Making Men into Fathers

Men, Masculinities and the Social Politics of Fatherhood

Edited by

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1 Coresidential paternal roles in industrialized countries: Sweden, Hungary and the United States

Livia Sz. Oláh, Eva M. Bernhardt and Frances K. Goldscheider

There have been dramatic changes in family patterns throughout the industrialized world during the last third of the twentieth century. Male–female relationships have become less committed, at least as indicated by the rapid rise in divorce and in cohabitation, which in most countries also involves less commitment than marriage. The couple relationship has become a much less central and stable element in adults' lives, both for men and for women.

These patterns are frequently noted. Less frequently noted, however, is a clear concomitant: that parenthood has become a much less central and stable element in men's lives, not only compared with the past, but particularly as compared with its role in the lives of women. In all of the countries undergoing these changes, the connections between men and children have become complex. Men are increasingly unlikely to live with their own biological children, struggling (some more and some much less successfully) to maintain rewarding and supportive relationships with them, yet increasingly likely to live with other children, the children of their current partner, with whom it is not clear at all what sorts of relationships should be established or maintained. In David Morgan's terms (see Morgan in this volume), the core meaning of "fatherhood" is challenged when men are confused about how to "father" either their absent biological children or the children (of their partner) with whom they do live. It is often not totally clear in either case whether they should be considered "fathers" at all. Their partner's children normally have a biological father, and their biological children's mother often has a new partner who is living with them.

Although there has been much more change in the relationships between men and children than in those between women and children, the focus of most theorizing about recent changes in the family has been on women, their increased independence, their increased aspirations and their presumed reduced dependence on men. If one way to view the gender revolution is that it is reducing the separation between the work sphere of men and the home sphere of women, then the focus of most research and theories has been on the ways that women have become more nearly equal with men in the sphere of work, with almost no attention to the implications of this complexity in men's parental roles for men's equality or inequality in the sphere of the family.

In addition to the increase in men's parental role complexity, many industrialized countries have experienced a considerable increase in the support states provide for families. Like separation and repartnering, this change also raises different issues for men than for women, since the traditional element of the father's role in the family division of labor is financial support. State support for families with children is generally seen as pro-family, although not always (Popenoe 1988, 1991). A consideration of families in gendered perspective, however, suggests that the type and extent of state support for families might have very different implications for the family roles of men than for those of women.

Research on the effects of family policy has shown that public policies differentially reinforce family types. Some primarily provide support that reinforces gender relations based on "separate spheres" for men and women, with payments made to men that substitute for women's wages. This system allows women to stay home but provides little or no affordable day-care if they wish to continue working, and also provides little job security when they want to return to work. Other systems of family support tend to reinforce gender equality, since payments are made to custodial parents; employed parents have access to substantial parental leave with job guarantees; and subsidized day-care is available to both employed and student parents (Sundström 1991). These two systems are also distinguished as "male breadwinner" and "worker–carer" models (Leira 1992; Lewis 1992; Hobson 1994).

There is another dimension on which family support policies differ, and that is whether they serve as a complement to men's financial roles or as substitutes for them (Cox and Jakubson 1995). The latter has been the case in the United States, where the major programs that provide support to children both have been strongly means-tested and have normally required that no man be present in the household. Although these policies have changed, most agree that the changes are not perceived either by the administrators at the local level or by applicants (Moffitt et al. 1998).

Both of these new trends, then, the growth in state support and the decrease in relationship stability, mean something quite different for men than for women. State support can either reinforce men's traditional roles or encourage egalitarian ones (such as the Swedish "daddy month," a month of parental leave that is only available to men), or it can drive them from the family altogether. The growth in complex paternal roles, with biological children that are often absent and stepchildren who are often present, also has effects with an important economic component. While there is no legal obligation for men to support these stepchildren unless there is formal adoption (Moffitt et al. 1998), most men realize that this is unrealistic, and that the children will be claimants on their income, at least while they remain together in the household.

There is actually little evidence one way or the other on whether men treat their partner's children as "their own." Most of these children have a living biological father who may dilute the strength of the paternal relationship. Further, men in these relationships can be much less confident that the relationship will last, since cohabiting relationships tend to be short-lived and second marriages have even higher rates of dissolution than first marriages when stepchildren are present (White and Booth 1985). Although they must live together and interact on a daily, even hourly basis, the relationships between the children and their mother's partner are only very weakly institutionalized as *parental* relationships. If the couple is married, the woman's husband becomes the children's "stepfather," but in the case of cohabitation there is not even a name for the relationship between the children and their mother's new partner.

In Sweden, men who cohabit with a woman with children are sometimes referred to as "social," "pretend" or "plastic" fathers. None of these terms, however, is well established or generally accepted. In this chapter we will use the term "household father" and call such children "household children." We have struggled with this concept, first using the term "informal father," thereby emphasizing the lack of a legal tie binding such men and children. We have chosen, however, to use a more positive term, one that emphasizes the actual structure of their relationship, which is based on coresidence. Although most biological fathers also live with their children, we will call those who do "biological fathers" to maintain the distinction between them and the growing numbers of men who no longer live with their biological children, whom we will call "absent fathers," and those who have become fathers by joining children in their households (household fathers).

The proportion of men who are living as household fathers is not small. In the three countries which we will be studying, the proportion of men in their late 20s or early 30s who are living with at least some household children among those living with children at all is 5 percent in Hungary, 10 percent in Sweden, and 14 percent in the United States. Hence, it has become increasingly important to know what sorts of men undertake the task of being household fathers, and how they differ from men in relationships which involve only biological children. How does the different obligation to support affect the processes linking income and parenthood? Does the provision of substantial state support for families mean that men make different calculations when they consider a union involving household fatherhood instead of or in addition to biological fatherhood than otherwise similar men might make in countries where such support is weak? Do societal gender-role attitudes influence men in their decision-making about becoming household fathers? We will address these issues by examining the extent to which men with more resources are more likely to be in more committed relationships, and whether this difference is greater for marital relationships than for cohabiting ones and greater in countries with less than more state support, controlling for other factors likely to influence men's family roles.

In this chapter, we begin a cross-national investigation of the relationships between men and children, focusing on cases that vary systematically in the extent of state support to families and on the extent of social support for separate spheres for men and women. We examine Northern Europe (Finland, Norway and Sweden), focusing on Sweden; Central/Eastern Europe (the former East Germany, Hungary and Poland), focusing on Hungary; and Western Europe/North America (France, the former West Germany, Canada and the United States), taking the United States as our focus in this category.

Background

In order to study factors affecting the types of coresidential paternal roles men hold in these three countries, we need to consider factors at the level of the state and at the level of the individual. At the state level are factors that affect all men in a given country, which in our case are the state-level differences in support for families and in gender-role attitudes. At the individual level are factors that differ among men, since an important question is *which* men become household fathers. Below we discuss both sorts of factors.

Country-level factors: state family support and gender role equality

Our primary, multivariate analysis focuses on three countries, Sweden, Hungary and the United States. These countries differ in a number of ways. They have different histories, very different sizes and different geographic locations. Nevertheless, they represent an opportunity for systematic comparative analysis, based on their differences and similarities.

The recent histories of social policy for Sweden, the smallest country of these three in terms of population (8 million), and of the United States, which is more than 30 times as large (270 million) are described elsewhere in this volume (Hobson and Bergman for Sweden; Orloff and Monson for the United States). Below we provide a short description of Hungary's recent history.

Hungary is a small country in central Europe, with a population of about 10 million. As part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire prior to 1918, and even up to the mid-1940s, Hungarian socioeconomic development was not much different from that of Western Europe, with central roles for the Church (especially the Catholic Church) and for the patriarchal family, in which men worked outside the home but few married women did.

After World War II, Hungary, together with the other states in the region, became part of the Soviet sphere of influence, which had major implications for the economy, politics and public policies. The rebuilding of the half-destroyed country required the work of both men and women in the early post-war years. The demand for female employment remained high due to massive industrial development and the ruling socialist ideology's commitment to full employment and "gender equality." The state–socialist concept of gender equality was, however, limited to women's and men's equal labor force participation. Also, the low level of wages increased the need for full-time working dual-earner couples.

There was no effort to require equal sharing of unpaid work (e.g. household work, childrearing and care for the sick and elderly), however, or to provide equal access to decision-making positions either in the economy or in the other spheres of public life. "Family-friendly" social policies and an extended network of social services (especially public child care) facilitated the combination of parenthood and employment for women, hardly addressing men at all. Thus, despite increases in equality in the extent of employment, pre-war gender relations were maintained within the family and the society during the forty years of socialism to a far greater extent than was the case in Sweden or the United States.

The power of using the three countries for contrast lies in two dimensions that distinguish them clearly. The first is the difference in the level and structure of state support for families, which can affect the ability of parents to combine working and family life by easing their economic and time costs, or, in the extreme, to remain with their children and still receive support. The second is the difference in the level of social support for actually combining work and family life in terms of the preferred gender-role attitudes in each of these three countries. Most research on gender issues has focused primarily on differences in attitudes.

This three-country contrast allows us to weigh the importance of this dimension against that of the structural dimension of state support.

State support for families

A major difference between the United States, Sweden and Hungary is in the level of public support provided to children and the terms under which it is provided (summarized in Table 2) (Adamik 1991; Sundström 1991; Sundström and Stafford 1992; Sainsbury 1996). Both Sweden and Hungary had particularly generous policies at the time the data used in this study were collected, although each country has experienced some decline in support in the mid-1990s. Direct state support to families is almost non-existent in the United States.

Sweden In Sweden, the cost of childrearing is reduced through four major policy programs. First, parents can be absent from work with cash benefits for many months (usually more than a year). Secondly, there is a universal system of child allowances, which provided about 12 percent of net income for a family with an average industrial worker's wage in 1985 (Wennemo 1994). Thirdly, there is a means-tested housing allowance. Fourthly, the highly subsidized public child-care system greatly facilitates the combination of gainful employment and parenthood, and thus further decreases the costs of children. Whether the parents are married or cohabiting is not a factor in determining eligibility for benefits. Single parents[1] are also not discriminated against, either positively

Table 2. *Public support provided to families with children in the United States, Sweden and Hungary*

Policy program	USA	Sweden	Hungary
Maternity/parental leave	not statutory until 1993	statutory (paid)	statutory (paid)
Child/family allowance	none	statutory (universal)	statutory
Housing-related benefit	none	housing allowance (means-tested)	"baby bonus" (for young couples buying a dwelling)
Subsidized public child care	none	yes	yes
Special program for single parents	AFDC (means-tested)	none	none
Tax allowance for children	yes	none	none

or negatively, except for a small supplement to the child allowance they received prior to 1996. The Swedish tax system, however, does not allow any tax deduction related to childrearing.

The parental leave program

Before 1974, only mothers were entitled to leave, which provided a maximum of six months and a 65 percent income replacement. After 1974, parents became free to divide the leave between themselves, with a replacement level of 90 percent of previous earnings, a job-guarantee, and pension entitlement. The benefit is taxable. The period of paid leave was extended several times, reaching fifteen months by the end of the 1980s, though the last three months only provided a flat-rate benefit. Non-employed parents are also eligible for a flat-rate benefit for the same period as the leave for employed parents. The system is highly flexible. The benefit can be used on a full-time or a part-time basis up to the child's eighth birthday (Sundström 1996). For children born in 1995 or later, one month of income-related leave is reserved for the father and one for the mother. (For more detail, see Hobson and Bergman in this volume.)

Child allowance

A child allowance was introduced as a universal benefit in 1947. It was paid to the mother for each child in the family (and included only children, unlike in other countries that provided benefits only for higher-order children). In 1982, an additional benefit (in Swedish: "flerbarnstillägg") was introduced for third and additional children, and its amount increased according to the number of children (Lavin 1987). This higher allowance was abolished for children born after 1995, but reintroduced for third and additional children after January 1, 1998.

Housing allowance

In the mid-1930s, a housing allowance was introduced as a means-tested benefit in Sweden. It was paid to families with at least three children. In 1947, families with two children also became eligible for it and after 1958, even families with only one child. The old system was replaced by a new program in 1968. Further reforms took place in the late 1980s and in the early 1990s, but the benefit has remained means-tested over time (SOU 1995: 133).

Subsidized public child care

The Swedish public day-care system began in the 1960s but expanded greatly after the mid-1970s. It is provided by municipalities and financed mainly by government subsidies, together with parents' fees which are normally based on their income. Public child care is available only for parents of pre-school children who study or are gainfully employed for at least twenty hours per week (Gustafsson and Stafford 1994). In the early 1990s, about 60 percent of children below the age of seven received care in the public day-care system (Statistics Sweden [SCB] 1995).

Hungary Hungary until recently had a very similar package of policies that reduced the cost of children: a parental leave program, family allowances, housing-related benefits and a public day-care system. The family allowance, which averaged about 17 percent of the net income per child (Krausz 1992), was paid as a universal benefit to all families with children. Although there was no housing allowance in Hungary, from the 1970s to the 1990s the state provided a significant one-time benefit for young married couples with children who wanted to build or buy a dwelling. The individual-based tax system, as in Sweden, did not provide any tax allowance for dependent children in Hungary. (This has changed in 2000 to a relatively low tax-deduction for working parents based on the number of children in the family.) However, marital status did matter for some benefits[2] in Hungary and single parents receive more public support than average two-earner families, in contrast to Sweden.

The parental leave program

Until the mid-1960s, mothers could take only a short paid leave after birth in spite of the socialist full-employment policy that required both women's and men's full-time labor market participation. In 1967, women became entitled to a leave with job security, in addition to a fully paid five-month long maternity leave after the birth, and a flat payment ("GYES") of about 40 percent of an average female wage until the child was 2.5 years old. In 1969, the leave was extended to the child's third birthday. Men were not eligible for child-care leave until 1982, but even then they could take leave only when the child was at least one year old.

In 1985, the period of fully paid maternity leave was extended to six months, and leave during the following six-month period was earnings-related (75 percent of the previous wage, or 65 percent in case of shorter previous employment), called child-care pay ("GYED"). Those not eligible for GYED, for example students, could still receive GYES, since both programs were available until the mid-1990s. At the beginning, only mothers could use GYED. In 1986, it was extended by half a year and fathers became entitled to leave for children 12–18 months of age. Starting in 1987, GYED could be used until the child's second birthday (Adamik 1991). In 1996, GYED was abolished and GYES became a means-tested benefit. Unpaid parental leave was still available for parents who were not eligible for cash benefits according to the means-test. In 1999 the means-test for GYES was abolished. Since 2000 working parents are, again, eligible for GYED with a benefit level of 70 percent of the previous wage.

Family allowance

A family allowance was introduced in Hungary in 1938, one of the first countries in Europe to do so (Gordon 1988). During the socialist period, it was restricted to employment in the state-sector (although after the mid-1950s it also covered members of agricultural co-operatives). After 1990, the employment requirement was abolished. While at first only large families received the benefit, one-child families became eligible in 1983. The amount of the allowance has varied according to family type, i.e. single parents and those with disabled children have received higher benefits (Krausz 1992; Jarvis and Micklewright 1992). In 1996, the family allowance was converted to a means-tested program, but became again a universal benefit in 1999.

Housing-related benefit

During socialism there was a constant shortage of housing in Hungary, especially in urban areas, with rental housing only available through the municipalities. In the late 1960s, it became possible to buy a house or apartment. From the 1970s, young couples who took a loan from the bank to build or buy a dwelling received part of the loan as a one-time benefit they did not have to pay back if they had children or "promised" to have one child within three years or two children within six years after taking the loan, a kind of "baby bonus." Only couples below the age of 35 were eligible to make such a "promise." If they did not have the promised children in the period given in the contract, they had to pay the "baby bonus" back as a part of the original loan. The benefit was abolished at the end of 1994.

Subsidized public child care

Hungarian child-care institutions were run by municipalities and by big companies, and were mainly financed by state subsidies. Parents' fees were quite low and based on their income (Adamik 1991). In the transition period, many day-nurseries have closed and others were privatized; the rest are run by the reorganized municipalities with significantly higher financial contribution from the parents than in the past.

United States There is much less state support for families with children in the United States than in either Sweden or Hungary. While private employers not uncommonly have offered maternity benefits, there was no national legislation on parental leave until 1993, and, even then, only unpaid leave was provided.[3] There is almost no subsidized day-care (Panayotova and Brayfield 1997), which makes the cost to working families very high. The major program of support for children (AFDC) is strongly means-tested and the benefit level is low in most states. AFDC is a federal–state program, that provides cash benefits to single-parent families. Other benefits, such as food stamps, Medicaid, day-care and housing are normally tied to receipt of AFDC. A work requirement was adopted for single mothers in the program in 1972, but it was not strictly enforced. During the 1980s, eligibility conditions became more restrictive and eligibility to the related in-kind benefits was reduced (Sainsbury 1996).

The American tax system, however, does provide a tax allowance for families with dependent children, unlike in Sweden and Hungary. It is much less generous than the direct support provided by these two countries. In 1985 it averaged around 4 percent of net income for families with an average industrial worker's wage (Wennemo 1994).

Also in contrast to the Swedish and Hungarian systems, the United States provides no national program of medical insurance, often a considerable expense to families with children. The only program that provides subsidized medical care to children (Medicaid) is strongly means-tested. Like AFDC, Medicaid, in addition to stringent means-testing, was also restricted to single-parent families until the last few years, so that families could expect their benefits to go to zero if a male entered the family, particularly if the couple married (Moffitt et al. 1998). Even under the new rules that lifted the restriction to single-parent families, the stringent means-testing implies that all but extremely low-earning prospective partners can expect the benefits to be withdrawn upon their entry into the household. In terms of state support for families with children, then, the United States stands out, by providing almost none, either in terms of financial support, which eases the burden of parents (and particularly men) to "provide" or in terms of family leave, which makes it more feasible to plan adult lives that include both family and paid work (particularly for women). These differences in the structure of state support for families with children can have a substantial influence on demographic behavior patterns and on patterns of coresidence.

Gender-role attitudes

When it comes to gender relations, there are major differences between these countries in levels of social support for egalitarian gender relationships. Women's participation in higher education and in the labor force has reached high levels in each of the three countries (despite some differences in the use of part-time employment).[4] Nevertheless, no real transformation of gender relations has occurred in Hungary or in other state–socialist countries. In these countries, respondents typically express strong support for men's primacy in the public sphere of work and politics, and the centrality of the family in women's lives (Szalai 1991), with the result that employed mothers carry a double burden of paid work and domestic chores.

Americans are more egalitarian in their attitudes toward women's involvement in non-traditional roles (e.g. employment and politics) than Hungarians (Panayotova and Brayfield 1997). Support for mothers to hold paid employment increased dramatically in the United States (Thornton 1989). There has been much less change in actual behavior in terms of domestic tasks, which resulted in the development of a double burden in the United States, as in Hungary (sometimes called the "second shift"), for employed women (Hochschild 1989). Men in the United States have increased the time they spend caring for families (Goldscheider and Waite 1991), with the result that, while fathers spent less time on domestic tasks than single men in the 1960s, this has now reversed (Gershuny and Robinson 1988).

Swedes have been more successful in moving traditional gender relations in the home to greater equality (Baxter and Kane 1995). A portion of the family leave benefit is only available to fathers. Gender equality has been on the active policy agenda at least since the mid-1960s, and from early on the idea of a transformation of gender roles included the notion that at the same time as women got more involved in non-family activities men should take their share of domestic responsibilities (Bernhardt 1992; Hobson and Bergman in this volume).

In terms of attitudes toward gender-role equality, then, our second country-level dimension, it is Hungary that differs the most, in contrast to the situation on the dimension of state support for families, where the United States is the most distinctive. While we take the two dimensions together, the picture seems to be that in the United States women feel a strong commitment to combine work and family but have great difficulties doing so because of the lack of supportive programs. In addition, the costs of parenthood are very high for men. In Hungary, in contrast, state support for families serves primarily to ease the financial burdens of the population (since as we will see, most live in families with children), and to allow exhausted women to reclaim their domestic roles to the extent possible, which reinforces men's traditional position in the family. Only in Sweden are attitudes and policies congruent, providing support for both fathers and mothers to work and to care.

Individual-level factors: theories of family formation

We expect that there will be individual factors, in addition to the structure of state support and expected gender roles, that will influence the types of families men (and women) form. We draw primarily on general theories of union formation (cohabitation versus marriage) and fertility for our choice of explanatory variables. Demographic studies on connections between men and children have been largely indirect; they examine how having already had children affects the likelihood that a *woman* enters a new union. These studies have also focused almost entirely on marriage and on the United States (Koo et al. 1984; Chiswick and Lehrer 1990; but see Ermisch and Wright 1991 on Great Britain). They have typically found that the presence and sometimes the number of children reduce women's likelihood of marrying. Bennett, Bloom and Miller (1995) also find that children depress the likelihood of union formation, but the negative effect is less for cohabitation than for marriage, which suggests that children reduce the extent of men's commitment to the relationship.

There is much less evidence on how children affect men's likelihood of union formation. Bernhardt (2000) found that men who had children were more likely to enter a second union than men who reported no children in their first union. However, few of these children lived with their fathers. Smith, Zick and Duncan (1991) looked at widowers, where presumably most of the children lived with their fathers, and showed that dependent children also reduce middle-aged (<60) men's likelihood of remarriage after widowhood, although the reduction is much less than is the case for women with children.

However, there is no research on how the presence of the children of a potential partner would influence a person's likelihood of forming a union with that partner. Based on the research that takes the parent as the unit of analysis, we expect that the effect of children would be negative, if only for financial reasons. This is particularly likely to be the case in societies that provide little state support for the expenses of children. Societal gender-role attitudes can further strengthen the negative effect of partners' children, at least for countries with more traditional gender relations. To predict entering a union with children, we will treat such unions as non-normative, and in that sense inferior unions, and derive our expectations from the body of theory developed to study racial intermarriages, which are also non-normative unions.

Theories predicting entry to marriage and parenthood lead us to expect that those with more resources are both more desirable as marriage partners and more ready themselves to take on these adult roles. However, this effect should be weaker for cohabitation than for marriage, since the planning horizon for cohabitation is less. With regard to the effect of pre-existing children, intermarriage theory predicts that those considering entering unions that are less desirable normally "trade" some other characteristic. For example, a white man considering marrying a black woman can do so with a lower occupational status than he would need to attract an otherwise comparable white partner (Monahan 1976; Schoen and Wooldredge 1989).

This logic with regard to children is reinforced by taking the point of view of the individual, him/herself. Since people are likely to prefer to invest more resources into biological and adopted children, many of those with more resources might avoid entering situations where the potential for investment in household children is high. These effects should be stronger in a society that provides little financial support for children, such as the United States, than in Sweden or Hungary, where support for children is extensive, both via entitlement programs (family allowances, national health care, and free education at all levels) and means-tested poverty prevention programs. There is some evidence of such an income pattern in the United States, where the incomes of men in stepfamilies and cohabiting families are substantially lower than the incomes of men in other families (Sweet and Bumpass 1989), particularly if children are present (Duncan and Hoffman 1985). Hence, our major hypothesis for this analysis is: higher socioeconomic status should increase the likelihood of being in a union, but lower status is needed to be in a union with a partner with coresident children than to be in a union with a partner without children. The effect should be greater for marriage than for cohabitation, and greater in the United States than in Sweden or Hungary.

As for the effect of gender-role attitudes, men with more traditional gender-role attitudes are probably more likely to be in a union. Although they should also be more likely to want children, men with traditional gender-role attitudes might be more reluctant to be in a union with a partner with coresident children, given the non-traditional nature of such relationships.

It is also important to control for other factors likely to influence various dimensions of the union formation process, particularly those likely to have an effect on the parental behavior of those entering such unions. The major types of measures which we consider as controls are indicators of a man's life-course progress (age), background (family structure and number of siblings) and whether he is an absent father.

Data, concepts and methods

Our analysis proceeds in two steps, based on two sets of data and two analytic methods. We will begin with an overview of the family statuses of men and women in ten countries in Europe and North America. We will then narrow our focus to men in three countries, Sweden, Hungary and the United States. At both steps, our goal is to maximize the similarities in the ways we construct our measures in order to reveal similarities and differences in the processes underlying different family statuses, and, in particular, how men attain different types of parenthood.

Data

In our overview analysis of the family roles of men and women in industrialized countries, we use data from a set of countries in Europe and North America. These are drawn from the "Fertility and Family Surveys in Countries in the ECE Region" project, which is being carried out by the Population Activities Unit of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. This project has involved the development of core and module questionnaires and the co-ordination of efforts among the twenty industrialized countries that undertook surveys on family and fertility between 1989 and 1996, all of which have been or are in the process of being converted to standard recode files and archived in Geneva.

Our more focused analysis of men and of the factors linked with being in different paternal roles uses data from three separate nationally representative surveys of Sweden, Hungary and the United States. (For details on these surveys see Sweet et al. 1988; Granström 1997; Kamarás 1999.)

Concepts

Our central concepts focus on types of family status. We distinguish throughout between families that include partners, those that include children, and those that include both. In our multi-country analysis, we use these concepts in their simplest form. In our three-country analysis, we distinguish partnerships by whether they are marital or cohabiting and children by whether the coresidential children are a man's "household" or "biological" children. We use measures of education and gender-role attitudes to predict who holds which family statuses in each country. We also control age, childhood family structure (parental marital status and number of siblings) and absent fatherhood. We have attempted to construct these measures to maximize their similarity among all countries, both for our multi-country and three-country analyses. With the exception of gender-role attitudes, where we had to use the only available information from each survey, our measures are almost fully identical in their construction. They are described in Table 3.

Methods

Our descriptive analysis focuses on differences between the family statuses of men and women. We focus on life course, country and gender differences in living in partnerships and parenthood. Our goal is to establish gender differences in these major axes of family structure before beginning the process of unraveling the factors underlying these differences with our multivariate analysis. Our multivariate analysis uses multinomial logistic regression with a dependent variable based on combinations of men's parental and partnership statuses.[5]

Results

First, we show men in the United States, Sweden and Hungary in a broader context. We compare them both with women and with men in the other countries in their "region," and focus on the ages of young and middle adulthood. In this portion of the analysis, we do not distinguish partnerships by whether they are marital or cohabiting, or parents by whether the children are biological or not.

Multi-country analysis

Data for women aged 20–24, 30–34 and 40–44 in the period around 1990 are shown for 10 countries (Table 4) and for men aged 25–29, 30–34 and 40–44 for as many of the same countries as the data allowed (Table 5). In all of these countries, these data show a basic life-course pattern: the young are most likely to be living with neither partner nor children, or with a partner only. Men enter unions and become parents at later ages than women, and are much less likely than women in every country to be single parents. Regional differences, however, are substantial, and there are differences in the extent to which our target countries typify their region.

Table 3. *Definitions of independent variables*

Variables	Sweden, 1992–3
Age	age at survey (28, 33, 43). Reference category = age 28
Education	
low (reference)	elementary school (6–8 years) and at most 2 years of vocational school
medium	upper-secondary-school diploma and possibly some vocational
high	university studies (with or without degree)
Family structure in childhood	(composition of family during the greater part of childhood (<16 years)
non-bio parents	stepfather/stepmother or single parent
intact (reference)	biological or adoptive parents (incl. widowed)
Siblings	number of full or half brothers and sisters
Gender-role attitudes	respondent's image of ideal family situation with children under age 7 1 = Both parents work and share the responsibility for home and children equally 2 = Man works full-time, woman works part-time and bears the primary responsibility for home and children 3 = Only the man has a job while the woman bears the primary responsibility for home and children
Absent father	has biological or adopted children who live with their mother
	Hungary, 1992–3
Age	age at survey. Age 2 = 31–35; Age 3 = 40–44; Age 1 = 26–30 (ref.)
Education	
low (reference)	up to elementary (4–8 years) and vocational school (+3 years)
medium	up to upper-secondary-school diploma and some vocational (4 years)
high	university studies (with or without degree)
Family structure in childhood	composition of family during most of childhood (<15 years)
non-bio parents	stepfather/stepmother or single parent
intact (reference)	biological parents (incl. widowed)
Siblings	number of full or half brothers and sisters
Gender-role attitudes	four questions combined to create a scale; recoded E = egalitarian, I = intermediate, T = traditional *agreement or disagreement with the following:

Table 3. (*cont.*)

Variables	Hungary, 1992–3
	– marriage as an institution has lost its importance nowadays – if a single woman wants to have children without living together with a man, she should be allowed to do what she likes – I do not mind any sacrifices in order to have a good relationship with my spouse/partner, even if it jeopardizes my other goals – I do whatever it takes in order to promote my career
Absent father	has biological or adopted children who live with mother
	United States, 1988–9
Age	age at survey. Age 2 = 31–35; Age 3 = 40–44; Age 1 = 26–30 (ref.)
Education	
low (reference)	high school or lower
medium	some college, vocational school, or associate's degree
high	bachelor's degree or higher
Family structure in childhood	
non-bio parents	ever lived with stepparent for four months or more, or parents separated/divorced or never lived with biological father
intact (reference)	lived with two biological parents through childhood or death of parent
Siblings	number of full brothers and sisters
Gender-role attitudes	
	five questions combined to create scale from 5 to 31; recoded 1 = egalitarian (5–13), 2 = intermediate (14–22), 3 = traditional (23–31) *approval or disapproval of the following: – mothers who work full-time when their youngest child is under age 5 – mothers who work part-time when their youngest child is under age 5 – children under 3 being cared for all day in a day-care center *agreement or disagreement with the following: – man earns the main living and woman takes care of the home and family – pre-school children suffer if their mother is employed
Absent father	Has minor children living elsewhere

Table 4. *Percentage of women living in different family types in selected European and North American countries, 1988/1992*

	Age Group at Interview											
	20–24				30–34				40–44			
Country	both	partner	child	neither	both	partner	child	neither	both	partner	child	neither
Finland	16[a]	38[a]	4[a]	43[a]	69	15	6	10	69	11	11	10
Norway[b]	27	31	5	37	76	7	9	9	78	9	9	5
Sweden[b]	21	36	5	38	71	9	12	9	66	12	13	8
former East Germany	35	13	6	46	78	3	13	7	76[c]	5[c]	12[c]	7[c]
Hungary	37	17	4	42	80	4	10	6	79[d]	3[d]	14[d]	4[d]
Poland	37	14	3	46	82	5	5	8	79	5	12	4
France	14	24	4	58	66	11	12	12	74	5	14	7
former West Germany	13	18	2	67	64	13	8	16	66[c]	11[c]	9[c]	14[c]
Canada	13	22	7	57	64	15	9	12	70	11	9	10
USA	23	19	12	46	64	9	15	12	52	24	13	11

Source: NSFH and FFS

Note: both = living with partner and child(ren); partner = living with partner, no child(ren); child = living with child(ren), no partner; neither = living without partner and child(ren).

[a] 22–24 years of age; [b] exact ages 23, 33 and 43; [c] age group 35–39; [d] 40–41 years of age.

Central and Eastern European women are the most likely to have both a partner and children at all ages, although the differences are most marked in their early twenties, while they are the least likely to live with a partner only. Women in Western Europe/North America are the most likely to postpone family formation, and to live alone (i.e. without partner and children) even in their early thirties. Having a partner but no children is most common among young Nordic women compared to women in other regions.

Hungarian women closely resemble the patterns shown by Polish women and those from the former East Germany. Swedish women more closely resemble other Nordic women than women in other regions but are somewhat more likely to be single parents than are Norwegian or Finnish women. The US women, however, do not fit closely with women in other countries (whether West European or Canadian) in several ways. They are more likely than others to be single parents, particularly at young ages. The oldest US women (aged 40–44 in 1988) are also much less likely to live in partnerships with children. That group of women had their children very young, and US children leave home earlier than those in most of these countries (Cherlin 1997).

When we turn our attention to men (Table 5), we see that the regional differences are quite similar to those for women, with the highest proportions living with both a partner and children in Central and Eastern Europe and the lowest proportion in Western Europe/North America. Swedish men are more typical of their region than Swedish women, falling between the levels of Finnish and Norwegian men at each age. Hungarian men enter unions and parenthood somewhat less rapidly than the other two Central and Eastern European countries and, like men in the former East Germany, have fewer children than Polish men. US men closely resemble Western European and Canadian men at age 40–44, in being more likely to live without children among those in partnerships than men in Northern or Central/Eastern Europe, but this seems to represent a different process for US men. At young ages, they move rapidly into parenthood (close to the Northern European pattern) but, by their early 40s, they are the most likely to live with a partner but with no children. Hence, while the pattern for the other countries in the Western European/North American grouping seems to reflect late childbearing, the US pattern seems more likely to be the result of the much higher level of partnership dissolution in the United States than in other countries. Most of these men are too young to have children who have left home; hence, it is more likely that they have left their children, to live in many cases with a childless woman.

To summarize the differences between the regions and between men and women, we present Figure 2, which shows the percentage of men and

Table 5. *Percentage of men living in different family types in selected European and North American countries, 1988/1992*

	Age Group at Interview											
	25–29				30–34				40–44			
Country	both	partner	child	neither	both	partner	child	neither	both	partner	child	neither
Finland[a]	28	32	0	40	65	10	2	24	61	19	3	17
Norway[b]	47	25	1	27	–	–	–	–	78	8	3	11
Sweden[c]	37	26	1	36	61	12	2	25	70	10	4	17
former East Germany	54	12	2	32	75	8	1	16	75[d]	7[d]	3[d]	16[d]
Hungary	45	16	0	39	71	6	1	22	74	9	3	15
Poland	56	9	0	35	72	5	0	23	86	4	1	9
France	30	24	0	45	64	12	1	23	75	7	2	16
former West Germany	28	21	0	51	52	18	3	27	63[d]	15[d]	2[d]	20[d]
Canada	31	27	1	41	54	19	1	26	73	10	3	14
USA	36	23	1	40	59	17	1	23	62	21	2	15

Source: NSFH and FFS

Note: both = living with partner and child(ren); partner = living with partner, no child(ren); child = living with child(ren), no partner; neither = living without partner and child(ren).

[a] age groups 25–29, 35–39 and 45–49; [b] exact ages 28 and 43; [c] exact ages 28, 33 and 43; [d] age group 35–39.