furthermore, this sort of dependency is not questioned (Alberdi 1999; Reher 1996). Secondly, the tendency to leave the parental home as early or as late as possible has to do with the possibilities offered by the state. In Finland everyone who has reached the age of 18 is entitled to receive the basic

living resources, and students are granted student loans and grants; in Spain the state does not offer similar possibilities.

Arising out of this, it is true that the educational and socialising values are more individual in Finland and more collective in Spain. It is also true that the ideology behind the Finnish welfare state and legislation, in general, is individualistic. But Spanish legislation is also moving away from family-centred rights towards individual rights (see Iglesias de Ussel 1998). This, as we know, is the common development in all Western societies. In that sense, the individual has replaced the family as the basic cell of the society both in Finland and in Spain. But this does not mean that in either of these countries the family and sense of collectivity no longer matter. Neither does individualism mean that values and morality have changed so that 'anything goes'.

The emphasis on personal autonomy has reduced the significance of all sorts of institutions in the Western world. The individual is less guided by tradition and traditional institutions such as church and the family, and these institutions no longer legitimate individual moral choices to the same extent. The moral guidance of the Church, in particular, has been challenged especially in the realm of sexual morality. In issues like marriage, divorce, homosexuality, contraception and abortion people increasingly rely on their own judgements and prescriptions, and legislation is increasingly allowing it (Flecha Andrés 1998; Halman 1995).

It seems reasonable to think that there is a distinction between traditional or institutional morality and personal morality. Therefore, it is likely that the frequently discussed moral decline in contemporary Western societies does not exist as such. What may have declined, instead, is the traditional morality based mainly on religion. Traditional morality has focused especially on issues concerning sexual behaviour and reproduction, which nowadays are considered private matters, and therefore they have become questions of personal morality. This shift has required a growth in permissiveness, which in turn is based on increasing levels of education, mobility, mass media, etc. Permissiveness denotes an attitude according to which everyone is free to live as they see fit as long as their way of life and choices do not harm anybody else. Thus permissiveness does not mean a lack of moral standards, but indicates that people are willing to accept the fact that others may have a different set of values (Halman 1995). Permissiveness comes very near to Bauman's idea of the post-modern mentality as one that accepts ambivalence and teaches people to live with it. Because the forms of culture are multiple and intertwined, the modern dualism that pursues clarity, 'purity' and all-encompassiveness is not equivalent to the ambiguous reality. In order to function in modern society people need to develop a post-modern mentality that is accepting, permissive, flexible, and tolerates imbalance, unsteadiness and rapid change (see Bauman 1996; Jallinoja 1997).

It seems that contemporary morals are affected by two contradictory trends. On the one hand, people's actions are increasingly regulated by various rules and laws, but on the other hand growing liberalism and permissiveness have extinguished the authorities dictating what is right and wrong. These simultaneous trends lead to a situation where some moral issues are administratively regulated, and others remain under individual consideration (cf. Jallinoja 1997). This schizophrenia is

apparent when we consider the Finnish and Spanish regulations and people's actual behaviour in relation to cohabitation. In Finland people cohabit without legal recognition, and in Spain cohabitation is administratively recognised but people seldom live in that way.

In a word, people nowadays are freer to choose how to live their lives and what to believe than in previous times. But this kind of freedom can also become a burden. As Giddens (1991: 81) has said, people in modern societies 'have no choice but to choose'. Individual freedom is also relative. There are many constraints within cultural and social systems. People are social beings and one person's actions and choices have some kind of an impact on the lives of others. Therefore, people, especially those who are close to each other, have to take others' expectations, values and preferences into account, at least to some extent. Besides, in addition to other people, individual freedom is also restricted by legislation and common principles of decency. Consequently, it is correct to say that increasing individualism does not mean that 'anything goes'. In addition, freedom connected to individualism brings responsibilities, particularly to be 'decent' while making individual choices, that is, making choices within commonly accepted ground rules which can be understood as the moral consensus in the given society.

6.3. ...to religious/secular...

People in modern societies live on a razor's edge: at the same time as they have multiple options they are also historical and cultural beings and therefore carry the traditions inherent in their culture. This inheritance influences people's choices both consciously and unconsciously. One important source of cultural heritage is religion. From a religious point of view Finland and Spain are similar in the sense that they are both Christian and different in the sense that one is Protestant and the other is Catholic.

The common trend in all Western societies is that more and more people are leaving the Church, they do not practise religion actively e.g. by going to church regularly, they doubt religious teachings, values, ethics and world view, etc. This sort of modern development has been particularly rapid in Spain. According to the Spanish studies, in 1970 two out of three Spaniards regarded themselves as 'good and practising Catholics', whereas twenty years later less than half did so. The studies also show that religious doctrines and the Church's authority are increasingly questioned (Díaz-Salazar 1993; Montero 1993). Nevertheless, several studies have also shown that when we glance at the weight put on children's religious upbringing and at the attention given to the Church on family matters, people in Southern and Catholic societies are more religious than people in Northern and Protestant ones (e.g. Guerrero & Naldini 1996).

However, the general secular trend does not in itself indicate that modern people do not have 'faith' or that they do not 'believe'. Turner (1991: 143) points out that the secular trend has been exaggerated because, firstly, the focus has been on the relationship between people and the 'official' Church: the Evangelic Lutheran Church in Finland and the Roman Catholic Church in Spain. And, secondly, the popularity and prevalence of different cults in modern societies clearly demonstrates that neither

modern societies nor the behaviour of modern people is dominated by technical and scientific rationality (also Díaz-Salazar 1993). The need for religious purpose in life is a permanent feature of human existence. Therefore, secularisation does not mark the disappearance of the meaning and significance of religion, but the transformation of the modes of religiosity. Religion is very alive in norms, values, morals, in family celebrations and in the 'rites of passage' (Parker 1998; Rappaport 1999). Because I do not have comparable data on Finns' and Spaniards' actual religious behaviour, and because that type of an approach to issues concerning religiosity and secularity is very common, I will concentrate on celebrations and rites of passage and on the values they reflect.

Why do Finnish and Spanish families get together and celebrate Christmas and Easter? One answer is because people have holidays then. But why do we have holidays just then and not a month or a week before or after? The answer is religion. Christmas and Easter are religious holidays. Many of us do not attend religious services then or even clearly recall the religious traditions behind these holidays, but the holidays are important. They give us a break from our daily routines, and they provide us time and opportunity (and obligation) to be with family. Moreover, every family, religious or not, has their Christmas and Easter traditions. In some families Christmas is not Christmas before the manger scene with Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus is in its place. We give each other gifts, some paint Easter eggs, the flowers we put on the Christmas and Easter dinner table are particular flowers and even meals consist of particular foods, etc. All these traditions and symbols that make Christmas and Easter what they are have a religious origin. Some are Christian and some date back even further.

Another connection between contemporary Finnish and Spanish families and family lives and religion is found in the rites of passage, namely christening, confirmation and first communion, marriage and funerals (Parker 1998). Most children in both countries are christened in church even if their parents do not consider themselves religious. Adolescents go through the ceremonies of confirmation and first communion even if they are not believers. Most people choose the religious marriage ceremonies instead of the civil ones and most people are buried in 'holy ground'. When we go through these rites it is doubtful that we think about our changing position and status in the congregation. Instead, they are markers of the stages of our personal lives and of our new statuses within the family and kin and also in the society (*ibid.*). Furthermore, these rituals are usually followed by celebrations among the family, kin and the closest friends. So, like holidays, they also provide the time to be together in an atmosphere which is not marked by the everyday reciprocal obligations.

When people are asked why they marry, have children and thus form families, their answers are usually quite vague—because they are normal or proper things to do. When we add here the common opinion that family is not family without children, it becomes quite obvious that the notions of normality and propriety have much in common with the old Christian doctrines concerning sexual behaviour. According to Christian doctrines, (heterosexual and monogamous) marriage is the only legitimate forum for sexual relations, and the sex drive should be harnessed to procreation (*cf.* D'Antonio & Aldous 1983; Gittins 1985). Furthermore, infidelity is regarded as morally wrong, the most valued things in life and the most important elements for the good life for Finns and Spaniards alike are family

and good and close relations with family members (Alberdi 1999; Flaquer 1998; Iglesias de Ussel 1998; Melkas 1996; Puohiniemi 1996; Reuna 1997). So, regardless of the permissiveness towards others' different ways of life, people themselves tend to act quite traditionally. And further, these familial values outstrip such values as work and leisure even in Finland where the Protestant work ethic and value of self-reliance are strong. As we have seen, many of the contemporary values and practices, and especially those connected to family and family life, have a religious background. Religion, particularly Christianity, has shaped the cultural heritage of both Finland and Spain. From this perspective it may not be too bold to claim that Finns and Spaniards and, particularly, their family ideologies and lives are equally religious *and* secular.

The issue of secularisation divides sociologists into two camps. There are those who treat secularisation as a loss of faith connected to the loss of community and moral coherence, and those who regard secularisation as a gain in personal freedom and autonomy. As has been discussed earlier, the views of both of these camps are not beyond doubt. The basic notion, however, is that secularisation involves diminished social significance of religious institutions. That is, the Church's control e.g. of education and provision of 'poor relief' have been taken over by the state and the Church does not have an explicit role in states' affairs (e.g. legislation) (Beyer 1998; Turner 1991). In consequence, we can assume that religious then means the opposite. From this point of view, it is obvious that today both Finland and Spain are secular, although the 'secular tradition' is longer in Finland than in Spain due to Franco's alliance with the Catholic Church.

In a modern society, religion is supposed to belong to the private sphere and not interfere in the public sphere. But as Riis (1998) points out, the civil religion has political associations to such an extent that the values underlying a political ideology are either directly or indirectly related to a religious world view. The religious-political dealings can lead to the situation where a ruling power gets its legitimisation from religion, which puts the ruler beyond discussion and critique. This is what happened in Spain when General Franco and the Catholic Church allied with each other. The Church regained its powers and Franco got the confirmation for his status from the Church, and thereby from God. As Catholics tend to be more authoritarian than Protestants, and as Catholic teachings and values were (and are) an inseparable part of the world view and identities of Spanish people, religion and religious doctrines worked as a means of control and a tool for the authoritarian regime in its battle against modernisation and outside influences and in its attempt to regain the lost sense of Spanish nationalism (see Linz 1993; Riis 1998). Francoist family policy and legislation were powerful means to maintain the hierarchical social order.

On the other hand, the association of religion and politics is reflected also in the ideology behind the welfare states. The whole idea of the welfare state and thus family policy in modern capitalist societies derives from the religious ethic of compensation and from the belief in the passage from precariousness to well-being, from disease to health, and from inadequate living conditions to a higher standard of living (Parker 1998). The actual developments and outcomes of policies in different

countries are affected by the religious-cultural stress put on individual and collective values as shown in the chapter dealing with Finnish and Spanish family policies.

As this short discussion has shown, the secularisation process is by no means uniform or linear. It is quite in order to ask whether such a process even exists (see Turner 1991: 145). From the macro-level point of view, both Finland and Spain can be said to be secular as the State and the Church are separate institutions with their separate tasks. But then again, religion and politics are intertwined at least at the ideological level. At the micro-level, religion dictates neither Finns' nor Spaniards' behaviour but it certainly influences it. The point is that nowadays religion and religiosity are not something that one has to or even needs to be involved in but rather are a question of wants. Wants are closely bound up with the values of particular communities, but judging them is an individual matter. Needs, in turn, are not matters of individual choice for they arise when authorities tell us what is necessary for a human life in society (Slater 1998a).

6.4. ...to private/public

Like religion, getting married and forming a family come down to the question about needs and wants. The private realm, usually associated with the family, is defined as the realm of social life which is most intimate and based on free will (wants). The public realm, commonly associated with the state, is that part of life that is shared, visible and governed by common norms and rules (needs) (Slater 1998b). It is arguable, however, to what degree marriage, family and family life are based on free will. Gittins (1985) remarks that sociologists have been so overtaken by the idea of and emphasis on love and romance as the basis for contemporary marriage and the family that they have overlooked other less voluntary reasons to get married and start a family.

Regardless of the increased permissiveness, a pregnant woman without a husband is considered socially and morally suspicious and therefore unplanned pregnancy is one reason to end up married and have a family. Furthermore, in spite of changing gender roles, marriage continues to be an important vehicle, especially for women, to gain financial security and improve their social status. It is quite common for nurses to marry doctors and secretaries to marry their bosses. Thus it seems that women need marriage more than men (see e.g. Gittins 1985; Jallinoja 1997). Due to cultural, social and economic (public) circumstances, for many women and men alike, marriage is the way to become independent and gain the status of a true adult. This, as discussed earlier, is the case in Spain, but in Finland the importance of marriage for becoming an independent adult or starting a family of one's own is not so marked.

The relation between private and public is often seen as one of subordination: the private sphere and its inhabitants are subordinated to the public sphere (Slater 1998b). That is, even though the private represents the locus of free will and sovereignty, the organisation of private life is regulated by laws and norms. But it is also true that the public (the state) cannot survive without the private (the family) because its reproducing, socialising and economic functions are essential to the state's existence.

Due to this symbiotic relationship, the family is not only a retreat from the outside world but very political, and the line between public and private is anything but clear.

The private/public dichotomy, as we now understand it, is the creation of modernity since the structural changes accelerated 'the division of labour' between the family and the state. Subsequently, the idealisation and defence of the private sphere are modern phenomena. The middle-class private life came to denote a 'haven' from the public world and the proper way of living (one-earner nuclear family composed of a married couple and their children). In the process, the requirements of private life became defined by transforming the mores of middle-class private life into public norms. As a consequence, the privacy of those (e.g. single mothers, working mothers, cohabiting couples, 'fallen' women, poor and/or dysfunctional families) whose way of life did not fit into the modern, middle-class norms, became objects of public concern and intervention (Gauthier 1996; Goldthorpe 1989; Sulkunen 1989).

When these middle-class mores became the norms, childhood and housewifery started to be idealised. Child labour became unacceptable and children's proper place moved from the public to the private sphere, i.e. home, and later on to the school, which is a public place designed precisely for children. Similarly, the idealisation of housewives confined women to the private sphere and excluded them from the public one (e.g. Alanen & Bardy 1990; Goldthorpe 1989; Gittins 1985). As the development of Finnish and Spanish legislation and policies has shown, these trends were very much stressed in both countries from the early decades of the 20th century up until the 1950s and 1960s, and even later in Spain. Before and after the Second Republic until the late 1970s, Spanish women, particularly the married ones, were actually forced to remain in the private sphere since legislation indeed restrained women from acting in the public sphere. In addition, the Francoist family policies rewarded women for staying at home and punished them if they did not. In Finland the ideology took a different direction mainly because women were not excluded from the public sphere, and because they had means, that is civil and political rights, to act there. The conviction that woman's proper place is at home and that it actually would be for her own and her family's benefit served as a launching pad for the development of the welfare state, particularly the family policies.

Nowadays the bedrock under the modern democratic societies is egalitarianism and thus neither civil legislation nor family policies are supposed to raise any obstacles to citizens' activities in the public or private spheres. Since the late 1970s onwards one of the main objectives of Finnish family policy has been to ease women's efforts in particular to combine family and work. Furthermore, it has started to encourage men to participate more actively in the chores in the private sphere. Similar trends have emerged more recently in Spanish family policy, and the matching benefits and services are still very much in the developmental phase. The stress on egalitarianism has also provided the justification for enlarging the state's 'surveillance' of all, not only those who do not meet the standards of 'normality'.

Despite these egalitarian trends and principles, the traditional gender roles are very much alive within the family and within the cultures of the respective countries. The essence of masculinity still lies in the role of provider and of actor in public arenas. Equally, femininity remains connected to the caretaker

role, presiding over the private sphere. However, the gender roles have changed. Today's Finnish and Spanish women do not identify themselves only as mothers, wives, caretakers and homemakers but are increasingly winning their place in the public sphere. Nonetheless, the traditional gender roles and values persist in reflecting the ideology of the modern nuclear family with a male breadwinner and female home-maker, as men still earn more than women and women continue to be the principal caretakers and service providers in both the private and public spheres. The 'novelty' is that in the public sphere they are paid for it and in the private sphere they are not (cf. Rauhala et al. 1997).

In any case, the changing gender roles are important motivators for developing family policies, but these policies are not disinterested good deeds of public powers. First of all, to support wage work is to guarantee state tax revenues to maintain and develop the society. Secondly, the family policies are entrances to the private and means of social control. For example, having children is a private matter but socialising and educating them is also a public matter. And then, if parents (parent) fail to meet their parenting duties and a child is abused, mistreated or lacks adequate provision and protection, the public steps in and makes a private into a public concern.

Families in Northern Europe are often described as public because the state is very involved in those tasks that have traditionally belonged to the family, such as taking care of children, the sick and elderly and providing maintenance. The families of Southern Europe are considered private since the caretaking and providing duties have largely remained in the family. From this perspective it is valid to say that, yes, Finnish families and family life are more public than Spanish ones. But we have a different kind of picture when we think of this public/private issue in the context of family legislation. Finnish civil legislation provides very little regulation of the relationships and duties between family members, and thus the Finnish family can be characterised as private. By contrast, Spanish civil legislation regulates the relationships and duties of the family members much more specifically (e.g. maintenance liability) and therefore the Spanish family can be regarded as more public than the Finnish one. In reality, contemporary families and family lives in the modern Western societies are both private and public. Numerous studies of Western families and welfare states have proved that regardless of the extent to which the welfare state (public) shares familial tasks and duties, the family (private) remains the principal provider for welfare and the family/kin members are the ones to turn to when support in all its forms is needed.

7. Concluding remarks

Ideology and stereotypes have their basis in reality, for if they did not have some relation to people's actual existence they would be totally irrelevant. As a result, the problem with ideology and stereotypes is that they bestow an aura of naturalness. Even though neither family ideology nor stereotypes tell us how people actually organise and live their lives or what the family means to people, they influence the ways people interpret their lives, the ways legislators and policy-makers interpret families, and the ways scholars interpret people's lives, legislation and policies. And

furthermore, ideology is a powerful tool for reproducing the social order. For that reason family is very much a political issue. Family causes most concern whenever the society is undergoing some kind of change, e.g. periods of structural changes, economic recession, political unrest or when there is a change in the population growth. During these times family ideology tends to be emphasised and used as social cement (cf. Gittins 1985; Thompson 1986).

In this paper I have argued that instead of actually changing the family, modernisation produced the Western family ideology, which is very prevalent in both of the societies in question. Fundamentally the Finnish and Spanish 'official' ideologies are the same: the family is a nuclear family composed of a married (heterosexual) couple and their children. This is the case even though cohabitation, single-parent and reconstituted families, and homosexual unions are more and more common and/or accepted, and even though public powers do recognise them in varying degrees. Why is this ideology so persistent? And why is it dominant in both societies even though they differ in many ways?

Its power lies in the fact that it is built on the very pillars of the Western world view. First of all it is founded in Christian theology and in the Western form of patriarchy which support one another. Christian theology has been formed on the concept of a single male God who is the source of authority, and man has become interpreted as an image of God. Even though the term 'man' could refer to human beings in general, it was translated to refer only to males, and women became a lesser form of being. Therefore, the justification for male authority had a divine origin and family became construed as a microcosm of the divine world order (D'Antonio & Aldous 1983).

Secondly, although the development of science started the process of secularisation, its interpretation of the world was founded on religiously-based beliefs about authority and gender. The difference was that male authority and gender roles became expressed in terms of 'nature' rather than divinity. Men were seen as 'naturally' stronger, active and intelligent whereas women were 'naturally' weak, passive and intuitive. Therefore, men got the capacity to govern and direct others, namely women and children (Gittins 1985; Helén 1997). Thus the middle-class family ideology idealising the conjugal and private nuclear family was influenced by patriarchal notions and notions of gender which were legitimised by science and religion. As the middle classes gained political power these notions became an integral part of the ways in which legislation and policies were formulated, as has become clear in the chapters dealing with Finnish and Spanish legislation and policies.

Because the ideology is related to reality, it is not static and therefore has been moulded to better correspond to the prevailing circumstances. Egalitarian principles and individual rights have gained emphasis in both Finnish and Spanish family legislation and family policies. Thus, family ideology has gradually changed from being patriarchal to being more egalitarian, from a one-earner model towards a two-earner one, although the speed of this change has been different in Finland and Spain. The Finnish development has been smoother and steadier whereas the Spanish development has resembled a roller-coaster largely due to the political circumstances and, hence, to the emergence of civil and political rights.

Even though I have claimed that the basic ideology of the family is the same in Finland and Spain, I do not deny the existence of culturally-specific characteristics of family ideologies and conceptions of the family and family life. The central difference seems to be the importance put on the value of self-reliance. The Finnish culture is marked by individualism originating from a Protestant set of values, while the Spanish culture is more collective by its nature due to Catholic values. In other words, Finns value self-reliance more than Spaniards. This difference has become visible in what is stressed in education, in the issue of who is legally responsible to provide maintenance for whom, and in relations between generations and family members, etc.

For this reason, the difference in valuing self-reliance seems to be the foundation of the stereotypical conceptions of Finnish and Spanish families representing the Northern and Southern family types. Moreover, the labelling of Finnish families as individual, secular, and therefore modern, and Spanish families as collective, religious, and thus traditional has influenced the characterisation of the Finnish (Northern) and Spanish (Southern) welfare state types and the legitimations behind them. The argumentation is that because Spanish families are collective and mutual dependency between family members is not questioned, the state has not been forced to take over the familial tasks and therefore the family has remained a private matter and the most important safety net. By contrast, the Finnish state has entered into the private sphere to secure the possibility of individual independence, and in so doing it lessens the importance of the family as safety net. All this is true but only to a certain extent as I have attempted to demonstrate by questioning the dichotomies.

When we compare countries that are distinctly different in several dimensions, the differences are easily detected and for that reason they have a tendency to be comprehended as all-encompassing, unquestioned facts, leading to the risk of exaggeration and oversimplification. In this connection, there are some problems connected to family studies in general and to comparative ones in particular which need to be pointed out.

First of all, the problem with family studies in general is that they tend to focus on changes rather than on those features that are enduring and, therefore exaggerate the crisis of the family. Comparative family studies in particular tend to stress only the differences and neglect the possible similarities, which leads to oversimplifications.

The second problem has to do with the methodological orientations. Most comparative studies dealing with families are quantitative ones based on statistics. They tell us more about the family forms and clearly show the differences between them, but they are not able to provide knowledge about the meanings of the families. If we want to strive towards more comprehensive knowledge about different families of different nations, it is useful and even necessary to combine and compare qualitative and quantitative methods and data. The use of various methods and data allows for a richer and more complex approach which makes it possible to move from one level of analysis to another and to avoid the risks of exaggeration and oversimplification (see Elliott 1996; Oinonen 1998a; Schmink 1984).

The third problem with unidimensional comparisons is that in addition to reproducing the dualistic notions of families of different nations, they also imply the universality of the family. But in reality there is no such thing as 'The Finnish Family' or 'The Spanish Family'. Historians, anthropologists and feminists have proven that meanings and conceptions of the family differ for men and women, for different generations, social classes and ethnic groups. Further, they vary during a person's life course and between rural and urban settings.

This study has not conquered these problems nor was this the aim. My intention has been to question the stereotypical notions of Northern and Southern families and to cause a rift in the apparently flawless picture of different nations' different families. The use of this rift is twofold: to open an exit out of simplistic notions and analysis of Finnish (or Northern) and Spanish (or Southern) families, and to open an entrance into a more comprehensive understanding of the differences and similarities between the families and their surroundings.

So, have I found answers to my questions: are Finnish and Spanish families as different as usually assumed and if so, in what ways and why? The upshot is that yes, Finnish and Spanish families are different but not immensely so. The ideologies of nations' families arise from the same source, and the evolution of family ideologies has moved in the same direction. From the viewpoint of the dichotomies, it has become clear that Finnish and Spanish societies and thus families are simultaneously modern and traditional, individual and collective, secular and religious, public and private. The ways these qualities have been shaped and the reasons for it lie in historical, social and political developments.

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