

# From Patriarchy to Egalitarianism: Parenting Roles in Democratizing Poland and Kyrgyzstan

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**ABSTRACT.** This paper offers an analysis of how parenting can be understood as an artifact that articulates and portrays the cultural, economic and political reality of transitional democratic vs. communist societies. In this framework, we specifically compare forms of family life and parental roles in the democratizing former Soviet countries: Poland and Kyrgyzstan. In these countries traditional culture, stemming in part from Moslem or Catholic traditions, operates as a noteworthy segment of societal structure that plays a significant role in holding societies together. Accordingly, two tendencies can be observed in these countries: (a) a move towards Western democratic values, including the idea of egalitarianism and small nuclear families, and (b) a revival of cultural traditions relating to family life and marital relation-

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ships. Although families have become solely responsible for how they choose to organize themselves, whether in the spirit of Western values and egalitarian roles, or in the spirit of traditional patriarchy, this paper posits that recent democratization and diffusion of Western, egalitarian models of family relationships have a stronger effect on parenting roles than religious traditionalism. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2004 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

**KEYWORDS.** Democratic transitions, gender roles, post-communist states, parenting, parent-child relationships

This paper explores the cultural and ideological understanding of parental roles that reflects and defines the social reality of the communist and post-communist (transitional democracy) periods. The current democratic transformation taking place in the former communist states, accompanied by the transition toward a capitalistic market economy, have brought substantial changes in the lives of residents of countries from the former Soviet bloc (Czapiński, 1994; Reboud & Hoaquan, 1997; Stephenson, 1998). Among these changes are the establishment of political freedom, free elections, the transition to a market economy, and the opening of opportunities for private entrepreneurship. Moreover, the ongoing political and economic openness, and contact with the Western world, have exposed former Soviet-bloc societies to the lifestyle of Western countries, and to their liberal, egalitarian culture (Dąbrowski & Antczak, 1996; Wejnert, 2002; Wejnert & Spencer, 1996).

These changes have generated trends of rising expectations and yearning for material comforts at the same time as a tendencies to adopt Western models of social behavior. Such Western practices include modern parental roles characterized by marital relations that are egalitarian as well as the active involvement of fathers in child care and child-rearing duties. Consequently, this paper offers an analysis of how parenting can be understood as a social mechanism that articulates and portrays the cultural, economic and political reality of communist and post-communist societies.

In this framework, we specifically compare family relationships and parental roles in the communist and post-communist periods of two former Soviet countries: Poland and Kyrgyzstan. In these countries, traditional culture operates as an articulated segment of societal structures, and thus, plays a significant role in holding societies together.

### ***AN OVERVIEW OF PARENTING ROLES DURING COMMUNISM***

It is true that in the Soviet bloc women keep the wheels of industry turning. Virtually no factory could keep going without female labor, no hospitals could function in a country where women constitute about 70 percent of all doctors, and service industries would collapse without women hairdressers and waitresses, ticket-sellers, and shop assistants . . . But women also do *all* the shopping, cooking and cleaning. (Binyon, 1983, p.36)

Every year on March 8th, the men of Eastern European and former Soviet societies used to officially honor their wives with a holiday that was a celebration of women's liberation during the communist revolution—a recognition of their achievement of equality. The celebration of this *International Women's Day* was acknowledged by tributes in the press, speeches in the Politburo, and flowers and gifts for female coworkers, wives and mothers. Women, however, recognizing that their equality under communism was, at the least, equivocal, often used these celebrations as an occasion to send letters to newspaper editors describing their bitter lives.

Since the establishment of the communist system in the early 1920s, women were proclaimed to be equal to men across communist states. Potential problems with the equality of women were solved through the establishment of laws prohibiting gender discrimination. For the next fifty years, the problem of gender inequality was considered to be nonexistent (Gontarczyk, 2001, p.213). To some extent, the equality of women and men was achieved in education, labor force participation, and representation in political organs was more extensive than in Western democracies. Women also received many social benefits that were rarely seen in Western countries, such as maternity leaves lasting as much as 3 years, long-term maternity benefits, low-cost day-care centers, and state funds for child support provided to married couples (Wejnert, 1996a).

Nonetheless, the view of social equality promoted by communist states failed to acknowledge that women were also expected to be the sole care-providers for family members, and practically the sole care-givers of children. The lack of state interest in the domestic sphere led to women being overburdened and to the submissive position of wives-mothers, a circumstance that contrasted with what appeared to be their equal position in the public sphere. The neglect of domestic issues was reflected by a lack of studies on the overburdened condition of women. In fact, such studies were considered Western political propaganda and any initiative with the goal of raising public awareness of women's inequality at home was categorized as dissident political activity

(Binyon, 1983, p.36). In addition, the communist government exerted control over media coverage of feminist issues and the media was remarkably timid about the issue of domestic inequality. Patriarchal authority prospered under such a climate. Fathers' involvement in child rearing was limited and there was a lack of emphasis placed on modern paternal roles. Similar to other Soviet bloc countries, patriarchal culture dominated family life in Poland and Kyrgyzstan.

*Poland.* Throughout nineteenth and twentieth century Polish history (e.g., the time of partition in the nineteenth century, World War I and II), Polish men were killed, imprisoned, or sent to Siberia, while women were left to raise children, support families, and maintain cultural traditions (Titkov, 1992). These historical circumstances eventually led to the emergence of a model of "Matka Polka" (the Polish Mother). The image of *Matka Polka* envisioned a woman who was strong and selfless, "a figure of courage and great strength." At the same time, this ideal woman was to have "no meaningful life of her own" but was supposed to be fully devoted to her family (Reading, 1992).

Thus, across the last two centuries, women's self-sacrifice for the family was glorified in literature, movies, songs, paintings and monuments. This cultural tradition, deeply embedded in Polish society, was an important element in the prevailing "models of womanhood" within communist systems. In particular, during a brief period from the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s, the "socialist hero-worker" model of women came to predominate, presenting women as brick layers, tractor drivers, miners and factory workers. This model rested entirely on women's occupational involvement. In the years 1945-54, when all hands were needed for labor, the streets were full of posters with women tractor drivers and women streetcar drivers who were joyfully smiling. By the end of the 1950s, when no more laborers were needed, the traditional domestic view of women replaced previous propaganda and the previous posters vanished from streets (Reading 1992, p.39). From the 1960s until the end of the 1980s, the hero-worker model for women was being abandoned and replaced by a more traditional and difficult, "working mother" model.

Thus, within the communist past, contrasting cultural models of motherhood, ranging from total engagement in occupational activities to the more traditional worker-mother, were propagated. Nonetheless, the prevailing model of mother-homemaker was never completely revived and working, career-oriented involvements are still expected of mothers, though perhaps only implicitly. Such expectations have been supported by the Catholic tradition of promoting sexual abstinence before marriage and forbidding the use of birth-control methods by married couples, a practice that indirectly encourages larger families. The promotion of larger families was accompanied by several ideas rooted in the traditional culture. These traditional ideas included

patriarchal authority of husbands/fathers, combined with the absence of expectations conveyed by religious, state-run, or non-governmental institutions, that fathers should be actively involved in parental duties. Consequently, child-parent relationships, lasting until adulthood, were expected to be dominated by strong emotional ties developed between children and mothers, but were extremely limited if not absent in relationships between fathers and children.

This mother-centered parenting was generally free of substantial conflicts between parents and children. For example, in Skorupska-Sobańska's 1967 study, 73% of children age 11-18 reported having a strongly positive relationship with their parents and 91% of children reported feeling loved by their parents. However, the relationships between mothers and children were much stronger than relationships between fathers and children. The great majority of children reported having a close affiliation with mothers (97% of children) but only 3% of girls and no boys reported having close relationship with fathers (Skorupska-Sobańska, 1967). In another study by Skorupska-Sobańska (1971), close to one-fifth of youth were reported to believe that parents do not understand their problems and hence wanted to expand relationships with them. However, while almost all of those children (over 90%) were certain that mothers would support them during times of difficulty, only 3% believed that they could always count on the support of fathers. Middle and high school students perceived mothers as caring, patient, dedicated to children, seeking contact with children, and having interest in their problems, while fathers were perceived as controlling, interested in discipline, unwilling to spend time with children, and not having any interest in children's lives. Fathers also were criticized for not helping mothers with housework and/or child-care (Rachalska, 1968).

Only 3% of youth felt alienated at home, attesting to very positive relationships between children and parents and almost nonexistent conflicts (Skorupska-Sobańska, 1967). If conflicts were noticed, they tended to be short-term in nature, with over one-fifth (22%) of youth reporting frequent, short-term disagreements with parents (Skorupska-Sobańska, 1971). More frequent but also short-term disagreements were observed in families of farmers where, according to one study (Grzybek, 1977), as many as 75% of high school students reported having minor conflicts with parents. Youth described most disagreements as relating to parental requirements to help with house-care duties or about children's behavior. Conflicts occurred more frequently with mothers than with fathers (Kowalski, 1980). It is not surprising, however, that fathers rarely disagreed with children because child-father con-

tacts were extremely limited and children were emotionally distant from fathers (Kowalski, 1980).

Overall, in communist Poland, parent-child relationships were dominated almost solely by the care that mothers provided. Not surprisingly, society's and children's perceptions of the role of Polish mothers versus fathers reflected the prevailing cultural image of "*Matka Polka*" (the Polish Mother).

*Kyrgyzstan.* In order to understand the changes in roles of mothers and fathers introduced during communism, it is necessary to summarize briefly the traditions that prevailed in pre-Soviet times. Kyrgyz people used to lead a nomadic life with a patriarchal culture strongly consolidated by a hierarchy of social status based on sex and age. Polygamy and extended families were among the most common family forms, with families consisting of parents (the core of the family), grandparents, children, and unmarried siblings. Father was the breadwinner and had the unquestionable authority in his family over children and his one or more wives.

To establish a family, an adult son needed to pay the bride's family *kalym*, a bride-price, which led to the treatment of the acquired wife and her children as the property of the husband and his family (Olcott, 1991). Mothers, who often had 10 or more children, were solely responsible for childcare and all domestic tasks. At the same time, they had no authority in the family, and were fully subordinated to their husband, older male children, the husband's parents and his family. If a husband died, a mother did not gain authority in her family nor control over her children. Often, a widow could not keep her children because they were taken in by the husband's family members. In order to keep the widow and her children as property of her husband's family, her husband's brother would marry her (the practice of *levirate*) or a widower would marry the sister of his wife (the practice of *sororate*).

The Soviet experience was crucial to women's emancipation in Central Asia and to changes in parental roles. By two decades after the establishment of communism, free education was implemented and, for children under the age of 25, mandatory schooling leading to the full literacy of boys and girls was achieved. The communist government banned polygamy, introduced abortion policies, taught about birth control methods, included women into the labor force, and opened networks of preschools and after school programs. Parental duties, child-parent relationships, and the relationship between the nuclear and the extended families drastically changed. Following recommendations of the Communist Party and communist ideology, the communist government in Kyrgyzstan designed regulations and laws regarding parenting, marriage, and egalitarian family relationships. Parents were taught that education, including moral guidance, as well as the upbringing of children should be left to preschools, schools, and after school activities

in social organizations, like the Pioneer Organization, and the Young Communist Union. Mothers as well as fathers were not involved in child-care and child-rearing with the exception of mothers' responsibility to feed and clothe the children. Parenting by mothers and fathers was fully replaced by state institutions. Children were taught to respect parents, but they spent most of their time at preschool, school, and at after school activities.

Consequently, by the end of 1990s, women's involvement in the labor force reached 49% of the total labor force (Semya v SSSR, 1991). High levels of women's employment, together with an increase in urbanization, strengthened the position of wives and mothers. However, families were far from egalitarian in terms of the roles of women compared to men. Working mothers were obligated to perform all the domestic duties, to care for husbands, provide food and clothing for children and, in most traditional families, care for the husband's parents and other members of the husband's extended family. Husbands were considered the heads of families while wives and children had subordinated positions. The role of a father was reduced to being an authority in the family and an economic provider with no expectations in the area of child rearing, childcare, or household duties.

#### ***AN OVERVIEW OF PARENTING ROLES IN POST-COMMUNISM***

In the early 1990s, together with new economic and political transitions, increased unemployment and privatization of industry brought an end to women's participation in the labor force and maternity-type benefits (day care centers in company facilities, maternity leave, and sick child leave), that were common during the communist period (Wejnert, 2002). Moreover, in the new political, economic, and social climate, the model of "working mother" was changed to that of "mother-homemaker," as religious institutions joined governments in encouraging women to be mothers above all else, rather than professional achievers. This newly propagated role for women was used, in part, as a mechanism to free up jobs in a downsizing job market (Lissyutkina, 1993).

The new perspective on the role of *Mother* was mirrored by the acceptance of legislative changes encouraging higher fertility and in some countries making abortion illegal. Famous at that time was a slogan: *Women Returned to a Family*. Despite going back to traditional roles of mothers, the parental role of fathers did not change much and husbands continued to be viewed as the sole breadwinners (even in cases where mothers were working and fathers were unemployed). However, in some of the former Soviet bloc countries, fathers' involvement in childcare and domestic duties started to increase.

Despite models to promote larger families, a rapid transition to a market economy generated economic hardship, which influenced the decision of many couples to reduce planned procreation. The fertility rate dropped from an average of 2.1 to 2.3 children at the end of the 1980s, to 1.4 to 2.0 children per woman a decade later (United Nations, 2002). Except for a small percent of families that grew in affluence, many families could not afford to fulfill children's needs and "wishes" especially since new consumer goods were introduced to the market causing increases in both basic needs and more luxurious wishes.

The new ideology promoting women as homemakers, combined with the difficult economic situation of many families were reflected in child-parent relationships and in parental roles. In the two countries presented in this article, changes observed in these relationships were as follows.

*Poland.* During the period of rising unemployment and the rule of conservative political groups in the early 1990s, an ideological concept was widely propagated that the survival of the Polish nation required the strengthening of traditional family values, including putting women back into home to take care of the house and children. This early 1990s trend found expression in the new restrictive abortion policy and in the closing of the Office for Women and Family Matters in the Polish Government (i.e., Pełnomocnictwo Rządu do Spraw Kobiet i Rodziny) in 1993, which used to represent women's rights in the public and domestic spheres. Released as a Director of this latter office, Minister Anna Popowicz stated: "as soon as the right wing politicians win the election to the Polish government, women's role will be limited to that of mother, care giver, and homemaker . . . and nobody will invest in the education of women whose only role will be to bear children" (Paradowska, 1992, p.5).

Economic difficulties, however, led to the reduction of family size and a decrease in fertility rates, but did not disturb parent-child relationships. The great majority of children increasingly felt loved by parents (an increase from 81% in 1992 to 83% by 1999) and more children felt understood by their parents (an increase from 39% in 1992 to 43% in 1999). At the same time the percentage of children that felt unloved by parents decreased from 6% to 3% (Kwak, 2001) (see also Table 1).

To some degree, children-parent relationships were a function of the family's economic well-being. Children from more wealthy families, more often reported having strong, positive relationships with parents than children from poorer families (Kwak, 2001). Moreover, children of wealthy families, when compared to children from poor families, almost twice as often reported feeling loved by parents (59% vs. 39%, respectively) and less frequently felt alienated from parents (10% vs. 16%, respectively) (Filipiak, 1999). At the same

TABLE 1. Relationship of Polish Youth with Their Parents (in Percent)

Describe your relationships with your parents	Data collected in April 1994*	Data collected in April 1996	Data collected in December 1998
<b>With mothers</b>			
Very good	35	36	47
Rather good	43	39	37
Sometimes good sometimes bad	17	20	13
Rather not good	3	3	2
Not good	2	2	2
<b>With fathers</b>			
Very good	17	21	31
Rather good	31	29	29
Sometimes good sometimes bad	31	33	23
Rather not good	14	11	9
Not good	7	6	8

Source: Data from Central Office of Public Opinion Research. 1999. *Polish Census Data* on the representative sample of middle and high schools youth in Poland. See also Kwak, Anna (2001, p. 237). \* For 1994 N = 1260, for 1996 N = 1275, and for 1998 N = 1316. The percentage depicts percent of the respondents in each sample in the particular year.

time, however, children who reported that parents do not understand them came mainly from families with college-educated parents who tended to be more economically affluent. According to Wrzesień (2001, 2002) higher educated parents believed that education is the key to success in the post-communist society and hence had high educational expectations for their children. Having high expectations for their children, in turn, led to many conflicts between parents and youth. However, as Marzec (2001) showed, 15% of children from very wealthy families, who lived in luxurious conditions and whose parents fulfilled all of their material desires and needs, reported that their home was a stressful place. These youth preferred to spend time with their friends' families because their own parents had no time for them.

Observed differences in child-parent relationships also were a function of family residence and parental religiosity. Throughout the 1990s, compared to rural families, children of urban families reported feeling loved and understood by parents almost twice as often (55% vs. 37%, respectively) and felt alienated at home less than half as often (9% versus 21%). Similarly, significant differences were found between religious and non-religious families. Children who had religious parents felt loved by parents twice as often as those who had non-religious parents (56% vs. 27%, respectively) and were over six times less likely to report feeling alienated at home (4% vs. 26%, respectively) (Filipiak, 1999).

The most visible change was demonstrated in the roles of fathers. Partially as a result of the diffusion of Western models of fatherhood (e.g., the popular Scandinavian model), fathers became more involved in child rearing. Interestingly, the change in parental roles of fathers was supported and promoted by the Polish Catholic church, which may have been influenced by increasing contacts with more liberal Catholic churches of Western countries. By the end of the 1990s, therefore, though mothers still performed most household and childcare duties, fathers were increasingly viewed by children not only as the breadwinners but also as the caregivers.

As reported by middle and high school students, children had closer relationships with mothers than fathers but 30% of them, as compared to 3% in communist times, believed that fathers would help them at times of difficulty (63% of children believed that mothers would always help them) (Kwak, 2001). Children reported being able to discuss their problems with parents, but most discussion was still with mothers. For example, 67% of girls and 40% of boys reported being able to talk with mothers about a broad range of problems from sex and personal friendships to professional careers and educational plans. However, college-educated fathers were considered discussion partners as well (Kwak, 2001). Under communism, none of the boys ever discussed their problems with fathers, and only 3% of girls reported talking about their problems with fathers. By contrast, in post-communist Poland, 1% of the boys and 13% of the girls reported discussing problems with their fathers. This small but visible change was significant for parent-youth relationships, especially since it occurred in just one decade. By 1999, children still predominantly had relationships with mothers, who were the main persons in their lives—children talked to mothers about intimate problems, engaged with them in discussion about various issues, could count on them when in trouble, and cared the most about their opinions and approval (Zielińska, 2001). Nonetheless, the strong attachment of children to mothers was becoming slowly supplemented by the development of relationships between children and fathers.

*Kyrgyzstan.* The Communist ideology was displaced by the transition to democracy, and thus, children's social organizations disappeared and issues of educating children, teaching morality and ethics, along with the responsibility for children's upbringing returned to families. The traditional division of labor at home, with the mother being fully responsible for domestic duties and child care, returned with the abolishment of communism. The democratic transition, with its introduction of personal freedom, also stimulated a rebirth of an old, banned custom of wife-kidnapping and women wearing *parandjas*<sup>1</sup> that were still formally banned, but, being considered religious practice, were tolerated. To clarify and document changes in the roles of mothers and fathers

that emerged in the post-communist system, we conducted field research in Poland and Kyrgyzstan (presented below) and compare the results with the parental roles described in the literature mentioned above.

### ***FIELD RESEARCH IN POLAND AND KYRGYZSTAN***

#### ***Methodology***

Two consecutive questionnaire interview studies were conducted in Poland in 1995 and 1999. The first research, conducted under the direction of Wejnert and Joseph Stycos, took place in the regions of Konin and Poznan (West-central Poland), which, compared to the whole country, are characterized by an average level of socioeconomic development, an average mean income per resident, and an average unemployment rate, including women's unemployment. The later (1999) study was conducted under the direction of Anna Wachowiak in one of the poorest rural areas in Poland, the region of Zielona Gora (South-Western Poland). The first study consisted of 50 interviews, and was intended to test the questionnaire developed by Stycos, Wejnert and Tyszka (Stycos, Wejnert & Tyszka, 2001, Stycos, Wejnert, & Zbigniew, 2002) for its application to Polish and Kyrgyzstan studies; the later (1999) project consisted of 306 interviews (Wachowiak, 1999).

Data were collected in Kyrgyzstan during 2001 using the Polish questionnaire interview translated into Russian. Kyrgyz data were collected from 100 female and 100 male respondents who resided in two villages located to the North and to the West of the capital city Bishkek. These villages consisted of multinational populations having largely an average standard of living for Kyrgyzstan. Included in this multinational population were the larger Kyrgyz and Russian (settled during communism) ethnic groups as well as the smaller German and Kazakh ethnic groups.

In the 1995 study the respondents were 35-60 years of age with about four-fifths being married and two-thirds being employed outside the home. In 1999-2001, almost all the respondents were married (97% in Poland and 91% in Kyrgyzstan), with 92.5 % in Poland and 84% in Kyrgyzstan being married to their first partner. The general tendency in Kyrgyzstan was to marry early, with female respondents being married between 16 and 23 and males between 20 and 26 years old. In comparison, the majority of Polish female respondents married between the ages of 21 and 25 and males between 21 and 29 years old indicating that Polish couples tended to marry later. Most Polish couples formed nuclear families, which consisted of parents, children, and sometimes older grandparents. The family composition in Kyrgyzstan, in turn, varied de-

pending upon parents' ethnic background. Following tradition, Kyrgyz and Kazakh couples lived in multigenerational, extended families with parents, children, grandparents and unmarried siblings of parents (usually the husband), whereas Russian and German families were mainly nuclear in their structure.

### **Results**

In both countries, women were the sole childcare providers, being almost fully responsible and involved in bringing up children prior to communism. Moreover, in Poland, women remained fully responsible for these roles during the communist period. Consequently, to demonstrate the effect of democratization and economic transition on parental roles, we tested whether the roles of fathers changed and whether fathers became more involved in parental duties.

Indicators of husbands' help with childcare and the upbringing of children and of husbands' help in domestic duties were selected for our study. The selected indicators represent active (involved) vs. passive (uninvolved) parenting functions of fathers. They also indicated the general models for paternal and maternal roles that the younger generation was socialized into within families. The initial analyses provide a presentation of different types of childcare tasks performed by fathers, which describe the participation of fathers in child rearing in each country. In the next step, we examined several potential predictors of fathers' parental involvement, a procedure that assessed parental roles as a function of a set of variables depicting family structure and parental cultural tradition. Specifically, the variables for this study were:

#### *Structure of Families*

- family size (measured as the number of children in each family)
- current husband's employment status
- current wife's employment status

#### *Parents' Cultural Tradition*

- parents' traditionalism
- religiosity
- liking/disliking housework

The traditionalism of the father/mother was measured by agreement/disagreement with the statement “the man is the decision maker and the woman is the subordinated follower.” Religiosity was assessed by statements indicating frequency of religious practice, whereas liking/disliking housework (a domestic activity) was self-assessed by respondents indicating agreement/disagreement.

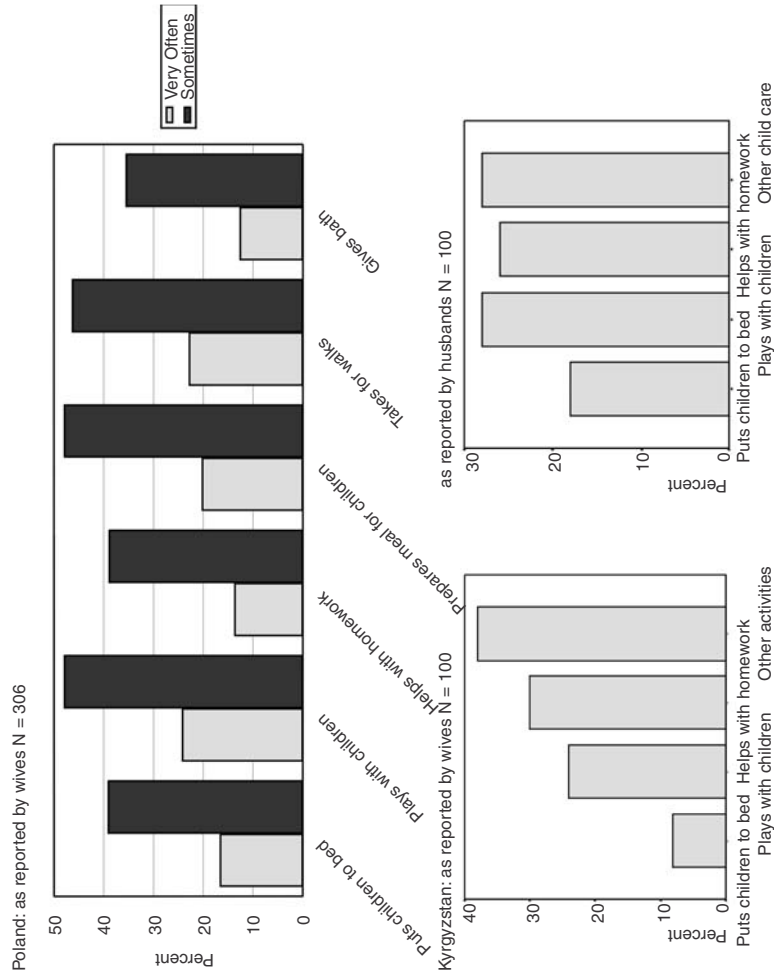
*Types of Parenting Roles.* In both countries, a slow increase in fathers’ involvement in childcare indicated a change towards modern paternal roles. Although the specific tasks related to childcare differed, unlike circumstances in prior history, nearly 45.4% of Polish fathers and 42% of Kyrgyz fathers helped with childcare duties either a lot or somewhat. Kyrgyzstan fathers helped mainly with homework and played with children, while Polish fathers most frequently played with children, took children for walks, or cooked meals for them (see Figure 1).

*Parenting Roles and Family Size.* In Kyrgyzstan as well as in Poland, children were strongly desired by families, as demonstrated by the first baby being born in these families during the first 1-2 years of marriage. However, significant differences between countries and ethnic groups were observed in reference to family size. Polish families were small, with an average of 1.5 children per family (the national average was 1.37 as of 2/2001) (GUS, 2002), while the number of children in families in Kyrgyzstan varied depending on parents’ ethnicity. Kyrgyz and Kazakh couples had significantly more children than Russian or German families. On average, Kyrgyz families had 3-4 children, which despite being large, was a smaller number of children than during Soviet times, when the average Kyrgyz family size was 4.6 children. Moreover, also during Soviet times, 20.3% of all families and 35.4% of Kyrgyz families had 7 or more children (Lubin, 1991). In addition, couples in Kyrgyzstan frequently adopted children when they could not have their own children. The practice of adoption was very rare in Poland, and there were no cases of adoption in our sample.

Family planning had been commonly practiced in both countries during the communist period. This trend continued into post-communism, when economic difficulties and increasing expectations for higher material standards of living became prevalent. Other developments that encouraged family planning were reductions in the number of many state-run, inexpensive preschool institutions (daycares and kindergartens) that influenced parents to have only as many children as they could afford (Falkingham, 1997).

As our studies show, Polish and Kyrgyz couples controlled childbearing, particularly using conventional methods of contraception, with twice as many husbands in Poland (60%) as in Kyrgyzstan (30%) using some form of birth control (see Table 2). The conventional methods were complemented by abortion and in Poland also by contraception pills and less often by IUD. Despite recently

FIGURE 1. Forms of Active Paternal Roles of Fathers Measured by the Type of Childcare Involvement\*



Note: \*Overall, as respondents indicated, 45.4% of Polish fathers and 35.4% of Kyrgyz fathers were involved in parental duties

TABLE 2. The Use of Birth Control by Husbands in Relation to Family Size in Number of Respondents

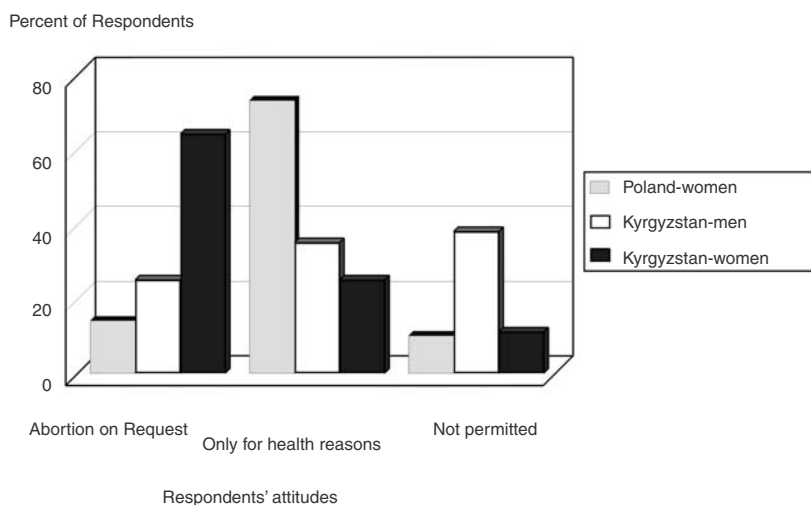
Kyrgyzstan*: Husband's birth control N = 100						Total
		yes	no	sometimes	N/A	
How many children	1	1				1
	2	2	3			5
	3	12	28			40
	4	6	18		1	25
	5	6	9			15
	6	1	6			7
	7	1	1			2
	8	1	3	1		5
Total		30	68	1	1	100
Poland: Husband's birth control N = 306						Total
How many children	0	4	2			6
	1	42	27			69
	2	90	33			123
	3	29	23			52
	4	8	4			12
	more than 4	5	9			14
Missing data						30
Total		178	98			276

Note: \* The recorded data were derived from interviews with Kyrgyz men. The interviews with Kyrgyz women closely resembled data obtained during interviews with husbands.

growing religiosity among the mainly Moslem population of Kyrgyzstan (near 90% of the population is considered Moslem), and the large Catholic population in Poland (over 90% of Poles declare themselves as Catholics), only 10% of Polish and 11% of Kyrgyz female respondents believed that abortion should be banned, while 38% of Kyrgyz men believed that it should be (see Figure 2). Abortion is more commonly practiced in Kyrgyzstan, where women on average have 4 to 10 abortions in their lifetime (United Nations, 1999).

Women tried to increase their incomes, especially at times of economic hardship (as our study shows, 65% of female respondents preferred working to increase income and to achieve relative financial stability) even if it implied reducing family size. Nonetheless, the pro-family traditions influenced parents to prefer to have larger families than they actually had, if they could afford to do so. As our data demonstrates, 37% of mothers and 100% of fathers in Kyrgyzstan would have liked to have more children. Many Kyrgyzstan women (30% of women) with three children expressed a preference to have more children and many men (38% of men) with 4 children would like to have more children. In

FIGURE 2. Attitudes Towards Abortion in Poland and Kyrgyzstan



Note: In Poland N = 306 (women), in Kyrgyzstan N = 100 (women) and N = 100 (men).

contrast, Polish families preferred to have two children. In Kyrgyzstan, the desire to have more children was not determined by the family size; but, on the contrary, in larger families parents (mothers and fathers alike) continued to prefer having more children than they had currently (see Table 3). For example, most working mothers indicated that poor economic conditions had caused them to stop procreation but, regardless whether they currently had two or more than five children, they continued to want one more child than their present number.

The size of a family has also a non-linear effect on parenting roles or shared domestic duties in Poland and in Kyrgyzstan. Specifically, in Kyrgyzstan, husbands helped the most with childcare when families had 3-4 children (twice as many fathers helped than not helped—43% vs. 22%, respectively); for families with five and more children, the figures were 16% helped vs. 13% did not help while for families with two children only 3% helped. When there was only one child, the husband did not help at all. It seems that husbands do not feel the need to help when there are 1-2 children or when there are five or more children. Since the most common are families with 3-4 children and the families that are larger follow the traditional Muslim norms, the most traditional

TABLE 3. Respondents' Attitude for Having More Children as Corresponding with Family Size

Wants more children							
Women-Kyrgyzstan N = 100							
		no more	one more	two more	three more	seven and more	Total
How many children in the family	1	1					1
	2	1	4				5
	3	10	29			1	40
	4	7	15		1	2	25
	5	7	8				15
	6	3	3			1	7
	7	1	1				2
	8	3	1			1	5
Total		33	61		1	5	100
Men-Kyrgyzstan N = 100							
How many children in the family	1		1				1
	2			4			4
	3		5	10	5		20
	4		16	14	8		38
	5		8	8	2		18
	6		4	5			9
	7			2			2
	8		3	5			8
Total			37	48	15		100
Poland N = 306							
How many children in the family	No children	8	.3				9
	1	56	17				73
	2	123	4				127
	3	49	.3				50
	4	11	.3				13
	5						12
Missing							22
Total		259	25				306

Note: Data are presented in number of respondents.

husbands are least likely to help women. When there was only one or two children, help may not have been seen as needed.

Polish fathers' help also did not have a linear relationship based on the number of children. Fathers were actively engaged in childrearing in families with one or two children (51.7% of fathers were involved vs. 9.5% were not). In families with three or more children, nearly one quarter of fathers (22.8%) were helping with childcare and only 0.1% did not help. Thus, the pattern ob-

served in Poland is similar to Kyrgyzstan. In families with 1-2 children that are considered more modern, husbands were more likely to help, but in more traditional, larger families, closely following the Catholic norms, husbands were less likely to help.

Polish fathers with 1-2 children were 10 times more likely to help with household chores than were Kyrgyz fathers with the same number of children (51.7% and 5.0% respectively). See Table 4.

*Parenting Roles and Employment Status.* Interestingly, the strongest indicator of a husband's help with housework and childcare was his employment status. *Working fathers helped much more in housework than unemployed fathers.* In Poland, the percentage of working fathers who helped was higher and the percentage of unemployed fathers who were not helping was lower than in Kyrgyzstan. In Kyrgyzstan, husbands who help at home were much more likely to be working (59%) than unemployed (32%). Among those husbands who did not help at home 3% were working and 5% were unemployed. In Poland, 74.6% of those husbands who help at home were working compared to 11% who were unemployed (see Table 4).

It seems that in Kyrgyzstan, the prevailing traditional culture affected the non-working fathers' involvement in domestic duties. Only the employed father, who fit the image of a successful man and breadwinner, had a sufficiently high self-esteem to break the gender role boundaries of what was often considered not a masculine activity, and to engage in help with house chores and childcare. We assume that in a society with a traditional culture, fathers who have lost their jobs and cannot fulfill the expected breadwinner role are reluctant to engage in the "non-masculine" activity of parenting. This trend was not so strongly visible in Poland where, historically, women had held strong positions in the family, making the implementation of a new tradition of husbands helping with domestic chores much easier.

Not surprisingly, in Kyrgyzstan the employment status of mothers did not predict greater involvement of fathers in parental duties. As discussed earlier, it was common during communism for mothers to be employed full time in addition to being full time mothers which led to an expectation for women to do both tasks simultaneously. As demonstrated, husbands more likely helped non-working than working wives (22% of Kyrgyz mothers who had full time jobs were helped by their spouses with child upbringing in comparison to 40% who were not helped; and 35% of working mothers were helped vs. 53% were not helped with domestic duties).

In contrast, Polish husbands helped their working wives. Of those wives who were helped with childcare, 64% were employed and only 19.7% of

TABLE 4. Variables that Influenced Kyrgyz and Polish Husbands' Help with Childcare and Domestic Duties (in percent)\*

Variables	Kyrgyzstan				Poland			
	Help with childcare		Help in domestic duties		Help with childcare		Help in domestic duties	
	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
<b>1. Wife: has a job</b>	22 (22%)	19 (19%)	35 (35%)	6 (6%)	184 (64%)	11 (3.8%)	168 (59.2%)	25 (8.8%)
does not have a job	40 (40%)	19 (19%)	53 (53%)	6 (6%)	56 (19.7%)	6 (2.1%)	57 (20%)	14 (4.9%)
<b>2. Husband: has a job</b>	26 (26%)	17 (17%)	59 (59%)	3 (3%)	202 (71%)	14 (4.9%)	212 (74.6%)	27 (9.5%)
does not have a job	20 (20%)	9 (9%)	32 (32%)	5 (5%)	37 (13%)	1 (.03%)	34 (11.1%)	10 (3.5%)
<b>3. Family size:</b>								
0 child	0	0	0	0	0	0	6 (2.1%)	0
1-2 children	3 (3%)	3 (3%)	5 (5%)	0	144 (50.7%)	12 (4.2%)	147 (51.7%)	27 (9.5%)
3-4 children	43 (43%)	22 (22%)	59 (59%)	6 (6%)	65 (22.8%)	3 (.1%)	61 (21%)	10 (3.5%)
5 or more children	16 (16%)	13 (13%)	19 (19%)	5 (5%)	5 (1.7%)	0	6 (2.1%)	0
<b>4. Father's traditionalism**</b>								
traditional	19 (19%)	10 (10%)	36 (36%)	4 (4%)	14 (4.9%)	1 (.03%)	14 (4.9%)	1 (.03%)
not sure	22 (22%)	8 (8%)	37 (37%)	3 (3%)	12 (4.2%)	4 (1.4%)	15 (5.2%)	3 (1%)
not traditional	8 (8%)	5 (5%)	19 (19%)	1 (1%)	214 (75.3%)	11 (3.8%)	215 (75.7%)	34 (11.9%)
<b>5. Father's religiosity</b>								
religious	29 (29%)	16 (16%)	57 (57%)	6 (6%)	191 (67.2%)	9 (3.1%)	194 (68.3%)	23 (8.1%)
not religious	17 (17%)	10 (10%)	34 (34%)	2 (2%)	48 (16.9%)	6 (2.1%)	51 (17.9%)	14 (4.9%)

Note: \*The percent indicates % of husbands and numbers the Ns of husbands who were helping or not with childcare and helping/not helping in domestic duties as a function of each variable. \*\*Percent agreeing that man is a decision maker, the woman is a submissive follower.

non-employed mothers, while 59.2% of working and only 20% of not working mothers were helped in domestic tasks (see Table 4).

*Parenting Roles and Religiosity.* Interestingly, in Kyrgyzstan the religious husbands were less involved in paternal roles than were religious husbands in Poland (29% of religious fathers were involved in childcare in Kyrgyzstan while 67.2% of fathers in Poland) while the percent of nonreligious fathers who were involved in childcare was about the same in both countries. This finding reflects that Kyrgyz cultural tradition is strongly rooted in religion (Islam), whereas, while Polish tradition also stems from traditional religion (Catholic), it became modified most likely due to contacts with modern Western European and North American Catholic churches and the diffusion of cultural models of paternal roles. The diffusion of paternal roles, we believe, is to some degree reflected by recent changes in the Polish Catholic church's perspective on families and its broad emphasis on fathers' and husbands' involvement in childcare (see Table 4).

*Parenting Roles and Traditionalism.* Similarly, the increased involvement of fathers in child and house care positively correlated with egalitarian marital relationships in Poland but opposite trend was found in Kyrgyzstan. Accordingly, Polish wives, in general, had more authority in the family and a greater ability to make decisions regarding family matters than Kyrgyz women. Polish wives who did not hold traditional beliefs were able to persuade husbands to be egalitarian spouses and involved fathers, and to share parenting and house duties (75.3% of non-traditional vs. 4.9% of traditional husbands helped). An unanticipated finding for Kyrgyzstan was that, unlike Poland, husbands with traditional beliefs were two and a half times more likely to help with childcare than were husbands with non-traditional beliefs (19% vs. 8%).

A similar pattern was observed for help with domestic duties. In Poland, 75.7% of husbands with non-traditional beliefs provided help as compared with 4.9% of husbands with traditional beliefs. However, in Kyrgyzstan, 36% of husbands with traditional beliefs provided help with domestic duties as compared with 19% of those holding nontraditional beliefs (see Table 4). In additional analysis it was found that Kyrgyz women who were liberated (and hence fully disagree with the statement that "a man is a decision maker and a woman is a submissive follower" were much less likely to be helped by their spouses—14.3% traditional vs. 4.8% of non-traditional, liberated wives were helped by their spouses. It seemed that it paid off to be submissive and subordinated women in Kyrgyzstan. Perhaps traditional Kyrgyz husbands felt threatened by their wives' independence and tried to preserve their position in the family by refusing to be involved in perceived as not masculine activities of child and house care.

### **CONCLUSION**

In both countries, despite differences in family composition, parenting roles were a function of: (a) family size, (b) fathers' employment status, (c) religiosity, and (d) traditionalism. At the same time, wives' working status and the degree to which wives liked domestic duties had no effect on performed parental roles. Based on this study, two tendencies can be observed in Poland and Kyrgyzstan today. First, there is movement toward Western democratic values, including the ideas of egalitarianism and greater emphasis on small nuclear families. Second, tendencies exist in the direction of reviving traditional cultural patterns relating to family life, marital, and parent-child relationships. These opposite tendencies can lead to conflict, particularly when the state does not interfere and does not support any ideology through its policies. Under these circumstances, families become solely responsible for decisions pertaining to family patterns, socialization practices, and the education of children in terms of either Western values and egalitarian relations versus the traditional relationships of patriarchy within families. Given such contradictory viewpoints, families must resolve questions related to morality and the role of religion, particularly in reference to such issues as family planning, abortion, and the family roles of women and men. The first years of this major transition may be the turning point, which will determine which model prevails in the future.

Our 1995 Polish study depicted that marriage and family are the strongest determinants of life satisfaction (Stycos, Wejnert & Tyszka, 2001), a finding supported by several American studies (Andrews & Whithey, 1976; Andrews & Robinson, 1991; Campbell, 1981). However, a corresponding finding is that women have lower marital and life satisfaction than men.

Why should women consistently report lower levels of satisfaction in these studies? One possibility is their increasing dissatisfaction with male contributions to household tasks. As Elina Haavio-Mannila (1992, p.105) has concluded, "women were happier . . . the more the spouse participated in domestic work." For example, only half of our respondents in 1995 reported that their husbands often help with household chores and this data was consistent with earlier World Bank studies conducted in five European countries, including Poland (World Bank, 1994).

As demonstrated five years later in Poland and in Kyrgyzstan (see Tables 2-4), while domestic work still was not equally shared, our respondents were crossing parental role boundaries as fathers were helping with childcare and domestic duties more extensively. This contrasts with the periods prior to and during communism, when mothers performed almost all of the childcare duties and were responsible for children's well-being. Fathers were the authori-

ties within families but were uninvolved parents and the emphasis on equalizing men and women did not generate egalitarian parental roles. In contrast, recent trends toward democratization, assisted by the diffusion of the Western European and American egalitarian models of family relationships (both marital and parent-child relationships), have started to influence parenting roles by overcoming cultural traditionalism.

Changes are already being observed, some of which are responses to economic conditions and preferences for improved material well-being. An example of change is that our respondents have established smaller families despite expressed preferences for larger families. Moreover, active fatherhood (i.e., fathers involved in childcare) in Poland is actually promoted by the Catholic Church, most likely because of the diffusion of more modern religious attitudes. The formation of Women's Studies programs and majors in Poland, which are also starting to be established in Kyrgyzstan, have generated numerous studies on men's and women's social positions, including their parental roles. This trend also might bring the awareness and recognition that mothers are overburdened and might help to encourage egalitarian parental models.

At the same time, however, the more traditional behavioral norms, such as traditional attitudes regarding abortion, birth control and the desired family size, are reemerging. The rebirth of traditionalism in part results from the growth of religious freedom and increasing religiosity, but also from the newfound freedom to regain parenting roles that had been performed by state-run childcare facilities under communism. Therefore, following Mukherjee's (1998, p.4) argument that "culture does not change on its own because 'by definition,' culture is not capable of self-revision or self-production: it registers the worldview which may or may not change over time" we may expect intertwined modern and traditional parenting styles during the post-communist transition. On one hand, the encouragement of Western examples of parenting should progressively encourage greater egalitarianism for men's and women's domestic and childcare duties, and improve father-child relationships. On the other hand, an important role in shaping parenting styles may also be traditionalism.

At time of contradicting parenting models, active fatherhood could serve as a source of help for somewhat confused youth, as well as a source of guidance and a constructive role model. Active fathering could help manage a new youth subculture inundated with pathological behaviors that were extremely rare, if not nonexistent, within strictly controlled communist societies (Pielkova, 2001). Hence, the models of involved, active parenting are especially important within liberal democratic systems where the parent-child relationships are challenged by increases in youthful drug use, teen prostitution, as well as teen and out-of-wedlock pregnancy.

## NOTE

1. *Parandja* is a burqa-type cover for face and body which is worn by women and girls. Under the Soviet regime, this tradition was forbidden and local authorities, fulfilling the Party's instructions, organized public burnings of *parandjas*.

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