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## Attitudes towards parental employment across Europe, in Australia and in Japan

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# VIENNA INSTITUTE OF DEMOGRAPHY

## *Working Papers*

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*Isabella Buber-Ennser and Ralina Panova*

## ***Attitudes towards Parental Employment across Europe, in Australia and in Japan***



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## **Abstract**

Based on the Generations and Gender Survey this paper studies attitudes towards parental employment in 14 European countries—among them ten located in central and eastern Europe, Australia and Japan. In a multivariate framework we examine how the acceptance of the employment of mothers of pre-school children differs. Our aim is to find out how attitudes vary across countries and sex. Since the role of fathers in the process of socialisation of their children has been underestimated and underinvestigated for a long time, we take the challenge of studying attitude towards fathers' concentration on work. The country-specific ranking in terms of traditional attitudes towards employment of mothers with pre-school children is in tune with the expectations derived from the Second Demographic Transition (SDT) theory, with the exception of Romania. Australia holds a medium position, Japan an ambivalent one. We find a large diversity in the level of traditionalism among the central and eastern European countries. Variation in gender differences is substantial; differences are largest where SDT is at an advanced level. Regarding fathers' concentration on work, the majority presumes negative consequences for children, but the answering pattern shows no clear relation with advancement in the SDT.

## **Keywords**

Attitudes, maternal employment, paternal employment, pre-school children, GGS, Second Demographic Transition

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# Attitudes towards Parental Employment across Europe, in Australia and in Japan

Isabella Buber-Ennser and Ralina Panova

## 1. Introduction

Family attitudes are key drivers of changing family patterns (Frejka, 2008). The attitudes towards maternal employment do not only refer to the family but are also related to gender roles and the distribution of household labour. Evidence from panel data indicates that gender role attitudes and family formation are related in a dynamic process, in that gender role attitudes influence family formation and vice versa (Moors, 2003). Differences in attitudes towards demographic behaviour and values are large across countries (Aassve, Sironi, & Bassi, 2013). The gendered division of paid work and care and individual attitudes towards it are crucial for understanding the gendered nature of welfare states (Haas, 2005; Lewis, 2002). The political, social and economic contexts as well as the cultures of care shape individual family attitudes. In modern societies there are dominant social norms and attitudes towards family and gender, which are part of the overall cultural and institutional systems of a country.

We study attitudes towards the statements “A pre-school child suffers if his/her mother works” and “Children often suffer because their fathers concentrate too much on their work”. We adopt the culturalist research perspective as we concentrate on social values and norms in a broad range of post-modern countries (Haas, 2005; Pfau-Effinger, 1998). The aim of this paper is to contribute to the understanding of cross-country differences in gender roles and family models. By studying not only the attitudes towards combining motherhood and work when children are at preschool-age, but also by addressing the less studied issue of the role of fathers in childrearing, we bring new insights into the perception of parenthood across Europe, Australia and Japan. Of particular interest is the ranking of countries.

Attitudes towards employment of mothers with pre-school children have been used to create indices for family role attitudes, family responsibilities and gender attitudes and thereafter included in multivariate analyses as explanatory factors (Aassve, Fuochi, & Mencarini, 2014; Aassve et al., 2013; Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004; Kjeldstad & Lappegård, 2014; Kraaykamp, 2012; Matysiak & Weziak-Bialowolska, 2013). Some studies have analysed attitudes towards these statements within one or two countries only (Pailhé & Sinyavskaya, 2009; Rindfuss, Choe, Bumpass, & Tsuya, 2004). To our knowledge, however, attitudes towards the statement that preschool children suffer if their mothers work have not been used as single items for international comparison before. Moreover, attitudes towards the statement that children often suffer because their fathers concentrate too much on their work have not been studied at all so far.

Based on the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS) we concentrate on country and gender differences in attitudes towards parental employment. Our analysis is guided by

two research questions: What is the ranking of countries according to attitudes towards employment of mothers with pre-school children and towards the fathers' concentration on their work? Are there gender differences? We contribute to the literature by comparing attitudes in 15 European countries, Australia and Japan, and by taking into consideration aspects of both maternal and paternal employment.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

### **2.1. Second Demographic Transition**

The Second Demographic Transition (SDT) approach focuses particularly on cultural elements to explain changes in fertility and family life (Lesthaeghe, 1995; Lesthaeghe & Surkyn, 2002; van de Kaa, 1987). Higher educational levels and higher female labour force participation coincide with changes in values and attitudes related to family life, childbearing and sexuality. Self-fulfilment, personal freedom of choice, personal development and emancipation are established as new driving forces behind individual behavior (van de Kaa, 1996). The individualization approach (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1994) goes in the same direction, as it assumes that individuals are freed from the normative constraints imposed by family policy institutions and religious institutions.<sup>1</sup> According to the individualization approach and the SDT, there are considerable differences in social norms with regard to gender and family roles across post-industrial societies (Liefbroer & Billari, 2010; Sobotka, 2008).

The SDT began around 1965 in the Nordic countries. According to an SDT-index reflecting attitudes and value orientation, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, UK and Finland score highest whereas Portugal and most former Soviet countries score lowest. Estonia, Hungary and Lithuania hold intermediate positions and are ranked after the western European countries (Sobotka, 2008). The SDT is anchored in Europe, but demographic changes in advanced non-European countries also have been related with this approach, like for the US (Lesthaeghe & Neidert, 2006), Australia (Carmichael, 2014) and Japan (Rindfuss et al., 2004).

### **2.2. Previous Empirical Studies**

Social norms and attitudes can be shared by the society as a whole or within specific social subgroups (Bergh, 2007; Liefbroer & Billari, 2010). At the individual level, education and religion are often linked with front-runners in the SDT (Liefbroer & Billari, 2010). Socio-demographic characteristics like age, gender, partnership, marital status, parity, labour market participation and family income are associated with attitudes and gender roles (Alwin, Braun, & Scott, 1992; Bergh, 2007; Merz & Liefbroer, 2012; Moors, 2003). More

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<sup>1</sup> Other theoretical approaches for studying differences in attitudes between individuals and countries are the structural explanation by Wilensky (2002) and the values explanation by Inglehart (1997). For an overview we refer to Bergh (2007).

generally, interests and exposure contribute to the formation and maintenance of gender role attitudes (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004).

Early research on attitudes towards maternal employment was mainly carried out in the US and in Sweden. It underlined the link between sharing household tasks within the couple and attitudes towards traditional roles and towards maternal employment (Banaszak & Putzer, 1993; Hultaker, 1981). Throughout the literature, women's labour market participation is associated with family and gender attitudes (Alwin et al., 1992; Kraaykamp, 2012). Age is positively associated with traditional attitudes (Hultaker, 1981) and in general women have more egalitarian attitudes compared to men (Fodor & Balogh, 2010; Kunovich & Kunovich, 2008; Lee, Alwin, & Tufiş, 2007). It is argued that the gender gap in role attitudes arises from "women's growing understanding of their own self-interest in changing traditional gender norms tied to their changing life situations" (Fodor & Balogh, 2010, p. 293). Moreover, egalitarian gender role attitudes are associated with higher educational attainment (Liefbroer & Billari, 2010; Perelli-Harris, 2008; Philipov, 2008).

Whereas mothers' employment has been taken into account in numerous surveys (e.g. European Value Survey (EVS), International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), GGS), attitudes towards paternal commitment are less often addressed (e.g. Liefbroer & Billari, 2010). Men's increased involvement in their families is regarded as an ongoing modern gender revolution where first women entered into the public sphere (increased labour force participation) and then men participated more in the private sphere (increasingly active role in their families by contributing to the care of children and homes) (Goldscheider, Bernhardt, & Lappegard, 2014). The new thinking about fathers has been reflected at the political level as well, aiming at a balanced participation of women and men in family and working life (European Communities, 2000).

### **2.3. Institutional and Cultural Context**

A country's family policy, the institutional setting, the economic development and the cultural background build a country-specific social environment that not only enables and restricts individual choices but also influences prevailing values and norms (Inglehart & Norris, 2003). Individual attitudes are partly related to the present societal and structural conditions and partly to the individual life course experience (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

At the macro level, the political and institutional framework is just as important as the economic development, since "the system of social and economic policies implemented by the government will determine the easiness with which individuals can adopt modern values and attitudes" (Aassve et al., 2013, p. 320). Numerous studies have outlined the major traits of welfare states and family policies across Europe and have derived influential typologies, some of them also including non-European industrialised countries (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Gauthier, 1996, 2002). The central and eastern European (CEE) countries are not included in these typologies. They shared similar characteristics with respect to the state socialistic regime and the predominant pro-natalist social and population policies (Frejka, 2008). But diversity within these countries is large, owing to

long-standing cultural differences present already before the times of communism but also to different political, institutional and economic developments after the fall of communism (Blum et al., 2009; Fodor & Balogh, 2010; Katus, Puur, Poldma, & Sakkeus, 2007; Pailhé & Sinyavskaya, 2009).

Different normative expectations of mothers' and women's roles and the attitudes towards external childcare are well documented for France, Austria, western and eastern Germany, with a strong normatively grounded "homemaker/breadwinner" family model being dominant in Austria and western Germany (Alwin et al., 1992; Berghammer, 2014; Fagnani, 2002; Ruckdeschel, 2009). Among post-communist countries, individuals in Moldavia, Hungary, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Russia (in this order) turned out to hold more conservative gender role views, whereas those in the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Ukraine were more liberal (Fodor & Balogh, 2010). Various studies have provided evidence on a large diversity in attitudes and norms among the Baltic countries: Lithuanians tend to hold more conservative views on the family and the division of gender roles, whereas Latvia and Estonia are less traditional (Blum et al., 2009; Katus et al., 2007; Plaat, 2003). In this respect, Estonia has even been compared to Sweden, the trendsetter of modern family patterns (Katus et al., 2007). As for Japan, cultural expectations towards wives and the specific dual labour market situation are crucial to understand family life and attitudes in the country (Boling, 2008; Fukuda, 2009; Ishii-Kuntz, 2013; Rindfuss et al., 2004).

### 3. Hypotheses

Our study is based on the theoretical framework of the SDT and ties in with the current state of research. The STD approach suggests that an increased emancipation and gender revolution that had initially spread across western and northern Europe has led to greater gender equality and a departure from traditional gender roles. Our central assumption is that the cultural-historical context in which persons are socialized, and thus also the country's advancement in the SDT, is associated with the prevailing social norm of combining parenthood and employment.

**Hypothesis 1:** We hypothesize the attitude towards employment of mothers with preschool children to be more liberal in countries that are more advanced in the SDT than in countries which are still at lower levels of the SDT. More specifically, the most egalitarian countries are expected to be the northern European countries. The German speaking countries are expected to hold a middle position since they are advanced in the SDT but the child care infrastructure was weak during the last decades. We expect traditional attitudes in CEE countries.

**Hypothesis 2:** We expect large diversity across the former Soviet countries, given the different cultural backgrounds. We expect Estonians to have less traditional attitudes, Lithuanians, Russians and Georgians to have more traditional attitudes.

**Hypothesis 3:** Given the cultural background and the prevailing lowest levels of fertility, we assume Japan to hold a medium position in terms of SDT and hypothesize that Japan ranks among the countries with medium levels of agreement/disagreement.

**Hypothesis 4:** We expect gender differences to be smaller in countries that are more advanced in the SDT.

Regarding the attitude towards “Children often suffer because their fathers concentrate too much on their work”, we take more an explorative approach, as we see the ambiguity in the statement. If the emphasis were on “children suffer”, we would expect higher agreement in countries that are more advanced in the SDT. If the emphasis were on “often”, we would expect lower agreement in countries more advanced in the SDT, assuming that because of the egalitarian work–care type, a higher share of fathers is actively involved in childcare, more child-oriented and not strictly work/career-oriented.

#### **4. Data and Measures**

The current study is based on the first wave of the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS), carried out between 2004 and 2011. Out of the 18 countries with available data, Italy and the Netherlands had to be excluded due to missing information on attitudes towards parental employment. The focus is on individuals in reproductive age up to 45 years. In total, 82,955 men and women are analysed. Information on attitudes towards parental employment is also captured in other surveys, such as the European Value Survey (EVS), but sample sizes for the countries are substantially larger in the GGS. Because of persistent differences in demographic behaviour and gender roles Germany is divided into former West and East Germany (Adler & Brayfield, 2006; Goldstein, Kreyenfeld, Huinink, Konietzka, & Trappe, 2010; Konietzka & Kreyenfeld, 2002; Lee et al., 2007). Table 1 summarises the sample comprising 17 countries/regions. Data were weighted with calibrated cross-sectional weights and additional weights were calculated so that each country is represented by the same weighted sample size in the pooled sample. We opted for this strategy, as the size of the countries ranges from 1.3 million (Estonia) to 141.9 million (Russia), according to the population size in 2011 (United Nations, 2011; VID-IIASA, 2012).

The central variables are attitudes towards the employment of mothers with pre-school children and towards fathers’ commitment to working.

The two dependent variables which are analysed separately are agreement and disagreement with the following two statements:

- “A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his/her mother works.”
- “Children often suffer because their fathers concentrate too much on their work.”

Possible answers were “strongly agree”, “agree”, “neither agree nor disagree”, “disagree”, “strongly disagree”. For descriptive results we combined “strongly agree” and “agree”, as well as “strongly disagree” and “disagree”. It turned out that Australia, Estonia and Norway have a substantial proportion of non-responders, amounting to 14%, 21% and 34% respectively. In these countries the survey was carried out as a combination of face-



to-face interviews or telephone interviews and separate self-administered questionnaires (including attitudes). Non-response on the above mentioned statements is comparably high because in these three countries as not all interviewed respondents returned the self-administered questionnaire. Following Wiik and colleagues (2012), we used multiple imputation to assign values to the missing data. After imputations for the three countries, the proportion of respondents with missing values, refusals and “don’t know” was low (3% in Hungary and 1% or less in the remaining countries). Analyses were run with imputations and without imputations. As results remained stable, we present those including imputations only.

**Table 1:** Number of records by country

| Country                | Number of records |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| Australia (AU)         | 3,557             |
| Austria (AT)           | 4,994             |
| Belgium (BE)           | 3,318             |
| Bulgaria (BU)          | 7,853             |
| Czech Republic (CZ)    | 5,210             |
| Eastern Germany (E-DE) | 1,014             |
| Estonia (EE)           | 3,522             |
| France (FR)            | 4,790             |
| Georgia (GE)           | 5,208             |
| Hungary (HU)           | 6,245             |
| Japan (JP)             | 2,919             |
| Lithuania (LT)         | 4,875             |
| Norway (NO)            | 7,144             |
| Poland (PO)            | 8,371             |
| Romania (RO)           | 5,017             |
| Russia (RU)            | 5,144             |
| Western Germany (W-DE) | 3,774             |
| Total                  | 82,955            |

Source: GGS, wave 1; unweighted data

The interpretation of attitudes towards the first statement on maternal employment is rather straightforward: a low level of agreement reflects openness towards early external child-care and egalitarian or modern attitudes towards gender roles; high values are associated with more conservative and traditional attitudes. Furthermore, the individuals’ answers might reflect the particular perception of the given institutional framework (Pfau-Effinger, 2009). A high degree of agreement with maternal employment having a negative impact on pre-school children might express not only a high degree of traditionalism, but might also be related to inadequate childcare infrastructures (e.g. poor quality or lack of child-care facilities).

As mentioned earlier, the statement regarding fathers is ambiguous. Agreement or disagreement might refer on the one hand to “children often suffer” and on the other hand to “children suffer because their fathers concentrate too much on their work”. Unfortunately, this ambiguity is difficult to interpret. Nevertheless, it is worth considering the given responses across countries and to speculate about the outcome. Little is known

about attitudes towards fatherhood in a cross-country comparison. We intend to provide some insights in the perception of fatherhood across a variety of countries, or at least give incentives for further discussions.

In multivariate analyses, the central variables were dichotomized for logistic regressions. One possibility is to concentrate on agreement, the other is to focus on disagreement. We opted for both strategies and present the results for the two approaches. First, (strong) agreement was one category, opposed to an indifferent attitude (neither agreement nor disagreement) and to (strong) disagreement in a second category. Missing values were collapsed with the second category. Second, (strong) disagreement was opposed to an indifferent attitude as well as (strong) agreement. To facilitate the interpretation of the country coefficients in the regressions, we did not choose one country as the reference, but used effect coding which tests deviations from the grand mean (Wendorf, 2004). An alternative methodological approach is to apply ordered logistic regressions. As we focus on ?ordering ?the countries and less on the determinants for agreement, disagreement and neutral position, we opted for logistic regressions.

Based on previous research on family and gender attitudes, we included the following control variables in our model: age (16–19, 20–24, 25–29, 30–34, 35–39, 40–45), educational level (low, medium, high), partner status (married, nonmarital cohabitation, living apart together/LAT, no partner), employment status ((self)employed, unemployed, student, parental leave, looking after home/family) and parity (childless, 1 child, 2 children, 3 children, 4 children).

## **5. Results**

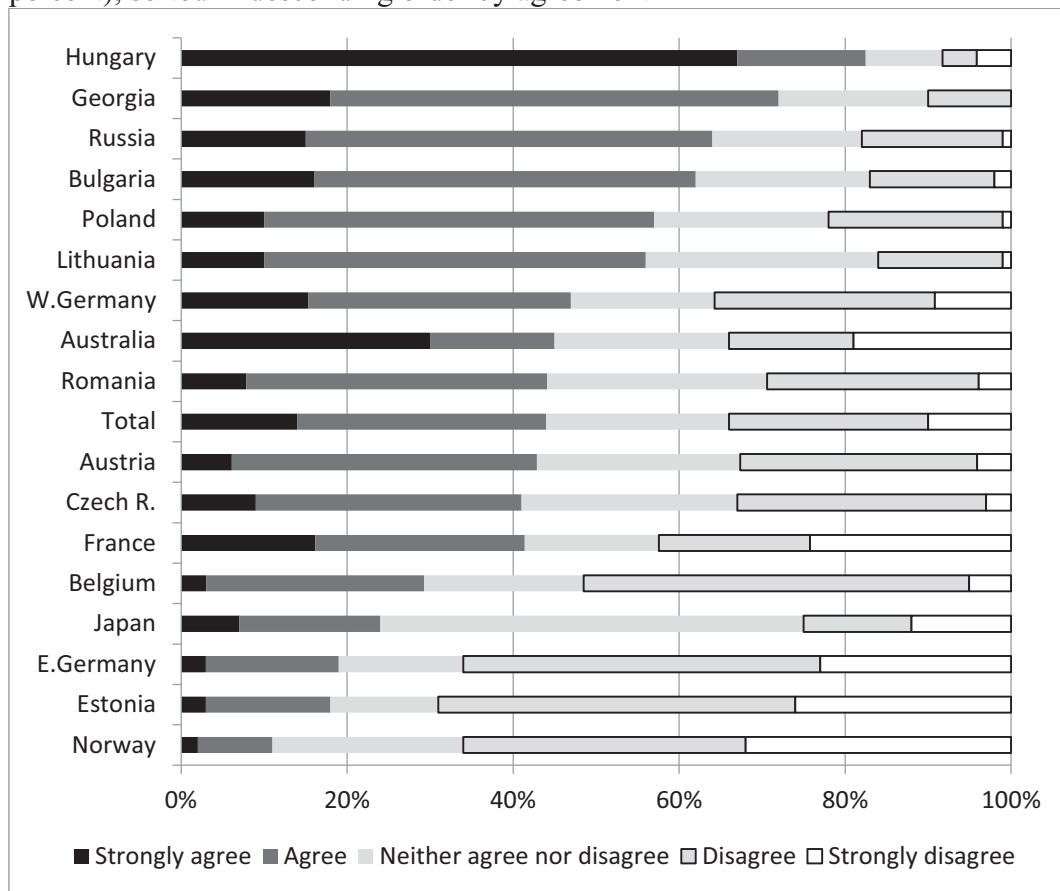
### **5.1. Maternal Employment**

First descriptive results revealed considerable country variations (Figure 1). Agreement that pre-school children suffer if their mothers work amounted to 80% in Hungary and 72% in Georgia. These two countries were ranked with most traditional attitudes, followed by Russia (64%), Bulgaria (62%), Poland (57%) and Lithuania (56%). Western Germany (46%), Australia and Romania (45%), Austria (42%), the Czech Republic and France (41%) were ranked as less traditional whereas agreement was low in Belgium (29%), Japan (24%), eastern Germany (19%), Estonia (18%) and exceptionally low in Norway (11%). At the other hand, “strong agreement” was exceptionally high in Hungary (65%), a further indicator for the outstanding position of this country. In Japan, the group of respondents with a neutral position (neither agreeing nor disagreeing) was large (51%). Similarly in a study on attitudes towards nontraditional family behaviours in Japan, Rindfuss et al. (2004) found that the “neutral” category tended to be the largest, often by quite a large margin. In Lithuania, Romania and the Czech Republic neutral answers were frequent as well (around 25%).

As a consequence, the relative size of those with a neutral position leads to a different ranking when sorting the selected countries by disagreement (in descending order): Estonia, Norway and eastern Germany remained the most liberal countries with

highest levels of disagreement (66–69%), followed by Belgium and France (40–50%). Western Germany, Australia, Romania, Austria and the Czech Republic had mean levels of disagreement (around 33%). Disagreement was low in Japan and Poland (one in four) as well as in Georgia, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Russia (less than 20%). Hungary remained the most conservative country (8% of disagreement).

**Figure 1:** Attitudes towards employment of mothers of pre-school children by country (in percent), sorted in descending order by agreement



Source: GGS wave 1.

In a next step, we carried out multivariate analyses using logistic regressions<sup>2</sup> (Table 2). First, the dependent variable was the dichotomous variable “(strong) agreement” with the statement “A pre-school child suffers, if his/her mother works” versus an indifferent attitude or even (strong) disagreement. The dichotomous variable was 1 for agreement and 0 otherwise. For ease of describing results, we define “traditional attitude” in the current paper as agreeing with the statement. Positive coefficients indicate higher proportions of agreement and thus more traditional attitudes. The country coefficients depict the deviation from the grand mean.

<sup>2</sup> Stepwise models as well as gender- and country-specific results are available on request.

**Table 2:** Estimated coefficient for agreement and disagreement with the statements

|                           | “A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his/her mother works” |              | “Children often suffer because their fathers concentrate too much on their work” |              |
|---------------------------|--|--------------|--|--------------|
|                           | Agreement  | Disagreement | Agreement  | Disagreement |
| <b>Country</b>            |  |              |  |              |
| Australia                 | 0.12***  | 0.04         | -1.20***   | 1.55***      |
| Austria                   | -0.09**  | 0.14***      | 0.98***  | -1.00***     |
| Belgium                   | -0.54***   | 0.80***      | -0.18***   | 0.48***      |
| Bulgaria                  | 0.78***  | -0.85***     | -0.00  | -0.04        |
| Czech R.                  | -0.11***   | 0.15***      | 0.31***  | -0.46***     |
| E. Germany                | -1.13***   | 1.47***      | -0.35***   | 0.76***      |
| Estonia                   | -1.25***   | 1.61***      | 0.30***  | -0.31***     |
| France                    | -0.07*   | 0.46***      | -0.13***   | 0.57***      |
| Georgia                   | 1.24***  | -1.34***     | 0.14***  | 0.06         |
| Hungary                   | 1.70***  | -1.71***     | 0.81***  | -1.10***     |
| Japan                     | -0.91***   | -0.24***     | 0.06+  | -0.93***     |
| Lithuania                 | 0.55***  | -0.91***     | -0.11***   | -0.33***     |
| Norway                    | -1.88***   | 1.52***      | -0.81***   | 0.56***      |
| Poland                    | 0.61***  | -0.52***     | 0.57***  | -0.54***     |
| Romania                   | -0.03  | 0.00         | -0.82***   | 0.83***      |
| Russia                    | 0.96***  | -0.92***     | 0.26***  | -0.19***     |
| W. Germany                | 0.05   | 0.31***      | 0.16***  | 0.12**       |
| <b>Gender</b>             |  |              |  |              |
| Female                    | 0  | 0            | 0  | 0            |
| Male                      | 0.14***  | -0.32***     | 0.05**   | -0.07***     |
| <b>Age</b>                |  |              |  |              |
| 16–19                     | -0.12*   | 0.21***      | 0.02   | 0.10         |
| 20–24                     | -0.11***   | 0.15***      | -0.01  | 0.04         |
| 25–29                     | -0.13***   | 0.14***      | 0.00   | -0.02        |
| 30–34                     | -0.15***   | 0.17***      | -0.02  | -0.03        |
| 35–39                     | -0.08***   | 0.08***      | -0.02  | 0.00         |
| 40–45                     | 0  | 0            | 0  | 0            |
| <b>Education</b>          |  |              |  |              |
| Low                       | 0.45***  | -0.63***     | -0.09***   | -0.04        |
| Medium                    | 0.28***  | -0.35***     | -0.01  | -0.05*       |
| High                      | 0  | 0            | 0  | 0            |
| <b>Parity</b>             |  |              |  |              |
| Childless                 | 0  | 0            | 0  | 0            |
| 1 child                   | 0.02   | 0.17***      | 0.07**   | 0.13***      |
| 2 children                | 0.08**   | 0.14***      | 0.08**   | 0.14***      |
| 3 children                | 0.23***  | 0.04         | 0.10**   | 0.12**       |
| 4 children                | 0.26***  | -0.08        | 0.13**   | 0.06         |
| <b>Partner status</b>     |  |              |  |              |
| Married                   | 0  | 0            | 0  | 0            |
| Nonmarital cohabitation   | -0.08**  | 0.04         | -0.08**  | 0.01         |
| LAT                       | -0.07*   | 0.03         | -0.00  | -0.06        |
| No partner                | -0.09***   | -0.00        | -0.14***   | 0.01         |
| <b>Employment</b>         |  |              |  |              |
| (Self)employed            | 0  | 0            | 0  | 0            |
| Helping family            | -0.04  | 0.04         | -0.20*   | 0.10         |
| Unemployed                | 0.10***  | -0.21***     | 0.02   | -0.07*       |
| Student                   | -0.08*   | 0.11**       | 0.13***  | -0.13**      |
| Parental leave            | 0.22***  | -0.27***     | 0.16***  | -0.15*       |
| Looking after home/family | 0.40***  | -0.45***     | 0.18***  | -0.13**      |
| Other                     | 0.19***  | -0.31***     | 0.13**   | -0.26***     |
| Constant                  | -0.55***   | -0.48***     | 0.41***  | -1.73***     |
| R <sup>2</sup>            | 0.1298   | 0.1455       | 0.0554   | 0.0683       |
| N                         | 82,944   | 82,944       | 82,944   | 82,944       |

Significance: + p&lt;0.10; \* p&lt;0.05; \*\* p&lt;0.01; \*\*\* p&lt;0.001.

Source: GGS wave 1.

Based on the estimated coefficients, we ranked the countries in three categories: high, medium and low level of agreement (Table 3). Alternatively, we name these groups traditional, medium and liberal. Countries with large positive coefficients were grouped in the “high agreement” group, countries with negative coefficients large in absolute size were classified as “low agreement”. The middle group comprised countries with statistically non-significant coefficients on the one hand, and others with significant coefficients that were modest in size on the other. For our analyses, -0.50 and 0.50 turned out to be appropriate thresholds. When focusing on agreement with the statement that pre-school children suffer if their mothers work, the coefficients ranged from 0.55 to 1.70 for the “high agreement” group, from -1.88 to -0.54 for the “low agreement” group, and from -0.11 to 0.12 for the medium group (Table 2, column 1). Hungary turned out to be the most traditional country, followed by Georgia, Russia, Bulgaria, Poland and Lithuania. These countries made up the “high agreement” group. Australia, western Germany, Romania, France, Austria and the Czech Republic ranked in the middle, whereas Belgium, eastern Germany, Japan, Estonia and Norway were the least traditional countries. These results support our hypothesis 1, assuming attitudes to be more liberal in countries which are more advanced in the SDT than in countries still at lower levels of the SDT. Romania constitutes the single exception, as it is less advanced in the SDT but belonged to the medium-attitudes group. We therefore could only partly confirm hypothesis 1. Our results confirmed hypothesis 2, expecting large diversity across the former Soviet countries, with less traditional attitudes in Estonia and more traditional ones in Russia and Georgia. Hypothesis 3 suggesting a medium position for Japan had to be rejected, given the low levels of agreement in that country.

**Table 3:** Country ranking according to the agreement/disagreement with the statement “A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his/her mother works”

| Agreement   |            |          | Disagreement |            |          |
|-------------|------------|----------|--------------|------------|----------|
| Traditional | Hungary    | 1.70***  | Traditional  | Hungary    | -1.71*** |
|             | Georgia    | 1.24***  |              | Georgia    | -1.34*** |
|             | Russia     | 0.96***  |              | Russia     | -0.92*** |
|             | Bulgaria   | 0.78***  |              | Lithuania  | -0.91*** |
|             | Poland     | 0.61***  |              | Bulgaria   | -0.85*** |
|             | Lithuania  | 0.55***  |              | Poland     | -0.52*** |
| Medium      | Australia  | 0.12***  | Medium       | Japan      | -0.24*** |
|             | W. Germany | 0.05     |              | Romania    | 0.00     |
|             | Romania    | -0.03    |              | Australia  | 0.04     |
|             | France     | -0.07*   |              | Austria    | 0.14***  |
|             | Austria    | -0.09**  |              | Czech R.   | 0.15***  |
|             | Czech R.   | -0.11*** |              | W. Germany | 0.31***  |
| Liberal     | Belgium    | -0.54*** | Liberal      | France     | 0.46***  |
|             | Japan      | -0.91*** |              | Belgium    | 0.80***  |
|             | E. Germany | -1.13*** |              | E. Germany | 1.47***  |
|             | Estonia    | -1.25*** |              | Norway     | 1.52***  |
|             | Norway     | -1.88*** |              | Estonia    | 1.61***  |

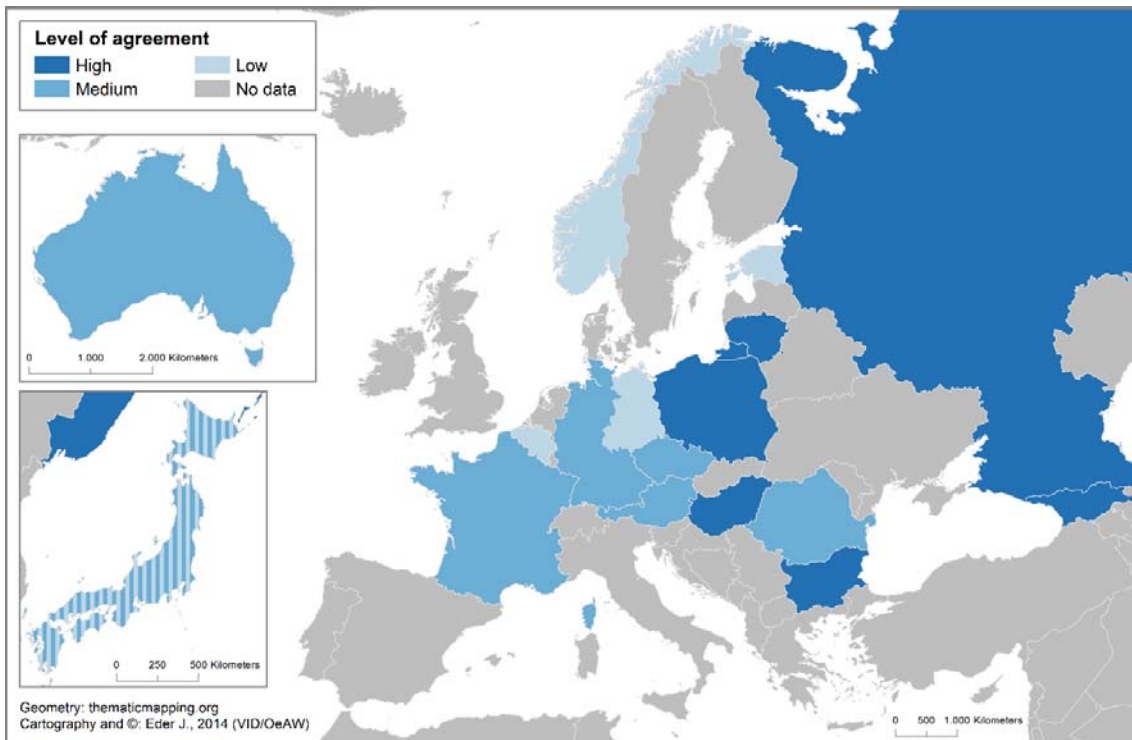
Significance: + p<0.10; \* p<0.05; \*\* p<0.01; \*\*\* p<0.001.

Remark: Controlling for socio-demographic characteristics as in Table 2.

Source: GGS wave 1.

Multivariate analyses were carried for disagreement as well (Table 2, column 2). The dichotomous variable was 1 for disagreement and 0 otherwise. This time, positive coefficients indicated a higher proportion of disagreement and thus less traditional attitudes. The coefficients ranged from -1.71 to -0.52 in the traditional group, from -0.24 to 0.46 in the medium group and from 0.80 to 1.61 in the liberal group. As expected from descriptive results, the country ranking changed—especially for those countries with a large proportion of neutral answers. Thereafter, the same six countries were classified as traditional as before, only the position of Lithuania changed within this group and the country turned out more traditional (shifting from rank 6 to rank 4) (Table 3). The main difference between the agreement and disagreement approach was the fact that Japan was no longer classified as liberal, but belonged to the group with medium level of disagreement—and within this group was the most traditional one. Moreover, within the medium group and the liberal group the ranking changed. Norway lost its leading liberal position to Estonia where disagreement was highest now. In the medium group the estimated coefficient for France was 0.46, and thus close to the dividing threshold of 0.50 for the liberal group. Compared to the coefficients in the liberal group (0.80; 1.47; 1.52; 1.61), however, the distance of the French coefficient to the representatives of the liberal group was quite large, thus justifying the classification as a country with medium level of disagreement. The map in Figure 2 visualizes our classification, Japan holding an intermediate position (liberal/medium).

**Figure 2:** Country typology based on attitudes towards „A pre-school child suffers if his/her mother works“



Source: GGS wave 1.

In light of our results based on the disagreement approach, partial confirmation of H1 and support of H2 remained, whereas H3 assuming a middle position for Japan was confirmed in the disagreement approach, as opposed to the agreement approach. Given this ambiguity, we could not confirm H3 and had to reject it.

We now turn to gender differences. In the overall model including all countries, men significantly more often agreed that pre-school children suffer if their mothers work (and significantly less often disagreed). To identify gender differences within the countries, we carried out the analyses for each country separately. The gap turned out to be largest in Austria and Norway, and also substantially large in western Germany (Table 4, columns 1 and 2). In these countries men much more often agreed that preschool children suffer if mothers work. Also in Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Japan and Russia men held more traditional attitudes than women, but differences were smaller in size. In Australia, Bulgaria and Georgia, by contrast, agreement was lower and disagreement was higher among women than among men (although partly at a lower statistical significance level).<sup>3</sup> Our results reject H4 which assumes that gender differences are smaller in countries that are more advanced in the SDT.

Table 4: Gender differences by countries; estimated coefficients for men compared to women

|            | “A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his/her mother works” |              | “Children often suffer because their fathers concentrate too much on their work” |              |
|------------|--|--------------|--|--------------|
|            | Agreement  | Disagreement | Agreement  | Disagreement |
| Australia  | -0.37***   | 0.18*        | -0.47***   | 0.43***      |
| Austria    | 0.95***  | -0.95***     | 0.49***  | -0.43**      |
| Belgium    | 0.23**   | -0.29***     | 0.33**   | -0.27**      |
| Bulgaria   | -0.16**  | 0.15*        | -0.11*   | 0.16*        |
| Czech R.   | 0.13*  | -0.35***     | -0.03  | -0.01        |
| E. Germany | 0.26   | -0.24+       | 0.11   | 0.08         |
| Estonia    | 0.21*  | -0.31***     | 0.03   | -0.14        |
| France     | 0.25***  | -0.23***     | 0.18**   | -0.14+       |
| Georgia    | -0.13+   | -0.23*       | -0.09  | -0.07        |
| Hungary    | -0.11  | -0.18+       | 0.01   | -0.08        |
| Japan      | 0.29**   | -0.37***     | -0.14+   | 0.38*        |
| Lithuania  | 0.08   | -0.18*       | 0.00   | -0.25**      |
| Norway     | 0.62***  | -0.99***     | 0.48***  | -0.63***     |
| Poland     | 0.08   | -0.17**      | -0.09+   | 0.09         |
| Romania    | 0.03   | -0.04        | 0.03   | 0.11         |
| Russia     | 0.22***  | -0.14+       | 0.00   | 0.00         |
| W. Germany | 0.64***  | -0.73***     | 0.07   | -0.15        |
| All        | 0.14***  | -0.32***     | 0.05**   | -0.07***     |

Significance: + p<0.10; \* p<0.05; \*\* p<0.01; \*\*\* p<0.001.

Remark: Controlling for socio-demographic characteristics as in Table 2.

Source: GGS wave 1.

<sup>3</sup> In addition, we ran models for men and women separately, revealing similar results regarding the ranking of the countries (results available on request). Thereafter, women in the two German-speaking countries occupy low traditional ranks, men high traditional ranks.

The current study focuses on country and gender differences, and we only briefly mention the results for the socio-demographic characteristics which are in line with previous findings on family attitudes and gender roles. Agreement with the statement that pre-school children suffer if their mothers work turned out higher when respondents were older, lower educated, parents (especially with two or more children), married (as compared to those in nonmarital cohabitation, in living apart together-relationships or without a partner), on parental or childcare leave, or looking after the home or family (as compared to being employed and self-employed) (Table 2). The results for the disagreement approach were in line. Employment status and attitudes towards maternal employment are most probably causally linked, but the current study does not allow for analysis of causality. Gender-specific analyses revealed minor differences for socio-demographic characteristics. For example, educational differences were larger among women, whereas differences by number of children were more pronounced among men. A detailed presentation of these results is out of the scope of the current study.<sup>4</sup>

## 5.2. Strong Paternal Engagement in Work

We now turn to the aspect of paternal employment. In our study, we analysed agreement and disagreement with the statement “Children often suffer because their fathers concentrate too much on their work”. As mentioned above, this statement is ambiguous, and our analysis remains less detailed and more explorative. According to descriptive analyses, agreement was highest in Austria, Hungary and Poland (80%, 77% and 73% respectively), and lowest in Australia, Romania and Norway (29%, 41% and 41%). In the remaining countries, agreement was between 53% and 67% (Figure 3). Again, “strong agreement” was exceptionally high in Hungary. As with attitudes towards maternal employment, a neutral answer was frequent in Japan and Lithuania (32% and 31%), but this time also in other countries like Norway or Romania (36% and 31%). When sorting by ascending order of disagreement, these countries changed their position: Japan showed a very low level of disagreement (7%), was close to the lowest levels in Austria and Hungary (5%) and no longer in the medium group. Norway and Romania lost their exceptional position and had disagreement levels similar to Belgium, France and eastern Germany (21% to 28%)<sup>5</sup>.

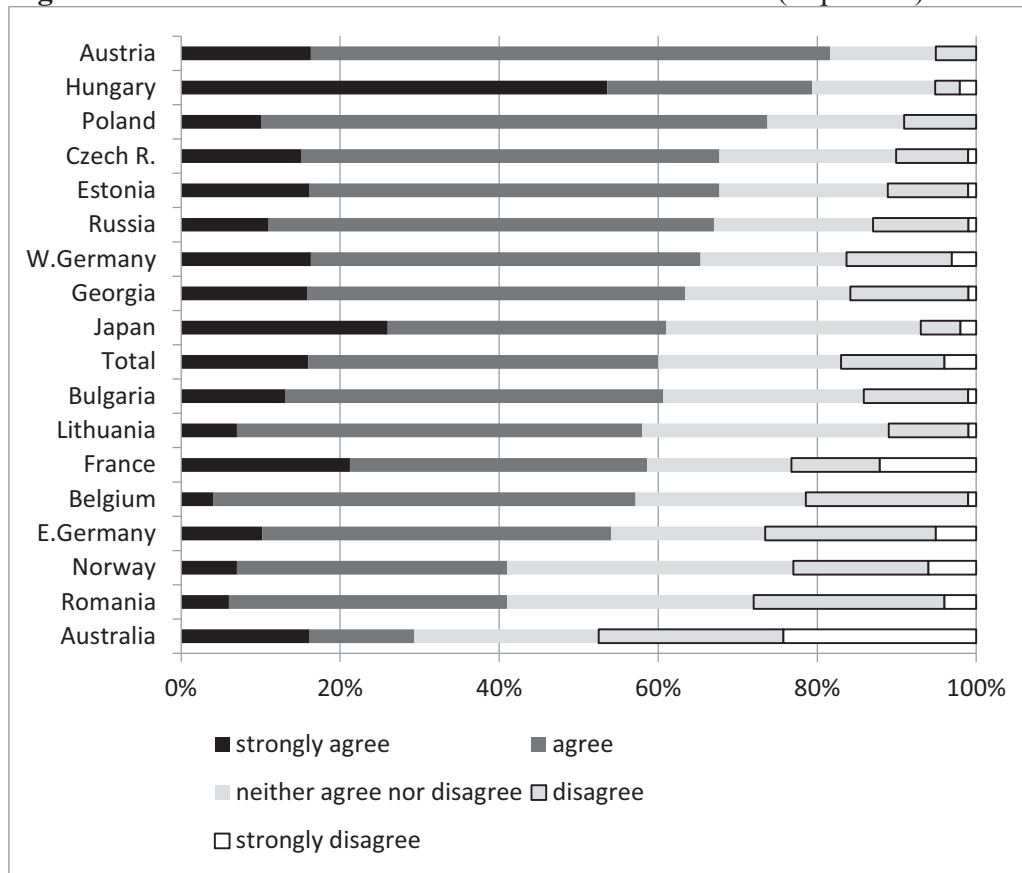
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<sup>4</sup> Stepwise models as well as gender- and country-specific results are available on request.

<sup>5</sup> Results on ranking remains when excluding imputed values for Australia, Norway and Estonia.



**Figure 3:** Attitudes towards fathers' concentration on work (in percent)



Source: GGS wave 1.

In the pooled sample, men more often than women agreed on negative consequences of fathers' concentration on work, and less often disagreed. But the estimated coefficients were comparable small (0.05\*\*\* and -0.07\*\*\*), especially when compared to the gender differences in the model on maternal employment (0.14\*\*\* and -0.32\*\*\*) (Tables 4 and 2). Country-specific analyses showed that gender differences were large in Austria and Norway with men agreeing much more often than women that children suffer from fathers' concentration on work. This also holds for Belgium and France, although with less marked differences. In Australia, we observed an opposite association with men agreeing far less often than women on the statement towards paternal employment (the estimated coefficient is -0.47\*\*\*). In Japan, Bulgaria and Poland men less often agree, too, but gender differences are small in size and of lower statistical significance (Table 5).

**Table 5:** Country ranking according to agreement/disagreement with the statement “Children often suffer because their fathers concentrate too much on their work”

| Agreement |            |            | Disagreement |            |          |         |
|-----------|------------|------------|--------------|------------|----------|---------|
| High      | Austria    | 0.98***    | Low          | Hungary    | -1.10*** |         |
|           | Hungary    | 0.81***    |              | Austria    | -1.00*** |         |
|           | Poland     | 0.57***    |              | Japan      | -0.93*** |         |
| Medium    | Czech R.   | 0.31***    | Low          | Poland     | -0.54*** |         |
|           | Estonia    | 0.30***    |              | Czech R.   | -0.46*** |         |
|           | Russia     | 0.26***    | Medium       | Lithuania  | -0.33*** |         |
|           | W. Germany | 0.16***    |              | Estonia    | -0.31*** |         |
|           | Georgia    | 0.14***    |              | Russia     | -0.19*** |         |
|           | Japan      | 0.06+      |              | Bulgaria   | -0.04    |         |
|           | Bulgaria   | -0.00      |              | Georgia    | 0.06     |         |
|           | Lithuania  | -0.11***   |              | W. Germany | 0.12**   |         |
|           | France     | -0.13***   |              | Belgium    | 0.48***  |         |
|           | Belgium    | -0.18***   |              | High       | Norway   | 0.56*** |
|           | E. Germany | -0.35***   |              |            | France   | 0.57*** |
| Norway    | -0.81***   | E. Germany | 0.76***      |            |          |         |
| Low       | Romania    | -0.82***   | High         | Romania    | 0.83***  |         |
|           | Australia  | -1.20***   |              | Australia  | 1.55***  |         |

Significance: + p<0.10; \* p<0.05; \*\* p<0.01; \*\*\* p<0.001.

Remark: Controlling for socio-demographic characteristics as in Table 5.

Source: GGS wave 1.

At the individual level, age had no explanatory power. The association between education and parity on the one hand and attitude towards father concentration on work on the other was smaller in magnitude and level of significance compared to the attitudes towards maternal employment of pre-school children (Table 5). The measure of model fit ( $R^2$ ) was larger in the model on maternal employment (agreement model: 0.1298; disagreement model: 0.1455) than for paternal employment (0.0554 and 0.0683, respectively), indicating a very poor model fit for attitudes towards the fathers' concentration on their work. Moreover, model fit was higher for the disagreement approach than for the agreement-approach.

## 6. Discussion

We found a substantial variation in the attitudes towards employment of mothers with pre-school children across post-industrial societies, which are at different stages of the SDT. Individuals in Norway, Estonia, eastern Germany and Belgium held the most egalitarian views. Agreement that preschool children suffer if their mothers work was lowest in these countries. Norway as representative of the Scandinavian countries—the forerunners in the SDT—had the lowest levels of agreement, together with the Baltic country Estonia known for its cultural proximity to the Scandinavian countries. Within Europe, enrolment in formal childcare of children under three years is highest in Norway, Belgium and France with proportions above 40% in 2007 and around 50% or above in 2010 (OECD, 2014). Moreover, enrolment in formal childcare and pre-school among children aged three to five years is almost universal (OECD, 2014). But whereas Norwegians and Belgians rarely saw disadvantages for children, French respondents did so more often. The finding that France did not belong to the less traditional group but to the medium group is therefore surprising,

but confirms an earlier study showing that in France roles remain traditional (Almqvist, 2008). Overall high enrolment of pre-school children in childcare does not automatically preclude that individuals assume negative consequences for children.

Western Germany and Austria occupied a middle position, which speaks in favour of the prevailing modified bread-winner model (Haas, 2005). The two German-speaking countries are known for a lack of public childcare facilities for infants and toddlers, despite some improvements during the last years (Berghammer, 2014; Bujard, 2011; OECD, 2014). Austria, western Germany and the Czech Republic, a further member of the medium group, are less advanced in the SDT than the leading Nordic countries (Sobotka, 2008). The well-known gap between eastern and western Germany (Goldstein et al., 2010; Konietzka & Kreyenfeld, 2002), was clearly confirmed in our study. Although Romania is classified as one of the least advanced countries in terms of the SDT (Sobotka, 2008), agreement that pre-school children suffer if their mothers work, was at medium level in this country. Maternal-leave arrangements and provision of childcare in Romania is comparable to Austria and Germany (Muresan, Hărăguș, Hărăguș, & Schröder, 2008) in terms of maternal leave and it turned out that the ranking in terms of employment of mothers with pre-school children is similar, too. Australia belonged to the medium group as well. The normative view that young children need constant and sustained parental attention is often prevalent in Anglo-Saxon countries (Craig & Mullan, 2011).

The ranking of Japan was ambiguous, due to the large group of persons with neutral answers. Agreement that pre-school children suffer if their mothers work was rather low, and disagreement was at medium level. Therefore, we attributed to Japan an intermediate position, between liberal and medium. Accordingly, Rindfuss et al. (2004) found in a study on attitudes towards nontraditional family behaviours in that country, that the “neutral” category was the largest. The authors concluded that “to the extent that the Japanese attitudinal milieu towards family behaviour is changing, the neutral category may be a way on the movement from disapproval of nontraditional family behaviour to approval” (Rindfuss et al 2004, p. 851). In fact, our results based on GGS data from 2005 provide further evidence that Japan is on its way to a less traditional society regarding family behaviour and attitudes.

According to our ranking, persons in Hungary held the most traditional views, followed by Georgia, Russia, Bulgaria, Poland and Lithuania. These countries are also least advanced in the SDT. Fodor and Balogh (2010) explained the conservative views in these countries by the political, institutional and economic situation. Georgia has been characterized as a highly patriarchal society (Blum et al., 2009), Russia as a country with a marked patriarchal pattern (Pailhé & Sinyavskaya, 2009). The conservative attitudes in Lithuania and Poland reflect the strong influence of the Roman-Catholic church in the two countries (Höhn, Avramov, & Kotowska, 2008; Plaat, 2003). Diversity across CEE countries turned out to be quite large, representing not only traditional attitudes, but also more moderate ones—like in Romania and the Czech Republic—and very liberal ones—like in eastern Germany and Estonia.

Gender differences were smallest in CEE countries and largest in western Germany and Austria, with men being much more traditional than women. In Norway, a forerunner

in the SDT and known for its leading position in terms of gender equality, gender differences are substantial, too. We might conclude that especially in countries that are advanced in terms of the SDT, women and men have different attitudes towards employment of mothers with pre-school children and that men are still much more conservative. Australia is the only country, where women significantly more often than men agreed that children suffer if their mothers work. In Australia, issues such as work-family reconciliation and raising children are largely considered private and outside the responsibility of the state, so most formal early childcare is purchased privately (Craig & Mullan, 2011). Possibly concerns about the quality of these childcare facilities might play a role, but further research is needed to clarify.

The wording of the question on maternal employment in the GGS is standard and has been included in several other surveys, though it leaves room for interpretation. When talking about pre-school children, some respondents might primarily think about toddlers others might associate children aged 3 to 5. For mothers' employment, some might have full-time employment in mind, others part-time. Although some surveys make further distinctions, to our knowledge no international comparative data are available that would allow for detailed specification.

We also attempted to examine the barely researched question of fathers' concentration on their work. Overall, the majority presumes negatives consequences for children if their fathers concentrate too much on their work, but the answering pattern shows no clear relation with a country's advancement in the SDT. Agreement was substantially high in the CEE countries and in the German speaking countries. We might speculate that high agreement indicates an awareness of the importance of fathers' presence and their active role in raising children. Possibly, men and women in these societies wish a higher involvement of fathers in childcare, which obviously contrasts with their professional commitment. Agreement is substantially lower in Norway, known for its high level of gender equality. But neutral answers are rather frequent there, too. Possibly, Norwegians less often agree with this statement because Norwegian fathers more often play a very active role in fathering. Despite the concerns about the wording of the statement, we are convinced to contribute to the discussion on fathers' commitment in a comparative setting. The changing role of fathers has to become more central when discussing gender roles.

Particularly with a view to the process of Europeanization and the further advance of the SDT in the CEE it is important to collect and analyse internationally comparative data with information on cultural and normative values. This is essential when we want to adequately capture normative changes of gender regimes in modern societies.

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