

Institutional Filters on Children's Internet Use

An Additional Explanation of Cross-national Differences in Parental Mediation

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Introduction

Along with the rapid growth of children's Internet use and rising public concern about risks and negative experiences kids may face online, there has been increasing research interest in parental strategies for regulating and monitoring children's online behaviour (see e.g. Kirwil (2009) for overview). Special Eurobarometer surveys in 2005 and 2008 have provided data on parental mediation of children's Internet use in EU 25 and EU 27 countries, respectively, allowing researchers to conduct comparative analyses, and leading to the overall conclusion that, in addition to individual-level variation in parental strategies, systematic cross-national differences exist (see Kalmus, Keller, & Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, 2009; Kirwil, 2009; Kirwil, Garmendia, Garitaonandia, & Martínez-Fernández, 2009; Livingstone, & Haddon, 2009; Lobe, Segers, & Tsaliki, 2009). These differences have mainly been explained by taking into account the countries' orientations in terms of individualistic and collectivistic values. This kind of 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, Mizera, De Geer, & Tryggvason, 2007 for an overview).

¹ The preparation of this article was supported by the research grants No. 6892, 6968 and 8527 financed by the Estonian Science Foundation; the target financed projects No. 0180017s07, 0132682s05 and 0130027s11 from Estonian Ministry of Education and Science; the European Social Fund cofunding in EDUKO sub-project No. 30.2-10.2/1276, in Archimedes mobility grants No. 30.1-9.2/34 and 30.1-9.1/620 and in the Doctoral Schools program; a grant from the European Science Foundation (contract ref: FK/CE/SCSS-LD6-28), including support for research exchange visits; and Cornell University Institute for European Studies where Triin Roosalu was a visiting researcher when preparing the paper.

While this explanation is rather convincing, it is necessary to take into account that globalisation, along with the diffusion of new media technologies, by making parental experiences and perceptions more similar, has increased uncertainty and flexibility among parents in all countries (cf. Hofmeister, Blossfeld, & Mills, 2006). In the overall set of child-rearing activities, parental mediation of Internet use is a new phenomenon, and the current generation of parents is the first to face this challenge. They cannot rely entirely on their own childhood experiences or on the nation-specific cultural history, with its related meanings, implicit in the way child-rearing is interpreted in many other everyday contexts and practices. Hence, in acknowledging that the current generation of parents across countries is in a similar situation in having to work out strategies to mediate their children's Internet use, we find it intriguing that parents in different countries systematically prefer specific strategies.

In proceeding from the approach of Hofmeister and colleagues (2006), we assume that the universalising impact of globalisation on parental experiences and practices is mediated by institutional filters. In line with Spilerman (2009), we also suggest 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 the differences between countries as a matter of institutional arrangements, as well as a matter of cultural mores and religious belief systems, provides the opportunity to disentangle the mechanisms behind these differences. We follow the concept of layered institutions, as presented by Scott (1994), who suggested these 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 for enforcement (informal and formal sanctions).

In this paper, we remain within the socialisation approach, which contextualises parental practices in relation to socialisation cultures. We assume, however, that the factors behind cross-national differences in parental strategies of mediation are multilateral. We suggest, firstly, that, besides individualistic and collectivistic values, other cultural factors deserve to be taken into consideration. Also, we take into account 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 for cross-national differences in parental mediation by taking into account some institutional arrangements – namely, gender regimes (Hofäcker, 2006; Hofmeister, &

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 the predominant gender role models in a given country.

In the following section, we give an overview of the relevant institutional arrangements, present a classification of European countries based on welfare and gender regimes, and outline our argumentation on how these institutional arrangements might affect parenting practices. In the third section, we discuss the available research on parental mediation of children's Internet use. Then we introduce our data and methodology. In the empirical analysis, by using cluster analysis of recent pan-European survey data, we provide a typology of parents based on their strategies of mediating children's Internet use, offer a classification of European countries according to the predominant parental types, and compare the results with the welfare state arrangements in a country to find out whether any systematic correlation patterns exist between the institutional arrangements and the daily practices that individual parents engage in. The paper concludes with a discussion focusing, among other issues, on policy implications, as well as on the way broader cultural ideologies influence the family as an agent of socialisation.

Institutional Arrangements Influencing the Distribution of Child-rearing Tasks

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

Analysing women's labour market participation in Western European countries and post-socialist states, Hofäcker (2006) has found 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 structure invokes women as housewives or breadwinners (e.g. Bielenski, Bosch, & Wagner, 2002), and define differences based not only on norms but also on the form of the 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 private or public institutions in providing childcare (see Esping-Andersen, 1990; Esping-Andersen *et al.*, 2002; Folbre, 2008):

- *Southern European familialistic states* (such as Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain) where neither the state nor the private sector have created any preconditions for the increased supply of female labour, as there are no alternative childcare opportunities besides the (extended) family. The predominant gender arrangement is the male breadwinner (see Bielenski *et al.*, 2002), with only limited part-time job opportunities for women.
- *Conservative states* are in 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 the female work force. In this cluster, Austria and Germany follow the predominant male breadwinner ideology, with rather high part-time opportunities for women, while France and the Netherlands fall into the modified male breadwinner model (Bielenski *et al.*, 2002).
- *Liberal states* (such as Ireland and the United Kingdom) have active labour force participation by women – not because of state support but due to the development of market-oriented childcare facilities and the service sector as an employer. The gender regime is characterised by the predominant male breadwinner pattern (Bielenski *et al.*, 2002), with wide part-time job opportunities.
- In *social democratic states* (such as Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden), women's labour market participation is very high, encouraged by state policies (e.g. creating public sector jobs and offering public childcare opportunities). The universal breadwinner model characterises these countries (Bielenski *et al.*, 2002). Part-time work is widely available, and women's part-time hours are longer than elsewhere.
- *Post-socialist states* are classified as a group, due to the fact that, following the societal transition to capitalism, the institutional systems have not yet stabilised enough to allow a more distinctive categorisation. Moreover, Hofäcker (2006) analysed only a small number of post-socialist countries and he did not reach any specific conclusions regarding the labour market participation rate of women.

Some authors claim that post-socialist countries have already developed in different directions: a neo-liberal type in the Baltic states, an embedded neo-liberal type in the Visegrad states and a neo-corporatist type in Slovenia (Bohle, & Greskovits, 2007). According to gender ideology, these countries can be labelled as following the universal breadwinner model, with very few part-time options and, thus, rather egalitarian full-time labour market participation, with mothers taking extensive breaks from their careers to care for younger babies (see also Roosalu, & Täht, 2010).

On what basis do we assume that institutional arrangements such as welfare and gender regimes might help to explain the pattern of parental strategies of mediating children's Internet use? We assume 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 kids at home. This attention is probably highest in countries with predominant traditional role division between parents and lowest 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 probably devote to children. Thus, one would expect that when working parents' child-rearing practices are time-limited, they either pay less attention to this activity, or develop more efficient strategies. However, recent studies have demonstrated that this relationship is not entirely observable: while mothers are more often employed full-time than before, the overall time families devote to their children has increased across countries (Gauthier, Smeeding, & Furstenberg, 2004), as working parents decrease the time spent on leisure rather than on parenting. This may reflect the widespread belief in quality-time, or the understanding that it is not the amount of time a parent spends with children that matters, but the quality of activities one is engaged in with kids. Nevertheless, in the context of our comparative study, it is important to note that Gauthier and colleagues (2004) have witnessed significant differences between countries regarding the time spent directly on parenting, which may be attributable to the differences in parenting time that already existed before the global societal and cultural trends emerged.

Secondly, in countries with good provision of public childcare opportunities, parents may more easily outsource socialising tasks, including media education, to kindergartens and schools, thus taking a more passive role in mediating children's Internet use. Moreover, preschoolers educated at home may spend a considerable amount of time online, while children who attend kindergartens are less active Internet users, at least during the childcare hours. Thus, parents in countries with high

childcare attendance may worry less about their children's media consumption.

An additional factor to be considered is the level of specialisation of 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 fewer personal resources, such as empathy and specific child-rearing experiences and skills, to be devoted to socialising kids. In male breadwinner or modified male breadwinner families, there is always one parent responsible for children's development and well-being, and this specialisation may help to develop the relevant skills. On the other hand, if both parents are engaged in employment as well as child-rearing, the family may have a wider variety of knowledge available to perform different parenting tasks. Mediating the use of technology, as a traditionally male-dominated sphere, may be one of those areas which are considered to be a responsibility of fathers. Also, working mothers 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, by influencing parents' time resources, child-rearing knowledge and skills, and allocation of socialising tasks between themselves and public institutions, probably also have some bearing on the predominant types of parental mediation of children's online behaviour.

Parental Strategies of Mediating Children's Internet Use

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* approaches (i.e. between technical solutions and parental guidance), or *restrictive mediation* and *instructive mediation* (i.e. between rule-making and active efforts to interpret media content for children; see Kirwil *et al.*, 2009 for an overview). Based on these distinctions, various typologies of parental mediation of children's Internet use have been proposed. Lwin, Stalaland, & Miyazaki (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, almost unanimously, suggest that parents tend to favour the *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 and colleagues (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.

The existing cross-European comparative analysis suggests, in broad terms, that parents from individualistically-oriented child-rearing cultures (e.g. historically Protestant Nordic Europe) engage more in social co-use and apply more non-restrictive rules, and technical and website restrictions, while parents from cultures with a collectivistic orientation (e.g. Portugal and post-communist Europe, excluding Slovenia) use more time restriction (Kirwil 2009). This analysis was conducted by clustering eighteen European countries into four groups according to parents' preference for teaching individualistic or collectivistic values to children at home (based on the European Values Study 2000), and then comparing the distribution of five parental strategies of mediation in the four groups of countries. This type of analysis, however, does not account for the different combinations of strategies followed by parents; also, it clusters the countries into broad groups based on only one cultural dimension.

Data and Method

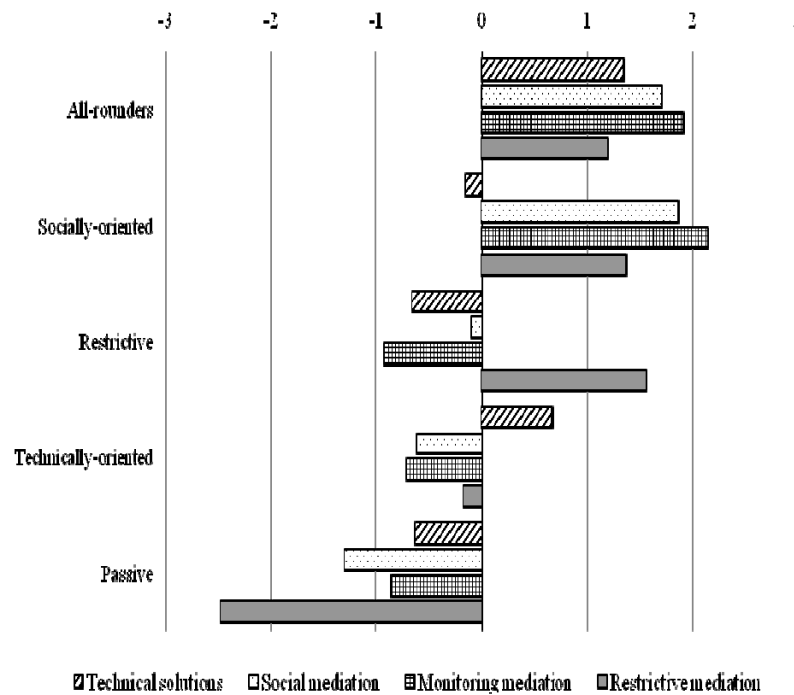
Our analysis is based on the survey data from *Flash Eurobarometer No. 248 – Safe Internet for children*, conducted in October 2008 among parents of 6-17-year-old children in 27 EU member states (N=12,803). We selected parents whose children accessed the Internet at home (N=8,631). Based on earlier distinctions between general strategies parents follow in mediating their children's Internet use (Kirwil, 2009; Kirwil *et al.*, 2009; Livingstone, & Helsper, 2008; Lwin *et al.*, 2008), 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 about what s/he is doing or has done online; "always" added two points to the index, while "very frequently" added one point);
- *Monitoring mediation* (checking the computer later to see which sites the child has 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, and "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 or 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).

We used the four indexes as input variables for two-step cluster analysis. A five-cluster solution, shown in Figure 4.1, provided the most comprehensive and most easily interpretable typology of parents according to their strategies for mediating children's Internet use.

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



- *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, also comprising 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 practising “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 characterised 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 juxtaposed this classification with the level of parents’ Internet use (derived from the same survey data) and the typology of welfare and gender regimes, based on Hofäcker’s approach (2006).

Classification of Countries

The first group of countries (see Table 1) is characterized by an almost equal predominance of *all-rounders* and *technically-oriented* parents. The three countries in this group – the UK, Ireland and Germany – include 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, lead to 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 UK and the medium level in Ireland and Germany can be seen as a precondition for the predominance of *all-rounders* and *technically-oriented* parents. In the UK and Ireland, parents ascribe both individualistic and collectivistic values in child-rearing moderate importance; in Germany, individualistic values also have moderate importance, while collectivistic values have low importance (Kirwil, 2009).

The second group of countries is distinguished by the predominance of *socially-oriented* parents, and includes only southern European familistic 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 also obviously facilitates social interaction with a parent when the child goes online. In Greece, Italy and Spain, individualistic values in child-rearing have moderate importance and collectivistic values have low importance, while Portugal belongs to the group of countries with moderate importance of collectivistic values and very low importance of individualistic values (Kirwil, 2009).

Romania makes up a distinctive case, characterised by a very high proportion of parents practising 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 post-socialist countries, Romania is the one with the lowest attendance of children in kindergarten (Roosalu, & Täht, 2010) and with the lowest female labour force participation. Thus, parental supervision in childcare in general, and in mediating Internet use in particular may be more feasible and normalised as a part of parental responsibilities. The fact that Romania has one of the lowest levels of parents' Internet use among the EU countries may account for it having the smallest overall proportion of *all-rounders* and *technically-oriented* parents.

Two other post-socialist countries, Poland and Slovenia, form the fourth group, which is characterised by the prevalence of *technically-oriented* and *restrictive* parents. Again, several cultural and institutional factors probably are at play here. The two countries are different in regard to individualistic versus collectivistic orientation, with moderate importance of collectivistic values and very low importance of individualistic values in Poland, and moderate importance of individualistic values and low importance of collectivistic values in Slovenia (Kirwil, 2009). However, Poland and Slovenia share a Catholic religious background and Socialist past with Romania (and Lithuania), which may provide some explanation for the high proportion of *restrictive* parents in all 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 post-socialist countries (Zhelyazkova, & Valentova, 2009), being characterised by low kindergarten attendance and low female labour force participation, which, in turn, may 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 also make up a large percentage. The group includes mostly conservative continental Euro-

pean countries. We can assume that the differentiating effect of welfare and gender regimes is rather similar to the one suggested in the case of the first group of countries, fostering extensive social mediation in families with male breadwinners and leaving two-career families with the options of technical solutions or passive strategies. In terms of individualistic versus collectivistic orientation, three different groups of countries are represented in this cluster. In Belgium, parents ascribe both individualistic and collectivistic values moderate importance; in France and Austria, individualistic values have moderate importance while collectivistic values have low importance; and the Netherlands stands out for the very high importance of individualistic values and very low importance of collectivistic values (Kirwil, 2009).

The sixth group of countries is characterised by relatively high percentages of *technically-oriented* and *passive* parents, and includes all three Nordic social democratic states, as well as post-socialist Hungary. Social democratic and post-socialist countries are known for women's active, full-time participation in the labour market, encouraged by state policies. The prevalent universal breadwinner model in these countries provides some explanation for the fact that most families opt for strategies which involve 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 of child-rearing tasks to the state via the extensive use of public childcare beginning at age three. In this cluster, Sweden and Denmark are two of the countries with very high importance of individualistic values and very low importance of collectivistic values (Kirwil, 2009).

The seventh group of countries stands out as having the highest proportion of *passive* parents and is comprised of only post-socialist states. Compared to social democratic regimes, in post-socialist countries high female labour force participation is combined with very low part-time options, which may leave the parents with the least time and energy to employ more active strategies in mediating their children's online activities. In this group, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria are characterised by moderate importance of collectivistic values and very low importance of individualistic values (Kirwil, 2009).

Table 1: Classification of EU 27 countries according to parental types (%) and welfare regimes

<i>Predominant parental types</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Welfare Regime</i>	<i>Parents' Internet use*</i>	<i>All-rounders</i>	<i>Socially oriented</i>	<i>Rest- rictive</i>	<i>Tech- nically oriented</i>	<i>Pas- sive</i>
<i>All-rounders</i>	UK	Liberal	H	34	15	7	39	6
<i>& Technically-oriented</i>	Ireland	Liberal	M	27	24	16	30	4
	Germany	Conservative	M	27	24	12	27	10

<i>Socially-oriented</i>	Portugal	Familistic	M	8	45	23	11	13	
	Greece	Familistic	L	10	39	17	24	10	
	Italy	Familistic	M	7	38	22	20	12	
	Cyprus	Familistic**	L	5	37	21	21	15	
	Spain	Familistic	L	18	31	23	17	11	
	Malta	Familistic**	L	7	28	18	25	23	
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<i>Restrictive & Socially-oriented</i>		Romania	Post-socialist	L	3	28	32	10	27
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<i>Technically-oriented & Restrictive</i>		Poland	Post-socialist	M	8	21	26	29	16
		Slovenia	Post-socialist	M	10	14	25	28	23
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<i>Technically-oriented</i>		France	Conservative	H	15	16	11	43	16
		Luxembourg	Conservative**	H	15	16	12	41	16
		Belgium	Conservative	H	7	21	17	37	18
		Austria	Conservative	M	13	19	19	33	16
		Netherlands	Conservative/Social democratic***	H	10	18	19	33	20
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<i>Technically-oriented & Passive</i>		Sweden	Social democratic	H	5	5	13	43	34
		Finland	Social democratic	H	9	12	22	33	25
		Denmark	Social democratic	H	4	6	24	29	38
		Hungary	Post-socialist	M	4	13	22	28	33
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<i>Passive</i>		Estonia	Post-socialist	H	4	11	15	22	48
		Czech Republic	Post-socialist	H	2	14	19	19	46
		Latvia	Post-socialist	M	5	15	12	22	46
		Slovakia	Post-socialist	M	2	17	19	18	44
		Bulgaria	Post-socialist	H	3	25	21	14	38
		Lithuania	Post-socialist	M	2	9	31	22	36
				Total	10	19	19	27	25

* H – high (at least 93 per cent of parents use the Internet at least once a month); M – medium (86-92 per cent of parents use the Internet at least once a month); L – low (less than 86 per cent of parents use the Internet at least once a month). ** Classification suggestion by the authors. *** The Netherlands has, due to its peculiarities, sometimes been classified into social democratic cluster (Vis *et al.*, 2008).

Discussion

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

Secondly, our typological analysis, in general, lends support to the claim by Kirwil and colleagues that parental mediation of children's Internet use varies between the countries with an individualistic orientation in child-rearing and the countries where collectivistic values are more important (Kirwil, 2009; Kirwil *et al.*, 2009). Our results suggest, however, that the division of European countries into broad groups based on a single cultural dimension is a bit too wide a generalisation. For instance, Portugal as a collectivistic country firmly belongs, according to our analysis, in the same group as other southern European family countries, most of them characterised as individualistic. Also, post-socialist countries, most of them sharing a collectivistic orientation, vary greatly in terms of parental strategies. Thus, other cultural factors, among them religious background, need to be taken into account.

Thirdly, 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. It is therefore possible to suggest 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.

As a limitation of our study, we admit that the factors considered in our analysis are not sufficient to explain the full variety of parental strategies in European countries. Additional cultural and institutional indicators, such as the length and intensity of awareness-raising activities are needed to clear up further particular characteristics, for instance a great proportion of *all-rounders* in some countries.

Our findings, nevertheless, allow us to comment on the debate between cultural determinists and institutionalists, such as Lück (2006) and Spilerman (2009), on the role culture plays in the way societies are organised. Lück (2006) has argued that the cultural background of societies has shaped their institutional arrangements, but cultural mores and religious belief systems continue to assert a direct effect on women's values. He also claims that, compared with cultural background, the impact of the welfare regime is modest. According to Lück, institutional arrangements should not matter as much as culture in explaining the individual level practices. Spilerman (2009) is critical of the fact that studies of values tend to be oblivious to the literature of institutional effects. While Spilerman agrees with Lück that the cultural background of a society preceded and has shaped its institutional features, continuously constraining and moulding the institutional change, he suggests that the impact of value structures on individual-level practices is filtered through institutions.

In relying on the conclusions from the study by Kirwil and colleagues (2009) and on our own research (both based on the same Flash Eurobarometer survey data), we would like to emphasise that the influence of broader cultural ideologies and trends, both global and national, on families as agents of socialisation is, with a high degree of probability, both direct as well as filtered through institutional arrangements. Acknowledging the basic differences in the institutional arrangements across countries, and at the same time the standardising and unifying global forces, we also propose a further, more general 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 the family itself as an agent of socialisation, while regime differences largely predict predominant parenting styles in a country. The extent of the persistence of country-level differences in raising future generations and mediating their participation in the global (youth) culture and information flows accessible through online media thus leads us to predict the sustainability of national differences regardless of the cultural and technological trends towards homogenisation.

As a policy implication, stemming from an analysis of the relation between parental strategies of mediation and their effectiveness in terms of reducing children's experience of online risks, researchers boldly suggest that it is "the task of policy makers to promote parental mediation of Internet use, particularly in countries with a collectivistic culture in which parental mediation tends to be lower" (Kirwil *et al.*, 2009, p. 213). However, parents should be guided in their strategies according to the given socialisation culture, as the same strategy may function as either a protective factor against risk or one that increases it, depending on the cultural context (Kirwil *et al.*, 2009; Lobe *et al.*, 2009). In addition, our findings clearly demonstrate the need for more attention to the effects of welfare arrangements in different countries, not least when planning for awareness-raising campaigns among parents. Also, when welfare regimes foster the outsourcing of socialising tasks to public childcare, media education deserves more emphasis in the curricula of kindergartens and primary schools.

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