

FAMILY

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In many European countries, a lot of fundamental changes concerning the family have been taken place in the last decades. Some speak of a new era in Europe's demographic history, and call this stage 'the second demographic transition' (Van de Kaa, 1987). The first demographic transition began with a gradual decline in death rates in the early 19th century, followed by a decline in fertility. The second transition started around 1965, and is characterized by fertility rates below replacement level (that is lower than 2.1 births per woman), accompanied with a decline in the number of marriages and a rise in the number of divorces. Also values concerning the family changed. The driving force behind these changes is thought to be modernization.

Modernization theory claims that technological developments lead to industrialization, urbanization and major changes in the labour market: occupations shifted from agricultural work to industrial and later post-industrial work, and educational credentials became much more important. In addition, levels of prosperity and wealth rose, providing people with a level of material security. This economic modernization gave way to social, political, and cultural modernization. Society became more rationalized, political systems changed into democracies, and culturally, a process of individualization started. Individualization means that there is an increase in individual freedom and self-determination, as well as an increase in the appreciation of these. Values orientated on autonomy, privacy, self-actualization and personal happiness have become more important than values that point at collective goals. Therefore, a common 'family ideal' is less a necessity for individual's happiness in the 'modern' post-materialistic countries of north-western Europe than it is for people from traditional oriented countries in the Southeast. What is of influence as well and goes along with these traditional oriented countries, is the level of religiosity within a country. Religious people are

led by traditional institutions like the church that encourage traditional family orientations. This affects a country's cultural climate, even for the non-religious in that country: in general, individuals in the more religious countries have more traditional family orientations than individuals in the less religious societies. Since the dominant role of the churches eroded in many European countries; less and less people were guided in their actions and thoughts by what the churches tell. In 'modern' society, people can no longer be dictated on how to behave and what to think is right or wrong. People want to be free and independent, and decisions are made based on personal and individual choices. Research shows that people in the economically most modernized countries indeed rank highest on individual freedom and self-determination (Hagenaars, Halman & Moors, 2003).

The focus on individual freedom and independence in 'modern' societies also means that both men and women now strive at earning a personal income. Female labour market participation increased in many European countries. While in former days it was not acceptable when mothers worked outside the household, nowadays this seems to be more accepted. This can also be explained by the welfare provisions and by the increasing facilities in many countries which make it possible for mothers to combine work and care tasks. Nonetheless, men and women are not equals yet. Earlier research shows that despite the increasing participation of women in the labour market, the participation of men in housekeeping is very little. In addition, people still object to mothers who have a full-time job since this could have negative consequences for the family, although most people approve of mothers working. Opinions about mothers' working hours seem to be strongly related to the family situation of women. In general, it seems to be mainly the post-materialistic countries in north-western Europe that have 'modern' beliefs with regard to the role of women.

Please note that the term 'modern' is not meant as a judgement (in the sense that a modern society would imply being not backward and underdeveloped), but simply a word to denote that some countries are more economically advanced than others, and that value patterns are more liberal and non-traditional than others. Whether this is a good or a bad thing, is for others to judge.

In this paper, we will often explain differences between European countries by looking at processes of economic modernization (more wealth) and cultural modernization (individualization and secularization: more personal freedom). Still, it is not possible to explain all differences between countries. Exceptions to the rule exist, which can be linked to the diversity of cultural heritages, languages, religious and ideological traditions and differences in political and educational systems that characterize Europe. In addition, the modernization process takes place at its own speed in each country and cultural changes do not succeed economic changes in the same way everywhere (De Graaf, 2007). Values that are connected to the family are therefore dependent on the specific national context and historical development of a country.

MARRIAGE

Although the number of marriages has decreased steadily, while the number of divorces and alternatives to the traditional form of marriage (like cohabitation) increased, one could think that marriage is no longer seen as the only form of a relationship between a man and a woman (Halman, 1996). In spite of this, most people still value marriage as being important and, therefore, marriage as an institution has not been declared dead yet (Manning, Longmore & Giordano, 2007). Contrary to what is supposed in theories of modernization and individualization, the emancipation of alternative forms of marriage did not lead to rejection of the institute of marriage. According to these perspectives, people are nowadays less bound to traditions, and they are free to act according to their personal preferences and beliefs, emphasizing personal satisfaction and self-expression. Therefore, a marriage should no longer be based on something that goes without saying; on the contrary, it has become a matter of personal choice, based on individual preferences. According to these theories, increasing individualization and self-expression leads to a decrease in traditional family orientations. But, as mentioned, this seems to be not the case when it comes to marriage: most Europeans don't think that marriage is an outdated institution (graph on p. 30 in AoEV). It is remarkable how small the differences between inhabitants of different European countries are and how positive most Europeans still are towards marriage. This seems to contradict the growing number of divorces and the growing number of people who live in cohabitation, but this doesn't have to be so. Many respondents are married themselves, and it is not very strange that they do not reject their own situation. In addition, many people see that marriage is still very common in their country and will therefore have the opinion that marriage is not an outdated institution yet. Moreover, it is possible that respondents interpret marriage as living together with one partner, as people who cohabit agree that marriage is not old fashioned. Marriage is still alive and kicking in Europe: everyone seems to want a partner for life.

In addition, many Europeans agree with the statement 'A marriage or a long-term stable relationship is necessary to be happy' (map on p. 31 of AoEV). It is particular in the south-eastern part of Europe that almost everyone thinks that a relationship is a prerequisite for happiness, whereas many people in the Northwest do not agree. We might explain these differences by looking at both economic and cultural factors. Because of increasing wealth and because many women participate in the labour market, from an economic perspective, it is no longer necessary that partners marry to bring together their incomes. In the rich north-western part of Europe, it therefore is not necessary for someone's economic happiness to be married or to have a partner. In addition to this economic modernization process, processes of individualization and secularization play a role here. People nowadays have more personal freedom and take existing rules

and norms (for example those of the church) as less for granted. They choose their own way of living and make their decisions based on personal interests and values. In the strongly individualized societies of north-western Europe, having a relationship with a partner therefore is less a prerequisite for happiness than it is in the more traditional countries in the Southeast. Apart from that, people with a partner on average seem to be happier than people without a partner (graph on p. 116 in AoEV). Before we can conclude that a relationship leads to more happiness, it is important to answer the question who has a partner and who hasn't. Maybe it is the case that people, who are happier with themselves and their lives, and who see the world from a sunny side, are more attractive for partners than unhappy losers and doom watchers, who remain single for that reason (Stutzer & Frey, 2006).

When asking people what factors are most important for a successful marriage (maps on p. 3 and further in AoEV), mainly factors that are related to the affective quality of the relationship are mentioned, like fidelity, mutual respect, understanding, and tolerance. Especially in the Northwest of Europe, these factors are often mentioned, whereas material circumstances like an adequate income and good housing are thought to be of less importance. People in the Southeast of Europe and Turkey however do think that these material circumstances are quite important factors that contribute to a successful marriage. These differences correspond with modernization theory and the related idea of Ronald Inglehart who differentiates between people with materialistic values and people with post-materialistic values (Inglehart, 1977). Inglehart bases this idea on Maslov's (1954) hierarchy of needs in which lower and higher human needs are distinguished. The hierarchy runs from a need for food and protection, via safety, affection and esteem, to self-actualization. Inglehart further assumes that, because of a huge increase in economic wealth, people take the fulfilment of lower needs for granted and start to look out for the fulfilment of higher needs. As soon as the lower needs are fulfilled, people get post materialistic needs, he proposes. Because countries in south-eastern Europe experienced less economic growth than countries in north-western Europe, people in the Southeast think material circumstances are more important for a successful marriage than people in the Northwest. The emphasis on the affective quality of the relationship on the other hand seems to indicate the importance of the individual and his or her happiness. This also means that when people experience a lack of love and care, getting a divorce is thought of as justifiable in 'modern' societies (Cherlin, 2004). Since there is much less agreement on other reasons of divorce, it can be concluded that marriage in these countries mainly serves personal happiness and security of partners.

DIVORCE

Thus, marriage is still important and highly valued (graph on p. 30 in AoEV), even in countries where there are many alternatives. At the same time, people do not oppose to divorce. Especially in the Northwest of Europe, divorce is highly accepted, while in southern and eastern Europe this is less the case, and least so in Ireland. Processes of modernization and individualization make that people who divorce are no longer stigmatized, mainly because in ‘modern’ societies, the meaning of marriage changed (see above). Marriage is no longer seen as a lifelong commitment and divorce is recognized as a normal ending of a marriage (Manning, Longmore & Giordano, 2007).

THE FAMILY

The popularity of the family is still present in Europe. The majority of people believe that it would be good when in the future more emphasis is put on the family (graphs on p. 27 in AoEV). This is not only the case in the South and East of Europe; also in north-western European countries, the majority of people value the family as being important. Thus, people in all European countries regard the family as the cornerstone of society. In fact, the importance of family is not that strange, since research shows that the family pre-eminently is the place to meet individual needs. Of course, this does not mean that the family is only thought of in the traditional form. The concept of ‘family’ is more broadly defined nowadays than it was a couple of decennia before. Therefore, when people answer questions about ‘the family’, they can mean different things: a large range of family types and forms of cohabitation are all denoted by the term ‘family’. However, it seems to be confirmed that the idea of the ‘family’ represents a permanent value; not only in traditional cultures, but also in more individualized society (Halman, 1999).

CHILDREN OR CHILDLESS

The choice of staying childless is to a large extent accepted in most contemporary societies, which means that having children is now seen as an option rather than a duty. More and more people accept the choice of women to make a career for oneself even if this means that because of this career they stay childless. Not only having children has become an option, also the ‘image’ of children has changed. In ‘traditional’ society, children are seen as an economic necessity. After all, someone has to take care of the parents when they are no longer able to do it themselves. However, with growing prosperity and welfare facilities, children are no longer a necessity in ‘modern’ countries. The traditional idea has been

replaced by a more individualistic point of view that women decide themselves, if, how, and when they want to have children. The fact that having children is no longer necessary appears from the answers on the question whether a woman needs to have children in order to reach her destination (map on p. 29 in AoEV). In most West-European countries, only a minority agrees on this statement. In eastern and southern Europe, the majority of people, however, agree, which can be explained as being a consequence of modernization and individualization.

However, this does not mean that individualism is unlimited and one can do whatever one wants to do. The majority of people believe that a marriage or a long-term stable relationship is necessary before one decides to have children. In addition, the interest of a child (growing up happily) is more important than the interest of a woman (desire to have children) (graph on p. 28 in AoEV). This becomes also clear from the fact that a majority supports the idea that a child needs both a mother and a father in order to grow up happy (map on p. 29 of AoEV). The two-parent model is considered to be of essential importance for the normal development of children (Halman, 1999). Here we see the limit of individualism: when it comes to children, people are less inclined to adhere individualistic views and stay loyal to the traditional family pattern. Apparently, it is a generally shared view that children need both parents. Research shows that children from single parent families do less well than children from families in which both parents are present. Two parent families offer more emotional and economic security and provide better life chances than one parent families (Whitehead, 1998; Coltrane, 1998). People in the North and West of Europe however do agree less often with the statement that a child needs both a father and a mother than people in the South and East.

So, children still have an important position in 'modern' societies. The number of people that do not wish to have children is, in fact, very small. Although children are no longer considered as necessary for the success of an individual; for the success of a relationship they seem rather important, at least in Western-Europe. In more 'traditional' Eastern-Europe, having children is more or less a social norm. Noticeable is that the well-being of children is more important than the well-being of oneself. Many people find the traditional family with both a father and a mother essential for the happiness of the child.

PARENTING-VALUES

Not only parenthood became an option, also the role that parents play with regard to the socialization process of children has changed: from teacher to companion. The family became a democratic institute in which the relationship between parents and children is characterized by equality. Thus, the role of parents changed: the upbringing of a child became less a process of disciplinary supervision and

more a matter of personal attention for the emotional and relational aspects in the development of a child. Consequently, the things that parents teach their children have changed too. Instead of putting emphasis on qualities like obedience and discipline (maps on p. 38 in AoEV), people in 'modern' societies value responsibility and independency (maps on p. 40–41 in AoEV) as more important to teach children, because these are the values that support individual freedom and self-actualization.

LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

In general, mothers work fewer hours than fathers, especially when the children in the household are young. Often mothers have to choose between quitting work or working full-time and using formal or informal childcare providers. In Spain, women work either not or they work full-time; part-time work is quite rare. In the United Kingdom it appears that women do not work less when having children. Also, in Sweden where there are good facilities to combine work and care, this is not exceptional. However, in the Netherlands, working part-time is, for quite some time now, considered as the ideal way to combine work and care. In the United Kingdom and Germany, a majority of part-timers work less than 20 hours outside the household, whereas in France, Spain and especially Sweden only a minority of women work less than 20 hours. In general, research shows that having children results in women working less hours on the labour market.

Of course, these patterns are related to the opinions of people about working mothers. Working outside the household is more and more accepted in 'modern' societies and, therefore, there is less objection to combining work and care. However, people do object more if women work full-time because they believe this has negative consequences for the family, although the majority of people still approve of mothers working. As we saw before, many men and women prefer that a child is raised by both the father and the mother and, therefore, to keep the upbringing in the hands of the family, especially when children are small. In addition, if children go to school, parents prefer that one of both parents is at home when the children come home from school. However, a change can be observed: younger generations appear to have less difficulty when mothers of young children or pre-school children work. What becomes clear is that opinions about working hours are strongly related to the family situation of women. Especially people in the northern Scandinavian countries appear to have 'modern' values with regard to the role of the mother. In addition, they believe that mothers who work as well as mothers who do not work can have a warm bond with the children (map on p. 37 in AoEV); a pre-school child is not likely to suffer if his or her mother works; being a housewife is not what women really want; both the husband and wife should contribute to the household income (map on p. 37 in AoEV); fathers

are as well suited to look after their children as mothers; etc. The majority of people in the Mediterranean countries believe the opposite. Countries like the Netherlands, Iceland, and England rank in the middle. Here, individuals believe that men and women should be equal in the household, although on the labour market they appear to be less equalitarian (equal). The Czech Republic – along with Slovenia and Slovakia – score quite high concerning equality on the labour market. The more ‘modern’ ideas on working women in these countries can be explained by the communist decades in which political, sexual and economic equality of women was explicitly proclaimed as a major political goal. In other parts of Eastern-Europe (Russia, Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania) people, however, seem to be most traditional, even though they accept a moderate equality at the labour market. Apparently, other cultural and historical factors play a role here, one of them being the larger influence of the church which propagates more ‘traditional’ family values.

CONCLUSION

Economic modernization processes (more wealth) seem to be accompanied with cultural modernization processes (individualization and secularization: more personal freedom). In the more ‘modern’ countries in Europe, values about family life are more liberal than in the more ‘traditional’ countries. This is especially the case for ideas about marriage and happiness, what makes a marriage successful, justification of divorce, parenting values, and opinions about working women. Nevertheless, people in all European countries think that marriage is not an outdated institution and value the family as very important. It, however, is quite plausible that the meaning of marriage and family changed in more ‘modern’ countries. Since not all country differences can be explained by modernization theory, it is important to look at country-specific circumstances.