

# **Political Culture and Child Poverty: An examination of Western and post-communist European states**

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**Abstract:** This paper examines political culture in relation to child poverty outcomes in Western European and post-communist Central and Eastern European (CEE) states. Although the European Union represents advanced industrial economies and has committed itself to the eradication of child poverty, variation in welfare policies as well as child poverty outcomes exist across Europe. Research has shown that egalitarian attitudes towards redistribution are linked with lower poverty outcomes. In addition to egalitarianism, this paper examines the relationship between gender roles and child poverty. The findings of this study indicate that support for feminist gender roles and an egalitarian distribution of wealth are related to lower child poverty outcomes. The situation in Eastern Europe, however, is complicated by a communist past that has left behind a political culture of egalitarian ideals of redistribution combined with a backlash of traditional values regarding gender roles.

## **Introduction**

The industrialized world has witnessed the eradication of many forms of poverty since the creation of the welfare state. While widespread programs that address poverty among the elderly have been largely successful in the post-World War Two era, the issue of child poverty has only received the close attention of a portion of the world's governing bodies (Vleminckx and Smeeding 2001). In the last fifty years, Western countries that have experienced high rates of economic growth and a general improvement of lifestyles have also seen increases in child poverty<sup>[1]</sup> (Muffels and Fouarge 2002). Further, studies have shown that child poverty rates vary widely among countries at similar levels of affluence (Bradbury and Jantti 2001). A child born into an economically advanced country is not guaranteed a life without material deprivation and other forms of social exclusion; and children of disadvantaged families can be restricted or empowered by a government's choice of social policy (Vleminckx and Smeeding 2001). The nature of welfare in industrialized states impacts a child's access to employment, health, education, and the ability to provide a better life for future generations (Vleminckx and Smeeding 2001; Kamerman et al. 2003).

While still in the process of addressing social exclusion and creating a convergence of living conditions, the European Union features poverty outcomes among children that vary widely among its member states. The recent addition of eight post-communist European states and the prospect of two more provide additional challenges to the cross-national understanding of child poverty. On one hand, the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries bring a legacy of impressive family benefits, social equality, and educational attainment. Much of that focus on social welfare may still be reflected in CEE child poverty levels. On the other hand, these post-communist countries in transition have suffered deep economic shocks generated by the transition to market-based democracy. Family affluence measures have deteriorated as divorce rates have increased, and lone motherhood has become increasingly common. The negative effects of marketization have been generally made worse by pressure from international lenders to reduce social expenditures as a percent of GDP. To varying degrees, institutions like the IMF and World Bank have promoted social welfare models that call for means-testing and other restrictions to the access of benefits that are being reduced simultaneously (Haney 2003). In some cases, welfare regimes in CEE states have been pressured to privatize assistance (Deacon et al. 1997).

If standards of living across the European Union are ever to converge, then the opportunities for children should be similar "wherever they are born—because children are European citizens too, and because the nature of their childhood helps determine the shape of Europe's future" (Mickelwright and Stewart 2001, p. 102). One must ask why some European children are born into poverty and others are fully empowered to face the future. Why have some states been more successful in combating child poverty than others? What role does political culture—citizen expectations and values—play in shaping the policies that states adopt regarding child well-being? How do gender politics affect the politics of child poverty cross-

nationally? Is there a relationship between emerging gender regimes in Eastern Europe and transitional welfare regimes? This study intends to contribute to the limited volume of research aimed at exploring the relationship between public attitudes and various aspects of welfare regimes, policy choice, and poverty outcomes. An overview of child poverty will be followed by an examination of the political cultures of both Western European and CEE states in relation to child poverty outcomes.

## Explaining Child Poverty Outcomes

**Table 2.1: Child Poverty Rates in Selected OECD States**

Country	Child Poverty Rate	Country	Child Poverty Rate
Slovak Republic	2.0	Denmark	8.7
Norway	3.9	Hungary	8.8
Sweden	4.2	Romania	10
Czech Republic	6.6	Poland	12.7
Germany	6.8	United Kingdom	15.4
Slovenia	6.9	Italy	16.6
France	7.9	United States	21.9

Source: Luxembourg Income Study, 2000.

As Table 2.1 displays, it is apparent that child poverty varies greatly among industrialized OECD states. In fact, the United States, arguably one of the most economically developed countries included in the table, has the highest occurrence of child poverty. In addition to the variation in outcomes, this lack of correlation between national income and child poverty leads to an examination of other determinants of poverty among children in developed states. Studies have shown that household unemployment is the most prominent determinant of poverty and social exclusion among children. The next leading indicator of child poverty is lone parent status. Families with lone mothers, especially in conditions of unemployment, have an even higher risk of poverty. Children in households among the working poor are at risk of poverty as well, although the rate is lower than among the unemployed (Kamerman et al. 2003).

**Table 2.2: Percentage of Children in Single-Mother Families (SMF) with Corresponding Child Poverty Rates in Selected OECD States**

Country	% Children in SMF	Child Poverty Rate in SMF	Country	% Children in SMF	Child Poverty Rate in SMF
Slovak Republic	9.6	8.3	Denmark	14.1	30.2
Norway	15.2	13.5	Hungary	6.7	11.8
Sweden	17.8	12.9	Romania	10.0	17.4
Czech Republic	10.0	36.2	Poland	9.9	18.0
Germany	12.3	35.5	United Kingdom	21.7	34.0
Slovenia	6.6	19.6	Italy	4.9	19.2
France	9.3	25.3	United States	19.5	49.3

Source: Luxembourg Income Study, 2000.

Clearly, the determinants of child poverty exist among all countries. The degree of impact that these determinants exert, however, varies considerably between states. Table 2.2 displays the percentages of children living in families headed by a single mother in selected OECD states as well as the corresponding poverty rates for children in single-mother families. Similar percentages of children in single-mother families are found in Sweden, at 17.8%, and the United States, at 19.5%. While Sweden's percentage of

children in single-mother families is only 2% less than that of the United States, the poverty rate for children in single-mother families in Sweden is over 37% lower than that of the United States. While there are certainly multiple variables that have led to the low child poverty rate among single-mother families in Sweden and the relatively high rate in the United States, scholars recognize that certain welfare policies are more effective at combating child poverty than others.

Income transfers have been shown to be central to the reduction of child poverty (Kamerma et al. 2003; Phipps 1999; Bradbury and Jantti 2001; Vleminckx and Smeeding 2001). Countries vary with regards to their reliance on income transfers as well as in their success at implementing effective transfer policies. For example, due to policy differences, some countries have been able to reduce pre-transfer and pre-tax child poverty by twenty percent through income transfers, while other countries have only managed a five percent reduction (Oxley et al. 2001). Although income transfers have proven to reduce child poverty by up to twenty percent, market incomes among poor families have been shown cross-nationally to be more important at addressing child poverty (Bradbury and Jantti 2001). As stated earlier, household unemployment is the key determinant of child poverty. Therefore, policies that promote or support entry into the paid labor force and improve employment rates should result in decreased child poverty rates. Looking back at the comparison between Sweden and the United States, Sweden's low child poverty level is due in part to policies resulting in high employment levels among mothers and lone parents which have been augmented by income transfers and the provision of services and other benefits (Oxley et al. 2001).

While the types of policies adopted by states are associated with varying child poverty outcomes, the method of distributing welfare benefits can greatly affect poverty levels as well. The two opposing systems of targeting the provision of welfare are means testing and universal access. In the former system, thresholds of poverty and social exclusion are considered prior to any state provision of benefits. Means testing usually results in an emphasis on alleviating or "treating" poverty rather than preventing it (Mayes, Berghman, and Salais 2001). Studies have shown that it is more difficult to exit from a situation of social exclusion than it is to prevent social exclusion (Berghman 1995). It has been recognized, therefore, that states that implement preventative forms of social assistance tend to have lower rates of poverty and other forms of social exclusion.

In order to prevent situations of social exclusion, benefits must be provided universally to all citizens either prior to or in situations of need. Those states that feature universal provision tend to be more effective at alleviating child poverty. For example, if social transfers were removed in Norway, where access to welfare benefits is highly universal, the percentage of children in poverty would increase from 14.8% to 61.1%. Conversely, in the United States, where benefits are targeted through means testing, child poverty would only increase from 57.9% to 68.4% with the removal of social transfers (Phipps 1999). As this example illustrates, states that offer universal access to welfare are able to create greater reductions in poverty.

From one perspective, means testing is a very efficient method of providing welfare because it targets those who need it most. This efficiency can be seen in states that emphasize either a guaranteed minimum income or transfers to those below the poverty line (Heikkila and Kuivalainen 2002). On the other hand, means testing results in a much lower level of redistribution of wealth than occurs under universal welfare systems.

In recent years, the members of the European Union have repeatedly committed themselves to combating child poverty (Vleminckx and Smeeding 2001). Why, then, do states choose to implement policies that are less effective at combating child poverty and social exclusion? It seems that there is a link between citizen values and the policies that states adopt to combat child poverty. Although countries may agree at the supra-national level that it is the state's role to alleviate poverty, the citizenry of individual countries may disagree with this proposition. Citizen values that do not promote an egalitarian income distribution will not support a universal welfare system.

The values of a country's citizens fall into the larger category of political culture, which has close ties with both the adoption of certain types of welfare policies as well as the resultant poverty outcomes (Svallfors 1997; Phipps 2001). In addition to attitudes regarding income distributions, a host of other societal values would conceivably impact the way that individual countries perceive and react to the needs

of their populations. This study focuses on public attitudes towards distribution of income, feminist versus patriarchal values, and the role of the state and market in redistributing wealth and benefits. These aspects of political culture are closely tied to the primary determinants of poverty in the industrialized world as well as the policies that states adopt to combat poverty (Svallfors 1997; Phipps 2001).

Additionally, in a cross-national study of Norway, Canada, and the United States, Phipps (2001) has shown that societal values are closely linked with child poverty outcomes. Specifically, countries like Norway that feature highly egalitarian values are more likely to spend more on redistribution than countries like the US and Canada where income equality is less of a priority. In addition to desiring an egalitarian distribution of wealth, Norwegians support the government as an actor in the redistribution wealth. In the US, however, market based solutions emphasizing labor force participation are favored over government income transfers (Forster 2000). In the end, 21.9% of children live in poverty in the US compared with 3.9% of Norwegian children.

As Svallfors (1997) has noted, there is not a common political culture shared among all Western countries. Further, political cultures differ between the post-communist countries of Eastern Europe and the countries of Western Europe due to the divergent paths of the post-World War Two period. Post-communist states have generally come from a history in which citizens were universally entitled to social benefits under planned economies (Heikkila and Kuivalainen). During the existence of socialist regimes, the CEE states generally featured price subsidies, full employment, and extensive benefits including maternity, child care, and health care (Haney 2003). During the transition to market-based democracies, however, CEE states have witnessed the drastic dismantling of the state welfare apparatus. It is expected that the historically egalitarian political cultures of the CEE states have been maintained to the present in some degree.

In addition to attitudes towards redistribution, the societal conceptions of gender roles differ greatly between Eastern and Western Europe, although variations exist within each region. Gender roles and societal perspectives on the structure of the family have important links to the provision of welfare and child poverty outcomes as well. As noted earlier, female unemployment is strongly linked to child poverty. Populations that value traditional family models in which men are the primary or sole breadwinner will likely endure a higher risk of child poverty, especially among female headed households (Kamerman et al. 2003). In general, it can be expected that political cultures that are more feminist than patriarchal would feature lower child poverty rates. Social values that see women's paid labor as natural should place pressure on the state to adopt greater family and woman friendly policies.

In Western Europe, the welfare state is strongly linked to both first wave maternalist feminism and the subsequent pro-equality women's movements (Lewis and Hobson 1997). Second wave feminism encouraged women to move into the paid labor force and demanded that states provide policies that ease the impact of female labor on women and their families. Welfare regimes that reflect maternalist values tend to provide family benefits that allow women to provide care work in the home, while those that support second wave feminism are apt to deliver services and benefits that ease the double burden of mothers who participate in the paid labor force. Those countries that do provide transfers and benefits for either female care work or paid employment allow women to enhance their contributions to the welfare of their families.

Societal views on the role of women in the post-communist CEE states are complicated by the high levels of workforce participation that were achieved under communism (Funk and Mueller 1993). Although women approached parity with men in the paid labor force in many of the communist states, this situation did not present a true emancipation for women. Women earned much less than men for equal work; 50 percent less on average in some states (Siklova 1993; Meurs 1994; Pollert 2003). Despite significant opportunities for female education under communism, women were generally excluded from administrative positions and relegated to low-skill and low-prestige jobs (Siklova 1993; Meurs 1994; Pollert 2003). Extensive family benefits and child care provisions allowed women to enter the paid labor force at unprecedented levels, but women were still burdened with primary responsibility over domestic duties (Pollert 2003). Although women endured segregation and discrimination in the workforce under communism, the situation has arguably worsened during the transition to market-based democracy.

With the collapse of communism, the CEE states have experienced a re-traditionalization of family and gender values, which can be described as a backlash against the directive or “pseudo” emancipation of the communist regimes (Siklova 1993). The withdrawal of welfare benefits combined with the reentry of women into the domestic sphere has resulted in dramatic increases in both household poverty and women’s workload (Haney 2003). Many CEE women have left the paid labor force, but others have been unable to move to the domestic sphere due to low household incomes.

While women have been exiting the public sector in order to maintain traditional households, there is evidence that citizens retain an egalitarian bias and desire for state intervention to reduce personal risks and provide social safety nets. For example, the retrenchment of traditional lifestyles and values has been accompanied by a continued support for state provision of abortion on demand (Fuszara 1993). In the absence of family benefits, traditional and patriarchal values should produce policy orientations that reinforce child poverty by pressuring women out of the workforce and promoting male breadwinner family models. The maintenance of egalitarian values involving a large role for the state, however, would favor a more universalist and generous policy approach that would expectedly produce lower levels of child poverty.

In addition to societal values regarding redistribution and the role of women in the family, attitudes towards female participation and leadership in politics at the national level should also impact the nature of welfare policy and the resultant child poverty outcomes. Children, lacking in direct political representation, are generally benefited by female legislators who tend to favor family and child-oriented issues more than men (Matland and Montgomery 2003; Lijphart 1991; Thomas 1991). Similar to the state-directed participation of women in the paid labor force under communist rule, women were placed in the lower ranks of legislatures throughout the CEE with the use of quotas. Although women held over 30 percent of the seats in many of the national legislatures of authoritarian regimes, high levels of female representation did not reflect a politically empowered voting bloc that could secure strong family benefits and ensure child welfare. In fact, during the transition to market democracy, women fled legislatures throughout CEE states in a similar fashion to the exodus from paid employment (Matland and Montgomery 2003; Pollert 2003). Much of this apparent shift in female political participation can be explained by social attitudes regarding the political abilities of men and women (Wilcox et al. 2003; Norris and Inglehart 2000). While more than three quarters of men and women in Western Europe reject the notion that men make better political leaders than women, men and women favor men as political leaders by a majority in almost all CEE states (Wilcox et al. 2003). Recognizing this correlation between attitudes and female representation, populations that support female political leadership ought to have lower child poverty outcomes due to the tendency of women to support child and family-friendly policy.

In an environment of economic decline, the contradictory presence of egalitarian ideas of entitlement and traditional or patriarchal values presents uncertainties regarding child welfare in the CEE states. Even if the citizens of post-communist CEE states prefer a more egalitarian and universalist model, can their governments afford such a system? Can most families really afford for women to retreat from paid employment? How is social spending on families as a percent of total spending holding up against other types of social support? What role, if any, are women playing in defending family policy and child welfare in the emerging politics of the region? Although not all of these questions will be examined in this study, four hypotheses have been generated regarding the expected relationships between aspects of political culture and child poverty outcomes.

## **Hypotheses**

H1: The greater the public support for an equal distribution of income, the lower the levels of child poverty.

H2: The greater the percentage of the population who believe the state ought to play a role in redistributing wealth, the lower the levels of child poverty.

H3: The more egalitarian and less patriarchal social values are regarding gender, motherhood, and the

family, the lower the incidence and severity of child poverty.

H4: Countries whose populations support female political leadership will have lower levels of child poverty than those that discredit women's political abilities.

## Research Design

Using a focused-structured comparison approach, the distribution of child poverty outcomes will be examined among EU and CEE states at the country level of analysis. It is important to note that while each of these two categories of European states maintains a high degree of internal homogeneity with regards to political, social, and economic development, the two regions differ markedly from one another. The socialist backgrounds and recent transition to market-based democracy found among CEE states create stark contrasts with the predominantly affluent states of the EU. The process of marketization has had many negative consequences for quality of life in the post-communist states. In addition, Western European states are assumed to differ from post-communist CEE states with regard to political culture. Coming from a highly egalitarian culture with regards to state welfare provision in the era of socialism, the CEE states have generally adopted traditional attitudes towards the family and gender roles during the cultural and political backlash that accompanied the transition to market-based democracy (Siklova 1993). This general conglomeration of egalitarian and traditional values sets the CEE states apart from the EU states where a variety of political cultures exist. Case selection for this study reflects the limited number of cases included in the International Social Survey Programme, whose surveys will be used to assess political culture. Table 3.1 displays the matched EU and CEE states.

**Table 3.1: Breakdown of Cases Between EU and CEE Post-Communist States**

<b>European Union Member States</b>	<b>CEE Post-Communist States</b>
United Kingdom	Slovenia
West Germany <a href="#">[2]</a>	Hungary
Norway	Czech Republic
Sweden	Poland
Italy	Bulgaria

Looking at the dependent variable, it is important to study outcomes in light of the fact that some states, notably Bulgaria, are unable to implement policies due to financial restraints. In addition, child poverty outcomes as opposed to policies represent the ultimate result of political and social goals. While there are many methods of measuring child poverty, this study defines the threshold of poverty at 50% of a country's median income.

Acting as a poverty line, this measure does not examine the depth of poverty. Additionally, being a relative measure, the 50% median income poverty threshold does not measure absolute poverty either (Atkinson 1998). However, this relative measure of poverty does give insight into aspects of social exclusion involving material deprivation. The depth, persistence, and widespread nature of poverty found in the more resource poor countries of the world are not apparent in industrialized Europe. Therefore, concern in Europe and other parts of the economically advanced world centers on the lack of social rights among the socially excluded and materially deprived (Muffels and Fouarge 2002). Also, the use of the 50% national median income poverty threshold allows for a comparative examination of how individual states respond to the needs of their citizens (ibid.) All measures of poverty in this study, excluding Bulgaria, have come from

the most recent results of the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) for each country. The figures for Bulgarian child poverty levels were given by the Bulgarian government and must be interpreted cautiously due to the suspect nature of self-reported statistics.

Under socialism, the post-communist countries, as stated earlier, had historically strong welfare regimes featuring universal access. These systems have been largely dismantled and replaced by welfare regimes that rely on means-testing due to low national income levels and international pressure to reduce social expenditure. As the hypotheses suggest, there is a link between policies and poverty outcomes. This examination of universal versus means-tested access fits into a larger framework of welfare regime typology. According to Esping-Andersen, three main categories of welfare states exist, and placement into each category is largely determined by the prominence of various political ideologies (1990 and 1999). The differences between the conservative, liberal, and social democratic welfare regimes primarily revolve around different interpretations regarding the role of the family, the market, and the state in providing for social welfare (Esping-Andersen 1990 and 1999; Heikkila and Kuivalainen 2002). This typology can be used to predict certain poverty outcomes as it provides a generalization of the nature of social benefits within the cases.

In the liberal model, the market is seen as the primary actor in the allocation of wealth and welfare with a reliance on means-testing to distribute social benefits on the basis of need. Threshold of poverty and social exclusion are considered prior to any state provision of services or transfers. On the other hand, states that feature universal provision fall into the category of social democratic welfare regimes. These states tend to be more effective at alleviating poverty and social inequality (Mayes, Berghman, and Salais 2001). Due to the greater degree of effectiveness associated with the preventative nature of universal coverage, it is expected that lower child poverty levels will exist in social democratic regimes when compared to liberal regimes. Conservative welfare regimes fall somewhere in between the other two regime categories. They reflect a societal preoccupation with maintaining a traditional family model. In the conservative category, the family is the primary unit responsible for the distribution of welfare benefits that are ultimately provided by the state (Esping-Andersen 1990). Membership in the labor force, whether employed or unemployed, is a prerequisite for access to social benefits in this category. Therefore, within conservative welfare states that promote male breadwinner models, female headed households are subject to a lack of access to social assistance (Grootaert and Braithwaite 1998). It is assumed that a child's limited and indirect access to social benefits in the conservative model will result in greater child poverty levels than found in social democratic states. Table 3.2 displays the variation among cases regarding welfare regime type. States representing each of the three welfare regime types have been selected from both the EU and post-communist CEE states.

**Table 3.2: Breakdown of Cases by Welfare Regime Type\***

<b>Liberal</b>	<b>Social Democratic</b>	<b>Conservative</b>
United Kingdom	Norway	Italy
<i>Hungary</i>	Sweden	West Germany
	<i>Czech Republic</i>	<i>Bulgaria</i>
	<i>Slovenia</i>	<i>Poland</i>

\*CEE post-communist cases are listed in italics. Welfare regimes were categorized according to Esping-Andersen (1990), Muffels and Fouarge (2002), and Deacon (1992).

The independent variables involve two aspects of political culture: attitudes towards proper gender roles and values regarding income inequality and the role of the state in redistributing wealth. As stated earlier, female employment is closely related to the reduction of child poverty. Although this study will not include measures of policies that facilitate maternal participation in the workforce, it does include figures regarding women's share of the workforce and indicators regarding attitudes towards female and maternal participation in the workforce. The survey data regarding political culture and attitudes come from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). Data regarding gender roles have been derived from the *ISSP Family and Changing Gender Roles II* survey from 1994. Attitudes regarding redistribution and

egalitarianism were measured in the *ISSP Role of Government III* survey conducted in 1996 and the *ISSP Social Inequality II* survey from 1992.

**Table 3.3: Attitudinal Survey Questions**

<b>Attitudes Towards:</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Question</b>
Female Employment(1)	ISSP Family and Changing Gender Roles II – 1994	And do you agree or disagree: Both the man and the woman should contribute to the household income.
Female Employment(2)	ISSP Family and Changing Gender Roles II – 1994	Do you agree or disagree: A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work.
Female Employment(3)	ISSP Family and Changing Gender Roles II – 1994	Do you agree or disagree: All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job.
Female Employment(4)	ISSP Family and Changing Gender Roles II – 1994	A man’s job is to earn money: a woman’s job is to look after the home and family.
Market Based Redistribution	ISSP Social Inequality II – 1992	Allowing business to make good profits is the best way to improve everyone’s standard of living.
Government Redistribution(1)	ISSP Role of Government III - 1996	It is the responsibility of the government to reduce the differences in income between people with high incomes and those with low incomes.
Government Redistribution(2)	ISSP Social Inequality II – 1992	The government should provide a job for everyone who wants one.
Government Redistribution(3)	ISSP Social Inequality II – 1992	The government should provide everyone with a guaranteed basic income.
Egalitarianism	ISSP Social Inequality II – 1992	Large differences in income are necessary for (R’s country) prosperity.

All of the questions taken from the surveys involve rating a respondent’s agreement with a given statement. Responses of ‘strongly agree’ were coded as (1), ‘agree’ (2), ‘neither agree or disagree’ (3), ‘disagree’ (4), and strongly disagree (5). For the purposes of this study, the responses for each country on each survey question were averaged to aggregate individual responses into aspects of a national political culture.

In order to measure the egalitarian and redistributive values of each case, a summative index will be created regarding the relevant questions. Referring to Table 3.3, the averages of the responses to the three questions involving government redistribution egalitarianism, and market based redistribution will be summed to create the index of egalitarian and redistributive value<sup>[3]</sup>. While agreement with the three government redistribution questions implies a greater support for redistribution, agreement with the egalitarianism and market based redistribution questions opposes both an equal distribution of wealth and the role of government in redistribution. Summing these five items results in an index ranging from 5 to 25. A score of 5 implies a completely egalitarian political culture that supports government redistribution. A score of 25 displays a complete opposition to an egalitarian distribution of wealth and denies the government a role in redistributing wealth.

With regards to the divide between feminist and traditional or patriarchal political cultures, the four questions regarding female employment in Table 3.3 will be used to assess gender roles. A second

summative index will be created from the averages of the responses to each survey item<sup>[4]</sup>. While agreement with the first two statements regarding female employment displays a favorable or feminist attitude towards women's role in the paid labor force, agreement with the second two statements displays a patriarchal stance within a political culture. The gender roles summative index will range from 4 to 20. A score of 4 represents a political culture wholly rooted in second wave or post-second wave feminism. A score of 20 displays a political culture that supports a patriarchal system featuring male breadwinners.

As stated earlier, it is expected that high levels of egalitarianism and support for government redistribution should yield low child poverty outcomes. Additionally, the greater the support for second wave feminist ideals, the lower the expected levels of child poverty. Therefore, the countries that have the lowest scores in both summative indexes should be the most effective at combating child poverty.

## Control Variables

Region is the primary control variable included in this study. For historical reasons mentioned earlier, the EU and post-communist states are expected to differ greatly with regards to political culture. Assuming a link exists between political culture and child poverty outcomes, regional poverty level differences are expected as well. In addition to analyzing relationships between political culture and child poverty levels between CEE and EU states, region will be coded as a dummy variable. It is expected that CEE states will have higher levels of child poverty than EU states. The breakdown of cases into Esping-Andersen's typology of welfare regimes will act as a second control variable. While citizen values are expected to impact child poverty levels, the welfare regime typology gives a point of reference to the actual nature of welfare policy adopted by states and fills in the gap between attitudes and outcomes. Correlations will be derived regarding relationships between welfare regime types and child poverty outcomes with the use of dummy variables representing welfare regime categories. It is expected that the social democratic regimes will have the lowest levels of child poverty, while outcomes among the conservative and liberal are uncertain. Although a reliance on means testing certainly makes liberal states less effective than social democratic states at improving welfare, the efficiency of means testing and guaranteed minimum incomes may reduce the relative child poverty levels in liberal states to some degree. Conservative states, while indirectly providing welfare benefits through breadwinners, can conceivably achieve low child poverty rates if the transfers and benefits are great enough.

## Analysis

Table 1: Independent Variables Among All Cases N=10

Country	DV	Regime	Egalitarian Index	Gender Role Index	% Women in Workforce	% Women in National Legislature	Region
Czech Republic	6.6	Social Democratic	12.71	11.37	47.29	17.0	CEE
Slovenia	6.9	Social Democratic	12.24	10.82	46.47	12.2	CEE
Hungary	8.8	Liberal	11.13	11.94	44.60	9.8	CEE
Poland	12.7	Conservative	12.10	12.38	46.43	20.2	CEE
Bulgaria	21.0	Conservative	10.53	11.40	48.10	26.2	CEE
Norway	3.9	Social Democratic	11.99	10.23	46.63	36.4	EU
Sweden	4.2	Social	13.82	9.03	48.10	45.3	EU

		Democratic					
West Germany	6.8	Conservative	12.89	10.84	42.41	32.2	EU
United Kingdom	15.4	Liberal	12.83	10.16	43.73	17.9	EU
Italy	16.6	Conservative	12.02	10.84	38.64	11.5	EU

Additionally, in order to verify a political culture's support for the role of women in the public sphere, data from the International Parliamentary Union (IPU) will provide the ratio of women in national legislatures. For states with bi-cameral legislatures, only the lower house will be examined. This control variable is supplemented by data from the International Labor Organization that measure the ratio of women to men in the paid labor force. Referring to the literature, women are more likely than men to advocate on behalf of children. Therefore, states that feature a greater percentage of women in two aspects of the public sphere, national legislatures and the paid labor force, are expected to have lower child poverty levels. Listed in Table 2 are the results of bivariate analyses of the independent variables and child poverty levels. Bivariate analysis with Spearman's R measure of association was used to examine correlations and the direction of relationships. Although there were no statistically significant relationships among the entire sample, the Gender Role Index was strongly correlated in a positive direction with child poverty with a Spearman's R of .426. This correlation indicates that among both EU and CEE states, those that have patriarchal cultures have higher levels of child poverty.

Table 2: Bivariate Correlations N=10

IV	Spearman's R Correlation	Statistical Significance (One-tailed test)
Egalitarian Index	-.430	.107
Gender Role Index	.426	.110
Percent Women in Workforce	-.334	.173
Percent Women in Legislature	-.685*	.014
Social Democratic(dummy)	-.798**	.003
Liberal(dummy)	.190	.300
Conservative(dummy)	.569*	.403
Region(dummy)	.244	.249

\*Significant at the .05 level.

\*\*Significant at the .01 level.

The Egalitarian Index is in an unexpectedly negative direction, suggesting that the more egalitarian the citizens, the higher the poverty rate. This correlation, however, is not statistically significant. Although lacking in statistical significance as well, there is a moderate negative relationship between the percentage of women in the paid labor force and child poverty levels. This correlation suggests that as more women enter the paid labor force, the lower the child poverty levels. The role of women in national legislatures, however, has the strongest relationship with child poverty outcomes out of all of the independent variables. The percentage of women in national legislatures has a correlation of -.685 and is statistically significant at the .05 level. This relationship in the negative direction confirms hypothesis four which states that countries whose populations support female political leadership will have lower levels of child poverty than those that discredit women's political abilities.

Among the dummy variables regarding regime type, both social democratic and conservative welfare regime types have correlations to child poverty outcomes at statistically significant levels. The social

democratic dummy variable has a correlation of  $-.798$ , which is statistically significant at the  $.01$  level. This finding shows that states with social democratic welfare regimes are highly correlated with low child poverty levels and much more likely to have child poverty rates that are lower than those among either liberal or conservative regimes. The conservative dummy variable has a correlation of  $.569$  and is statistically significant at the  $.05$  level. Conservative welfare regimes, therefore, are strongly correlated with higher child poverty levels. The liberal dummy variable had a correlation of  $.244$  and lacked statistical significance. This suggests that liberal regimes experience varying degrees of success in combating child poverty. The findings from the regime type dummy variables, especially those of the social democratic variable, support the expected relationships.

Looking at the region dummy variable, a weak correlation of  $.244$  lacking in statistical significance suggests that region is not a strong determinant of child poverty levels. CEE states are only slightly more likely to have higher rates of child poverty than EU states. It is important to note, once more, that the measures of child poverty being examined are relative rather than absolute. The percentage of children living in absolute poverty is higher among the CEE states than the EU states.

Table 3: Bivariate Correlations Among EU States N=5

IV	Spearman R Correlation	Statistical Significance (One-tailed test)
Egalitarian Index	.000	.500
Gender Role Index	.410	.246
Percent Women in Workforce	-.800	.052
Percent Women in Legislature	-.900*	.019

\*Significant at the  $.05$  level.

Due to expected differences in attitudes resulting from historical differences, the results of the bivariate correlations were controlled for by region. As Tables 3 and 4 display, relationships emerge within both the CEE and EU states. All of the relationships among the EU cases exist in the expected directions. Table 3 shows that gender roles favoring progressive feminist ideals are strongly correlated with low child poverty levels. The percent women in the workforce variable has a Spearman's R of  $-.800$ , while the percent women in the national legislature is significant at the  $.05$  level with a Spearman's R of  $-.900$ . Based on these two variables and a correlation of  $.410$  for the Gender Role Index, it appears that a prominent role for women in the public sphere is important for reducing child poverty levels. Therefore, the results for the EU states show continued support for hypothesis four regarding women in political office. The EU results also display that countries that make it possible and comfortable for women to work in the paid labor force have lower child poverty levels. In addition, the  $.410$  correlation for the Gender Role Index lends some support to hypothesis three, which states that the less patriarchal social values are regarding gender, motherhood, and the family, the lower the incidence and severity of child poverty.

Table 4: Bivariate Correlations Among CEE States N=5

IV	Spearman's R Correlation	Statistical Significance (One-tailed test)
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Egalitarian Index	-.900*	.019
Gender Role Index	.600	.142
Percent Women in Workforce	.100	.436
Percent Women in Legislature	-.200	.374

\*Significant at the .05 level.

Table 4 displays the results of the bivariate analyses for the CEE states. Although the Gender Role Index scores are positively correlated, the correlations for the percent women in the workforce and percent women in the national legislature variables suggest that the role of women in the public sector is not the same in the CEE as it is in the EU.

Focusing on the percent of women in the workforce, there is no relationship between this variable and child poverty levels. This lack of relationship can be largely explained by the fact that all of the CEE states have maintained relatively high levels of female labor force participation. Therefore, this variable is lacking in variation. Although a backlash of traditional values has been observed in the post-communist states, it appears that women have remained at their jobs outside of the home. It is possible that women are unable to retreat to the domestic sphere due to the poor economic situation found among the CEE states. It is interesting, however, to examine the situations within individual countries. For instance, the Czech Republic, one of the two social democratic welfare states in the CEE sample, has a relatively high female labor force participation rate in conjunction with a very low child poverty rate. This is reflective of a system that eases and supports the entry of women into the labor force through many universally provided family benefits.

Meanwhile, the Egalitarian Index variable has a correlation of -.900 and is statistically significant at the .05 level. This finding states that the relationships expressed by hypotheses one and two exist inversely in the post-communist CEE states. Based on this bivariate correlation, it can be stated that the lower the support for government redistribution of wealth, the lower the level of child poverty. Arriving at this relationship is not wholly surprising due to the increases in poverty associated with the transition to market based democracies in even the most egalitarian of post-communist states. This situation is best displayed by Bulgaria where a high child poverty rate of 21% is combined with an Egalitarian Index score that shows strong support for government redistribution. Bulgaria is unable to translate its strong support for egalitarianism into a favorable distribution of wealth due to a lack of funds for social spending (Heikkila and Kuivalainen 2002). In addition, this relationship can be explained by the expected clash between highly egalitarian redistributive values and patriarchal gender roles among CEE states.

## Conclusions

Controlling for region between CEE and EU states is necessary when examining relationships between political culture and child poverty outcomes. All four hypotheses were crafted around assumptions that appear to only exist in the Western industrialized states. While the Egalitarian Index scores among the EU states were not correlated with child poverty, it is possible that the survey questions did not accurately reflect the social views in question. In previous studies regarding political culture and welfare policy in Western industrialized states, correlations were discovered between egalitarianism and regime types as well as poverty outcomes (Phipps 2001; Svallfors 1997). Hypotheses three and four regarding gender were supported by the data for the EU states.

Among the EU and CEE states, it appears that gender roles have been shaped in clearly different ways within the historical contexts of the two regions. In the EU states where feminist ideals are being asserted through participation in the paid labor force and representation in national legislatures, women have been able to push for family and woman friendly social benefits. The impact of women in the public sphere on welfare policy can be seen in the decreased child poverty rates of countries like Sweden and Norway. Conversely, Italy has low female levels of political representation and participation in the paid labor force. In the EU context, this lack of female input into the shaping of public policy has led to relatively high child

poverty levels.

Within the CEE states, the traditional backlash that has accompanied the transition to market based democracies is certainly impacting any relationship between political culture and child poverty levels. Additionally, budgetary constraints on social spending cause a breakdown between the role of social values and their impact on policies and outcomes.

In conclusion, within the EU states, there tends to be support for the notion that higher levels of public support for government redistribution of wealth and egalitarian gender roles are linked to lower levels of poverty. The roles of women in the paid labor force, within the family, and in national legislatures are especially important in relation to child poverty. Meanwhile, more research regarding the role of political culture in post-communist CEE states needs to occur.

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[1] References to absolute poverty aside, this study will solely consider poverty in relative terms. Outside of especially marginalized groups, the absence of hunger, starvation, and other effects of extreme poverty in the Western world has led to a focus on relative material deprivation and social exclusion (Muffels and Fouarge 2002). Therefore, poverty will be measured at the 50% national median household income.

[2] Only respondents from Western Germany were included in this study. The current German welfare model was developed by Western Germany without input from Eastern Germans whose social values are expected to be more egalitarian due to the history of socialism.

[3] While the coding for the government redistribution questions will remain in the form used in the ISSP survey, to aid interpretation, the responses to the egalitarianism and market based redistribution questions will be coded in reverse order so that 5→1; 4→2; 3→3; 2→4; 1→5.

[4] Female Employment (1) and (2) will retain the coding methods used in the ISSP survey, while Female Employment (3) and (4) will utilize the reverse system of coding used previously in the egalitarianism and redistribution index.