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Stalling modernization of family values: a quarter century of change and stability

Extended abstract

Major theories, especially the theory of the second demographic transition, and the developmental idealism framework attribute a determining role to value orientation, and to value change in fertility development started around the 70s in Western Europe. These approaches became very popular also in explaining abrupt changes in fertility behavior after the political upheaval in post-communist countries. Our investigation aims to identify changes in attitudes toward gender roles, family life, marriage and childbearing in the last twenty-five years in Hungary, and hope to contribute to discussions about possible effects of value change on fertility behavior. Using the „Changing Gender Roles” module International Social Survey Program, we cover the time from 1988 to 2013 and could utilize four waves of data collection. According our preliminary analyze of family related value change does not have a have a clean-cut character. Although the basic trend is toward modernization, we can identify throwbacks (at the very beginning) and in specific dimension (eg. value of children) inertia. We also aim to identify if period and age effects, and the educational expansion contributed to the value changes.

Preliminary results

Job and housework, working mother

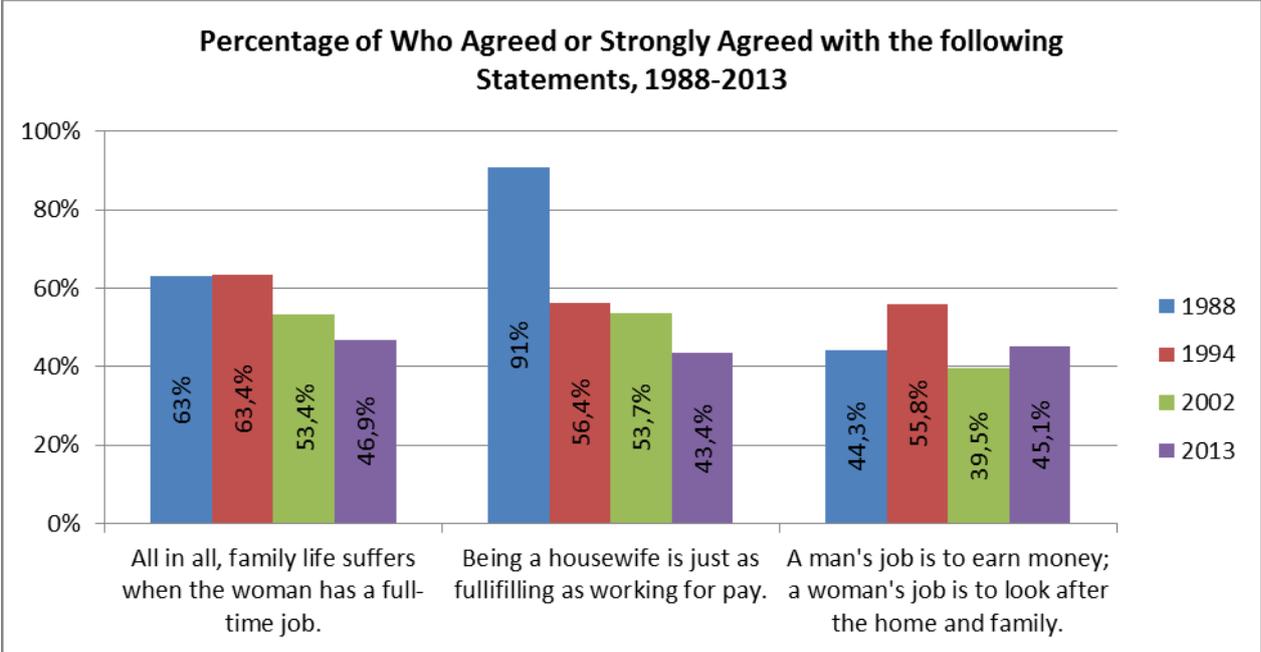
A clear change of opinions about working mother could be identified in the last twenty-five years. In 2013 fewer Hungarian think, that female employment has negative effects on pre-school children or the whole family than in 1988. The year 1994 was exceptional on this field, the attitudes were more traditional than in the end of the eighties, but in the next years a modernization has began. Despite of fewer people agree with the negative effects of the female employment it has slightly decreased the rate of who think that a working

mother can establish as warm and secure relationship with her children as a mother who doesn't work (see. Figure 1).

Attitudes towards the role of housewife shows the most clean-cut direction. The rate of people who agreed with to be a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay decreased continuously from 1988 (in 1988 rate of who agreed or strongly agreed was 91%, in 2013 just 43.4%). At the same time it suggests the way of more modern attitudes about gender roles that fewer and fewer people think that what women really want is home and kids against career. It is important to highlight the rate of agreeing with this statement was 55% in 2013 yet.

Changes in attitudes toward differing gender roles in the family is less clear. On the one side, the acceptance of dual-earner family model in Hungary is wide spread: in every examined year there were above 70% the percentage of who upheld this model. It is mention worth, that this attitude was fluctuating from 1988 to 2013, in the last ten years returned to the level of 1994. On the other side, agreement with the statement „A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family.” is at a low agreement level, and shows hardly any changes during the period.

Figure 1.



Marriage, cohabitation

The ratio of people who think „*Married people are generally happier than unmarried people.*” decreased significantly from 2002. Despite the mentioned decrease 42% of the respondents agreed or disagreed with this statement in 2013. Also decisive changes occurred in attitudes toward the necessity to enter into marriage in case of childbirth. The shift toward a more modern attitude from marriage to cohabitation is clear but the rate of change has slowed down from 2002.

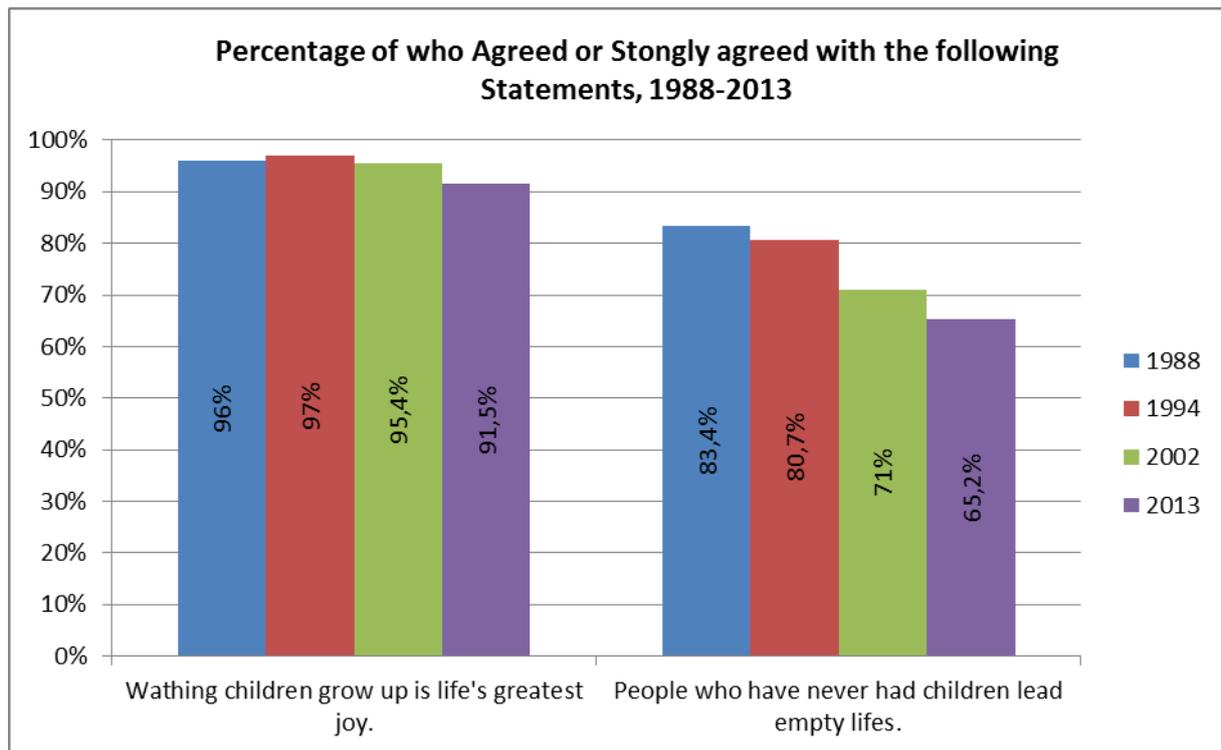
Attitudes toward divorce became more tolerant in Hungary. Three fifth of the respondents supported that divorce is usually the best solution when a couple can't seem to work out their marriage problems in 2013.

Childbearing, the value of children

Despite declining fertility, and decrease of mean age of ideal number of children the ISSP-data shows hardly any change in attitudes toward childbearing and towards the value of children. In 1988 96 percent of the respondent of agreed, that „*Watching children grow up is life's greatest joy.*” In 2013 the same ratio was still 92%, and less than 9% agreed or strongly agreed with „*better not have children because they are such a heavy financial burden*”.

Nevertheless significant shift occurred toward tolerance to childlessness: while in 1988 more than 80% of Hungarian people thought that people without children live empty lives, this rate decreased to 65% to 2013.

Figure 2.



Future analytical plans

Notwithstanding, a slow but a stalled modernization has began after the 1990s in the attitudes toward family life, gender roles, and childbearing. While in some aspects attitudes has become somewhat traditional or were stable (relationship between working mother and children, husband's and wife's roles in the family), in most of the examined fields Hungarian values have become more tolerant and/or modernized.

In the next step we are going to analyze how far educational expansion, age and/or period effects influenced the identified trends.