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# The Perception of Children in Chile: Burden or Joy?

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## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### Do attitudes about family and gender roles predict participants' attitudes about the centrality or burden of children?

Developmental idealism (DI) is a cultural model encompassing values such as, the desirability of a modern society, modern family behavior, and freedom and equality, which aims to explain the behavior of individuals and groups under its influence. As a result of DI, many aspects of family values and behavior have changed, including gender equality, less universal marriage, extensive individualism, higher prevalence of divorce, older age at marriage and planned and low and controlled. DI appears to have spread around the world and is a major influence in human action and social change globally and compared to other Latin American countries, Chile has been experiencing the most dramatic changes related to DI. For example, traditionally, Chilean families have adhered to a household organization based on the practice of patriarchy, where men were believed to have the responsibility of presiding over the family and women are expected to focus on family. However, in the past 15 years, there have been major changes in several attitudes in favor of non-conformist family arrangements, and more egalitarian gender relations. These changes in the attitudes regarding roles of men and women will likely lead to a change in perception of how men and women view children. This study looks at variables regarding family and gender attitudes contributing to the perceived burden or centrality of children.

## DATA AND METHODS

### Sample

International Social Survey Program, 2012 (n=1,473)

### Dependent variables

- 1) Composite score from a 3 item scale measuring the perceived burden of children
- 2) The perceived centrality of children ("Watching children grow up is life's greatest joy")

### Independent variables

(Measured on a Likert scale 1-Strongly Disagree 5-Strongly Agree)

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

### Control Variables

Sex, religion, relationship status, income, employment, education, number of children and age.

## RESULTS

Table 1. OLS Regression Predicting Attitudes Regarding Perceived Burden of Children

Characteristics	b coefficient	Standard error
<i>Attitudes</i>		
Man's job is work; a woman's job is home and family	0.037	(0.022)
Preschool child suffers if mother works	0.054*	(0.025)
Working mother just as warm and secure a stay home mother	-0.036	(0.020)
Man and woman should contribute income	-0.011	(0.028)
Housewife is as fulfilling as working	-0.093***	(0.022)
Most women really want home and children	-0.013	(0.025)
Family life suffers when the woman has job	0.010	(0.027)
<i>Control variables</i>		
Age	0.000	(0.002)
Male	-0.075	(0.045)
<i>Education</i>		
Less than secondary (reference)	----	----
Secondary complete	-0.084	(0.053)
Some college	-0.025	(0.086)
Technical degree complete	-0.081	(0.094)
University degree complete	-0.019	(0.091)
<i>Employment</i>		
Current in paid work (reference)	----	----
Currently not in paid work	0.024	(0.050)
Never had paid work	0.017	(0.067)
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Married (reference)	----	----
Separated/Divorced/Widowed	0.187	(0.058)
Never Married	0.185**	(0.059)
Cohabiting	-0.023	(0.070)
<i>Religion</i>		
No Religion (reference)	----	----
Catholic	-0.045	(0.065)
Other religion	-0.132	(0.074)
# of Children	0.055*	(0.022)
Income	0.006	(0.011)
Constant	2.965***	(0.186)
Observations		1,459
Rsquare		

Source: International Social Survey Programme 2012

\*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05

Table 2. OLS Regression Predicting Attitudes Regarding Perceived Joy of Children

Characteristics	b coefficient	Standard error
<i>Attitudes</i>		
Man's job is work; a woman's job is home and family	0.001	(0.018)
Preschool child suffers if mother works	0.009*	(0.021)
Working mother just as warm and secure a stay home mother	-0.001	(0.016)
Man and woman should contribute income	-0.165***	(0.022)
Housewife is as fulfilling as working	0.062***	(0.021)
Most women really want home and children	0.0164	(0.021)
Family life suffers when the woman has job	0.058**	(0.022)
<i>Control variables</i>		
Age	0.000	(0.001)
Male	-0.015	(0.037)
<i>Education</i>		
Less than secondary (reference)	----	----
Secondary complete	0.043	(0.044)
Some college	0.018	(0.071)
Technical degree complete	-0.031	(0.077)
University degree complete	0.028	(0.075)
<i>Employment</i>		
Current in paid work (reference)	----	----
Currently not in paid work	0.068	(0.041)
Never had paid work	0.141*	(0.053)
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Married (reference)	----	----
Separated/Divorced/Widowed	0.025	(0.046)
Never Married	0.019	(0.048)
Cohabiting	-0.076	(0.056)
<i>Religion</i>		
No Religion (reference)	----	----
Catholic	0.084	(0.052)
Other religion	0.155*	(0.060)
# of Children	0.051**	(0.017)
Income	0.030*	(0.010)
Constant	3.442***	(0.224)
Observations		1,459
Rsquare		

Source: International Social Survey Programme 2012

\*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05

Model 1 (Table 1)

Men and women who believed that a preschool child suffers if mother works and did not believe that being a housewife is as fulfilling as working perceived children as more of a burden.

Model 2 (Table 2)

Men and women who believed that a preschool child suffers if mother works; that being a housewife is as fulfilling as working; and believed that family life suffers when the woman has a job saw children as life's greatest joy. Participants who did not believe that both the man and woman should contribute to household income saw children as life's greatest joy.

Model 3 (Male vs Female)

Men who think women should stay home and men should earn money and don't think both should contribute to household income see children as life's greatest joy

Women who do not think both men and women should contribute to household income; women who believe that being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working; and women who believe that family life suffers when the woman works, saw children as life's greatest joy.



## RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

1. Does the role of choice make a difference in the relationship between gender attitudes and perceptions of children? Are women who choose to stay at home more or less likely to see children as a burden or as life's greatest joy?
2. How could gender values be measured in a more culturally competent way than the ISSP provides?
3. Does an increase in the perceived burden of children have implications on parental mental health?

## CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

1. Above all else, practitioners working with Latin American clients need to be aware of how cultural beliefs impact family relationships.
2. Clinicians may need to consider clients' attitudes about the role they play in their family and how it affects the perceived burden or joy of their children.
3. Clinicians should be aware of gender differences in family values and how it impacts their perceptions of their children.