

Attitudes towards parental employment

(Extended Abstract)

Ralina Panova

Federal Institute for Population Research
Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 4, 65185 Wiesbaden, Germany
Email: ralina.panova@bib.bund.de

Isabella Buber-Ennser

Wittgenstein Centre, Vienna Institute of Demography/Austrian Academy of Sciences
Wohllebengasse 12-14, 1040 Vienna, Austria
Email: isabella.buber@oeaw.ac.at

Introduction

With the begin of the Second Demographic Transition (SDT) in the middle of the 1960 in western European countries the traditional male breadwinner model is being transformed into more gender-equal family models. Especially in terms of education and market employment women have opportunities nearly equivalent to those of men (McDonald 2000a, McDonald 2000b). Although more mothers with young children are in paid work than in the past, the employment rate of mothers varies substantially within Europe. Acceptance of the model of the working mother and availability of childcare facilities are crucial for gender equality in families. Our research question is how the acceptance of employment of mothers with pre-school children and of father's strong concentration on work differs according to gender and stage of the SDT in a country. The aim of this study is to contribute to the understanding of cross-country differentiations in gender roles and to gender gap in attitudes towards parental employment as we study the individual attitudes towards maternal and paternal employment.

Theoretical background

The study is based on SDT theory that focuses particularly on changes in values and attitudes related to family life, childbearing and sexuality (Lesthaeghe 1995; van de Kaa 2001; Lesthaeghe und Surkyn 2002, Surkyn und Lesthaeghe 2004). It suggests that an increased emancipation and gender revolution, which had initially spread across Western and Northern Europe, has led to a greater gender equality and deviation from traditional gender roles. In Europe the SDT began around 1965 in countries like Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands, and started later in the post-Soviet countries. Therefore, the different European countries are at different stages of the SDT (Sobotka 2008).

Countries with high level of gender equality as the Nordic countries promote post-material attitudes, more equal division of household and child care tasks between partners and scored highest in the SDT. In the German speaking countries (GSC) - Austria, Western Germany and Switzerland - the male breadwinner model prevailed on the individual and institutional level. France contrasts to the GSC not only with its strong infrastructure policy but especially with different normative expectations to

mother's and women's role at the individual level (Ruckdeschel 2009). The group of the CEE countries has not yet advanced as far towards the SDT (Sobotka 2008; Lesthaeghe 2010). Historically conditioned in the former Soviet countries maternal employment was uniform and to large extend still is. After 1989 there has been a change in the mainstream gender ideology with emphasis on "the need for women's presence in the home and women's natural difference" (Fodor und Balgoh 2010: 292). The empirical evidence indicates that the fall of state socialism "froze gender role attitudes at the point of collapse" (Fodor und Balgoh 2010: 295). The region of CEE is characterised by enormous cultural and economic diversity (Sobotka 2003).

At the individual level, characteristics which are often linked to front-runners in the SDT are education, age and religion (Liefbroer und Billari 2010). Individual characteristics like gender, partnership and employment status have been analyzed with respect to gender roles attitudes (Moors 2003; Merz und Liefbroer 2012).

According to this theoretical approach we expect attitudes towards parental employment to be more liberal in countries that are frontrunner in the SDT than in countries where the SDT has not yet spread at a very high level.

Data and research methods

Based on the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS) data this paper studies attitudes towards parental employment in twelve European countries and Australia. We focus on individuals up to age of 45 years and analyze 66,455 men and women in total.

We focus on the agreement/disagreement towards 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."

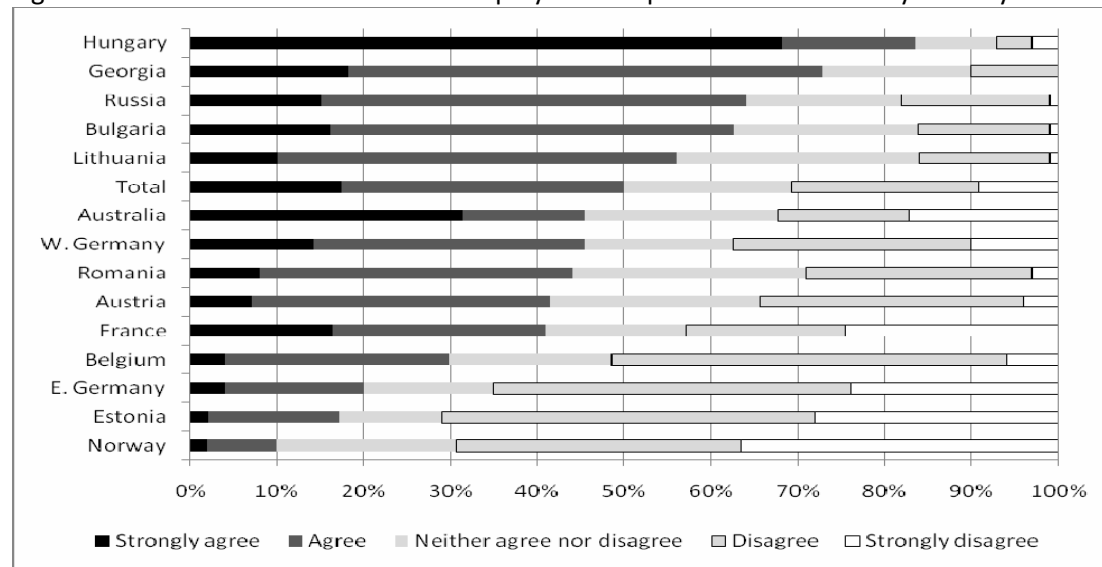
For descriptive results we combined "strongly agree" and "agree", as well as "strongly disagree" and "agree". In multivariate analyses, the central variables were dichotomized for logistic regressions. Thereafter, (strong) agreement was one category, opposed to indifferent attitude (neither agreement nor disagreement) and to (strong) disagreement in a second category.

Findings

First descriptive results revealed large country variation the agreement towards maternal employment of pre-school children (Figure 1). The individual characteristics confirm the findings from previous literature. The country-specific ranking in terms of traditional attitudes goes along with the expectations derived from the Second Demographic Transition theory concerning the stage of SDT in a country. We find large diversity in the level of traditionalism among the CEE countries and gender differences (Table 1).

In the overall sample, men are more traditional than women. Analyses were carried out for each country separately, revealing differences in the effects of socio-demographic characteristics. The gender difference is most pronounced in Austria, Western Germany and Norway, where men much more often agree that a pre-school child suffers if the mother works. On the contrary, in Georgia, Bulgaria and Australia women are more traditional and agree more often than men towards this statement.

Figure 1: Attitudes towards maternal employment of pre-school children by country



Source: GGS, wave 1

Table 1: Ranking of countries for the two statements

A pre-school child suffers if his/her mother works.			Children often suffer because their fathers concentrate too much on their work.		
1	Hungary	1.66***	1	Austria	1.05***
2	Georgia	1.23***	2	Hungary	0.87***
3	Russia	0.92***	3	Estonia	0.37***
4	Bulgaria	0.76***	4	Russia	0.33***
5	Lithuania	0.52***	5	W.Germany	0.23***
6	Australia	0.08*	6	Georgia	0.21***
7	W.Germany	0.02	7	Bulgaria	0.07**
8	Romania	-0.05+	8	Lithuania	-0.05
9	France	-0.10***	9	France	-0.06*
10	Austria	-0.12***	10	Belgium	-0.11***
11	Belgium	-0.58***	11	E.Germany	-0.28***
12	E.Germany	-1.15***	12	Norway	-0.74***
13	Estonia	-1.28***	13	Romania	-0.75***
14	Norway	-1.92***	14	Australia	-1.14***

Remark: Controlled for age, gender, education, parity, partner status and employment status. The estimated coefficients are the deviations from the grand mean.

In a next step we turn towards an aspect of paternal employment. Ordering the estimated coefficients for the countries reveals a different ranking from the first grouping for maternal

employment (Table 1). Gender specific models show minor variation in the ranking of the countries for the middle group. Country specific analyses indicate that in Austria, Norway but also in Belgium and France men significantly more often agree towards the statement, men in Bulgaria and Australia less often agree than women.

The current study provides new insights into cross-national differences in the attitude towards parental employment. Moreover we target the less often studied topic of acceptance of father's involvement in paid work and put it in relationship with attitudes towards maternal employment. The results suggest that the attitudes largely go in line with the development of a country towards the SDT.

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