

SATISFACTION AND PLURAL MODERNITY: GERMAN AND JAPANESE PARENTS

Hans BERTRAM

PLURAL MODERNITY: SATISFACTION, FEARFULNESS, AND THE EVALUATION OF POLITICAL MEASURES

Measuring the satisfaction (Commission on Measuring Well-Being 2011) with policy measures by the whole population is not appropriate when one wants to verify the effectiveness and acceptance of family policies. For many things that are important to parents, because they ensure the care of their children and their development, are often regarded as privileges by those without children. A good example of this is the two father's leave months, which were introduced at the income-dependent parental allowance, to involve the fathers more strongly in the care of their children. In the public debate, and not only in Germany, paternal childcare leave was considered a vacation, and from Sweden it was reported that the fathers "only" went elk hunting at this time. Apparently, those who do not care for children or have grown-up children are often confronted with difficulties in imagining that the child's needs, even in the case of an excellent infrastructure and many state support measures, bind about 40 to 60 hours of the 168 week hours until the age of six, as shown by the time budget studies laid out in the introduction (Zagheni et al. 2015). To assess the family policy measures in terms of their efficiency and their acceptance, surveys focusing on parents with children in that particular age range are imperative. Besides, it is important to compare the results of one country with those in other countries, as these comparisons not only analyze developments in the individual countries for the efficiency of the individual measures, but also check whether there are certain improvements in their own country respectively (Thévenon 2011).

Just as the specific addressees concerned are the analysis basis for the political work, this also applies to country comparisons, and this study follows this principle. However, another problem is to be solved, which is addressed in international research (Laslett 2009) but is not solved. The individual countries have a very different history with regard to child rearing and family tradition. The family structure in North-West Europe, such as Germany, France, the Netherlands, Austria, and the Northern European countries, has developed as a *neo-local family* of spouses (Szołtysek

2007): After reaching economic independence provided by both partners, the new family establishes its own budget, and the social obligations relate primarily to this family (Sovic, Thane, and Viazzo 2015; Mitterauer 2005).

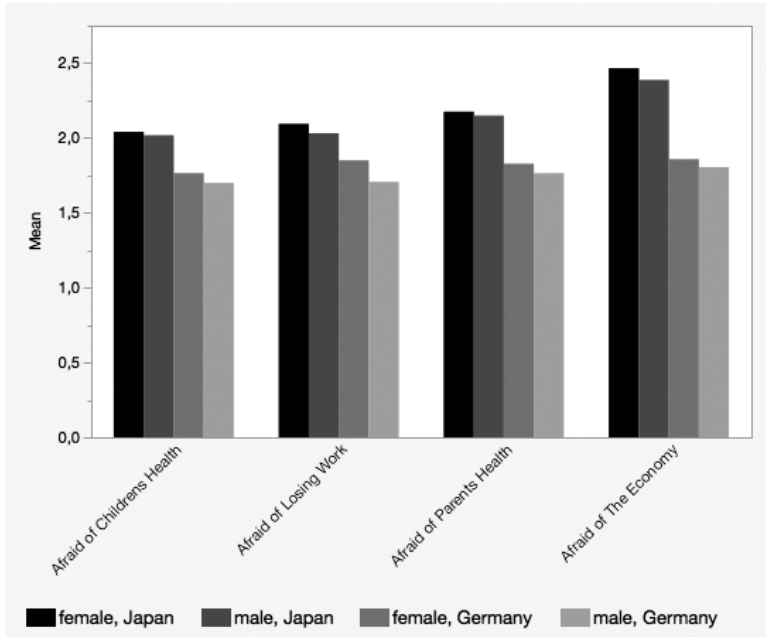
In Europe, especially in Southern Europe, but also in Eastern Europe, there are other forms of family life, which are referred to as *ancestry family* (Reinhard 2006). The responsibility for the founding of the new family lies mainly with the family of the man who financially supports this foundation, but with high social responsibility towards the parent family. This is especially clear when it comes to supporting and caring for the older generation. The obligation character of societies with ancestry families is much more pronounced than in the societies with neo-local families of spouses.

Of course, these cultural patterns also influence the perception of family policy and necessarily have a significant impact on the efficiency of family policy measures because the organization of private support services is of great importance for family life. According to a study by the Rand Cooperation (Janta 2014), private support services for families with small children in Germany and the Nordic countries are much rarer than in southern Europe, where grandmothers play a significant role in child development.

Such factors should be taken into account in international comparisons from the outset, but there are other factors that can significantly influence the family context, family policies and their assessment. In order to ensure that the comparison of satisfaction with family policies of Japanese and German parents does not make the mistake of interpreting different assessment criteria of the respective society as an expression of the differences between the societies, the satisfaction indicators used for comparison were added with further detailed indicators of personality, self-control, and anxiety.

Even in a simple comparison of mean values, the Japanese parents questioned in our survey concern themselves more with the health of their children, their parents, and their workplace than the German parents. This is particularly evident in the concern for further economic development, where the parents of both countries differ significantly.

Now one could say that this is due to the different economic and social situation of Japan and Germany and not to be interpreted as a variation of different cultural and milieu-specific developments. Also, the question of anxiety for their relationships was raised, namely the relationship to the children, the growing-up of the children, the relationship to the spouse, and possible conflicts between parents and children. The differences in these private realms of their lives are much more pronounced.

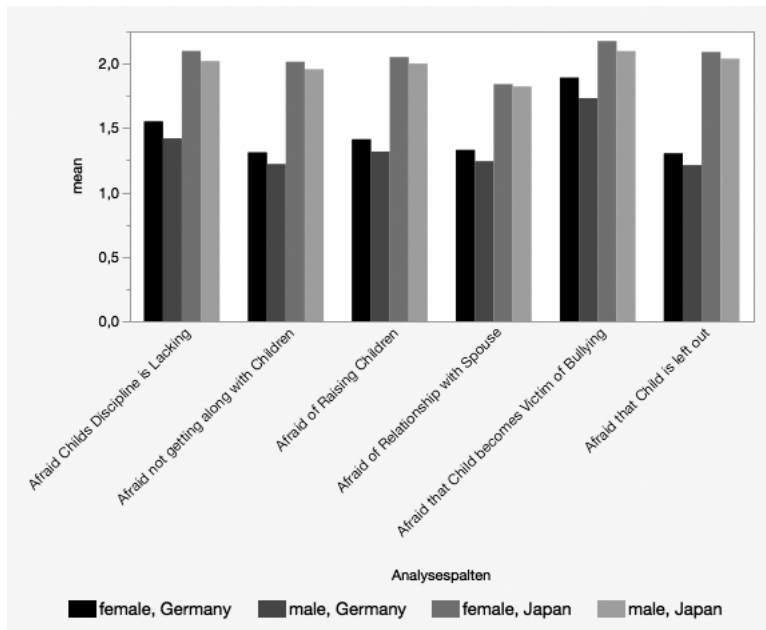
Figure 1: Fear of children's and parents' (bad) health, losing work, economy

Among the Japanese parents, the fear of possible conflicts with the children or the partner seems to be much more pronounced in the education of the children than with the German parents (see Figure 2). While it is exciting to examine and interpret these apparent differences, we have only analyzed the influence of these factors on the dimensions of satisfaction.

The factor analysis provides an “anxiety factor” from the items surveyed here. If the various aspects of satisfaction in the field of family policy are related to this factor, a correlation of $r = .67$ results between Japan and Germany and this anxiety factor, and the strong correlation between this anxiety factor and the satisfaction indicators remains the same partial check of the correlation. Furthermore, overall life satisfaction can be explained to 27 percent by a combination of country affiliation and the anxiety factor.

Obviously, the different perception of the social and personal reality in Japan and in Germany and the articulated fears in Japan and the lesser confidence in the security of the relationship to the child, the partner, the employer, and overall economic development have a strong influence on

Figure 2: Fear of problems with personal relationships



satisfaction. Thus, a direct comparison of family policies and the assessment of the satisfaction with these measures could possibly document the cultural differences of the two countries, but not the actual assessments. This can hardly be clarified but is only to be taken into account as an empirical fact for the planned comparison of the different satisfaction with the political measures in the area of families in both countries, making the comparison more difficult (Atoh 2007; Bertram and Ehlert 2011; Kumagai 1995).

Fortunately, the questionnaire was designed in such a way that even the most concrete everyday things were questioned, for example in day-care centers, as well as the parents' goals for family policies. This gave the opportunity to compare the assessments of Japanese and German parents, instead of an evaluative comparison of Japanese and German family policy, as had been planned first. In spite of the differences in the initial situation of the two parent groups, however, surprising coincidence appears. In this way, perspectives for the further development of family policies can be sketched out as a result of what parents in Japan and in Germany very concretely and pragmatically expect from family policies in their respective countries, despite the different sociocultural conditions.

The results are only briefly outlined here, with a substantial difference in anxiety of the Japanese parents in the assessment of the security of one's private relations, the relationship to the employer, and the relationship with the child, as well as the different assessments of the safety of the health of one's parents and children make it necessary to review international analyses on the well-being of Japanese and Germans, as the OECD (2009) regularly publishes, but also to examine whether here the specific cultural backgrounds involved in the subjective assessment of living conditions within individual nations are neglected; this mistake is often made in international comparisons. It is possible that such research in an internationally comparative context must reflect the underlying psychological structure within the individual nations in a more sustainable way, quite in the sense of the plural modernity, as illustrated by Mishima (2005). That serves as a benchmark for further research and international comparisons.

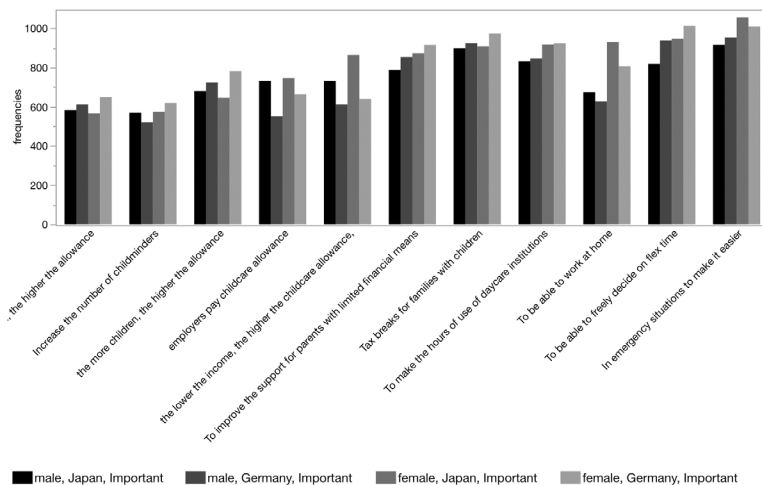
TIME, MONEY, INFRASTRUCTURE: WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR PARENTS?

Japanese and German parents are subjected, despite the different cultural and psychological self-perception, to quite similar transformational tendencies of family life. In the highly productive but aging societies, the human capital of both men and women is needed for the economic development of the country as well as for securing the elaborate social systems. In their assessment of what is necessary and important to them regarding family policy, they show surprising similarities.

Time policies are particularly important for Japanese and German mothers (see Figure 3). It is very important for the parents to be able to leave work in emergencies, such as illness. They also want to be able to decide as freely as possible about their own working hours, as well as a flexible time offer by the institutions that care for their children. In contrast to the German and Japanese fathers, the mothers in both countries also want more opportunities for working at home. This makes the topic of time in Japan as well as in Germany a central family policy challenge, but it also makes clear that the flexibility of the times is not interpreted centrally from an operational perspective or for career reasons but is essentially oriented to the needs of the family and the children.

Contrary to public opinion, which is widely disseminated in Germany at the time, the parents' particular tax considerations are very popular among parents in Japan and Germany. If in German politics and science it is repeatedly asked to reduce the financial benefits for families, especially the family tax split, this does not reflect the parents' opinion. In this study, the economic situation of families was not compared with other

Figure 3: Care, time, and financial support



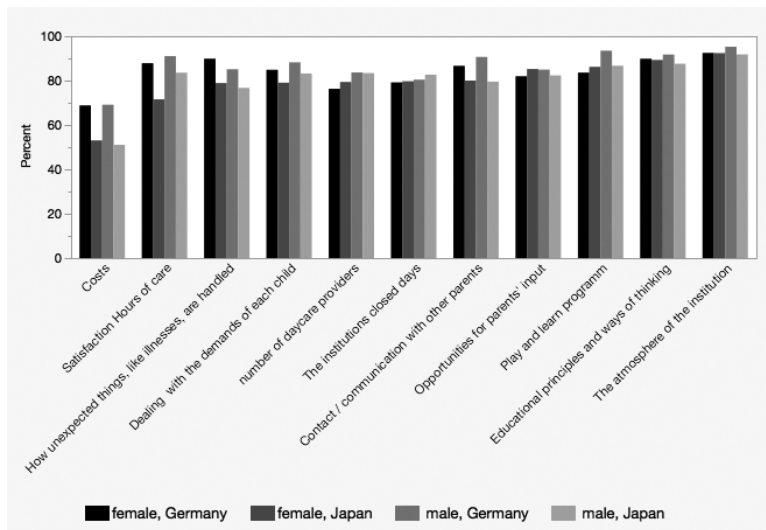
forms of living in detail (Bertram 2017; Bertram and Deuflhard 2014), but data from the German microcensus as well as from the international comparative data of the European budget statistics show that families with children in relation to couples without children have a per capita income which is about 500 euro per capita lower than that of couples without children. The working time in families with both parents in the labor market is rather high in this study, with about 44 hours of Japanese and 42 hours of German men and about 24 hours of working mothers in Japan as in Germany, that despite this nearly 70 hours of working time and the corresponding tax assessment of the income the incidence of the childless couples cannot be obtained. We will return to that point later.

In both countries, parents also argue that they would appreciate more support with economic resources. Individual measures, such as greater support with increasing numbers of children or greater support for several children, are just as little in focus as the question of whether the employer should contribute to the support of childcare. The available data can be interpreted as meaning that in Japan as in Germany the parents, and above all the mothers, regard the time policy for families as particularly important. Here, there are clear ideas for employers with regard to the flexibility of working time, the possibility to work at home, and assistance in emergencies. Also, the expectation of the childcare institutions for flexible offers is marked. In Germany, a flexible range of “day mothers”

(*Tagesmutter*) is much less in demand than the institutional offerings of daycare centers, as is the case in France among children under three-year-olds, which also clearly leads to the problems of flexibility. Because daycare centers as business necessarily have operational rules which the caregivers, who are working there, want to observe and keep. In the day mothers model, the flexibility between the mother, the children to be cared for, and the working mother is easier to achieve. The different patterns of childcare have evidently also a cultural basis, because the general assessment of these models in France and also the Benelux countries on the one hand and Germany and Denmark on the other differ (Bertram 2008; Klenner and Lott 2016).

It is astonishing to see that the parents consider the increase in the personnel key in daycare centers to be less important than the improvement of the financial situation of the parents and especially the flexibility of the time. However, a closer look at the parents' assessment of the infrastructure for children up to six years is a good idea. More than 90 percent of fathers and mothers in Japan and Germany like the atmosphere in their children's institution (see Figure 4). Also, the principles according to which their children are raised, and, somewhat lower, the program of the institution meet with the great agreement of the parents; the values are all over 80 percent. The costs for the institutions are judged by the Japanese parents as critical, as the Japanese mothers also consider the organization

Figure 4: Satisfaction with infrastructural provisions



of the hours in the institutions more skeptical than the German mothers and fathers. With the flexibility of the offer, the German parents are much more satisfied than the Japanese parents. Also, with the costs the Japanese parents are less satisfied than the German parents; but they also consider the costs more skeptical about the content of the assessments.

The political evaluation of these measures raises the question of whether the financing structure in the Japanese system indeed corresponds to the wishes of the parents, and why in the German system, despite the high acceptance of the program and the atmosphere, the costs of setting up a fairly large part of parents are critical. Possibly, an explanation could be the fact that in Germany the visit of school (*Hauptschule*, *Realschule*, or *Gymnasium*) and university (*Fachhochschule* or university) is free of charge. On the other hand, for the youngest children up to the sixth year, graded according to the parents' income, contributions are paid for childcare, which does not seem to be meaningful or logical.

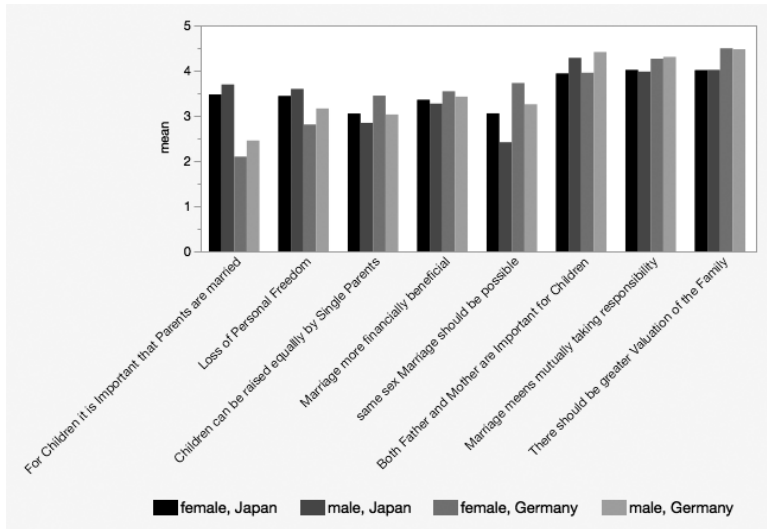
For the Japanese parents, especially for the mothers, the organization of attendance in kindergarten and daycare and the flexibility is important in addition to the costs for the institution. Here the parents' assessments with the needs expressed in Figure 3, especially the organization of work and family and kindergarten/daycare as a substantial political goal, are very consistent because they were discussed there and are expressed here as dissatisfaction.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY: WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO THE PARENTS?

In Germany, family policy has focused in recent years on improving the reconciliation of family and work and has done a great deal to improve the infrastructure for children so that as many children as possible can benefit from it and do benefit from it (Bertram 2011a,b; Institut für Demoskopie 2012). However, family policy can only be successful if it also takes into account the wishes and life-plans of the potential and the actual parents, and these life-wishes and life-plans relate not only to the reconciliation of family and work.

When parents with children are interviewed in Japan and in Germany, according to their attitudes to marriage, the importance of marriage for children, and the importance of the family in society, there are similarities, but also clear differences between Japan and Germany (see Figure 5). Thus, German fathers and mothers are more certain than Japanese fathers and mothers, that the social recognition of family and their achievements in society must be improved. Parents are not concerned about having a family besides the employment, but they

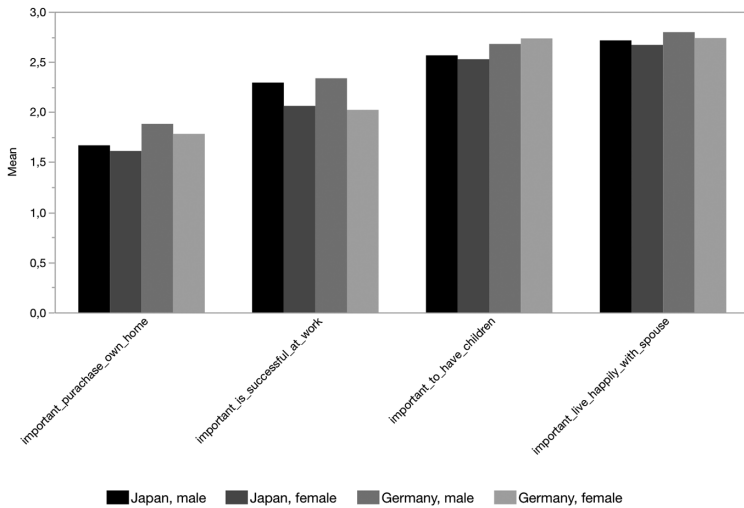
Figure 5: Opinions on family, father, mother, marriage, same sex-marriage, and freedom



expect a substantial recognition of a family's benefits for society, and this assessment is similar in Japan. For the Japanese as well as for the German parents, marriage means a personal community of responsibility with the same importance of father and mother for the children. This point is much more important to them than what is often discussed in the public debate in Germany, such as the financial gains from tax advantages. Other points, which are intensively discussed in Germany, such as the right of adoption for same-sex couples, are just as unimportant as the question whether parents should be married or not. On this question, Japanese parents differ from German parents because they attach greater importance to marriage.

Whatever the political and personal side of many aspects of marriage and family, it is important to note that personal relationships, social recognition, the same importance of father and mother for the children, and personal trust for each other are the core components of family. It is not primarily of interest in this comparison, whether in this very personal interpretation of marriage and family in two cultures as diverse as Japan and Germany, the same historical legacy of the industrial society with the strong emphasis on the family core, or whether anthropological factors play a role, or even current social ideas, transported by the media and the politics. What is crucial is that family policies which do not take into ac-

Figure 6: Importance of work, spouse, home, and children



count the personal values of the parents for their relationship with the partner as well as for their children will be difficult to be accepted by the parents (see Figure 6). For the parents interviewed in Japan and Germany, a happy relationship with the partner and a good relationship with the children are most important, while house ownership is less important for both groups.

Even work is much less important for the parents, both men and women, than having a good relationship with the children and the partner. The personal side and the emotional connections are much more important for the interviewees than professional success or house ownership. The differences in both Japan and Germany between men and women are surprisingly low. The Japanese and German fathers weigh career success slightly higher than the mothers surveyed, but these differences are not significant.

Now a policy can hardly influence the emotional relationship between parents and children and between fathers and mothers (Lietzmann and Wenzig 2017; Myrskylä and Margolis 2014). These personal processes may be influenced by their own family of origin, friends, and kinship, but it is not plausible that policy has any influence on it. Nevertheless, when analyzing the values and attitudes of Japanese and German parents on family policy, it seems to be a central message that the personal aspects of the relationship play a decisive role and are therefore also important for the success of family policy (Raibley 2012).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Atoh, Makoto. 2007. "The relevance of ideational changes to family transformation in postwar Japan". In: Rukmalie Jayakody, Arland Thornton, and William Axinn (eds.): *International family change: Ideational perspectives*. New York and London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 223–250.
- Bertram, Hans. 2008. *Mittelmass für Kinder: Der UNICEF-Bericht zur Lage der Kinder in Deutschland*. München: Beck.
- Bertram, Hans. 2011a. "Introduction: The plural modernity". In: Hans Bertram and Nancy Ehlert (eds.): *Family, ties and care*. Opladen, Farmington Hills: Barbara Budrich, 11–29.
- Bertram, Hans. 2011b. "Care, attachment, and the diversity of modernity: Perspectives for a future-oriented family policy". In: Hans Bertram and Nancy Ehlert (eds.): *Family, ties and care*. Opladen, Farmington Hills: Barbara Budrich, 611–648.
- Bertram, Hans. 2017. *Die Zweiverdiener-Familie: Ein europäischer Vergleich*. Berlin: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.
- Bertram, Hans and Nancy Ehlert (eds.). 2011. *Family, ties and care*. Opladen, Farmington Hills: Barbara Budrich.
- Bertram, Hans and Carolin Deuflhard. 2014. *Die überforderte Generation: Arbeit und Familie in der Wissensgesellschaft*. Opladen: Barbara Budrich.
- Commission on Measuring Well-Being, Japan. 2011. *Measuring national well-being: Proposed well-being indicators*. http://www5.cao.go.jp/keizai2/koufukudo/pdf/koufukudosian_english.pdf (accessed September 12, 2017).
- Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach. 2012. *Monitor Familienleben 2012: Einstellungen und Lebensverhältnisse von Familien*. Allensbach: Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach.
- Janta, Barbara. 2014. *Caring for children in Europe: How childcare, parental leave and flexible working arrangements interact in Europe*. Brussels: European Union. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR554.readonline.html (accessed September 12, 2017).
- Klenner, Christina and Yvonne Lott. 2016. *Working time options: New regulations and empirical findings in five European countries* (WSI Study Vol. 7). Düsseldorf: Hans Böckler Stiftung.
- Kumagai, Fumie. 1995. "Families in Japan: Beliefs and realities". *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 26,1: 135–163.
- Laslett, Peter. 2009. "Family, kinship and collectivity as systems of support in pre-industrial Europe: A consideration of the 'nuclear-hardship' hypothesis". *Continuity and Change* 3,2: 153–175.
- Lietzmann, Torsten and Claudia Wenzig. 2017. "Arbeitszeitwünsche und Erwerbstätigkeit von Müttern: Welche Vorstellungen über die Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Familie bestehen". *IAB-Kurzbericht* 10, 1–8.
- Mishima, Kenichi. 2005. *Kategorien der geteilten Moderne: Änderungen vorbehalten*. Ceremonial address at the awarding of the Eugen and Ilse Seibold Prize on April 4, 2005. http://www.dfg.de/download/pdf/geoerderte_projekte/preistraeger/seibold-preis/2005/preisverleihung_vortrag_mishima_seibold_2005.pdf (last accessed October 11, 2017).

- Myrskylä, Mikko and Rachel Margolis. 2014. "Happiness: Before and after the kids". *Demography* 51,5: 1843–1866.
- OECD. 2009. "Comparative child well-being across the OECD". In: *Doing Better for Children: Comparative Child Well-Being across the OECD*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Raibley, Jason R. 2012. "Happiness is not well-being". *Journal of Happiness Studies* 13,6: 1105–1129.
- Reinhard, Wolfgang. 2006. *Lebensformen Europas: Eine historische Kulturanthropologie*. München: Beck.
- Sovic, Silvia, Pat Thane, and Pier Paolo Viazzo. 2015. *The history of families and households*. Oxford: Brill.
- Szoltyssek, Mikołaj. 2007. "Central European household and family systems, and the 'Hajnal-Mitterauer' line: The parish of Bujakow (18th-19th centuries)". *History of the Family* 12,1: 19–42.
- Thévenon, Olivier. 2011. "Family policies in OECD countries: A comparative analysis". *Population and Development Review* 37,1: 57–87.
- Zaghenni, Emilio, Gabriel Movsesyan, Marina Zannella, and Brittney Wagner. 2015. *A comparative analysis of European time transfer between generations*. Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer.