

Attitudes toward Female Labor Force Participation in Eastern and Western Europe

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Introduction

Fair employment opportunities for women are considered as a strong indicator for achieving gender equity. Despite a steady growth in the rates of female labor force participation, chances for men and women to get employed and promoted in the workforce remain uneven. Moreover, the gender pay gap still exists and widens as educational attainment and job tenure increase (Bonvillain, 2006). The unfairness for women's employment provokes researchers to examine the belief system on women's role in work and family. Previous research has documented a strong association between gender attitudes and the actual social opportunities for women. For example, studies on attitudes about gender, work and family among scientists contend that stereotypical attitudes about women's occupations in science might create interactions and structures that help legitimize the gender hierarchy and maintain science as a male domain (Hanson et al. 2004). Other research argues that as the rate of women's labor force participation increases, attitudes change toward a greater acceptance of women's non-familial roles (Cherlin and Walters, 1981; Mason and Lu, 1988). This paper examines attitudes toward women's labor force participation which can influence and be influenced by the actual work environment for women, in order to gain a thorough understanding of gender inequality that exist in the workforce.

Attitudes toward women's employment are embedded in different economic, social, political and cultural systems. Thus, a comparative perspective of attitudes toward women's employment can reveal the diversity of gender ideologies under different institutional systems. Furthermore, comparative perspective is also important for understanding the interrelationships between gender norms and the social contexts in which they are embedded. Previous research has documented a considerable difference in social and cultural contexts between Western and Eastern Europe. Western European countries have social systems with capitalist economies, democratic politics and individualistic beliefs; whereas Eastern European countries as in China, share a common experience of authoritarian governments in a socialist era, and their people tend to emphasize structural factors over individual factors that influence their social performance (Hanson and Wells-Dang, 2005). In this paper, I compare attitudes toward women's labor force participation between Eastern and Western Europe. Although similar research has been done, little of it has compared attitudes toward women's employment across regional contexts. Moreover, scant research has compared these countries in the post-communist era. Two decades after the collapse of the USSR, the political and economic transition from state centralized systems to quasi-capitalist systems in formerly socialist countries would no doubt lead to the change of social structures and values in these countries, and thus the change in attitudes toward

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women's employment. My research intends to fill these research gaps by the comparing individual national settings to regional settings and from the time of the communist era to that of the post-communist era. Specifically, this paper is intended to examine whether, within that scope, there is any significant difference in attitudes toward women's labor force participation in Eastern and Western Europe in the post-communist era. I start with an introduction of the macro structural arrangements in Eastern and Western Europe and their effect upon the gender ideologies in two regions. I then use the data from the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) 2002 module measuring gender and family attitudes to examine my proposed hypotheses.

Gender Ideology in Eastern and Western Europe

Sociologists argue that social structure affects personality by its "decisive influence on proximate conditions of life" (Kohn, 1990). Macro-structural elements, such as principles of political organization, national economic and social policies, employment and welfare policies, have a great impact on material and social resources and choices available to individuals. These available resources and choices form the basis in which individual intelligence develops and personal judgment forms. In addition, national norms and values also shape individual normative contexts by interpersonal connection and communication. Thus, different macro structures and ideologies might result in different gender attitudes by influencing different personal experiences and values.

In the post-communist era in Eastern European countries, one prominent feature in gender norms is to allow women to return to the "private sphere". This is a response to the state enforcement in the socialist era, in which women were overburdened with conflicting social roles, the economic restructuring welfare change.

After World War II, Eastern European countries, following the Soviet model of socialist development, accelerated their process of industrialization and urbanization. The fast economic growth created vast demand for industrial labor force (Panayotova and Brayfield, 1997). The communist states forced women into the urban labor force by implementing full employment policies. Meanwhile, states used Marxist ideology of egalitarian gender roles as the official justification for women's participation in the workforce. Governments also offered generous welfare policies for employed women. For example, women in Hungary were provided "paid maternity leaves, benefits for childbirth, and an extensive childcare policy to ease the tension between women's employment and maternal responsibilities (Panayotova and Brayfield, 1997)" In Czechoslovakia in the late 1970s, the government spent almost 4 percent of its annual budget on direct cash benefits, including family allowances, birth grants, paid maternity leaves and allowance; and an additional 7 percent on services and subsidies in day care, kindergartens, school meals, afterschool care, children's goods, tax and rent deductions based on numbers of children (Heitlinger, 1993). Despite the equal gender roles propagandized from the official rhetoric and the offer of extensive maternity benefits, Eastern European women still experienced discrimination and segregation in their workforce. Research documented that in the socialist system, men were more able to utilize their qualifications, receive higher salaries for the same work, and achieve faster promotion than women. With similar levels of skills and qualifications as men, women were excluded from making major planning, decisions, and taking leadership positions (Kiczkova and Farkasova, 1993). In Bulgaria in 1988, only 1.6 percent of the employed female population worked in management, decision-making and administrative spheres (Panova,

Gavrilova and Merdzanska, 1993). Furthermore, women were overburdened by their double role in occupation and in family, and had great difficulty in reconciling the two roles, which triggered stress and desperation (Kiczkova and Farkasova, 1993). Thus, state imposition of full employment for women has resulted in a lack of motivation for women to work. Their experience of gender inequality in the workforce and their hardship in reconciling work and family roles made them work not out of eagerness but out of necessity and compulsion (Harsanyi, 1993). As a result, women were so exhausted that they would rather return to their traditional roles as wife and mother for a relief.

Moreover, returning to traditional gender roles for women in post-communist countries indicates a way of emancipation. Studies on gender issues in post-communist countries note an almost universal trend of returning to the traditional gender values after the collapse of totalitarian ideology (Funk, 1993). In socialist states under a central planning economic system, human workers, male and female, were considered as homogeneous, undifferentiated mass. They were organized in an interchangeable way, educated to have the same needs and pursue a common goal so that they could be more easily controlled (Kiczkova and Farkasova, 1993). The neglect of sexual differences and personality diversity had greatly challenged the socialist ideal of “women’s emancipation”. Women’s participation in the workforce was regarded as “formal emancipation”, which lacked sufficient channels of expressing their specific nature of female subjectivity (Kiczkova and Farkasova, 1993). After the collapse of Soviet Union, many women choose to go back to family to fulfill their identity as women and obtain their self-realization that was lost during the communist period. Research conducted in Russia reports that women in the post Soviet Union thought emancipation was not “based upon a demand to work. On the contrary, liberation was perceived by many as the right not to work.” Another research documented that Bulgarian women in transitional period thought it wise to return to their “authentic nature” by making home a priority, having enough time with their children, kitchen, knitting, sewing and cosmetics. It seemed only in this way that women could meet “the inborn needs of their sex” (Petrova, 1993). The eagerness for achieving distinguished sexual identity leads women to regarding traditional gender roles as a way to their real emancipation, and thus in the post-communist era women from Eastern Europe might be less favorable for their labor force participation. In China, the advent of the new market based economy liberated hundreds of thousands of young women from poverty in farms and villages. Despite the government they have flocked to city factories and offices and they see them selves as liberated and bold.

Another relevant factor has to do with the change of welfare provisions in post-communist countries. Most post-communist countries such as Poland, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Hungary witness a decline in childcare services and wage compensation for leave arrangements, yet there still remain considerable parental leave benefits (Crompton, Lewis, and Lyonette, 2007). In both Czech and Slovak Republics, supply subsidies for child-care services have been significantly reduced. In 1990, fees for day care increased by 36.5 percent and fees for kindergartens by 86.5 percent. Some municipalities even claimed to rent the attractive kindergarten buildings to commercial firms for more profitable use. With the decline of public childcare facilities and the retention of family and maternity allowances, mothers’ care for their children is considered more beneficial and socially acceptable (Heitlinger, 1993). In sum, the burdensome workload, the value of emancipation, and the welfare policy change contribute a favorable environment to encouraging women to stay at home in post-communist Eastern Europe.

In contrast, Western European countries did not experience the state enforcement era which prevents their citizens from the enforced identity denial or imposed double burden. Women's labor force participation contributes greatly to the changes in economic restructuring (Crompton and Harris, 1997). With the advancement of modern technology and the trend of globalization, manufacturing employment is declining when many jobs are created within the service sector. China on the other hand is still very much in the manufacturing stage and has yet to modernize its service sectors. Jobs such as teaching, caring, clerking, electronic assembly, and leisure business are gradually replacing the weight of heavy industrial work and thus lead to an increase in the level of women's paid work. In addition, unlike Eastern Europe that has full-time jobs as the main employment pattern, Western Europe women are more flexible in choosing their employment patterns—they can be full time employees or part-time workers, or self-employed, or remain as full time house wife. Furthermore, the cultural factors also play a significant role in the formation of gender ideology and women's employment. As consumerism becomes a predominant feature in capitalist society, and people, especially women, are more entrenched into this consumerism tide, a single wage earner might not be sufficient to maintain a family's spending. Women's participation in the workforce would contribute to their family's income and thus sustain their consumption. Besides, the second feminist wave in the 1960s had great influence on Western European societies. Work is considered to be an important indicator for women to achieve independence, manifest their rights, and get emancipation from home and kitchen. Due to the less coercive work obligations, more flexible employment patterns, the attractions of consumerism and impact of feminism, Western Europe has a more favorable environment for women's labor force participation than Eastern Europe.

To sum up, the overview suggests a great difference in institutional, political, economic and cultural circumstances between Eastern and Western Europe. These macro-structural elements are the forces that construct and shape the social milieu where individual actors, live and interact, and thus affect their personal judgments in particular and ideological contexts in general. The coercion of state force and the homogenization of sexual difference in formerly socialist countries had led to a painful burden for women and their eagerness to express distinctive sexual identity. Returning to family might be a choice for women in post-communist countries to relieve the double burden and achieve their self-realization. Social policies of maternity leave encouragement have reinforced this trend of returning to traditional gender roles. Western Europe women, in contrast, did not experience the drastic social coercion or sexual identity suppression, which makes them less aspiring for returning family for burden relief or identity realization. Furthermore, the influence of consumerism and second feminist wave had encouraged women to work for improving both their economic condition and personality independence. Thus, people from Western Europe might be more progressive in attitudes toward women's labor force participation than their counterparts in Eastern Europe.

Hypotheses

In view of previous research about the impact of gender, region and their interaction on attitudes toward women's labor force participation, I propose the following hypotheses:

1. Different political, social, economic and cultural contexts in Eastern and Western Europe might lead to the attitudinal difference on women's employment issues. Given the more favorable context for female labor force participation in Western European countries, I

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expect a cross-regional difference in attitudes toward women's employment, with Western European respondents more supportive to women's work than their counterparts in Eastern European countries. More specifically, I expect to see the attitudinal differences across countries, with Western European countries exhibiting more progressive attitudes than Eastern European countries.

2. Previous research has demonstrated a significant difference in gender-role attitudes by sex, with men exhibiting more traditional gender roles across countries (Adler and Brayfield, 1996; Hanson, Fuchs, Aisenbrey and Kravets, 2004). Women are more likely to show willingness of labor force participation because they can reduce some burden from family work, and also gain more economic resources to achieve independence. As a privileged group in the gender hierarchy, they tend to be conservative on gender role attitudes and try to secure their primary wage-earner position (Panayotova and Brayfield, 1997). Thus I expect to see women exhibiting more progressive attitudes than their male counterparts across countries and regions.
3. Because of the difference in regional contexts, the attitudinal difference by sex might vary. Previous research documented a larger gender gap in China, India and Nordic countries such as Sweden and Norway than in U.S. The interpretation is that women in US are less equal to gain power and resources compared to their Nordic counterparts, and thus more dependent on men. US women tend more easily to accept gender hierarchical interpretations constructed by men, who occupy a privileged social status (Baxter and Kane, 1995, 1998). Thus I expect that gender gaps vary across regions, with a smaller gender gap in more traditional gender context. i.e. smaller gender gap in Eastern Europe than in Western Europe, and greatest gaps of all in eastern Asian countries.

Data and Method

Sample

This research uses data from the 2002 International Social Survey Program (ISSP) module that measures, attitudes and behaviors on family and gender roles across a number of nations (Hanson et al, 2004). The data were voluntarily gathered by a group of study teams who interviewed a representative nationwide sample of adults on an annual basis (Crompton and Harris, 1997; Hanson, 2004). A stratified random sampling method was used to collect respondents' reports. Before adopting the final questionnaire, topics were pretested in various countries. The final questionnaire is ensured to be "meaningful and relevant to all countries" and "expressed in an equivalent manner in all relevant languages" (ISSP website). By compiling pre-existing social science projects and coordinating research goals, ISSP provides a valuable source for comparative research. In ISSP 2002 family and gender role module, Eastern European countries include Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, former East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Russia; Western European countries include France, Great Britain, Austria, former West Germany, Switzerland, and Netherlands (UN).

Dependent Variable: Attitudes toward women's labor force participation

8 questions in the project are related to attitudes toward female labor force participation as follows: To what extent do you agree or disagree.

1. A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work.
2. A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works.
3. All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job
4. A job is all right, but what most women really want is a home and children
5. Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay.
6. Having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person.
7. Both the man and woman should contribute to the household income.
8. A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family.

The answer for each question is a Likert scale ranging from "1 strongly agree" to "5 strongly disagree". I recoded questions 2 and 3 so that for each question, the higher the score is, the more liberal attitude the answer represents.

Given the number of items measuring attitudes toward women's employment, I used factor analysis to group the 8 items into three factors. I used the principal components model, varimax rotation and Kaiser selection criteria to do factor analysis. Previous research using ISSP 1994 on gender and family roles modules has shown that items measuring attitudes toward women's employment fall into three categories: 1. Attitudes toward the potential conflicts between employment and maternal roles of women; 2. Perceptions of stereotypes of personality differences by gender; 3. Attitudes toward the general acceptability of the gender-based division of labor (Mason and Bumpas, 1975). Despite some changes of measured questions in the 2002 module, the results of my factor analysis are consistent with previous findings. Factor 1 represented by items 1,2,3, measures role conflict between work and maternity; factor 2 represented by items 4,5,8, indicates stereotypical perception on gender difference (personality difference). Factor 3 represented by items 6 and 7, measures the acceptability of gendered division of labor (general acceptability).

Independent Variables

I created a dummy variable for region, with 0 representing Western European countries including France, Great Britain, Austria, former West Germany, Switzerland, and Netherlands, and 1 representing Eastern European countries including Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, former East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Russia.

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I also used country as an independent variable to compare means of factor scores by each country.

To examine the gender effect, I created a dummy variable with 0 representing female and 1 representing male.

My research examines an interaction effect of region and gender to see if the gender effects on attitudes toward women's employment vary according to regions.

Controls

Previous research shows that some personal attributes such as age, marital status, level of education, and employment status are also significant indicators to affect gender-role attitudes (). My research includes them as control variables in multivariate analyses. Age is measured by year; marital status is recoded as 1=married or live as married, 0=other; level of education is measured by years of schooling; and employment status is recode as 1=full-time or part-time employed and 0=others.

Analyses

Bivariate Analysis.

Regional variation. in attitudes toward female labor force participation was more measured. Given the fact that the independent variable (region) is a 0,1 categorical variable, dependent variables (factor scores) are variables in continuous level, I used independent sample t-test to compare the means of factor scores across Eastern and Western Europe at bivariate level, and test if attitude difference exists across two regions.

Attitudes by country. To show the mean factor scores in each country, I used one-way ANOVA by presenting a comparison of mean factor scores measuring attitudes toward women's labor force participation in each country.

Attitudes by gender. I also used independent sample t-test to examine the effects of gender on factor scores that measure attitudes toward women's employment.

Multivariate Analysis

Attitudes by region and gender. Given my interest in the effect of region, gender and their interaction on attitudes toward women's employment, I used ordinary least squares (OLS) regression equations to include region, gender and their interaction in my model.

Attitudes by region and gender controlling for age, marital status, education, and employment status. I also used OLS regression model to include region, gender as independent variables, and age, education, marital status and employment status as control variables. I provided information of standardized regression coefficients, adjusted R-square and F statistic in the model.

Findings

Table 1 shows the bivariate effects of region and gender on the factors measuring attitudes toward female labor force participation. Results show that region has a significant influence on all of the three factors. Factors measuring work and family role conflict (factor 1) and women-men personality difference (factor 2) fall in the predicted direction, with respondents from Eastern European Region exhibiting more traditional attitudes than those from Western European region. However, factor 3 measuring the general acceptability of women’s employment shows the opposite direction, with Eastern European respondents showing a more progressive attitude than their Western European counterparts. This inconsistency is also evident by examining the factor scores in each of the Eastern and Western European countries (Table 2). According to table 2, most Eastern European countries, such as Hungary, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Russia, and Slovak Republic exhibit traditional attitudes in the aspects of role conflict and personality difference, yet progressive attitudes in the aspect of general acceptability of women’s work (Only East Germany and Poland exhibit different results compared with other countries in Eastern Europe. East Germans tend to be progressive across all of the three factors, whereas Residents from Poland show a slightly conservative attitude toward general acceptability of women’s work). In contrast, Countries from Western Europe generally show progressive attitudes in scores of factor 1 and factor 2, yet traditional attitudes in factor 3.

Table 1. Comparative Attitudes toward Women’s Labor Force Participation by Region and Gender

| Independent Variables | Factor1: Role Conflict | Factor 2: Personality Difference | Factor 3: General Acceptability |
|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Region | | | |
| East | -.072 | -.319 | .140 |
| West | .065 | .288 | -.127 |
| East-West | -.137 | -.607 | .267 |
| t | -8.163*** | -38.037*** | 16.098*** |
| Model F | 34.203*** | 4.705* | 73.959*** |
| Gender | | | |
| Male | -.077 | -.073 | -.127 |
| Female | .052 | .049 | .086 |
| Female-Male | .129 | .122 | .203 |
| Model F | 21.552*** | 22.098*** | .122 |

Note: * significant at .05 level; *** significant at .001 level

Why is there an inconsistency in different dimensions that measure attitudes toward women’s labor force participation? Why do respondents from Eastern European Countries tend to think that a role conflict exists in reconciling work and family, and a personality difference exists between men and women, yet are more likely to accept women’s labor force participation in general? My explanation is that residents from the post-communist countries consider women’s labor force participation both as their duty and as means of achieving women’s emancipation. In Eastern European countries, there is a striking lifestyle contrast between public and private spheres (Havelkova, 1993). In public, people’s subjectivity is severely suppressed, which makes the return to family a relief from this suppression. Thus family is placed a high value for Eastern European citizens, and women would like to have a paid job in order to support their families. Furthermore, the past work experience allows people from post-countries to better understand women’s benefits from work—such as greater independence, sense of achievement,

personal network, wage contribution to family finances. The general acceptability of women’s labor force participation in the socialist era has been retained in post-communist era.

In contrast, Western European citizens have a cultural value of liberal individualism, which makes them place higher value on individual freedom (Kiczkova and Farkasova, 1993), and thus might not value family responsibility as highly as their Eastern European counterparts. Moreover, Western European countries are mostly postindustrial societies. Previous research has documented that in postindustrial societies work is not so important a means for individuals to achieve independence as in less developed countries. Therefore, Western European citizens show less supportive attitudes toward women’s work for achieving independence than their Eastern European counterparts.

Table 2. Attitudes Toward Women’s Labor Force Participation By Country

| Country | Role Conflicts | Personality Difference | General Acceptability |
|-----------------------|----------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Eastern Europe | | | |
| East Germany | .563(.888) | .602(1.025) | .332(.816) |
| Hungary | -.041(.919) | -.597(.943) | -.049(.960) |
| Czech Republic | .127(.987) | -.364(.933) | .281(.933) |
| Poland | -.051(1.000) | -.162(.863) | -.120(.905) |
| Bulgaria | -.402(.890) | -.237(.930) | .212(.904) |
| Russia | -.349(.875) | -.255(.897) | .151(.905) |
| Slovak Republic | .131(.991) | -.633(.967) | .271(1.017) |
| Western Europe | | | |
| Austria | -.250(.951) | .240(1.076) | .345(.890) |
| West Germany | .040(.950) | .406(1.049) | -.126(.972) |
| Netherlands | .090(.894) | .440(.769) | -.678(.937) |
| France | .250(1.125) | .269(.992) | .267(.978) |
| Switzerland | -.123(.973) | .210(.844) | -.172(.922) |
| Great Britain | .244(1.008) | .245(.829) | -.591(.966) |
| F | 69.988*** | 178.279*** | 161.212*** |

***significant at .001 level.

My findings also show a significant influence of gender on attitudes toward women’s employment. As I expect, men tend to be more conservative in all of the three factors than women (Table 1). This gender difference is significant in two of the three factors. Table 4 shows this consistency of attitudinal difference by gender across two regions. Men are more conservative than women across all of the three factors in two regions. Western Europe shows greater gender differences in factor 1 and factor 2, and Eastern Europe shows a greater gender difference in factor 3. However, the interaction effect of gender and region only shows a significant influence on attitudes measured by factor 1. This means that the gendered difference in attitudes toward female labor force participation in Western Europe is greater than in Eastern Europe only in respect to attitudes toward women’s role conflict between work and family.

Table 3. OLS regression Showing the Descriptive Effects of Region and Sex on Attitudes toward Women’s Labor Force Participation

| Independent Variables | Role Conflict | Personality Difference | General Acceptability |
|-----------------------|---------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Model | 37.837*** | 378.27*** | 105.023*** |
| Region | 49.952*** | 1383.531*** | 252.716*** |
| Gender | 54.093*** | 570989*** | 157.083*** |
| Region*Gender | 26.088*** | 1.305 | .126 |

Note: 1. scores in the table are F statistics 2. *** significant at .001 level

Table 4. Attitudes toward Women’s Labor Force Participation by Region and Gender

| Region | | Role Conflict | Personality Difference | General Acceptability |
|--------|------------------|---------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| East | Male | -.095 | -.382 | .017 |
| | Female | -.056 | -.277 | .223 |
| | Difference (F-M) | .039 | .105 | 0.206 |
| West | Male | -.061 | .204 | -.256 |
| | Female | .151 | .346 | -.039 |
| | Difference (F-M) | .212 | .142 | .183 |

Table 5 shows the effects of region and gender when controlling for age, education, marital status and employment status. The findings are supportive of my expectations, with both region and gender exhibiting significant influence of the three factors measuring attitudes toward women’s employment. Because the model shows significant effects of the control variables, the multivariate analyses show fewer significant differences on attitudes toward labor force participation influenced by region and gender.

Table 5. Standerized OLS Regression Coefficients (and standard errors) Showing Attitudes Toward Women’s Labor Force Participation By Region and Gender controlling for age, education, marital status and employment status

| Independent Variables | Role Conflict | Personality Difference | General Acceptability |
|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| East-west | .093 (.018)*** | .300(.017)*** | -.213(.018)*** |
| Women-men | .084(.018)*** | -.074 (.017)*** | -.106 (.018)*** |
| Controls | | | |
| Age | -.092(.001)*** | -.073 (.001)*** | .085(.001)*** |
| Education | -.043(.001)*** | .073 (.001)*** | .027 (.001)*** |
| Marital Status | -.040 (.026)*** | -.023 (.024)*** | -.048 (.026)*** |
| Employment Status | -.103 (.020)*** | -.133(.019)*** | -.079 (.021)*** |
| Adjusted R Square | .051 | .140 | .056 |
| Model F | 112.181*** | 334.909*** | 123.265*** |

***significant at .001 level

Conclusions and Discussion

This paper examines the difference in attitudes toward female labor force participation between Western and Eastern Europe in the post-communist era. I propose three hypotheses about the effects of region, gender, and their interaction on attitudes toward women's employment. I expected a regional difference in attitudes due to different historical and cultural contexts in two regions. Data from 2002 ISSP module were used to testify my hypotheses.

With regard to the influence of region, my findings are complex. Two of the three factors measuring attitudes toward women's employment fall within my predictions, with more progressive attitudes in Western Europe than in Eastern Europe. However, in factor 3 measuring the general acceptability of women's employment, respondents from Eastern Europe show a more supportive attitude than those from the west. This means that Eastern European respondents are more likely to consider women's participation in paid work as both duty for fulfilling family responsibilities and means of gaining women's independence. I explain this phenomenon as a result of the important function of the family in Eastern Europe. The high pressure in public life makes Eastern Europe residents place high value on their family, which can give them sufficient private space for a relief. In contrast, the value of individualism and the postindustrial social context make respondents from Western Europe less likely to consider work as a necessity for either fulfilling family duty or achieving individual independence. This finding indicates that it is imprecise to generalize about attitudes toward women's employment as more progressive in Western Europe than in the east. Attitudes toward women's labor force participation are measured in different dimensions, which are differently impacted by the embedded social context. Eastern European respondents might be less progressive in the aspects of women's role conflict between work and family, and personality difference between men and women, yet they are more progressive in accepting women to work for family and for emancipating themselves.

My results support my prediction that there is a gender difference in attitudes toward women's labor force participation between men and women, with women exhibiting more progressive attitudes across two regions. My results only show a significant interaction between gender and region in factor 1, with the size of gender difference in attitudes greater in the West than in the East. This finding, again, shows that the double effect of region and gender also differs by different dimensions of attitudes toward women's employment.

My research shows that the attitudinal difference toward women's labor force participation between Eastern and Western Europe is generalizable. There is a significant impact of the past socialist experience on gender attitudes in Eastern Europe. The belief that work and family conflict, and that women should return home to realize their identity, are a response to their past experience of state enforcement and overburdening of double roles. Even the favorable attitude toward a paid job also partly comes from women's intention to contribute to family earning. However, the past work experience does raise women's awareness of achieving independence from nonhousehold work, and this awareness persists in the post-communist era. China shares much of the same socialist and centrist characteristics as Eastern Europe with two heavy additions. The government opposed for 40 years the movement of both men and women from villages to cities which greatly inhibited the women's roles in the workforce. In addition, the government during the same period tightly controlled job movement, even between work places

in the same city. One consequence of these oppressive workforce policies was to force many women into the informal economy.

For further exploration, my research indicates the importance to examine different dimensions of attitudes toward women's employment, for social contexts influence different dimensions of attitudes in different ways. Furthermore, the difference in the impact of social context on attitudinal dimensions is complicated by gender effect. The interaction effect of region and gender differs by dimensions of attitudes. Therefore, a careful examination of the attitudinal dimensions is significant for a complete understanding on issues of women's workforce participation, and their embedded social contexts.

Another point worth noticing is the attitudinal difference by gender. Men exhibit traditional attitudes toward women's labor force participation in all attitudinal dimensions across regions. Men are also the privileged group to shape gender norms in the workforce and influence the actual employment opportunities for women. Thus raising men's awareness of increasing women's employment opportunities is significant for achieving women's empowerment. Previous research has documented a higher awareness of men toward women's labor force participation in Nordic countries, where women's employment rates are high (Crompton and Harris, 1997). Thus it is important to examine the association between men's attitudes and the actual work opportunities for women, as well as the social factors that influence men's gender attitudes in the future.

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