Socialization values across Europe

This study presents research findings on preferences regarding children’s qualities among nationals of the European countries participating in the World Values Survey 2006. The respondents were asked to choose up to five children’s qualities which they considered as the most important for children to learn at home from their parents. The theoretical framework of the survey focuses on the theory of modernisation and post-modernisation (Ronald Inglehart, 1995, 1997). Cluster analysis identified two patterns each containing five significantly linked characteristics of children. The preferred images of children in Europe vary on the continuum from the traditional-religious pattern of children's characteristics to the post-modern. The preferences are significantly linked with the percentages of “materialists” and “post-materialists”, as well as with per capita gross national product (GNP) and with the level of income inequality in the societies (GINI index).

Key words: children's characteristics, Europe, World Values Survey

Introduction: socially constructed images of the child

Many scholars considered values as the core concepts defining ‘culture’ (e.g. Kluckhohn, 1951; Hofstede, 1980; 2001; Schwartz, 2006). Culture is a »medium« organising both, the behaviour and thinking of actors. Parents’ and teachers’ child-rearing concepts and values are the result of pre-learned cultural patterns as well as their individual interpretations of specific situations (Harkness and Super, 1996, p. 56). Social representations (of childhood) are an element of culture, language and at the same time individual conscience (Moscovici, 1984; Augoustinos and Walker, 1996). They exist simultaneously in the individual's mind as part of their cognitive apparatus and at the same time represent an objective reality found in ways of speech, discourses, jargons, messages communicated by the media and books. Individual behaviour can be understood as a reflection of social representations shared by individuals in a given society or group. Consensual elements of social representations represent implicit, silent knowledge which is »unquestionable« (Ule, 2004, pp. 101-107). Child-rearing values, norms and preferences are part of a collective series of ideas and in this sense participate also in the construction of culture.

Anthropological and psychological studies contributed to identification of cultural models (Holland and Quinn, 1987; D'Andrade and Strauss, 1992) and the cultural belief systems of (Harkness and Super, 1996). By exploring the »embeddedness« of cultural belief systems in parental and/or teachers' child-rearing practices they contributed to better understanding of conceptualisation of childhoods in societies or cultures. With Ronald Inglehart a leading
researcher into social values, child-rearing values have become studied in the context of inter-relationships between various cultural/societal components.

Qualities of children as an integral part of the cultural value patterns

In his extensive research on mass values based on World Values Survey Inglehart (1995, 1997) examines socialization values in the context of cultural modernisation and post-modernisation. The modernisation societal changes (industrialisation, secularisation...) led to occupational specialization, rising educational levels, rising income levels, and eventually brings changes in mass values; it promotes a shift from traditional to secular-rational values, while the rise of post-industrial society brings a shift toward more trust, tolerance, well-being, and post-materialist/postmodern values. Post-modernisation processes beginning to occur in the 70-ies of the past century in the advanced industrial societies; it involves a radical value shift - away from maximizing income to values emphasising the importance of the quality of life, democracy and self-expression (Inglehart, 1995, pp. 379-388).

Cultural, economic and political characteristics of the societies are closely correlated and »support« each other; the coherent cultural patterns (Inglehart 1995, 1997) demonstrate high levels of constraint between various cultural attributes that are linked with economic and technological development; preferences on children’s qualities co-constitute the cultural patterns. By factor analysis of mass values the author (Inglehart, 1995, 1997) identified the two polarizations: traditional authority vs. rational-secular authority and scarcity values vs. security values.

The traditional/secular-rational value dimension of cross-cultural variation reflects the contrast between societies in which religion is very important and those in which it is not. Inglehart’s (1995) explain some links to child-rearing values: societies that emphasize the importance of religion (as well as attach low importance to politics) and tend to favour large families, many children, showed strong tendency to place low emphasis on child’s thrift and determination (r = -0.57 and -0.59, respectively), but stressed obedience as important quality to teach children (Inglehart, 1995, 390). Societies with secular-rational values have the opposite preferences on all of these topics.

A central component of scarcity/security value dimension involves the polarization between materialist and post-materialist values\(^1\), reflecting a cultural shift that is emerging among generations who have grown up taking survival for granted. Accordingly, priorities have shifted from an emphasis on economic and physical security toward an increasing emphasis on subjective well-being, self-expression and quality of life. This cultural syndrome lies at the hart of post-modernisation (Inglehart, 1995, p. 391). The changes reflect a qualitative shift in people’s expectations of life: from maximisation of income to maximisation of quality of life (Inglehart 1995, p. 391). Postmodern or post-

\(^1\) Postmodern societies are characterised by high proportions of »post-materialists« and/or low percentages of »materialists«.
A materialist set of values involves high priority to environmental protection, tolerance of diversity and rising demands for participation in decision making in economic and political life. Accordingly, the publics of societies with high proportions of post-materialists strongly emphasise children’s tolerance, imagination and independence.


The relations between socio-economic factors and mass values

Inglehart and Baker (2000) have tested the thesis that economic development is lined with systematic changes in basic values. The shift from preindustrial to industrial society leads to profound changes in people’s daily experiences and prevailing world views (Bell, 1973; Inglehart, 1997, p. 21). Economic development is linked with coherent and, to some extent, predictable changes in culture and social and political life. The value priorities shift from an emphasis on economic and physical security toward and increasing emphasis on subjective well-being and quality of life. Economic collapse, on the other hand, tends to propel societies in the opposite direction (Inglehart and Baker, 2000 p. 50).

Economic development leads to certain changes in the prevailing social values and beliefs, which in turn produce counter-effects, reflected in the economic and political development of societies. Changes in socio-economic conditions lead, through the individual's life experiences, to a re-evaluating of the individual's beliefs, viewpoints and values. Therefore, major changes in the social environment have the strongest influence on those generations which live their formative years in the new circumstances (Inglehart 1997, pp. 59-65).

However, as the authors (Inglehart and Baker, 2000) points out, different societies follow different trajectories even when they are subjected to the same forces of economic development; in part because situation-specific factors, such as cultural heritage, also shape how a particular society develops. Drawing on empirical data (WVS, 1990-1991 and 1995-1998) Inglehart and Baker (2000) found evidence of the persistence of distinctive - the traditional religious - values enduring over long periods of time. Values do change in a predictable direction, but also continue to reflect a society’s cultural heritage. The fact that a society was historically shaped by Catholicism or Protestantism or Confucianism or Islam leaves a cultural heritage with enduring effects that influence subsequent development. The authors (Inglehart and Baker 2000) identified the existence of economic zones - the societies with similar annual per capita gross national products - cutting across the boundaries of the Protestant, ex-Communist, Confucian, Catholic, English speaking, and Orthodox cultural zones. Cultural zones with distinctive value systems persist
after controlling for the effects of economic development (Inglehart and Baker, 2000 p. 22 -34). They stress that distinctive cultural zones persist two centuries after the industrial revolution.

The studies (Granato, Inglehart, Leblang, 1996; Inglehart, 1997) also examined the relations between economic factors and motivational factors, such as achievement motivation. The motivational literature view achievement motivation as an essential component in the process of economic achievement. McClelland’s (1953, 1961 in: Granato, Inglehart, Leblang, 1996; Inglehart, 1997) hypothesizes that some societies emphasize economic achievement as a positive goal while others give it little emphasis; there are also significant differences between Catholics and Protestants in emphasizing those values in children (Lenski, 1963). Inglehart and his colleagues (Granato, Inglehart, Leblang, 1996; Inglehart, 1997) have constructed an index of achievement motivation that reflects socialisation values emphasizing autonomy and economic achievement (thrift or saving money and things, determination) over conformity (obedience and religious faith). Their study of the bivariate relationship between the index of achievement motivation and rates of per capita economic growth between 1960 and 1989 (Granato, Inglehart, Leblang, 1996, pp. 611–614) provide evidence that a society that emphasizes thrift, produces savings, which leads to investment, and later to economic growth. According to the authors, this does not rule out the possibility that economic growth might be conducive to thrift but this linkage is less obvious. The motivational component is also tapped by materialist/post-materialist values, with post-materialism having a negative relationship with economic growth.

Values as prerequisite for democracy

Inglehart (1997) emphasise that the shifts in the system of values, norms and beliefs are not merely a result of macro societal changes but also co-form them. In subsequent works Inglehart and his colleagues (Welzel, Inglehart, and Klingemann, 2002, Inglehart and Welzel 2005, Welzel, 2006, Welzel, and Inglehart, 2008) continue to examine the relationship between social changes and democracy, searching for casual linkages. By adding the concepts such as self-expression values and effective democracy, Welzel, Inglehart, and Klingemann (2002) demonstrate that socioeconomic development, cultural change (changing values) and democratization constitute a coherent syndrome of human development. The three components have a common focus on

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2 According to Weber, the Calvinist version of Protestantism encourages norms favourable to economic achievement; mainly because this belief system undermines a set of religious norms that inhibit economic achievement and are common to most preindustrial societies characterized by little or no economic growth. The Protestant Reformation combined with the emergence of scientific logic broke the grip of the medieval Christian Worldview on a significant part of Europe. Prior to the Reformation, Southern Europe was economically more advanced than Northern Europe. During the three centuries after the Reformation, capitalism emerged, mainly among the Protestant regions of Europe and the Protestant minorities in Catholic countries. Within this cultural context, individual economic accumulation was no longer rejected (Granato, Inglehart, Leblang 1996, pp. 609-610).
broadening human choice: “socioeconomic development widens human choice by enlarging people’s individual resources; cultural change releases mass emphasis on self-expression which leads people to seek for human choice; and institutional change towards effective democracy extends human choice by granting legal rights […]” (Welzel, Inglehart, and Klingemann, 2002, p. 27). Overall, societal levels of individual resources, self-expression values and effective democracy tend to correspond to each other. In addition, the author’s empirical analysis demonstrates the casual priority of individual resources and self-expression values over effective democracy. The authors conclude: “Democracy is effective only to the degree that it finds support by mass culture that emphasizes human self-expression. Such an emancipatory culture needs a socioeconomic basis that reduces restrictions on human autonomy.” (Welzel, Inglehart and Klingemann, 2002, p. 27)

Research questions and the method

The study aims to explore the preferences regarding children’s characteristics among the nationals of 20 European countries participating in World Values Survey 2006. They responded to the following question: Here is the list of qualities which children can be encouraged to learn at home. Which, if any, do you consider to be especially important? Please, choose up to five. The list contained qualities such as independence, religious faith, thrift, unselfishness, imagination, hard work, responsibility, tolerance/respect for others, obedience, and determination/perseverance. The goal was also find out whether certain characteristics “go together” or form the clusters of significantly linked items. In addition, we have explored the links with the socio-economic and cultural factors (value orientations) previously defined by R. Inglehart. The associations with social wealth (the annual per capita gross national product) as well as with the level of social inequality (the GINI coefficient as a measure of the inequality of income) have been made. Moreover, the linkages with the respondent’s views on the future goals of society were analysed; more precisely, with the percentages of “materialists” (people emphasising economic growth combined with strong tendency to maintaining order in the society) and “post-materialists” (people emphasising future developmental goals such as

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3 “Self-expression values” reflect a syndrome of interpersonal trust, tolerance and political activism that plays a crucial role in the emergence and survival of democracy. (Welzel and Inglehart, 2008).

4 Each issue is a dichotomous variable (important = 1; not mentioned = 0). For each a score was computed denoting how many times it was selected by respondents; the percentages were calculated for each country.

5 Annual per capita Gross National Product, as the most widely used indicator of social wealth, range from $ 2,100 (Moldova) to $ 35,633 (Switzerland). GINI coefficient range between 0 and 100;

6 A low Gini coefficient indicates a more equal distribution, with 0 corresponding to complete equality, while higher Gini coefficients indicate more unequal distribution. Gini coefficients in the study range between 25 (Sweden) and 44 (Russian federation).
creating more humane societies, increasing people’s participation in the
decision making…).  

Research findings

The preferred characteristics of children in Europe

Table 1 The preferences on children’s characteristics in Europe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Std. Devs</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INDEPENDENCE</td>
<td>54,66</td>
<td>18,31</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HARD WORK</td>
<td>48,15</td>
<td>26,26</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESPONSIBILITY</td>
<td>78,69</td>
<td>9,57</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMAGINATION</td>
<td>27,80</td>
<td>12,01</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOLERANCE/RESPECT FOR OTHERS</td>
<td>75,13</td>
<td>12,49</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THRIFT</td>
<td>40,67</td>
<td>11,38</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DETERMINATION</td>
<td>47,36</td>
<td>14,11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELIGIOUS FAITH</td>
<td>20,90</td>
<td>15,98</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSELFISHNESS</td>
<td>30,52</td>
<td>15,06</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBEDIENCE</td>
<td>31,40</td>
<td>12,39</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More on post-materialism index Ronald Inglehart, 1971. Participants of the World Values Survey where asked to select the most important and second important goal a country should have from the following four items: a) Maintaining order in the nation, b) Giving people more to say in important government decisions, c) Fighting rising prices and d) Protecting freedom of speech. “Materialists” are the respondents whose first choice is item a, and second choice item c or first choice item c and second choice item a; “post-materialists” are those whose first choice is item b and second choice item d. In our study the percentages range between 1 percent of “materialists” in Sweden and 26 percent of “materialists” in the Russian Federation, and between 10 percent of “post-materialists” in Switzerland and 0.1 percent of “post-materialists” in the Russian Federation.
Table 2  Preferences on children’s characteristics – percentages in selected countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Independence</th>
<th>Hard work</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Imagination</th>
<th>Tolerance</th>
<th>Thrift</th>
<th>Determination/Persistence</th>
<th>Religiosity faith</th>
<th>Unselfishness</th>
<th>Obedience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>85.4</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>71.6</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>87.1</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>73.9</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>83.2</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>73.9</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>86.9</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>41.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>44.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>86.9</td>
<td>73.1</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>88.0</td>
<td>81.0</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>36.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>89.8</td>
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<td>85.9</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andorra</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>90.3</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>39.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>81.5</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>48.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>66.5</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>91.6</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>93.6</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>34.7</td>
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<td>Finland</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>90.1</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>88.7</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>90.7</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Germany</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>77.9</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Germany</td>
<td>74.6</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>90.3</td>
<td>35.4</td>
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<td>59.0</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more than three-quarters of the European respondents the pro-social characteristics such as responsibility and tolerance are the most desired qualities in children. About one half of them value independence and determination as well as hard work (and thrift), the qualities which emphasise child's individuality as well as the ability to “perform” and “contribute”. Obedience, unselfishness and religious faith are the preference for one third of Europeans: these qualities indicate child's subordination to authorities. Imagination as a typically individualistic quality which can be seen as a prerequisite of creativity, is also among the least desired (Table 1).

Variations in the preferences among European nationals are most notable regarding hard work (also religious faith and unselfishness) and independence (Table 1 and Table 2). It seems that the dichotomy »conformity vs. autonomy« reflects cultural differences regarding the preferred image of a child. For
example, child’s ability to work hard is highly valued for over eighty percent of the population of the Russian Federation, Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova, while in Sweden and Finland it is important for only about one tenth of the population. With more than 80% of respondents appreciating child's independence, Slovenia ranks first among European countries, followed by more than three quarters of the population in Sweden, Western Germany, Eastern Germany and Switzerland. In contrast, less than one third of the population of Romania, Ukraine and Spain also value independence.

Patterns of children's characteristics

Figure 1 Children's characteristics – tree diagram, cluster analysis

The cluster analysis (Figure 1) identifies two large clusters, both consisting of five significantly linked children's characteristics. The first group brings together responsibility, tolerance and imagination associated with independence and determination on the next level. The second cluster associates hard work, thrift and religious faith with unselfishness and obedience. The analysis indicates polarisation between the »progressive pattern« of children’s characteristics and the »traditional pattern«. The first suggests an image of a child perceived as an autonomous (yet a pro-social) person with the right to express himself/herself; the second represents almost an “opposite” image of the child whose first and foremost duty is to meet »external« requirements such as to practice religion and/or contribute to material prosperity.
Are there countries sharing similar views on children's characteristics?

Table 3 K-means clustering – cluster means and results of variance analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Cluster no. 2</th>
<th>Cluster no. 1</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>independence</td>
<td>-.620628</td>
<td>.930942</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27.93918</td>
<td>.00005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hard work</td>
<td>.552933</td>
<td>-.829400</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16.79874</td>
<td>.00067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsibility</td>
<td>-.537661</td>
<td>.806491</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15.11505</td>
<td>.00108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imagination</td>
<td>-.526393</td>
<td>.789590</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.00058</td>
<td>.00149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tolerance/respect for others</td>
<td>-.439784</td>
<td>.659677</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7.91363</td>
<td>.01151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thrift</td>
<td>.156447</td>
<td>-.234671</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.72359</td>
<td>.40614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>determination/perseverance</td>
<td>-.418302</td>
<td>.627452</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.87144</td>
<td>.01730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious faith</td>
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<td>-.647254</td>
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<td>7.49545</td>
<td>.01352</td>
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<td>3.99222</td>
<td>.06105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>obedience</td>
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<td>-.460098</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.14051</td>
<td>.09329</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
K-means clustering has identified clusters with the nearest means of items. Table 3 shows the characteristics associated in cluster No.1 (independence, responsibility, imagination, and determination) and those associated in cluster No. 2 (hard work, thrift, religious faith, obedience and unselfishness). Figure 2 demonstrates the distribution of countries in the graphic display defined by the two factors. Countries which emphasise the traditional and/or religious children’s characteristics are placed in the upper left corner. The extreme upper left position is occupied by Romania, which holds a unique position in Europe by emphasising child's religious faith rather than independence. Religious faith is also priority in Moldova and Romania (combined with hard work), in Poland (combined with obedience), and to some extent also in Cyprus and Serbia. Countries with the prevailing traditional yet non-religious set of child's characteristics are Ukraine, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Serbia and the Russian Federation (also predominantly Orthodox Christian). In Spain, as a predominantly Catholic country, neither child’s religiosity is important (unlike in Italy) nor independence or determination. The particularity of France and United Kingdom is high priority of unselfishness and obedience.
The progressive set of children's characteristics (tolerance, imagination (combined with independence, responsibility and/or determination) are characteristic for Switzerland and Sweden, and to certain degree also for Western Germany, Eastern Germany and Finland. These countries are in the lower right corner. Slovenia and Netherlands are characterised by specific deviations from both extreme patterns, which place them in the centre of the display.

Factors related to the preferred children's characteristics

Table 4 Correlation with the independent variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>indep</th>
<th>hard</th>
<th>respons</th>
<th>imagin</th>
<th>toleran</th>
<th>thrift</th>
<th>determin</th>
<th>religiou</th>
<th>unselfi</th>
<th>obedie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GNP</td>
<td>.6361</td>
<td>-.7511</td>
<td>.5080</td>
<td>.6033</td>
<td>.7831</td>
<td>-.5586</td>
<td>.4115</td>
<td>-.5649</td>
<td>.1429</td>
<td>-.0260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GINI</td>
<td>-.4625</td>
<td>.3664</td>
<td>-.3438</td>
<td>-.5243</td>
<td>.0051</td>
<td>-.0494</td>
<td>.5892</td>
<td>.4326</td>
<td>.3410</td>
<td>.2163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of materialists</td>
<td>-.6595</td>
<td>.8783</td>
<td>-.3757</td>
<td>-.6072</td>
<td>-.7531</td>
<td>.3517</td>
<td>-.2218</td>
<td>.2572</td>
<td>-.0030</td>
<td>.0389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of post-materialists</td>
<td>.5017</td>
<td>-.5796</td>
<td>.5220</td>
<td>.6368</td>
<td>.7673</td>
<td>-.4778</td>
<td>.3328</td>
<td>-.4344</td>
<td>.2464</td>
<td>-.1813</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Marked correlations are significant at p < .05000

The progressive qualities of children are in positive correlation with the post-materialist value orientation, while hard work and thrift are in negative correlation with it. Correlations with GNP tend to go in the same direction (with additional negative correlations with religious faith). In contrast, materialistic outlook correlates positively with child’s hard work and negatively with progressive characteristics. Gini index is in negative correlation with child’s determination, independence and imagination. (Table 4).

Figure 3 Factor analysis display (Biquartimax normalized)
The factor analysis revealed two dimensions (factors), explaining 64 percent of the total variance in the data. Looking for patterns of similarity between items, we have named the Factor 1 'security/insecurity' and the Factor 2 'equality/inequality' (Figure 3). The 'security/insecurity' factor indicates polarisation between child's characteristics prevailing in the conditions of prosperity and those in the conditions of scarcity. It seems that a sense of (financial) security coupled with a post-materialist view of life tend to promote an image of the child as tolerant, independent and imaginative person, while insecurity combined with materialistic outlook suggests an image of a hard-working child. The factor 'equality/inequality' suggests that in the conditions of high levels of income inequality people tend to emphasise child's obedience and unselfishness rather than independence, determination and imagination.
Discussion

Each country has a unique “configuration” of the most desired and the least desired characteristics of children. The prevailing images of children in Europe vary on the “continuum” - from the extremely progressive (post-modern) to the extremely traditionally-religious. The countries are allocated on the continuum from the North and Northwest Europe to its South and Southeast. Geographic proximity, common history (e.g. former socialist countries) and/or religion (e.g. countries sharing Orthodox Christianity) are clearly the factors contributing to similarity in the perception of the child and childhood. However, the study proves other socio-economic and cultural factors need to be taken into account in the interpretations.

Data analyses indicate polarisation between the image of the child seen predominantly as an autonomous being and, the one stressing conformity and subordination to authorities. However, the dualist interpretation in terms of the conflict existing between individualism and collectivism are not to be taken as valid, because these extreme child-rearing models rarely occur. Numerous studies draw attention to the co-existence of the individualist and collectivist (socio-centric) perspectives also within individual societies (see: Harkness, Raeff and Super 2000).

A consistent pattern of characteristics such as imagination, tolerance/respect for others and responsibility (combined with independence and determination/perseverance) indicate the “individualistic” child-rearing paradigm which is oriented towards promotion of the child’s creativity, personal potential and choice, and is at the same time socio-centric – i.e. the relationship towards the other is based on the respect as well as responsibility for the “Other”. In some cases individualistic image is »associated« with the characteristics indicating human inter-dependence (tolerance, responsibility), in others it is not (e.g. in Slovenia). The pattern usually occurs in prosperous countries with a large proportion of the population holding libertarian-oriented and non-material values. Since post-materialism is the most reliable indicator of post-modern value orientation (Inglehart, 1995, p. 391) the pattern is also called post-modern. The post-modern construction of the child (able to freely develop as autonomous, expressive but also responsible person) is in the long run more likely to be formed in societies with majority of the population experiencing financial security, and in cultures defining human development as the promotion of the quality of life rather than the stimulation of strong economy. Typically, post-materialists also strive for participatory democracy – the growth of opportunities for people to be able to make decisions on their work, the environment and state matters, together with the protection of human rights, especially the freedom of speech. According to Inglehart (1997, p. 326), the above said reflects a new view of life and of what people expect from life.
A unique antipode to the postmodern image of the child is represented by the consistent pattern of characteristics such as religious faith, thrift and hard work (combined with obedience and unselfishness). This set of characteristics indicates collectivist and/or religious child-rearing paradigm oriented towards conformity to the (religious) community and its requirements: be this the requirement for a contribution to material well-being (hard work, thrift) or/and the requirement for the expression of religiosity. Pro-social nature of this image is reflected more in terms of charity (unselfishness) than in terms of acceptance of the differences between people (tolerance). The traditional/religious images of a child tend to prevail in poor countries with a large proportion of people holding authoritarian-oriented and material-oriented values. In this respect, the study confirms previous findings demonstrating the links between socio-economic factors and social values (see Inglehart 1995, 1997, 2005; Human Development Report Slovenia, 1998, 2000/2001, Turnšek, 2000).

As previously demonstrated (Inglehart & Welzel 2005) people’s value orientations are also associated with indicators of social democracy, such as with the years of democratic institutions existing in a society, and self-expression values. The present study, however, introduced the Gini index as a measure of “de facto” democracy, since it represents the ratio between the wealthiest and the poorest strata in society. The analyses indicate that societies with higher levels of income disparities tend to stress the child’s obedience and unselfishness rather than the traits supporting the child’s autonomy. The findings thus raise an intriguing question: does upbringing in the conditions of high levels of social inequality tend to promote those characteristics of children that lead to subordination, while inhibit the child’s autonomy as a prerequisite for critical reflection of “unfair” social systems? It seems that the exploration of the relationship between the indicators of social democracy and the socialization values might represent the next research challenge.
References


