Parenting ideas in Germany and Hungary

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

For most people, parenthood and parenting are important aspects of life. Ideas about parenting shape how individuals interact with their children and raise them. These ideas vary between countries and cultural contexts.
In order to understand and explain how cultural conceptions affect behavior and inhibit change in families' daily lives, we draw on the *leitbild* approach (Lück et al. 2017). Accordingly, it is especially fruitful to compare (parenting) *leitbilder* across countries and cultural contexts. In order to shed light on the specificity or universality of parenting ideas, East Germany, West Germany, and Hungary are studied. Germany and Hungary are similar regarding their welfare regimes. In an ideal-typical description, both are Christian democratic welfare regimes; a Bismarckian structure characterizes their social security systems, they have corporatist systems and are influenced by neoliberalism (Aspalter 2011). The selection allows for comparisons between East and West Germany – thus within the same legal framework, but different cultural backgrounds during the time of separation – between East Germany and Hungary – thus between post-socialist cultures with different legal frameworks – between West Germany and Hungary – thus between two countries with low employment rates for mothers of young children (Hanel und Riphahn 2011; Makay 2015).

Research questions

Against this background, the paper focusses on two research questions:

(1) Which parenting *leitbilder* can be identified in East Germany, West Germany, and Hungary and how prevalent are these? Which persons hold which *leitilder?* How do these *leitbilder* characterize the countries and how different or comparable are East Germany, West Germany, and Hungary?
(2) Which factors help to understand the differences between countries? Are there similarities between the countries according to socio-economic items?

Theoretical considerations

We assume that regional contexts, socio-structural characteristics and life-course events influence parenting *leitbilder*. First, regional differences between Hungary, East, and West Germany can be assumed as norms of involved parenthood and intensive mothering vary between countries (Hays 1996; Kaufmann 1990; Widding 2015; Grunow et al. 2018). Second, differences regarding socio-structural aspects seem plausible as previous findings show that education and sex affect parenting ideas. Ideals of involved parenthood are more widespread in the middle class (Widding 2015). We use education as an indicator of social class and expect higher educated respondents to have more often ideas in line with intensive parenting. Mothers and fathers spend different amounts of time with their children (see for example Craig et al. 2014; Kutrovátz 2017), and societal expectations regarding mothers' and fathers' involvement in childcare differ and are higher regarding mothers' engagement (Hays 1996; Grunow et al. 2018). Therefore it can be expected, that women hold more often *leitbilder*

oriented toward intensive parenting than men do.

Third, life-course events, and especially becoming a parent, might influence parenting *leitbilder*. It seems that childless respondents hold more ambitioned parenthood types while parents have more distanced parenthood types Ruckdeschel (2015). Thus, it can be assumed that parenting *leitbilder* are affected by parenthood status; childless respondents are expected to have higher expectations regarding parenting than parents have.

Data and Methods

The analysis draws on two data sets. The first is the Family Leitbild Survey (2012) conducted by the Federal Institute for Population Research in Germany. For this survey, innovative items were developed to describe contemporary *leitbilder* concerning family and their influence on family life or decisions about childbirth. In 2016, the Hungarian Demographic Research Institute conducted a survey that transferred most of the German items to the Hungarian context. Both surveys are representative of the target populations (Germany: 20-39 years old, living in Germany; Hungary: 18-44, living in Hungary).

The data sets contain several items measuring parenting ideals on a five-point scale. We selected five of them:

- Parents should put aside their own needs entirely for their children
- Children grow up anyway; you do not have to bother too much
- Parents can make many mistakes in upbringing their children; therefore, they have to acquaint themselves with information thoroughly
- It is best for a child between 1 and 3 years when only the mother cares for it
- 1 to 3-year-old children suffer when they are predominantly cared for in a daycare center

The method of latent class analysis is applied (see Gibson 1959; Goodman 1974; Lanza et al. 2013) to analyze similarities and differences in parenting *leitbildern* between the regions (research question 1). This method allows for exploring latent structures within the data – in this case, the latent structure of parenting ideals. In contrast to factor analysis, latent class analysis is a person-centered, not a variable-centered approach. It groups individuals into distinct classes according to their response patterns. The single items are dichotomized for the latent class analysis in order to reduce complexity. The analysis is conducted using Stata. We tried several latent class models, including combined analysis for all regions and separated analyses for the three regions. The latter had the best model fit. In other models, we found that Hungarian respondents were sorted into distinct classes.

In order to understand similarities and differences between the regions, we assign respondents to latent classes, conduct multinomial logistic regressions and apply predictive margins. We include education (low, medium, high), sex, parenthood status (yes, no), relationship status (yes, no), living in an urban neighborhood (yes, no), age, labor market participation (not working, part-time, full time), religion (yes, no) and for West Germany migration background (yes, no).

Preliminary findings

In a descriptive analysis, Hungarian respondents emphasize some aspects more than those in East and West Germany: putting aside own needs, children grow up anyway, maternal childcare for young children is best. Hungarian and West German respondents indicate more often than East German respondents that young children suffer when they are predominantly cared for in a daycare center. German respondents are more concerned about making mistakes than Hungarians.

The following Graphs 1 to 3 show the results of the latent class analysis with separate models for each region. Table 1 shows the class memberships within each class in the three regions.

Graph 1: Parenting *leitbilder* - West Germany – Item response probabilities per class
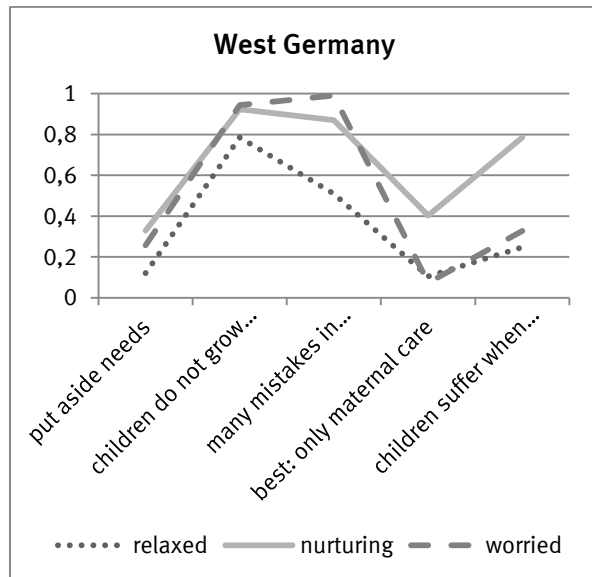
Graph 2: Parenting *leitbilder* - East Germany – Item response probabilities per class
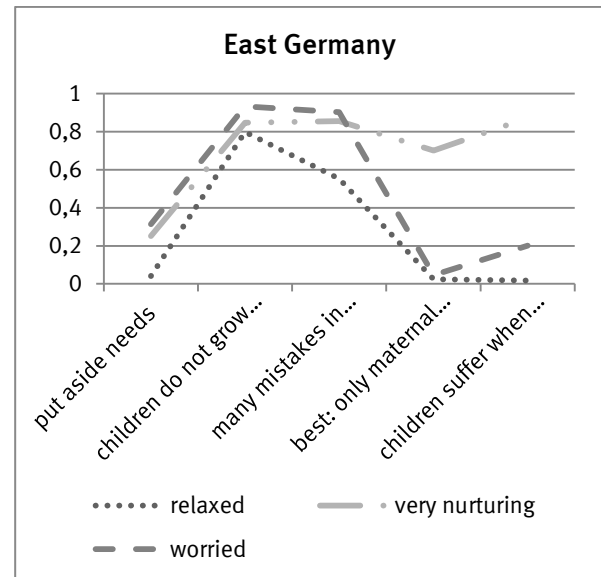
Graph 3: Parenting *leitbilder* - Hungary – Item response probabilities per class
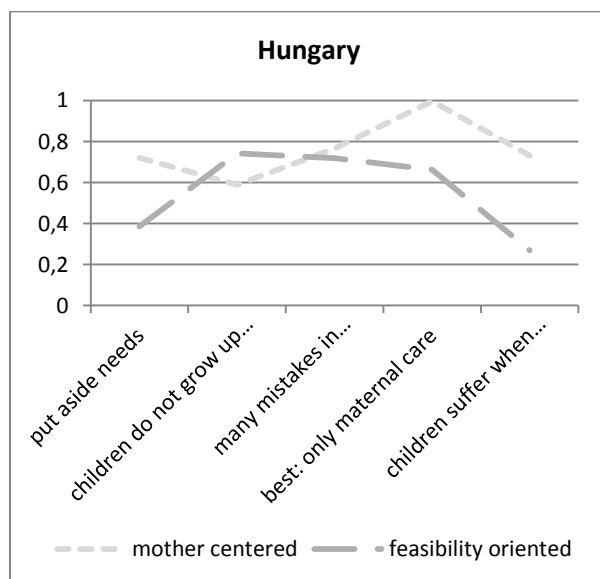

Table 1: Class memberships in West and East Germany and Hungary

	West Germany	East Germany	Hungary
Relaxed	24%	27%	-
Nurturing	32%	-	-
Worried	43%	67%	-
Very nurturing	-	6%	-
Mother-centered	-	-	41%
Feasibility-oriented	-	-	59%

Note: not weighted.

The conclusion regarding the first research question is that the patterns in Hungary are distinct from the patterns in Germany. Within Germany, East and West are similar, but still, even within the same parenting *leitbild,* we find differences in the item response probabilities. Furthermore, the nurturing and very nurturing *leitbild* in both German regions are more different than similar. In order to answer the second research question, we conducted multinomial logistic regression analyses – in the following, we will only show the results for West Germany (see Table 2). Some characteristics are associated with holding worried parenting *leitbilder:* having a high education, being male, not having children, being a childless woman or a man with or without children, and being full time employed. Holding nurturing *leitbilder* is associated with low education, being

female, being a mother, living in a rural area, not working, being religious, and having a migration background. Relaxed *leitbilder* are associated with being female, being childless, being older, not working or working part-time, and not having a migration background. In East Germany (not shown), fewer characteristics seem to be associated with holding specific parenting *leitbilder*. The older the respondents are, the more likely is a relaxed *leitbild*. For Hungary (also not shown), none of the characteristics seems to be associated with holding a specific parenting *leitbild*.

Table 2: Multinomial logistic regression for West Germany

	relaxed	nurturing	worried (ref.)
Education (ref: medium)			
low	0.169	0.246**	
	(0.146)	(0.116)	
high	0.0714	-0.247**	
	(0.107)	(0.0967)	
Sex (ref: man)	0.477***	0.435***	
	(0.163)	(0.143)	
Parenthood (ref: yes)	-0.311*	-0.0225	
	(0.170)	(0.142)	
Sex*Parenthood	-0.197	-0.508***	
	(0.208)	(0.175)	
Relationship (ref: no)	0.0347	-0.0241	
	(0.112)	(0.0908)	
Living in urban neighborhod (ref: no)	-0.0741	-0.245***	
	(0.101)	(0.0858)	
Age	0.0241**	-0.00285	
	(0.0104)	(0.00853)	
Labor market participation (ref: full-time)			
not working	0.199*	0.321***	
	(0.121)	(0.0958)	
part-time	0.531***	0.210	
	(0.143)	(0.131)	
Religion (ref: no)	-0.143	0.438***	
	(0.100)	(0.0916)	
Migration background (ref: no)	-0.376***	0.232***	
	(0.116)	(0.0870)	
Constant	-1.983***	-1.090***	
	(0.400)	(0.332)	
Observations		3857	

Standard errors in parentheses
*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$ Pseudo R2 (McFadden): 0.0348

Conclusion

The preliminary findings show that different there are different parenting *leitbilder* in West Germany, East Germany, and Hungary. Hungarian parenting *leitbilder* are even more oriented towards this cultural conception of how important it is for a child's development that the parents – and especially the mother – spend substantial amounts of time with childcare and put their own needs aside. The international comparison across cultural contexts points at the differences in the conceptions of parenting and helps to understand how *leitbilder* affect time use of parents. The analysis showed that socio-demographic characteristics are only partly relevant – which allows for the conclusion that the different *leitbilder* are not a result of different compositions of the populations .

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