

Essays on Social Themes

**Edited by
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Families Bolstering the Effects of Globalisation: Do Welfare Regimes Explain Cross-National Differences in Parenting Strategies?

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Recent welfare state literature suggests evaluating the efficiency of institutional arrangements based on child-centred social investments (Esping-Andersen, 2002) and compensating parents for the time and efforts families dedicate to children (Folbre, 2008; Goodin et al., 2008). However, apart from emerging evidence on apparent costs of time and money, we lack research on the more qualitative effects that institutional arrangements have in terms of upbringing children. In this paper we analyse parenting strategies to see whether various welfare regimes indeed produce any principal differences in parental behaviour.

Parental views regarding children and child-rearing have received considerable attention in the literature since the 1950s because of their importance in understanding and explaining the variation in people's parenting behaviours that, in turn, have an impact on the child outcome (Tulviste et al., 2007). Most of the research on parental views regarding child-rearing has focused on the question of how parental child-rearing values reflect broader cultural ideologies. Lück (2006) argues that since the cultural background of societies has shaped their institutional arrangements, the cultural mores and religious belief systems continue to assert a direct effect on women's values. Spilerman (2009) suggests this impact rather comes indirectly through institutions. He asserts that country-level differences in value preferences affect the course of institutional adaptations to the unfolding of globalisation, both in rate and in the form that these adjustments will take.

Referring to differences between countries as a matter of institutional arrangements rather than as a matter of unique culture also gives us meaningful possibilities to disentangle the mechanisms behind these. We follow here the concept of layered institutions, as presented by Scott (1994), who suggested these to be viewed as consisting of three distinct elements: meaning systems and related behaviour patterns (e.g. time spent on different activities that form parenting); symbolic elements, including normative components (e.g. the prevailing vision in a society of a good parent and a well-behaved child); and

regulatory processes to enforce these (informal and normal sanctions). These layers seem to be inherent also in the welfare state typologies.

The aim of this paper is to see whether the countries with different gender regimes and institutional arrangements differ systematically according to the dominant parenting style. To analyse systematic differences in parenting as produced by the institutional arrangements, we use parental mediation of children's Internet use as an example of parenting choices. In the overall universal set of childrearing activities, parental mediation of Internet use is a new phenomenon and this generation of parents is the first to face it. They cannot rely on their own childhood experiences or on the nation-specific cultural history with the related meanings, implicit in the way childrearing is conceptualised in many other everyday contexts and practices. This makes Internet-related parenting behaviour an especially good example for assuming the importance of institutional effects over the cultural meanings. We are in a fortunate situation to make use of one of the first attempts to collect the comparative data on EU27 countries in this regard, enabling us to follow this line of inquiry.

The paper is structured as follows. In the first section, we give an overview of the institutional arrangements and present our suggestions on how they might affect the parenting choices. In the second section, we discuss the specificities of the national differences in the specific area of parenting – mediation of the Internet. Then we introduce our data and methodology and present the typology of parents based on the mediation strategies that we use in our analysis. Finally, we create the typology of countries based on the dominant parental strategies and compare the results with the welfare state arrangements in a country to see whether there are any systematic correlation patterns between the societal arrangement and the daily choices that individual parents make.

Institutional Arrangements of Gender Regimes

Based on a general normative assumption throughout European cultural and geographical area and beyond, regardless of the specific gender regime, women take up most of the caring responsibilities in a society, while men are more engaged in paid labour. This gender based specialisation in home-making, although changing in time, secures that there is always a parent at home to tend the children. This traditional pattern, however, is not dominant in all the countries. The well-known welfare state typologies (Esping-Andersen, 1990), with ideas originating from classical approaches (see Holmwood, 2000; Oorschot, Opielka and Pfau-Effinger, 2008), have been systematically reformulated into different gender regimes (Esping- Andersen 2002, Blossfeld & Hofmeister, 2006). Pfau-Effinger (2004) has yet developed the concept of gender cultures as intertwined, but distinct, from that of gender regimes.

Analysing women's labour market participation in Western European countries and postsocialist states, Hofäcker (2006) finds the changes and

developments in this regard to be compatible with the welfare regime of a specific state. The gender regime models applied in this type of analysis have as their key feature the extent to which the family form invokes women as housewives or breadwinners (e.g. Bielenski et al., 2002), and define differences based not only on norms but also on the form of welfare state (see Walby, 2004). We use Hofäcker's (2006) classification as the starting point to differentiate between European countries, distinguishing between five types of institutional arrangements, here ordered according to the level to which parents are supported by the private or public institutions to provide childcare (see Esping-Andersen 1990, 2002; Folbre 2008):

Southern European familialistic states (like Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain) where neither the state nor the private sector have created any preconditions for the increased supply of female labour force as there are no alternative childcare possibilities in addition to the (extended) family. The predominant gender arrangement is male breadwinner (see Bielenski et al., 2002), with only limited part-time job opportunities for women.

Conservative states staying at the middle position in regard to women's labour force participation rates as well as the role of the state and the private sector in increasing the supply of female work force. In this cluster, Austria and Germany have the predominant male breadwinner ideology with rather high part-timing options for women while France and the Netherlands have been ascribed modified male breadwinner model (Bielenski et al., 2002).

Liberal states (as Ireland and the United Kingdom) with women's active labour force participation – not because of the state support but due to the development of market-oriented childcare facilities and the service sector as an employer. The gender regime is characterized by the predominant male breadwinner pattern (Bielenski et al., 2002) with wide part-time job opportunities.

In *social democratic states* (like Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) women's labour market participation is very high, encouraged by the respective policies (e.g. creating of public sector jobs and offering public childcare opportunities). The universal breadwinner model characterises these countries (Bielenski et al., 2002). Though part-timing is widely used, women's part-time hours are longer than elsewhere.

Postsocialist states are classified together, as there the institutional system has not yet been settled out following the societal transitions to capitalism. Hofäcker (2006) also analysed only a small number of postsocialist countries and he did not formulate any single conclusions regarding the labour market participation rate of women. Some authors claim that postsocialist countries have already developed in different directions: a neoliberal type in the Baltic states, an embedded neoliberal type in the Visegrad states, and a neocorporatist type in Slovenia (Bohle & Greskovits, 2007). According to gender ideology, these countries could be labelled as having universal breadwinner model with very low part-time options and thus rather egalitarian fulltime labour market

participation, with mothers taking extensive career breaks to care for the younger babies (see also Roosalu & Täht 2010).

Even though there are national differences in gender specialisation, the latter has decreased over time. Which childrearing practices are employed, could be seen as depending on the amount of parental attention available to the kids at home. There are at least two factors to support this claim. First and foremost, the time effect is at place: the more parents are engaged in paid work, the less time they can actually devote to the kids, and the time for children is the least in families where all adults work. The second is the lower specialisation in a family in childrearing – in two-career families, both parents are engaged in paid work and also in parenting, leaving less personal resources to devote to childrearing than in male breadwinner families – which might lead to lower awareness and use of different strategies. But, while mothers are more often employed fulltime than before, the time families devote to their children has rather increased across countries (Gauthier et al., 2004), as working parents decrease their time on leisure but not on parenting, reflecting the widespread belief in quality time. Gauthier and colleagues witness notable differences by countries, which may be attributable to the differences in parenting time existing already before the global societal and cultural trends emerged. This may, however, also reflect the very basic differences in the institutional arrangements, predominant ideologies and framing practices across the countries.

National Differences in Parental Mediation of Children's Internet Use

Along with the rapid growth of children's Internet use and rising public concern about risks and negative experiences kids may face online, we can witness an increasing research interest in parental strategies for regulating and monitoring children's online behaviour. Previous literature offers several distinctions between general strategies parents use in mediating their children's Internet use, differentiating, for instance, between 'system-based' and 'user-based' approach (that is, between technical solutions and parental guidance), or 'restrictive mediation' and 'instructive mediation' (that is, between rule-making and active efforts to interpret media content for children; see Kirwil et al., 2009, for overview). Based on these distinctions, various typologies of parental mediation of children's Internet use have been proposed. Lwin et al. (2008) propose four parental strategies: restrictive, promotive (only instructive mediation), selective (both restrictive and instructive), and laissez faire (no mediation). Livingstone and Helsper (2008) have described four factors of parental mediation: an active 'co-use' and three types of 'restrictive mediation' (use of technical filtering/monitoring tools, rule-making and monitoring of visited websites and e-mails).

Previous studies, rather unanimously, suggest that parents tend to favour 'user-based' or social approach over 'system-based' or technical solutions (see, e.g. Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Lwin et al., 2008; Kirwil, 2009; Kirwil et

al., 2009). Several individual-level differences between parents based on their gender, education and Internet use, as well as on the child's gender and age, have also been described in these studies. For instance, Kirwil et al. (2009) have shown that the more parents use the Internet, the more they practice social mediation and apply restrictions (with the exception of parents who use the Internet daily). The authors, however, do not explore the relationship between parents' Internet use and 'system-based' mediation.

Recent special Eurobarometer surveys (2005, 2008) have provided comparative data on EU 25 and EU 27 countries, respectively, allowing researchers to conclude that in addition to individual-level variation in parental strategies, systematic cross-national differences exist (see Kalmus et al., 2009; Kirwil, 2009; Kirwil et al., 2009; Livingstone & Haddon, 2009; Lobe et al., 2009). Based on the socialisation approach, which contextualises parental practices in relation to socialisation cultures, Kirwil and her colleagues (Kirwil, 2009; Kirwil et al., 2009) have explained cross-cultural similarities and differences in parental mediation by taking into account the countries' orientation in terms of individualistic and collectivistic values. They suggest, in broad terms, that parents from individualistically-oriented child-rearing cultures (e.g. historically Protestant Nordic Europe) engage more in all types of mediation, while parents from cultures with a collectivistic orientation (e.g. Portugal and post-communist Europe, excluding Slovenia) either do not use any mediation or favour restrictive rules or technical solutions. This approach is in line with a long tradition of research on techniques and practices of child-rearing guided by parental values and attitudes, which, in turn, are influenced by broader cultural ideologies (Tulviste et al., 2007).

In this paper we remain within the socialisation approach to parental mediation. We assume, however, that the factors behind cross-national differences in parental strategies are connected to the general gender regime in the country, or the welfare regime, which illustrates or drives it.

Data and Method

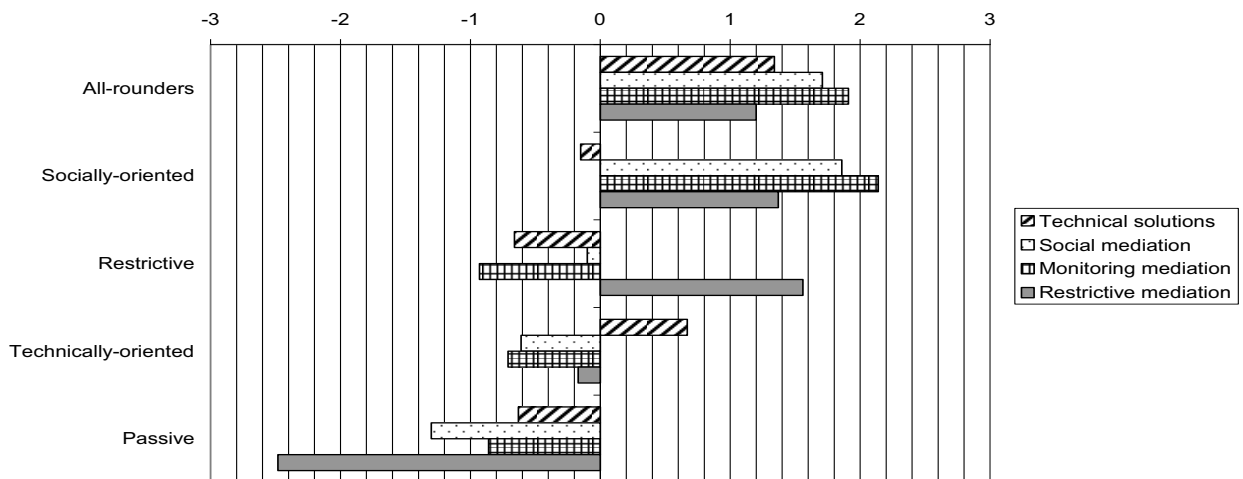
Our aim in this article is threefold: firstly, by using a secondary multi-dimensional analysis of the most recent pan-European survey data, we provide a typology of parents based on their strategies of mediating children's Internet use; secondly, we offer a classification of European countries according to the predominant parental types; and thirdly, we discuss the significance of underlying institutional roots in explaining cross-national differences in parental strategies.

Our analysis is based on the survey data from *Flash Eurobarometer No. 248 – Safe Internet for children*, conducted in October 2008 among parents of 6 to 17 year old children in 27 EU member states (N=12,803). We selected the parents whose child accessed the Internet at home (N=8,631). Based on earlier distinctions between general strategies parents use in mediating their children's

Internet use (Eastin et al., 2006; Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Lwin et al., 2008; Kirwil et al., 2009) we composed four sum indexes of parental mediation:

- *Social mediation* (staying nearby when the child is online; sitting with the child when s/he goes online; asking/talking to the child what s/he is doing or did online; ‘always’ added two points to the index, ‘very frequently’ added one point);
- *Monitoring mediation* (checking the computer later, to see which sites the child visited; checking the messages in the child’s e-mail account / instant messaging service; checking whether the child has a profile on a social networking site / online community; ‘always’ added two points to the index, ‘very frequently’ added one point);
- *Restrictive mediation* (not allowing the child to spend a lot of time online; to talk to people they don’t know in real life; to use e-mail / instant messaging tools; to use chat rooms; to create a profile in an online community; to access certain websites; to download / play music, films, games; to buy online; to give out personal information; each restriction added one point to the index);
- *Technical solutions* (filtering software; monitoring software; each solution added one point to the index).

Figure 1. *Typology of Parental Strategies for Mediating Children’s Internet Use (differences in the indices compared to the average of the whole sample)*



We used the four indexes as input variables for two-step cluster analysis. A five-cluster solution, shown on Figure 1, provided the most comprehensive and easily interpretable typology of parental strategies for mediating children’s Internet use.

Table 1. *Classification of EU27 Countries by Parental Types (%) and Welfare Regimes*

Predominant parental types	Country	All-rounders	Socially oriented	Restrictive	Technically oriented	Passive	Welfare regime
All-rounders + Technically-oriented	UK	33.7	14.6	6.9	39.4	5.5	Liberal
	Ireland	27.1	23.6	16.1	29.5	3.8	Liberal
	Germany	26.8	24	11.7	27.1	10.3	Conservative
Socially-oriented	Portugal	8.2	44.7	23.3	10.5	13.2	Familialistic
	Greece	10.2	38.6	17.3	24.4	9.6	Familialistic
	Italy	7.4	38.3	22.3	20.2	11.7	Familialistic
	Cyprus	5.3	37.2	21.2	21.2	15	Familialistic*
	Spain	18.2	31.3	23.1	16.6	10.7	Familialistic
	Malta	7.1	27.8	17.5	24.5	23.1	Familialistic*
Restrictive + Socially-oriented	Romania	3	28.1	32.3	9.6	27.1	Postsocialist
Technically-oriented + Restrictive	Poland	7.6	21.1	25.6	29.2	16.4	Postsocialist
	Slovenia	10.3	14.1	24.9	27.5	23.2	Postsocialist
Technically-oriented	France	15	15.5	10.9	43.1	15.5	Conservative
	Luxembourg	14.7	16.3	12	40.8	16.3	Conservative*
	Belgium	7.1	21.4	16.6	37.1	17.8	Conservative
	Austria	13.2	19.4	18.8	32.6	16	Conservative
	Netherlands	10.3	17.9	18.8	32.6	20.4	Conservative**
Technically-oriented + Passive	Sweden	5	4.8	13.4	43.1	33.8	Social democratic
	Finland	9.2	12	21.7	32.6	24.5	Social democratic
	Denmark	3.7	5.7	24.1	28.7	37.8	Social democratic
	Hungary	4.3	13.2	22.3	27.6	32.7	Postsocialist
Passive	Estonia	4.2	10.9	14.9	22.4	47.6	Postsocialist
	Czech Republic	1.8	14	18.9	19.1	46.2	Postsocialist
	Latvia	4.6	14.9	12.1	22.4	46	Postsocialist
	Slovakia	2.1	17.1	19.2	17.7	43.9	Postsocialist
	Bulgaria	2.6	24.7	20.9	14	37.8	Postsocialist
	Lithuania	2.2	8.5	31.2	22.4	35.6	Postsocialist

Source: own calculations; welfare regime typology from Hofäcker (2006).

Classification suggestion by the authors

** The Netherlands has also been classified into social democratic cluster (see Vis et al., 2008).

‘All-rounders’ use all four types of mediation more actively compared to the average of the sample. This type is not widespread, involving only 10 per cent of European parents. ‘Socially-oriented’ parents employ all ‘user-based’ types of mediation most actively and make up 19 per cent of the sample. ‘Restrictive’ parents, comprising also 19 per cent of the respondents, rely most heavily on making rules and setting restrictions. ‘Technically-oriented’ parents use filtering and monitoring software relatively actively while practicing ‘user-based’ types of mediation less frequently than the average. The largest

proportion of parents, 27 per cent, fell into the *'technically-oriented'* type. The remaining 25 per cent of parents practice all types of mediation, especially setting restrictions, less frequently compared to the sample average, and can be characterized as *'passive'* in mediating their children's Internet use.

To create a typology of EU member states, we cross-tabulated the types of parents with countries and classified the countries by predominant parental types as shown in Table 1. We juxtapose this classification with the typology of welfare and gender regimes, based on Hofäcker's approach (2006).

Do Predominant Parental Strategies Differ by Institutional Arrangement?

The first group of countries (see Table 1) is characterised by almost equal predominance of *'all-rounders'* and *'technically-oriented'* parents. The three countries in this group – the UK, Ireland and Germany – involve two rather different large parental types: those who actively employ all possible means to mediate their children's Internet use and those who rely mostly on technical solutions. The underlying welfare regimes (liberalism in the UK and Ireland, and conservatism in Germany), by providing wide part-time job opportunities but predominantly private childcare facilities, bring about differentiation of families between the male breadwinner type and two-career families, which is reflected in the two main strategies parents use to regulate children's online behaviour.

The second group of countries is distinguished by the predominance of *'socially-oriented'* parents and includes only Southern European familialistic countries. With women's low labour force participation and modest availability of public childcare, children spend their time more regularly with an adult nearby, which obviously facilitates social interaction with a parent also when the child goes online.

Romania makes up a distinctive case, characterised by a very high proportion of parents practicing the restrictive strategy on the one hand, and a great share of *'socially-oriented'* parents on the other hand. Different cultural and institutional factors may play a role here. Among postsocialist countries, Romania is one with the lowest attendance of children in kindergarten and with the lowest female labour force participation (Roosalu & Täht, 2010). Thus, parental supervision in childcare in general and in mediating Internet use in particular may be more feasible and normalised as part of parental responsibilities.

Two other postsocialist countries, Poland and Slovenia, form the fourth group, characterised by the prevalence of *'technically-oriented'* and *'restrictive'* parents. Again, several cultural and institutional factors probably are at play here. Poland and Slovenia share Catholic religious background and Socialist past with Romania (and Lithuania), which may give some explanation to the high proportion of *'restrictive'* parents in all these four countries as the *'threatened values'* (Padilla-Walker & Thompson, 2005) such as innocence and proper behaviour of children are more important in these cultures. Also, Poland

is referred to as the ‘strongest case for a return to the male breadwinner model’ among postsocialist countries (Zhelyazkova & Valentova, 2009), characterised by a low kindergarten attendance and a low female labour force participation, which, in turn, can account for its similarity with some Western European conservative countries (e.g. Austria and Germany) in terms of the share of ‘socially-oriented’ and ‘technically-oriented’ parents.

In the fifth group of countries, the greatest proportion of parents rely mostly on technical solutions in regulating their children’s Internet use, while ‘socially-oriented’ and/or ‘passive’ parents have also a great share. The group involves mostly conservative continental European countries. We can assume that the differentiating effect of welfare and gender regimes is rather similar to the one suggested in case of the first group of countries, fostering extensive social mediation in the families with male breadwinner and leaving two-career families with the options of technical solutions or passive strategies.

The sixth group of countries is characterised by relatively high shares of ‘technically-oriented’ and ‘passive’ parents and involves all three Nordic social democratic states as well as postsocialist Hungary. Social democratic and postsocialist countries are known for women’s active, fulltime participation in labour market, encouraged by respective policies. The prevalent universal breadwinner model in these countries provides some explanation to the fact that most families opt for the strategies, which imply less supervision and social interaction when children go online. Also, the relative passivity of parents may be partly due to the higher level of outsourcing any child-rearing tasks to the state via the extensive use of public childcare from age three.

The seventh group of countries stands out by the highest proportion of ‘passive’ parents and comprises only postsocialist states. Compared to social democratic regimes, in postsocialist countries high female labour force participation is combined with very low part-time options, which may leave the parents with least resources such as time and energy to employ more active strategies in mediating their children’s online activities.

The results of this comparative analysis confirm our assumption about the interplay of structural factors behind cross-national differences in parental mediation. We admit though that the factors considered in our analysis are not sufficient for explaining the full variety of parental strategies in European countries. Additional cultural and institutional indicators such as the length and intensity of awareness raising activities would be needed to clear up further particularities, for instance a great proportion of ‘all-rounders’ in some countries.

Institutional Arrangements Matter in Parenting – So What?

This paper is among the first ones attempting to reveal the mechanisms of systematic effects of welfare regime arrangements on parenting strategies.

Our analysis suggests that systematic correlation patterns indeed exist between the types of welfare arrangement (and underlying gender regimes) and predominant parental styles of mediating children's Internet use. One can therefore assume that welfare state institutions, especially through regulating female labour force participation and the availability of public childcare, have some bearing on the strategies parents are actually able to employ in their child-rearing tasks. This clearly brings forth the need for more attention to the effects of welfare arrangements in different countries. Also, if welfare regimes foster the outsourcing of socialising tasks to public childcare, the curricula of kindergartens and primary schools deserve more emphasis.

Acknowledging the basic differences in the institutional arrangements across the countries, and at the same time the standardising and unifying global forces, we set a further question how likely it is that the values and meanings – cultural framings – will be diverse in the future in different countries. One of the major mechanisms for inter-generational transmission of these kinds of framings is family itself as an agent of socialisation, while regime differences largely predict predominant parenting styles in a country. The extent of persistence of country-level differences in upbringing future generation and mediating their participation in global (youth) culture and information flows accessible through online media allows us to see the sustainability of national differences regardless of the trends towards unification.

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*Families Bolstering the Effects of Globalisation:
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