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15 COMMENTARIES

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27 Parental mediation of EU 28 kids' Internet use revisited: 29 Looking for a complex model 30 of cross-national differences 31 32 33 34 35 36 37

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41 Along with the rapid growth of children's Internet use and rising public
42 concern about risks and negative experiences kids may face online, we can wit-
43 ness an increasing research interest in parental strategies for regulating and
44 monitoring children's online behaviour. Previous literature offers several dis-
45 tinctions between general strategies parents use in mediating their children's
46 Internet use, differentiating, for instance, between 'system-based' and 'user-
47 based' approach (that is, between technical solutions and parental guidance) or
48 'restrictive mediation' and 'instructive mediation' (that is, between rule-making
49 and active efforts to interpret media content for children; see Kirwil et al. 2009,
50 for overview). Based on these distinctions, various typologies of parental medi-
51 ation of children's Internet use have been proposed. Lwin et al. (2008) propose
52 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 and 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 (2007, 2008) have provided comparative data on EU25 and EU27 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 and Haddon 2009; Lobe et al. 2009). Based on the socialization approach, which contextualizes parental practices in relation to socialization 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 (see Tulviste et al. 2007, for overview).

In this discussion we remain within the socialization approach to parental mediation. We assume, however, that the factors behind cross-national differences in parental strategies are multilateral. We suggest, first, that besides individualistic and collectivistic values other cultural factors deserve to be taken into consideration. Also, we take account of the level of Internet use among EU parents as we assume it to be a necessary precondition for applying technical restrictions. More importantly, we seek to provide an additional explanation to cross-national differences in parental mediation by taking into account some institutional arrangements – namely, gender regimes (Hofäcker 2006; Hofmeister and Blossfeld 2006) embedded – or reflected – in welfare state typologies (Esping Andersen 1990). We assume that the extent to which parents mediate their children's Internet use is influenced, among other factors, by the distribution of child-rearing tasks between the private and the public sphere as well by predominant gender role models in a given country.

WELFARE REGIMES AND DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD-REARING TASKS

To operationalize institutional arrangements in European countries for our current purposes, we follow the well-known welfare state typologies (Esping

01 Andersen 1990), combined with ideas originating from classical approaches by
 02 Marshall, Polanyi and Myrdal (see Holmwood 2000), which are reformulated
 03 into different gender regimes (see Blossfeld and Hofmeister 2006; Hofäcker
 04 2006 for overview). In analysing women's labour market participation in west-
 05 ern European countries and postsocialist states, Hofäcker (2004) finds the
 06 changes and developments in this regard to be compatible with the welfare
 07 regime of a specific state. The gender regime models applied in this type of
 08 analysis have as their key feature the extent to which the family form invokes
 09 women as housewives or breadwinners (e.g. Bielenski et al. 2002), and define
 10 differences based not only on norms but also on the form of welfare state (see
 11 Walby 2004). We use Hofäcker's (2004) classification as the starting point to
 12 distinguish between European countries:

- 14 • Southern European familialistic states (Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain)
 15 where neither the state nor the private sector has created any preconditions
 16 for the increased supply of female labour force as there are no alternative
 17 childcare possibilities in addition to the (extended) family. The predominant
 18 gender arrangement is male breadwinner (see Bielenski et al. 2002), with
 19 only limited part-time job opportunities for women.
- 20 • Conservative states staying at the middle position in regard to women's
 21 labour force participation rates as well as the role of the state and the private
 22 sector in increasing the supply of female work force. In this cluster, Aus-
 23 tria and Germany have the predominant male breadwinner ideology with
 24 rather high part-timing options for women while France and the Nether-
 25 lands have been ascribed modified male breadwinner model (Bielenski
 26 et al. 2002).
- 27 • Liberal states (Ireland and the United Kingdom) with women's active
 28 labour force participation – not because of the state's support but due to
 29 the development of market-oriented childcare facilities and the service sec-
 30 tor as an employer. The gender regime is characterized by the predominant
 31 male breadwinner pattern (Bielenski et al. 2002) with wide part-time job
 32 opportunities.
- 33 • Social democratic states (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) with
 34 women's active, full-time participation in labour market, encouraged by
 35 the respective policies (e.g. creating public sector jobs and offering pub-
 36 lic childcare opportunities). The universal breadwinner model characterizes
 37 these countries (Bielenski et al. 2002). Though part-timing is widely used,
 38 women's part-time hours are longer than elsewhere.
- 39 • Postsocialist states where the institutional system has not yet been settled
 40 out. Hofäcker (2004) analysed only a small number of postsocialist coun-
 41 tries and he did not formulate any single conclusions regarding the labour
 42 market participation rate of women. Some authors claim that postsocialist
 43 countries have already developed in different directions: a neoliberal type
 44 in the Baltic states, an embedded neoliberal type in the Visegrad states and
 45 a neocorporatist type in Slovenia (Bohle and Greskovits 2007). According
 46 to gender ideology, these countries could be labelled as having universal
 47 breadwinner model with very low part-time options.

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 50 On what grounds do we assume the pattern of parental strategies of medi-
 51 ating children's Internet use to comply with the welfare and gender regimes? We
 52 presume that the extent and character of child-rearing practices, among them

mediating children's online activities, depend on the amount of parental attention available to the kids at home. This is probably most generous in countries with predominant traditional role division between parents and least generous in regimes of two-career families. At least two factors support this claim. First and foremost, the time-effect is at work: the more parents are engaged in paid work, the less time they can devote to children. Second, in those countries with good provision of public childcare opportunities, parents may outsource any socializing tasks, including media education, to kindergartens and schools. The third factor is the level of specialization on child-rearing in a family, which may work in two different ways: in two-career families, both parents are engaged in paid work as well as in parenting, leaving less personal resources such as empathy and specific child-rearing experiences and skills to devote to socializing kids compared to male breadwinner families. On the other hand, working parents may employ their professional resources (e.g. pedagogical or computer skills) in mediating their children's Internet use. Thus, institutional arrangements embedded in different welfare and gender regimes, via influencing parents' time resources, child-rearing knowledge and skills and allocation of socializing tasks between themselves and public institutions, probably have some bearing on the predominant types of parental mediation of children's online behaviour.

Our aim in this article is threefold: first, by using a secondary multidimensional 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; second, we offer a classification of European countries according to the predominant parental types; and third, we discuss the significance of some macro-level variables, including the underlying institutional roots, in explaining cross-national differences in parental strategies.

DRAWING THE TYPOLOGIES

Our analysis is based on the survey data from *Flash Eurobarometer No. 248 – Safe Internet for Children*, conducted in October 2008 among parents of six- to seventeen-year-old children in 27 EU member states ($N = 12,803$). We selected the parents whose child accessed the Internet at home ($N = 8631$). Based on earlier distinctions between general strategies parents use in mediating their children's Internet use (Livingstone and Helsper 2008; Lwin et al. 2008; Kirwil 2009; Kirwil et al. 2009) we composed four sum indexes of parental mediation:

1. Social mediation (staying nearby when the child is online; sitting with the child when he/she goes online; asking/talking to the child what he/she is doing or did online; 'always' added two points to the index, 'very frequently' added one point)
2. 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)
3. Restrictive mediation (not allowing the child to spend a lot of time online; to talk to people they do not 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

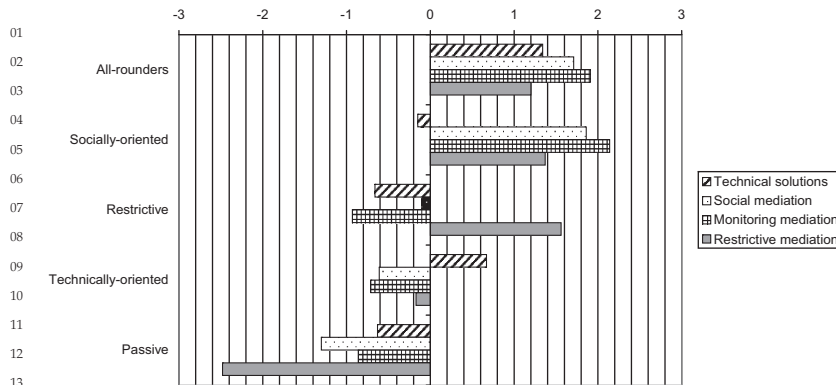


Figure 1: Typology of parents according to their strategies for mediating children's Internet use (differences in the indices compared to the average of the sample).

- 19 certain websites; to download/play music, films, games; to buy online; to give out personal information; each restriction added one point to the index)
- 20
- 21 4. Technical solutions (filtering software; monitoring software; each solution
- 22 added one point to the index)
- 23

24 We used the four indexes as input variables for two-step cluster analysis. A

25 five-cluster solution, shown in Figure 1, provided the most comprehensive

26 and easily interpretable typology of parents according to their strategies for

27 mediating children's Internet use.

28 'All-rounders' use all four types of mediation more actively compared to the

29 average of the sample. This type is not widespread, involving only 10 per cent

30 of European parents. 'Socially oriented' parents employ all 'user-based' types

31 of mediation most actively and make up 19 per cent of the sample. 'Restrictive'

32 parents, comprising also 19 per cent of the respondents, rely most heavily on

33 making rules and setting restrictions. 'Technically oriented' parents use filtering

34 and monitoring software relatively actively while practicing 'user-based' types

35 of mediation less frequently than the average. The largest proportion of par-

36 ents, 27 per cent, fell into the 'technically oriented' type. The remaining 25 per

37 cent of parents practice all types of mediation, especially setting restrictions,

38 less frequently compared to the sample average, and can be characterized as

39 'passive' in mediating their children's Internet use.

40 To create a typology of EU member states, we cross-tabulated the types

41 of parents with countries and classified the countries by predominant parental

42 types as shown in Table 1.

43 We juxtapose this classification with the level of parents' Internet use

44 (derived from the same survey data) and the typology of welfare and gender

45 regimes, based on Hofäcker's (2004) approach.

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48 CLASSIFICATION OF COUNTRIES

49 The first group of countries (see Table 1) is characterized by almost equal

50 predominance of 'all-rounders' and 'technically oriented' parents. The three

51 countries in this group – the United Kingdom, Ireland and Germany – involve

52

Predominant parental types	Country	Parents' Internet use	Welfare regime	All-rounders	Socially oriented	Restrictive	Technically oriented	Passive
All-rounders + technically oriented	United Kingdom	H	Liberal	33.7	14.6	6.9	39.4	5.5
	Ireland	M	Liberal	27.1	23.6	16.1	29.5	3.8
	Germany	M	Conservative	26.8	24	11.7	27.1	10.3
	Portugal	M	Familialistic	8.2	44.7	23.3	10.5	13.2
	Greece	L	Familialistic	10.2	38.6	17.3	24.4	9.6
Socially oriented	Italy	M	Familialistic	7.4	38.3	22.3	20.2	11.7
	Cyprus	L	Familialistic*	5.3	37.2	21.2	21.2	15
	Spain	L	Familialistic	18.2	31.3	23.1	16.6	10.7
	Malta	L	Familialistic*	7.1	27.8	17.5	24.5	23.1
Restrictive + socially oriented	Romania	L	Postsocialist	3	28.1	32.3	9.6	27.1
Technically oriented + restrictive	Poland	M	Postsocialist	7.6	21.1	25.6	29.2	16.4
	Slovenia	M	Postsocialist	10.3	14.1	24.9	27.5	23.2
	France	H	Conservative	15	15.5	10.9	43.1	15.5
Technically oriented	Luxembourg	H	Conservative*	14.7	16.3	12	40.8	16.3
	Belgium	H	Conservative	7.1	21.4	16.6	37.1	17.8
	Austria	M	Conservative	13.2	19.4	18.8	32.6	16
	The Netherlands	H	Conservative/social democratic**	10.3	17.9	18.8	32.6	20.4

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	Technically oriented + passive	Sweden	H	Social democratic	5	4.8	13.4	43.1	33.8
		Finland	H	Social democratic	9.2	12	21.7	32.6	24.5
		Denmark	H	Social democratic	3.7	5.7	24.1	28.7	37.8
		Hungary	M	Postsocialist	4.3	13.2	22.3	27.6	32.7
		Estonia	H	Postsocialist	4.2	10.9	14.9	22.4	47.6
		Czech Republic	H	Postsocialist	1.8	14	18.9	19.1	46.2
	Passive	Latvia	M	Postsocialist	4.6	14.9	12.1	22.4	46
		Slovakia	M	Postsocialist	2.1	17.1	19.2	17.7	43.9
		Bulgaria	H	Postsocialist	2.6	24.7	20.9	14	37.8
		Lithuania	M	Postsocialist	2.2	8.5	31.2	22.4	35.6
	Total				9.9	18.5	19.2	27.2	25.3

H – high (at least 93% of parents use the Internet at least once a month); M – medium (86–92% of parents use the Internet at least once a month); L – low (less than 86% of parents use the Internet at least once a month).

*Classification by the authors.

**The Netherlands has, due to its peculiarities, sometimes been classified into social democratic cluster.

Table 0: Classification of EU27 countries by parental types (%) and welfare regimes.

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 United Kingdom 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. As both of these strategies are based on parents' knowledge of the Internet, the high level of parents' Internet use in the United Kingdom and the medium level in Ireland and Germany can be seen as a precondition of the predominance of 'all-rounders' and 'technically oriented' parents.

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, characterized 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 and Täht 2010). Thus, parental supervision in childcare in general and in mediating Internet use in particular may be more feasible and normalized as part of parental responsibilities. One of the lowest levels of parents' Internet use among the EU countries can account for the smallest overall proportion of 'all-rounders' and 'technically oriented' parents.

Two other postsocialist countries, Poland and Slovenia, form the fourth group, characterized 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 and 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 and Valentova 2009), characterized 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

01 extensive social mediation in the families with male breadwinner and leav-
 02 ing two-career families with the options of technical solutions or passive
 03 strategies.

04 The sixth group of countries is characterized by relatively high shares
 05 of 'technically oriented' and 'passive' parents and involves all three Nordic
 06 social democratic states as well as postsocialist Hungary. Social democratic and
 07 postsocialist countries are known for women's active, full-time participation
 08 in labour market, encouraged by respective policies. The prevalent universal
 09 breadwinner model in these countries provides some explanation to the fact
 10 that most families opt for the strategies, which imply less supervision and social
 11 interaction when children go online. Also, the relative passivity of parents may
 12 be partly due to the higher level of outsourcing of any child-rearing tasks to the
 13 state via the extensive use of public childcare from age 3.

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

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22 **TOWARDS A MORE COMPLEX MODEL**

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24 The results of comparative analysis confirm our assumption about the interplay
 25 of multilateral factors behind cross-national differences in parental mediation.
 26 First, our analysis confirmed that as a precondition of the predominance of
 27 'all-rounders' and/or 'technically oriented' parents, at least medium level of
 28 parents' Internet use is needed; however, high level of parents' Internet use in
 29 itself is not sufficient for these two parental types to prevail in a country.

30 Second, our typological analysis, in general, lends support to the claim by
 31 Kirwil et al. (2009) that parental mediation of children's Internet use varies
 32 between the countries with an individualistic orientation in child-rearing and
 33 the countries where collectivistic values are more important. Our results sug-
 34 gest, however, that the division of European countries into only two main
 35 groups based on a single cultural dimension is a bit too wide a generaliza-
 36 tion. For instance, Portugal as a collectivistic country firmly belongs, according
 37 to our analysis, to the same group with other southern European familialis-
 38 tic countries, most of them characterized as individualistic. Also, postsocialist
 39 countries, most of them sharing a collectivistic orientation, vary greatly in
 40 terms of parental strategies. Thus, other cultural factors, among them religious
 41 background, need to be accounted for.

42 Third, our analysis suggests that systematic correlation patterns indeed exist
 43 between the types of welfare arrangement (and underlying gender regimes)
 44 and predominant parental styles of mediating children's Internet use. One can
 45 therefore suggest that welfare state institutions, especially through regulating
 46 female labour force participation and the availability of public childcare, have
 47 some bearing on the strategies parents are actually able to employ in their
 48 child-rearing tasks. This clearly brings forth the need for more attention to the
 49 effects of welfare arrangements in different countries, not least when planning
 50 for awareness-raising campaigns among parents. Also, in case welfare regimes
 51 foster the outsourcing of any socializing tasks to public childcare, media edu-
 52 cation deserves more emphasis in the curricula of kindergartens and primary
 schools.

We admit 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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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