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Cultural underpinning for the development of family policy in a global perspective

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Abstract

Country contexts in which state policies for families are created, designed, and carried out differ in many respects. We are particularly interested in the diverse cultural conditions that can subtly pave the way for the perception and acceptance or dismissal of specific policy measures. In what ways and with what objectives the state invests in families, whether and how it considers the normative and moral aspects, as well as the roles and behaviors of family members, can vary considerably across societies even if they are at the same stage of economic development. We cannot assess the direct link between cultural conditions and family policy instruments in this paper. Rather, survey data from the World Values Survey (WVS) and other supplementary information are used to examine attitudes and cultural conceptions of the family, as well as broader cultural conditions around the world. Our descriptive analysis of values and attitudes considers the following dimensions: familialization/defamilialization, secularization and self-realization, gender roles, and openness towards diverse family forms. Further, we examine the countries' stages in demographic transition and governments' views and policies on fertility levels in their countries. Systematic differences are found between world regions, which supports the notion that typical cultural traditions and values may be associated with specific policy configurations.

Zusammenfassung

Die länderspezifischen Rahmenbedingungen, unter denen staatliche Familienpolitiken eingeführt, gestaltet und umgesetzt werden, unterscheiden sich in vielerlei Hinsicht. Wir fokussieren hier auf die unterschiedlichen kulturellen Bedingungen, die auf bisweilen subtile Weise die Einschätzung und Akzeptanz oder die Ablehnung bestimmter familienpolitischer Maßnahmen beeinflussen können. Auf welche Weise und mit welchen Zielen der Staat in Familien investiert, ob und wie er normative und moralische Gesichtspunkte sowie die vorherrschenden Rollen und Verhaltensweisen der Familienmitglieder berücksichtigt, kann von Gesellschaft zu Gesellschaft sehr unterschiedlich sein – auch dann, wenn sie sich auf der gleichen Stufe der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung befinden. Den direkten Zusammenhang zwischen den kulturellen Rahmenbedingungen und den familienpolitischen Maßnahmen können wir in diesem Papier nicht aufzeigen. Vielmehr verwenden wir Umfragedaten des World Values Survey (WVS) und andere ergänzende Informationen, um Einstellungen und kulturelle Vorstellungen zur Familie sowie allgemeinere kulturelle Rahmenbedingungen weltweit zu untersuchen. Unsere deskriptive Analyse von Werten und Einstellungen berücksichtigt folgende Dimensionen: Familialisierung/De-Familililialisierung, Säkularisierung und Selbstverwirklichung, Geschlechterrollen und Offenheit gegenüber unterschiedlichen Familienformen. Darüber hinaus beziehen wir die Geburtenraten sowie die Ansichten und Politiken der Regierungen zum Fertilitätsniveau in ihren Ländern ein. Wir finden systematische Unterschiede zwischen den Weltregionen, womit die Annahme gestützt wird, dass typische kulturelle Traditionen und Werte mit bestimmten familienpolitischen Konfigurationen verbunden sein können.

Contents

1. Introduction

Family policies have a profound impact on the functioning of families, and they affect the lives of family members in a myriad of ways. Although the formation and implementation of family policies can be traced from supranational levels, such as the United Nations, to local, organizational, and company levels (Nieuwenhuis & Van Lancker, 2020b), the most consequential and crucial layer continues to be the nation-state, which dominates the policymaking and implementation of various family policy measures, as well as comparative research on family policy. The state has a genuine interest in the functionality of families, as is evident in the establishment of ministries of family affairs or family development in many countries, indicating the importance of family as a social institution. But how are family policies in nation-states devised? Which goals do states pursue and how do they select from numerous policy instruments?

In this paper, we cannot directly trace the decision-making process in policy formation. Rather, we address the diversity of country contexts in which policies for families with children are created, designed, and implemented. We are particularly interested in diverse cultural conditions that can subtly pave the way for the perception and acceptance or dismissal of specific policy measures. Economic development and budgetary constraints undoubtedly determine the extent to which a state can provide benefits and support to families. This applies to various forms of support: monetary (e.g., child benefits, baby bonuses), time (e.g., maternity, paternity, and parental leaves), and infrastructure (e.g., childcare and early education). But the direction in which the state invests in families, whether and how it considers the normative and moral aspects, as well as the roles and behaviors of family members can vary considerably across societies even if they are at the same stage of economic development. Whether the policy concern is to support traditional family forms or the individual well-being of family members regardless of family models, or whether the policies enable and facilitate the employment of all adult family members and promote gender equality is not primarily the question of financial capacity. Rather, the broader cultural contexts with diverse values and norms, socio-cultural heritage, highly codified marriage systems, ethnic and religious diversity, kinship solidarity, societal importance attached to children, filial piety, patriarchy, and gender equality to a large extent shape the formation of family policy and its specific instruments.

But also once policies are in place, they rely on their being accepted as legitimate in order to function. Therefore, the adoption of policy instruments from distant cultural settings may be futile if they do not fit the family system and cultural values in a country. Although this holds for all policy fields to some extent, it is particularly valid for family policy because of its normative nature. By way of comparison, it is reasonable to assume that, for example, health policy aimed at reducing illness and mortality pursues universally acceptable goals. In contrast, family policy goals may be controversial and can face severe obstacles. They can be perceived as a governmental intrusion in private family affairs, intertwined with sensitive and emotional aspects, including sexuality, religiosity, deeply embedded ideas on proper gender roles, and ideological orientation. This can be observed even among policymakers. For example, Ooms stresses the pervasiveness of competing and confusing values in the field of family policy and argues that there is an inherent incongruity in family policy in the United States, where politicians take turns "to become 'champions' of supporting families in one moment and then turn around and decry government intrusion in family life in the next" (Ooms, 2019: 20). We, therefore, suggest that exploring cultural conditions around the world can help us to understand

the underpinning that supports, strengthens, or impedes the development of family policy.

In the next sections, we will explore the concepts of "family" and "policy" subsumed under "family policy", before we turn to cultural variations in family policy and the empirical analysis based on the World Values Survey (WVS) and other data. In general, researchers have been more concerned with the question of which "policies" constitute family policy and less with the concept of "family" subsumed under family policy. Even as a consensus is emerging around the definition of family policy, research has not resolved questions about the definition of family (Bogenschneider & Corbett, 2010). This is unfortunate, as there is a mutual and bidirectional relationship between the conception of family and family policy. The culturally diverse notion of family and the understanding of family relations, including gender and generational relations, affect the formation and development of family policies in contemporary societies and is one reason for the fact that large differences in family policy can be observed across countries. However, also family policy itself has an impact on who is considered to be a family member, what are acceptable family models, and how this changes over time. Moreover, policies, once in place, engender societal change and may impact upon their own cultural foundations.

2. Family

Globally, family is a universal social institution. As one of the main institutional pillars of all societies, it continues to be responsible for their biological and social reproduction. The cultural conception, definition, and practices of "family" have been changing over time and can differ significantly between societies. After the changes that have accompanied industrialization and urbanization in Western countries and culminated in the dominance of the modern bourgeois family ("the golden age of marriage"), a deinstitutionalization and diversification of family forms and relationships among family members could be observed over the last 50 years. Accordingly, a shift in the cultural image of the family can be noted. A similar change, although moderate, is also apparent in other parts of the world, where traditional family structures are or were the rule, corresponding with a cultural image that is often still heavily determined by influential religious belief systems (Furstenberg, 2019; Lesthaeghe, 2020). One reason for the considerable variation of family policy in cross-national comparison is because policy measures are based on different conceptions of family and are more or less inclusive of an increasing variety of family forms in contemporary societies.

There is an agreement that family is understood as a relationship between two or more persons tied together by blood, legal bonds, or the joint performance of family functions. But depending on the socio-economic, political, religious, and cultural frameworks in individual countries, there may be dissent about what or who counts as family and whom the family policy should address. Moreover, the changing cultural notion of family leads to changes in the notion of family in vital statistics, demography, or other purposes undertaken by governmental institutions and international organizations (Selzer, 2019; United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2011).

The prototypical norm of a stable nuclear family with a breadwinning husband and caregiving wife, which was used in developed Western countries as a basis for policymaking in the twentieth century, is losing ground even in countries where the idea began, especially in light of the diversity of existing family constellations, such as dual-earner couples, patchwork families, single mothers living with new partners, single parents with children from multiple partners, children of divorced parents living interchangeably in two households, same-sex families, co-parents regardless of sexual orientation who

reject a partnership relationship but purposefully conceive and jointly raise children, multi-generational families, skipped generation families, and co-residing kin members, just to name a few. Changes to and the development of diverse family types have not been uniform or concurrent, even if only European countries are considered (Huinink, 2010). This diversity becomes much more complex when global perspectives and world regions with very different cultural traditions and structural conditions are considered. Therborn (2004; 2014) distinguishes seven major family systems around the world that, in his view, are not converging and, in some respects, are rather diverging: Christian-European family which includes the New World settlements, Islamic West Asian/North African, South Asian, Confucian East Asian, sub-Saharan African, Southeast Asian, and Creole family patterns. These major family systems correspond fairly well with world regions which we can analyze using survey data in the continuation of this paper.

3. Policies

The definition and scope of family policy are not precise and univocal. Thus, family policy has been described as a "fuzzy" concept, with blurry and variable boundaries. Neither the set of policies that qualify as family policies nor the notion of what the family is are clear-cut, particularly in the global perspective that goes beyond the European realm and the countries that are typically included in comparative welfare state research.

The term "family policy" was first used in the second half of the twentieth century in European social policy discourse to describe public policies designed with the aim to affect families or individuals in their family roles. Explicit state responsibility for families developed later than many other areas of social policy, such as income redistribution and securing the adult life course (Gauthier, 1996). However, families had been shaped and affected by legal regulations and public policies well before the concept was introduced in policymaking and research. As formulated by Saraceno, "Governments' intervention in family matters, regulating what constitutes a family and what obligations family members have to each other, dates back to the formation of nation states… Access to marriage, the conditions of its dissolution, the distinction between what is a family and what are acknowledged family relationships, the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate (later "natural") filiation, gender and intergenerational obligations, whether and how contraception and abortion are allowed, intra-family violence condoned or on the contrary persecuted – all these became matters of regulation by law" (Saraceno, 2011:2).

An early broad definition of family policy was suggested to encompass "everything that government does to or for the family" (Kamerman & Kahn, 1978). In a similar vein, Zimmermann (1995) put forward the understanding of family policy as "a perspective for understanding and thinking about policy in relation to families". Kaufmann (1993) proposed to distinguish between explicit and implicit family policy. While many policy measures are motivated by the labor market, health, population, or poverty reduction goals, they nevertheless implicitly affect families. In this way, family policy is overlain with other specific policy areas, such as population policy, education, labor policy, health, and long-term care policy. Explicit family policy, however, involves policy measures that are expressly targeted at families and the specific needs of family members. Such measures are planned and implemented by public authorities specifically established for these purposes (Kamerman & Kahn, 1978; Kaufmann, 1993).

Scholars define contemporary family policy as government activities that are intentionally designed to support families, enhance family members' well-being, and strengthen family relationships (Bogenschneider, 2006).

Recent developments aim at broadening the conceptualization and assessing changes that the field of family policy underwent in its historical development (Daly, 2020). Nevertheless, even the most recent and encompassing accounts of research on family policy (Eydal & Rostgaard, 2018; Nieuwenhuis & Van Lancker, 2020a) to a large extent focus on Europe and, less systematically, on other OECD countries. The global perspective is emerging but remains peripheral and underdeveloped as a focus of intellectual inquiry.

In the next section, we aim at exploring some underlying structural and cultural characteristics that shape the national constellations and constitute the framework in which family policies are designed. The focus of our analysis lies on state policies related to families with children. Although care for older people may also be subsumed under family policy, and historically this may be an important part of family responsibilities, this is less and less the case. Countries vary greatly in the extent to which informal elder care is supported by public policies; however, among 35 European countries included in the analysis by Spasova et al. (2018), only three have family responsibilities by adult children to their parents enshrined in law, and such regulations are usually part of emerging long-term care policy rather than family policy. Hence, our primary focus is on families with young children.

4. Cultural variation and family policy

For our purposes, it would be of interest to collect information on how populations in various countries perceive family policy and how much support there is for such measures, but the data needed for this are not available cross-nationally. However, it is known from international comparative research on attitudes towards the welfare state that support for social policy measures and state income redistribution to reduce inequalities varies significantly between groups of countries. Approval depends not only on individual interests or values but also on country-specific conditions (Dallinger, 2008). It is to be expected that the notion or the cultural conception of family and gender roles, which are likely to decisively influence support for family policy measures, also vary strongly between societies. This has been found for European countries (Lück & Castrén, 2018; Trommsdorff, 2006; van Vlimmeren et al., 2017), and is also reflected in the social legislation of respective societies (Nygren et al., 2018).

We propose that the cultural ideals, belief systems, and convictions that influence the actions of individuals and policymakers importantly contribute to which policy areas are given the most attention and which instruments and configurations of instruments are adopted and carried out in a given society. Along which dimensions do cultural and structural trends most likely affect family policies? We suggest that countries differ in the following dimensions which might affect the level and direction of state involvement in regulating family behaviors and relationships.

Familialization and defamilialization

The concept of defamilialization versus familialization was developed in extended discussions of the traditional welfare state typology and is defined as the extent to which the family is expected to absorb social risks relative to the state. Defamilialization refers to the degree of support for an individual's independence from family relationships. This involves, in particular, the autonomy of women and the reduction of intergenerational dependency (Leitner, 2003; Lohmann & Zagel, 2016), while familialistic attitudes and policies oblige the family to meet the care needs of its members and, in this way, enforce the dependence of people in need of care onto their families.

Secularization and self-realization

Although the relationship between religious beliefs and processes of modernization is more complex than a straightforward negative correlation between religion and manifold manifestations of modernization, including the family structure and family relations, religious beliefs and convictions may have an important impact on family life and the formation of family policy measures. Overall, the cultural foundation in which family relations and family models evolve can be deeply influenced by religious beliefs. Even in highly secularized societies, many family-related life course rituals evolve in religious contexts (e.g., weddings, funerals). The impact of specific religious beliefs is particularly evident in the socialization of children.

Gender roles

The roles of women and men in the family and society have been changing in many parts of the world, with the increasing labor force participation of women as one of the most significant trends in past decades in most contemporary societies, while the progress in changing men's roles in the family has been lagging. Protection for mothers was an early goal of family policy, although employment protection for new mothers can also be seen as a health and labor market policy. The attitudes towards women as mothers and as workers remain diverse and often lay behind the trends of the changing positions of women in the labor market. Still, the direct and indirect costs of childbearing and childrearing are disproportionally borne by women, as is the burden of domestic labor. Indicators of gender inequality continue to demonstrate the unequal position of women in private, occupational, and political life. The cultural models for the gendered division of labor and the attitudes and social norms concerning what men and women should (not) do can affect the opportunities and barriers to equitable participation by women and men, and guide the development of family policy measures.

Openness towards diverse family forms

In many societies, the marriage of opposite-sex couples is the traditional vehicle for creating a new family and linking families, that is, providing a legally acceptable unit for bearing and rearing children and creating bonds between two families via in-laws. People differ in their views on the importance of marriage for partnership formation and childbirth, divorce, remarriage, and single parenthood. In particular, attitudes and legal regulations of same-sex partnerships and same-sex families vary across countries and world regions. This has important implications for the concept of the family and the inclusiveness of family policy measures.

Stage in the demographic transition and fertility

Although we focus on the cultural factors associated with the four dimensions discussed above, we would like to emphasize that also structural conditions in a country, particularly population size and demographic trends are known to affect family policy strategies.

With increasing longevity worldwide and restrictive migration laws in many countries, fertility rates are perceived as an important element of population regulation and development. Many countries of the Global South have not yet completed their demographic transitions, while others have joined the developed welfare states in aiming to stabilize or even increase birth rates (Böger et al., 2021). In many countries there is a keen awareness about population growth or decline, expressed as a concern about population control in the framework of a sustainable development agenda, and conversely, as a concern about low fertility rates, aging populations, and a shrinking labor force. Not only individuals, but also governments have an "opinion" on the need to intervene

in population development, and family policy can be employed for such interventions. Specific measures of family policy are thus likely to depend on pro- or anti-natalist goals or an indifferent approach to population development in a specific country. Moreover, one can assume that low fertility coincides with less conservative cultural values concerning the family, both of which favor a progressive family policy.

5. Data

The indicators of cultural dimensions are considerably more difficult to assess than economic indicators, politico-legal frameworks, or demographic indicators, which can also be a challenge from the global perspective. For cultural indicators, we cannot rely on indicators amassed by country statistical offices. Rather, we must examine attitudes and values, which reflect the state of mind, opinions, emotional responses, and evaluations towards a specific issue. These data are typically assessed in surveys.

Despite the proliferation of cross-national surveys in past decades, coverage is typically limited to well-established cases, such as the EU and, to a lesser extent, OECD countries. For countries in other world regions, there is a paucity of data, and even if high-quality surveys are performed in individual countries, the comparability of data suffers across multiple languages, cultures, and contexts. The only dataset that includes a considerable number of countries globally is the World Values Survey (Inglehart et al., 2014), which includes nationwide representative samples of adult populations in the countries involved (http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp). The WVS is a global research project that explores people's values and beliefs, how they change over time, and what social and political impact they have. One focus is on cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs towards gender, family, and religion. At present, the data contain seven cross-sectional waves, starting with the first wave in 1981/1983 until Wave 7, conducted from 2017 to 2021. Subsequent waves are planned for every five years and the territorial coverage is expanding continuously. Altogether, 104 countries participated at least once in the seven waves of data collection. However, looking at individual waves, 60 is the largest number of countries involved in a particular year in Wave 6. We use this dataset because it is the only source of individual-level data that taps into world regions that are typically excluded from comparative policy research and cross-country comparison in general.

Other data sources that can shed light on societal conditions conducive to the scope and orientation of family policy measures include the Social Science Survey Programme (ISSP) and various UN and World Bank data sources that also study countries in the Global South. Indicators from the set of Hofstede Indicators (Hofstede, 2011) or the GII (UN's Gender Inequality Index) and the GGGI (Global Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum) can be considered. In the next section, we will compile relevant data from some of these sources with a focus on descriptively documenting attitudes to compare across countries.

6. Descriptive analysis

The variables of interest in the World Values Survey relate to the dimensions we identified as those most likely to affect the development and direction of family policy: familialization and defamilialization, secularization and self-realization, gender roles, and openness towards diverse family forms. This distinction is made for analytical purposes, but in reality, many measures overlap. Still, we distinguish these dimensions to provide a more systematic overview of the cultural underpinning of policy instruments.

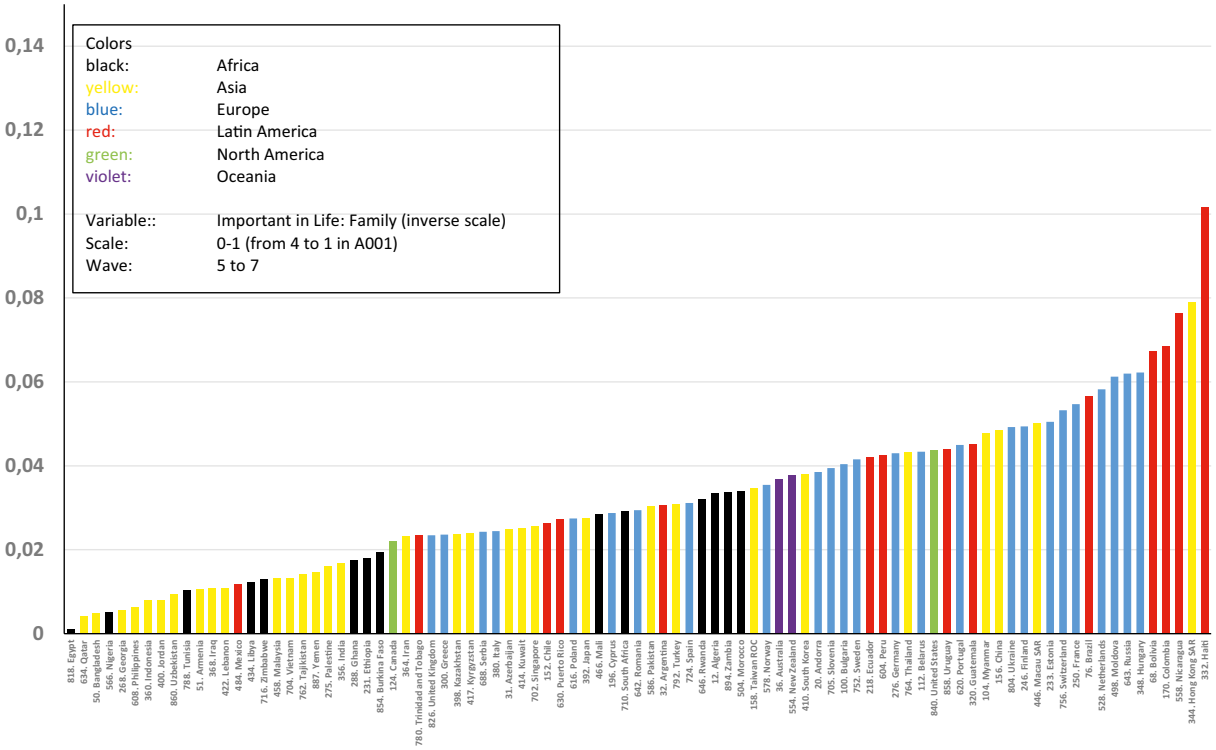
Our analysis of the World Values Survey includes 89 countries that participated in the latest three panel waves. The values for each country are taken from the most recent panel wave in which the country participated. That is, if the information was not available for Wave 7 (2017-2020), it was taken from Wave 6 (2010-2014), and if both of the last waves were missing, the value was obtained from Wave 5 (2005-2009). We did not incorporate survey waves from the more distant past to ensure that data in different countries do not cover overly disparate historical periods.

Unfortunately, data restrictions do not allow us to create single indices for the dimensions of interest. Since not all variables are available in all survey waves and not all participating countries included in their questionnaires all variables that could be meaningfully used for the creation of indices, too many cases would be missing in the analysis. Only the secularization and self-realization dimension which can be understood as a subset of the Inglehart–Welzel Cultural Map (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005) has been systematically assessed over the panel waves and indices provided in the WVS database. We gratefully make use of these indices. Apart from that, we had to resort to individual variables as indicators of attitudinal patterns assumed to be related to country-specific family policies. We coded all variables in such a way that they point in the direction of societal trends of modernization: higher values indicate more widespread defamilialization, greater secularization, more egalitarian gender roles, and a more widespread acceptance of diverse family forms.

Familialization and defamilialization

Familialistic attitudes stress the importance of family and call for the family to meet the care needs of its members and, in this way, enforce the dependence of people in need of care onto their families. However, famili-

Figure 1.
Importance of family in a person's life (reversed)



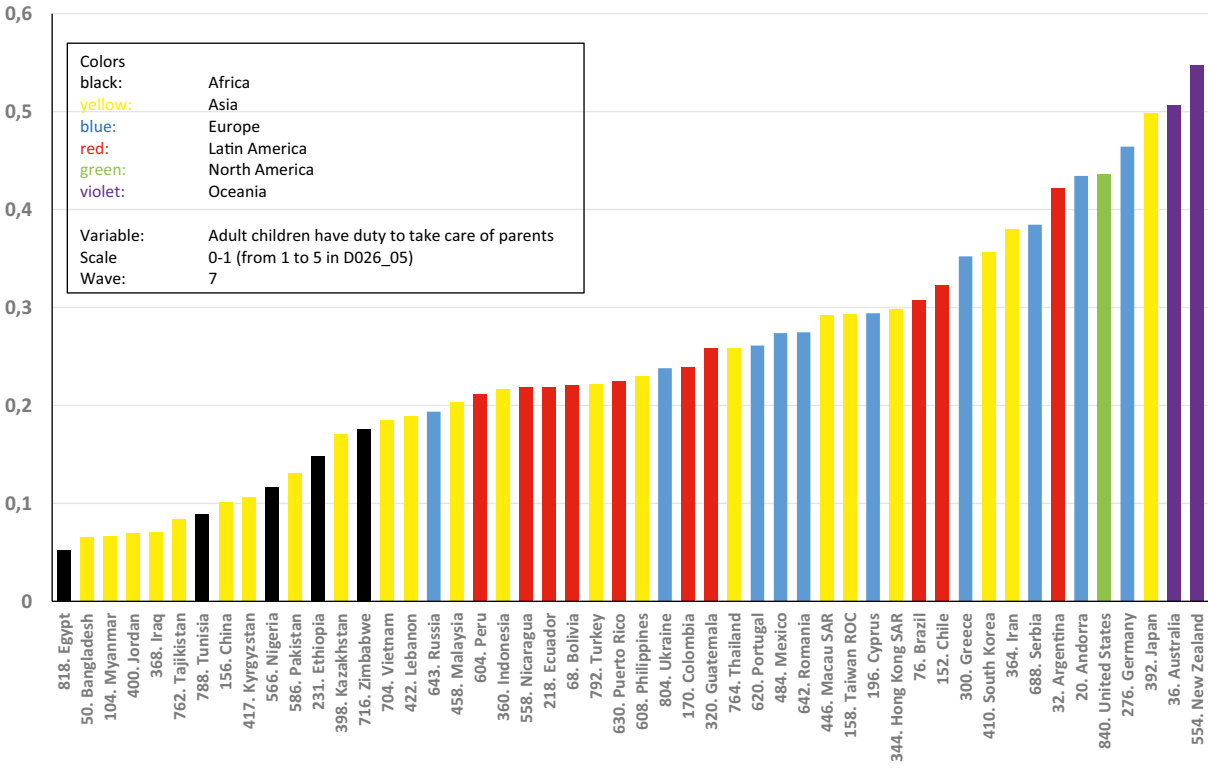
Source: WVS.

alization is an elusive concept that, to a large extent, overlays with the conception of gender in the provision of welfare to family members. In this sense, we agree with Saxonberg that "the terms 'familialization' and 'defamilialization' are… ambiguous… many scholars use the terms differently and, therefore, obtain much different results" (Saxonberg, 2013: 27). Nevertheless, we propose to examine the distribution of two variables that can be understood as indicators of country orientation towards defamilialization.

First, we measure the importance of family in the country, based on the question "For each of the following, indicate how important it is in your life. Would you say it is very important, rather important, not very important, not at all important." The 4-point scale has been reversed to reveal the stage of defamilialization, and the values were standardized so that the mean for each country is expressed in the range of 0 to 1. Data are not weighted. The position of the countries on this variable is presented in Figure 1. The most remarkable outcome of this overview is the overall importance of family around the world. In every single country, the overwhelming majority of respondents consider family to be very important. Cross-country differences are small; the scores lie between 0.00 (Egypt) and 0.10 (Haiti) on the standardized 0–1 defamilialization scale. Within this narrow range, Asian countries, with a few exceptions, tend to be located at the lowest level of defamilialization, and Latin American and European countries have somewhat higher scores on the right-hand side of the graph.

The second indicator of defamilialization reveals considerably more cross-country diversity even if the number of countries is, unfortunately, smaller. The WVS question "How would you feel about the following statements? Do you agree or disagree with them? Adult children have the duty to provide long-term care for their parents." The

Figure 2.
Adult children's responsibility for elderly parents (reversed)



Source: WVS.

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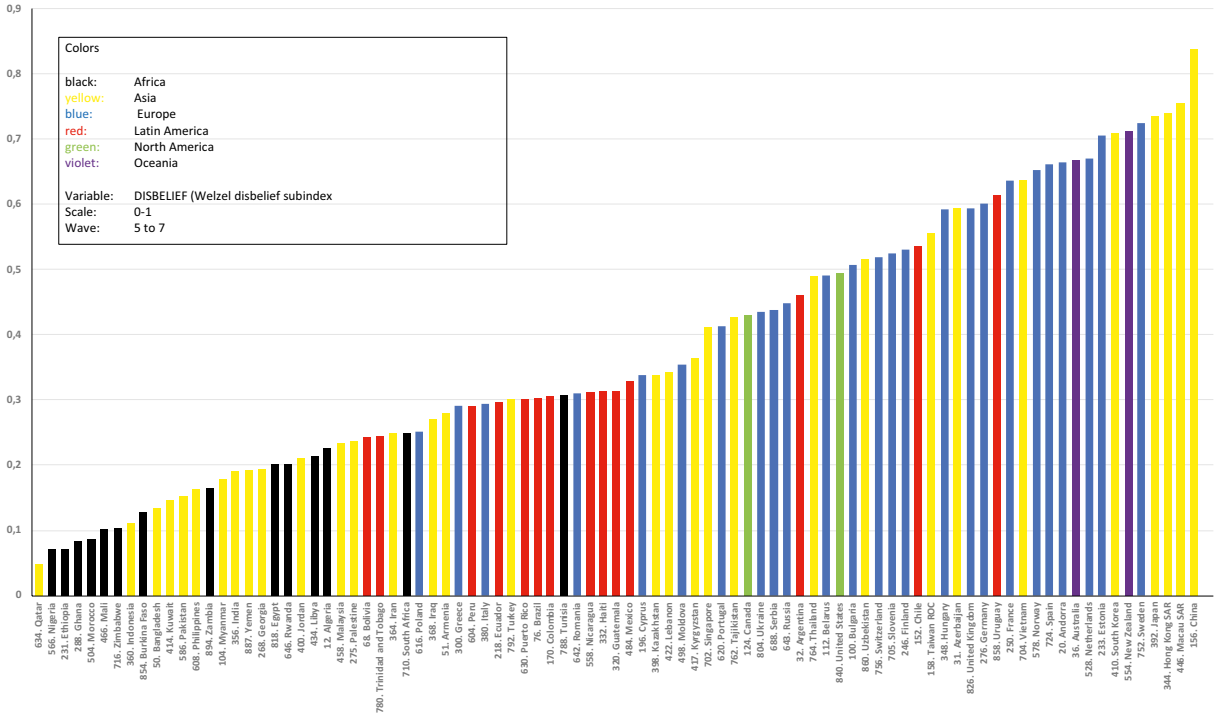
5-point scale: agree strongly, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and disagree strongly, was rescaled to a range of 0 to 1. All African and a large fraction of Asian countries strongly agree that adult children are responsible for their elderly parents (Figure 2). New Zealand and Australia are the only countries where the mean of standardized respondents' scores slightly exceeds the 0.5 threshold towards disagreeing. Other countries with a relatively high level of disagreement are Japan, Germany, and the United States.

Overall, the two indicators of defamilialization suggest that particularly Asian and African societies tend to exhibit familialism and intergenerational family solidarity. Admittedly, this is a very general statement. There is considerable variation within world regions and cultural spheres, and important exceptions. For example, Japan is among the countries with the highest disagreements on the obligation of adult children to provide long-term care for the parents, despite prevailing Confucian values and culturally grounded intergenerational solidarity. Notwithstanding, intergenerational contracts within the urban Japanese family are shifting in response to the growing availability of public care services for the elderly (Jenike, 2003), which might explain the comparably high score in the WVS. However, many countries in Asia and Africa resort to familialism which reinforces the primacy of familial responsibility, which has a widespread legitimacy in the population and is seldom questioned.

Secularization and self-realization

A high degree of secularization in society and the propensity towards self-realization and emancipation indicate a move away from traditional values. It can be expected that countries in which the populations have, on average, more progressive and conservative values are more likely to have more progressive and conservative family policy models, respectively. An indication of such a relationship has been found in East and Southeast Asian countries, where a discern-

Figure 3.
Secularization



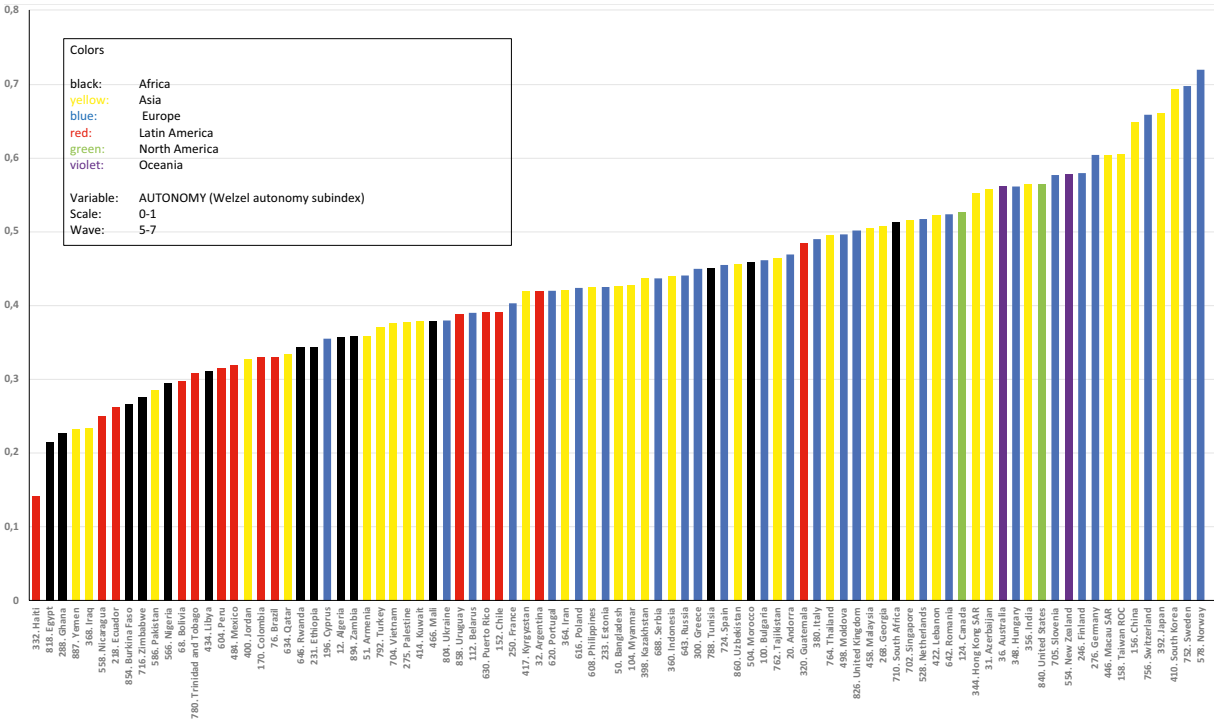
Source: WVS, Welzel's sub-index DISBELIEF.

ible affinity between the clustering of family policies and the cultural fabrics of respective societies was detected (Tonelli et al., 2021).

The World Values Survey features a set of composite indices (Welzel, 2013; see also https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp?CMSID=welzelidx&CMSID=welzelidx). We assess the progressivity of a country using Welzel's indicators of disbelief and autonomy, each of which is constructed using three items of the World Values Survey questionnaire. The scores of the indices are standardized and can assume values between 0 and 1. Larger scores always represent relatively higher values of secularization and autonomy. Secularization is measured by the sub-index DISBELIEF which combines information on the importance of religion in a person's life, his or her religiosity, and religious practice. The higher value indicates higher secularization. The most striking variation can be found in Asia, from the least secular (Qatar) to countries with the highest scores on DISBELIEF, including China, Macau, Hong Kong, and South Korea (Figure 3). European countries and Oceania are fairly secularized, although Poland, Greece, and Italy are considerably lower on the index, on par with most Latin American countries. In Africa and many Asian countries, particularly Islamic societies, religion and religious practices play a very important role.

To assess the values that are particularly appreciated in various societies, the World Values Survey inquires about the importance of qualities that children can be encouraged to learn at home. Welzel's sub-index AUTONOMY combines the importance of independence, imagination, and obedience (reversed) as children's qualities (Figure 4). Norway, Sweden, South Korea, and Japan, followed by other European and East Asian countries lead the ranking on the autonomy index, although several countries can also be found in the mid- to lower-range. Latin American countries are rather low on the

Figure 4.
Autonomy as a value to be transmitted to children



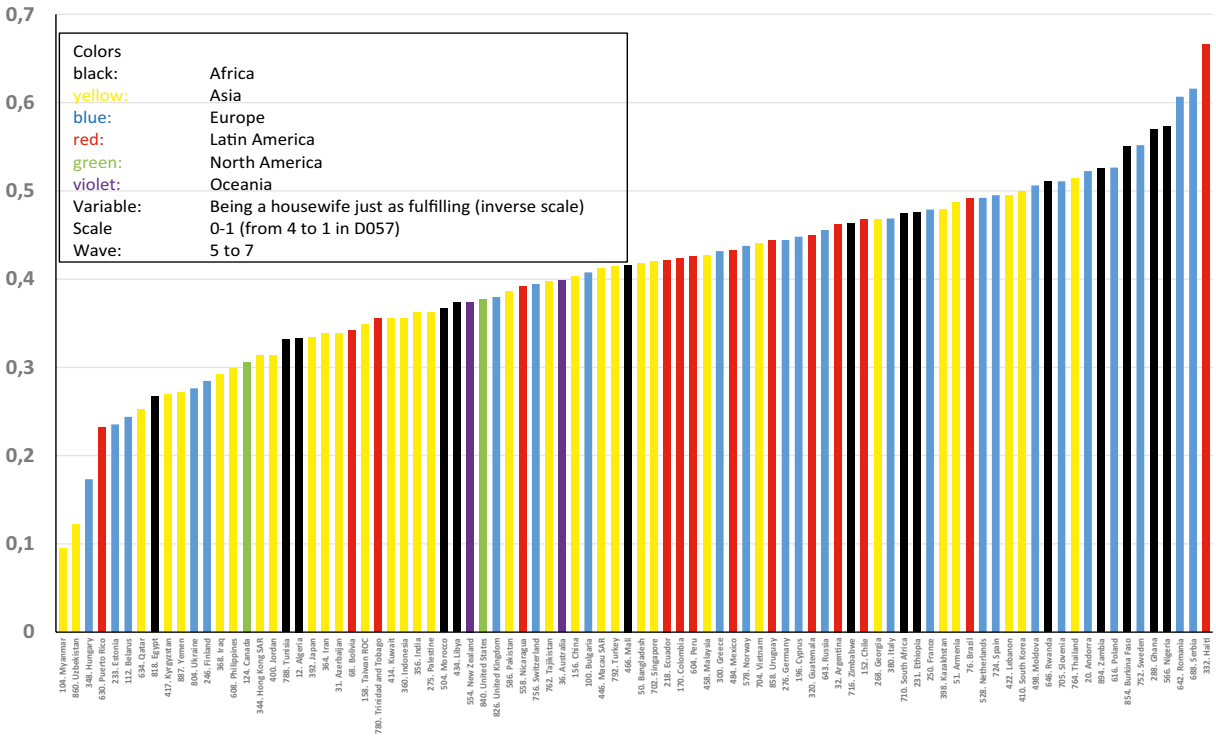
Source: WVS, Welzel's sub-index AUTONOMY.

scale, as are African countries, except for South Africa.

Gender Roles

The attitudes towards women's and men's roles in the family remain diverse around the world, as well as the attitudes towards the changing position of women in the labor market. The increase in the proportion of married women and mothers who are employed outside of the home has often not been accompanied by a corresponding change in societal attitudes and values. Even in countries where the labor force participation of women has increased considerably, results indicate that the attitudes of both men and women reflect a substantial preference for a primary familial role for women, especially when young children are present (Alwin et al., 1992), and "liberal-egalitarian" ideologies co-exist with a highly unequal gender division of labor in families (Abramowski, 2020). Thus, the underlying notion of what a man's and a woman's proper place is in society can undoubtedly guide family policy. Policy instruments can differ substantially if the aim is to support stay-at-home mothers, dual-earner couples, or to deliberately promote the caring role of men in the family. To measure normative factors associated with the care and nurture of children, we examine attitudes towards female employment and its implications for young children in the WVS. We only selected indicators that were included in many countries. The WVS asked the questions "For each of the following statements I read out, can you tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with each. Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree? Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay" and "When a mother works for pay, the children suffer." Again, the response categories have been rescaled so that the average country values lie between 0 and 1. Higher values show lower agreement with the first statement, a higher acceptance of female employment, and thus, more gender-egalitarian attitudes.

Figure 5.
Domestic role of women: Being a housewife is as fulfilling as working for pay (reversed)

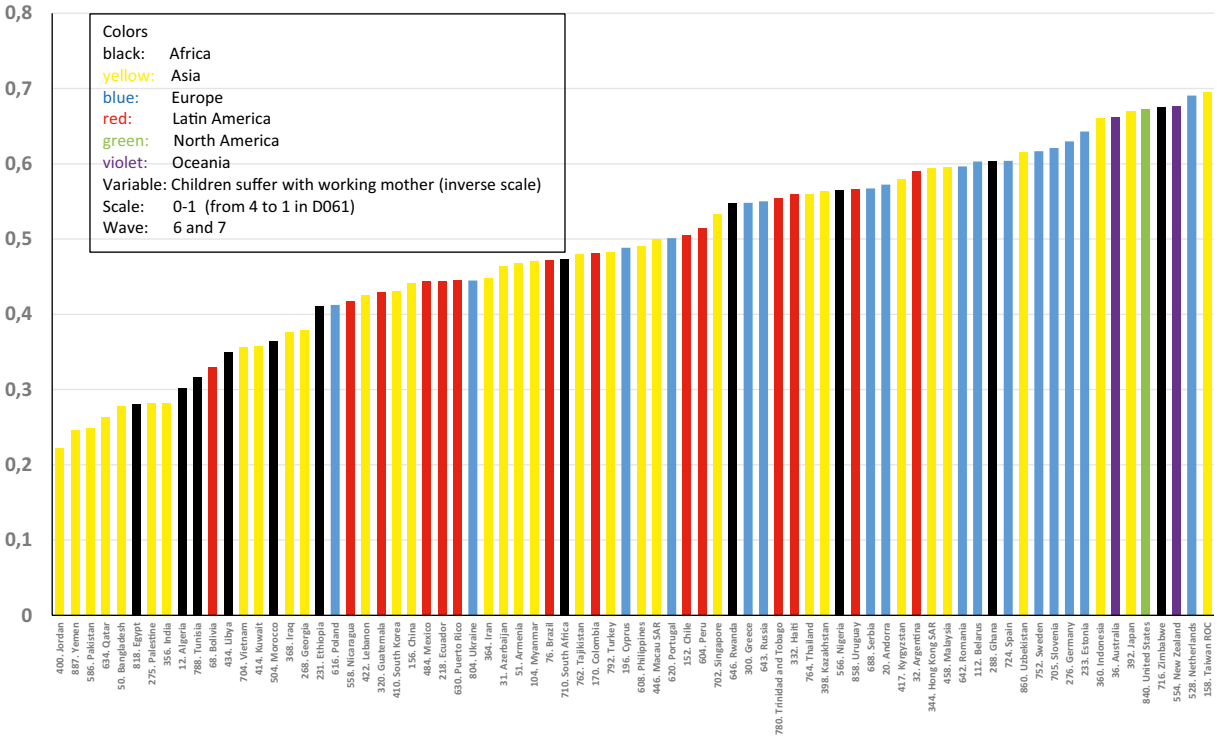


Source: WVS.

Figure 5 shows the level of agreement (reversed) with the statement that being a housewife is as fulfilling for a woman as working for pay, thus expressing support for the traditional gender division of labor. The dominant impression conveyed in Figure 5 is a large variation of attitudes, huge diversity within world regions, and disparity among countries that are often considered belonging to similar cultural settings. No discernible patterns can be observed across continents. For example, respondents in Myanmar to a large extent agree with the statement that housewives have a fulfilled life, but neighboring Thailand can be found among the countries that largely disagree with that statement. Substantial disagreement can also be found in Serbia, Romania, Sweden, and several other European countries, but Hungary, Estonia, and Belarus are among the countries that exhibit the most traditional gender attitudes in this respect. This traditional view on women's roles also applies to North African countries, such as Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria, while countries in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Nigeria and Ghana, see paid work as an important accomplishment for women. Latin American countries are spread all over the response spectrum between Puerto Rico which tends to agree and Haiti which shows the greatest disagreement with the statement.

A similar dispersion across world regions is also evident for the second indicator. Again, the belief that children suffer when the mother works for pay is the most widespread in Asian countries such as Jordan, Yemen, Pakistan, Qatar, and Bangladesh, but Taiwan is at the other end of the opinion spectrum, exceeding the Netherlands, New Zealand, Zimbabwe, and the United States (Figure 6). A more systematic pattern of responses is evident in the results of the question "How would you feel about the following statements? Do you agree or disagree with them? If a woman earns more money than her husband, it's almost certain to cause problems." On a 5-point scale, from strongly agree to

Figure 6.
Domestic role of women: When the mother works for pay, the children suffer (reversed)



Source: WVS.

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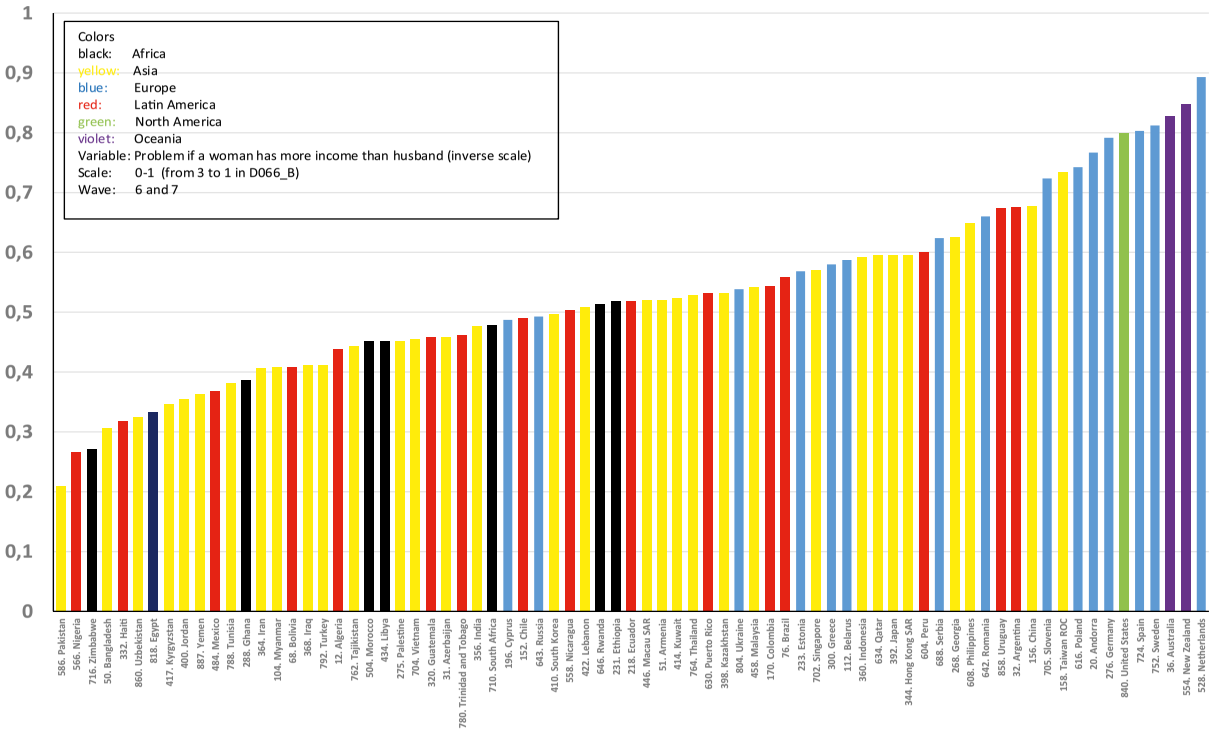
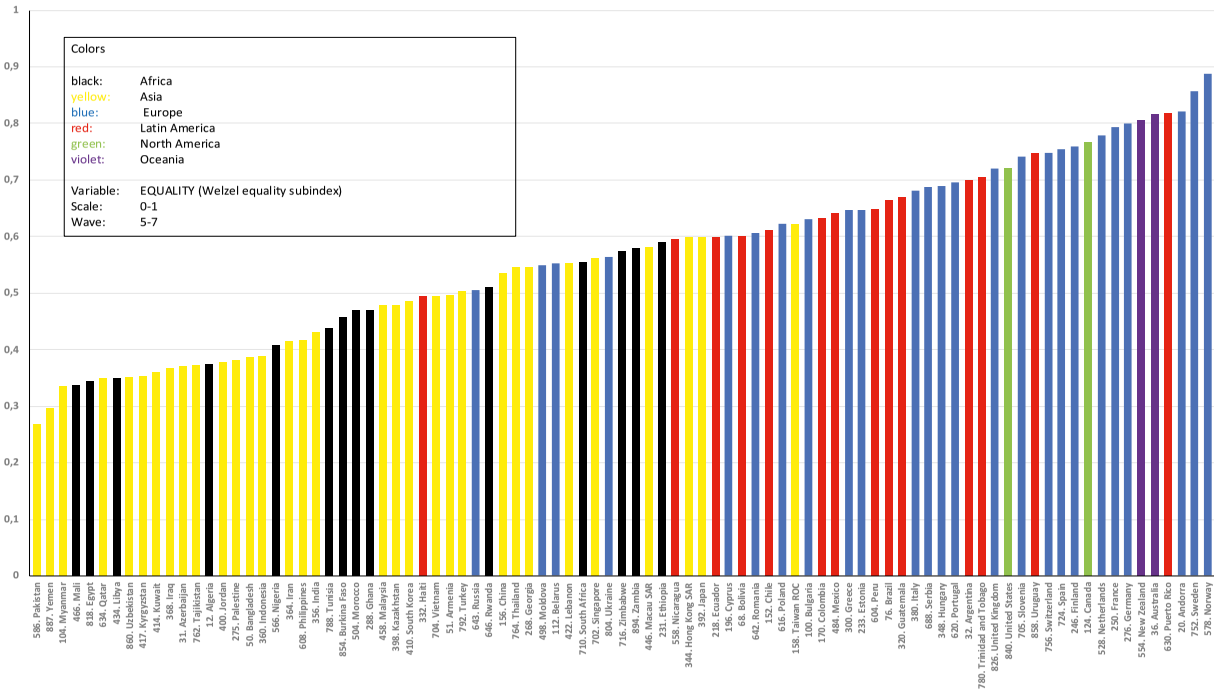
Figure 7.
Perception of gendered income inequality



Source: WVS.

Figure 8.
Gender inequality in employment, education, and politics



Source: WVS, Welzel's sub-index EQUALITY.

strongly disagree, the responses were again rescaled to the values between 0 and 1 and plotted in Figure 7. EU countries, New Zealand, Australia, and the US tend to strongly disagree with this statement, while respondents in Asian, African, and Latin American countries are much more likely to consider a female advantage in earnings to be a problem.

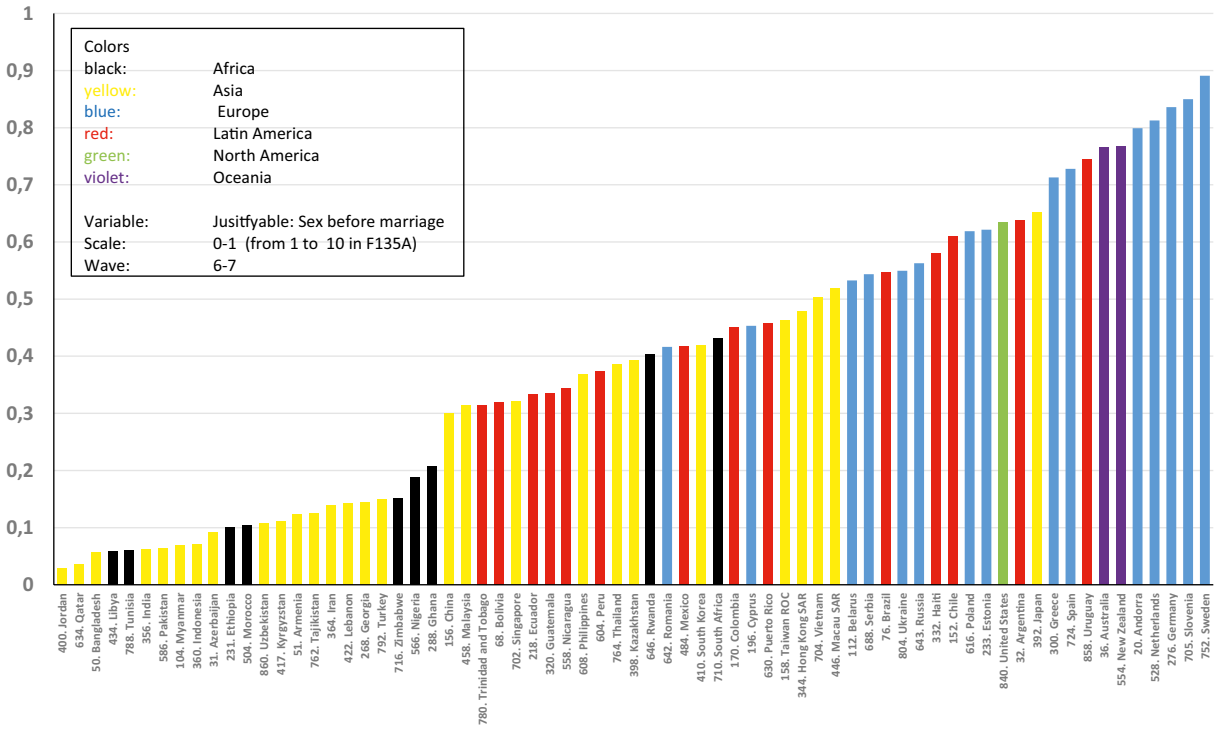
We assess the progressivity of a country using Welzel's sub-index on gender equality that includes attitudes on women's employment ("When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women"), education ("A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl") and politics ("On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do") (Welzel, 2013). Examining the sub-index EQUALITY, rescaled to the range of 0 to1, reveals that European countries, Australia, New Zealand, and North America exhibit more gender-egalitarian opinions, followed by Latin America, particularly Puerto Rico (Figure 8). Asian countries, with Pakistan at the bottom, and African countries stand out as upholding high gender inequality in these domains.

Openness towards diverse family forms

The question is not only how family policy can support or hinder the life scripts of wives/mothers and husbands/fathers, but also whether governmental policies recognize and include pluralist family forms in institutional support. We examine the cultural basis for family policy instruments that also incorporate non-traditional family arrangements, such as unmarried couples, single parents, and same-sex families.

The first indicator is based on the question "Please tell me for each of the following actions whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between, using this card: Sex before marriage." A 10-point scale that runs between never and always justifiable has been rescaled to values between 0 and 1. In many Asian countries, particularly Jordan, Qatar, and Bangladesh,

Figure 9.
Openness towards pre-marital sex



Source: WVS.

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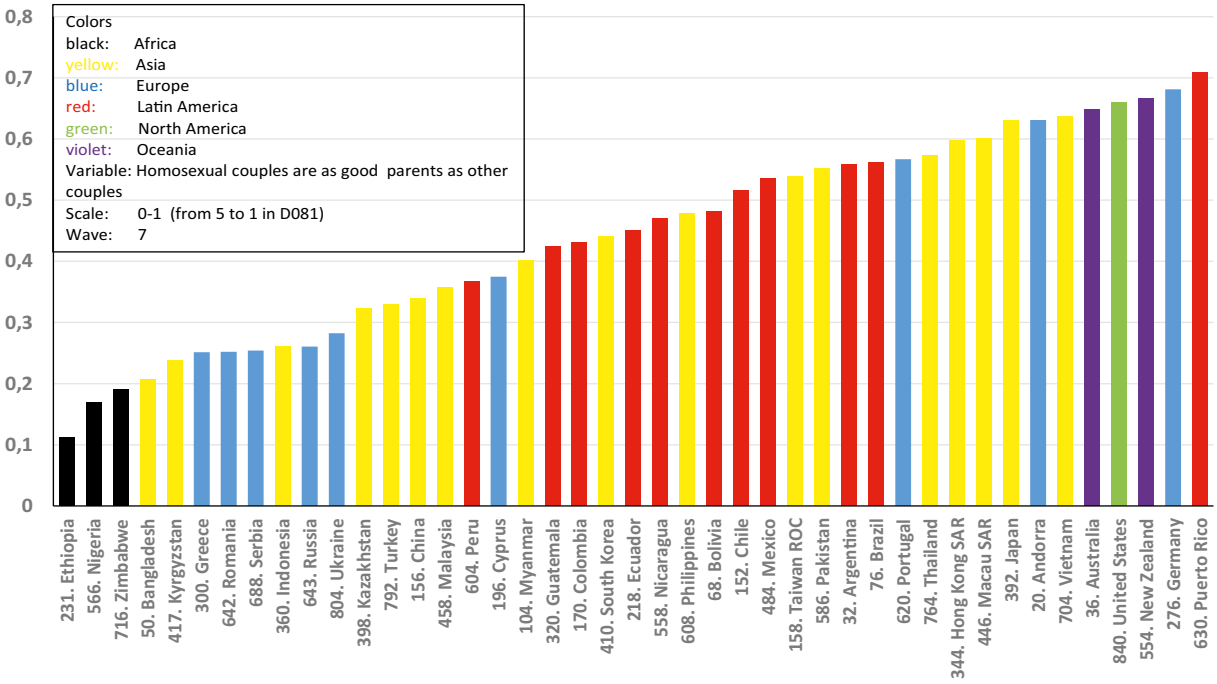
almost all respondents consider sex before marriage unacceptable and never justified (Figure 9). Also, African countries, such as Libya, Tunisia, and others, are often extremely restrictive in their opinions on non-marital sexual relationships. At the other end are European countries with Sweden, Slovenia, Germany, the Netherlands, and Andorra as the most permissive societies, followed by New Zealand and Australia. Latin America has a more central position on the distribution, with Uruguay joining the European and Oceanian states in their permissive attitudes.

Compared to the previous question, fewer countries in the WVS implemented the following question: "How would you feel about the following statements? Do you agree or disagree with them? Homosexual couples are as good parents as other couples." The 5-point scale has been reversed to higher values expressing a stronger agreement and rescaled to values between 0 and 1. All three African countries, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe, show the lowest agreement score (Figure 10). Several European countries are also very low on the scale, such as Greece, Romania, Serbia, Russia, and Ukraine. Interestingly, societies that exhibit the highest scores are widely spread over the continents: Puerto Rico, Germany, New Zealand, USA, Australia, and Vietnam.

Finally, Welzel's sub-index CHOICE combines three items: homosexuality, abortion, and divorce, and respondents were asked whether these actions can be justified or not. The degree of justifiability was given on a 10-point scale between never and always and was rescaled to take values between 0 and 1. The composite index is displayed in Figure 11. All the most tolerant societies involve European countries with New Zealand and Australia. On the other side of the spectrum are Asian and African societies, with India having the most restrictive attitudes in this matter.

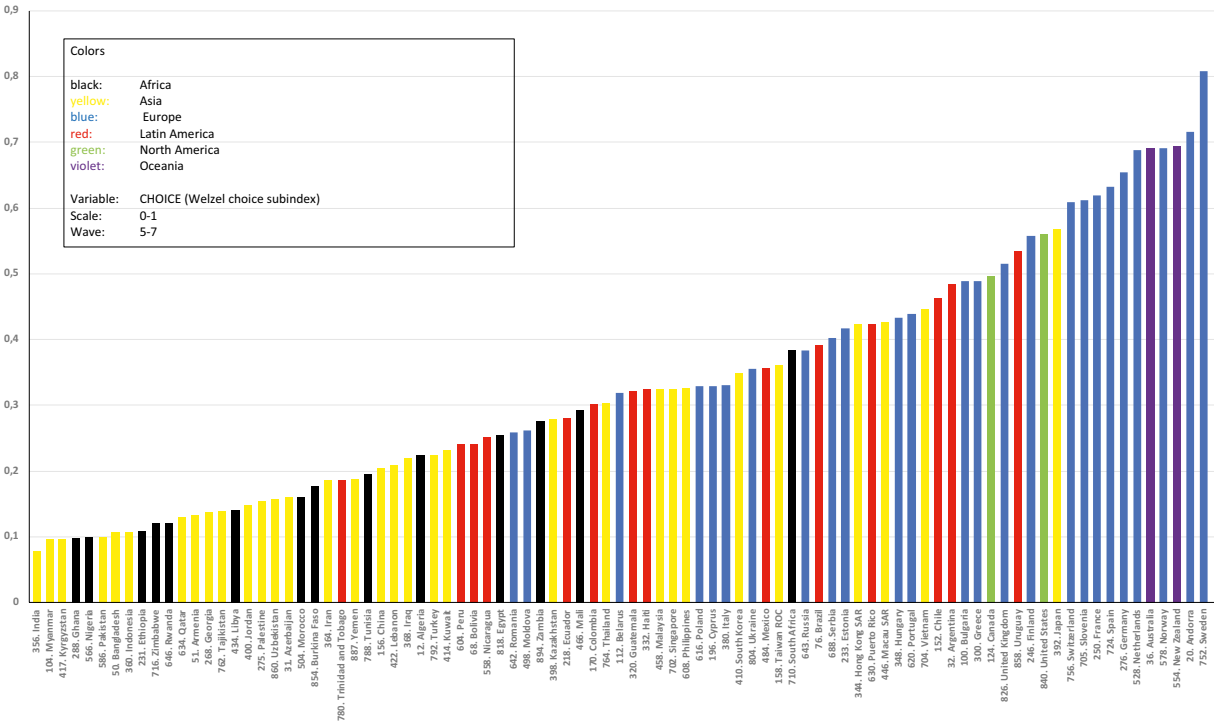
Overall, in terms of geographic distribution, African societies included in the WVS are less open to non-traditional family forms than many countries in other parts of the world. Asian societies tend to see sex before

Figure 10.
Openness towards same-sex families



Source: WVS.

Figure 11.
Justification of homosexuality, abortion, and divorce



Source: WVS, Welzel's sub-index CHOICE.

marriage as less justified but score fairly high in the view that homosexual couples can be good parents. This view is not shared by countries in Southern and Eastern Europe. However, European countries together with Australia and New Zealand are the most tolerant societies concerning sex before marriage as well as freedom of choice in terms of homosexuality, abortion, and divorce.

Stage in the demographic transition and fertility

Apart from cultural aspects, structural circumstances and the interplay between cultural contexts and structural conditions can affect family policy strategies. Structural conditions are not at the center of our analysis. Nevertheless, we include some aspects related to fertility levels and the perception of fertility issues around the world. Table 1 displays total population size and population change across world geographic regions. Extremely rapid population growth in the twentieth century has almost come to a stop in many parts of the world and will shift to negative growth rates in Europe, Asia, and Latin America by the end of the twenty-first century, according to the median-variant projections (United Nations 2019). The population in Africa, however, will continue to grow rapidly. While the world population apart from Africa is projected to increase by 4% overall from 2019 to 2100, projections for Africa are a 227% increase in the population size. Such uneven developments should be taken into consideration when family policies and policy instruments are studied from a global perspective.

Population changes and fertility levels are carefully observed in many countries. In most cases, the respective governments continuously review the population issues and pursue explicit policies aimed at influencing fertility in their countries. Table 2 displays these government views as reported to the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN. Most countries actively pursue policies aiming to raise fertility rates, maintaining current levels, or lowering

Table 1.
Total population and average annual rate of population change across world geographic regions (projections are in italics)

Location	2019	1950-1955	1980-1985	2010-2015	2040-2045	2070-2075	2095-2100	2100
	Total population	Annual rate of population change			*Median-variant projection*			
Geographic regions								
Africa	1 308 064	2,08	2,82	2,58	1,88	1,12	0,61	4 280 127
Asia	4 601 371	1,95	1,95	1,04	0,25	-0,25	0,39	4 719 907
Europe	747 183	0,97	0,40	0,18	-0,22	-0,28	0,14	629 563
Latin Am. & Caribbean	648 121	2,65	2,14	1,07	0,32	-0,24	0,46	679 993
Northern America	366 601	1,65	0,95	0,78	0,38	0,30	0,25	490 889
Oceania	42 128	2,07	1,60	1,56	0,86	0,54	0,37	74 916

Source: United Nations (2019).

the fertility level if it is considered too high for reaching specific economic, social, or other developmental goals. Countries also report if they do not design any interventions in the domain of fertility. Of the 195 government reports included in the UN overview (Table 2), 43 countries consider fertility levels to be too low and implement policies aimed at raising fertility. This is the case with most European countries and a group of Asian countries. Asia is a deeply divided region in this respect. While a few countries still exhibit high fertility rates and the state policy is to lower them, several countries, particularly in East and Southeast Asia, have experienced an extraordinary shift in demographic trends in the second part of the twentieth century. They moved swiftly from very high to the lowest-low fertility rates, and the governments, confronted with rapid population aging, are now in the phases of raising the fertility level. A large majority of African countries' declarations is to lower the fertility level, as is the case with some Latin American countries and the Caribbean. However, most Latin American governments plan no intervention, as is the case in the United States and Canada.

Finally, we show how some indicators of cultural dimensions discussed in this paper are linked to total fertility rates (TFR) in respective countries. We argued that low fertility should correspond with less conservative values in a country – both supporting a state's engagement in family policy. The scatterplots in Figure 12 depict the relationship between TFR and the belief that adult children have the duty to provide care for their elderly parents (Graph A), the importance of religion (Graph B), gender equality (Graph C), and openness towards homosexuality, abortion, and divorce (Graph D). Individual countries are not discernible on the graphs, but the general trend is apparent and consistent. Higher fertility rates are associated with lower values on defamilialization, disbelief, gender equality, and choice subindices, as expected.

7. Summary and conclusion

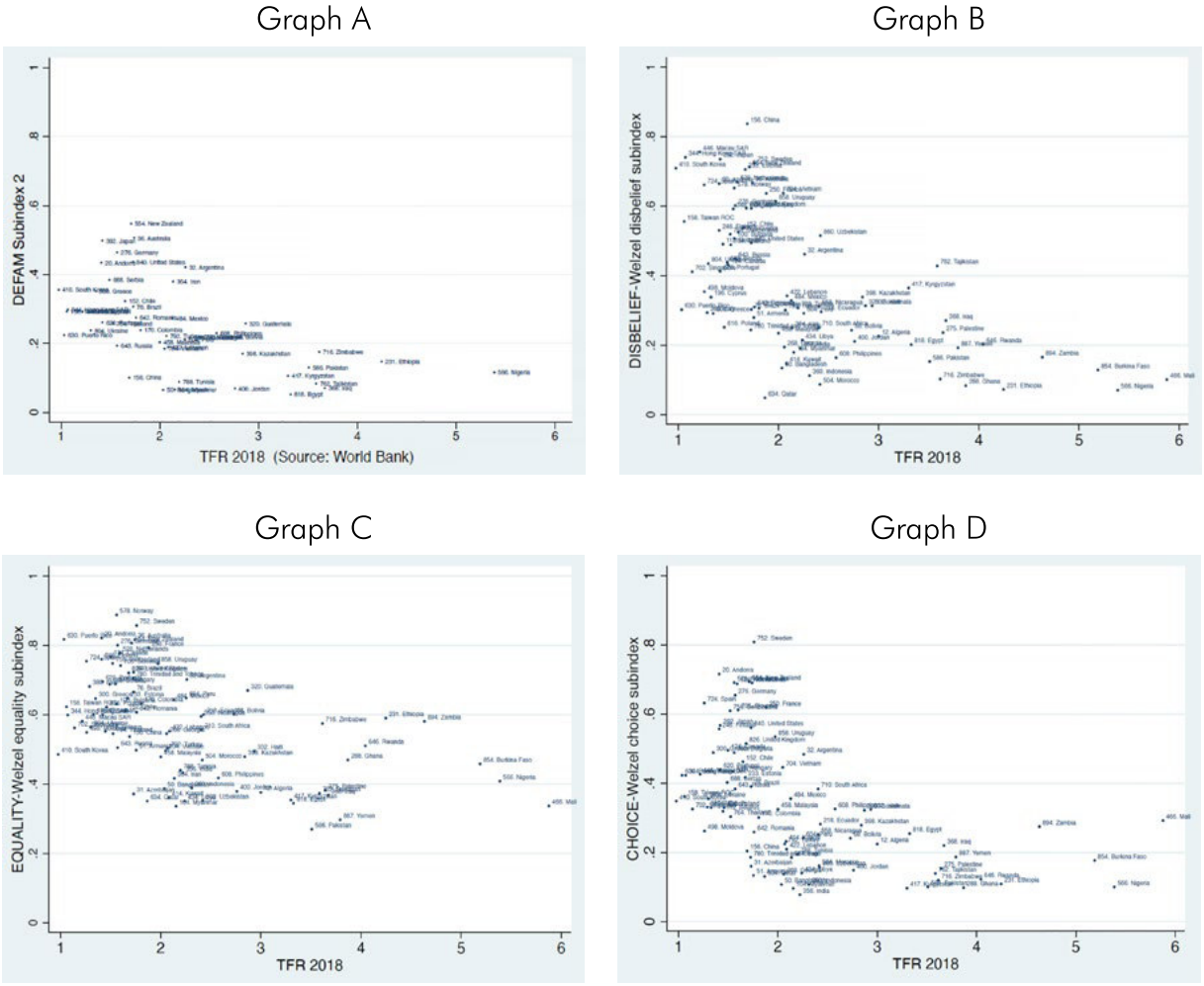
We want to emphasize once again that we cannot examine the direct association between family policies and the cultural orientation of specific countries. Mapping the configurations of family policies around the world and linking such configurations to cultural patterns is far beyond the scope of this paper. Rather, we aim at descriptively identifying values and attitudes expressed in the World Values Survey and linking them to various underlying dimensions which presumably affect family policies. Indeed, the notion that typical cultural traditions and values may

Table 2.
Government views and policies on the level of fertility in their countries

	Raise	Maintain	Lower	No intervention
Africa	Gabon	Angola, Botswana, Equatorial Guinea, Mauritius, South Africa	Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Swaziland, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe	Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Dem. Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Guinea-Bissau, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Somalia
Asia	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Georgia, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Mongolia, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Turkmenistan	China, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan	Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Lao People's Dem. Republic, Maldives, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Vietnam, Yemen	Afghanistan, Brunei Darussalam, Dem. People's Rep. of Korea, Iraq, Lebanon, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Timor-Leste
Europe	Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, TFYR Macedonia, Ukraine	Albania, Andorra, Finland, Iceland, Luxembourg, Monaco, Norway		Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, Holy See, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Malta, Netherlands, San Marino, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom
Latin America and the Caribbean	Barbados	Panama, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago	Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru	Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guyana, Paraguay, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Rep. of)
Northern America				Canada, United States of America
Oceania	Australia, Cook Islands, Niue	Nauru, New Zealand, Tonga	Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu	Palau
All	43	27	74	51

Source: United Nations 2011.

Figure 12.
Correlation between country-specific total fertility rate and defamilialization (Graph A), disbelief subindex (Graph B), gender equality subindex (Graph C), and choice (homosexuality, abortion, divorce) subindex (Graph D)



Source: World Values Survey and World Bank Open Data (https://data.worldbank.org/).

be associated with specific policy configurations has been confirmed on a smaller scale by Tonelli et al. (2021) in a study on child-related family policies in East and Southeast Asia. The authors argue that the country clusters with specific family policy configurations differ in their levels of secularization, in values that families need to transmit to their children, and in gender-egalitarian values. However, they conclude that more comprehensive policy measures seem to be primarily related to governmental concerns about fertility levels (Tonelli et al., 2021), and thus have at least an implicit aim to increase fertility through family policy instruments.

The present study involves a large set of countries from very diverse levels of socio-economic development and modernization, cultural traditions, and value systems. In describing and ranking the countries according to the attitudes and values expressed in the WVS, we aim to detect value patterns that could help us to understand different scopes and orientations of family policy measures around the world. We examine the country-specific distributions of responses on individual questions in the WVS and make use of composite indices for emancipative and secular values which have been theoretically explained and empirically tested for their

cross-cultural reliability and validity in Welzel (2013), but we do not explicitly test the association between cultural values and actual policy instruments. The graphs in Figure 12, which link fertility rates and cultural dimensions, are only one step in this direction. They demonstrate that demographic processes and cultural change unfold in parallel, fostering the motivation and the normative climate to invest in family policy.

For simplicity and convenience, we displayed the results across continents. However, the results correspond to the typology of family systems proposed by Therborn (2014) to a large degree. There are several observations in the figures that become more understandable if this typology is kept in mind. For example, there is considerable diversity among Asian societies on numerous indicators. According to the world family systems, Therborn (2014) distinguishes between South Asian, Confucian East Asian, and Southeast Asian types of families, and groups Islamic West Asian families together with North African families. These divisions and similarities are seen on several indicators in the WVS. Likewise, we observe the divide between sub-Saharan African and North African family pattern, which itself is much closer to the Islamic West Asian model. However, this alignment is not observed in all indices, and not all family systems (e.g., Creole family system) can be mapped on WVS data which involve countries and not subgroups within countries. Therefore, the results are displayed according to major geographic world regions.

To summarize the major findings, first and foremost, the differences in the perceived importance of family are hardly noticeable. All around the world, family plays an important role in people's lives and there is no indication that this has been diminishing over time. However, in terms of responsibility for elderly family members, the picture is very different. The perceived responsibility varies greatly. Apart from New Zealand and Australia, which stand ahead in terms of defamilialization, countries in other world regions like Asia, Europe, Latin America, are spread quite widely along the defamilialization scale. Still, the lowest ranks are taken by African and some Asian countries, including China. These societies exhibit traditional intergenerational family solidarity and a strong familialist orientation, which could indicate a lesser perceived need for comprehensive family policy measures. It is not possible to infer from these data whether value change in this respect precedes the expansion of public services for the elderly or if the emerging state support has an impact on value change and the cultural perception of family responsibilities.

The move away from traditional values has been more pronounced in some parts of the world than others. Composite indices involving secularization and autonomy show a similar tendency of African countries scoring low, Latin America taking a low- to middle-range, and Western countries mid- to high-range on the scale. Asian societies are extremely diverse, with Islamic countries in Asia more similar to Africa, and East Asian countries closer to Western societies. The composite index on gender equality shows a somewhat different picture. Latin American countries move higher on the gender equality index ranking, displaying more similarities with Western societies. Meanwhile, no Asian country scores high on this indicator, and all are joining African countries with a low gender equality index. Still, when specific indicators are examined, this seemingly orderly world pattern, in which Western societies tend to score high on gender equality, is shattered. In terms of the domestic role of women, many European and other Western societies take the stance that the position of a housewife is as fulfilling as working for pay, while the mean values for several African countries show strong disagreement. Housewifery systems seem deeply ingrained in the cultural scheme of Western societies, with their consequences in terms of the economic dependency of women, and ultimately

providing the rationale for family policy instruments in support of the traditional male breadwinner family model.

The examination of emancipative values again displays a higher cultural acceptance and tolerance of alternative ways of life and new family forms in Western societies and the lowest approval in African and many Asian societies. This applies to divorce, abortion, homosexuality, and in particular, to sex before marriage, which is widely accepted in Europe and Oceania but not justifiable in large parts of Africa and Asia. However, Europeans often do not agree that homosexual couples can be as good of parents as other couples, thus drawing the line in permitting personal freedom and family arrangements when it comes to new family forms involving children.

The cultural division demonstrated in this paper is aligned to a considerable degree with the structural conditions in terms of fertility rates and governmental views on the level of fertility. In a broad sense, secularization, more openness towards non-traditional family forms, greater gender equality, and less dependency on intergenerational family solidarity are associated with a completed demographic transition. Governments in such countries tend to view fertility rates as (too) low and, in many cases, pursue policies to raise them. Within this context, comprehensive family policy instruments that increase the well-being of family members may at least partly be seen as a pro-natalist population strategy. Indeed, it has been confirmed that the models of family policy that lead to an increase in fertility are those which are the most generous and also incorporate a gender perspective (Gandasegui et al., 2021). On the contrary, many societies with deeply rooted religious norms, patriarchal gendered roles, and traditional views on family life are concerned with the fast population growth. A generous family policy may even be perceived as counterproductive in light of the population policy. Moreover, if family policy measures are seen as defamilializing, altering gender relations, and encouraging alternative family forms, which are often considered by citizens as destructive and immoral, such policy instruments may lack legitimacy and societal support because they are perceived as threatening deeply ingrained cultural values.

In social policy research, and particularly in the context of family policy, there is a need to further explore the relationship between cultural conditions and country-specific policy measures. This is a neglected aspect that could potentially increase our understanding of the introduction or dismissal of specific policy instruments, beyond other factors that have an impact on the formation and development of policy measures. Contrasting cultural conditions would be particularly valuable in cross-national research, yet data limitations and difficulties in collecting suitable high-quality data are also particularly severe in cross-national comparison.

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