Subjective well-being of single, dating, cohabiting, married, divorced, and widowed people

and its dependence on the normative climate in 45 European countries

Ellen Verbakel

first draft, prepared for the ISOL-meeting, June 15 2011
please do not cite or quote

Correspondence

Tilburg University

Department of Sociology

P.O. Box 90153

5000 LE Tilburg

The Netherlands

T: +31 (0)13 466 8928

E: E.Verbakel@uvt.nl

Summary

This study examines the relationship between relationship type and subjective well-being in 45 European countries by analyzing the European Values Study 2008. It was expected and empirically confirmed that married persons have most well-being, followed (in order) by cohabiting, dating, single, widowed, and divorced persons. In addition, this study examines to what extent the well-being gap depend on the normative climate. It was hypothesized that the advantageous position of married persons compared to cohabiting, divorced, and singles over the age of 35 would be larger in societies with traditional family values. Only for the marriage-divorce gap this was found to be the case. Moreover, it was expected that the gap between married and groups without a partner (divorced, widowed, and singles) would be smaller in societies that embrace a strong familialistic norm. This expectation was only confirmed for young singles. It is concluded that the weak dependence of well-being on the normative climate may point at high autonomy in private decisions like relations.

Introduction

In contemporary modern society, the choice how to live your life is generally believed to be a free choice. Marriage has long been the standard, but alternative arrangements like cohabitation, single parenthood, and same-sex relations have gained popularity and are more and more accepted (Cherlin, 2004). Argued in the extreme, one could assume that, to the extent that relationship status is the result of autonomous decisions, there is no relationship between relationship status and subjective well-being; since people choose what they prefer most, each relationship type should make people equally happy. Obviously, this is not a realistic claim. First of all, relationship status is *not* always a matter of choice. One's partner may have passed away, resulting in unwanted widowhood; one's partner may have broken up the relationship one-sidedly, resulting in unwanted divorce; a partner may not be found while desired so, resulting in unwanted singlehood; or perhaps one's partner does not want to take the next step in a relationship (cohabitation or marriage), resulting in an unwanted dating or cohabiting phase. Secondly, not every relationship type goes with the same level of resources (Coombs 1991), while resources are an important contribution to well-being. A single person household cannot benefit from the pooling of resources like households with two persons can. In addition, a partner can provide comfort and affection which persons in relationship types without a partner lack. Thirdly, the level of well-being people in different relationship types experience may depend on the normative context. Even if someone is in a relationship type that (s)he prefers, the level of well-being derived from that is expectedly lower if the context (s)he is living in disapproves of it. In addition, a context that emphasizes the norm of unconditional family support may buffer the negative well-being consequences for those who cannot rely on a partner for support.

This study will focus on this dependence on the normative climate. It will first answer the descriptive question to what extent subjective well-being differs by relationship status, distinguishing, singlehood, dating (defined as being in a steady relationship but without living together), cohabitation, marriage, divorce, and widowhood. The extensive array of relationship types administers justice to the large variability of household arrangements nowadays and is an improvement on earlier studies. Early studies on marital status and well-being have mainly focused on the position of married persons compared to non-married persons (Coombs 1991). Later on, it became acknowledged that the group of unmarried persons should be refined by distinguishing never married, dating, cohabiting, and divorced or widowed people (Soons, Liefbroer, and Kalmijn 2009; Stack and Eshleman 1998). However, previous work that assessed the moderating effect of the normative context is mostly restricted to the well-being comparison of cohabiting and married (Diener et al. 2000; Soons and Kalmijn, 2009) or divorced and married persons (Diener et al. 2000; Kalmijn, 2010). The second question examines to what extent differences in well-being between relationship types depend on the normative context. This study includes almost the complete European continent with much variety in normative climates which implies improved opportunities to test empirically whether the macro context conditions individual level relationships. Moreover, because the European Values Study 2008 (EVS 2010) contains a broad set of value measurements, this study can reveal whether general traditional family values are the ones that affect well-being differences between relationship types or whether

only specific values, such as disapproval of divorce, affect the difference in well-being between, in this case, divorced and married persons.

Earlier studies that examined the role of the normative climate on subjective well-being differences between relationship types presented mixed results so that strict conclusions about the role of the normative climate are hard to make. Based on a 30 country study using the European Social Survey, the well-being gap between cohabiting and married persons appeared to be smaller in countries in which cohabitation is more institutionalized, which is measured by a combination of cohabitation prevalence and acceptance (Soons and Kalmijn, 2009). Diener et al. (2000) concluded on the basis of the World Values Survey covering 42 countries that the marriage-cohabitation gap in life satisfaction is smaller in individualist countries, which are argued to have a high level of acceptance of cohabitation, compared to collectivist countries, which are argued to have a low level of acceptance of cohabitation. The difference in well-being of divorced and married persons is found not to depend on the normative rejection of divorce (Diener et al. 2000; Kalmijn 2010), although Kalmijn showed that among religious people the well-being gap is wider in countries where divorce is strongly disapproved of. The well-being gap between divorced and married persons was not affected by family support according to the study by Diener et al. using the distinction between collectivist and individualist countries as a proxy, but appeared to be lower in countries where the family is strong according to Kalmijn's study who used the proportion of unmarried adults living with their parents as an indicator for the strength of family support. Finally, Kalmijn showed that the difference in well-being between divorced and married persons is smaller when divorce is more common.

Literature on marital status and subjective well-being often makes note of the selection hypothesis that asserts that the positive relationship found may be the result of certain characteristics that make people more likely to marry and more likely to be happy and could therefore be spurious (e.g. Coombs 1991; Gove, Briggs, Style, and Hughes 1990). These characteristics are to some extent measured, like health and income (Gove, Briggs Style, and Hughes 1990), but to some extent unmeasured, like being 'happiness-prone' (Stack and Eshleman 1998) or emotional mature (Coombs 1991). In longitudinal studies, the selection hypothesis does not find strong support (Kamp Dush and Amato 2005), and Coombs (1991) concludes on the basis of his literature overview that selection is definitely not the driving force behind the observed relationship between marriage and well-being. The tenability of the selection hypothesis cannot be empirically tested in this study. However, given this study's focus on the moderating effect of normative culture on the relationship between marital status and well-being, the selection problem seems less relevant. When assessing the well-being levels of the several relationship types, I will extensively control for possible underlying factors.

Theory

Expected differences in well-being between relationship types

Next to the selection argument mentioned above, literature on the relationship between marital status and well-being offers several causal explanations why married people would have higher levels of subjective well-being, but also higher levels of physical and mental health. First, marriage increases economic resources due to economies of scale and the possibility to pool incomes, and economic

resources enhance well-being (Diener et al. 1999; Ross, Mirowski, and Goldsteen 1990; Stack and Eshelman 1998). Second, marriage implies social support in terms of direct help by the partner or access to the partner's network; living alone would increase the odds of social isolation which in turn harms one's sense of belonging and security (Ross, Mirowski, and Goldsteen 1990; Stack and Eshelman 1998). Third, a spouse offers emotional support. Humans need affection, and having a partner makes people feel cared about, being esteemed, loved, and valued as a person (Diener 1999; Ross, Mirowski, and Goldsteen 1990; Stack and Eshelman 1998). The emotional gratification that comes with continuous companionship buffers against daily life stress (Coombs 1991; Gove, Style, and Hughes 1990; Kessler and Essex 1982).

Although the above explanations are generally meant to explain why marriage enhances well-being, they essentially differentiate between having a partner or not. Consequently, I would like to argue that these arguments do not apply to marriage exclusively, but to all relationship types that involve a partner. On the basis of these general assumptions regarding well-being, it can therefore be assumed that married, cohabiting and dating persons have higher levels of well-being than single, divorced, or widowed persons. However, the explanations concerning economic, social, and emotional resources, combined with additional theoretical insights, also enable to make more specific speculations about the level of well-being in different relationship types. In the following, I will derive expectations about further distinctions within the group of relationship types that involve a partner and those that do not involve a partner in order to predict a rank order in the level of well-being.

The first distinction is made within the group of relationship types that involve a partner: marriage, cohabitation, and dating. Partnerships differ in the level of commitment (Kamp Dush and Amato 2005). Commitment may refer to the intensity of the emotional bond and to a long-term time horizon with accompanying relation specific investments and securities. As a result, commitment fosters both emotional gratifications and economic and social resources. In addition, when levels of commitment increase, uncertainty decreases, and this sense of security contributes to well-being as well (Soons, Liefbroer, and Kalmijn 2009). Marriage is characterized by the strongest form of commitment as married partners have proclaimed their intention to share their life forever. Cohabiters have at least expressed their willingness to share a household, which demonstrates a higher level of commitment than a dating stage. From this, lowest well-being is expected among dating persons, followed by cohabiting persons, and married persons. One could argue that lower well-being among cohabiting persons compared to married persons might be explained by fewer resources because cohabiting people are younger and have less advanced careers. However, this would be a spurious or selection effect.

The second distinction is made within the relationship types that do not involve a partner: singleness, divorce, and widowhood. Divorced and widowed people both have experienced a negative life event that is most likely accompanied by stress and sadness (Mastekaasa 1994). Although it is possible that the negative effect of losing a partner decreased after a while or that a divorce was experienced as a relief, compared to singles, who have never been in a serious relationship, a lower level of well-being can be expected. Reasoned from the availability of both financial and social support, it can be expected that the negative impact on well-being is strongest among divorced

people. Because the death of a spouse never involves the issue of guilt or own responsibility (perhaps except in the case of euthanasia), whereas in a situation of divorce one could argue that there is someone to blame and therefore could be rejected, network members are inclined to offer more support to widowed than divorced persons. Financially, people are generally better protected against the consequences of a death of a spouse (via life insurances and widow's funds) than the break up with a spouse that involves the splitting of a house and other possessions while on top of that alimentation arrangements are not always executed as they should (McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994). As a result, I expect that in the group without a partner, highest levels of well-being will be observed among single persons, followed by widowed persons, and lowest levels among divorced persons. In sum, the predicted rank order from most to least well-being is as follows: married, cohabiting, dating, single, widowed, and divorced.

The impact of culture

I will examine the impact of two cultural conditions that may moderate the well-being gap between certain relationship types. First, well-being is expected to be lower if one has to face disapproval by the environment (Diener et al, 2000; Kalmijn, 2010; Soons and Kalmijn, 2009). Deviation from social role expectations results in a social stigma and produces stress which reduces subjective well-being. This mechanism refers most strongly to relationship types that deviate from the standard, in particular cohabitation and divorce. It may also be extended to singlehood, especially when it concerns persons above the age of 35 who are generally expected to be in a serious relationship by then. Singlehood at a lower age and dating is usually seen as normal, non-deviating stages in relationship careers and are therefore not strongly rejected, even in societies with traditional family values. Widowhood is considered as a relationship type that happens to people and that does not result from a free choice, and is therefore not condemned. As a result, it can be expected that the gap in well-being between married persons on the one hand and cohabiting, divorced, and older single persons on the other hand will be larger in societies that have traditional family norms that include a high valuation of marriage and a rejection of divorce and cohabitation. I do not expect that the well-being gap between married and the other relationship types is affected by countries' traditional family values.

Second, the well-being gap between persons with and without a partner is assumed to depend on the amount of support that can be expected from one's environment. One reason why people without a partner, that is divorced, widowed, and single persons, presumably have lower levels of well-being than persons with a partner is that they cannot benefit from support by a partner. It can be expected that this lack of support, and thereby the related lower level of well-being, has less severe consequences if support can be retrieved from other sources like one's family (Diener et al. 2000; Kalmijn, 2010). Strong norms concerning intergenerational support can be found in familialistic countries like in Southern Europe. Parents are strongly expected to help their children at whatever costs, and the same is true for the support of children to their parents in need. I expect that the well-being gap between persons who cannot rely on support by a partner and are thus more in need of family support and persons with a partner is lower in familialistic countries. I will compare the divorced,

widowed, and single persons to the married as this relationship type is most strongly characterized by security of partner support.

Data

This study analyzes data from the most recent wave of the European Values Study 2008 (EVS 2010). The EVS is a large scale data collection on values and opinions regarding life, family, work, religion, politics and society in Europe. The 2008 wave includes 47 European countries (or in some cases, regions). Data have been collected under supervision of a local programme director in each country, but they have been centrally coordinated using strict methodological guidelines in order to safeguard high quality and highly comparable data. For more information on the data collection, I refer to the EVS website (www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu). After an age selection (18-80), the exclusion of respondents with a missing value on either the dependent variable subjective well-being or on relationship type, the exclusion of Kosovo due to unavailability of macro information, and the exclusion of Azerbaijan being an influential case, the analytical sample consists of 60,518 respondents in 45 countries.

Individual level variables

The dependent variable, subjective well-being, has been measured by the question "All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?" Answers have been given on a ten-point scale with higher scores indicating higher levels of well-being. Life satisfaction can be considered as a cognitive evaluation of life, and forms together with positive and negative emotions the notion of subjective well-being (Diener et al. 2000). The average level of well-being is 7. Countries vary considerably in average well-being: from 5.47 in Georgia to 8.39 in Denmark.

Relationship type has been derived from an extensive module on current and prior relationships. I focus on the current relationship status and ignore whether, for example, currently married or cohabiting persons have experienced a divorce in the past. The logic is that current well-being is primary dependent on one's current relational situation (Mastekaasa 1994) and that the possible negative impact of being in a position that is not in line with the normative climate presumably only relates to one's current position. Whether the respondent is married has been derived from the respondent's current legal marital status. Cohabitation refers to unmarried living together with a partner. It does not refer to an official marital status, which implies that people who have been divorced, widowed or who have never been married, but currently have a (new) partner with whom they share a household are considered cohabiting. This information has been derived from the question whether one lives with a partner. Registered partnerships (not existing in each country) have been combined with cohabitation in order to leave the married group as pure as possible as it will serve as the reference category. Dating respondents have indicated to be unmarried and not in a registered partnership, not to live with a partner, but to have a steady relationship. The definition of a 'steady' relationship is not provided in the questionnaire and thus reflects the respondent's view. Again, this relationship type does not refer to an official marital status, and can therefore include respondents who have been divorced, widowed, or never married. Respondents have been counted

6

as single if they have never been married, do not live with a partner and do not have a steady relationship. I distinguished those below the age of 35 and those of 35 years and older. The divorced and widowed have indicated these relationship types as their legal current marital statuses and do not live with a partner and do not have a steady relationship. Separation after a cohabiting relationship has been considered a divorce (prevalence rates of separation are low, 1.4 on average).

The relation between relationship type and subjective well-being will be controlled for several individual characteristics inspired by common findings in the literature (Diener et al. 1999; Wilson 1967). *Education* has been measured with the international standard coding scheme (ISCED 1-digit) that distinguishes 7 levels running from pre-primary or no education (0) to second stage tertiary education (6). *Health* refers to subjective health, retrieved from the question "All in all, how would you describe your state of health these days? Would you say it is very good, good, fair, poor, or very poor?" The answer categories have been reversed so that a higher score means a better health (range from 0 to 4). *Children* have been measured with a binary variable indicating whether the respondent has had at least one child. The *age* range has been limited to 18 through 80, and the square root of age has been included because the expected decline in well-being when getting older is expected to level off. *Religiousness* is a binary variable that labels someone as a religious persons if (s)he belongs to a denomination and attends religious services at least once a month. The *unemployed* have been distinguished from the rest because unemployment is often found to negatively affect well-being because of the involuntary character of it. Analyses that are not separated for men and women include a binary variable with 1 indicating females. Missing values have been comprised in an extra dummy variable in case of categorical variables, and have been imputed by the country mean in case of continuous variables. This was the case in less than 1 percent of the cases. The models will control for the dummy variables indicating the information was originally missing (results not shown).

Three other important individual characteristics will be included in the models. First, *household income* has been considered a proxy for the economic resources available to the respondent. Household income is therefore expected to partly explain the differences in well-being between the several relationship types. By keeping constant on household income, the remaining well-being gaps are less likely to result from differences in material resources and thus more likely to be sensitive to the normative context. Household incomes have been corrected for differences in power purchase parities and expressed in Euros (x1,000). Missing values have been imputed by country means (18 percent of the cases) and a dummy variable with score 1 if the original information was missing will be included in the analyses. Second, the values in which I am interested at the country level will also be included as individual level variables to prevent any composition effect to blur the country level results. *Traditional family values* have been measured by five items all related to acceptance or opposition towards standard and non-standard household arrangements: (a) "Please tell me for each of the following whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between, using this card. Divorce" (scale from 1 "never" to 10 "always"); (b) "A marriage or a long-term stable relationship is necessary to be happy" (scale from 1 "agree strongly" to 5 "disagree strongly"); "It is alright for two people to live together without getting married" (scale from 1 "agree strongly" to 5

"disagree strongly"); "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Marriage is an outdated institution?" (1 "agree", 2 "disagree"); "If a woman wants to have a child as a single parent, but she doesn't want to have a stable relationship with a man, do you approve or disapprove?" (1 "approve", 2 "disapprove"). Items have been recoded (if necessary) so that higher scores mean more traditional family values. Because of the different metrics, the items have been standardized before being averaged. *Familialistic norms* have been measured by two items: (a) "Which of the following statements best describes your views about parents' responsibilities to their children? 1 – Parents' duty is to do their best for their children even at the expense of their own well-being, 2 – Parents have a life of their own and should not be asked to sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of their children"; (b) "Which of the following statements best describes your views about responsibilities of adult children towards their parents when their parents are in need of long-term care? 1 – Adult children have the duty to provide long-term care for their parents even at the expense of their own well-being, 2 – Adult children have a life of their own and should not be asked to sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of their parents". Those who find that parents (children) should not be asked to sacrifice their own well-being for their children (parents) receive score 0. Those who find that parents (children) have the duty to help, score 1. Respondents who spontaneously answered that they agreed with neither of the statements, received score 0.5. The scores on the two items have been averaged. In case of missing values, the score 0.5 was assigned (5.6 percent of the cases), while a dummy variable that indicates the original information was lacking will be included in the models. Descriptive information can be found in Table 1.

>>Table 1 about here<<

Country level variables
The normative climate of a country has been measured with two different values. *Traditional family values* have been aggregated from the individual level variable and represents the average level of traditional family values. Between-nation variation is substantial, from -2.91 in Iceland, -2.71 in Denmark, and -2.61 in Sweden to 1.55 in Turkey, 1.56 in Slovak Republic, and 1.58 in Moldova.

Familialistic norms have been aggregated from the corresponding individual level variable (before the imputation of missing values), and ranges from 0.93 in Georgia, 0.89 in Malta, and 0.86 in Portugal to 0.54 in Finland and Austria , 0.47 in Denmark, and 0.45 in Lithuania.

Because values are generally shown to correlate with economic development in a country (Inglehart, 1990) and I would like to filter out the economic element in the value measurements to deal with the normative climates of countries as good as possible, I will control for countries' *Gross Domestic Product*. These data have been derived from the UNESCE Statistical Database and reflect the average GDP per capita in current prices PPP in US dollars between 2004 and 2008. No information is available for Kosovo, and this country will therefore be left out of the analyses.

In addition, I will control for the *prevalence rate of divorce* since it has been argued that the well-being gap between married and divorced is smaller if divorce rates are low. If people face much barriers to get a divorce in their country, it is likely that many with an unhappy marriage stay together

lowering the average happiness of married people (Kalmijn 2010; Stack and Eshleman 1998). Low divorce rates are likely to be observed in traditional countries. Hence, the gap between married and divorced is expected to be high in societies with traditional family values and a strong familialistic norm, but at the same time expected to be low in these societies as they have a low divorce rate. The proportion of ever divorced people in a country is derived from individual level information that includes everyone who has ever experienced a divorce in one's life, irrespective of the current relationship status. Separations after cohabitation are not considered. Descriptive information on the country level characteristics can be found in Table 2. For the distribution of relationship types by country, see Appendix A.

>>Table 2 about here<<

Descriptive results: characterization of relationship types

Table 3 provides descriptive information on the different relationship types. Over half of the sample consist of married persons showing that marriage is still the most popular relationship status by far. On average, married persons score 7.17 on the ten-point subjective well-being scale, which is slightly above average. Cohabiting and dating persons are even a bit happier (7.38 and 7.33 respectively), but also young singles have relatively high levels of well-being (7.10). Single persons over age 35, divorced, and widowed people have lower well-being levels than average. Variation between the relationship types is substantial: the maximum difference (that between widowed and cohabiting persons) amounts to 1.36 points on the ten-point scale.

The bivariate relationship between relationship type and well-being must be interpreted with care because the relatively high levels of well-being among cohabiting and dating persons for example could well be traced back to their young age, good health or educational level. Table 3 displays structural characteristics and values by relationship type. Cohabiting, dating, and young single persons are generally young, highly educated, in good health, not religious, and not traditional. Interestingly, older singles have less traditional family values than younger singles. People in cohabiting relationships have a markedly high employment rate and, related, a high household income. Parenthood is less likely than in marriage, but still over half of the cohabiting respondents in this sample have children. Widowers are not surprisingly often female and relatively old, and consequently, poorly educated, not employed, in bad health, in low-income groups, religious, and traditional in their family values. The currently divorced differ from the married group in the relatively high female rate, low household income, and less traditional family values. In most respects, the married group takes an intermediate position. Multivariate analyses will demonstrate how relationship type is related to subjective well-being if these structural differences are taken into account.

>>Table 3 about here<<

Models

The data will be analyzed with multilevel regression models with individuals nested in countries. I will start with a model including all relationship types (marriage as reference category) and control variables. Random slopes of the relationship types are included to see to what extent the relationship between relationship type and well-being varies over countries. This model will provide the answer to the first research question about the differences in well-being between relationship types. In Model 2, the country level variables and the interaction terms between traditional family values and relationship types are added, while controlling for household income and personal values. The third model will replace the interaction terms of Model 2 with the interaction terms between familialistic norm and relationship types. Models 2 and 3 together enable to answer the second research question about the influence of the normative climate on the well-being gap.

When assessing to what extent the well-being gap between relationship types depends on the normative context, I will not only control for GDP and the proportion of ever divorced persons, but also for the values measurement that is not in the interaction terms. The reason is that the two value measurements correlate positively with each other (r=0.66), while opposing effects on the well-being gap are expected. The correlation between GDP and traditional family values is -0.69 and between GDP and familialistic norm is -0.49, demonstrating that values are indeed less traditional in prosperous countries. In addition, Table 4 confirms the negative relation between the proportion ever divorced persons in a country and traditional family values (r=-0.64) and familialistic norm (r=0.75).

I will conduct analyses separately for men and women, because previous research has suggested that relation type effects on well-being are different for men and women. Coombs (1991) reports in his review article that married men are happier than married women, whereas unmarried men have lower levels of well-being than unmarried women.

>>Table 4 about here<<

Results

Figure 1 displays the well-being gap between marriage and the other relationship types, controlled for spurious effects caused by differences in education, health, children, age (and its squared term), religiosity, unemployment, and gender. It is the graphical presentation of Model 1 in Table 5. The answer on the first research question about differences in well-being between relationship types follows the prediction perfectly. Highest levels of well-being can be found among married persons, followed (in order) by cohabiters, daters, young singles, singles over age 35, widowers, and divorcees. The maximum difference is 0.8 on a ten-point scale, and this is net of the impact of control variables on well-being. All differences between the groups are significant at a 5% level, except for the difference between younger and older singles. Analyses for men and women separately confirm this pattern, although the difference in well-being is not significant between dating and cohabiting men, between widowed and divorced men, between young single and dating, older single, and widowed women, and between older single and widowed women.

<<Figure 1 about here<<

The overall clear pattern as shown in Figure 1 is not replicated perfectly in each country (see Appendix B for regression analyses for each country separately). Most striking is that the well-being gap between married and cohabiting persons reaches the level of significance in only five countries: Belgium, Greece, Latvia, the Netherlands, and Slovak Republic. The random slope in Model 1 shows that the gap between marriage and cohabitation does not vary between countries. These results contradict the generally believed marriage premium on top of the cohabiting relationship (Soons and Kalmijn 2009; Stack and Eshleman 1998). The separate country analyses do demonstrate that in general divorce goes together with less well-being (significant gap with marriage in 39 countries), as does widowhood (significant gap in 34 countries). Young singles have significant lower levels of well-being than married persons in 23 countries and older singles in 21 countries, whereas dating persons report significantly less well-being than married persons in only 15 countries. There is no country in this sample of 45 in which marriage goes together with significant less well-being than any other relationship type, which underlines the favorable position of marriage in terms of subjective well-being.

Before turning to the question whether the size of the well-being gap depends on the normative climate, Model 1 shows us to what extent the gaps vary over countries. The model includes random slopes of the relationship types. As mentioned before, the effect of cohabitation on well-being compared to marriage does not vary by country (b=0.000). The gaps with all other relationship types do very significantly over countries, with the slope of singles under the age of 35 showing the strongest variation. Given the fact that the well-being gap between marriage and cohabitation does not differ over countries, it is highly unlikely that interaction effects between the well-being gap and the normative context will turn out to be significant.

>>Table 5, 6, and 7 about here<<

The first hypothesis on the normative climate expected that the difference between marriage and non-traditional relationship types (cohabitation, divorce, and singleness when 35 years or older) would be larger in societies that embrace traditional family values. Model 2 shows that this is true for the divorced. Further inspection in Tables 6 and 7 reveals that this effect is only present for women and not for men. Divorced women report lower levels of well-being than married women and this is especially so in societies with traditional family values (*b*=-0.144), probably because in these societies divorced women feel stigmatized or even rejected. No significant interaction term is found for the singles of 35 years or older, both for men and women, and as could be expected given the zero variance in the slope, no significant interaction term is found for cohabitation which contradicts the hypothesis. In addition, Model 2 shows two unexpected findings. In traditional societies, the disadvantage in well-being of young singles compared to married persons decreases (*b*=0.165 Table 5), whereas the gap between widowed and married women increases (*b*=-0.084 Table 7). The theoretical ideas concerning traditional family values cannot explain these findings. It was expected

11

that these well-being gaps would not depend on the normative climate, as was expected and found for dating persons.

As an alternative approach to test the idea of traditional family values, I estimated Model 2 again, but replaced traditional family values by a specific measure indicating disapproval of divorce. The results are displayed in Appendix C. The group of divorcees are affected in a similar way by disapproval of divorce than by the more general measure of traditional family values. Women who are divorced have less subjective well-being than married women as divorce is more strongly disapproved of in that country. Divorced men are not affected, and in the overall model the interaction effect just fails to reach significance. Also singles are being affected in a similar way than shown in Table 5, but interestingly the widowed are not affected anymore. In other words, widowed persons benefit in terms of subjective well-being in societies that are characterized by traditional family values, but their well-being does not depend on the disapproval of divorce. In sum however, we must conclude that this specific measure does not affect the specific group of divorcees more clearly than the general measure. I also replaced the measure of traditional family values by disapproval of cohabitation to find out whether the well-being of cohabiters compared to married persons depends on this specific value, but given the absence of variation in this gap it is not remarkable that this turns out not to be the case (results available upon request).

The second interaction hypothesis expected that the difference in well-being between marriage on the one hand and relationship types that do not involve a partner (singleness, widowhood, and divorce) on the other hand would be smaller in societies that emphasize a strong norm of familialism since this may buffer the lack of support they can receive from a partner. Model 3 supports this expectation as far as young singles are concerned, and this is true for both men and women. The well-being gap is estimated to be over 40% smaller in the country with the strongest familialistic norm compared to the country with the least familiaristic norm (range in familialistic norm is 0.48, see Table 2). For older singles, this finding is not replicated. In line with the expectation, no dependence on norms is found for cohabiting and dating persons. Completely contrary to the expectation however, is the fact that divorced and widowed women (not men) appear to be unhappier compared to married women in societies with a strong familialistic norm where they supposedly can rely on much help from family members. There is hardly a well-being gap in societies with a weak familialistic norm, but this gap increases as this norm becomes stronger. This finding remains significant if both sets of interaction effects are included in the model simultaneously (results available upon request).

Conclusion

This study has shown that subjective well-being varies by relationship type, with married persons reporting most well-being, followed (in order) by cohabiting, dating, single, widowed, and divorced persons. This order is in line with expectations based on differences in economic and social resources.

The second part of this study assessed to what extent differences in well-being between relationship types depend on the normative climate in a country. The general conclusion is that there is no convincing evidence for a strong impact of the normative context. It was expected that relationship types that deviate from the standard, traditional picture would suffer more in societies with

traditional family values. However, this was only found to be the case for divorced women; not for divorced men, singles, and cohabiters. In addition, widowed women's well-being appeared to be positively affected by traditional family values, but this cannot be related to the idea of stigmatization or rejection (as is the key element in the traditional values hypothesis). Perhaps widowed women feel better 'at home' in traditional societies as they are more traditional themselves as well.

The second hypothesis received only weak support as well. It was expected that the well-being of groups without a partner would deviate less from the married group if they live in a society that advocates strong and unconditional family support. This turned out to be the case for young singles, but not for older singles. Perhaps singles of age 35 and older have enough resources themselves so that they do not become any happier if they know they can depend on their parents. In contrast to the expectation, widowed and divorce women appeared to be even unhappier in familialistic societies. It might be that the willingness or possibilities to help are lower among children than among parents, and widowed and divorced women obviously must rely on their children for help, whereas (young) singles can rely on their parents. If the norm suggests that help by family is very important, but the actual help (by children) is limited, satisfaction levels may be reduced.

In conclusion, this study found variation in well-being gaps between relationship types across countries, but the normative climate does not turn out to be a clear explanation for that. This conclusion may be interpreted as evidence for the idea that in present day society, autonomy in private decisions, like relationships, is so high that people's well-being is hardly or not affected by what society thinks of their relationship status. The next question then is whether people's well-being in different relationship types is affected by practical issues, like the amount of resources that they are able to obtain, either through family and friends or through the state. I suggest this issue to be examined further in future research.

Two other findings of this study I would like to highlight as they may guide future research. First of all, the well-being gap between marriage and cohabitation seems a bit overrated. Although I do find evidence for a marriage premium over all populations in the 45 countries under study, separate country analyses show that this is only significantly the case in 5 countries. It must be noted that cohabiters in my study may have been divorced or widowed earlier, but found a new partner with whom they share a household; other studies sometimes only consider never married cohabiting persons only. As Mastekaase (1994) has shown, divorced and widowed persons in a new cohabiting relationship are happier than those who have not found a new partner.

Secondly, although the effects were not always in the expected direction, women seem to be more affected by the normative context than men. For men, only the well-being of young singles appeared to depend on the traditional family values and familialistic norm in society, whereas for women not only young singles, but also divorcees and widowers were affected by the normative context. In encourage future research to try to understand this difference.

References

Cherlin, Andrew J. 2004. "The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage". *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 66*(4): 848-861

Coombs, Robert H. 1991. "Marital Status and Personal Well-Being: A Literature Review". *Family Relations, 40*(1): 97-102.

Diener, Ed, Carol L. Gohm, Eunkook Suh, and Shigehiro Oishi. 2000. "Similarity of Relations between Marital Status and Subjective Well-Being Across Cultures". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 31*(4): 419-436.

Diener, Ed, Eunkook M. Suh, Richard E. Lucas, and Heidi L. Smith. 1999. "Subjective Well-Being: Three Decades of Progress". *Psychological Bulletin, 125*(2): 276-302.

EVS. 2010. *European Values Study 2008, 4th wave, Integrated Dataset*. GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, Germany, ZA4800 Data File Version 2.0.0 (2010-11-30) doi:10.4232/1.10188 (http://dx.doi.org/10.4232/1.10188).

Gove, Walter R., Carolyn Briggs Style, and Michael Hughes. 1990. "The Effect of Marriage on the Well-Being of Adults". *Journal of Family Issues, 11*(1): 4-35.

Inglehart, Ronald. 1990. *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kalmijn, Matthijs. 2010. "Country Differences in the Effects of Divorce on Well-Being: The Role of Norms, Support, and Selectivity". *European Sociological Review, 26*(4): 475-490.

Kamp Dush, Claire M. and Paul R. Amato. 2005. "Consequences of Relationship Status and Quality for Subjective Well-Being". *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 22*(5): 607-627.

Kessler, Ronald C. and Marilyn Essex. 1982. "Marital Status and Depression: The Importance of Coping Resources". *Social Forces, 61*(2): 484-507.

Mastekaasa, Arne. 1994. "The Subjective Well-Being of the Previously Married: The Importance of Unmarried Cohabitation and Time Since Widowhood or Divorce". *Social Forces, 73*(2): 665-692.

McLanahan, Sarah and Gary Sandefur. 1994. *Growing Up With a Single Parent. What Hurts, What Helps?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Ødegard, Ømulv. 1946. "Marriage and Mental Disease: A Study in Social Psychopathology". *Journal of Mental Science, 92*: 35-59.

Ross, Catherine E., John Mirowski, and Karen Goldsteen. 1990. "The Impact of the Family on Health: The Decade in Review". *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 52*(4): 1059-1078.

Soons, Judith P., Aart C. Liefbroer, and Matthijs Kalmijn. 2009. "The Long-Term Consequences of Relationship Formation for Subjective Well-Being". *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 71: 1254-1270.

Soons, Judith P. and Matthijs Kalmijn. 2009. "Is Marriage More Than Cohabitation? Well-Being Differences in 30 European Countries". *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 71*: 1141-1157.

Stack, Steven and J. Ross Eshleman. 1998. "Marital Status and Happiness: A 17-Nation Study". *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 60*(2): 527-536.

Wilson, Warner. 1967. "Correlates of Avowed Happiness". *Psychological Bulletin, 67*(4): 294-306.
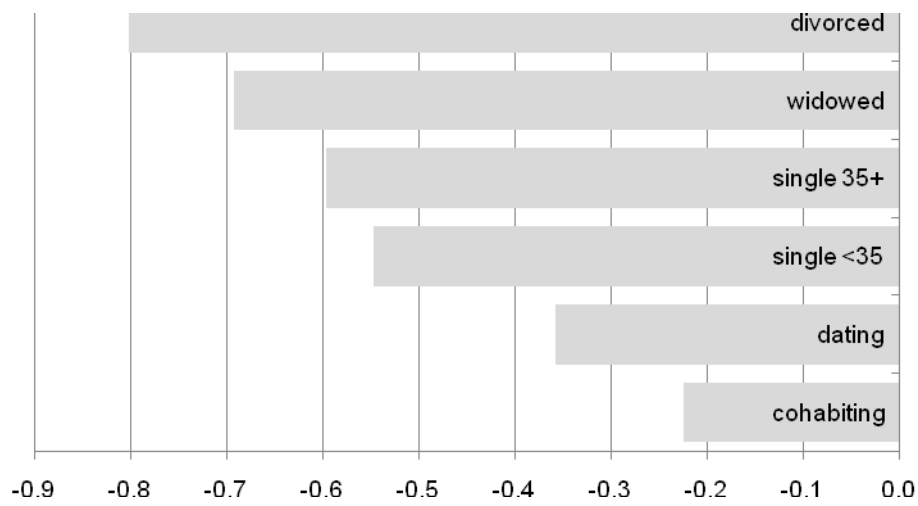
Figure 1: Well-being gap between married and other relationship types (based on Model 1 in Table 5)

Table 1: Descriptive information on individual characteristics

	minimum	maximum	mean	st.dev.
subjective well-being	1	10	7.02	2.29
married	0	1	0.56	
cohabiting	0	1	0.08	
dating	0	1	0.06	
single	0	1	0.16	
single <35	0	1	0.11	
single 35+	0	1	0.04	
widowed	0	1	0.08	
divorced	0	1	0.06	
education	0	6	3.10	1.35
health	0	4	2.72	0.95
children	0	1	0.71	
age	18	79	45.54	16.63
religious	0	1	0.27	
unemployed	0	1	0.10	
female	0	1	0.55	
household income (ppp x1,000)	0	14.73	1.30	1.22
traditional family values	-6.33	8.92	-0.13	2.45
familialistic norm	0	1	0.71	0.36

Source: European Values Study, 2008 (N=60,518 individuals in 45 countries)

Table 2: Descriptive information on country characteristics

	traditional family values	disapproval of divorce	familialistic norm	GDP per capita, PPP (x 1,000)	proportion ever divorced	average subjective well-being	N
Albania	1.00	5.61	2.65	0.80	6.52	0.02	6.35
Armenia	1.52	6.72	3.04	0.85	4.56	0.03	5.67
Austria	-0.61	3.96	1.72	0.54	35.20	0.14	7.55
Belarus	0.23	4.41	2.38	0.63	9.82	0.18	6.11
Belgium	-0.92	4.27	1.54	0.62	33.32	0.20	7.63
Bosnia Herzegovina	0.24	5.80	2.78	0.85	6.24	0.04	7.05
Bulgaria	0.85	4.95	2.48	0.77	10.45	0.09	5.78
Croatia	-0.20	5.42	2.55	0.81	16.58	0.08	7.18
Cyprus	0.84	5.48	2.91	0.79	26.15	0.09	7.30
Czech Republic	0.16	4.35	2.47	0.62	22.02	0.21	7.20
Denmark	-2.71	2.29	1.31	0.47	34.76	0.34	8.39
Estonia	0.01	4.77	2.12	0.64	18.20	0.27	6.66
Finland	-1.42	2.76	1.78	0.54	32.80	0.31	7.67
France	-0.97	3.46	1.48	0.69	30.86	0.28	7.10
Georgia	1.38	5.96	3.19	0.93	4.09	0.05	5.47
Germany	-0.32	3.76	1.89	0.59	32.86	0.32	6.78
Great Britain	-0.80	4.06	2.05	0.62	33.83	0.25	7.53
Greece	0.25	4.15	2.25	0.78	26.37	0.10	6.89
Hungary	-0.15	4.18	2.05	0.70	17.93	0.19	6.34
Iceland	-2.91	2.65	1.65	0.57	35.44	0.18	8.05
Ireland	-0.29	4.77	2.07	0.66	40.39	0.05	7.85
Italy	0.36	5.19	2.52	0.83	29.46	0.07	7.23
Latvia	-0.11	4.85	2.14	0.61	14.71	0.22	6.41
Lithuania	-0.09	4.50	2.56	0.45	15.91	0.17	6.42
Luxembourg	-1.13	3.34	1.42	0.70	75.52	0.19	7.86
Macedonia	0.37	5.15	2.63	0.80	8.58	0.04	6.90
Malta	1.07	6.75	3.15	0.89	21.72	0.01	7.87
Moldova	1.58	6.95	2.87	0.83	2.55	0.10	6.55
Montenegro	-0.03	4.71	2.41	0.79	9.95	0.08	7.47
Netherlands	-1.78	3.70	1.88	0.57	37.23	0.17	7.98
Northern Cyprus	0.93	5.71	2.92	0.74	12.29	0.09	6.29
Northern Ireland	-0.27	5.18	2.30	0.61	33.83	0.13	7.91
Norway	-1.60	2.95	1.46	0.60	50.78	0.31	8.10
Poland	0.27	5.49	2.39	0.77	15.02	0.11	7.28
Portugal	0.09	4.32	2.11	0.86	22.18	0.11	6.54
Romania	0.36	5.34	2.42	0.75	11.28	0.09	6.82
Russian Federation	0.42	4.67	2.50	0.67	13.34	0.23	6.51
Serbia	-0.11	5.15	2.36	0.73	9.27	0.10	6.96
Slovak Republic	1.56	4.97	3.16	0.73	18.24	0.11	7.14
Slovenia	-1.19	3.61	2.27	0.72	24.99	0.06	7.60
Spain	-1.53	3.12	1.73	0.81	29.18	0.15	7.34
Sweden	-2.61	1.86	1.36	0.60	35.01	0.26	7.70
Switzerland	-1.10	3.71	1.67	0.63	38.90	0.29	8.01
Turkey	1.55	6.67	3.33	0.82	12.29	0.01	6.51
Ukraine	1.17	5.68	2.83	0.76	6.28	0.17	6.04
Mean	-0.08	4.66	0.71	22.13	0.14	7.02	
St. dev	1.10	1.17	0.12	14.49	0.09	2.29	
Minimum	-2.91	1.86	0.45	2.55	0.01	5.47	
Maximum	1.58	6.95	0.93	75.52	0.34	8.39	

Source: European Values Study, 2008 (N=45)

Table 3: Descriptive information by relationship type

	subjective well-being (1-10) mean	age (18-80) mean	education (0-6) mean	employed %	female %	health (0-4) mean	household income (0-14.73) mean	religious %	child %	traditional family values (-6.33 - 8.92) mean	familialistic norm (0-1) mean	N
married	7.17	49.14	3.06	0.54	0.54	2.68	1.39	0.31	0.92	0.13	0.72	33,915
cohabiting	7.38	37.58	3.40	0.72	0.54	2.95	1.74	0.11	0.57	-1.12	0.63	4,899
dating	7.33	31.43	3.42	0.59	0.53	3.07	1.42	0.18	0.23	-1.00	0.68	3,922
single	6.95	30.94	3.24	0.48	0.47	3.01	1.14	0.25	0.07	-0.46	0.71	9,573
single <35	7.10	23.43	3.29	0.45	0.45	3.17	1.17	0.24	0.03	-0.41	0.71	6,920
single 35+	6.57	50.53	3.12	0.56	0.49	2.60	1.08	0.27	0.15	-0.59	0.71	2,653
divorced	6.23	50.45	3.18	0.58	0.67	2.49	0.99	0.20	0.85	-0.69	0.63	3,561
widowed	6.02	65.87	2.42	0.17	0.81	1.99	0.67	0.40	0.92	0.86	0.75	4,648
total	7.02	45.54	3.10	0.52	0.55	2.72	1.30	0.27	0.71	-0.13	0.71	60,518

Source: European Values Study, 2008 (N=60,518 individuals in 45 countries)

Table 4: Correlations between macro level characteristics

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(1) average well-being				
(2) traditional family values	-0.72			
(3) familialistic norm	-0.44	0.66		
(4) GDP	0.75	-0.69	-0.49	
(5) proportion ever divorced	0.34	-0.64	-0.75	0.51

Source: European Values Study, 2008 (N=45)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(1) average well-being				
(2) traditional family values	-0.72			
(3) familialistic norm	-0.44	0.66		
(4) GDP	0.75	-0.69	-0.49	
(5) proportion ever divorced	0.34	-0.64	-0.75	0.51

Table 5: Multilevel analysis on subjective well-being

	Model 1 b		Model 1 se	Model 2 b		Model 2 se	Model 3 b		Model 3 se
INDIVIDUAL LEVEL									
married (ref)									
cohabiting	-0.224	**	0.034	-0.217	**	0.039	-0.002		0.205
dating	-0.358	**	0.052	-0.310	**	0.055	-0.301		0.311
single <35	-0.546	**	0.068	-0.486	**	0.061	-1.293	**	0.354
single 35+	-0.596	**	0.055	-0.535	**	0.055	-0.620	*	0.295
widowed	-0.692	**	0.043	-0.659	**	0.044	0.083		0.247
divorced	-0.801	**	0.047	-0.730	**	0.052	0.069		0.282
education	0.075	**	0.007	0.057	**	0.007	0.057	**	0.007
health	0.808	**	0.010	0.798	**	0.010	0.799	**	0.010
children	0.041		0.029	0.053	~	0.029	0.054	~	0.029
age	-0.052	**	0.004	-0.053	**	0.004	-0.053	**	0.004
age square	0.001	**	0.000	0.001	**	0.000	0.001	**	0.000
religious	0.009		0.018	0.002		0.018	0.002		0.018
unemployed	-0.613	**	0.030	-0.587	**	0.030	-0.587	**	0.030
female	0.122	**	0.017	0.126	**	0.017	0.126	**	0.017
household income				0.096	**	0.009	0.096	**	0.009
traditional family values				-0.012	**	0.004	-0.012	**	0.004
familialistic norm				0.088	**	0.024	0.087	**	0.024
COUNTRY LEVEL									
traditional family values				-0.170	*	0.085	-0.174	*	0.085
familialistic norm				-0.029		0.697	0.078		0.700
GDP (x 1,000)				0.010	~	0.006	0.010	~	0.006
proportion ever divorced				-0.065	*	0.029	-0.067	*	0.029
CROSS LEVEL INTERACTIONS									
traditional family values									
* cohabiting				-0.023		0.029			
* dating				0.010		0.047			
* single <35				0.165	**	0.048			
* single 35+				0.019		0.045			
* widowed				-0.086	*	0.042			
* divorced				-0.076	~	0.043			
familialistic norm									
* cohabiting							-0.299		0.306
* dating							-0.015		0.440
* single <35							1.112	*	0.489
* single 35+							0.115		0.413
* widowed							-1.047	**	0.339
* divorced							-1.132	**	0.403
Intercept	5.829	**	0.127	5.456	**	0.533	5.379	**	0.536
variance individual level	2.019		0.006	2.016		0.006	2.016		0.006
variance country level	0.544		0.059	0.393		0.045	0.394		0.045
random slopes									
cohabiting	0.000		0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000		0.000
dating	0.201		0.055	0.207		0.055	0.209		0.055
single <35	0.365		0.050	0.293		0.045	0.321		0.047
single 35+	0.175		0.067	0.161		0.071	0.163		0.071
widowed	0.152		0.046	0.156		0.046	0.133		0.047
divorced	0.189		0.049	0.190		0.049	0.176		0.048
N individuals	60,518			60,518			60,518		
N countries	45			45			45		

Source: European Values Study, 2008

*~ p<0.10 * p<0.05 ** p<0.01*

Table 6: Multilevel analysis on subjective well-being, males only

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	b		se	b		se	b		se
INDIVIDUAL LEVEL									
married (ref)									
cohabiting	-0.185	**	0.050	-0.199	**	0.057	-0.098		0.298
dating	-0.264	**	0.069	-0.253	**	0.073	0.080		0.391
single <35	-0.553	**	0.076	-0.516	**	0.070	-1.349	**	0.347
single 35+	-0.531	**	0.073	-0.474	**	0.075	-0.573		0.380
widowed	-0.871	**	0.088	-0.841	**	0.089	-0.390		0.549
divorced	-0.729	**	0.084	-0.674	**	0.086	-1.045	*	0.517
education	0.084	**	0.010	0.059	**	0.011	0.059	**	0.011
health	0.809	**	0.015	0.794	**	0.015	0.795	**	0.015
children	0.075	~	0.044	0.078	~	0.044	0.076	~	0.044
age	-0.056	**	0.006	-0.059	**	0.006	-0.059	**	0.006
age square	0.001	**	0.000	0.001	**	0.000	0.001	**	0.000
religious	0.140	**	0.034	0.159	**	0.034	0.159	**	0.034
unemployed	-0.659	**	0.043	-0.623	**	0.043	-0.622	**	0.043
household income				0.117	**	0.013	0.117	**	0.013
traditional family values				-0.012	*	0.006	-0.012	*	0.006
familialistic norm				0.059		0.036	0.058		0.036
COUNTRY LEVEL									
traditional family values				-0.186	*	0.084	-0.177	*	0.084
familialistic norm				-0.382		0.844	-0.432		0.848
GDP (x 1,000)				0.011	~	0.006	0.011	~	0.006
proportion ever divorced				-1.152		1.050	-1.154		1.050
CROSS LEVEL INTERACTIONS									
traditional family values									
* cohabiting				-0.017		0.041			
* dating				-0.026		0.059			
* single <35				0.161	**	0.048			
* single 35+				0.024		0.057			
* widowed				-0.064		0.090			
* divorced				0.056		0.075			
familialistic norm									
* cohabiting							-0.132		0.444
* dating							-0.465		0.553
* single <35							1.150	*	0.474
* single 35+							0.132		0.534
* widowed							-0.643		0.762
* divorced							0.520		0.741
Intercept	5.832	**	0.171	5.927	**	0.723	5.967	**	0.725
variance individual level	2.006		0.009	2.002		0.009	2.002		0.009
variance country level	0.532		0.059	0.377		0.045	0.377		0.045
random slopes									
cohabiting	0.000		0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000		0.000
dating	0.190		0.083	0.208		0.080	0.208		0.079
single <35	0.300		0.057	0.232		0.055	0.253		0.056
single 35+	0.142		0.114	0.135		0.120	0.137		0.120
widowed	0.308		0.097	0.318		0.098	0.325		0.096
divorced	0.360		0.079	0.352		0.079	0.348		0.080
N individuals	26,996			26,996			26,996		
N countries	45			45			45		

Source: European Values Study, 2008

*~ p<0.10 * p<0.05 ** p<0.01*

Table 7: Multilevel analysis on subjective well-being, females only

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	b		se	b		se	b		se
INDIVIDUAL LEVEL									
married (ref)									
cohabiting	-0.214	**	0.046	-0.232	**	0.051	0.066		0.282
dating	-0.415	**	0.061	-0.377	**	0.065	-0.671	~	0.360
single <35	-0.498	**	0.080	-0.460	**	0.075	-1.117	**	0.428
single 35+	-0.616	**	0.077	-0.573	**	0.079	-0.730	~	0.442
widowed	-0.659	**	0.047	-0.619	**	0.049	0.151		0.269
divorced	-0.814	**	0.058	-0.809	**	0.057	0.494		0.308
education	0.070	**	0.010	0.054	**	0.010	0.054	**	0.010
health	0.808	**	0.014	0.798	**	0.014	0.798	**	0.014
children	0.009		0.038	0.019		0.039	0.020		0.039
age	-0.048	**	0.005	-0.049	**	0.005	-0.049	**	0.005
age square	0.001	**	0.000	0.001	**	0.000	0.001	**	0.000
religious	0.173	**	0.029	0.186	**	0.030	0.185	**	0.030
unemployed	-0.548	**	0.041	-0.529	**	0.041	-0.530	**	0.041
household income				0.078	**	0.013	0.078	**	0.013
traditional family values				-0.019	**	0.005	-0.019	**	0.005
familialistic norm				0.094	**	0.033	0.093	**	0.033
COUNTRY LEVEL									
traditional family values				-0.201	*	0.088	-0.211	*	0.088
familialistic norm				-0.733		0.880	-0.541		0.886
GDP (x 1,000)				0.009		0.006	0.009		0.006
proportion ever divorced				-0.895		1.096	-0.894		1.098
CROSS LEVEL INTERACTIONS									
traditional family values									
* cohabiting				-0.029		0.039			
* dating				0.043		0.057			
* single <35				0.156	**	0.059			
* single 35+				0.035		0.067			
* widowed				-0.084	~	0.045			
* divorced				-0.144	**	0.051			
familialistic norm									
* cohabiting							-0.419		0.419
* dating							0.406		0.513
* single <35							0.907		0.589
* single 35+							0.214		0.617
* widowed							-1.086	**	0.367
* divorced							-1.854	**	0.443
Intercept	5.823	**	0.151	6.118	**	0.749	5.978	**	0.753
variance individual level	2.025		0.008	2.023		0.008	2.023		0.008
variance country level	0.559		0.061	0.397		0.047	0.398		0.047
random slopes									
cohabiting	0.000		0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000		0.000
dating	0.168		0.093	0.167		0.092	0.157		0.097
single <35	0.379		0.063	0.324		0.060	0.354		0.062
single 35+	0.261		0.103	0.266		0.103	0.271		0.101
widowed	0.136		0.055	0.144		0.053	0.117		0.058
divorced	0.224		0.072	0.200		0.073	0.139		0.083
N individuals	33,522			33,522			33,522		
N countries	45			45			45		

Source: European Values Study, 2008

*~ p<0.10 * p<0.05 ** p<0.01*

Appendix A: Distribution of relationship types by country

	married	cohabiting	dating	single <35	single 35+	widowed	divorced
Albania	70.6	3.5	1.9	18.0	1.3	3.7	1.1
Armenia	62.4	3.3	1.7	16.4	3.8	9.0	3.4
Austria	48.1	11.4	7.6	13.5	5.7	6.5	7.3
Belarus	48.4	3.7	11.8	13.7	2.6	10.8	8.9
Belgium	54.6	14.7	9.0	8.4	3.8	4.0	5.5
Bosnia Herzegovina	60.9	2.0	9.8	16.9	3.0	4.6	2.9
Bulgaria	60.9	4.6	0.0	11.3	3.1	13.1	7.0
Croatia	56.6	6.1	8.8	14.5	4.7	6.5	2.9
Cyprus	65.2	4.3	3.5	11.2	2.6	9.0	4.2
Czech Republic	48.6	9.2	5.6	11.3	4.3	11.1	9.9
Denmark	59.5	15.2	5.3	6.9	4.4	2.9	5.8
Estonia	39.4	12.4	6.6	10.1	6.6	14.0	11.0
Finland	54.6	16.5	5.3	7.5	6.4	2.3	7.6
France	46.9	15.9	11.7	6.1	5.4	5.9	7.9
Georgia	65.7	0.2	1.6	12.8	4.3	11.6	3.8
Germany	51.5	11.4	6.2	8.1	5.8	7.3	9.8
Great Britain	47.7	10.7	5.2	8.5	7.4	8.3	12.2
Greece	61.1	3.3	7.4	11.0	4.4	9.2	3.6
Hungary	50.1	13.0	9.2	11.6	3.4	6.4	6.3
Iceland	48.0	23.1	5.0	9.5	3.9	1.3	9.1
Ireland	50.2	9.0	7.3	14.6	8.6	3.6	6.7
Italy	60.3	5.3	11.6	11.9	5.3	3.1	2.5
Latvia	44.3	17.7	6.5	9.2	3.4	9.9	9.2
Lithuania	51.1	7.4	4.7	13.5	2.6	12.3	8.5
Luxembourg	44.6	13.4	16.3	17.4	2.1	2.2	4.1
Macedonia	61.1	1.7	8.3	18.5	3.3	4.8	2.4
Malta	61.3	1.7	6.0	8.2	10.5	9.1	3.2
Moldova	60.4	7.6	3.8	10.5	1.6	11.5	4.7
Montenegro	53.5	2.6	8.8	16.7	6.8	7.2	4.6
Netherlands	60.0	11.0	5.4	4.0	6.5	7.1	5.9
Northern Cyprus	51.5	1.7	10.7	25.8	0.8	5.4	4.1
Northern Ireland	52.0	9.4	7.3	9.8	9.8	6.6	5.0
Norway	55.4	17.9	7.0	9.6	3.5	2.6	4.1
Poland	58.8	5.3	3.3	16.7	3.4	8.9	3.5
Portugal	62.4	3.6	3.3	8.2	6.5	9.7	6.3
Romania	65.1	6.4	3.7	8.2	1.8	11.0	3.8
Russian Federation	51.2	5.3	8.6	9.4	2.7	14.6	8.2
Serbia	57.7	4.2	7.9	11.3	3.8	9.5	5.6
Slovak Republic	63.0	5.5	2.5	5.3	5.3	13.0	5.6
Slovenia	53.2	14.9	7.4	11.1	4.7	6.4	2.4
Spain	45.8	11.0	8.1	13.0	8.2	6.6	7.4
Sweden	58.4	15.3	6.6	6.6	5.4	1.2	6.5
Switzerland	50.1	8.9	13.3	7.1	5.8	5.3	9.5
Turkey	74.1	0.6	1.7	15.1	1.5	4.8	2.3
Ukraine	59.3	4.9	3.5	8.7	1.7	13.2	8.6
Total	56.1	8.1	6.5	11.4	4.4	7.7	5.9
N	34,171	4,932	3,941	6,972	2,675	4,695	3,583

Source: European Values Study, 2008

Appendix B: OLS regression on subjective well-being by country

	Albania b	Austria b	Armenia b	Belgium b	Bosnia Herzegovina b	Bulgaria b	Belarus b	Croatia b	Cyprus b	Northern Cyprus b	Czech Republic b	Denmark b
cohabiting	-0.086	0.233	-0.728 ~	-0.341 *	-0.456	-0.488	-0.503 ~	0.063	-0.138	-0.689	-0.221	-0.071
dating	-0.975 *	-0.197	0.908	-0.485 **	0.091		-0.643 **	-0.102	-0.636	-1.135 *	-0.479 ~	-0.093
single<35	-0.707 *	-0.588 *	0.343	-0.725 **	-0.047	-0.821 *	-0.735 **	-0.195	-0.687 *	-1.834 **	-0.002	-0.272
single35+	-0.765	0.258	-0.117	-0.860 **	-0.413	-1.234 **	-0.147	-0.296	-0.192	-3.556 **	0.007	-0.767 **
widowed	-0.997 **	-0.904 **	-0.515 ~	-0.968 **	-0.657 *	-0.786 **	-0.530 **	-0.643 *	-1.121 **	-1.557 **	-0.491 **	-0.828 **
divorced	-1.266 *	-0.601 **	-0.509	-0.807 **	-0.703 *	-1.004 **	-0.497 **	-0.805 *	-0.939 **	-1.710 **	-0.838 **	-0.665 **
education	0.075	0.112 ~	0.294 **	0.073 *	0.010	0.136 *	0.057	0.038	0.079	0.001	0.118 *	-0.016
health	0.907 **	0.900 **	0.602 **	0.686 **	0.870 **	1.047 **	0.737 **	0.951 **	0.890 **	0.988 **	0.753 **	0.497 **
children	0.277	0.621 **	0.629 ~	0.055	0.155	-0.358	-0.214	0.246	0.389	-1.281 **	0.360 *	0.010
age	-0.098 **	-0.076 **	-0.091 **	-0.072 **	-0.034	-0.048	-0.051 *	-0.035	-0.051	-0.013	-0.043 ~	0.018
age_square	0.001 **	0.001 **	0.001 **	0.001 **	0.000	0.000	0.001 *	0.000	0.001 *	0.000	0.000 ~	0.000
religious	0.100	-0.048	-0.053	0.260 *	0.207	0.225	0.167	0.438 **	0.270	-0.155	0.193	0.029
unemployed	-0.551 **	-0.366	-0.436 *	-0.973 **	-0.295 *	-0.832 **	-0.744 **	-0.092	-0.153	-0.524	-0.571 *	-0.687 *
female	-0.121	-0.030	-0.023	-0.065	-0.090	0.182	0.039	-0.075	-0.208	-0.327	0.252 *	0.145
intercept	6.171 **	5.436 **	4.743 **	6.998 **	5.248 **	4.515 **	5.717 **	5.131 **	4.989 **	5.275 **	5.513 **	6.401 **
N	1,500	1,453	1,389	1,460	1,401	1,380	1,456	1,338	949	480	1,674	1,438
R2	0.182	0.188	0.113	0.211	0.150	0.201	0.104	0.196	0.178	0.200	0.150	0.101

	Estonia b	Finland b	France b	Georgia b	Germany b	Greece b	Hungary b	Iceland b	Ireland b	Italy b	Latvia b	Lithuania b
cohabiting	-0.319 ~	0.033	-0.287 ~	-1.306	-0.066	-1.171 **	-0.224	-0.158	0.084	-0.170	-0.332 *	-0.020
dating	-0.870 **	-0.127	-0.602 **	-1.555 **	-0.073	-0.480 ~	-0.972 **	-0.020	-0.412 ~	-0.359	-0.086	-0.090
single<35	-0.761 **	-1.040 **	-1.330 **	-0.705 *	-0.682 **	-0.852 **	-1.099 **	-0.669 *	-0.545 *	-0.934 **	-0.397	-0.307
single35+	-0.527 *	-0.888 **	-1.181 **	-1.013 *	-0.589 **	-0.542	-0.650 ~	-0.597 ~	-0.245	-0.824 **	-0.047	-0.828 *
widowed	-0.840 **	-0.483	-0.744 **	-0.700 **	-0.331 ~	-0.501 *	-1.373 **	-0.042	-0.718 *	-0.797 *	-0.422 *	-0.010
divorced	-0.720 **	-0.269	-1.346 **	-1.166 **	-1.124 **	-1.317 **	-1.114 **	-0.732 **	-0.834 **	-0.591 ~	-0.577 **	-0.339 ~
education	0.043	0.040	0.028	0.255 **	0.248 **	0.140 **	0.199 **	0.024	0.152 **	0.085 ~	0.037	0.190 **
health	0.976 **	0.967 **	0.568 **	0.519 **	0.805 **	0.883 **	0.714 **	0.528 **	0.566 **	0.748 **	1.066 **	1.180 **
children	-0.247	0.093	-0.551 **	-0.370	-0.105	-0.124	-0.114	0.007	0.097	-0.238	-0.083	0.191
age	-0.057 *	-0.043 ~	-0.055 *	-0.045 ~	-0.018	-0.110 **	-0.088 **	-0.039	-0.070 **	-0.032	-0.054 *	-0.106 **
age_square	0.001 **	0.001 **	0.001 **	0.000	0.000	0.001 **	0.001 **	0.000	0.001 **	0.000 ~	0.001 **	0.001 **
religious	0.065	0.036	-0.027	0.288 ~	0.792 **	0.160	0.455 **	0.368 *	0.101	0.487 **	-0.071	0.313 *
unemployed	-1.245 **	-1.180 **	-0.764 **	-0.440 **	-1.690 **	-0.754 **	-1.350 **	-0.475 ~	-0.328	-0.712 **	-1.031 **	-1.193 **
female	0.249 *	0.066	0.072	0.007	0.133	0.146	0.277 *	0.258 *	0.248 *	0.028	0.372 **	0.002
intercept	5.589 **	5.506 **	7.254 **	5.077 **	4.214 **	6.528 **	6.133 **	7.195 **	6.723 **	5.316 **	4.850 **	5.049 **
N	1,434	1,095	1,399	1,456	1,975	1,407	1,461	763	889	1,339	1,392	1,426
R2	0.207	0.272	0.149	0.145	0.322	0.181	0.213	0.169	0.150	0.132	0.209	0.300

~ p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01

Appendix B: OLS regression on subjective well-being by country, continued

	Luxembourg b		Malta b		Moldova b		Montenegro b		Netherlands b		Norway b		Poland b		Portugal b		Romania b		Russian Federation b		Serbia b		Slovak Republic b	
cohabiting	-0.225		-0.610		-0.304		-0.510		-0.202	~	-0.237	~	0.291		-0.075		0.141		-0.291		-0.189		-0.586	*
dating	0.021		0.127		-0.710	~	-0.708	*	-0.295	*	-0.480	*	0.281		0.020		-0.544		0.071		-0.502		-0.914	*
single<35	-0.004		-0.343		-0.291		-0.374		-0.541	*	-0.885	**	-0.223		-0.314		-0.323		-0.232		-0.662	*	-0.538	
single35+	-0.360		-0.711	**	-0.115		-0.244		-0.310	*	-1.030	**	-0.348		-0.459	~	-1.354	**	-0.527		-0.604		-0.669	*
widowed	-0.726	*	-0.727	**	-0.158		-0.810	**	-0.542	**	-0.927	**	-0.569	**	-0.735	**	-0.615	**	-0.655	**	-0.417	~	-0.362	*
divorced	-1.472	**	-0.935	**	-1.121	**	-0.832	**	-0.405	**	-0.990	**	-0.629	*	-1.038	**	-0.338		-0.847	**	-0.843	**	-0.414	~
education	0.057	~	-0.015		0.025		0.022		0.032		-0.051		0.150	**	0.033		0.181	**	0.252	**	0.094	~	0.143	*
health	0.783	**	0.874	**	0.832	**	0.760	**	0.461	**	0.734	**	0.717	**	0.705	**	0.666	**	0.905	**	0.856	**	0.873	**
children	0.002		-0.227		0.422	~	0.628	**	-0.022		0.170		0.076		0.021		-0.647	**	0.238		0.283		-0.351	
age	-0.014		-0.002		-0.082	**	-0.088	**	-0.038	*	-0.068	**	-0.045	~	-0.036		-0.003		-0.026		-0.050	~	-0.007	
age_square	0.000	~	0.000		0.001	**	0.001	**	0.000	*	0.001	**	0.001	*	0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000	
religious	0.109		-0.024		0.208		-0.323	~	0.095		0.088		0.354	*	0.283	*	0.089		0.247		0.057		0.001	
unemployed	-1.357	**	-0.866	**	-0.737	**	-0.220	~	-0.646	**	-0.462		0.001		-0.684	**	-0.055		-0.459		-0.293	~	-0.920	**
female	-0.163	~	-0.043		-0.063		0.046		0.145	*	0.243	*	0.034		0.003		0.305	*	0.131		0.166		0.119	
intercept	5.345	**	5.564	**	6.575	**	7.276	**	7.417	**	7.521	**	5.526	**	5.758	**	4.873	**	4.124	**	5.783	**	4.984	**
N	1,578		1,422		1,483		1,464		1,413		1,086		1,394		1,408		1,393		1,395		1,449		1,347	
R2	0.167		0.154		0.127		0.134		0.129		0.198		0.167		0.172		0.108		0.141		0.150		0.202	

	Slovenia b		Spain b		Sweden b		Switzerland b		Turkey b		Ukraine b		Macedonia b		Great Britain b		Northern Ireland b	
cohabiting	-0.225		0.087		0.026		0.183		0.972		-0.182		0.181		0.153		-0.343	
dating	-0.223		0.062		-0.803	**	0.014		0.552		0.155		-0.782	*	-0.532	*	-0.200	
single<35	-0.713	*	0.007		-1.357	**	-0.350		-0.120		-0.236		-0.659	~	-0.783	**	0.006	
single35+	-0.527	~	-0.176		-1.399	**	-0.922	**	-0.870	~	-1.417	**	-0.596		-0.887	**	-0.374	
widowed	-0.462	~	-0.874	**	-1.029	*	-0.881	**	-0.952	**	-0.434	*	-0.796	*	-0.542	**	-0.780	*
divorced	-0.926	**	-0.631	**	-0.640	**	-0.925	**	-0.934	*	-0.576	**	-1.232	**	-0.511	**	-0.258	
education	0.034		-0.036		-0.057		0.034		0.037		0.132	*	0.061		0.046		-0.025	
health	0.658	**	0.760	**	1.250	**	0.819	**	1.009	**	0.931	**	0.720	**	0.589	**	0.368	**
children	-0.150		0.166		0.086		0.075		0.356		-0.276		0.096		-0.126		-0.141	
age	-0.032		-0.011		-0.025		-0.040	~	-0.047	~	-0.029		-0.115	**	-0.062	**	-0.038	
age_square	0.000		0.000		0.001	~	0.001	**	0.001	*	0.000		0.001	**	0.001	**	0.001	
religious	0.174		0.033		0.084		-0.036		-0.249	~	0.546	**	0.156		0.052		-0.103	
unemployed	-0.783	**	-0.202		-1.084	**	-1.509	**	-0.467	**	-1.119	**	-0.390	**	-0.890	**	-0.018	
female	0.171		0.106		0.215	*	0.219	*	0.464	**	-0.007		-0.146		0.332	**	0.294	~
intercept	6.726	**	5.235	**	4.190	**	5.768	**	4.315	**	4.678	**	7.338	**	6.724	**	7.427	**
N	1,256		1,379		1,037		1,161		2,256		1,441		1,362		1,403		437	
R2	0.148		0.151		0.348		0.215		0.127		0.196		0.122		0.170		0.089	

*~ p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01*

Appendix C: Alternative for Model 2, traditional family values replaced by disapproval of divorce

	M2 disapproval of divorce all respondents		M2 disapproval of divorce males		M2 disapproval of divorce females	
	b	se	b	se	b	se
INDIVIDUAL LEVEL						
married (ref)						
cohabiting	-0.153	0.123	-0.097	0.175	-0.215	0.171
dating	-0.463 *	0.197	-0.174	0.252	-0.712 **	0.229
single <35	-1.242 **	0.218	-1.251 **	0.222	-1.181 **	0.270
single 35+	-0.662 **	0.194	-0.631 *	0.246	-0.745 *	0.296
widowed	-0.361 ~	0.194	-0.784 ~	0.406	-0.299	0.213
divorced	-0.492 *	0.196	-1.066 **	0.331	-0.184	0.234
education	0.059 **	0.007	0.061 **	0.011	0.058 **	0.010
health	0.799 **	0.010	0.797 **	0.015	0.800 **	0.014
children	0.054 ~	0.029	0.082 ~	0.044	0.029	0.039
age	-0.052 **	0.004	-0.059 **	0.006	-0.047 **	0.005
age square	0.001 **	0.000	0.001 **	0.000	0.001 **	0.000
religious	0.004	0.018	0.040	0.026	-0.043 ~	0.024
unemployed	-0.589 **	0.030	-0.627 **	0.043	-0.535 **	0.041
female	0.129 **	0.017				
household income	0.097 **	0.009	0.116 **	0.013	0.079 **	0.013
disapproval of divorce	0.001	0.003	-0.002	0.005	0.003	0.004
familialistic norm	0.080 **	0.024	0.059 ~	0.036	0.096 **	0.033
COUNTRY LEVEL						
disapproval of divorce	0.000	0.088	0.016	0.087	-0.018	0.091
familialistic norm	-0.797	0.757	-0.575	0.748	-0.997	0.783
GDP	0.017 **	0.006	0.018 **	0.006	0.016 **	0.006
divorce rate	-0.061 *	0.029	-0.040	0.041	-0.079 *	0.040
CROSS LEVEL INTERACTIONS						
disapproval of divorce						
* cohabiting	-0.011	0.028	-0.023	0.041	0.002	0.039
* dating	0.035	0.043	-0.015	0.054	0.078	0.050
* single <35	0.160 **	0.045	0.155 **	0.045	0.156 **	0.055
* single 35+	0.029	0.042	0.035	0.053	0.039	0.063
* widowed	-0.064	0.039	-0.013	0.083	-0.069	0.043
* divorced	-0.048	0.042	0.088	0.072	-0.119 *	0.050
Intercept	5.844 **	0.557	5.726 **	0.562	6.138 **	0.583
variance individual level	2.017	0.006	2.003	0.009	2.025	0.008
variance country level	0.416	0.047	0.405	0.047	0.427	0.049
random slopes						
cohabiting	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.002
dating	0.204	0.055	0.212	0.079	0.145	0.098
single <35	0.294	0.044	0.235	0.055	0.324	0.059
single 35+	0.157	0.072	0.122	0.129	0.267	0.102
widowed	0.161	0.045	0.325	0.097	0.154	0.052
divorced	0.197	0.049	0.348	0.080	0.204	0.072
N individuals	60,518		26,996		33,522	
N countries	45		45		45	

Source: European Values Study, 2008

*~ p<0.10   * p<0.05   ** p<0.01*