Proposed title for the Module | Attitudes toward family diversity
---|---
Single or repeat measurement within the panel | Single measurement on one wave
Principal Applicant | Dimitri Mortelmans
Position | Full Professor
Institution (including name of University School or Department) | University of Antwerp
| Department of Sociology
Address for correspondence | Sint Jacobstraat 2
| 2000 Antwerpen
| BELGIUM
Telephone: +32 3 265 55 35 | Email: dimitri.mortelmans@uantwerpen.be

Relevance and rationale
The proposal directly addresses one of the most important developments in European countries: family diversity resulting from the increasing complexity of life-course trajectories since the 1960s [1, 2] and the related rise in separation/divorce rates and in single-parent and stepfamilies [3, 4]. In addition, thanks to widening legal and medical possibilities, same-sex couples may nowadays grow children together. As a consequence, more children experience different types of parental relationhsips as those with stepparents and with sam-sex parents. Furthermore, children increasingly live across multiple households, as a result of rises in separation or divorce and the consequent diffusion of non-residential parent visiting practices and the increased popularity of joint physical custody [5, 6].

The increase in non-traditional families has fueled concerns about children’s well-being [6]. An important reason is that certain family arrangements (e.g., single parents, same-sex parents) may be less accepted in the population, which makes families vulnerable [7]. Non-traditional families also face an uncertain legal and social position. Many European countries are considering or have made legal reforms to accommodate the position of divorcing parents, stepparents or same-sex parents, or to define more than two (biological) parents and their rights and duties towards minor children [8]. These transformations have fueled a public debate raising the question of what the public stance is on the position of non-traditional families. Despite such developments and the urgent adaptations they pose to legal and social institutions concerned by children wellbeing, we know still very little about European population attitudes towards children living in diverse family arrangements.

We propose to collect data on population attitudes toward (i) children growing up in diverse household structures and (ii) children’s living arrangements across multiple households. The module captures whether family forms are perceived to be different in terms of children’s best interests and opinions about the parental rights of diverse parental figures. Our module extends existing knowledge, first, by asking attitudes on understudied non-traditional family forms. Existing surveys have only focused on the most common non-traditional families so far: cohabiting parents and single parents/mothers (i.e., GGS [9], ISSP [10]). Although these surveys query same-sex relationships, they lack a child-centered approach (i.e., attitudes do not refer to same-sex parenting, but to the acceptance of same-sex couples). Even more evident is the lack of information about stepfamilies or children living in multiple households (in joint physical custody). When post-divorce families or same-sex parents are considered, attitudes are measured for one particular country (e.g., NFN [11]). Second, we explicitly consider gendered patterns. Most surveys do not distinguish between single mother and single father families; gay and lesbian couples; or stepmother and stepfather families - even though some research suggests differences in how these families are perceived.
Third, our measures allow for systematic comparisons based on gender (e.g. stepmother vis-à-vis stepfather), household structure (same-sex vis-à-vis stepfamilies), and residence (nonresident vis-à-vis resident parents). Existing surveys have developed different items for varying family types, while we ask the same question for all family types/parental figures, enabling possibilities to rank acceptance of diverse family forms.

Our approach allows testing for theoretical notions: (1) gender roles and the primacy of biological motherhood [14, 15] suggesting gendered patterns in attitudes; (2) the role of biology and residence [12, 13] in acceptance of different families and rights of parental figures; (3) the role of individual experience in shaping attitudes, and (4) the role of macro-level characteristics such as the country’s prevalence of non-traditional families [16], its level of gender equality [17], and religiosity [18], that predict both cross-national variation in attitudes toward family diversity and differences in effects of well-known social-demographic determinants on attitudes.

Suitability for the CRONOS-2

The proposed module on attitudes toward family diversity is comparable to earlier ESS rotating modules and CRONOS modules focusing on attitudes towards specific topics (e.g., attitudes on climate related issues). In so far ESS has queried attitudes in the work-family domain, however, the focus has been limited to gender-role attitudes, but family change has been less pervasive as gender role change. Family change is a major component of the second demographic transition (SDT), which has/is taking place in most, if not all, European countries and other parts of the world, but in different tempo’s [19]. The pervasiveness and cross-national nature of family change, makes it a topic that is relevant to the general population in many countries. Our child-centered approach adds to the topic’s relevance for the general public as most adults, even childless, seem able to reflect on what is better or worse for a child. Children are also at the heart of recent public debates about, for example, same-sex couples and access to assisted reproduction, or step-parent rights.

Although the questions have been developed for the present purpose, the questions mimic attitudinal items from other surveys, such as the GSS or the ISSP, and rely on standard likert-scale items. Our questions do not use specific terms such as “shared physical custody” or “blended families” that are quite technical and might be understood differently across countries. Instead, we try to define the situation we aim to receive attitudes on within the question.

The module in itself would already be worthwhile to analyse, as articles on cross-national variation in comparable items on, for example, marriage or same-sex couples have been successfully published [18, 20]. Note that the module accommodates cross-national comparisons on more than one type of attitude. In addition, the attitudinal items may be connected to the ESS module on socio-demographic characteristics, such as age, birth cohort, or education, which are well-known determinants of attitudes. Also the ESS-questions about previous experience with divorce and (ever) having children are worthwhile to connect to our module.

Research team

The team is composed of five renowned researchers working on family diversity in their countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands, and Switzerland) or in a comparative perspective. The knowledge of their national background and the diversity of their disciplinary fields (sociology, demography, and economics) guarantee theoretical depth and methodological rigour. They all have a strong publication record and have published numerous articles on topics such as divorce, single parenthood, or joint physical custody, in leading international journals. The researchers are member of the European Divorce network,
where they regularly meet and work together in a working group of the EAPS [21]. In different constellations, team members have collaborated in the past by editing books or special issues together and/or contributing to these [22, 23]. The researchers have solid academic affiliation and work environments that allow them to work on the module in the future. All researchers have headed or are currently leading a research project on related topics with slightly diverse approaches.

All applicants have conducted surveys nationally (see appendix 1). Additionally, team members are actively involved in large-scale data collections of cross-national surveys like the Family and Fertility Survey (FFS), the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS), the Survey on Aging, Health and Retirement (SHARE), and the European Community Panel Survey (ECHP). They are involved in substantive and methodological teaching to bachelor and master students and published methodological handbooks on statistics and survey methodology using ESS as the main example database (24, 25).

Feasibility of implementation (max. 800 words – excluding draft questions which can be in addition)

We propose a module of 15 questions (note that Q12 and Q13 consist of two parts, which amounts to 15 questions in total). A draft version of our module can be found in appendix 2. Part 1 includes questions on attitudes on child welfare in diverse family forms. Part 2 focuses on attitudes towards rights of parental figures in diverse family forms. Thus, we will use two different type of questions: about attitudes toward families type and about rights about non-resident and step-parents. Within these parts, questions tap on different aspects of family diversity – with some focusing more on e.g. stepfamilies and others on single and same-sex parents. The module will thus capture attitudes on different – be it related – issues, providing a rich database to analyze. As said, the gendered phrasing and use of similar questions for different family types furthermore allows for systematic comparisons regarding gender and family types.

The questions are on original subjects but are identical in structure and shape (items proposed) to questions about attitudes of established international surveys (e.g. GGS or ISSP) or previous rounds of ESS. Most of our items take the shape of standard Likert scales. Therefore, they should be easy to answer for all respondents and the lack of testing possibilities should not be an issue. The questions about rights are also very simple, because we opted for the simplest version and a minimum of items with the possibility to be proposed and to answer easily on smartphones or personal computers. We are completely ready to receive advices and suggestions from the ESS CST and National Coordinators to update the questions and items - if necessary - to the country-specific context.

We do not anticipate any methodological difficulty. Given the short time-span between the different groups, we do not expect any problem related to spacing the fieldwork across time as attitudes are not likely to change during this short period. It might be difficult for parents who have lost contact with their children after a separation to answer about this topic; that is why we decide to focus the large part of the module on attitudes rather than on the personal life-course.

Dissemination plans
All applicants are experienced in successfully publishing empirical findings in high ranked peer reviewed journals (e.g., Journal of Marriage and Family, Journal of Family Issues, or Demography). Thus, we will write and publish several scientific papers based on data of this module to disseminate results to the academic audience, focusing for example on:
• Attitudes toward family diversity by gender, birth cohort, and country of residents of the respondents.
• Attitudes toward family diversity considering gendered patterns in families (e.g., single father vs. single mother families or stepmother vs. stepfather families).
• Attitudes toward family diversity considering household structure and cross-household relations.
• Acceptance of non-traditional families and rights of parental figures by individual experiences and country-level characteristics (e.g., prevalence of certain family types in a country and actual rights of parental figures).

Additionally, we will present those papers at international conferences (e.g., the annual conference of the European Sociological Association). However, also non-academic audiences will be addressed. In this case is has to be through the individual researchers in their own countries because disseminations via media like newspapers or radio need to be in their native languages. European-level comparisons on attitudes toward non-traditional families are not existing so far, which hold out great interest from both academic and non-academic audiences which we would like to address in highly visible research on the one hand and in low-threshold dissemination channels for the public audience on the other hand. As several members of the research team are member of Population Europe, this opens possibilities to have policy oriented workshops at the European level and subsequent policy briefs as we have done for example on Lone Parenthood [26].
References


APPENDIX 1: CVs of applicants

Curriculum Vitae, Dimitri Mortelmans (dimitri.mortelmans@uantwerpen.be)

CURRENT ACADEMIC POSITION AND CONTACT INFORMATION
Senior Full Professor
Department of Sociology, Antwerp University, Sint Jacobstraat 2, 2000 Antwerpen, Belgium

RECENT RESEARCH GRANTS
2020 UAntwerp - Single in Europe – A longitudinal, cross-comparative study on singleness.
2019 FWO - Women’s employment and divorce: untangling causes and consequences.
2019 Hor2020 - Study on transition and exclusion in society of single-mums (STRESS-mums).
2019 FWO - The gendered care perspective: a systemic approach to intergenerational solidarity.
2019 FWO - Like brother, like sister: Sibling influence on their respective life courses.

DATA COLLECTION
2021+2008 – Multi-actor survey Divorce in Flanders (2 waves)
2019 – Fieldwork for the Belgian national Election Study
since 2002 - Flemish data collection agency for the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (Share)
2019 – Fieldwork for the TAKE-survey
2019 – Survey to measure the satisfaction among members of the COV union.
2010 – Flemish Career Panel Study

METHODOLOGY TEACHING
- Bachelor course (500 students): Introductory to Scientific Work (obligatory ESS usership)
- Bachelor course (450 students): Quantitative Research Methodology– co-teaching with Prof. Neels
- Masters course (100 students): Applied Multivariate Statistics (obligatory ESS usership)

BOARD MEMBERSHIPS AND COMMITTEES
- Member of EAPS Working Group “Family Demography and Family Law”
- Member of Belgian “States General of the Family”
- Member of FWO Expert Panel Social Sciences

PUBLICATIONS
Total publications: 498 / Total Scholar Cites: 6088 / H-Index: 36

5 Key publications:
CURRENT ACADEMIC POSITION AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Full Professor, Institute of Social Sciences and LIVES Centre / SSP, Lausanne University, Géopolis Building, 1015 Lausanne, Switzerland; Tel.: 0041 (21) 6923846

RECENT GRANTS

- 2019-2022 Swiss National Science Foundation, Family ties and vulnerability processes (PI)
- 2019-2021 Swiss National Science Foundation, WELLWAYS: Multidimensional wellbeing and critical events and transitions in family and work trajectories (co-PI)
- 2011-2018 Swiss National Science Foundation, National Centre for Competence NCCR LIVES: Overcoming Vulnerability in the Life Course (co-PI and Deputy Director)
- 2017-2020 Research funding from the city of Lausanne, the Vaud Canton Department of health and Social Affairs (DSAS) and the Youth Protection Service (SPJ) Observatory on the consequences of separation and divorce (PI)

DATA COLLECTION

- Development team for the questionnaire for the Swiss EFG 2013 and 2018 (Families and Generations Surveys) / Advising on the revisions of the EU-SILC and the GGS module of children living arrangements
- Max Planck Gesellschaft data for the project Fertility and family decisions in Eastern Europe (PI) / NIH-NSF data for the project Explaining Low Fertility in Italy (co-PI)/ - Swiss Panel study on Lone parents in the life course.

TEACHING RELATED TO THE PROPOSAL

- MA course: Family policies and vulnerability (comparative empirical papers on family diversity)

CURRENT BOARD MEMBERSHIP AND COMMITTEES

- President of the Social Sciences and Humanities Division of the Swiss National Research Council.
- Chair of the EAPS Working Group Family Demography and Family Law.
- President of the Institut Nationale des Etudes Démographiques (INED).
- Member of the scientific committee and section representative of the Swiss Academy of Social sienes and humanities
- Member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Swiss Foundation for Social Research (FORS).

PUBLICATIONS

Total refereed publications: 125 / Total Scholar Cites: 3209 / H-Index: 30
Webpage: https://www.lives-nccr.ch/fr/personne/laura-bernardi-n148#overlay=fr/node/148/edit

5 Key publications:

Curriculum Vitae, Anne-Rigt Poortman (a.poortman@uu.nl)

CURRENT ACADEMIC POSITION AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Professor (chair: Family diversity and life course outcomes)
Department of Sociology/ICS, Utrecht University, Padualaan 14, 3584 CH Utrecht, The Netherlands

RECENT GRANTS AND AWARDS

2018 NWO (Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research) VICI grant, ‘Postdivorce family diversity and outcomes for children and parents’ (€1.5 million). Sole applicant
2016 Grant Institutions for Open Societies (UU) for data collection among a replacement sample for panel survey New Families in the Netherlands (NFN) (€25K). Main applicant
2013 NWO talent grant, ‘Parenting plans of Dutch divorced and separated parents: What, who and does it work?’ (€170k). Main applicant
2011 NWO Medium Investment Subsidy (data collection),’Legal arrangements of divorced and separated Dutch parents: A longitudinal, multil-actor and multi-method approach’/’New Families in the Netherlands’ (€600k). Main applicant

DATA COLLECTION

2011-present – Project leader panel survey “New Families in the Netherlands [NFN]”.
2007-2011 – Co project leader “Panel Study Social Integration in the Netherlands [PSIN]”.

METHODOLOGY TEACHING

- BA course: Family sociology; trends, theory and quantitative research (obligatory GSS use)
- BA course: Data analysis practical: advanced statistical methods

BOARD MEMBERSHIPS AND COMMITTEES

- Appointed member of State Committee (Staatscommissie “Herijking Ouderschap” to advice government on reform of law on parenthood), 2014-2016
- Member of Expert Group Social demography for Statistics Netherlands (CBS), 2015-present
- Member Advisory Board panel survey “De Nederlandse levensloopstudie [NELLs], 2008-2014

PUBLICATIONS

Total refereed publications: 67 / Total Scholar Cites: 3052 / H-Index: 30
Full bibliography: https://www.uu.nl/medewerkers/apoortman/CV

5 Key publications:

Curriculum Vitae, Anne Solaz (solaz@ined.fr)

CURRENT ACADEMIC POSITION AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Senior Researcher (Directrice de recherches)
INED, French Institute for Demographic Studies,
9 cours des Humanités CS 50004, 93322 Aubervilliers Cedex, FRANCE
Co-editor in chief of the International Review Population since 2013

RECENT RESEARCH GRANTS

2020  France Stratégie (First minister) on a project about Living conditions and family arrangements of children after divorce in France.
2016  ANR Vieillir à deux on later lifecourse demographic events: couple formation and dissolution after 50

DATA COLLECTION

2018-2019 – Member of the group working for a better statistical knowledge of the separations in France
since 2013 – Member of the questionnaire development group on poverty and living conditions of the ELFE birth cohort panel
2004-2005 – Supervisor (co) of the Family and Employers Survey (10,000 respondents)
2002-2005 – Member of the questionnaire development European group of GGS survey

TEACHING

- Family Economics, master APE in Paris school of Economics
- Demography, ENSAE (statistical “Grande école“)

BOARD MEMBERSHIPS AND COMMITTEES

- Scientific committee Member of the Primary Panel Survey made by the ministry of education
- Scientific committee Member of the National survey on childcare arrangements made by the health Ministry.

PUBLICATIONS

Total publications: 80 / Total Scholar Cites: 2675 / H-Index: 24
Full bibliography: https://annesolaz.site.ined.fr/en/publications/

5 Key publications:

CURRENT ACADEMIC POSITION AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Full Professor
Department of Sociology, University of Duisburg-Essen, Lotharstr. 65, 4757 Duisburg, Germany

RESEARCH GRANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Grant Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021-2023</td>
<td>German Research Foundation, Family Models in Germany (FAMOD): The Well-Being of Children and Parents in Joint Physical Custody Arrangements</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018-2021</td>
<td>German Research Foundation, Family Models in Germany (FAMOD)</td>
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<td>2006-2010</td>
<td>BMBF, Regulation of Developmental Transitions in Second Generation Immigrants in Germany and Israel</td>
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<td>2008-2010</td>
<td>German Research Foundation, Preliminary Study on the Survey among People with Migration Background; part of the “German Family Panel” (pairfam)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006-2008</td>
<td>German Research Foundation, Development of Panel-Suited Instruments to Research the Values of Children as well as Intergenerational Relationships in Germany; part of the “German Family Panel” (pairfam)</td>
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DATA COLLECTION

- Development of the questionnaires (anchor, partner, children) “Family Models in Germany” (FAMOD)
- Development of the questionnaires (anchor, parents, partner) for the German Family Panel (pairfam)

TEACHING RELATED TO THE PROPOSAL

- MA course: Analysing papers using quantitative methods: families after separation or divorce
- MA course: Data analyses practical: couple relationships and family
- BA course: Partnership, family, and social change

CURRENT BOARD MEMBERSHIPS AND COMMITTEES

- Member of the EAPS Working Group Family Demography and Family Law
- Chair of the Scientific Advisory Board of the German Aging Survey (DEAS)
- Board member of the Committee on Family Research (RC06/CFR) of the International Sociological Association (ISA)

PUBLICATIONS

Total refereed publications: 83 / Total Scholar Cites: 1520 / H-Index: 23
Webpage: https://www.uni-due.de/soziologie/steinbach_en.php

5 Key publications:

APPENDIX 2: Draft questionnaire

PART 1: Attitudes on child welfare in diverse families

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1.</td>
<td>Children who grow up with only their biological mother can fare as well as children who grow up with both biological parents</td>
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<td>Q2.</td>
<td>Children who grow up with only their biological father can fare as well as children who grow up with both biological parents</td>
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<td>Q3.</td>
<td>Children who grow up with a step-mother and their biological father can fare as well as children who grow up with both biological parents</td>
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<td>Q4.</td>
<td>Children who grow up with a step-father and their biological mother can fare as well as children who grow up with both biological parents</td>
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<td>Q5.</td>
<td>Children who grow up with a lesbian couple as parents (lesbian women) can fare as well as children who grow up with both biological parents</td>
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<td>Q6.</td>
<td>Children who grow up with a gay couple as parents (gay men) can fare as well as children who grow up with both biological parents</td>
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Q7 In the event of parental separation/divorce the best for the children is to live:

- With their mother most of the time
- With their father most of the time
- With both parents about an equal amount of time
### PART 2. Attitudes towards rights of parents in diverse families

| Q8. Single women should have the same (legal) rights to become a parent as a heterosexual couple | Strongly disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Strongly agree |
| Q9. Single men should have the same (legal) rights to become a parent as a heterosexual couple |
| Q10. A lesbian couple should have the same (legal) rights to become parents as a heterosexual couple |
| Q11. A gay couple should have the same (legal) rights to become parents as a heterosexual couple |

When important decisions about a child have to be made (for example about the child’s non trivial medical treatment, school choice, religious affiliation, place of residence) in post-divorce stepfamilies ...

| Q12. ...the stepfather who resides with the child and is involved in the child’s daily life, should have the same (legal) rights in making important child-related decisions as: |
| a) the resident biological parent |
| b) the non-resident biological parent (with legal custody) |
| Q13. ...the stepmother who resides with the child and is involved in the child’s daily life, should have the same (legal) rights in making important child-related decisions as: |
| a) the resident biological parent |
| b) the non-resident biological parent (with legal custody) |