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Failing Family Policy in Post-Communist Central Europe

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ABSTRACT *This article examines the developments of family policies in four post-communist countries (the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary). A general tendency has emerged of implementing familist, gendered policies that encourage women to leave the labor market to raise children. The interplay of the ideological, economic and institutional legacy of the communist past with new economic, social and political conditions coupled with shifts in values have greatly influenced these policies.*

Introduction

When the communist walls came tumbling down, Central European women found themselves in a historically unique situation. On the one hand, they experienced the highest employment levels in the entire world, with only the Scandinavian social democratic countries coming close. On the other hand, in contrast to the Scandinavian countries, little discussion arose about the need for men to share in the household and child-rearing chores. As a result, the household remained strictly the domain of the woman (Gucwa-Lešny 1995: 128, Heinen 1997: 179). Under such conditions the double burden of paid and unpaid work became particularly onerous.

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Since virtually all women worked during the communist era and since a well-developed system of childcare existed, one could imagine that the post-communist regimes would follow the Swedish path of taking measures to encourage men to share in raising children, which would make it much easier for women to pursue careers and balance family and work. Rather than continuing down the path of de-familization (Esping-Andersen 1999), by supporting gender equality in work as well as the home (Saxonberg 2003) and considering both men and women simultaneously as earners and carers (Sainsbury 1999), we show that the post-communist regimes have all tried to reintroduce the traditional familization regime by inducing women to return to the home as they move back toward the path of re-familization.¹ Some countries have *explicitly* supported re-familization (Hantrais 2003) by supporting conservative family policies (Esping-Andersen 1990, Saxonberg 2003) that encourage women to leave the labor market to raise children. Such policies approach Sainsbury's (1999) model of *separate* gender roles. Other countries have rather *implicitly* supported re-familization by backing market-liberal policies based on means-tested family benefits and reliance on market solutions for daycare. Although such policies are usually coded in general neutral terms, given the existing division of household labor and the structural conditions on the labor market, these policies still encourage women to take sole responsibility for raising children and come close to Sainsbury's (1999) model of the *male breadwinner*.

The Re-familization of Family Policies

This section examines family policies by looking at three key areas that influence the ability for women and men to balance work and family: childcare leave schemes, access to daycare and labor market policies. We also compare the Central European countries to Sweden and western Germany, as these two countries are usually considered prototypes respectively for the social-democratic, de-familized, gender equality, earner/carer model and the conservative, familized, separate gender role models.

Paid Family Leave

The Central European countries have two basic types of paid family leave: one is maternity leave, which is insurance based, rather generous and reserved for the first months of the infant's life. Then each country has various types of parental leave, which are not insurance based, less generous, but available for much longer periods of time and open for fathers.

Maternity leave benefits have not changed much during the transformation. They are available for 24–28 weeks except in Poland, where they are limited to 16 weeks (see Table 1). The replacement rates are extremely generous and used to be 90 per cent (Czech Republic and Slovakia) or 100 per cent (Poland and Hungary). However, in the ensuing years the post-communist regimes have lowered the rates in every country but Poland. In addition, all four countries have rather low ceilings, which guarantee that the majority of mothers will receive even lower rates of replacement for lost earnings.

While maternity leave has remained relatively stable, the crucial change occurred during the very first years of the transformation (1990–1992), when the new post-communist governments extended the periods of parental leave, so that parents

Table 1. Paid family leave (2002)

	Maternity leave			Parental leave		Level in % of average wage (and absolute in EUR and national currency)	Main changes during 1990s
	Length (weeks)	Replacement rate	Length	Type of benefit and benefit formula			
Czech Republic	28 (37 multiple births)	69% of daily assessment base, low ceiling	4 years	Universal 1.1 x MSL of adult person (1.54 MSL since 2004)	14.9% €82.6 (2,552 CZK) since 2004 increased to €115.7 (3,573 CZK)	parental leave: benefit level an length increased	
Hungary	24	70% low ceiling	a) 2 years (if fulfilling social insurance condition - <i>child care fee</i>), b) 3 years, c) 8 years (third children)	Universal a) 70% of wage, ceiling 2 x min wage, b), c) min old age pension	22.8% €82.6 (20,100 HUF)	maternity leave: benefit level decreased	
Poland	16 (18 second child, 20 multiple births), 2 (4 weeks) may be used by father	100% low ceiling	4 years	Income - tested Explicit (low level)	15% €83.3 (318.1 PLN) 23.9% = €132.4 (505.8 PLN) in case of lone parent	parental leave: extended to men, benefit level increased for families with 3 (or more) children	
Slovakia	28 (37 multiple births)	90% of daily assessment base low ceiling (since 2004 55%)	3 years	Universal 0.913 MSL of adult person	29.6% €88.8 (3,790 SK)	parental leave: benefit level an length increased	
Germany	14 (18 multiple births)	100%	3 years	Income-tested Choice: €307 24 months/ €460 12 months	11.1%	parental leave implemented	

(continued)

Table 1. (*Continued*)

Maternity leave		Parental leave		Level in % of average wage (and absolute in EUR and national currency)	Main changes during 1990s
Length (weeks)	Replacement rate	Length	Type of benefit and benefit formula		
Sweden	maternity leave included in statutory parental leave		1.5 year (60 days for each parent, sharing the rest)	(80%) min. €16.4 (150 SEK) per day, this is €500 per month	“papa month” implemented
			Universal (insurance based) 80% of salary first 390 days (up to 7.5 times the basic income level), €6.6 (60 SEK) next 90 days		

Note: MSL = minimum subsistence level.

Sources: MISSCEEC and MISSOC (2004), available at http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/missceec/missoc; wages by OECD 2002 (Taxing Wages. Special Feature: Taxing Families); COM 2003 (358) final; EIRO 2003, own calculations.

can remain at home with their children another 3–4 years. The post-communist governments extended parental leave to men; however, it was clear that they did not expect any men to actually utilize this right (Castle-Kanerova 1992: 113). In Poland, men did not even gain the right to take parental leave until 1996, when it succumbed to EU pressure (Wiktorow 1996: 28, Nowakowska and Swedrowska 2000: 49). Moreover, the benefit level for extended leave is so low in all four countries that, given the fact that fathers usually have higher incomes than mothers, few men can afford to take advantage of their right to parental leave. As Table 1 shows, parental benefit has remained at the low level of 15 per cent to 30 per cent of gross average wage.

In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, these benefits are universal, but paid in a lump sum regardless of income. This combination of a long leave period with low benefit rates constitutes an explicit re-familization policy, which promotes separate gender roles for men and women, since few men will be willing to utilize their right to parental leave under these conditions (Gornick and Meyers 2003: 112, 145, 242 discuss this for Western Europe).

In Poland parental leave benefits are means tested and restricted to those earning less than the social subsistence minimum. The neutral manner and liberal method of means testing constitutes a more implicit re-familization policy.

Hungary provides a slight exception to the general trend. The conservative first post-communist government (1990–1994) kept a relatively generous two-year parental leave, which the government strangely calls a *childcare fee*. It pays 70 per cent of the recipient's wage, although it is limited to a level of twice the minimum wage. In addition, parents can also receive a flat-rate benefit for up to three years. This ceiling on parental benefits called childcare fees gives the model an explicit familization character that promotes separate gender roles. However, since it gives the greatest encouragement among the Central European countries for men to take parental leave, it also contains some elements of the gender equality, earner/carer model. Although the socialist government cancelled the childcare fee, the next conservative government reinstated it.

Daycare

At the same time that the post-communist regimes have extended parental leave, they have also radically reduced state aid to nursery schools for 0–3 year olds. In addition, they have transferred responsibility for running them to the local authorities. The local authorities in turn have increased the enrolment fees and closed down most of the nurseries.

From 1989, the number of nursery schools dropped dramatically in Slovakia and in the Czech Republic, while in Poland their number was already low (see Table 2). Once again, Hungary provides the exception, as the percentage of children in nursery schools decreased by little more than one per cent.

In the communist countries children could attend nursery schools until they reached three years, after which they could attend kindergarten until they reached six or seven (depending when they were enrolled in primary school). As Table 2 shows, in the absence of nursery schools after 1989, Czech and Slovaks have increasingly turned to kindergartens. However, although kindergartens are allowed to accept children under three, they are not obligated to take them and their decision depends

Table 2. Enrollment rates of children in public pre-school facilities

	1989		2002	
	birth to age two (0–1–2)	age three to five (3–4–5)	birth to age two (0–1–2)	age three to five (3–4–5)
Czech Republic	20.3 (13.2% in nurseries)	78.9%	10.3% (0.7% in nurseries)	94.7%
Hungary	11.7% (11.2% in nurseries)	85.7%	10.1% (9.6% in nurseries)	87.8%
Poland	9.1% (8.7% in nurseries)	48.2%	5.1% (4.2% in nurseries)	49.9%
Slovakia	17.7% (15% in nurseries)	88.6%	5.6% (0% in nurseries)	80.1%
Germany (in 2000)			5%	82%
Sweden (in 2000)			37%	77%
EU-15 (in 2000)			25%	81%

Notes:

1) In post-communist countries, children in pre-school facilities, who do not attend nursery schools attend kindergarten as kindergartens are allowed to accept children 2–3 years old if there is capacity and there is adequate staffing. There is a guaranteed right to attend kindergarten for children one year before entering primary school. In Hungary the guarantee includes all children over 5 years.

2) When computing enrolment rates for children in post-communist countries we only include children over 5 months, because maternity leave covers approximately this period so no children are in nurseries.

3) We have created an estimate of enrolment rates for children 0–1–2 based on data by Gornick and Meyers (2003: 204–205) for Germany, Sweden and EU-15 (average for 9 countries where data available – AUT, BE, DK, FI, FR, GER, LUX, NE, SWE). This estimate is computed from data for children 1–2 which are provided by Gornick and Meyers and our own rough estimate of 5% for children 3–12 months or other information available in some cases. If lower enrolment rates for children 0–1–2 are reported for specific cases compared to our estimate we accept these reported enrolment rates.

Sources: Own calculations based on MONEE database 2004, Gornick and Meyers (2003) own calculations, and for the Czech Republic, *Vývojová ročenka školství v ČR 2003*, *ÚZIS 2003*.

on the particular school's economic situation and capacity. This tendency to seek places in kindergarten for younger children indicates that a demand still exists for daycare for children under three.

While enrollment rates have radically declined for nursery schools, they have remained high for 3–6 year olds attending kindergarten, except for in Poland. This combination of long parental leave and lack of access to daycare for children under three makes it difficult for women to combine work and careers.

Thus, all four countries have encouraged the re-familization of society. The Czech Republic and Slovakia have done so explicitly, by incorporating the conservative, separate gender role model, based on a combination of low level lump-sum benefits for parental leave and inadequate support for daycare. Meanwhile, Poland has followed a more liberal, implicitly familization model, in which most families cannot receive parental leave benefits, the state does not support access to nursery schools and gives low levels of support to kindergartens. This rather free-market policy supports the male-breadwinner model by inducing women to return to the home, since fathers cannot afford to take parental leave and mothers cannot easily find daycare for their children.

Although Hungary basically follows the conservative, explicitly re-familization path, it does not support separate gender roles as strongly as in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, since it gives fathers greater incentives to stay at home and it provides greater access to nursery schools.

Labor Market Policies

Labor market policies can improve the possibilities of balancing work and family by making it easier to work part-time, so that parents – especially mothers – can choose to spend more time with their children rather than send them to daycare for extended periods. In Western Europe, where labor markets are more flexible, many married women work part-time (Sainsbury 1996: 108, Vleminckx 2002). Moreover, since daycare is *not* readily available in Central European countries for children under three, mothers are even more likely to want to work part-time until their children begin kindergarten, in order to keep a foot in the labor market and to supplement their family incomes.

So far, the Central Europe governments have not followed the Council Directive 98/23/EC and passed legislation giving parents of young children the ability to enforce their right to work part-time. Nor have they introduced tax incentives or other measure to make part-time work easier. Thus, except for Poland, where young mothers can often count on the help of their parents in taking care of the children (Siemienska 1994, Dabrowska-Caban 1997), women work part-time much less than in Western Europe (see Table 3).

Post-communist labor market policies also make it difficult for women to return to work after having been on parental leave for several years. Although one has a legal

Table 3. Employment impact of parenthood and part-time work (2002) in percentages

	Part-time work (% of total employment)		Employment impact of parenthood		Women's employment share (% of total employment)	Women's unemployment share (% of total employment)	Employment rate – women aged 15–64 1994–2002 in two points of time
	Men	Women	Men	Women			
Czech Republic	1.4	4.9	8.7	–41.8	43.6	54.8	66.2–57.1
Hungary	1.7	4.3	7.1	–35.1	45.1	41.0	41.9–49.8
Poland	7.1	16.7	12.8	–12.5	45.4	48.3	51.9–46.4
Slovakia	1.0	2.3	7.6	–29.7	45.7	46.4	52.4–51.4
Germany	5.5	35.3	7.9	–21.4	44.6	43.3	55.0–58.8
Sweden	7.5	20.6	–	–	48.0	44.3	70.6–73.4
EU-15	6.1	30.0	9.5	–12.6	43.1	49.1	49.1–55.8

Note: employment impact of parenthood = absolute difference in employment rates of men and women without children and with a child aged 0–6 in age group 20–50. Part-time employment refers to persons who usually work less than 30 hours per week in their main job. *Sources:* Employment impact of parenthood – EC 2004; part-time work – OECD 2003; women's employment share – EC 2003 (and own calculations); women's employment rate – OECD 1999 and 2003 and OECD LFS database for SK in 1994, available at <http://www1.oecd.org/scripts/cde/members/lfsdataauthenticate.asp>.

guarantee to return to one's job after parental leave, the post-communist governments have not enforced it. This contributes to a widespread feeling of insecurity among women, as employers often lay off mothers returning from their parental leave (Steinhilber 2003: 321). Like other vulnerable groups in the labor market, mothers also suffer because positive labor market policies are much less widespread in post-communist countries than in the EU. Expenditure on measures like training or job subsidies are about 0.5 per cent of GDP in Hungary and Slovakia and less than 0.2 per cent of GDP in the Czech Republic and Poland while in EU countries the average is above 1 per cent (OECD 2003).

The Ideological Legacy and Reform

Many observers have claimed that the anti-feminist ideological legacy from the communist era has strongly influenced post-communist family policies. However, this legacy is similar for all four countries, and thus cannot explain the differences in policies. Rather, we see the ideological legacy as providing a certain atmosphere in which policy decisions were made, but the differences in the policies pursued among the four countries come from the differences in their economic and institutional legacies. The ideological legacy influences both the ideological climate and the ability for women to organize around their interests.

The Ideological Climate

Under communist rule, the term "feminism" became blemished, because the former regime claimed to support gender equality (see, for example, Fuszara 1991, 1994, Robinson, 1995, Siemenska 1994). However, in reality, the communist regimes continued to support traditional gender roles, although almost all women had to work. Thus, it was extremely rare for women to reach influential positions in political or economic organizations. Meanwhile, women continued to have full responsibility for the household chores and childrearing. Consequently, the Czech sociologist, Čermáková (1997: 391), observes that a *gender contract* emerged during the communist era, in which virtually all women worked, but only men had careers. Instead, women accepted lower positions and lower salaries than men, so that they could balance work and family.

Moreover, in contrast to Western Europe, where women fought for the right to work, the communist regimes forced women to work whether they wanted to or not. Consequently, some women experienced work as state exploitation rather than a move toward liberalization. Thus, many women's organizations in the early 1990s made the right for women to stay at home and be housewives one of their main demands (Wolchik 1995, Saxonberg 2001a, 2003).

Inability to Organize

The communist regimes only allowed one official, state-controlled women's organization to exist, which prevented women from organizing around their interests. Consequently, no women's organizations could pressure the communist regimes into adapting de-familization policies. The absence of a women's movement

meant that no organizations could induce women themselves to support gender equality. During the first half of the 1990s, feminism remained a *dirty word* (Šiklová 1998, Saxonberg 2003). Women's organizations in Central Europe have continued to be rather weak, although some evidence indicates that they are beginning to grow stronger (the articles in Flam 2001, Saxonberg 2003).

Thus, the anti-feminist ideological legacy continues to influence policies in a familist direction, as policymakers themselves tend to hold anti-feminist values and support policies that encourage women to stay at home. Meanwhile, this anti-feminist legacy also inhibits the emergence of a women's movement that could challenge these moves and gain public support for gender equality.

The Economic Legacy of the Communist Past

Although the anti-feminist ideological legacy provides a backdrop in which policymakers considered strategies over family and gender issues, the economic legacy had the immediate effect of forcing these policymakers to make some quick decisions. In 1989, all four countries originally faced some type of economic crisis after over a decade of decline and stagnation (for example Saxonberg 2001b). Budgetary pressures coming from economic crisis convinced the governments that it was necessary to cut social spending (for example Pestoff 1995, Standing 1996). Under these circumstances it was easy to conclude that re-familization policies would be cheaper than de-familization policies, which tend to require rather generous state support. Thus, for example, in all four countries the governments made cutbacks in funding for nursery schools, but increased the length of extended parental leave, partially because they thought that they would save money (for example Potůček 1999: 108). This is obviously especially true in the Polish case where extended parental leave was income-tested.

The economic legacy also helps explain differences in family policies. For example, the two countries that went the farthest with introducing income-testing (Poland and Hungary) were also the two countries that inherited the greatest foreign debts and budget deficits from the communist era. At the time of the transformation, inflation rates were also extremely high in both countries and in the Polish case even approaching hyperinflation (Saxonberg 2001b). Thus, these two countries faced the greatest pressure to cut costs. This difference in economic pressures can help explain why the socialist government in Hungary felt forced to introduce income-testing for further parental leaves and the social governments in Poland (1993–1997, 2001–present) have kept income-testing intact, while the market-liberal Klaus government in the Czech Republic (1993–1997) kept the extended parental leave benefits universal. Nevertheless, the legacy of communist economics is losing its influence over time as economic development becomes less dependent on communist era developments. Thus, when the conservative Young Democratic government came to power in Hungary in 1998 they reinstated the previous more generous system with income related benefits.

The Institutional Legacy

The post-communist countries share a peculiar institutional arrangement inherited from the communist era, in which two different institutions under the control of two

different ministries have provided day care. While the ministry of education has responsibility for the kindergartens (for 3–6 year olds), the ministry of health has responsibility for nursery schools (for 0–3 year olds). Reforms in the 1990s officially gave responsibility to the local municipalities for running nursery schools, but the ministry of health still remains the supervisory body. To make matters even more complicated, yet another ministry (the ministry of labor and social affairs, or in Hungary the ministry of social and family affairs) has responsibility for maternity and parental leave benefits. This type of institutional arrangement makes it difficult to introduce de-familization policies, which require more comprehensive planning (coordination between nursery schools, kindergartens, parental leave insurance etc.). Market liberal policies, in contrast, require little governmental planning and coordination, while more conservative policies at least do not place the same demands on providing comprehensive childcare services.

In addition, the fact that the ministry of health has had responsibility for nursery schools, and even now personnel are nurses, sends a clear signal to parents: they cannot expect their children to receive qualified care, since the personnel do not have any training in pedagogy and psychology. Instead, the authorities look upon these children as health problems! Therefore, it is hardly surprising that nursery schools have poor reputations in Central Europe (Heitlinger 1996, Götting 1998: 228) and home care has been emphasized as superior to them in public discourse.

Not only can the institutional legacy from the communist era help explain the general move toward re-familization, it can also help explain the differences among the countries. Thus, Poland is the only country that has means-tested extended parental leave, which represents a continuation of the communist policies, as this benefit was means tested from the date of its incorporation in 1982 (Balcerzak-Paradowska 1991: 48). Given the country's debt crisis, not even social democratic governments have tried to replace an institutionalized income-tested policy with a more expensive universal benefit.

Meanwhile, Hungary, which had the relatively generous income-based childcare fee in the communist era, succumbed to economic pressures arising from the communist economic legacy and replaced the childcare fee with an income-tested benefit. However, after the economy began improving and the communist economic legacy lost some of its influence, the government decided to re-institute the communist-era childcare fee rather than introduce a new kind of parental leave benefit.

“Exit” and the Failure of Post-Communist Family Policies

Now that we have explained why family policies have generally moved toward re-familization, we can analyze the manner in which these policies interact with the needs and aspirations of the population. Here, we find that Havelková's (1996) differentiation between *abstract* and *concrete* citizenship is extremely useful for analyzing post-communist societies. She defines abstract citizenship as “an image of the system into which certain ideals are projected” (Havelková, 1996: 248). Meanwhile, concrete citizenship is “the attitudes that are rooted in the concrete knowledge and experiences of the individual within a particular social or political system” (Havelková, 1996: 248).

In the context of gender roles, we observe that because of the anti-feminist communist legacy, citizens of post-communist countries (including women) tend to be rather skeptical toward abstract, more theoretical feminist arguments concerning power relations in society and the ideal roles for men and women in society. However, at the concrete level, based on everyday experiences of balancing work and family, post-communist citizens (especially women) are much more supportive of increased equality. In other words, women have not been particularly engaged in debates about political power, power relations or notions about gender roles in society, but they are interested in increasing their possibility of having a career and they are also interested in achieving a more balanced division of labor within their own household.

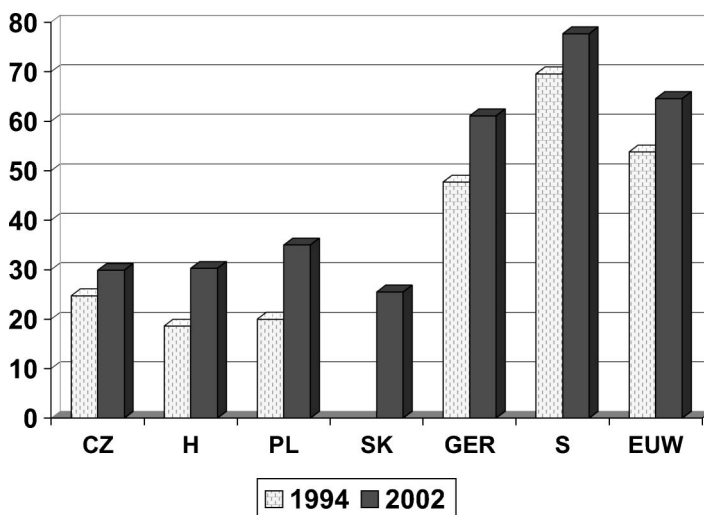
We should note that although we use the terms “abstract feminism” and “concrete feminism” in line with Havelková’s model, we are aware that many different kinds of feminisms exist. We are following the dominant tradition within Scandinavia in using “feminism” to designate support for gender equality, particularly the equality of or elimination of gender roles, which is not to deny that many feminists have other goals.

Abstract Feminism

The two most recent ISSP surveys on Gender and Family Roles from 1994 and 2002 provide data for comparing attitudes on abstract and concrete gender issues. The surveys were basically based on random samples, with some minor exceptions (see ISSP 2002 for details). Unfortunately, only one question posed in the ISSP survey is useful for measuring attitudes toward gender equality at the normative, abstract level. Respondents were asked whether they agree that “a man’s job is to earn money; a woman’s job is to look after the home and family”. This statement is “abstract” in the sense that it asks about one’s ideals as to what general roles men and women should have in society, rather than asking about concrete issues in the respondents’ daily life. As Figure 1 shows, a great gap exists between the post-communist countries and the West European countries on the theoretical issue of what the role of women and men should be in society. Among the post-communist countries, only 25–35 per cent disagree that “a man’s job is to earn money; a woman’s job is to look after the home and family”, while in conservative, familist western Germany over 61 per cent disagree and in social democratic, de-familist Sweden nearly 78 per cent disagree. Among the 11 western EU countries participating in the survey, nearly 65 per cent disagreed with the statement. This lack of support for gender equality at the abstract, theoretical level can explain why the post-communist governments could pursue re-familization policies without meeting much political protest. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that support for abstract feminism is increasing in all countries that participated in the last two surveys, which means that the potential is increasing for women to organize around feminist issues.

Concrete Feminism

Even if the majority of post-communist citizens still reject abstract feminist ideas about power and gender roles in society, at the concrete level questions exist about both the needs and aspirations of the population.

Figure 1. Percentage disagreeing that men should work and women should stay at home

Note: for 1994 the ISSP survey includes the following EU countries: Western Germany (n = 2324), Great Britain (n = 984), Sweden (n = 1272), Austria (n = 977), Italy (n = 1018), the Netherlands (n = 1968), Ireland (n = 938) and Spain (n = 24949). Slovakia did not participate in the survey that year. For the Czech Republic n = 1024, H = 1500 and Poland n = 1597.

For the 2002 ISSP survey includes the following western EU countries: Western Germany (n = 936), Great Britain (n = 1960), Sweden (N = 1080), Austria (n = 2047), the Netherlands (n = 1249), Ireland (n = 1240), Spain (n = 2471), Portugal (n = 1092), Flanders (Belgium) (n = 1360), France (n = 1903) and Denmark (n = 1379). Italy did not participate in the survey that year. For the Czech Republic n = 1289, Hungary n = 1023, Poland n = 1252 and Slovakia n = 1133.

For calculating the EU-West average, we counted each country equally regardless of the number of respondents, so that those countries with more respondents did not influence the average more than those with fewer respondents.

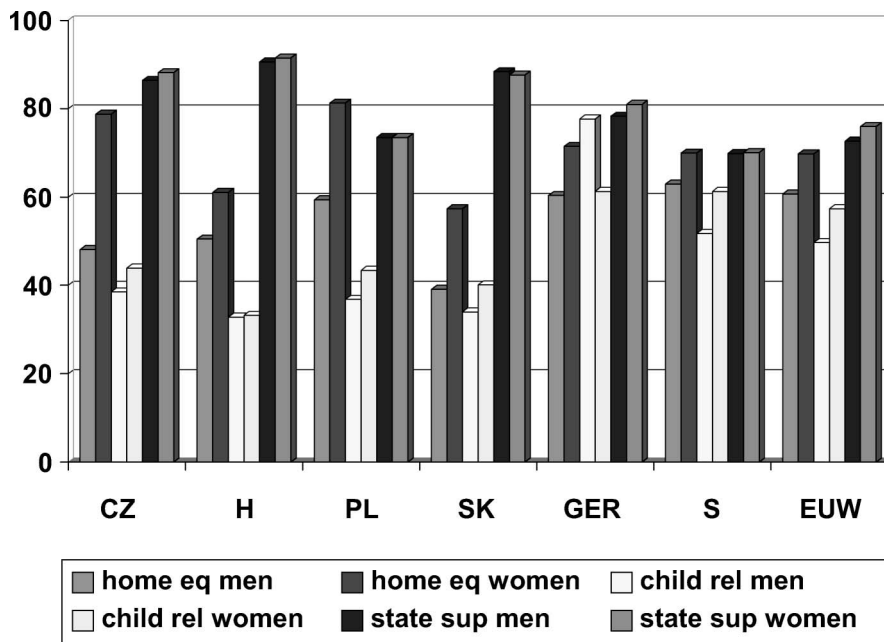
Source: ISSP 1994, 2002.

On the issue of needs, the 1994 ISSP survey asks whether women must work in order to support the family. Although Slovakia did not participate in the survey, among the other three countries over 92 per cent of women answered in the affirmative. Thus, even if some women might have wanted to return to the home, virtually all of them believed that working was a financial necessity. Unfortunately, the 2002 survey did not repeat this question. Nevertheless, among female respondents 88 per cent of Czechs, 74 per cent of Poles, 80 per cent of Hungarians and 83 per cent of Slovaks think that both members of the family *should* contribute to the family income, which in practice means that they believe that women should work at least part-time. Post-communist women believe that they must and should work to support their families, whether they really want to work or not.

In order to examine attitudes toward family and gender relations in more detail, we conducted confirmatory factor analysis and found that at the concrete, daily level, attitudes toward gender roles have three dimensions: household equality, mother/child relations and state support for families (see Figure 2).

The results show that important differences in attitudes only exist for the second factor, mother/child relations. On the issue of household equality, post-communist

Figure 2. Percentage supporting gender equality



Note: for EUW the same 11 western EU countries are included as in Figure 1.

Note on the factors (where “men” = male respondents and “women” = female respondents): HOME EQ = Household Equality, measured by two questions: 1) the percentage agreeing that men should do a larger share of the household work; and the percentage agreeing that men should do a larger share of child caring.

CHILD REL = Mother/Child Relations, measured by three questions: 1) Percentage agreeing that working mothers can have warm relations with their children; 2) percentage disagreeing that pre-school children suffer if their mother works; 3) the percentage disagreeing that “What women really want is home & kids”.

STATE SUPPORT = State Support to Families, measured by two questions: 1) the percentage agreeing that working women should be paid maternity leave; and 2) the percentage agreeing that working parents should receive financial benefits.

Sometimes we counted the percentage disagreeing with a statement rather than agreeing with it, so that we would always measure the percentage of those who are most supportive of gender equality. The factors were tested using confirmatory factor analysis in Amos 5. All of the factors for all the countries met the minimum conditions of RMSEA < .05, AGFI and GFI > .92.

Source: ISSP 2002.

citizens are no less supportive of concrete feminism than West Europeans. In fact, Czechs and Poles are even more likely than West Europeans to argue that men should do a larger share of the household and childcare work.

It is also interesting that respondents in the post-communist countries are extremely positive toward state support for families and they are more supportive than those in the Western European countries. Poland provides the one exception, as Poles are less favorable to state support than western Germans, but more so than Swedes. Part of the difference in responses could be because of the unfortunate wording in the survey that asks about maternity leave rather than paternal or

parental leave. Nevertheless, the results are still interesting, because they show that little support exists for the liberal, means-tested implicit familized policies which the post-communist governments have pursued in Poland and which the first socialist government pursued in Hungary (from 1994 to 1998).

The one factor where Central Europeans are clearly more conservative than Western Europeans is mother/child relations. Here the negative legacy of the communist nursery schools loom. For even if women feel that they must work for financial reasons and even if many women want to work in order to pursue the new career opportunities that opened up with the collapse of communism, they still fear that the state cannot provide high quality daycare for young children. Instead of using the “voice” option, parents have willingly abandoned the nursery schools and quietly tried to get their children placed in kindergartens.

The survey also indicates that Central Europeans are starting to rethink the issue of daycare, as the percentage of those believing that mother/child relations will *not* suffer has increased in all of the countries compared to the 1994 survey. Moreover, regression analysis for the factor mother/child relations shows that in all four countries, age and educational level significantly influence the belief that mothers can work without harming their relationship with their children (see Figure 2 for a listing questions for each factor). The more educated one is and the younger one is, the greater one’s belief that mothers can work without damaging their children. This means we can expect support for working women to increase, since educational levels are rising in all four countries, thanks to a sharp increase in the number of colleges and universities. Meanwhile, the generational factor indicates that the newer generation is more supportive of the working women than previous ones and we can expect this trend to continue.

Conclusion: The “*Wrong*” Kind of Exit

We have shown that in contrast to recent trends in Western Europe, the post-communist countries have explicitly or implicitly tried to persuade women to leave the labor market by pursuing re-familization policies. EU accession has not greatly influenced policies in the fields of part-time work and childcare, which have been largely neglected. The EU’s main influence so far has only been on the rather formal incorporation of EU legislation on equal treatment in employment and pay.

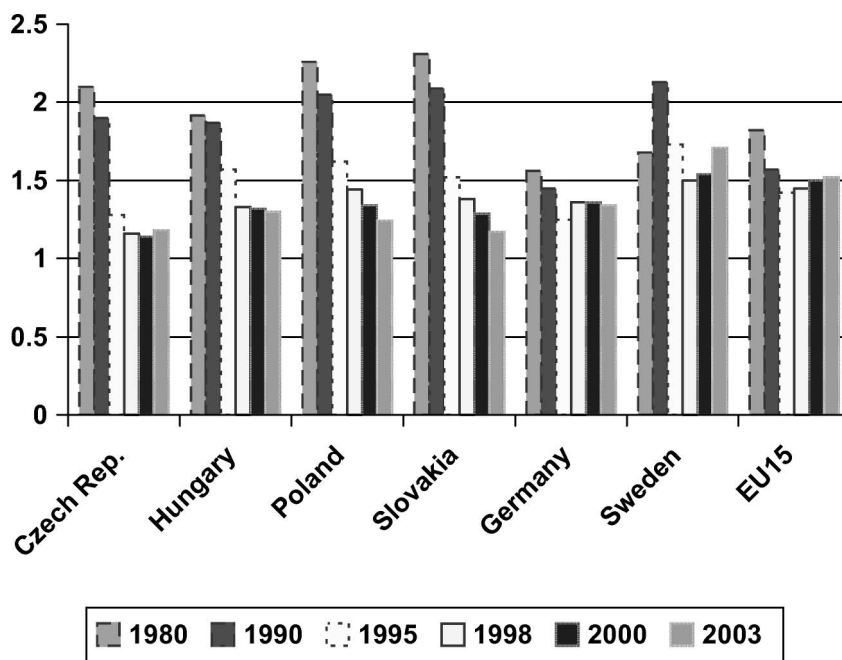
As Table 3 shows, the cost of childbearing is quite high for women, as their position in the labor market significantly decreases once they have children, while the position of men actually improves. In addition, this decrease is much higher than the EU average. However, our discussion of attitudes shows that women feel that they must work whether they want to or not. In addition, although support for abstract, theoretical feminism is rather low (but increasing), great support exists for gender equality at the concrete, daily level. The lack of support for theoretical feminism has hindered the emergence of a strong feminist movement that could challenge the re-familization policies. Rather than choosing “voice” by organizing politically, Central European women have largely chosen “exit”, by refusing to have babies. Rather than leaving the labor market, they have quite simply left the reproductive market. Thus the change in women’s employment rates has been rather modest as female employment as a share of total employment has remained

rather high (see Table 3). Women comprise a higher share of unemployed than they do of employed (except for Hungary, where female inactivity rate is still extremely high). This indicates that women generally face a higher risk of unemployment than men.

As Figure 3 shows, in the 1980s fertility rates were much higher in the Central European countries than in Western Europe. One year after the communist regimes fell, fertility rates were still higher than in conservative, familist Germany. Throughout the decade birthrates fell by around half and now are lower than in Germany. Meanwhile, fertility rates have been rising in Sweden after an initial fall during its economic crisis in the 1990s.

The fact that fertility rates could rise in Sweden, while declining in the post-communist countries and conservative, familist Germany, indicates that the familist policies constitute a major cause of the decline. If the decline were merely part of a general international trend, then fertility rates could not increase in Sweden. We do not deny that the economic crisis also played a role as living standards decreased for many families. However, the economic crisis did not cause declining birth rates during the communist era, when policies were less familist. In addition, in contrast to Sweden, fertility rates have not increased in the post-communist countries during periods in which economic conditions have improved. So, as Strohmeier (2002: 351) notes, family policies do influence fertility rates.

Figure 3. Fertility rates



Source: EUROSTAT 2004, available at http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int/portal/page?_pageid=1996,39140985&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&screen=detailref&language=en&product=Yearlies_new_population&root=Yearlies_new_population/C/C1/C12/cab12048

The Central Europe countries contradict Esping Andersen *et al.*'s (2002) and Castles' (2003) observations that the previously negative correlation between fertility rates and employment rates has transformed into a positive correlation. Post-communist women exhibit persistently high employment, while their fertility rates have dropped radically. However, our results confirm Castles' conclusion about the causal mechanism: the employment prospects of women greatly influence family formation, because values have changed. Today women believe that they have the same right and need to work as men and that they must combine having children with the demands of working life.

Similarly, our findings support McDonald's (2000a, 2000b) incoherence theory. He shows that in the industrially advanced countries the conflict between norms supporting high levels of gender equity in individual-oriented social institutions (like education system and labor market) and sustained gender inequality in family-oriented social institutions (in caring and nurturing and household maintenance) has caused fertility rates to drop. Post-communist family policies have increased rather than dampened this conflict.

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Note

1. Re-familization differs from familization in that familization policies are the general policies that a regime pursues, while re-familization connotes a direction. It implies that a country that once has carried out policies which to some extent have deviated from familization policies has now moved back toward policies that encourage increased familization.

As Hantrais (2003: 204) writes about post-communist countries: "Family policy can be said to have been refamilialised. This does not mean that formal institutional structures for managing family policy are non-existent, or that they are not legitimised. It does mean they are underfunded, that support for families is often rhetorical rather than practical and that the state is not trusted to deliver good quality and reliable services."

We use the term "re-familization" because before the war the Central European Countries pursued familist conservative social policies. Their policies were based on the conservative Bismarckian model: all family benefits were insurance-based including maternity benefits which were a part of sickness insurance that depended on the woman's employment record. Maternity benefits were limited to mothers and were only paid for 12 weeks (24 weeks in Hungary) at a replacement rate of 100 per cent (50 per cent in Poland). These countries did not introduce child benefits until after the war (except Hungary, where child allowance for state servants and low income groups existed in the pre-war period, and in Czechoslovakia, where they were only available for civil servants), and child care services did not exist. All in all, childbearing costs as well as child care have been assumed to be completely a family responsibility while caring duties were imposed on women due to the predominating male breadwinner model of the family.

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