

Trends of family attitudes and obligations in Europe

Małgorzata Mikucka

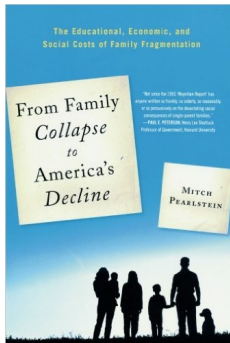
University of Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

Francesco Sarracino

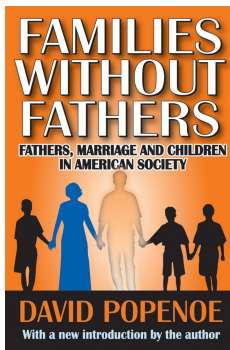
STATEC, Luxembourg

July 16, 2015, ESRA, Reykjavik

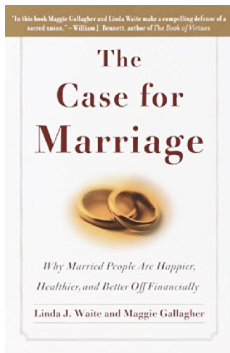




“If the underlying issues affecting the fragmentation of the family are not addressed effectively, then the United States will continue to sink into chaos and economic decline.”



“The American family is changing. Divorce, single parents, and step-families are redefining the ways we live together and raise our children. Many “experts” feel these seemingly inevitable changes should be celebrated; they claim that the “new” families, which often lack a strong father, are actually healthier than traditional two-parent families, or, at the very least, do children no harm. But as David Popenoe shows in *Families Without Fathers* this optimistic view is severely misguided.”



"*The Case for Marriage* is a groundbreaking look at marriage, one of the most basic and universal of all human institutions, which reveals the emotional, physical, economic, and sexual benefits that marriage brings to individuals and society as a whole."

ARLAND THORNTON AND LINDA YOUNG-DEMARCO
Institute for Social Research

Four Decades of Trends in Attitudes Toward Family Issues in the United States: The 1960s Through the 1990s

This article examines trends in family attitudes and values across the last 4 decades of the 20th century, with particular emphasis on the past 2 decades. The article focuses on attitudes toward a wide range of family issues, including the roles of men and women, marriage, divorce, childlessness, premarital sex, extramarital sex, unmarried cohabitation, and unmarried childbearing. More generally, the article considers trends in 3 broad contemporary values: freedom; equality; and commitment to family, marriage, and children. Five data sets are used for the article: Monitoring the Future, General Social Survey, International Social Science Project, Intergenerational Panel Study of Parents and Children, and the National Survey of Family and Household. The 5 data sets

time, marriage and family life remain important in the cultural ethos, with large and relatively stable fractions of young people believing that marriage and family life are important and planning marriage and the bearing and rearing of children.

This article is an examination of trends in family attitudes and values from the 1960s through most of the 1990s, with particular emphasis upon the past two decades. We examine trends in attitudes and values concerning a wide range of family issues: the roles of women and men, marriage, divorce, childlessness, premarital sex, extramarital sex, nonmarital cohabitation, and out-of-wedlock childbearing. We examine trends in these issues

The gap



Theoretical model: three main categories

(Thornton and Young-DeMarco, 2001)

Gender equality

How do men and women decide upon their lives and how prestigious are the roles of men and women?

Does gender equality increase?

Tolerance

Do people accept various forms of families, or do they expect adherence to specific pattern?

Does tolerance increase?

Commitment

Are people attached to their families, and committed within their families?

Does commitment increase?

Goals:

Is this a universal path?

1. Determine if the trend recognized for the US is universal.
2. Investigate the differences among European regions.



European *Values* Study

- ▶ maximum 4 waves: 1981-1984 · 1989-1993 · 1999-2004 · 2005-2009
- ▶ linear trend over observation period (regress on time)
- ▶ Likert scale → dichotomized → probit and marginal effects
- ▶ scale 1-10 → OLS

Increase of gender equality?

Expected decline of:	↑	ns	↓
A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works	1	2	31
A woman has to have children in order to be fulfilled	7	2	25
A job is alright but what most women really want is a home and children	5	2	27
Expected increase of:	↑	ns	↓
In general, fathers are as well suited to look after their children as mothers	28	0	6
A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work	26	2	6

Increase of tolerance?

Expected decline of:	↑	ns	↓
A child needs a home with both a father and a mother to grow up happily	2	4	28
Important for successful marriage: Children	6	7	21
A marriage or a long-term stable relationship is necessary to be happy	14	3	17
Expected increase of:	↑	ns	↓
Marriage is an out-dated institution	27	6	1
Justifiable: homosexuality	28	2	4
Justifiable: divorce	24	2	8

Increase of commitment?

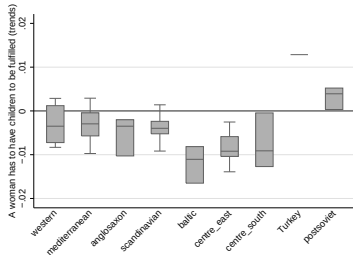
Expected decline of:	↑	ns	↓
Justifiable: adultery	13	2	19
Expected increase of:	↑	ns	↓
Important in life: Family	21	3	10
Regardless of what the qualities and faults of one's parents are, one must always love and respect them (vs. only if they have earned it by their behavior and attitudes)	8	7	19
Parents' duty is to do their best for their children even at the expense of their own well-being (vs. should not be asked to sacrifice their own well-being)	26	4	4

Europe

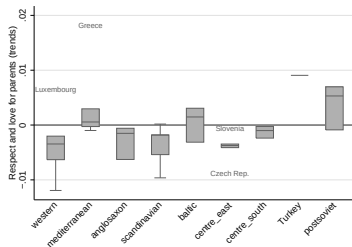


Post-soviet countries: Russia, Belarus, Ukraine

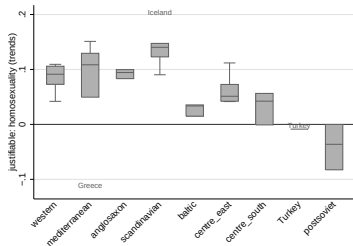
A woman has to have children to be fulfilled



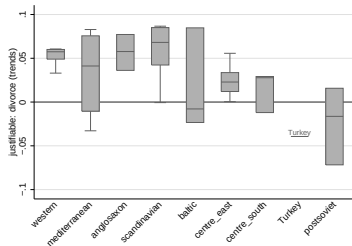
Respect and love for parents



Justifiable: homosexuality

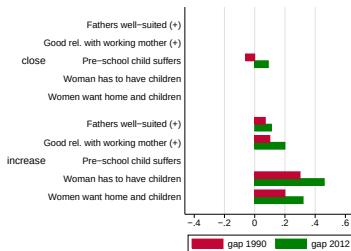


Justifiable: divorce

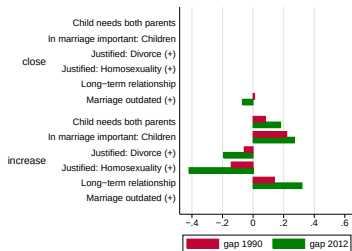


Post-soviet countries: Russia, Belarus, Ukraine

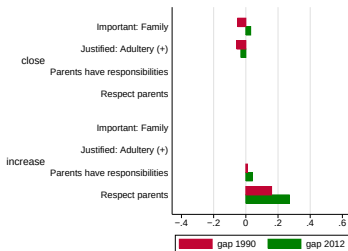
Equality



Tolerance

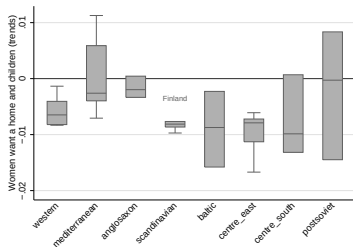


Commitment



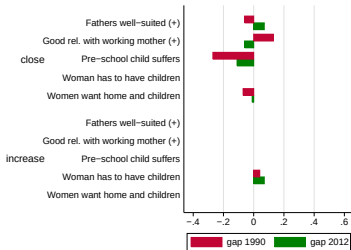
Mediterranean: Greece, Italy, Malta, Spain, Portugal

Women want a home and children

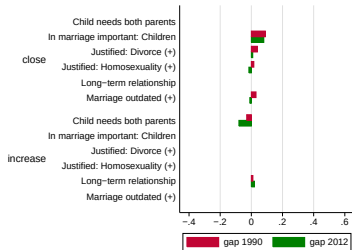


Mediterranean: Greece, Italy, Malta, Spain, Portugal

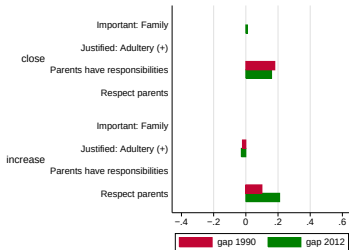
Equality



Tolerance

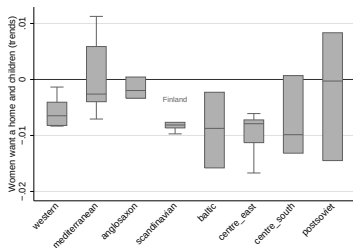


Commitment

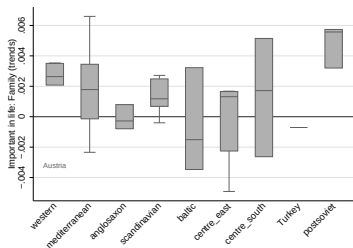


Baltic, Central-Eastern and South-Eastern

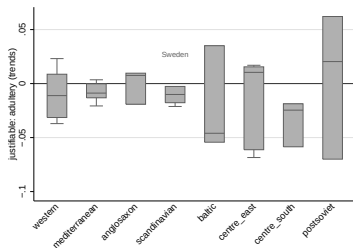
Women want a home and children



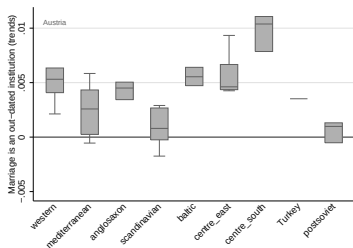
Important in life: Family



Justifiable: adultery

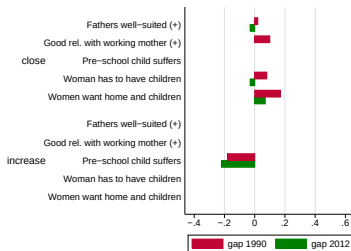


Marriage is an out-dated institution

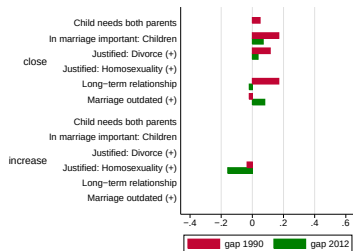


Baltic, Central-Eastern and South-Eastern

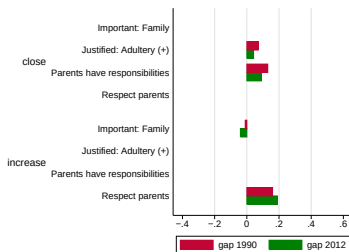
Equality



Tolerance



Commitment



Summary:

- ▶ The overall change of family-related attitudes is consistent with the US case; increase of gender equality and tolerance, some increase of commitment.
- ▶ Differences across European regions:
 - ▶ Post-soviet countries: more and more traditional; differences to Northern Europe increase.
 - ▶ Eastern and Southern Europe: stronger convergence with Western Europe.

Conclusion:

Non-traditional family arrangements can coexist with increasing commitment also in Europe.

malgorzata.mikucka@uclouvain.be

Thank you!