

Attitudes towards parenthood, partnership and social rights for diverse families:

Evidence from a pilot study in five countries¹

Mara A. Yerkes

Giulia M. Dotti Sani

Cristina Solera

ABSTRACT

Attitudes towards the civil and social citizenship rights of individuals in diverse family forms are under researched. We use cross-national data from a pilot study among students in Denmark, Spain, Croatia, Italy and the Netherlands to explore cross-country differences in beliefs about partnership, parenthood and social rights of same-sex couples vs. heterosexual couples or married vs. cohabiting couples. The results suggest a polarization between students' attitudes in countries that appear more traditional (i.e. Italy and Croatia) and less traditional (Spain and the Netherlands), where the rights of married heterosexual couples are privileged over other family forms more so than in non-traditional countries. Moreover, equality in social rights is generally more widely accepted than equality in civil rights, particularly in relationship to parenthood rights and in more traditional countries. We discuss the implications of these findings and develop hypotheses for further research in this under-explored area of attitudinal research.

¹ Published as: Mara A. Yerkes, Giulia M. Dotti Sani and Cristina Solera (2018). Attitudes towards parenthood, partnership and social rights for diverse families: Evidence from a pilot study in five countries. *Journal of Homosexuality*. 65:1, 80-99, DOI: 10.1080/00918369.2017.1310507

INTRODUCTION

Family forms have grown increasingly diverse in recent decades. While heterosexual married households still dominate family structures across Europe, cohabitation and births outside of marriage are on the rise (OECD, 2015) as well as asexual or childfree couples, “living apart together” couples and one-parent families or homosexual families (Ruspini, 2013; Saraceno, 2012). Some countries recognize this family diversity, for example through new laws and regulations on registered partnership (of both homosexual and heterosexual couples) and same-sex marriages (Merin, 2010). However, the “second demographic transition” towards a chosen and dynamic family life-course (Lesthaeghe, 1983; Van der Kaa, 1987) has clearly not been accompanied by a “universal” transformation of family laws and policies towards the equal recognition of diverse forms of partnership and parenthood. Indeed, the civil and social rights of same-sex and/or cohabitating couples have recently been accepted in some countries (e.g. Croatia, Finland, and Ireland), while these rights are under new debate in other European countries (e.g. Italy, Portugal), and under threat or non-existent elsewhere (e.g. Poland, Slovakia; see ILGA, 2015).

One crucial factor possibly hampering the realization of family-related citizenship rights is negative national attitudes towards the rights of co-habiting and/or same-sex couples (e.g. Kuyper, Iedema and Keuzenkamp, 2013). Yet, research examining these attitudes is rare and fragmented at best. On the one hand, the large body of research focusing on attitudes towards the redistributive role of the welfare state (e.g. Sachweh and Olafsdottir, 2012; Van Oorschot, 2007; Wright and Reeskens, 2013; Author X, Y, Z and Author A, 2011) does not address social rights connected to living in diverse family forms. On the other hand, the various studies focusing on attitudes towards homosexuality (e.g. Van den Akker, van der Ploeg and Scheepers, 2012; Hooghe and Meeusen, 2013; Kuntz, Davidov, Schwartz and Schmidt, 2015;

Kuyper et al., 2013; Takács and Szalma, 2013) or marriage and alternative forms of family formation (Treas, Lui and Gubernskaya, 2014) tend to address the general acceptance of “diverse family forms” or “diverse individuals” without addressing the issue of citizenship rights attached to this diversity. Exceptions to this include studies providing insights into attitudes towards the rights of same-sex couples in the US (Doan, Loehr and Miller, 2014; Miller and Chamberlain, 2013), Portugal (Costa et al., 2014) and Sweden and Norway (Jakobsson et al., 2013). Yet, few studies address attitudes towards parenthood rights or the issue of social rights for GLB individuals or alternative family forms and almost none consider cross-national variation in these attitudes.

Using cross-national data from a pilot study among students in five European countries - Denmark, Spain, Croatia, Italy and the Netherlands - this article explores cross-country differences in attitudes towards the social and civil rights of same-sex couples vs. heterosexual couples and married vs. cohabiting couples. The results presented here, while explorative in nature, provide an important foundation for future studies and theory building on the relationship between attitudes and citizenship rights in an increasingly diverse world.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The definition of citizenship, particularly in relation to citizenship rights, is often traced back to T.H. Marshall's seminal work on the subject (e.g. Marshall, 1950). Citizenship, in Marshall's terms, centres on the rights of individuals as recognized members of a nation state. *Civil rights* guarantee an individual's right to equality by due process of law. Marshall's work on citizenship rights was primarily progressive for conceptualising *social rights* in the same terms as civil, political and economic rights (Stephens, 2010). His definition of social rights was quite broad, encompassing a wide cache of rights and benefits, such as the right to

work (full employment), income protection, housing, education and healthcare, in essence ensuring a minimum standard of living.

Civil and social rights can differ across diverse family forms. It should be noted that the concept of *family diversity* differs from the concept of *plural families*. Pluralisation of family forms is an expression elaborated on by Second Demographic Transition (SDT) scholars (Lesthaeghe and van de Kaa, 1986) to indicate post-1965 changes in European family patterns towards sustained below-replacement fertility, low levels of marriage and low levels of union stability, leading to a deinstitutionalisation of the family and pluralisation of living arrangements and lifestyles. Compared to second demographic transition accounts, the conceptualisation of diverse families is more explicitly related to sexual orientation, and not just diversity in terms of marital status, gender roles and household structure (Ruspini, 2013; Pailhé et al., 2014). It also more explicitly points to a “normative reference point”, that is, the on-going transformation of the family, evidenced by the spread of family forms and living arrangements other than nuclear families of heterosexual (married) couples with children. It also refers to persisting differences in the pace and type of the transformation across countries and social strata (Saraceno, 2012; Sobotka and Toulemon, 2008).

Few attitudinal studies explicitly address this family diversity in relation to citizenship rights. Attitudinal research has so far focused on three related themes: attitudes towards marriage and alternative forms of partnership, the reproductive rights of individuals, and the redistributive role of the welfare state. Important insights can be drawn from these three related streams of literature. In particular, these studies demonstrate the importance of understanding individual variation in attitudes within differing national contexts. Cross-national variation in family attitudes, such as attitudes towards marriage and cohabitation (Aassve, Sironi, and Bassi, 2013; Treas, Lui, and Gubernskaya, 2014; Yucel, 2015) has been widely researched. In recent years, this attitudinal research has broadened to include studies

on the acceptance of homosexuality (Hooghe and Meeusen, 2012; Lottes and Alkula, 2011; Van den Akker, van der Ploeg, and Scheepers, 2013). These studies demonstrate the importance of understanding individual variation in attitudes within differing national contexts. For example, Treas, Lui, and Gubernskaya, (2014) use pooled country data for 21 industrialised countries to demonstrate the decline in disapproval of alternatives to marriage (cohabitation, unmarried parents, premarital and gay and lesbian sex). Individual-level characteristics such as gender and age were important determinants of these attitudes yet significant cross-country differences remained. Similarly, Gubernskaya (2010) investigates changing attitudes towards family formation in relation to both individual and country-level characteristics. The author concludes significant cross-country variation in attitudes remains unexplained once controlling for gender, educational level, employment status, marital status, and religiosity (frequency of attendance).

Studies that have broadened attitudinal research to include attitudes towards homosexuality confirm the need to account for contextual differences. For example, Gerhards (2010) and Van den Akker, van der Ploeg, and Scheepers (2013) show that in wealthier, well-educated countries, where post-materialist values dominate and diversity is tolerated, and where church attendance is lower, individuals tend to be more accepting of homosexuality and homosexual marriage. Hooghe and Meeusen (2013) conclude that lower educated, older, religious respondents are more disapproving of homosexuality but also that national legislation is important. In countries where there is full recognition of homosexual family formation (i.e. marriage), disapproval of homosexuality is the lowest. By contrast, few studies explore possible cross-country differences in attitudes towards the partnership rights of individuals living in diverse family forms. Indeed, among the few studies specifically addressing these types of rights (Costa et al., 2014, Jakobsson et al., 2013; Miller and Chamberlain, 2013), the focus is on the role of individual level factors such as gender and

religion. Similarly, the small, but growing literature that investigates attitudes towards the reproductive rights of gays and lesbians is (with few exceptions, such as Präg and Mills, 2015) based on single-country studies or datasets. This literature shows, for example, that citizens are generally more accepting of adoption by lesbian couples than by gay male couples (Herek, 2002) or that religion is an important driver of attitudes towards homosexual adoption (Whitehead and Perry, 2014) and gay and lesbian parenting (Costa et al., 2014). However, the extent of and reasons for *cross-national* differences in attitudes towards the partnership and parenthood rights of same-sex couples have received less attention.

Also the extensive research on attitudes towards general welfare state support suggests significant within and cross-country variation in relation to normative ideals relating to equity and redistribution (Sachweh and Olafsdottir, 2012). For example, studies of welfare state attitudes have focused on the extent to which citizens feel immigrants are entitled to the same social, civil or economic rights as natives (Wright and Reeskens, 2013). Yet, whether individuals in diverse family forms “deserve” social rights has been asked only with regard to inheritance rights, social security benefits, or health insurance and other employee benefits (e.g. Brewer and Wilcox, 2005). Attitudes towards the right to family benefits, such as to economic support for a partner and/or children, public childcare and paid parental leave remain unexplored.

CONTEXTUALISING ATTITUDES TOWARDS DIVERSE FAMILIES

Although not explicitly addressing civil and social rights attached to individuals living in diverse family forms, attitudinal research on related issues has so far shown important cross-country variation and the necessity to look at the role of macro-level cultural, economic and institutional arrangements to account for it. We therefore start with a descriptive overview of our countries using the relevant macro dimensions highlighted above in order to offer a

contextualisation of our piloted, empirical findings. Such a contextualisation is also useful for developing a number of exploratory hypotheses, which we do below, which can be tested in future research when better data become available.

The literatures reviewed have shown that in wealthier, well-educated countries, where post-materialist values dominate and diversity is tolerated, and where church attendance is lower, individuals tend to be more accepting of homosexuality, homosexual marriages and parenthood, and of “new” family forms including those deriving from cohabitation and divorce. Non-traditional attitudes towards diverse family forms are also fostered by high levels of gender equality, high levels of participation in social and voluntary activities and by laws allowing single women and men or homosexual couples to have access to partnership and parenthood rights.

Policy and legislative changes are intertwined with cultural changes. On the one hand, institutions in the form of policies and regulations not only define the set of opportunities and constraints in which women, men and couples act but also their beliefs, contributing to dominant interpretations of gender, family, and parenthood. There is indeed evidence that the enactment of legislation that provides equal rights to married and unmarried parents has contributed both to an increase in non-marital childbearing, and to a wider acceptance of this phenomenon (Delgado et al., 2008). Similarly, there is evidence that the opening up of marriage and other legal arrangements to two persons of the same sex in a growing number of countries has changed the visibility and acceptance of homosexuality and homosexual families, including homosexual parenthood (Waldijk, 2013). On the other hand, the diffusion of non-standard practices and their increasing “coming out”, such as the establishment of filiation outside marriage and the search – especially by homosexuals – for new forms of parenthood, such as multi-parenting and surrogacy, have made such practices

more normal, resulting in a push for their legal recognition and calling for a new perspective on parenthood, even heterosexual parenthood (Bertone, 2009; Segalen, 2012).

Looking at these relevant contextual features (see Table 1), we see there are important differences across our five countries.

[Table 1 about here]

From a cultural perspective, religion seems most important in Italy and Croatia, less so in Spain, and much less important in Denmark and the Netherlands. By contrast, the diffusion of post-materialistic values, the prevalence of cohabitation and a sense of freedom and autonomy in developing one's own life are highest/high in Denmark and the Netherlands, lower in Spain and Croatia, and lowest in Italy. From an economic perspective, Denmark and the Netherlands are also wealthier countries in terms of GDP per capita, followed by Spain and Italy, while Croatia has the lowest GDP per capita.

From an institutional perspective, Denmark and the Netherlands offer those features that have been identified in the literature as promoting less traditional attitudes: they have higher levels of gender equality and they legally recognize rights to marriage, adoption and assisted reproductive technology for gay and lesbian couples and/or single women. Spain occupies a middle position: levels of gender equality are lower than in Nordic countries, looking more similar to those in Italy and Croatia. Yet, unlike Croatia and Italy, Spain has permissive laws concerning partnership and parenthood rights for diverse family forms. These cross-country differences can be kept in mind as we turn to our empirical results and the possibility of future research in understanding attitudes towards the rights of diverse families.

METHOD

Sample

We conducted a pilot study among 991 students in the Humanities and Social Sciences in five countries: Denmark (N 148); Spain (N 220); Croatia (N 208); Italy (N 202); and the Netherlands (N 193). The students came from various disciplines within the Humanities and Social Sciences: 44% from the Social and Behavioural sciences, 18% from Social Services and 12% from Education. The sample is composed in large part of women (74%). This overrepresentation was to be expected given the known predominance of women in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Moreover, the large majority of the sample was born after 1990 (78%) with a minority born before 1990 (22%). More than 90% of students were native to the country in which the questionnaire was distributed. Although some differences across countries emerge in the profile of these youth, they are very minor and do not suggest compositional differences, allowing us to explore possible differences in attitudes across countries.

Questionnaire, measures, and procedures

The questionnaire was developed as part of a larger EU FP7 project on citizenship rights and barriers to European citizenship. Among other aspects, the questionnaire aimed at capturing whether individuals in certain types of families are considered more entitled to certain rights than individuals in other types of families. To this end, we used the concept of diverse families and throughout the survey we systematically compared attitudes towards heterosexuals vis-à-vis homosexuals; married vis-à-vis cohabitating couples.

The first set of civil rights indicators measure attitudes towards rights pertaining to partnership. Items measured whether respondents believed heterosexual and homosexual couples should have the same right to a) get married or b) enter into a registered partnership. Students were presented with a number of statements and were asked whether, on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 stood for completely disagree and 10 for completely agree, they agreed

or disagreed with a statement. For example, to measure attitudes towards partnership rights, respondents were asked whether they agreed with statements such as: “Homosexual couples should have just as much right to get married or to form a registered partnership as heterosexual couples”.

A second set of civil rights relates to parenthood rights. We focus on the right to adopt a child and to use assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs). In this case, respondents were asked whether they agreed that different types of couples, namely married heterosexual, married homosexual, cohabitating heterosexual and cohabitating homosexual couples, should be allowed to adopt and/or use ARTs: “The following individuals should have the right to adopt children or to use assisted reproductive technology: married heterosexual couples; married homosexual couples; cohabiting heterosexual couples; cohabiting homosexuals couples.”

Our measurement of social rights combines a Marshallian conceptualization of access to three “classical” social rights (housing subsidies, financial support for partners, and financial support for children) with an extended interpretation of social rights that reflects the recognition of a variety of family forms and the social rights attached to this recognition (i.e. access to public childcare and entitlement to paid parental leave after the birth or adoption of a child). To measure attitudes towards social rights, respondents were presented with statements such as: “In times of economic crisis when public resources are scarce, married couples should have a greater right than cohabitating couples *or* heterosexual couples a greater right than homosexual couples to various benefits: state-funded housing subsidies; economic support for a dependent partner; economic support for dependent children; access to public childcare; entitlement to paid parental leave after the birth or adoption of a child.”

In addition to these measures, we collected information on the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, including the country of residence, age, gender, field of

education, current living situation, whether the respondent has children, employment status, the parents' level of education and employment status, how many times the respondent has been to a foreign country and whether he/she has lived abroad.

The questionnaire was distributed to students in one university in each country between December 2014 and March 2015. The questionnaire was developed in English and then translated into the national language by each national research team. Students were given a participant information sheet explaining the study and informing them that participation was voluntary and responses would be treated anonymously. Participants were asked to provide written consent. With the exception of Denmark, which used an online submission, the questionnaire was distributed to students by class instructors. While the mixed forms of survey collection were not ideal, given the exploratory nature of our research this mixed approach presents fewer problems.

RESULTS

Attitudes towards civil rights

Figure 1 indicates some clear cross-national differences regarding attitudes towards civil rights. This figure reports predicted values² and 95% confidence intervals for the statements regarding whether heterosexual and homosexual couples should have the same right to marry and/or to form a registered partnership. Students in Spain, the Netherlands and Denmark display more favourable attitudes towards equality for heterosexual and homosexual couples in terms of both forms of family formation than students in Italy and Croatia. Moreover, in all countries, there appears to be greater support for equality in access to registered partnerships as opposed to marriage. However, the countries with higher values on both indicators are also

² The predictions were obtained by simple linear regression with country dummies used as predictors. Dummies for gender and year of birth were included as controls. While the predicted values are well above 7 in all countries for both types of partnership (indicating most respondents strongly agree), these very high values can be accounted for by the young age of the sample (about 80% born after 1990) and by their level and type of education.

the ones where the difference between the two is the smallest. For example, Spanish students support equality in marriage and in registered partnerships with a score of about 9.7. In contrast, in Croatia the average score for equality in registered partnerships is considerably higher (8.6) than the one for marriage (7.8). The results are not surprising considering that in Spain, the Netherlands and Denmark, marriage among homosexuals is regulated by law. By contrast, Italian law did not allow same-sex marriage nor any form of civil union either for homosexuals or heterosexuals when the data were collected. Croatia, instead, has a law allowing homosexual couples to unite in what are called “Life Partnerships”.

Caution is required in interpreting some of the cross-national differences due to the overlapping confidence intervals. Indeed, the wide confidence intervals indicate that some of the country differences are not statistically significant. However, the non-significance of some of the results can likely be attributed to our small sample sizes. More research with larger samples is needed to investigate cross-national differences further.

[Figure 1 about here]

Moving on to parenthood rights, Table 2 reports the results for a factor analysis on our two indicators - the right to adopt a child and the right to use assisted reproductive technologies (ART) – for couples with different marital status and sexual orientation. The Eigenvalues indicate the presence of two factors. However, the factor loadings show that the results are not uniform across countries. Note that while a factor loading is generally considered sufficiently high if it exceeds 0.3, in Table 2 and following we have used a higher threshold (0.6), considering that the loadings are very high overall.

[Table 2 about here]

First of all, with the exception of Spain, the item on adoption for married heterosexual couples does not load highly on either of the two factors. Moreover, in Croatia, Italy and Spain, the items seem to load along the lines of sexual orientation and marital status. This

would justify the aggregation of adoption and use of ARTs into a single indicator of ‘parenthood rights’. However, the results for Denmark and the Netherlands indicate exactly the opposite, with the items loading onto adoption and use of ARTs without discriminating among the type of couple. This is an interesting result, considering that Denmark and the Netherlands are rather progressive countries in terms of parenthood rights. Given the cross-country variation evident here, it is not fully justifiable to consider adoption and use of ARTs as a joint set of parenthood rights. Nonetheless, for the sake of parsimony, we have built an average measure of parenthood rights for the four types of couples. Using this measure, we once again obtained predicted values by country with 95% confidence intervals using linear regression while controlling for year of birth and gender. The results are plotted in Figure 2.

[Figure 2 about here]

As can be seen, most respondents agree that parenthood rights should be granted to married heterosexual couples. By contrast, students are less in favour of parenthood rights for cohabitating homosexual couples. However, large cross-national differences appear. Spanish students are most in favour of parenthood rights for cohabitating homosexuals, followed by the Netherlands and Denmark while the least in favour of such rights are Italian and Croatian students. Large, cross-national differences also emerge for other types of couples. For example, in Croatia, the predicted level of agreement for parenthood rights for cohabitating heterosexuals and married homosexuals is significantly lower than in the other countries. Overall, it appears that in Spain, the Netherlands, and Denmark, students agree that parenthood rights should be granted to all types of couples, regardless of sexual orientation and marital status. The overlapping confidence intervals in these countries support this interpretation. By contrast, Croatian and Italian students find that married and, in particular, married heterosexual couples are more entitled to parenthood rights than other couples.

Attitudes towards Social Rights

Moving on to social rights, Table 3 reports the results from a factor analysis investigating the presence of a latent variable identifying social rights for couples with different marital status or sexual orientation. The results indicate that, in all countries, the items for social rights load onto two factors, one for the contrast between married and cohabitating couples and one for the contrast between heterosexual and homosexual couples. Hence, an argument can be made in favour of evaluating this set of social rights together while separating along the lines of marital status and sexual orientation. Accordingly, two average scores are calculated. As previously, linear regression is used to obtain predicted values and confidence intervals by country, which are plotted in Figure 3. Overall, the values are rather low, indicating that students disagree with the notion that some couples should have more social rights than others. This is especially evident in Denmark, the Netherlands and Spain. However, respondents seem to discriminate by type of union more so than by sexual orientation: in all countries, the predicted values for the statement contrasting married vs. cohabitating couples are higher than the ones contrasting heterosexual vs. homosexual couples. Indeed, particularly in Italy and Croatia, being married vs. cohabiting seems to matter more than sexual orientation for attitudes towards deservingness.

[Table 3 about here]

[Figure 3 about here]

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This article addressed a shortcoming in current attitudinal research by providing an initial exploration into cross-national differences in attitudes towards social and civil rights for individuals living in diverse family forms. Evidence from our five-country pilot study among students demonstrates a number of important findings. First of all, when comparing couples

with different sexual orientation and marital status, students living in more traditional countries (Italy and Croatia) tend to privilege the rights of married heterosexual couples over the rest to a larger extent than in non-traditional countries (Spain, Denmark and the Netherlands). Interestingly, in terms of country differences, Spain appears to belong to the less traditional countries – actually being the least traditional in several aspects. This result is in line with previous streams of research showing that, for example, respondents generally have more favourable attitudes towards homosexuality in countries that are more progressive in terms of family formation laws and the regulation of same-sex marriage (Gerhards, 2010; Hooghe and Meeusen, 2013).

Second, there is general agreement that married couples are more entitled to *social rights* - such as housing benefits and economic support for a dependent partner - than cohabitating couples. Remarkably, students found sexual orientation less relevant than marital status in allowing access to social rights. However, students were less inclined to agree on equality in *civil rights* and in particular *parenthood rights* for homosexual couples - married or not - in traditional countries. A similar result emerged in a pilot study among students in Portugal, another traditional country (Costa et al., 2014). Third, although further research is required to validate these scales over a wider pool of countries, the results from our preliminary factor analyses suggest respondents distinguish between parenthood, partnership and social rights across diverse family forms. These distinctive items could thus be integrated into existing questionnaires on attitudes towards diverse families (e.g. the Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Marriage Scale (Pearl and Galupo, 2007), the Attitudes Toward Gay and Lesbian Civil Rights Scale (Costa et al., 2014) or large-scale comparative surveys such as the European Social Survey).

If we try to contextualise our findings within the cultural, economic and institutional profile of our countries, other important insights can be drawn from our explorative study. In

line with previous research (Gerhards, 2010; Hooghe and Meeusen, 2013; van den Akker et al., 2013; Yucel, 2015), our findings suggest attitudes are more traditional in countries where a diffusion of new types of families and post-materialistic and secularized values is lower, and where, at the same time, laws do not allow homosexuals access to partnership and parenthood rights. Indeed, in countries that have liberal laws in terms of who can marry, form a civil partnership, adopt or access ART techniques, acceptance of rights for diverse families, including homosexual parenthood, is higher. Such findings, while based on relatively small, non-representative country samples, suggest that individuals in progressive countries may be more likely to support equal partnership and parenthood rights for gay, lesbian and cohabiting couples than individuals embedded in countries with less progressive cultural norms. We would expect the same to be true in other countries with similar legislation (Waldijk 2013; Hooghe and Meeusen, 2013; van den Akker et al., 2013). In addition, when economic wellbeing, overall gender equality and new forms of families are still relatively infrequent, but institutions support family diversity, as is the case in Spain, attitudes seem more similar to the well-known Nordic “progressive” countries, at least among students.

Less clear is the role of the economic context in shaping attitudes towards the rights of diverse families. It seems that in wealthier countries, acceptance of civil rights of individuals living in diverse family forms is more widespread, but such a hypothesis needs further empirical testing. Expected cross-country differences in attitudes towards social rights for diverse families are also not clear-cut. However, based on the welfare state attitudes literature (Van Oorschot, 2007; Wright and Reeskens, 2013), macro-level drivers of support for parenthood and partnership rights described above might be similar to those shaping attitudes towards social rights: respondents in traditional countries lacking institutional acceptance of diverse family forms are likely to demonstrate the lowest levels of support for equal social rights for gay, lesbian and cohabiting couples.

While our five country pilot study provides much-needed insights into an underexplored area both in attitudinal research and research on family diversity and citizenship rights, it has its shortcomings. First of all, having only five countries limits our understanding of attitudes towards civil and social rights in international perspective. More cross-national variability would allow, on the one hand, more sophisticated methods of analysis, such as multi-level analyses that can statistically account for the importance of institutional and cultural factors hypothesised above. Furthermore, multi-group confirmatory factor analyses should be run to further test the comparability of the results between countries. Similarly, we were limited by the non-representativeness of our sample of students, by the relatively small sample sizes across countries, and by a limit of questionnaire length that impeded us from exploring other key issues, such as gender constructions in the approval of partnership and parenthood rights (for example, comparing attitudes towards lesbians versus gays) or differences according to type of parenthood (for example, comparing attitudes towards surrogacy versus IVF treatments). Despite these limitations, our article provides promising findings and a sound base for further research, broadening our understanding of cross-national variation in attitudes towards parenthood, partnership and social rights for individuals living in diverse family forms.

REFERENCES

Author X, Y, Z and Author A. 2011.

Aassve, Arnstein., Maria Sironi. and Vittorio Bassi. 2013. "Explaining attitudes towards demographic behaviour." *European Sociological Review* 29(2): 316-333.

Akker, van den, Hanneke., Rozemarijn Ploeg van der, and Peter Scheepers. 2013. "Disapproval of homosexuality: comparative research on individual and national determinants of disapproval of homosexuality in 20 European countries." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 20(1): 64-86.

Bertone, C. 2009. Una sfida a quale famiglia? Comprendere i mutamenti familiari attraverso le esperienze dei genitori non eterosessuali, in Cavina C. and Danna D (Eds.), *Crescere in famiglie omogenitoriali*, Milan: Franco Angeli.

Brewer, Paul R., and Clyde Wilcox. 2005. "Same-Sex Marriage and Civil Unions." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 69 (4): 599-616.

Brooks, Clem, and Jeff Manza. 2006. "Why do Welfare States Persist?" *Journal of Politics* 68(4): 816-827.

Busardo, Francesco, Paolo Matteo Gulino, Simona Napoletano, Simona Zaami, and Paola Frati. 2014. "The Evolution of Legislation in the Field of Medically Assisted Reproduction and Embryo Stem Cell Research in European Union Members." *BioMed Research International* volume 2014.

Costa, Pedro Alexandre, Rute Almeida, Catia Anselmo, Andre Ferreira, Henrique Pereira, and Isabel Leal. 2014. "University Students' Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Parenting and Gay and Lesbian Rights in Portugal." *Journal of Homosexuality* 61(12): 1667–1686.

Croatian Bureau of Statistics. 2011. *Population Aged 15 and Over, by Type of Union Person Lives In, Age and Sex, 2011 Census*. Accessed online 30 November 2015: http://www.dzs.hr/default_e.htm.

- Delgado, M., Meil, G and Zamora-López, F 2008. Spain: Short on children and short on family policies. *Demographic Research*, 19(27): 1059-1104.
- Doan, Long, Annalise Loehr, and Lisa R. Miller. 2014. "Formal Rights and Informal Privileges for Same-Sex Couples: Evidence from a National Survey Experiment." *American Sociological Review* 79(6): 1172–1195.
- Eurobarometer. 2008. *Eurobarometer 69: Values of Europeans*. Spring 2008: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb69/eb69_values_en.pdf.
- European Union. 2015. *Registered Partnerships*. Online data accessed 30 November 2015: http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/family/couple/registered-partners/index_en.htm.
- Eurostat. 2014a. *Online statistical database*: www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat. Brussels: Eurostat.
- Eurostat. 2014b. *GDP at current market prices, 2003–04 and 2012–14*. Online article, accessed 30 November 2014: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:GDP_at_current_market_prices,_2003%E2%80%9304_and_2012%E2%80%9314_YB15.png.
- Gerhards, Jürgen. 2010. "Non-Discrimination towards Homosexuality. The European Union's Policy and Citizens' Attitudes towards Homosexuality in 27 European Countries." *International Sociology* 25(1): 5-28.
- Gubernskaya, Zoya. 2010. "Changing attitudes toward marriage and children in six countries." *Sociological Perspectives* 53(2): 179–200.
- Herek, Gregory M. 2002. "Gender Gaps in Public Opinion about Lesbians and Gay Men." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 66(1): 40-66.
- Hooghe, Marc, and Cecile Meeusen. 2013. "Is same-sex marriage legislation related to attitudes toward homosexuality? Trends in tolerance of homosexuality in European countries between 2002 and 2010." *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 10: 258-268.

- ILGA-Europe. 2015. Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People in Europe. Brussels: European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans & Intersex Association.
- Inglehart, Ronald. 1977. "Long Term Trends in Mass Support for European Unification." *Government and Opposition* 12(2): 150–177.
- Jakobsson, Niklas, Andreas Kotsadam, Siri Støre Jakobsson. 2013. "Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Marriage: The Case of Scandinavia." *Journal of Homosexuality* 60(9): 1349-1360.
- Jones Day. 2015. *Legal Recognition of Same-sex Relationships*. Online article, accessed 30 November 2015: <http://www.samesexrelationshipguide.com/>.
- Kuntz, Anabel, Davidov, Eldad, Schwartz, Shalom H., & Schmidt, Peter. 2015. Human values, legal regulation, and approval of homosexuality in Europe: A cross-country comparison. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 45(1): 120–134.
- Kuyper, Lisette, Iedema, Jurjen and Saskia Keuzenkamp. 2013. Towards Tolerance. Exploring Changes and Explaining Differences in Attitudes towards Homosexuality in Europe. The Hague: The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP).
- Lesthaeghe, Ron. 1983. "A Century of Demographic and Cultural Change in Western Europe: An Exploration of Underlying Dimensions." *Population and Development Review*, 9(3): 411-435.
- Lesthaeghe, Ron and Dirk van de Kaa. 1986. "Twee Demografische Transitities?" In R. Lesthaeghe and D.J. van de Kaa, (eds). *Bevolking: Groei en Krimp, Mens en Maatschappij*. Deventer: Van Loghum-Slaterus: 9-24.
- Lottes, Ilsa.L. and Alkula Tapani. 2011. "An Investigation of Sexuality-Related Attitudinal Patterns and Characteristics Related to Those Patterns for 32 European Countries." *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 8(2): 77-92.

- Marshall, Thomas Humphrey. 1950. *Citizenship and social class, and other essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Merin, Yuval. 2010. *Equality for Same-Sex Couples. The legal recognition of Gay Partnerships in Europe and the United States*. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press.
- Miller, Monica K. and Jared Chamberlain. 2013. "How Religious Characteristics Are Related to Attitudes toward GLB Individuals and GLB Rights." *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* 9(5): 449-473.
- NVOG (Dutch Organisation of Gynecology and Obstetrics). 2010. *Mogelijke Morele Contra-indicaties bij Vruchtbaarheidsbehandelingen* (Possible Moral Contra-indications by fertility treatments). Online document, accessed 22 July 2015.
- Oorschot, Wim van. 2007. "Culture and social policy: a developing field of study." *International Journal of Social Welfare* 16: 129-139.
- OECD. 2015. Family Database, www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.
- Pailhé, Ariane, Dimitri Mortelmans, Teresa Castro, Clara Cortina Trilla, Marie Digoix, Patrick Festy, Sandra Krapf, Michaela Kreyenfeld, Vicky Lyssens-Danneboom, Teresa Martín-García, Wilfried Rault, Olivier Thévenon, and Laurent Toulemon. 2014. "Changes in the life course." *Families and Societies Working Paper Series* 6, 2014.
- Pew Research Center. 2015. *Gay Marriage Around the World*. Online article, accessed 30 November 2015: <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/06/26/gay-marriage-around-the-world-2013/>.
- Präg, Patrick, and Melinda C. Mills. 2015. "Assisted reproductive technology in Europe . Usage and regulation in the context of cross-border reproductive care." *Families and Societies Working Paper Series* 43 (2015).

- Ruspini, Elisabetta. 2013. *Diversity in Family Life: Gender, Relationships and Social Change*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Saraceno, Chiara. 2012. *Coppie e famiglie. Non è questione di natura*. Milano: Feltrinelli.
- Sachweh, Patrick, and Sigrun Olafsdottir. 2012. "The Welfare State and Equality? Stratification Realities and Aspirations in Three Welfare Regimes. " *European Sociological Review* 28: 149-168.
- Segalen, M. 2012. Les nouvelles formes de la conjugalité: du désordre dans l'institution? *Cahiers Français*, 371: 8-16.
- Sobotka, T. and Toulemon, L. 2008. Changing family and partnership behaviour: Common trends and persistent diversity across Europe. *Demographic Research*, 19(6): 85-138.
- Stephens, J.D. 2010. The Social Rights of Citizenship. In *The Oxford Handbook of the Welfare State*. F.G. Castles, S. Leibfried, J. Lewis, H. Obinger and C. Pierson (eds). 511-525. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stoffelen, Anneke. 2015. "Helpt ziekenhuizen weigert single vrouwen ivf (Half of hospitals refuse IVF to single women)." *De Volkskrant*, Amsterdam. 22 July 2015, accessed 26 November 2015: <http://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/helpt-ziekenhuizen-weigert-single-vrouwen-ivf~a4105429/>.
- Takács, Judit, and Ivett Szalma. 2013. "How To Measure Homophobia in an International Comparison? " *Družboslovne Razprave* 73: 11–42.
- Treas, Judith, Jonathan Lui, and Zoya Gubernskaya. 2014. "Children's union status and contact with mothers. " *Demographic Research* 30(May): 1495–1526.
- United Nations Development Programme. 2014. *Human Development Report 2014*. New York.
- Van der Kaa, Dirk J. 1987. Europe's second demographic transition. *Population Bulletin*, 42(1): 1-59.

- Verbakel, Ellen, and Eva Jaspers. 2010. "A Comparative Study on Permissiveness Toward Euthanasia: Religiosity, Slippery Slope, Autonomy, and Death with Dignity. " *Public Opinion Quarterly* 74(1): 109-139.
- Waaldijk, K. 2013. The Right to Relate: A Lecture on the Importance of "Orientation" in Comparative Sexual Orientation Law. *Duke Journal of Comparative & International Law*, 24(1): 161-199.
- Whitehead, Andrew L., and Samuel L Perry. 2014. "Religion and Support for Adoption by Same-Sex Couples: The Relative Effects of Religious Tradition, Practices, and Beliefs. " *Journal of Family Issues*, online before print: DOI: 10.1177/0192513X14536564.
- Wright, Matthew, and Tim Reeskens. 2013. "Of what cloth are the ties that bind? National identity and support for the welfare state across 29 European countries. " *Journal of European Public Policy* 20: 1443-1463.
- Yucel, Deniz. 2015. "What Predicts Egalitarian Attitudes Towards Marriage and Children: Evidence from the European Values Study." *Social Indicators Research* 120: 213–228.

Tables and Figures

Table 1. Profile of case countries according to various institutional, economic and cultural indicators.

	DK	NL	ES	IT	HR
<i>Factors shaping attitudes towards family rights</i>					
• <i>Cultural factors</i>					
Religiosity index ^a	-0.46	-0.25	-0.06	0.49	0.55
Cohabitation percentage ^b	11.5%	9.3%	3.3%	2.0%	2.6%
Autonomy levels ^c	85.26	70.73	53.00	49.67	57.45
Educational levels ^d	79.6%	76.0%	56.6%	59.3%	82.9%
Participation in social and voluntary activities ^e	34%	44.7%	35%	29.2%	..
Post-materialist values ^f	16%	20%	8%	6%	5%
• <i>Institutional factors</i>					
Law on registered partnership yes/no ^g	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Registered partnership also for homosexuals ^h	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Legalized same-sex marriage ⁱ	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Adoption possible for homosexuals ^j	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Assisted reproduction legislation					
– access for single women	Y	Y/N	Y	N	Y
- access for lesbian couples ^k	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Gender inequality index ^l	0.056	0.057	0.100	0.067	0.172
• <i>Economic factors</i>					
GDP per capita, relative to the EU-28 (set at 100) ^m	124	131	94	99	61

Sources:

^a Verbakel and Jaspers 2010. Their index is based on a factor analysis of 8 items from the European Values Study (EVS 1999/2000) measuring the importance of religion in one's life and religious denomination.

^b Data for DK, ES, IT and NL taken are data from 2010 and refer to individuals 20 years and older (OECD 2013). Data for HR are for 2011 and refer to individuals aged 15 and older (Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2011).

^c Verbakel and Jaspers 2010. Data are based on aggregated individual scores on the following item from the EVS: Some people feel they have completely free choice and control over their lives, and other people feel that what they do has no real effect on what happens to them. Please use the scale to indicate how much freedom of choice and control you feel you have over the way your life turns out?

^d Population aged 25–64 who have completed at least upper secondary education; Eurostat, 2014a.

^e Based on European Social Survey Data (2012), taking an aggregate individual measure of the percentage of individuals that does some voluntary work at least once every six months versus those who do voluntary work less often or never. Data for Croatia is not available.

^f Eurobarometer, 2008; based on Inglehart's 1977 four-item materialism/post-materialism value index.

^g http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/family/couple/registered-partners/index_en.htm.

^{h i j} Pew Research Centre, 2015: <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/06/26/gay-marriage-around-the-world-2013/>; Jones Day law firm information, 2014: <http://www.samesexrelationshipguide.com/>.

^k Busardo et al. 2014 and NVOG 2010. In the Netherlands, single women and lesbian couples do not have explicit access to assisted reproductive technology under the law. Current legislation is ambiguous, particularly on the position of single women. It is unclear whether clinics or hospitals can refuse ART to single women (NVOG 2010). A recent newspaper article suggests half of Dutch hospitals continued to refuse single women access to ART in 2015 (Stoffelen 2015). The Equal Treatment Committee in the Netherlands has, however, ruled it illegal to refuse ART to lesbian couples under the Equal Treatment Act.

^l United Nations Human Development Report, 2014; data are for 2013: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-4-gender-inequality-index>. The Gender Inequality Index is a composite measure of women's reproductive health, empowerment and economic position in society. For more information, see: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>.

^m Eurostat, 2014b. This measure provides an indication of GDP per capita at in purchasing power standards in 2013, relative to the EU-28 zone. Using this value allows for a comparison of our countries relative to each other within the Eurozone. http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:GDP_at_current_market_prices,_2003%E2%80%932012%E2%80%93YB15.png

Table 2. Factor analysis for parenthood rights by country. 2 retained factors. Rotation: orthogonal varimax.

	HR		IT		DK		NL		ES	
	Fa1	Fa2	Fa1	Fa2	Fa1	Fa2	Fa1	Fa2	Fa1	Fa2
Eigenvalue	4	1.5	3.4	2.1	2.8	2.8	3.2	3.1	3.5	2.8
	Factor loadings									
Adopt married heterosexual	.15	.32	.087	.39	.22	.37	.15	.5	.13	.72
Adopt married homosexual	.92	.19	.9	.076	.28	.68	.41	.8	.88	.17
Adopt cohabitating heterosexual	.49	.66	.21	.55	.24	.79	.22	.88	.26	.8
Adopt cohabitating homosexual	.89	.33	.9	.2	.29	.92	.35	.91	.78	.44
ART married heterosexual	.25	.43	.25	.81	.87	.028	.91	.098	.33	.8
ART married homosexual	.93	.21	.88	.24	.77	.43	.79	.44	.96	.16
ART cohabitating heterosexual	.54	.72	.26	.89	.78	.44	.87	.34	.31	.85
ART cohabitating homosexual	.91	.32	.9	.29	.74	.56	.8	.53	.93	.3
N	182		183		141		185		215	

Notes: Fa1: factor 1. Fa2: factor 2. Shaded cells indicate a factor loading larger than 0.6

Table 3. Factor analysis for social rights by country. 2 retained factors. Rotation: orthogonal varimax.

		HR		IT		DK		NL		ES	
		Fa1	Fa2	Fa1	Fa2	Fa1	Fa2	Fa1	Fa2	Fa1	Fa2
Eigenvalue		4.4	3.8	4.5	4.4	4.3	3.9	4.7	4.2	4.6	4.6
		Factor loadings									
Married vs. cohabitating:	Access to housing subsidies	.26	.77	.24	.89	.22	.79	.27	.86	.36	.83
	Economic support for partner	.23	.78	.26	.88	.21	.72	.14	.85	.35	.91
	Economic support for children	.32	.84	.26	.92	.27	.85	.26	.91	.33	.92
	Public childcare	.35	.85	.29	.9	.25	.91	.33	.89	.35	.9
Heterosexual vs. homosexual:	Paid parental leave	.34	.84	.3	.89	.24	.9	.36	.88	.3	.92
	Access to housing subsidies	.87	.28	.88	.32	.87	.35	.94	.27	.86	.37
	Economic support for partner	.87	.28	.86	.3	.87	.37	.96	.27	.92	.33
	Economic support for children	.91	.34	.95	.24	.95	.23	.96	.26	.93	.32
	Public childcare	.91	.35	.94	.25	.94	.22	.92	.3	.91	.31
	Paid parental leave	.88	.34	.93	.26	.87	.18	.86	.27	.86	.35
N		183		175		134		183		208	

Notes: Fa1: factor 1. Fa2: factor 2. Shaded cells indicate a factor loading larger than 0.6

Figure 1. Equality in partnership rights by sexual orientation and type of couple. Predicted values by country with 95% confidence intervals.

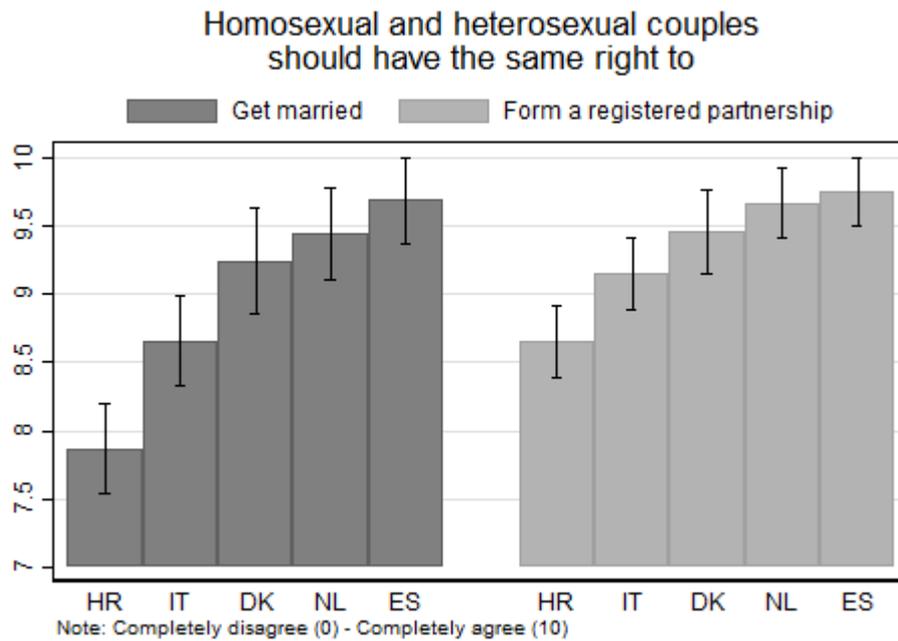


Figure 2. Equality in parenthood rights by sexual orientation and type of couple. Predicted values by country with 95% confidence intervals.

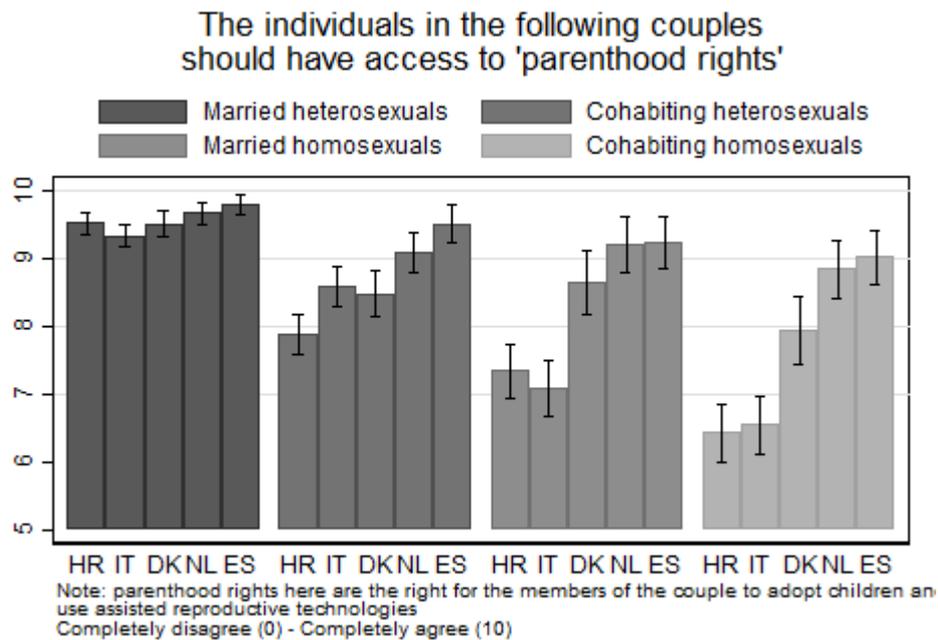


Figure 3. Equality in social rights by sexual orientation and type of couple. Predicted values by country with 95% confidence intervals.

