

“Sources of Attitudinal Support for Gender Equality in Selected Eastern and Western European Countries”

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Abstract

Using a combined institutional and individual-level model, I attempt to explain some of the important factors in western and eastern European individuals’ attitudinal support for gender equality. In doing so, I incorporate country-level variables (percent women’s employment and parental leave gender equality scale) accessing competing arguments as to the legacy of the ex-Soviet regime for individuals’ attitudinal support for gender equality in transition countries. On the one hand, there is good reason to expect that the vast gap between the ideals and the reality of Soviet policies aimed at women’s “emancipation” through paid employment helps to explain the more recent turn toward support for traditional gender roles observable in the east. In contrast, women’s employment in the west has been found to be positively related to support for gender equality, via mechanisms associated with women’s movements and modernization. On the other hand, it is also possible that there exists a positive Soviet-era legacy stemming from the parental leave and other work-family policies aimed at supporting women’s dual roles. In this regard, individuals in west and east European countries should be similarly pushed by their work-family regime to support gender equality. I also include individual-level variables found to be important in the western European context. Although current data limitations and shortcomings prevent any firm conclusions, the results are encouraging.

Literature and Theory

This paper represents a first, exploratory step in examining the sources of gender role attitudes in a selected set of western and eastern European countries. The literature suggests that there are significant sources of divergence, rooted in different social, economic and political historical trajectories between west and east. In the west, women's movements and processes associated with modernization are generally associated with rising support for gender equality (Bergh 2006; Hayes, McAllister, and Studlar 2000; Inglehart and Norris 2003; Klein 1987). Rising numbers of women receiving higher education and entering the workforce are trends associated with these processes (Banaszak and Leighley 1991; Banaszak and Plutzer 1993; Klein 1987; Klein 1984; Scott 1996; Wilcox 1991).

However, there are reasons we should not expect to see significant support for gender equality in "transition" countries according to the western model, despite more recent forces of convergence associated with joining the European Union. First, in countries under the Soviet thumb until recent decades, women's movements, as well as other efforts to organize at the grassroots level beyond the auspices of the Soviet state, were put down (Strandh and Nordenmark 2006). Second, in the context of the all-encompassing state, many women found sanctuary in their traditional family roles (Saxonberg 2007, cites in footnote 26.) In some cases, numerous weaknesses and failures of state socialist economies created a role for private family economies, which were in turn associated with and helped reinforce women's traditional roles (Szalai 1991.) Third, to the extent that political activity challenging the state existed, women and men typically joined together in common cause (Saxonberg 2007, cites in footnote 27.). Finally, some have argued for a rebellion effect: anything associated with the hated Soviet regime, which "emancipated" women by essentially forcing them to work without also attempting to change

gender roles at home, was and remains reviled by women men alike. Part and parcel of this negative reaction, which has persisted beyond the end of the Soviet regime, is a retreat to traditional roles (Einhorn 1993; Jacquette and Wolchik 1998; Motiejunaite and Kravchenko 2008; Saxonberg 2007, cites in footnote 25; Strandh and Nordenmark 2006).

There is also literature pointing out possible lines of convergence between east and west, I would argue. Despite the above, or perhaps in addition, it may be that the Soviet regime itself in some cases gave rise to support for gender equality, with a persistent legacy today. There was obviously a great difference between the ideals and the reality of Soviet policies regarding women's "emancipation" through paid employment. However, to the extent that large majorities of women worked for many years under this regime as instituted throughout eastern Europe, and took advantage of associated child care, maternity leave and other work-family policies, it is also valid to consider that the rise in daily/lived experiences of gender equality in action may have led to a rise in support for gender equality. Banaszak (2006) uses a theory of institutional learning in the context of a "natural experiment" to compare east and west Germany on support for gender equality. As east and west Germany have roughly similar cultures, the difference between regimes and associated institutions in place during the Soviet era allows for an examination of the role of regimes and institutions in influencing gender role attitudes. She finds that east Germans are quite supportive of gender equality, which she is able to attribute in large part to the legacy of the Soviet regime's policies and ideology concerning work and family and men's and women's roles in these areas.

I ask if this general argument is more broadly applicable to transitioning countries. Do parental leave policies, and other work-family supports, make a difference along the lines discussed by Banaszak? Pascall and Manning (2000) employs Sainsbury's, Lewis' and Esping-

Andersen's schemes to assess whether women in transitioning countries are becoming "familialized" relative to their Soviet-era status. While acknowledging the abuses and limits of Soviet work-family policies, this article finds that these policies went a certain distance in defining women as workers, and indeed as citizens independent from their roles as mothers, caretakers and wives. As such, the article is suggestive as to possible institutional effects perhaps similar to those found in Banaszak (2006.) It may be that despite the general movement across many transitioning countries toward traditional gender-role attitudes, support for gender equality where it does exist is a legacy of past Soviet regime work-family policies. This in turns suggests that there may be more commonalities in sources of gender-role attitudes between East and West than commonly thought. As discussed in more detail below, while many might assume a rather uniform "western" support for gender equality as well as the importance of women's employment in explaining this support, the actual picture appears more mixed. Rather, in countries—both east and west European—where a lot of women work but which have insufficient work-family policies, support for gender equality is rather low. However, where strong policies prevail, support is higher. As in the east, in the west parental leave policies themselves may help to steer citizens toward support for gender equality.

Hypotheses

The foregoing suggests some useful observable implications. (1) Women's involvement in the paid labor force work, both at the individual and contextual levels, would appear to be an important factor in support for gender equality among both western and eastern Europeans. However, in the east, the relationship should be negative due to the Soviet institutional legacy, as discussed above; whereas in the west, the relationship should be positive due to women's

movements and various modernization effects, also as discussed. (2) As the potential of parental leave policies in both west and east European countries to further gender equality increases, support for gender equality should rise. In the case of the east, the proposed mechanism is a more positive Soviet regime work-family policy legacy. While not intended to decide the issue one way or the other along the contrasting lines outlined in the reviews of the different literatures, assessment of these hypotheses could provide a more complete picture of how it is that the Soviet past shapes the present with regard to gender-role attitudes.

Dependent Variable: Support for Gender Equality

Item QC15 in the 2006 *Eurobarometer* survey (Papacostas 2007) asks respondents over 18 years of age to report the extent of their agreement/disagreement with a series of statements relating to gender roles. "Here is a list of statements relating to the role of men and women when it comes to raising children. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of them." The options were "1. totally agree, 2. tend to agree, 3. tend to disagree, or 4. totally disagree." I recoded the "don't know" category as missing.

Question 1: "A working mother can establish a just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work."

Question 2: "A pre-school child is more likely to suffer if his/her mother works."

Question 3: "All in all family life suffers when the woman has a full time job."

Question 4: "Both men and women should contribute to the household income."

Question 5: "Ideally, the woman should stay at home to look after the children while the man goes out to work."

Question 6: "Family life often suffers when men concentrate too much on their work."

Principle Axis factor analysis resulted in one factor with strong loadings on questions 1, 2, 3 and 5. The “support for gender equality” factor ranges between -1.588 (less support) to 1.874 (more support). These questions appear to access a core dimension of gender equality, encompassing gender equality at home as well as at work. This notion of gender equality at home is particularly challenging to traditional gender norms.

The Support for Gender Equality index is an individual-level variable. However, the basic theory above points to country-level and particularly regional west-east European differences. This calls for consideration of contextual-level independent variables. Accordingly, first I will examine country patterns on mean levels of the Gender Equality index, and second I will explain and examine country patterns on these contextual variables, both separately and in relation to the gender equality index. This will help to set up the rationale for the analyses that follow.

To maintain consistency among all data sources used, countries used in the preliminary examinations of country patterns on the dependent and some of the contextual independent variables are limited to the following: Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, Germany (I separate individuals from what were formerly West and East Germany because there are significant differences, as found in Banaszak 2006), France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Finland, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia.¹

¹ The number of countries used in later analyses is further limited (discussed where appropriate.)

Table 1. Country Means on Support for Gender Equality Index

Country	Mean	Number	Standard Dev.
Hungary	-.6954331	974	.65229267
Latvia	-.3077131	925	.80455888
Estonia	-.2967470	941	.82313773
Luxembourg	-.2843939	339	0.8487392
Lithuania	-.1728054	944	.80181692
West Germany	-.0678017	976	.89096811
Netherlands	-.0292855	1003	.95694538
Poland	.0349248	922	.84661578
Czech Republic	.0386904	1002	.86144766
United Kingdom	.0824042	1149	.91861336
Belgium	.1853183	985	.85690428
Slovenia	.2015357	1039	.91364734
Slovakia	.2111613	1058	.79218908
France	.2223692	988	.87847348
Finland	.3547375	967	.82532858
Sweden	.5566113	911	.97098703
Denmark	.5903324	961	.91174310
East Germany	.8093095	490	.81196839

Table 1 above displays a rank ordering of countries' mean scores on the Support for Gender Equality Index. There are variations among countries in the levels of support for gender equality. There also appears to be an East-West pattern at both extremes. (I have highlighted eastern European countries for clarification.) On the one hand, Hungary, Latvia and Estonia have

negative scores, suggesting that on average these societies are more traditional in their gender-role attitudes. Western European countries cluster on the positive end of the scale, which quite notably includes east Germany and excludes west Germany (see Banaszak 2006). On the other hand, in the mid-range there is more variation between eastern and western countries. Like Lithuania, Luxembourg, West Germany (again, See Banaszak 2006) and The Netherlands have negative scores. Showing small positive scores, Poland and the Czech Republic are only a shade behind the UK. Finally, Slovenia and Slovakia have larger positive scores than both the UK and Belgium.

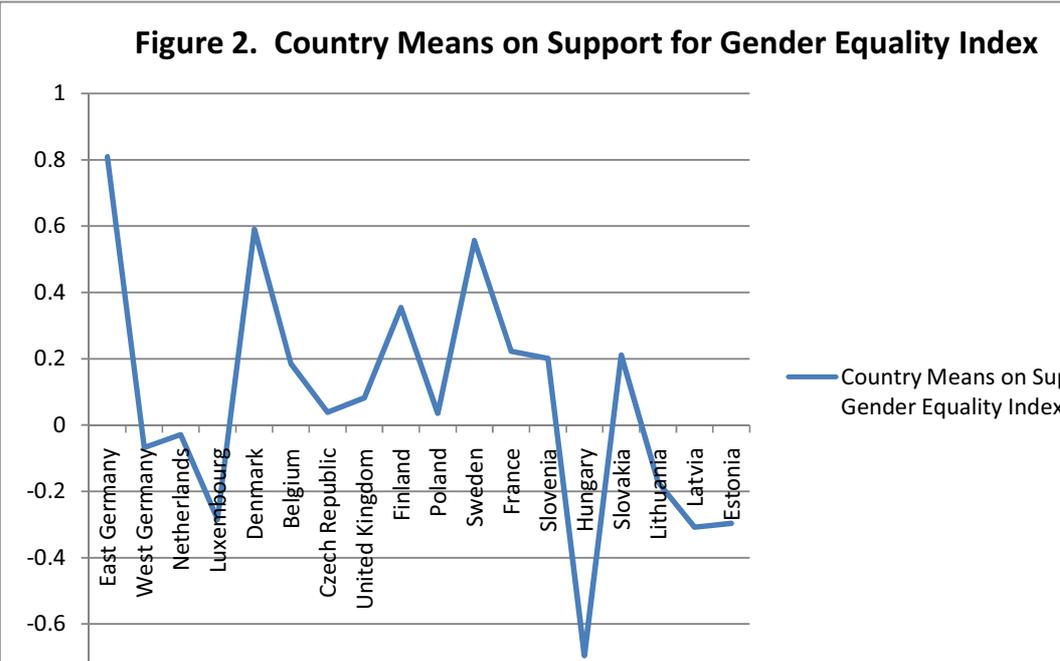
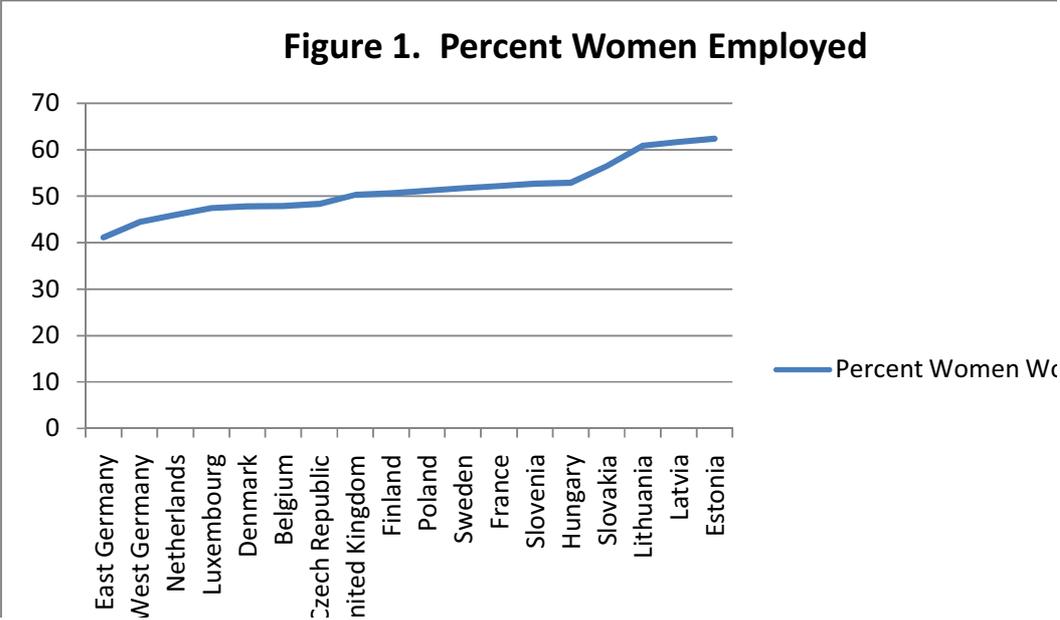
Contextual Independent Variable 1: Percent Women Employed

First, I used Item D15A on employment in the 2006 *Eurobarometer* survey (Papacostas 2007) to construct an individual-level employment dummy variable (0-not employed, 1-employed). This variable is ultimately part of the analysis. However, the literature as discussed above also suggests broader societal effects that call for examination via contextual variables. Interactions with employed women are likely, to some extent, to shape the values and attitudes regarding gender roles held by other women and men. Thus, second, from the employment dummy variable I created a country-level Percent Women Employed variable (as a percent of employed men and women). Table 2 shows a rank ordering of the percentages of women employed in each country.

Table 2. Percent Women Employed

Country	Percent
East Germany	41.1
West Germany	44.4
Netherlands	46
Luxembourg	47.4
Denmark	47.8
Belgium	47.9
Czech Republic	48.3
UK	50.3
Finland	50.6
Poland	51.2
Sweden	51.7
France	52.2
Slovenia	52.7
Hungary	52.9
Slovakia	56.5
Lithuania	60.9
Latvia	61.7
Estonia	62.4

To some extent, the entries in table 2 display a reversed east-west pattern of that seen in table 1: in this case, countries with the higher values are in eastern Europe, and those with lower values are in western Europe. A comparison between figures 1 and 2, below, clarifies these contrasting patterns. Figure 1 simply presents the same data as table 2, but in the form of a graph. Figure 2 presents the information from table 1 on country means on the support for gender equality index, but lists the countries and associated means in the same order as presented in figure 1.



While the graphs in figures 1 and 2 are not perfect mirror images of each other, the general picture is an increase in women’s employment paired with a zigzagging decrease in average levels of support for gender equality.

Contextual Independent Variable 2: Parental Leave Gender Equality Scale

In a future, more polished version of this paper, I would most likely put much of this detailed explanation of variable construction in a footnote. However, given the centrality of this variable to the theory, I will keep the whole explanation in the body of the paper for the time being. In the “Family Policy Database, Version 2 (2003),” Gornick and Meyers (2003) constructed a parental leave policy variable accessing the extent of gender equality intended by the nine western European countries (including a unified Germany) included in my study, in addition to others, as of 2000. Their explanation went as follows:

“We assigned countries one point on the ‘gender equality scale’ if they have any paid paternity leave, two points if fathers have non-transferable parental leave rights (either ‘use or lose’ portions of shareable leave or individual entitlements) and up to three additional points depending on wage replacement (three points if benefits are wage-related and at 80 percent or higher, two points if benefits are wage-related but at less than 80 percent, and one point if benefits are paid but only at a flat rate.)” (2003)

Centering primarily on the extent to which fathers are incentivized to take on primary care-giving responsibilities, as well as the extent of income replacement, this variable could well help to predict the extent of support among residents in a country for the “strong” version of gender equality at home as well as at work—a dimension captured by the dependent variable. It is also grounded in Lewis’ weak, moderate and strong breadwinner regimes (1992), work-family policies and fathers’ caring rights (Hobson and Morgan 2002), and other literature.

As noted, this variable covers the parental leave policies, as of 2000, of the western European countries included in my study. In order to provide more up-to-date policy information and to allow for the greater variety of provisions in the policies of eastern European countries, I have updated Gornick and Meyers’ scale with information from the report “Parental Leave in European Companies: Establishment Survey on Working Time 2004-2005” (Anxo, Fagan,

Smith, Letablier, and Perraudin 2007.) Including eastern European countries in this way is generally supported by Pascall and Manning (2000), which employs Sainsbury's, Lewis' and Esping-Andersen's schemes to assess whether women in transitioning countries are becoming "familialized" relative to their Soviet-era status. Specifically, I draw from the section on parental leave schemes in Europe and table 1, "Summary of the duration and level of financial support under the statutory parental leave entitlements of the EU21, by country," on pages 7-8 (2007). In particular, throughout eastern Europe, there are fewer countries with statutory provisions for paternity leave, especially if it is paid. Table 3 below displays the additive scale, and table 4 shows the country values on this scale.

Table 3. Parental Leave Gender Equality Scale

<u>Points</u>	<u>Condition</u>
1	Joint, shareable parental leave periods
1	Parental leave for the father (when policy states "each parent")
2	Paid paternity leave

Up to 3 additional points, according to the following scheme:

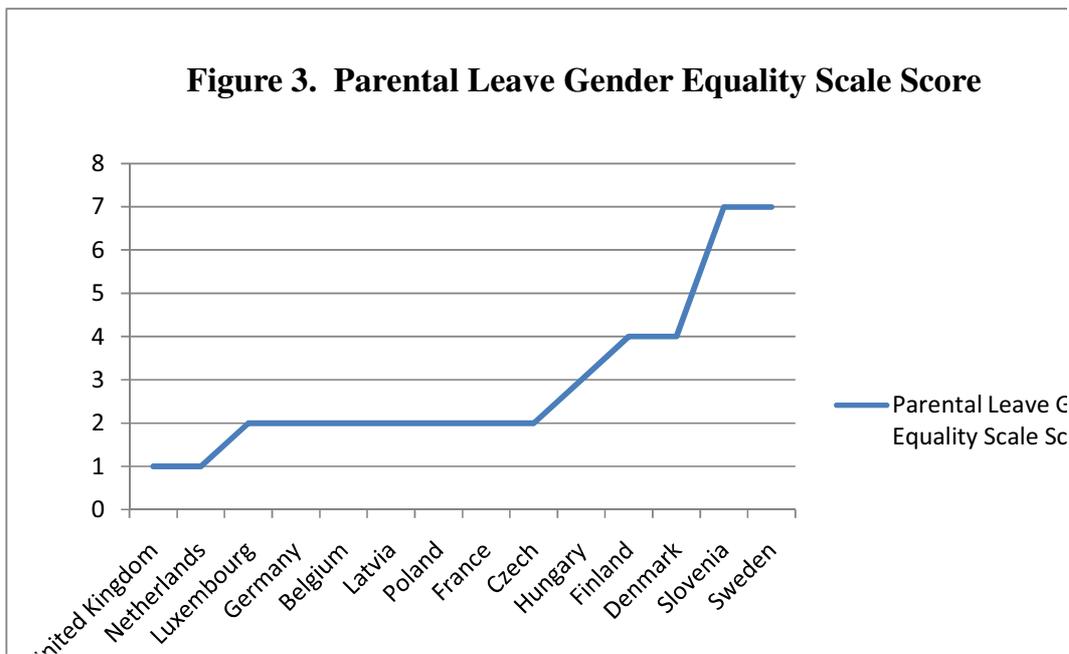
1	Wage replacement at a flat rate
2	Wage replacement is 70 percent or less of income
3	Wage replacement at 80 percent or higher

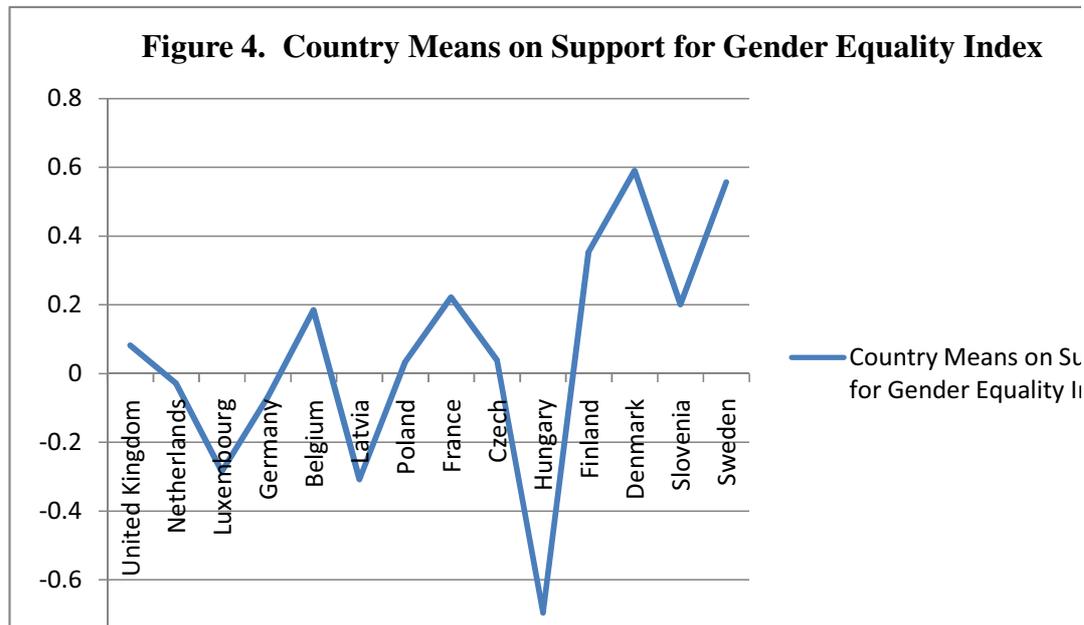
Table 4. Country Values on Parental Leave Gender Equality Scale

<u>Country</u>	<u>Points</u>
Sweden	7
Slovenia	7
Denmark	4
Finland	4
Hungary	3
Czech	2
France	2
Poland	2
Latvia	2
Belgium	2
Germany	2
Luxembourg	2
Netherlands	1
United Kingdom	1

The first thing that stands out in this table is the loss of Estonia, Lithuania and Slovakia, which were not included in the parental leave policy studies used to construct the scale. This is unfortunate, and will clearly entail limitations to the data analyses below. In addition, thus far “east” and “west” Germany have been considered separately, even though Germany has been unified for the last couple of decades. This is because of the quite different mean support for gender equality scores, with West Germans being slightly traditional and East Germans registering the highest support of any countries’ residents. This is discussed in Banaszak 2006, with some of the associated ideas being central to this paper. Specifically, I examine the question of possible Soviet regime legacies showing up in gender-role attitudes in other east European countries. Since Germany reunited as part of “the west,” it is classified as a western European country. In order not to bias results, in the analysis below, I leave eastern European respondents out.

I have highlighted eastern European countries, although it becomes more difficult ultimately to talk about possible East-West patterns when there are 9 western countries and 5 eastern countries. Nonetheless, it is intriguing with regard to the theory in this paper that “transitional” countries cluster in the middle range, with Slovenia furthermore registering the highest possible score of 7. Figures 3 and 4 (figure 4 presents the attitude means in the same country ordering as in figure 3) below, considered together, are suggestive as to a positive relationship between the degree of gender equality entailed by countries’ parental leave policies and their mean attitudinal support for gender equality scores.





Individual-level Independent Variables

The following independent individual-level variables were constructed from the same *Eurobarometer* survey (Papacostas 2007) used for other variables in this study: Gender, Education, Employment, Ideology (L-R), Age, Type of Community (Rural-Urban), and Frequency of Religious Attendance.² These variables are well-established in the literature on western Europe as factors explaining gender role attitudes, and may show up as important in the eastern European context as well. Banaszak (2006) found most of them to be significant in her

² *Gender*: Item D.10. 1. Male; 2. Female. *Education*: Item D.8. “How old were you when you stopped full-time education?” 1. No full-time education; 2. Up to 15 years; 3. 16-19 years, 4. 20+ years; and 5. Still studying. DK responses were recoded as missing. *Employment*: recoding of item D15A, 1. Not Employed; 2. Employed. *Ideology*: Item D.1. “In political matters people talk of the ‘left’ and ‘right’. How would you place your views on this scale?” 1. Left; 2. Left of center; 3. Center; 4. Right of center; 5. Right. DK and Refusal responses were recoded as missing. *Age*: Item D.11. 1. 15-24 years; 2. 25-34 years; 3. 35-44 years; 4. 45-54 years; 5. 55-64 years; 6. 65 + years. *Type of community*: Item D.25. “Would you say you live in a ?” 1. rural area or village; 2. small or middle-sized town; 3. large town. DK responses were recoded as missing. *Frequency of religious attendance*: Item D.45. “Apart from weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend religious services?” 1. Never; 2. Once a year or less; 3. Only on special holy days; 4. Once a month to once in three months; 5. Once a week or more. DK responses were recoded as missing.

analyses. On both of these points, much more will be said in a future, more developed version of this paper. Table 5 below shows descriptive statistics on the individual-level variables.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics on Individual-level Variables³

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Gender (M-F)	13594	1	2	1.55	.498
Age	13594	1	6	3.76	1.678
Ideology (L-R)	11412	1	5	3.02	1.018
Education	13456	1	5	3.34	.864
Type of Community (R-U)	13585	1	3	1.90	.776
Frequency of Religious Attendance	13488	1.00	5.00	2.4516	1.40734
Employment	13594	.00	1.00	.4881	.49988
Valid N (listwise)	11244				

I will now restate the overall hypotheses very briefly (again, a future iteration will have much more detail and discussion), taking into account the theory presented at the outset as well as the univariate patterns for the independent contextual-level variables and the dependent variable discussed above. First, parental leave gender equality scale should be positively related to support for gender equality: as the scores for the former rise, so should the values for the latter, suggesting a positive causal relationship. Second, percent women employed should be negatively related to support for gender equality: as the percentages rise, support for gender equality among individuals in the relevant countries should decline. Regarding the latter, the

³ Because of the very small number of cases included in the *Eurobarometer* survey for Luxembourg (about one-third of the N for the other countries, see table 1), I exclude Luxembourg from the analysis. The small N for Luxembourg in the original survey may reflect the fact that this country is known to have a very large number of cross-border workers.

theory led me to expect a positive relationship in the case of western Europe and a negative relationship in the case of eastern Europe. However, clear East-West patterns were not evident in the initial examinations of data patterns. The tables and charts above suggest, if anything, an overall negative relationship. Third, because of coding, age, ideology and frequency of religious attendance should be negatively related to support for gender equality, again, for well-established reasons that will be detailed in a subsequent version of this paper. The other four individual-level independent variables should be positively related to support for gender equality. Gender is particularly important to explain for obvious reasons, which I nonetheless don't have time to address now. Table 6 displays results for a standard OLS Regression analysis.

Results

Table 6. Contextual and Individual Level Model of Support for Gender Equality

Parental leave gender equality scale	.216**
Percent women employed	-.134***
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Gender	.186***
Age	-.037***
Ideology	-.079***
Education	.171***
Type of community	.038***
Frequency of religious attendance	-.047***
Employment	.235***
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Czech Republic Dummy	.221***
Hungary Dummy	.012
Latvia Dummy	1.674***
Poland Dummy	.773***
Slovenia Dummy	-.067
Belgium Dummy	.339***
Denmark Dummy	.621
France Dummy	.963***
Netherlands Dummy	.052
United Kingdom Dummy	.826***
Sweden Dummy	.119
Finland Dummy	.464**
West Germany Dummy	-.297***
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Constant	5.285***
Number of observations	10517
Adjusted R ²	.208

-Coefficients are unstandardized and are the result of ordinary least-squares regression.

-*p<.05; **p<.01; *** p<.001.

Generally, the results tentatively suggest support for the hypothesis. The signs are as expected, but there are obvious limitations in the data that are likely introducing biases. There are some issues with collinearity, but this is to be expected in the presence of country dummies and two contextual level independent variables based on these countries. Coefficients for the country dummies are generally of high magnitude, and show that, obviously, there is much at the

country level that is not explained by this model. Yet, this is an encouraging start. Unfortunately, I have run out of time to discuss implications and conclusions. I will bring this into discussions at the conference, and can hopefully bring along (hard copy) and later email a more complete version of the paper.

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