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**Welfare Deservingness Perceptions of Single
Mothers in Hungary:
Institutional Design, Government Discourse, and
Public Attitudes**

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Doctoral Dissertation

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Single-parent households form a group with one of the highest poverty risks in the European Union (Eurostat, 2020a) and the OECD (OECD, 2018). The vast majority of these households are headed by women, whose poverty risk is even higher than that of single-father households, due to their lower level of income, higher share in part-time employment, and longer time on parental leaves (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2016, pp. 1-2). Meanwhile, there is a significant variation between countries regarding the poverty rate of single-mother households that is highly dependent on welfare states' effort to support them. Previous studies show that welfare states that are the most effective in reducing the poverty rate of single-mother households, are those where universal social transfers are combined with targeted benefits towards single parents (Morissens, 2018; Van Lancker et al, 2015).

While benefits have a key role in reducing single-mother households' poverty risk, welfare states' intention to support single mothers is relevant also from a gender equality perspective. Single mothers, who have lower earning capacities, but more care responsibilities than men, uncover the hidden economic vulnerabilities of women that are invisible when women live in a traditional family. Women's capacity to form and maintain an autonomous household increases women's independence from men by making it possible for women to exit a marriage or to live alone, and also decreases the chance of domestic violence and patriarchal relations within relationships. Therefore, single mothers' state support is also seen as a litmus test of welfare states' efforts to promote gender equality (Hobson, 1994; Orloff, 1993a).

Taking into account the high poverty risk of single-mother households, and the importance of their support from a gender equality perspective, what considerations that drive policymakers when deciding about the design and level of support towards single mothers, is a most relevant question. Previous studies examined welfare states' intention to support single mothers based on the overall design of the welfare systems, their attachment to the male-breadwinner model, and single mothers' access to paid work and childcare services (Duncan and Edwards, 1997; Hobson, 1994; Kilkey, 2000; Lewis, 1997a; Millar, 1996). The role of perceived deservingness of single mothers is a less often

analysed aspect, while public perceptions are also important components of policy formation.

Deserving groups are more likely to receive generous state support than those with less positive perceptions, as the support of popular groups enjoy a higher level of social legitimacy (Schneider and Ingram, 1993; van Oorschot and Roosma, 2017). Therefore, public perceptions of single mothers could also explain the form and level of their and, in general, single parents' state support. Meanwhile, the opinions of policymakers regarding groups' deservingness might also be different than public views, and they might aim to change public perceptions and gain social legitimacy for welfare reforms by framing groups as deserving or undeserving (Blum et al, 2019; Schneider and Ingram, 1993; Slothuus, 2007).

Previous literature on single mothers' welfare deservingness almost exclusively focuses on the 1990s United States and United Kingdom (e.g., Battle 2019; Hancock 2004; Phoenix 1996), where politicians distorted single mothers' public image to legitimate welfare cuts of single mothers and to promote traditional family values. Political and media discourses framed single mothers as undeserving welfare recipients, who rationally selected single motherhood and welfare dependency instead of married life and paid work. Less attention has been paid to other welfare contexts, where single mothers' deservingness is not the main issue of the public discourse, but where less explicit discourses might also help to legitimize a low level of state support towards single-parent households.

Hungary serves an interesting case in this regard, as single mothers are not demonized in the public discourse, however, traditional family values and the deservingness of traditional families have been strongly advertised by the government since 2010. The government discourse in this case, therefore, only implicitly reflects on single mothers' deservingness, however, a shift in the benefit structure of single parents is also observable, as the level of targeting towards single parents decreased since 2010. The family allowance that has been providing an increased support to single mothers since the 1950s (and to single fathers from the late 1960s), has gradually been decreasing in value since 2008, as it has not been indexed with inflation. Meanwhile, the government introduced a tax credit system that provides a higher amount of reduction for those with

a higher tax base and with more children, which, however, does not provide a higher level of reduction for single-parent families. By these changes, the government challenges the long-standing and stable tradition of single parents' state support, and also, the principle that single parents deserve more help than two-parent households. Decreasing the level of targeting means less protection for single parents (and especially for single mothers) against poverty, and reduces single mothers' chance to form and maintain an autonomous household.

It is a question in this context, whether the rhetoric on the importance of traditional family values could legitimize the decreasing level of state support towards single parents. To explore the social legitimacy of these changes, the dissertation investigates the public attitudes towards single mothers' welfare deservingness. Moreover, the thesis applies a complex research design, and investigates not only the public attitudes, but also the factors that could shape it, such as the historical-institutional design of single mothers' benefits, the public image of single mothers, the deservingness perceptions of single mothers based on special criteria, and the government discourse on the family. The dissertation assumes that all of these factors shape public attitudes towards single mothers' state support (i.e., single mothers' perceived welfare deservingness), and it also acknowledges that these factors mutually form each other. The dissertation, therefore, also explores how attitudes could influence the formation of policies and discourses.

Furthermore, the thesis applies a comparative perspective regarding the factors that make it possible, and investigates single mothers' welfare deservingness in Hungary in contrast to the UK and US. The comparison is relevant not only because of the diverse discourses but also due to the different historical-institutional designs of these countries. The investigation of the historical-institutional design of single mothers' state support in (post)socialist Hungary compared to the capitalist UK and US provides an excellent case to nuance knowledge regarding how socialist versus capitalist countries fostered gender equality in the 20th century. While in Western feminist literature, Eastern European countries are often labelled as belated in terms of gender equality due to the forced equalizing process of socialist states (e.g., Jung, 1994; Olsen, 1997; Slavova, 2006, p. 248), single mothers' state support might provide a case which highlights that socialist states were indeed much ahead in fostering gender equality compared to some capitalist countries.

In the following part of this chapter, I present the target group, its connection to poverty, and earlier research findings on single mothers' welfare support and deservingness. Afterwards, I describe the context of the investigation (Hungarian family policy), then I summarize the literature on attitudes' function in welfare policy to set out the theoretical framework of the dissertation. At the end of the introduction, I formulate the research questions, highlight the applied methods to investigate each research question, and outline the structure of the dissertation.

1.2. PRESENTATION OF THE TARGET GROUP

1.2.1. Definitions

First, it is inevitable to define what this dissertation means by single parenthood, as it could be defined in different ways. There are structural as well as functional definitions. Structural definitions focus on the household structure, while functional approaches take into account parents' role in children's everyday life (Monostori, 2015, p. 42). This dissertation uses the structural definition of the OECD when referring to single-parent households (and families). According to this definition, in single-parent households "the child lives primarily in a household with only one adult that is reported as a 'parent' of the child" (OECD, 2020, p. 1). By this definition, single parents could live with other adults (e.g., grandparents) but could not live with a partner.

Furthermore, while the OECD defines children as individuals under the age of 18, and as the thesis investigates single motherhood in the context of family policy (that usually targets families with children under the age of 18), the dissertation focuses on single-mother families with children under the age of 18. Nevertheless, it has to be noted that in the Hungarian system, eligibility is not strictly tied to the age of the child, rather it is connected to compulsory education and available after children below school leaving age (16), or until the child finishes school, but at latest when the child turns 20 (with the exception of steadily sick or severely disabled children – in their case these benefits are available until the child turns 23) (Act LXXXIV of 1998 on Family Support, Article 8).

Moreover, the thesis does not exclude joint physical custody from the definition of single parenthood, because in the case of joint physical custody the parents might share the costs of child-rearing, however, they still live alone with their children, and they need to finance

two separate households with appropriate conditions for child-rearing. The Hungarian family allowance system also considers joint physical custody as single parenthood by giving the higher amount of family allowance (available for single parents) for one of the parents, or by equally sharing this amount between the two parents (based on the decision of the parents) (Act LXXXIV of 1998 on Family Support, Article 9). On the other hand, as joint physical custody is still rare in Hungary, as it was applied in 13.6% of the cases in 2017 (Szalma and Rékai, 2020), the thesis does not separately investigate the deservingness of single mothers with sole and joint physical custody, but rather investigates them together, as single mothers.

The thesis, furthermore, uses the terms “single mother” and “lone mother” interchangeably, referring to all mothers rearing children without a partner. Therefore, the thesis does not follow the British application of terms (Duncan and Edwards, 1997, p. 2) that uses “single mother” only to never-married mothers and “lone mother” to all mothers regardless of their marital status.

1.2.2. Scientific Interest towards Single-Mother Households

The share of single-parent households had risen significantly in most of the Western societies in the last third of the 20th century due to changing gender roles and changing behaviour regarding marriage and divorce. Scientific and policy interest in single-parent households, therefore, intensified in the 1990s, when the share of these households became statistically visible (e.g., Bianchi, 1999; Bradshaw et al, 1996; Davies and Joshi, 1998). However, studies from the late 1970s were already investigating the connection between single motherhood and poverty (Glendinning and Millar, 1987; McLanahan et al, 1989; Pearce, 1978).

Pearce (1978) was the first to introduce the concept of the feminization of poverty when she noticed that the economic status of women worsened between the 1950s and the mid-1970s despite the increasing level of female employment (McLanahan and Kelly, 2006; Murray, 2014). She stated that almost two-thirds of the poor in the United States above the age of 16 in the late 1970s were women, while the proportion of single mothers was significantly high (McLanahan and Kelly, 2006; Murray, 2014). Pearce (1978: 28) argued that the feminization of poverty was a consequence of inadequate state support of single and divorced women, who claimed independence from men at the expense of slipping into

poverty. McLanahan, Sorenson, and Watson (1989), however, found that both female and male poverty rates dropped between 1950 and 1980, and therefore the feminization of poverty rather uncovered women's latent economic vulnerability due to the changing household structure. Other studies also highlighted that single-mother households' poverty rate was significantly higher than the average (e.g., McLanahan, 1994). These studies explained single-mother households' high poverty rate by the drop-out of one of the maintainers that affect women harder than men, as they were more likely to be homemakers before divorce or separation.

In the early 1990s, single-mother households also became the subject of comparative social policy research (e.g., Hobson, 1994; Lewis, 1992; Orloff, 1993a). Similar to studies on the feminization of poverty (Pearce, 1978; McLanahan et al, 1989), feminist social policy scholars argued that lone motherhood uncovers the hidden economic vulnerabilities of women that are invisible when women live in a traditional family. Moreover, they proposed that the way in which welfare states support single mothers is a test case of states' intention to promote gender equality (Hobson, 1994; Orloff, 1993a).

Lewis (1992) and Orloff (1993a) implied that there is a division of labour between not only states and markets, but also between states, markets, and families, and early comparative welfare state studies (e.g., Korpi, 1989; Esping-Andersen, 1990) failed to recognize women's unpaid work and the gendered division of labour. The main aspects of distinguishing in Korpi's (1989) and Esping Andersen's (1990) works were state-market relations, effects of welfare states on stratification, and social citizenship rights/decommodification (i.e., independence from the market and employers to maintain a livelihood). Esping-Andersen (1990) differentiated three welfare types based on these dimensions: liberal, conservative-corporatist, and social-democratic. In liberal welfare states, benefits are mainly offered by the market, and the state intervenes only in the case of market or family failures and provides means-tested, modest support to marginal or highly deserving groups. In contrast, the state is the main provider in conservative and social-democratic welfare systems, but these two types differ regarding the aim and design of redistribution. While conservative welfare states aim to maintain status and class positions by providing benefits based on contributions, social-democratic systems aim to diminish differences between classes and promote egalitarianism by providing generous universal benefits based on citizenship. The most decommodifying welfare state type is the

social-democratic, where generous benefits are provided based on citizenship. The decommodification of labour is supported in neither conservative nor in liberal welfare regimes, as benefits are linked to contributions or means-testing.

Orloff (1993a) argues that these gender-blind typologies neglect that states could reinforce stratification not only between classes, but genders as well, if those working full-time are privileged over those working part-time or over those doing unpaid caring or domestic work. While decommodification increases workers' independence from the capitalist market and individual employers and thereby strengthens the political power of the working class, in the case of women, decommodification also needs to be understood as the level of independence from men.

Orloff (1993a), therefore, proposes two new dimensions of welfare state analysis: women's access to paid work and the capacity to form and maintain an autonomous household. She argues that if individuals who are responsible for caring and domestic work do not participate in the labour market or only as secondary workers, the income distribution within family will affect these people and their children's well-being. In the traditional division of labour, women and children are dependent on the male breadwinner's income, and men's willingness to share their income with the family. Women's dependence could be best captured by single motherhood, as after the dissolution of the marriage, men could more easily decide to not share their income with the family. Single mothers, therefore, illustrate the economic vulnerabilities of all women, as they need to maintain a household alone while their earning capacities are lower than men, and they are also solely responsible for the care of their children. Furthermore, women's capacity to form an autonomous household makes it possible for them to not marry or to divorce, and it also decreases the chance of domestic violence, and emancipate women from the patriarchal order. Policies that promote women's paid employment and facilitate women's capacity to form and maintain an autonomous household, increase decommodification for women.

Similar to Orloff (1993a), Lewis (1992) also argues that women's position in different gender regimes could be best illustrated by lone mothers' situation. Moreover, she proposes that gender should be incorporated in welfare state analyses based on states' attachment to the male breadwinner model. Most of the comparative works regarding single mothers' position in different welfare states relied on this categorization. She distinguishes three

types of gender regimes by comparing Sweden, France, Britain, and Ireland: strong male breadwinner countries (Britain and Ireland), modified male-breadwinner countries (France), and weak male breadwinner countries (Sweden). Strong male breadwinner countries are characterized by giving priority to men on the labour market that result in a low level of women's employment. Working women in these countries face barriers, as childcare services are hardly available and tax systems are also not favourable for them. Modified male-breadwinner countries are oriented towards a more gender-neutral redistribution, as the system built upon the redistribution between childless families and families with children. In these countries, there is a high rate of employment among married women, they usually work full-time, and they also work when their children are below school age. Some benefits are directly paid to mothers (e.g., maternity benefits) and childcare services are available for them. Weak breadwinner countries oriented towards a model in the 1970s within women's participation in the labour market is as much desirable as men's participation, and within women's unpaid work is also compensated by generous benefits. Mothers are encouraged to work by employment benefits, taxation policy, and childcare services.

1.2.3. Single Mothers in Different Welfare Systems and Their Welfare Deservingness

The most comprehensive works on single mothers' positions in different welfare systems were written in the 1990s (Duncan and Edwards, 1997; Hobson, 1994; Kilkey, 2000; Lewis, 1997a). These works usually investigated whether single mothers were treated as mothers, workers, or both mothers and workers in different policy settings. In general, single mothers in strong male breadwinner countries, such as in Ireland, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, or the United States, were perceived first and foremost as mothers until the 1990s and were mainly excluded from the labour market (Duncan and Edwards, 1997; Lewis and Hobson, 1997). In countries oriented more towards the dual-earner model (e.g., Scandinavian or socialist countries), single mothers were perceived as workers (besides being mothers), like all citizens (Klett-Davies, 1997; Lewis and Hobson, 1997).

The position of single mothers, however, was also varied among the strong male breadwinner countries. For instance, the labour market participation of married, as well as single mothers, was low in the Netherlands, where a strong social norm existed regarding mothers' role in childcare. Dutch single mothers were involved in a generous social

assistance scheme that made it possible for them to stay home and care for their children (Bussemaker et al, 1997; Knijn, 1994). Similarly, in Ireland, there was a strong commitment to mothers' role in childcare, and Irish single mothers received generous assistance-based benefits that replaced the male breadwinner's wage (Conroy, 1997). British single mothers could rely on social assistance as well, which was also not stigmatized and provided quite a decent amount of living. The poor provision of childcare services and the means-tested design of the benefits, however, also prevented British single mothers from having full-time jobs (Lewis, 1997b). In Germany, uninsured single mothers could have applied for assistance-based benefits, however, those provided only a lower level of living compared to married mothers, who were insured after their husbands (Ostner, 1997). Therefore, German single mothers were more encouraged to have paid work than their counterparts in Ireland, the United Kingdom, or the Netherlands, which was, however, often problematic due to the low level of public childcare provision (Lewis and Hobson, 1997). In the US, single mothers were again involved in an assistance-based benefit scheme, however, its low amount and stigmatized character often pushed single mothers to have paid work. The poor provision of childcare services was also a significant barrier for US single mothers to find adequate jobs (Lewis and Hobson, 1997). As the male breadwinner model became increasingly outdated in the 1990s, reforms were made in all of these countries to encourage single mothers' participation in the work market, while policies in the UK and Germany also aimed to strengthen the fathers' role in supporting single mothers (Lewis and Hobson, 1997).

The position of single mothers was different in those countries where welfare systems were not characterized by the male breadwinner model. For instance, in Scandinavian countries, where the welfare systems are built upon the concept that both men and women participate in the labour market. Single mothers had paid work, and the state provided generous universal benefits and childcare services for them, while they could rely on insurance-based benefits (e.g., parental leaves) as well (Lewis and Hobson, 1997). Single mothers were also treated as workers in the former GDR, where all men and women had to work due to socialism. Mothers' employment was supported by developed childcare services and a one-year-long parental leave, furthermore, single mothers received priority when applying to crèche services (Klett-Davies, 1997). Single motherhood was also treated outside of the male breadwinner model in Italy, where the employment rate of single mothers was high, and where childcare was mainly provided by the extended family (Bimbi, 1997).

These different positions of single mothers not only reflect on the states' connection to the male breadwinner model, but also the overall design of the welfare states and attitudes towards mothers' care work. For instance, the dual-earner model was complemented with universal benefits in the Scandinavian countries, where social-democratic welfare states, in general, provided generous universal benefits to all. In contrast, in the US, which is the ideal type of liberal welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1990), the male breadwinner model was paired with a low level of social transfers targeted only to the poor. The childcare help provided by the extended family in Italy reflects the characteristic of the increased role of the family in Mediterranean welfare states (Gal, 2010). Furthermore, the role of attitudes towards the mothers' role in childcare is best illustrated by the Dutch and Irish cases, where generous social assistance made it possible for single mothers to stay home and care for their children.

Besides these different positions in the welfare systems, different public discourses also emerged related to single motherhood. In Scandinavian countries, single motherhood was seen as an alternative form of family and did not emerge as a social problem (Duncan and Edwards, 1997), while single motherhood was more like a hidden issue in Italy during the 1990s (Bimbi, 1997). Single mothers were more likely to be seen as a social problem in strong male breadwinner countries, as the breadwinner was missing from the family and the state had to replace him. The strong male breadwinner characteristic of a country, however, did not necessarily lead to the problematization of single motherhood. For instance, the Dutch welfare reform of 1996, which aimed to increase lone mothers' participation in the labour market, was not motivated by single mothers' perception as a social problem. The aim rather was to liberate single mothers from the housewife position, poverty, and social isolation, as well as to reduce social spending (Knijn and van Wel, 2001, p. 236).

Single mothers, however, were perceived as a "severe social problem" in the US and UK during the 1990s, where neoliberal reforms of the welfare state and conservative views on family resulted in negative government and media discourses on single mothers' welfare deservingness (Hancock, 2004; Phoenix, 1996; Roseneil and Mann, 1996). Single mothers in these discourses were described as never-married, promiscuous women from the lower classes, who rationally selected single motherhood to live on state benefits, instead of getting married and having paid work. The discourse was also racist in the US, where state-

dependent single mothers were described as Black “welfare queens,” who cheated on the system to get more benefits than they would otherwise be entitled to (Gilman, 2014). These discourses had a role in legitimating the US welfare reform of 1996 that tied single mothers’ benefits to working status, and activation programs of single mothers in the mid-1990s UK (Abramovitz, 2006; Duncan and Edwards, 1999, pp. 31-36; Klett-Davies, 2007, pp. 13-14). Moreover, these discourses also set back gender equality in these countries by advocating the need of bringing back the male role model and breadwinner to these families (Roseneil and Mann, 1996).

While these works provided useful insights regarding single mothers’ positions in different welfare states, a common feature was that they mainly focused on Western countries, while other contexts – among Eastern European – are less often presented. One exception regarding the Eastern European context is the former GDR that was investigated by Klett-Davies (1997). She found that single mothers were supported through childcare services and paid work, and were perceived as “super-women,” who did everything alone (work and childcare), in the public discourse. These findings suggest that compared to the often stressed view of Western scholars regarding Eastern Europe’s belatedness related to gender equality (e.g., Jung, 1994; Olsen, 1997; Slavova, 2006), single motherhood might be an aspect of women’s life regarding socialist countries were more progressive than some leading capitalist democracies such as the US or UK.

Moreover, contemporary research on single mothers’ position in welfare states and their perception is also needed, as these comparative works were written in the 1990s. While in the 1990s it was a question whether single mothers should work or stay home with their children, in the 2010s already around 80% of single mothers had paid work in countries of the OECD. The employment rate of single mothers also increased significantly in strong male breadwinner countries like Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands, reaching employment rates of 55-70% in the 2010s (Nieuwenhuis and Maldonado, 2018, p. 4). Most single mothers, therefore, rely on their income, however, studies (Bradshaw et al, 2018; Van Lancker et al, 2015) show that single mothers require generous state support besides having paid work to avoid poverty.

1.2.4. Current International Trends – Prevalence and Poverty

Single-parent households, in general, constitute a remarkable proportion of households with children in advanced societies, however, there is significant variation amongst OECD countries. Their share was the highest in the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Denmark, and Ireland in 2010, where around 25% of households with active age parent(s) and dependent children (under the age of 18) were headed by a single parent. Their share was relatively low (around or below 10%) in most Southern European countries, while it was between 10% and 16% in most of the Eastern European countries (Nieuwenhuis and Maldonado, 2018, pp. 2-3).

The report of the European Parliament from 2015 presents the differences amongst the member states of the European Union regarding the poverty risk of households with dependent children. Poverty risk means “the share of individuals whose equivalised disposable household income falls below a national threshold (60% of the median household income)” (European Parliament, 2015, p. 13). In the EU, 34% of single-mother households were at risk of poverty, compared to 17% of other households with dependent children. From the 27 member states of the European Union, only Denmark was capable of keeping the poverty rate of both single-mother and two-parent households in line in 2012. The ratio of poor single mothers was extremely high in Greece, Luxembourg, Malta, and Lithuania (46% - 57%), while it was relatively low (around 20%) in Finland (besides Denmark). The ratio was medium in Hungary (around 30%) and also in most of the other Eastern European countries.

The report concluded that the rate of poor single-mother families is low in those countries, where the rate of poor families is also generally low (The European Parliament, 2015, pp. 10-13). The study of Van Lancker et al. (2015) on 15 European countries supports this finding, however, they also found that the poverty level of single-mother households was substantially lower only in those countries where generous family benefits were combined with targeted benefits towards single parents. This finding is supported by Morissens’s (2018) study as well, who, however, supplemented the picture with the employment situation of parents, and found that the combination of universal and targeted benefits could more effectively reduce the risk of poverty for single parents if parents are employed. In addition, Bradshaw et al. (2018) found on data from OECD countries that cash transfers have a significant role in reducing the level of child poverty regarding single-parent

families, while Brady et al. (2012) found that single mothers' poverty was significantly lower in more universal welfare states.

There is a more complex indicator to measure poverty that also considers low work intensity (the situation when working-age household members worked 20% or less of their total work potential in the previous year) and severe material deprivation (a condition when someone cannot afford at least 4 out of the 9 following items: to pay rent or utility bills, keep the home adequately warm, face unexpected expenses, eat meat, fish or a protein equivalent food every second day, have a week holiday away from home, have a car, a washing machine, a colour TV, or a telephone) as risk factors besides the risk of poverty (Eurostat, 2018). In the European Union, 85% of single-parent households were headed by women in 2014, and almost half (48%) of single-mother households, while a third (32%) of single-father households were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. The higher risk of single-mother households, compared to single-father households, could be explained by single mothers' lower level of income and their longer parental leaves. Furthermore, single mothers were more likely to have only part-time or temporary jobs, and they were more likely to have more but younger children than single fathers. This fact also matters: while older children are enrolled in kindergarten or school, the day-care of younger children is more likely to be provided by parents (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2016, pp. 1-2).

1.2.5. Hungarian Trends – Prevalence and Poverty¹

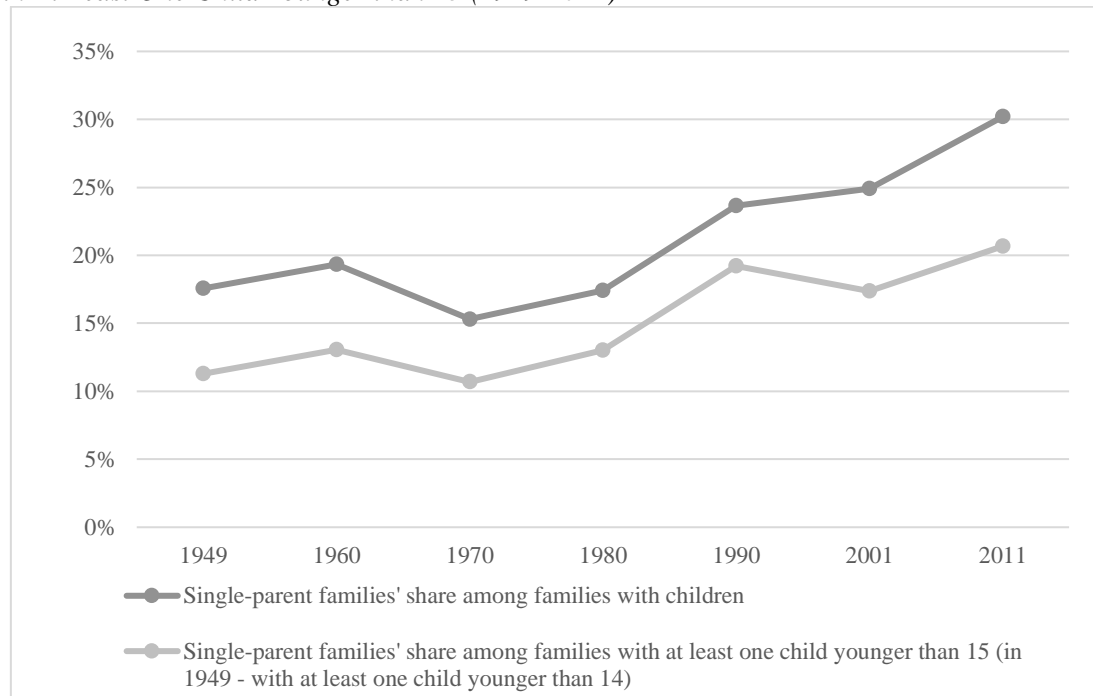
In Hungary, retrospective census data are available regarding the ratio of single-parent families among families with children² and concerning the share of single-parent families with children under the age of 15. The ratio of single-parent families among families with children was already significant (18%) in 1949 (that could be explained by the losses of the Second World War (Harcza, 2014, p. 7)), but it even increased further in the 1950s, and reached 20% of all families with children in 1960 (see Figure 1). The high prevalence of single-parent families was supported by the high divorce rate, which was most probably caused by women's forced participation in the work market, the declined role of churches,

¹ While the dissertation focuses on single-parent families with children under the age of 18, this sub-chapter also aims to present statistics related to this target group. In some cases, however, data are only available regarding all single-parent families or single-parent families with children under the age of 15 or 20.

² All single-parent families, regardless the age of the child/children.

and the liberal legislation of divorce under the socialist rule (Tomka, 2000, p. 82). Meanwhile, these figures also show that gender equality was quite advanced in socialist Hungary, at least regarding the aspect that the state made it possible for women (through the law and social policies) to exit from unwanted relationships and to form and maintain an autonomous household.

Figure 1. The Share of Single-Parent Families among Families with Children and among Families with At Least One Child Younger than 15 (1949-2011)



Source: Hungarian census data, own calculation. For the data see: HCSO, 1950; HCSO, 2015.

Note: Single-parent families' share among families with at least one child younger than 18 was 22% in 2011 (HCSO, 2013, p. 181).

The share of single-parent families decreased in the 1960s, but continuously increased afterwards, and reached 25% in 2001 and 30% in 2011. Their proportion increased strongly, with 32% in the 1980s, while there was a slower increase (14%) during the 1990s and 2000s (HCSO, 2015, pp. 38-39). As Figure 1 shows, the ratio of single-parent families among families with children, and the ratio of single-parent families among families with children under the age of 15, moved together until 1990. Between 1990 and 2001, however, the share of single-parent families with children under the age of 15 decreased, while the share of all single-parent families increased. This change could be explained by the new trend among young adults, appearing after the regime change, that they stay longer in the family house (Harcza and Monostori, 2017, p. 90). It is even more frequent among single-

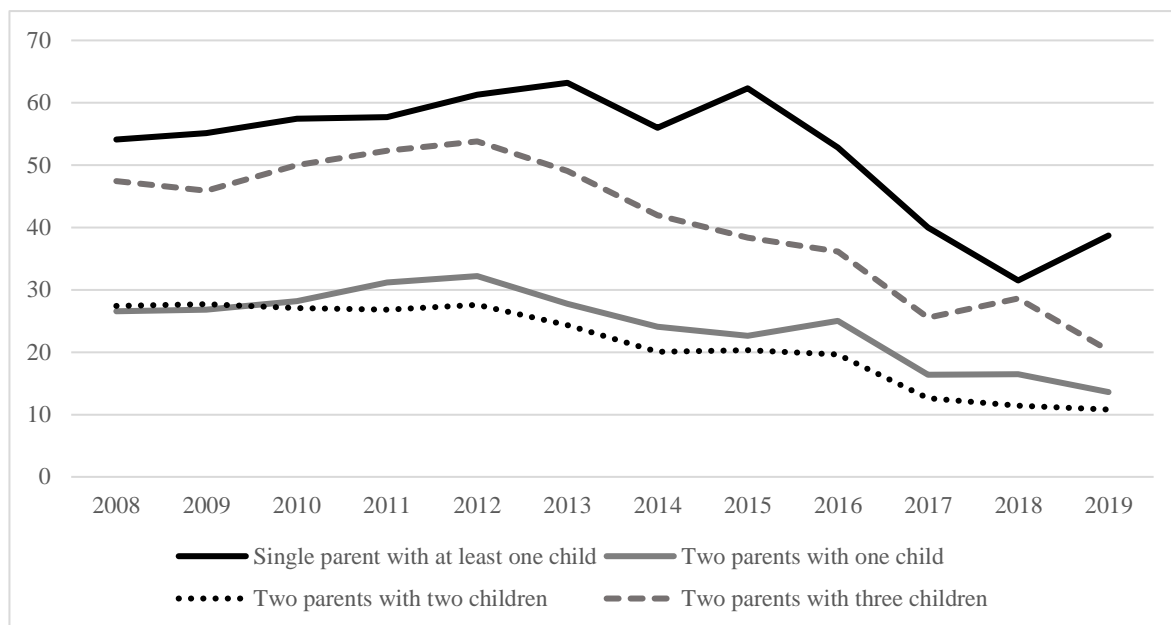
parent households than in two-parent households, in consequence, in 56% of single-parent households, children were at least 18 years old in 2011 (HCSO, 2015, p. 42).

Similar to other countries, in Hungary, single parenthood is also predominantly experienced by mothers. Around 90% of single parents with children under the age of eighteen were mothers in 2011 (HCSO, 2013, p. 181). Statistics also show that single motherhood is usually a long-standing situation. On average, Hungarian single mothers (with children under the age of 18) remain alone for 74 months (6 years) (Monostori, 2015, p. 46). Regarding the demographic characteristics of single mothers, previous research (Monostori, 2015) showed that women with a lower level of education are more likely to be single mothers than higher educated women. This trend is in contrast with Western and Northern European countries, where single mothers usually have a high level of education. Mothers with fewer children are also more likely to be single mothers, however, the causal link is not clear in this case. Furthermore, the results suggest that marriage protects women more from single motherhood than civil partnership, as single mothers were more likely to live in a civil partnership than in marriage before separation. The age of the first child is also a determinant factor, as most mothers became single when their first child was between the age of 4-6, or 11-13. The likelihood of becoming a single mother was greater for younger mothers as well (Monostori, 2015).

In Hungary, single-parent households (with dependent children under the age of 20) form one of the most vulnerable five groups at risk of poverty or social exclusion besides children (under the age of 18), people with a low level of education, unemployed people, and the Roma (HCSO, 2016, pp. 17-18). Looking at Figure 2, we could see how their risk of poverty or social exclusion changed during the 2010s. Their risk was roughly between 50% and 60% in the period of 2008-2016, then it decreased to 30-40% in the period of 2017-2019. Despite the drop in their risk, it was still more than the double of the average risk of two-parent families with children in 2019. Furthermore, as Figure 3 shows, the decrease in their risk of poverty and social exclusion was caused by the reduction in their risk of material deprivation and low work intensity rather than a decrease in their income poverty rate, as income poverty among single parents was almost the same (27% and 28%) in 2019 as in 2010. Figure 3 also indicates that compared to single-parent families, the income poverty rate of two-parent families with three or more children (who had similarly high income poverty rate in the beginning of the decade) dropped significantly from 35%

in 2010 to 12% in 2019. This tendency is in line with the changes in the Hungarian family policy system in the 2010s that increased financial support of families with three or more children.

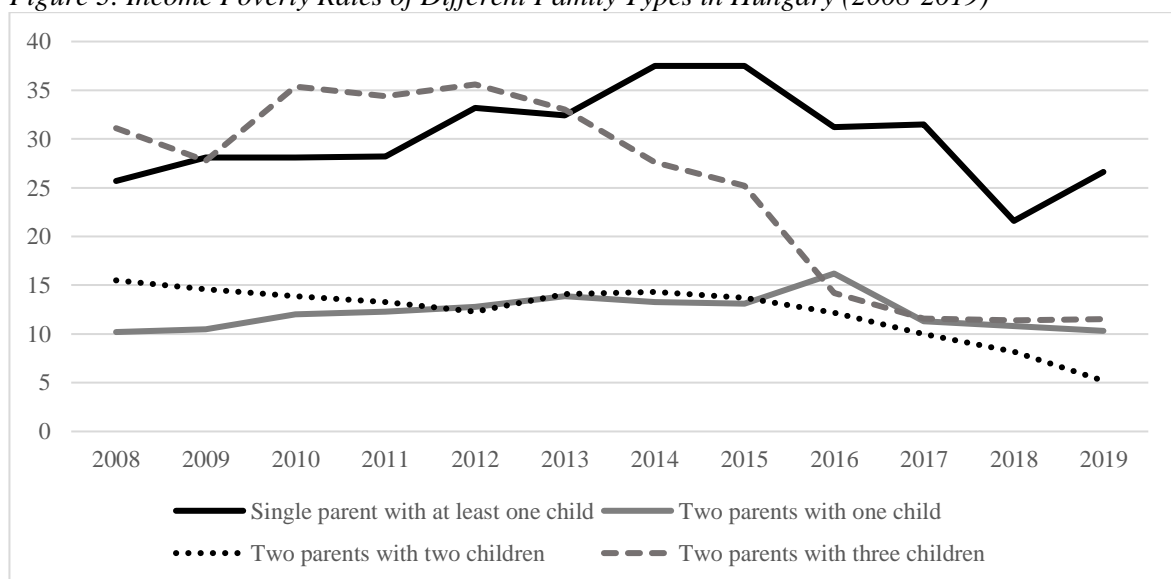
Figure 2. Poverty and Social Exclusion Rates of Different Family Types in Hungary (2008-2019)



Source: HCSO, 2021; own graph

Note: Families with dependent children under the age of 20 are included.

Figure 3. Income Poverty Rates of Different Family Types in Hungary (2008-2019)



Source: HCSO, 2021; own graph

Note: Families with dependent children under the age of 20 are included.

Single-parent households, therefore, constitute a remarkable share of all households with children in most advanced societies. Their income levels are usually lower than that of two-parent households due to the absence of one of the earners. Consequently, their poverty risk is also generally higher than the risk of two-parent households, and single-mother households have a higher poverty risk than single-father households. Meanwhile, the poverty rate of these households varies significantly between countries. These differences in the poverty risks of single-parent (and especially single-mother) households could be partly explained by the varied level of state support in distinct welfare states.

It is questionable which factors influence the generosity of single parents' state support in contemporary welfare contexts. The design of the welfare state, and attitudes towards single mothers' deservingness, could explain the variation between countries. The welfare deservingness of single mothers might not be explicitly addressed in contemporary discourses, such as it was in the 1990s in the US and the UK, however, negative public attitudes, or less explicit government discourses, might also help to legitimate a low level of state support towards single-mother (single-parent) families. I will elaborate below on the Hungarian context, where the rhetoric on the importance of traditional family values could also have a role in legitimizing a low level of state support towards single-parent families.

1.3. CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH: FAMILY POLICY AND BENEFITS OF SINGLE PARENTS IN HUNGARY DURING THE 2010S

1.3.1. The Rhetoric of Family Mainstreaming

The Orbán government declared support for a family mainstreaming policy in 2011 (Juhász, 2012, p. 4), as it believed that the declining fertility rate was partly, but significantly, caused by the liberalization of the relationships. Gender mainstreaming (i.e., the principle of considering both genders' interests in policymaking) was gradually substituted with family mainstreaming (i.e., the principle of considering families' interests in policymaking). While the original concept of family mainstreaming was a supplementary model of gender mainstreaming and it focused on the interests of all families, in Hungary, family mainstreaming is used as an alternative model of gender mainstreaming that is narrowed down to the support of traditional family values in policies (Grzebalska and Pető, 2018, p. 168; Juhász, 2012, p. 4). The most salient example

of these policies is the new family definition. Since the promulgation of the Fourth Amendment of the Hungarian Fundamental Law in 2013, the law defines marriage as a relationship which could only come into existence between a man and a woman. It also states that family is based on marriage and/or the relationship between parent and child (Hungarian Fundamental Law, Article L, 2011). According to this definition, same-sex couples cannot establish a family, or marry. In addition, cohabiting, but not married couples (with or without children) do not form a family (Szikra, 2014, p. 494), while the status of single parents and their children is also debated (Pap, 2018, pp. 66-85).

In this policy setting, the Hungarian government does not discriminate against single parents directly, instead, it propagates the traditional family. Recently, the government started to emphasize that it does not neglect lone-parent families. Due to this effort, single-parent families have had an advantage when applying for public crèche services since 2017. Additionally, the government founded a Centre for single parents in 2018, where they can get help regarding different issues, for instance, legal or child-rearing problems. One Centre in the capital city does not seem to provide significant help for single parents in the countryside in the process of poverty reduction but can rather be regarded as a symbolic step. Meanwhile, the government launched a National Consultation on Family Subsidies in November 2018. Citizens received a questionnaire via mail, and participation was voluntary. The consultation contained 10 yes-or-no questions connected to family policy, for instance about population growth, full-time mothering, or conditionality of family supports on working status. The survey also contained a question that was strongly connected to single parenthood: *Do you agree with the principle that a child has the right to a mother and father?* In a related interview, Katalin Novák, the Minister of State for Family and Youth Affairs emphasized that the government would like to protect children, and this question aims to highlight children's rights instead of their parents' (RTL KLUB, 24 November 2018). Finally, the government's commitment towards a child's right to a mother and father was implemented in the new adoption regulations in the autumn of 2020. While in the previous system, unmarried couples and singles could adopt children if local offices could not find a suitable married couple, in the new system, unmarried couples and singles could adopt children only when officials cannot find suitable married couples in the whole country. What is more, Katalin Novák, who became the Minister without Portfolio for Family

Affairs in 2020, needs to personally approve each of the cases, when the adopting parents are not married couples.

1.3.2. The Benefit Structure of Single Parents

The Orbán government distinguished social policy from family policy, by declaring in the 2011 Family Protection Act that family policies should support the responsible upbringing of children. Since then, family policy benefits are targeting families in better financial condition (Szikra, 2018, p. 8). The family tax allowance system is available for those families who pay taxes and whose tax is high enough to validate the discount. Citizens with low earnings could validate an advantage on the basis of their health care or pension contributions since 2014. As a result of the perverse redistribution, families with the highest salary earn the highest tax benefit, while families with non-working parents are excluded, and employed parents with a low level of income could validate only a smaller level of reduction (Darvas and Szikra, 2017, pp. 224; 227). The tax allowance system leaves lone-parent households in a disadvantageous situation, as dual-earner households usually have a higher level of income. Szikra (2013, p. 7) claims the tax advantage strengthens mothers' dependence on their partner, and she is concerned that women are more likely to stay in a bad relationship to validate a higher tax advantage.

In line with the introduction of the new tax credit system, the Orbán cabinet has devaluated the universal and means-tested benefits with the implicit aim to discourage poor and Roma families from having more children (Szikra, 2014, p. 495), which strategy ignores the complex fertility decisions of the poorest, segregated Roma households (e.g., Durst, 2007; Janky, 2007). The universal family allowance has lost more than 25 per cent of its value between 2008 and 2017 (HCSO, 2018, p. 29) as the government decided not to index it with inflation. Single-parent families get an increased amount of family allowance, although it is only 12 per cent higher than the original amount. As this is the sole universal benefit for lone parents in Hungary, the devaluation process affects single-parent families negatively. Furthermore, the minimal amount of the orphan's allowance also has not changed since 2008, and while the state advances payment of maintenance, it has strict rules and it is available only for a limited period (Monostori, 2019, p. 19).

Meanwhile, one of the Hungarian opposition parties, LMP, submitted a law proposal, which urges an increase in single parents' family allowance. The Committee of Social

Affairs of the Hungarian Parliament disclaimed the proposal three times. After the first proposal in 2016, governing party members of the committee justified their decision by arguing that an increased amount of family allowance for single parents would provide an opportunity for welfare fraud, as married couples would resort to divorce to validate a higher family allowance (Committee of Social Affairs, 20 April 2016). The Committee did not provide special justification in 2017 (Committee of Social Affairs, 08 November 2017), but the Prime Minister once responded in the Parliament that they are likely to support anyone who works (Hungarian Parliament, 2017). This comment also highlights the major changes of the Hungarian welfare system in recent years, as the country has oriented towards work-based welfare (Lakner and Tausz, 2016). The committee rejected increasing the family allowance for single parents once again in 2018 (Committee of Social Affairs of the Hungarian Parliament, 09 October 2018). In the last two cases, LMP proposed the differentiated raising of the family allowance, whereas the single parents' amount would have been increased in a higher volume compared to the amount of two-parent families. Consequently, the committee rejected increasing the amount of the universal family allowance for all families, not just for single parents.

Single-parent families, therefore, are not explicitly discriminated in the Hungarian welfare system, however, the government prioritizes traditional families' interests in policymaking, and targeted cash transfers towards single parents have also lost value since 2010. Conservative rhetoric on the importance of family values, furthermore, might lead to the legitimization of a low level of state support towards single-parent families.

1.4. THE SOCIAL LEGITIMACY OF TARGETED WELFARE – THEORIES AND APPROACHES OF WELFARE DESERVINGNESS RESEARCH

The focus of the dissertation is the relation between targeted policies towards single parents and public attitudes towards single mothers' welfare deservingness. The link between these two is important, as welfare attitudes serve as indicators of welfare policies' social legitimacy (van Oorschot and Roosma, 2017). Positive attitudes towards single mothers' deservingness could legitimize generous state support towards single mothers (and, in general, towards single parents), while negative attitudes could make acceptable a low level of targeting towards them. In the following, I review those factors

that previously proved to be relevant in the formation of targeted policies' social legitimacy.

Three leading approaches developed during the past decades (van Oorschot and Roosma, 2017). The first one examines the institutional design of the benefits and states that the institutional characteristics of benefits and welfare regimes, in general, determine the attitudes towards benefit groups. The second approach concentrates on the public image of the target group and claims that benefits targeting groups with more positive public images have a higher level of social legitimacy. The third approach investigates the perceived deservingness of the group based on five criteria (control, attitude, reciprocity, identity, and need) (van Oorschot, 2000), and states that benefits targeting groups with more positive scores on the criteria have a higher level of social legitimacy. Below, I will briefly introduce these three approaches.

1.4.1. Institutional Design

The institutional approach focuses on how the design of the welfare system or particular benefits influences the legitimacy of groups' state support. For instance, earlier studies (e.g., Korpi, 1980; Rothstein, 1998) claimed that more universal systems (social-democratic and conservative ones) usually have greater legitimacy than selective ones (liberal welfare regimes), as, in the latter one, there is a strong social gap between reciprocators and beneficiaries. A good example of selective systems is the United States, where the so-called "selectivity trap" is observable, which refers to the phenomenon that the expansion of welfare to middle-class citizens is not desirable due to welfare's recognition as something only for the poor (Hills, 2017; Korpi and Palme, 1998).

Previous studies (Alesina and Angeletos, 2005; Larsen, 2006; Larsen and Dejgaard, 2013; Lockhart, 2001) showed that there is also a connection between the institutional design of welfare states and the media image of poor people. In liberal welfare regimes, the media often portray poor people in a negative context and also underrates the actual level of poverty of concerned groups. In contrast, in social-democratic welfare states, poor people are more likely to be portrayed in a positive way, as their difficulties are often exaggerated (Larsen and Dejgaard, 2013). Similarly, the moral panics are also diverse in these two types of welfare regimes: in liberal ones, there is a stereotype that poor people are deviant, while in social-democratic countries public opinion recognizes poor people

as ordinary citizens who did not get enough help from the state (Larsen and Dejgaard, 2013).

The institutional approach, however, does not necessarily connect the attitudes to “macro-level” welfare regimes, but it could investigate the attitudes related to the “meso-level” benefit schemes (e.g., Laenen, 2018; van Oorschot et al, 2017). The general finding, in this case, is again that more universal benefits have a higher level of social legitimacy than less universal (selective) benefits (Goodin and Le Grand, 1987; Skocpol, 1991). First, it could be explained by individuals’ opportunity structure, as people tend to support those benefits that they are more likely to receive (van Oorschot and Roosma, 2017, p. 8). Second, selectivity is associated with a higher level of administrative costs (Mkandawire, 2005; van Oorschot, 2002) and more complex rules than universal benefits (Alston and Dean, 1972). Therefore, beliefs regarding the expensiveness of the systems and abuse of benefits (because of the complexity of rules) are also more common in the case of selective benefits.

1.4.2. Public Image

This approach states that benefits targeting groups with more negative public images have a lower level of social legitimacy than benefits targeting groups with more positive images (van Oorschot and Roosma, 2017, p. 10). Therefore, groups with positive images/social constructions are more likely to be targeted by beneficial and generous policies than groups with negative and undeserving images (Schneider and Ingram, 1993). The literature mostly relied on the application of this approach, when it was hypothesized that a group under investigation has such a negative public image that could negatively influence the groups’ perceived deservingness. Negative public images in the literature include: the “undeserving poor,” the “lazy unemployed,” or the “Black welfare queen.” Furthermore, immigrants also often have an undeserving overall public perception (van Oorschot and Roosma, 2017, pp. 10-13).

First, poor people are often stigmatized and seen as “social other,” because they could not make a living for themselves. Means-tested benefits facilitate this process by making evident that recipients are deviating from the social norm of self-responsibility, as they need to rely on state benefits (van Oorschot and Roosma, 2017, p. 11). Second, unemployed people are often labelled as lazy and responsible for their situation, and

beliefs about the misuse of unemployment benefits are also widespread (Larsen, 2002; Golding and Middleton, 1982). Third, immigrants also often have a negative public image in those countries, where welfare chauvinism is widespread. State support of immigrants is less desirable than the support of native citizens in those contexts, where immigrants are seen as “social other” by native citizens (Reeskens and van Oorschot, 2012; Wright and Reeskens, 2013). Finally, the “welfare queen” is a quite negative public image of US single mothers (Foster, 2008; Gilman, 2014; Hancock, 2004). According to this stereotype, Black single mothers from the lower classes only have children to receive welfare benefits instead of paid work. This stereotype is going to be presented in more detail in further parts of the thesis.

1.4.3. Deservingness Perceptions

Compared to public image research, the third approach does not only focus on the stereotypical characteristics of the target group but investigates groups’ deservingness based on five criteria, called “CARIN.” The CARIN framework was developed by van Oorschot (2000), however, many of the criteria were already reflected in previous research (Cook, 1979; De Swaan, 1988). CARIN is the acronym of control, attitude, reciprocity, identity, and need (van Oorschot, 2000; van Oorschot et al, 2017). The first component is control, which refers to the responsibility of the group for their needy situation. “A” stands for attitude, more precisely, it defines the attitude of claimants towards their received support. The next component is reciprocity, as a group’s perceived deservingness also relies on the level of the groups’ perceived contribution to the work of the welfare system. Identity, as the fourth component, emphasizes the gap between the target group and the public and assumes that people find those groups more deserving, who are similar to them based on particular aspects (e.g., nationality or social norms). Finally, need is the most evident criterion, as it defines the perceived level of need.

It is a more detailed approach than the public image variant, as it does not solely focus on the stigmatized and stereotypical identity of target groups, but investigates perceptions based on five criteria that proved to be relevant indicators of perceived welfare deservingness (van Oorschot et al, 2017, p. 13). Target groups, therefore, could have a positive score regarding one criterion and a negative score based on another one, and the overall scores of the five criteria determine their positions between the absolutely deserving and absolutely undeserving (van Oorschot and Roosma, 2017, p. 15).

The importance of the criteria, however, could vary regarding different social groups. For instance, control is particularly relevant in the case of the unemployed, who are often accused of being out of the labour market and in need of state support due to their fault, while this criterion is less relevant in the case of the sick and disabled, who could hardly be blamed for their neediness. Furthermore, identity is especially relevant regarding immigrants, as a wide social gap could exist between the public and immigrants in countries where welfare chauvinism is common. On the contrary, identity may not be of much relevance in the case of the elderly, who are closely related to most people by being their parents or grandparents (van Oorschot and Roosma, 2017, pp. 14-17).

While some of the earlier studies found that people assess welfare policies based on their political values (Blekesaune and Quadagno, 2003; Feldman, 2003), recent studies claim that deservingness perceptions have higher importance than values. The theory of “deservingness heuristic” (Petersen, 2012; Petersen et al, 2011) states that people decide differently about recipients’ deservingness when specific information is available. The deservingness heuristic is an automatic procedure developed during evaluation to differentiate reciprocators from cheaters. Recipients, who demonstrated low effort to avoid requiring others’ help are categorized as “cheaters,” while recipients who showed high effort (and consequently also demonstrated a willingness to contribute to the work of the community), but are still in need of help, are categorized as “reciprocators.” The automaticity of the heuristic implies that people disregard their values and stereotypes pertaining to the target group if enough information on the recipient is available, and people with and without related knowledge produce consistent judgments. This theory, therefore, prioritizes deservingness perceptions over values in the formation of welfare attitudes, moreover, it highlights the role of the reciprocity and control criteria. On the other hand, it also emphasizes that opinions regarding recipients’ deservingness could differ in the presence and absence of specific information, and while deservingness perceptions have a major role in individuating situations, values and stereotypes might be more important when decisions are made in the absence of individuating information.

1.4.4. Interrelations of the Approaches

These approaches are, however, interrelated, as the public image of a target group could be related to the institutional design of their benefits, or the public image of a group could influence the score of the groups on the deservingness criteria. Moreover, target groups’

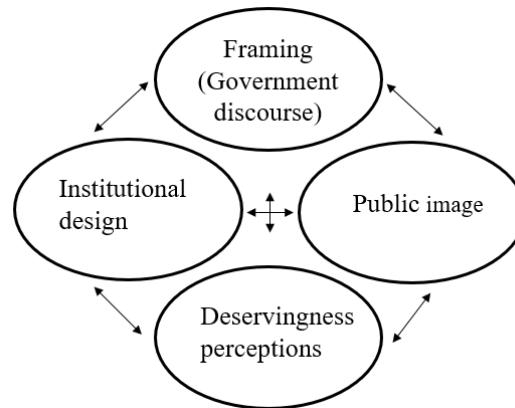
scores could also be connected to the institutional design of their benefits. For instance, poor people have a positive public image in social-democratic welfare states, while they are viewed negatively in liberal welfare regimes (Larsen, 2006). The “lazy image” of the unemployed leads to negative scores on the control criterion (Larsen, 2002), or the complex rules of means-tested benefits could facilitate the ungrateful, cheating perception of recipients (attitude criterion) (van Oorschot and Roosma, 2017, p. 18).

1.4.5. Framing

Besides the above presented three approaches, political framing (a process of suggesting a way of thinking regarding a policy problem) (Slothuus, 2007, pp. 325-326) could also be important in the formation of benefits’ social legitimacy. While there is a link between policies and the deservingness of target groups (i.e., more deserving groups receive more generous benefits than undeserving groups), politicians might aim to change the status quo and cut back or increase the benefits of target groups due to several reasons (e.g., economic or ideological) (Schneider and Ingram, 1993). In these cases, political elites need to frame welfare change in a way to make it acceptable by the public. One strategy is to frame welfare state change based on the (un)deservingness of the target group (Esmark and Schoop, 2017; Schneider and Ingram, 1993; Slothuus, 2007). Political elites could frame retrenching reforms by emphasizing the undeservingness of target groups, while welfare expansion could be framed based on the deservingness of target groups. These frames, however, also need to be in line with the images of the groups, because an undeserving framing of deserving groups could lead to negative political consequences (Blum and Kuhlmann, 2019). Framing thus emphasizes/strengthens the perceived deservingness or undeservingness of target groups.

Welfare attitudes, therefore, have a function in legitimating welfare policies, and the support of benefits targeted towards groups are influenced by the institutional design of the benefits, the public image, and the perceived deservingness of the target group. Furthermore, political elites could legitimate changes in welfare policies by framing target groups as deserving or undeserving. This dissertation uses all these approaches to arrive at a complex understanding of the formation of welfare attitudes towards single mothers in Hungary. Figure 4 shows these approaches and the interrelations between them.

Figure 4. Applied Approaches to Investigate the Social Legitimacy of Targeted Welfare and Interrelations between the Approaches



1.5. AIMS OF THE DISSERTATION AND RELEVANCE

The dissertation has three major aims. First, it aims to investigate the relation between the attitudes of the public towards single mothers' deservingness and the current benefit structure of single parents in Hungary, to evaluate the social legitimacy of single parents' decreasing level of targeting in family policy. Meanwhile, the dissertation aims to investigate not only the public attitudes, but also the factors that could shape it, such as the historical-institutional design of single mothers' benefits, the contemporary government discourse on the family, the public image of single mothers, and single mothers' perceptions based on the five deservingness criteria. Moreover, as the thesis acknowledges that these factors could mutually shape each other, it also intends to explore the interrelations between these factors.

Second, it aims to compare the deservingness of single mothers in the UK, US, and Hungary, to initiate the comparative research in this field. Third, it purposes to explore the determinants of single mothers' perceived deservingness by applying the major theories (CARIN and deservingness heuristic) in the field of deservingness research.

Thus, the first aim is to add relevance to the perspective of Hungarian social policy by focusing on the legitimacy of the current system of single parents' benefits. Furthermore, this aim has relevance also regarding the research of the social legitimacy of targeted welfare. It provides a complex empirical investigation on the formation of attitudes

towards a group's targeted welfare, based on all of those approaches that proved to be relevant in previous research.

The second aim has relevance in comparative social policy as the study provides insights regarding a quite different welfare context than the one present in the literature (US and UK). Furthermore, the comparison is beneficial due to the diverse history of these countries. Single mothers' position in socialist Hungary shed light on the progressiveness of the socialist state regarding gender equality compared to the UK and US. The dissertation, therefore, also aims to contribute to comparative feminist social policy literature.

The third aim has theoretical relevance regarding deservingness research, as the thesis explores the determinants of perceived deservingness based on the major deservingness theories in the case of a previously not-investigated group, single mothers.

1.6. STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following chapters are structured in a way that each focuses on one direction of deservingness research (institutional design, public image, deservingness perceptions) and one investigates the family discourse of the Hungarian government (framing). Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 could be regarded as contextual chapters, as they don't especially investigate the attitudes of the public, but rather the historical-institutional and discursive context of single mothers' welfare deservingness in Hungary. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 focus on the attitudes of the public towards single mothers' welfare deservingness.

Chapter 2 investigates the institutional background of single mothers' deservingness by evaluating the historical-institutional differences in single mothers' state support in Hungary, the US, and the UK. This chapter, therefore, mainly relates to the comparative aim of the thesis, and poses the following research questions: *“What are the major historical differences in the design of single mothers' state support in Hungary, the UK, and the US? What ideas shaped these designs? How did these differences pave the way for connected reforms and discourses? How these different welfare regimes fostered gender equality?”*

Chapter 3 analyses the discourse of the Hungarian government on the family to reveal how the discourse on the importance of traditional family values reflects on single-parent families' deservingness. The chapter's research question is: *"To what extent, and how, does the government discourse frame single-parent families as less deserving compared to traditional (two-parent) families?"*

In Chapter 4, the focus is on the public image of single mothers, its connection to the deservingness criteria, and the link between public attitudes and family policy. This chapter, therefore, mainly aims to achieve the goal related to Hungarian social policy, and asks *"How does the Hungarian public see single mothers and to what extent are their public image and perceived deservingness in line with single-parent families' low level of targeting in family policies?"*

Chapter 5 especially focuses on the determinants of single mothers' perceived deservingness in Hungary, and approaches its investigation based on two theories (CARIN and deservingness heuristic), and therefore, it is related to the third aim of the dissertation. First, it explores the weights of the CARIN criteria, and second, it evaluates the importance of these criteria in the presence, and absence, of specific deservingness cues. The chapter's research questions are the following: *"Which CARIN criteria explain single mothers' welfare deservingness in Hungary?"* and second *"To what extent do the weights of the deservingness criteria regarding single mothers vary in the presence and absence of specific deservingness cues?"* This chapter also formulates hypotheses, however, it is presented in Chapter 5, as those are built upon the results of Chapter 4.

1.7. RESEARCH DESIGN

The dissertation does not build on one dataset but applies several data sources and various methods (mixed methods) that are suitable to each research question. Chapter 2 reviews the history of single mothers' benefits in the US, the UK, and Hungary, and it applies a comparative literature review. The other three chapters use empirical data. Chapter 3 investigates the government discourse and aims to explore how it communicates single parents' deservingness and the extent to which it frames single-parent families as less deserving than traditional families. To answer these questions, the chapter applies frame and critical discourse analyses (CDA). First, the chapter analyses the broad frame (on the

importance of traditional family values) within the government's communication and evaluates how it reflects on single parents' deservingness. Second, the chapter investigates separately the discourse on traditional family values and the discourse on single-parent families with CDA. It compares how these separate discourses frame single parents' deservingness, and the extent to which they reinforce single parents' less deserving position compared to traditional families. For these purposes, speeches of government members connected to the topic were collected from the government's website, and additional speeches related to single parenthood were also collected.

Chapter 4 investigates the public image and perceived deservingness of single mothers. Open-ended and closed-ended survey questions are used to explore both the public image and perceived deservingness of the group. First, the public image of single mothers is explored with an open-ended question, and then it is validated by closed-ended questions. Second, based on the qualitative data, I operationalize the CARIN criteria in the case of single mothers, and formulate statements to measure them. In this chapter, therefore, the different data collections are built upon each other, using a mixed methods approach. While most of the datasets are based on quota samples of adult internet-users (varying from 500 to 1000 respondents), some of the questions are asked on both quota and representative samples (1000 respondents), providing robustness checks for the results.

Chapter 5 explores the role of the deservingness criteria in predicting single mothers' perceived deservingness. Relying on the theory of Petersen et al. (2011), the chapter uses two different methods. The theory of the deservingness heuristic states that people judge recipients' deservingness differently when more concrete cues are available about recipients' deservingness. Therefore, this chapter applies two popular methods of deservingness research: one measures deservingness in the presence of deservingness cues, and one, in the absence of deservingness cues. First, to measure the role of the deservingness criteria in the absence of specific cues, the chapter uses the statements that are also used in Chapter 4, and the relative weights of the criteria are explored with regression analysis of these statements; within a statement measuring the overall deservingness of the group (*"It's a role of the state to support single mothers"*) serves as the dependent variable. Second, for the investigation of the perceived deservingness of single mothers in the presence of deservingness cues, a vignette-based factorial survey experiment is used. The deservingness criteria are translated into characteristics of

hypothetical single mothers (specific deservingness cues), and the dependent variable is the perceived fairness of the amount of family allowance of hypothetical single mothers.

2. INSTITUTIONAL LEGACIES AND IDEAS REGARDING SINGLE MOTHERS' DESERVINGNESS – A COMPARISON OF THE US, THE UK, AND HUNGARY

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Feminism and gender equality in Eastern Europe are often presented as being belated compared to Western countries due to the socialist past (Jung, 1994; Olsen, 1997; Slavova, 2006, p. 248). This stream of literature highlights that even though socialist states were committed to sexual equality, in reality, women were not emancipated and not active social agents, and women-friendly policies were introduced only in order to remedy the low fertility rate and to maximize labour force utilisation. Western feminism often depicted Eastern European women as “suffering from false consciousness” (Suchland, 2011, p. 850). Meanwhile, other scholars argue that gender equality was quite advanced in socialist countries. Arguments for socialist states' development include that women's right to work, equal pay for equal work, extended parental leaves, and childcare services, were more or less already provided in the 1960s-1970s state socialist countries, when women in Western capitalist countries were still in a fight for these rights (Jung, 1994). Finally, a third group of authors (Fodor, 2003; Funk, 2014; Gal and Kligman, 2000; Haney, 2002; Massino and Penn, 2009) emphasize that the question of whether state socialist countries were liberating for women cannot be simply answered, and its investigation requires research regarding different aspects of women's everyday life.

Historical development of states' intention to support single mothers provides another test case to nuance knowledge regarding gender equality in (post)socialist versus Western countries. The chapter, therefore, compares the historical development of single mothers' state support in the (post)socialist Hungary and the capitalist UK and US. Comparing these countries is relevant also because changes in single parents' state support were accompanied by different kinds of discourses that might also be historically and institutionally determined. While the advertisement of family values was a central part of the discourses in the 1990s UK and US, as well as in the 2010s Hungary, in the Anglo-

Saxon countries, the political discourse simultaneously focused on the negative characterization of single mothers. Single mothers were described as “bad people” who threatened the ideal of the traditional family and also as “benefit scroungers” who selected to live on state support instead of paid work. This discourse helped to legitimate work-to-welfare reforms of single mothers, and their state support became tied to employment.

In contrast, in Hungary, single mothers are not demonized in the government discourse, but the government started to promote conservative family ideals, after the election of the Orbán government in 2010, due to the belief that the declining birth rate was partly caused by the liberalization of relationships. Population growth became the main aim of family policy, and reforms were made to encourage middle-class families to have more children. Reforms included the introduction of a tax credit system and the devaluation process of the family allowance that resulted in a decreasing level of targeting towards single-parent households, as the tax credit system does not privilege single-parent households compared to the family allowance system.

Single mothers, therefore, were explicitly demonized in the Anglo-Saxon countries, while in Hungary there is a broader discourse on the liberalization of family forms that, though implicitly, also reflect on single mothers’ deservingness. In the Anglo-Saxon countries, the question was whether single mothers deserve state support at all, while in Hungary, the question rather is whether single-parent families deserve more, the same, or less state support than traditional families.

Based on the extended historical institutionalist framework (Béland, 2005; 2009; 2016), the chapter investigates ideational, as well as institutional changes that might have paved the way for the distinct reforms and discourses, and that might have shaped gender equality in these countries. It addresses the following research questions: *“What are the major historical differences in the design of single mothers’ state support in Hungary, the UK, and the US? What ideas shaped these designs? How did these differences pave the way for connected reforms and discourses? How these different welfare regimes fostered gender equality?”*

The following section elaborates on the theoretical framework of this chapter. Afterwards, I review the history of single mothers’ benefits in the US and UK until the

1990s reforms, and in Hungary until the 2010s, to see the developments of policies, as well as the underlining ideas of changes. These summaries focus on the relevant turning points of single mothers' state support rather than providing a detailed overview of all changes in the systems. The part of the United Kingdom mainly relies on the work of Jane Lewis (1998), who thoroughly reviewed these turning points in the British system. The United States section is a summary of works that reviewed the history of single mothers' support from different aspects. Regarding Hungary, previous works have not investigated the history of single mothers' state support in detail, therefore, relevant turning points are identified based on connected literature and legislative documents. After these reviews, I compare the institutional developments of the countries and ideas that have shaped the formation of the benefits, then I evaluate how these differences paved the way for the reforms and discourses, as well as how these different pathways fostered gender equality. The chapter ends with the conclusion of the findings.

2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK – HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM AND IDEAS

Historical institutionalism is an often applied theory in the investigation of policy development (e.g., Orloff, 1993b; Pierson, 1994; Skocpol, 1992). This theory recognizes policymakers as autonomous actors, meanwhile, it states that their opportunity structure is determined by the legacies of institutions and policies. More recent works of historical institutionalism (Béland, 2005; 2009; 2016), furthermore, state that not only institutional legacies but also ideas are important components of policy formation. In this interpretation, ideas could explain policy changes that are not in line with the policies' historical formation.

Ideas have a crucial role as they could construct problems and issues in a way that those could successfully enter the narrow field of policy agenda and shape the assumptions that determine the content of reform proposals and could serve as discursive weapons in reform narratives. Ideas, however, could only be successful if there are not strong institutional obstacles, and if the ideas are communicated within an appropriate frame. In this approach, therefore, applied frames are as important as institutional legacies and ideas, as frames – “relatively coherent sets of cultural symbols and political representations mobilized during social and political debates” (Béland (2009, p. 706)

citing Marx Ferree, 2003) – have an inevitable role in generating public support for specific policy ideas.

To sum up, the ideational approach of historical institutionalism not only takes into account the opportunities and obstacles determined by institutional legacies, but also the ideas that shape the actions of political actors within this opportunity structure, and also the frames within which the ideas are communicated. The following sections review the history of single mothers' benefits in the three investigated countries based on this theoretical framework.

2.3. HISTORY OF SINGLE MOTHERS' BENEFITS IN THE US, THE UK, AND HUNGARY

2.3.1. The United States

The history of single mothers' welfare in the 20th century in the US is connected to one major benefit, the ADC (Aid to Dependent Children; called Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) from 1962, when the aid was expanded to two-parent families). ADC was founded in 1935 as part of the Social Security Act and it aimed to financially support families where one of the biological parents was missing or disabled. In general, it aimed to allow single mothers to stay home with their children like mothers in two-parent families (Gordon, 1994). ADC, therefore, reinforced traditional gender roles by perceiving women as mothers and not as workers (Gordon, 1994; Kessler-Harris, 2001). ADC was also primarily founded for white, middle-class widows, consequently, caseworkers often discriminated against recipients outside this group: white mothers were more likely to receive support than non-white mothers, while widows and deserted women were also preferred over never-married mothers. Widow single mothers were preferred as they were seen as morally pure (Gordon, 1994), while the discrimination against African-American mothers was rooted in the history of slavery, as they were primarily perceived as workers and not as mothers (Nadasen, 2007, p. 64).

While the other benefits included in the Social Security Act (old-age insurance and unemployment benefits) were based on contributions, ADC was the sole social assistance program. Mother-only families were treated outside social insurance programs, as they were seen not as employable citizens (Goodwin, 1995, p. 259). However, as the assistance was less generous compared to the other programs (Nelson, 1990), many recipients had

to work besides getting assistance. The original aim of ADC, therefore, was not so much reflected in practice, because the ADC was federally financed but ran by the states, and local welfare departments often tied eligibility to working status. In the 1940s and 1950s, local offices even made special regulations to deny eligibility, for instance, the “illegitimate children” rule denied giving benefits to mothers who had illegitimate children while receiving assistance. ADC soon became a stigmatized benefit, not only because of its means-tested character, but also due to the applied surveillance techniques over the recipients. Officials, for instance, often conducted midnight raids to check if recipients truly lived alone (Gordon, 2001, p. 21).

Eligibility criteria became even stricter in the 1960s, due to the increasing proportion of Black women on ADC. The mechanization of agriculture caused a mass migration of African-Americans from the Southern states to the Northern ones, however, the deindustrialization of the urban centres and discrimination based on gender and race, left many African-American women without paid work even in the Northern states. The unemployment rate of Blacks was 10.2%, while it was only 4.9% among whites in the 1960s. A higher level of unemployment among African-Americans also caused a higher share of ADC recipient mothers; the proportion of African-American recipients grew from 31% in 1950 to 48% in 1961 (Nadasen, 2007).

Besides the higher unemployment rate, the share of never-married single mothers was also higher among African-Americans. After the Second World War, there was an increase in the share of white single mothers as well, however, their pregnancies were well-hidden, as many of them gave their children up for adoption. On the contrary, community values of African-Americans did not support putting children up for adoption, therefore, Black never-married mothers were more likely to keep their children (Nadasen, 2007).

Illegitimate births were soon attributed to the pathological character of Blacks and Black migration in the public discourse. The pathologization of Black single mothers was reinforced by the Moynihan Report (1965) that blamed the matriarchal structure of Black families for illegitimate pregnancies and poverty. It suggested that men should be brought back to the family to end the cycle of poverty and to change the dominant position of women. The Report also explicitly advised that the state should not support single

mothers. The Report had a direct effect on the formation of welfare policy, as eligibility criteria of AFDC became even stricter. Offices thoroughly monitored the additional sources of single mothers' income and work requirements became a common feature of the benefits (Nadasen, 2007).

At the end of the 1960s, most AFDC recipients were never-married, divorced, or separated. The proportion of widows on ADC dropped from 43% in 1937 to 7.7% in 1961. This change, however, was supported by the Amendments of the Social Security Law that included widows to the old-age insurance scheme in 1939. Therefore, deserving widows were mainly removed from ADC (Nadasen, 2007). The share of widows among single mothers also declined in the following decades; while 4% were never-married and 26% were widowed in the 1960s, 36% were never-married and 4% were widowed in the 1990s (Gilens, 1999, pp. 178-179).

The growing share of never-married, divorced, and separated single mothers also caused a higher state interest in the fathers' role. US states were required to establish offices to enforce paternity tests and child support payments from 1965, and the federal-level Child Support Enforcement Program, established in 1975, specified the set-up of the public bureaucracy of child support enforcement (Garfinkel, 1988, p. 12).

Negative attitudes towards single mothers on AFDC intensified in the 1980s, due to the influence of the academic Charles Murray, who stated in his book *"Losing Ground"* (1984) that Black single mothers were a threat to the society. He described Black single mothers as being part of the underclass, not capable of working themselves out from poverty, and reproducing the cycle of poverty. Single mothers were blamed for violating the dominant sexual norm by rearing children alone. President Reagan reintroduced the "welfare queen" stereotype to the public in the 1980s (that was originated in the 1960s but received less public attention before), by repeating a story about a Black Cadillac driving single mother, who cheated on the welfare system to receive more benefits than she would have been entitled to. Welfare queens were described as lazy women, who intentionally selected single motherhood and social assistance instead of married life and paid work (Gilman 2014). Single mothers, in general, were represented as the source of all problems of contemporary US society (Abramovitz, 2006, p. 340).

Many attempts were made from the 1970s to reform single mothers' benefits (Gilens, 1999), however, the system only changed in 1996, when Bill Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA). The need for reform, however, was fuelled by many more factors than the negative perception of AFDC recipients: economic and political changes, as well as the growing power of conservatives, paved the way for reform (Katz, 2001). The growing rate of female employment also increasingly convinced policymakers that single mothers receiving AFDC should work: in the 1960s, 19% of married women had paid work, and this share increased to 30% in the 1970s and 60% in the 1990s (Gilens, 1999, pp. 178-179). However, as Abramovitz (2006) argues, the reform could be best understood as part of the neo-liberal recovery strategy of the US economy that started in the 1980s. Within this broader agenda, AFDC was a perfect target, as it served the vulnerable, but unpopular group of single mothers (believed to be Black women).

In the name of work enforcement, the reform brought strict and punitive work rules for welfare recipients (as well as for states, by obliging them to achieve a high proportion of working recipients to not lose federal funding) and created workfare by forcing recipients to accept low-paid jobs or be involved in public work programs in exchange for the benefits. TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; the new benefit instead of AFDC) was limited to 5 years/lifetime. Furthermore, single mothers receiving welfare became obliged to identify the father of their children and to work together with child support enforcement offices. The reforms also aimed to encourage "responsible parenting" (i.e., two-parent family), therefore, healthy marriages (i.e., heterosexual) were promoted through several programs such as pre-marital counselling, school-based marriage education, or services provided for married couples (Abramovitz, 2006).

The TANF system was reauthorized by the Bush administration between 2002 and 2006, as the Congress with the Republican majority agreed with the Work First Approach and the idea that traditional family values need to be promoted. Therefore, the states remained responsible to achieve a high proportion of working recipients, while the funding on abstinence education, promotion of healthy marriages, and responsible fatherhood was also renewed (Daguerre, 2008). In contrast, the Obama administration aimed to reform TANF by giving more flexibility to the states in achieving the aims of TANF. A memorandum written by the administration in 2012 encouraged the states to consider new

and more effective ways to successfully prepare and help needy families in finding employment. This idea, however, was declined during the legislative reauthorization process of TANF in 2015 (Parolin et al, 2017).

To sum up, the US history of single mothers' state support was determined by the fact that single mothers were perceived as not-employable (widow) mothers at the beginning of the 20th century. They were treated outside of social insurance and got involved in an assistance-based benefit program (AFDC). The growing share of never-married and African-American recipients, the increasing participation of married women in the labour market, as well as negative discourses, however, soon led to negative attitudes towards AFDC recipients. The program was an easy target for the 1996 welfare reform that aimed to reduce welfare spending. Single mothers' state support has been tied to employment ever since.

2.3.2. The United Kingdom

As Jane Lewis (1998) summarized in her work, one of the major features of single mothers' state support in the United Kingdom was that the country remained strongly committed to the male breadwinner model throughout the 20th century. The incorporation of lone-mother families into the male breadwinner model was quite challenging, and the state rather treated single mothers outside this model by becoming their main provider. Another relevant characteristic of the British system was that it aimed to maintain "less eligibility" for lone mothers to not make separated/divorced and unmarried motherhood more attractive than married life. It explains that the form of state support was always assistance-based in the UK, however, it is also connected to the general social security system of Britain that is dominated by assistance-based benefits (Millar, 1996). The level of state support and its exact forms, however, varied during the 20th century. At the end of the 19th century, lone mothers were expected to work, and the state only supplemented their wages. From the post-war period until the 1990s, lone mothers were expected to be mothers in the first place, and from 1997, they were viewed as workers who need to make their living (Lewis, 1998).

The majority of lone mothers were widow mothers at the beginning of the 20th century, and there was a growing interest to provide non-stigmatized benefits for widows (who were seen as good mothers) between 1911 and 1925. It was recognized that it is hard to

work in addition to ensuring childcare, and as there was no available male breadwinner for widow mothers, they were treated as more deserving than other lone mothers (Lewis, 1998, pp. 254-256). They were more likely to receive outdoor relief in the nineteenth century (Thane, 1978) and they were the first to receive relief outside the poor law in 1925. An insurance-based widow pension was also introduced in 1925 that provided a life-long benefit for widows (Lewis, 1998). In contrast, unmarried, divorced, and separated mothers were seen as less deserving, and could solely rely on means-tested benefits. Eligibility criteria were not strictly defined, and only those single mothers, who were perceived as deserving by officials, could receive assistance. Mothers who were seen as undeserving (mainly unmarried mothers) were separated from their children and were sent to workhouses. Unmarried mothers were also often sent to mental hospitals, as they were seen as “mentally deficient” at that time (Thane, 2011, p. 18).

After the Second World War, separated and divorced mothers began to predominate, but unmarried, separated, and divorced single mothers were still left out from the social security system. While married women got insured after their husbands due to the reforms of Beveridge in 1946, concerns regarding the faultiness of mothers in divorce, and the administrative costs of its investigation, led to the exclusion of divorced mothers from the system (Lewis, 1998, pp. 259-260). Finally, a family allowance scheme was established in 1945 that was paid directly to mothers (Smart, 1996, p. 52), however, its amount was modest and it was paid only after the second child. Therefore, the majority of divorced and separated, as well as unmarried single mothers, still had to apply for national assistance. Eligibility rules of means-tested benefits also got unified in the post-war period, but widows continued to have preferential treatment (Lewis, 1998).

The distinction between guilty and innocent mothers became harder only after 1969, when the divorce law partially abandoned the idea of “fault.” Never-married, divorced and widow single mothers became also equal according to public law in 1974. These changes might also have contributed to the growing divorce rate and the increasing share of unmarried motherhood. The number of divorces per 1000 married people rose from 2.1 in 1961 to 12.8 in 1988, while the ratio of births out of wedlock per total births rose from 8.4% in 1971 to 28.3% in 1990. It has to be noted though, that in the case of most out-of-wedlock pregnancies, the parents lived together, but not in marriage (Bradshaw and Millar, 1991).

The Finer Committee on One-Parent Families was established in 1969, within this changing environment of single motherhood. The Committee focused on the changing behaviour regarding marriage and divorce and concluded that while the state cannot regulate these behaviours due to personal freedom, it needs to face its consequences and take care of lone-mother families. Moreover, the Committee recognized that while the employment rate of married mothers had risen sharply (from 26% in 1951 to 62% in 1981), opportunities should also be provided to lone mothers to have paid work. Therefore, the extra needs of lone-mother families were recognized, and there was an increase in the additional personal tax allowance, and some of the benefits were extended to parents working part-time. The means-tested design of lone mothers' benefits, however, prevented the majority of single mothers to work in addition to receiving the allowance. Furthermore, as never-married and divorced motherhood became less stigmatized social positions, assistance-claiming became a less stigmatized practice as well (Lewis, 1998, p. 273). The ratio of lone mothers on supplementary benefits also increased from 37% in 1971 to 59% in 1986, while the employment rate of lone mothers dropped from 50% in the mid-1970s, to 39% in the mid-1980s (Bradshaw and Millar, 1991).

The sympathetic perception of lone-parent families quite radically changed to a hostile direction from the 1970s to the 1980s when conservatives became the governing party, whose opinion was influenced by the US academic scholar Charles Murray (1984) (his theory is described in the US section) (Roseneil and Mann, 1996; Thane, 2011). The British government faced a fiscal crisis in the 1980s when welfare payments represented the largest part of public expenditures, and the government needed a narrative to legitimize the cutback of social spending (Prideaux, 2010, p. 295). This narrative was provided by Charles Murray, who had several meetings with British government officials from 1987, including the Prime Minister in 1989 (Dean and Taylor-Gooby, 1992, p. 5).

The problematisation of lone motherhood as a threat to the traditional family was prevalent throughout the 1980s (McRobbie, 1991; Phoenix, 1991), however, it received significant media representation in 1993: it was the year of the lone mother in Britain (Roseneil and Mann, 1996, p. 192). The problem of never-married mothers was articulated throughout the media in consequence of the James Bulger case. James Bulger was a 2-year-old child, who was murdered by two teenage boys of a lone mother. The

moral panic was concerned around juvenile crime caused by lone motherhood. Newspapers, such as the *Sunday Times* and *Guardian*, introduced Murray's and the British scholar, A. H. Halsey's thoughts and periodically cited them. Both of them linked juvenile crime to the rise of the underclass and family breakdown, and articulated the need of a male role model in the family as a solution (Roseneil and Mann, 1996).

Concern about how lone motherhood threatens the social fabric was supplemented by worries about the economic costs of state-dependent mothers. As Roseneil and Mann (1996) argue, the discourse of 1993 united political forces who were concerned about family values with those who aimed to cut back the spending of the welfare state. Single mothers were seen as both a moral and financial social threat (Gauthier, 1996; Phoenix, 1996).

First, the state aimed to shift responsibility to men by implementing the Child Support Act of 1991 that enforced child support payments. Before this act, the practice was in accordance with the public law, defining that men need to support the family whom they live with and not the family whom they left. The Child Support Act, however, did not live up to expectations as the majority of lone mothers remained on assistance, and it also generated public dissatisfaction as it was contradictory to the previous practice (Fox Harding, 1996). Government attention, therefore, focused more on mothers' labour market participation from the mid-1990s (Lewis, 1998).

The mid-1990s brought a significant change in the British system of single mothers' state support, as since then, activation programs have been increasingly forcing single mothers to have paid work. The New Labour Government introduced the New Deal for Lone Parents in 1998, which provided a voluntary program for single parents, within which they could receive advice and training regarding how to find a job and how to claim in-work benefits. Single parents were encouraged to have paid work by receiving extra in-work credits, however, many single parents remained on Income Support (out-of-work benefit), as they would have lost other means-tested benefits. In 2008, Lone Parents Obligations was introduced, which removed all single parents from Income Benefit and transferred them on Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) that had much stricter rules. Claimants were required to actively seek a job or have paid work at least 16 hours per week in cases where their children were above the age of 10, while this criterion was lowered to the age

of 5 in 2012. Work obligations became even stricter by the introduction of the Universal Credit as part of the Welfare Reform Act in 2012. The Universal Tax Credit merged six means-tested working-age benefits (among Income Support) into one, to make the benefit system simpler. Claimants of this new credit are obliged to show evidence that they are actively looking for work, or they have paid work at least 35 hours per week. Universal Credit, however, has earning disregards that better motivate claimants to have paid work than Job Seeking Allowance (Klett-Davies, 2016).

To sum up, single mothers' state support in the UK during the 20th century was determined by the country's strong attachment to the male breadwinner model, within which single mothers were perceived as carers and not as workers. Single mothers received assistance-based benefits, except for widows, who were involved in the social security scheme besides getting an allowance. In the 1970s, all single mothers became equal regardless of their marital status, and the state accepted single motherhood as an alternative form of family. This perception, however, changed radically in the late 1980s, when unmarried mothers became seen as a social threat to the traditional family and the economy. Since the mid-1990s there has been a gradual shift from a citizen-carer to a citizen-worker approach of single mothers' state support (Klett-Davies, 2016), as single mothers are increasingly involved in activation programs.

2.3.3. Hungary

While in the US and UK, the history of single mothers' state support is connected to social assistance programs, in Hungary, the major form of support was provided through the family allowance scheme. As the Hungarian family policy and social policy has Bismarckian roots, the family allowance was also established as a contributory benefit in 1912. It included only public servants, however, it was expanded to factory workers (working in factories that employed at least 20 people) in 1938 (Baranyai, 1998, p. 805). From 1946, the allowance was available for all insured families (except agricultural workers, who got included gradually later on) (Baranyai, 1998). It became universal after the regime change and was means-tested only for two years (1996-1998) (Darvas and Szikra, 2017).

Single mothers were included in the family allowance scheme to some extent from the very beginning. While the law of 1912 defined the allowance as the right of the father and

was provided only after children born in wedlock, it also became possible for working mothers to receive it in case of widowhood or if the parents lived separately and the mother was the one who lived with the children and the father did not finance the costs of child-rearing, or if the father was disabled (Act XXXV of 1912, Article 4; Tárkányi, 1998, p. 238). Never-married single mothers got entitled in 1938, from that time the allowance became available in support of illegitimate children as well (Tárkányi, 1998, p. 239). The regulation of 1946 still applied these rules, while working single women became eligible for the family allowance after children who lived with them regardless of the financial support of their ex-partner in 1958. Single working women were defined as either widow, never-married, divorced, or separated, while married mothers whose husbands were in military service or were permanently sick or disabled were also included (Government Decree 42/1958 (VII. 8)). This broad involvement of single mothers in the family allowance system was supported by the socialist ideology of equality.

After the Second World War, the Hungarian Communist Party came to power and decided to follow the soviet example and achieve economic growth through developing heavy industry. In order to recruit enough workers for industrialization (and for the building of socialism), the Party depressed the wages of workers. One earner in a family was not enough for making a living for the family, and women were forced to take up paid work (Haney, 1994; Neményi, 1996). Meanwhile, state propaganda emphasized that women should work, not only because of financial reasons, but also because this way they could be fully human and equal to men. Posters depicted women tractor drivers and machine operators, who stood beside, not behind, men (Haney, 1994; Schadt, 2003). Children were also often depicted beside working mothers. The message was that women should not forget about their responsibilities as mothers, but motherhood in itself was not enough, women had to be workers as well (Csányi and Kerényi, 2019; Haney, 1994).

From 1953, however, the socialist rule started to increasingly acknowledge that women have maternal responsibilities besides work (Csányi and Kerényi, 2019, p. 148). This shift was supported by the declining birth rate caused by women's massive entry into the labour market due to extensive industrialization (Aczél and Szikra, 2012, p. 59). Single mothers also received increased state support from the beginning of the 1950s when the protection of mothers and children became a declared aim of the socialist state. As political leaders saw population growth as a source of legitimation of the system (Schadt,

2003, p. 132), the introduced measures first and foremost aimed to increase the birth rate. The new legislation on the one hand defined strict anti-abortion measures (Schadt, 2003, pp. 135-137), on the other hand, it increased support for pregnant women (Kéri, 2002, p. 48). Furthermore, it specified the creation of maternity homes for single mothers and local state offices became responsible to help single mothers in marrying the father of their children and to force fathers to pay child support for separated mothers (Council of Ministers' Decision 1004/1953. (II. 8.)). Besides, single mothers received preferential treatment regarding family allowance and sickness benefit from 1953: the allowance for families with one child was abolished, except for single mothers (Baranyai, 1998, p. 806), and they were entitled to sickness benefit until the child's second birthday, while for married and coupled mothers, it was available only until the child's first birthday (Göndör, 2012, p. 80).

The new Family Law of 1952 also brought significant changes in single mothers' lives. The law provided equal rights for children born within and out of wedlock, as well as men and women regarding marriage and divorce (Schadt, 2005, pp. 64-66). Therefore, divorce became an easier procedure, and the issue of "fault" was abolished. The law, however, also stated that all children need to have two legally recognized parents. This regulation, on the one hand, disregarded attempts of men to shrink from parental responsibility by claiming women promiscuous, on the other hand, it ignored women's intentions to keep the identity of the father in secret and to be independent of men. The law also regulated the practice of child support payments; the Ministry of Labour directly drew a portion from fathers' wages and transferred the money to the mothers (Haney, 2002).

Care for children was regulated as the primary responsibility of the nuclear and extended family, and the state took responsibility only in the cases of absence or failure of these relations. Local state offices, therefore, worked exhaustively to maintain and reunite families, and caseworkers often chased and regulated "dead beat dads," who abandoned their families and who failed to pay child support. If caseworkers could not reunite the nuclear family, they also helped single mothers' reintegration into their extended family by training them to present themselves to the family as "shunned women," who were abandoned by irresponsible men. Local state offices also advanced lone mothers' reintegration into employment, after all, they were seen as workers who need to finance

their own and their children's existence, with or without the help of the family and with modest help of the state (Haney, 2002, p. 81). Despite the help of state offices, benefits were scarce in the first period of socialism (1948-1952). Single mothers often had to give up their children to state care for short periods, in order to secure their existence due to the insufficient coverage of childcare services (Bicskei, 2006; Varsa, 2017). However, the idea that single mothers require extra state support dates back to this period, and this idea was present in consequent periods as well.

After the revolution of 1956, increasing living standards became one of the top aims of the new socialist rule (Rainer, 2011, p. 97). The amount of single mothers' family allowance was also raised due to this reason in 1959, as they were seen by the political leaders as working women who have especially hard circumstances raising children alone (Political Committee, 03 February 1959). The amount of single mothers' allowance was tripled in 1959 (Baranyai, 1998, p. 807), and from that time, they received a higher amount than two-parent families³: in 1959, the allowance of single mothers with two children was 69% higher than the amount of two-parent families with two children. This difference, however, decreased to 12% in 1965, (when the amount of family allowance of two-parent families with two children increased significantly) and less than 10% in the 1970s and remained on that level later on until the 1990s (Baranyai, 1998, pp. 808-810).

Single mothers' needs, therefore, were recognized by the socialist state, and also the media representation of divorced (as well as married) women was positive in the period of 1956-1970. They were represented as ideal women who did everything for their families and workplaces; they were seen as good workers and mothers. While newspaper articles emphasized the hard circumstances of mothers (e.g., scarce benefits, small wages, limited access to childcare services, modest housing conditions), the state and enterprises were also often represented as the saviour of the mothers (Grexa, 2017, p. 116). Meanwhile, the media representation of never-married single mothers was not that favourable in the 1950s, but it gradually changed towards a more positive view in the 1960s (Tóth, 2010).

³ Single fathers became entitled to the increased amount of family allowance in 1968 (Baranyai, 1998, p. 808).

Benefits became targeted after 1968, when mothers' needs were separated from those of other social groups. Mothers received new kinds of support and the state, instead of men, became their main supporter. In the 1960s, new benefits for mothers were introduced in Hungary as well as in other Eastern European countries to increase the birth rate that was starting to fall again. The case of Hungary was, however, special, as the pronatalist aim was combined with economic interests. The introduction of the New Economic Mechanism in 1968 made possible the market-based reorganization of enterprises as well as activities in the second economy. The new, two and half a year long parental leave (GYES), introduced in 1967, therefore, also served the economic aim to avoid labour force oversupply by leading mothers out from the labour market during the period of their parental leaves. The leave was primarily designed for mothers, however, single fathers and those men whose partner was too sick for care for the children, could as well apply for it from 1969. In that year, the length of the parental leave was also extended to three years (Haney, 2002).

In the public discourse, the declining birth rate was connected to mothers' participation in the labour market (Fodor, 2003), and the perception of women had gradually changed from the 1960s, as the state started to see them mainly as mothers and not as workers (Csányi and Kerényi, 2019, p. 150). Gender equality became a less salient issue, and the discourse focused more on the protection of women. Women could not work in jobs that were thought to be harmful to their reproductive capabilities from 1965, while the constitution also changed in 1972, and the principle that men and women should have equal opportunities in work was replaced by the principle that both men and women should have appropriate work conditions (Fodor, 2003, p. 106; Haney, 2002). Meanwhile, in order to help women to reconcile their different roles as mothers and workers, the Party prescribed the gradual reduction of night shifts for single mothers and mothers of several children (Zimmerman, 2010, p. 8).

Women's positions at their workplaces were secured while they were on parental leave, therefore, women could decide whether they would like to use the whole period of the three years, or only a part of it. Mothers, however, were rather pushed to stay home with their children during the whole period, as the public discourse emphasized the importance of mothers' role in young children's care and development, and working mothers of young children were seen as less of a good mother (Csányi and Kerényi, 2019, p. 150,

Haney, 2002). While the parental leave was designed in a way that provided the whole amount of the previous wage in the first twelve months, with a flat-rate amount adjusted to the average wage in the second two years, women with a higher level of income remained home less often for the whole period than mothers from lower-income groups. To encourage women with higher income to remain home with their children for a longer period, another track of parental leave was introduced in 1985 that replaced 75% of women's previous wages. In consequence, parental leave was used by a very diverse group of mothers, was not stigmatized, and fostered a strong sense of entitlement of mothers (Haney, 1994).

Family allowance also became maternalized in this period. From 1968, students, home workers, and part-time workers got included, and from 1974, mothers living in two-parent households could make an application to attach the allowance to their wage by referring to their primary caretaker role. Previously, the allowance was attached to the wage of the household head (employed full-time), and while single mothers living in separate households could receive the allowance, separated, divorced or married women living with a man were not eligible. Since then, family allowance became the right of the primary caretaker, and not the head of the household (Haney, 1994; 2002).

Furthermore, assistance-based benefits were also established in these years. Parents (usually mothers) could apply for Occasional (1969) and Regularized (1974) Child-Rearing Assistance, which were provided by local governments. Caseworkers did home visits, tested the domestic skills of mothers, and provided help only to those applicants who were judged as good mothers. "Good mothers" received help from caseworkers in finding deadbeat dads and they were more likely to be helped in finding convenient housing and receiving favourable custody arrangements. In cases where mothers were judged as "bad mothers," officials often took away their children and put them in state care, by referring to the dangerous home environment or maternal neglect (Haney, 2002).

It was typical during this period that women faced contradictory expectations. Mothers, who submitted their children into childcare facilities, were seen as less of a good mother, while those remaining home with their children for a long time were seen as secondary workers (Neményi, 1996). The public discourse often depicted mothers on parental leave as being bored and suffering from monotony, while there was a parallel discourse on

children who were left home alone while their mothers worked (Adamik, 2012; Zimmermann, 2012). Maternalist benefits reinforced traditional gender roles, and women were solely responsible for childcare and domestic work.

Childcare, therefore, was strongly attached to mothers from the late 1960s and it had a consequence on divorce practice as well. Divorce courts gave custody almost exclusively to mothers, who also received the apartment or house where the family had been living, while fathers had to move out (Tóth, 1993, p. 216). Fathers, furthermore, were obliged to pay child support, and in consequence of these factors, as well as the increased amount of family allowance, the average income of single-parent households was not much lower than that of two-parent households in the 1980s Hungary (Ferge, 1987, pp. 93-94).

Meanwhile, sociologists also argued that the dual system of stratification had led to the pauperization of female-headed households and urban families with children in the 1980s, as they had less access to the second economy (Szalai, 1991). Furthermore, single parents' poverty rate increased after the regime change (Förster and Tóth, 2001, p. 330). Lone mothers could not receive housing from councils and extra benefits from their workplaces anymore (Haney, 2002), while many workplace nurseries closed down and coverage rates of public nurseries dropped as local authorities became responsible for its finance (Corrin, 1994, p. 136). Eligibility shifted from motherhood to maternal needs, and women were recognized by the system only in case of financial need; they were no longer entitled based on working status, motherhood, or family membership. Social workers only helped those women who were materially deprived, and no longer evaluated the maternal skills of women (Haney, 2002). Mothers on parental leave lost job protection in 1991 (Corrin, 1994, p. 133), and the system of cash benefits also went through many changes in the 1990s.

After the regime change, Hungarian governments were forced by international organizations (e.g., the IMF) to reduce their social spending and make benefits, such as the parental leave, income-tested (Goven, 2000, pp. 287-297). The first government was formed by a coalition of Christian conservatives, who preserved the maternalist benefits. It was in accordance with the broader political discourse that emphasized mothers' caring role. The employment of women was specified as something unnatural to the Hungarian identity – that was forced by foreign influence (socialism), oppositely to Hungarian

women's natural role as mothers (Haney, 1994, pp. 136-145; Watson, 2014, pp. 132-133). The second democratic government was formed by socialists (1994-1998) who, however, wanted to abandon the socialist legacy by moving towards liberal policies. Therefore, the plan of Bokros was realized in 1996 that made both family allowance and parental leave income-tested (Haney, 2002). The family allowance remained universal only for families with at least three children. Single-parent families had to pass the means test, however, they had a more favourable income threshold to pass than two-parent families (Goven, 2000, p. 295). The restrictions of family benefits generated strong dissatisfaction among the public, and the maternalist media discourse on a child's need for mother's care resulted in the restoration of these benefits in 1998 by the third government (Goven, 2000).

The first Orbán government restored these benefits in 1998 and introduced a new system of tax benefits that was abolished in 2002 when the Socialist Party became the governing party and was introduced again after the formation of the second Orbán government in 2010 (Darvas and Szikra, 2017). Increasing the birth rate had become one of the top aims of the government since 2010, and it started to advertise traditional family values due to the belief that liberal relationships and gender equality were the sources of the low birth rate (Szikra, 2014, p. 9). Furthermore, tax credit became the most important tool of family policy as the government aimed to increase the birth rate of middle-class families in particular (Darvas and Szikra, 2017, pp. 223-227). The tax credit was designed to be progressive in the sense that it provided a higher amount of reduction for those with a higher tax base and with more children, while it did not provide a higher level of reduction for single-parent families. The level of targeting towards single-parent families regarding cash transfers, therefore, decreased since 2010, as the tax credit did not differentiate between single-parent and two-parent families and as the family allowance had not been indexed with inflation since 2008. The tax credit favoured not only two-parent families, but also families with a higher level of income. This kind of distinction between better-off and less wealthy families could also be observed in the services of the Single Parents' Centre. The government founded a centre for the help of single-parent families in Budapest in 2018, where single parents could receive help regarding legal or child-rearing problems, as well as providing free-time programs for single-parent families. The Centre, therefore, provided help in other areas of single parents' life rather than providing financial help that could help significantly the life of poor families.

Single mothers' state support has been embedded in the family allowance system since the beginning of the 20th century. They became entitled to the allowance based on their right from the late 1950s and single-parent families have received a higher amount since then. Single mothers were a highlighted group throughout socialism; they received extra benefits and the state also forced fathers to pay child support. There was not a wide gap between single-parent and two-parent households' income in the 1980s, while the poverty rate of single parents increased significantly after the regime change. Support through the family allowance also remained more or less intact in post-socialist periods, however, the current government's reform decreased the significance of the family allowance in the family policy system.

2.4. INSTITUTIONAL LEGACIES, IDEAS, REFORM DISCOURSES, AND GENDER EQUALITY – THE COMPARISON OF THE CASES

2.4.1. Institutional Legacies and Ideas

The summaries show that the historical development of single mothers' state support in the 20th century was quite different in Hungary as compared to the US and UK. One of the major differences is the form of state support. In the Anglo-Saxon countries, single mothers received assistance-based benefits, while in Hungary, their support was incorporated in the contributory benefit scheme of family allowance. These different institutional settings were determined by the perception of single mothers as workers, mothers, or both. In the UK and US, single mothers were mainly seen as mothers during the major part of the 20th century. ADC was founded as part of the Social Security Act of 1935, however, as single mothers were seen as non-employable citizens (such as mothers in general), they were included in an assistance scheme rather than in a contributory one. Similarly, the UK was strongly engaged in the male-breadwinner model, and therefore, single mothers were seen as mothers. On the contrary, in Hungary, single mothers were included in the contributory family allowance scheme from the beginning of the century, and therefore, they could receive the allowance if they were working mothers and if the father of the child was not entitled. The perception of single mothers as workers strengthened in socialism, wherein everyone was obliged to work, even single mothers, who could receive the family allowance as their right from the 1950s. While women were seen primarily as mothers due to pronatalist concerns from the 1960s, they still had to

work before and after parental leave, and single mothers' support remained incorporated in the family allowance scheme. Moreover, the state provided childcare services for working mothers in Hungary, while in the Anglo-Saxon countries the state had not promoted single mothers' employment with such services.

The next difference is also connected to the perception of single mothers as mothers or workers. As Hungarian single mothers were seen as working mothers by the state, they were also seen responsible for making a living for themselves and their children with the help of the father of the children (if his help was available) and the state. On the contrary, in the Anglo-Saxon countries, they were seen as dependents who were not responsible for the financial welfare of their family and who should be supported by the state, and who could count on the help of their ex-partner to various extents. Fathers remained quite marginal actors until the 1990s, when both countries aimed to increase the responsibility of fathers by forcing paternity tests and strengthening child support enforcement. Therefore, while the Hungarian system built upon the shared responsibility of mothers, fathers, and the state, the US and UK mainly focused on the responsibility of the state. In reality, however, a large number of single mothers had to work in the US in addition to getting assistance due to its low amount and the specific regulations of the different states.

The third important difference between the systems is how they perceived widows, separated/divorced, and never-married mothers. In the US and UK, widows enjoyed preferential treatment over other single mothers: they got involved in the social security scheme, and they were more likely to receive assistance. Widows were perceived as more deserving as they remained alone without a male breadwinner, while the state wanted to give less eligibility to other single mothers to not make single motherhood more appealing than married one. In Hungary, such discrimination has not existed since the 1950s as the family allowance covered all working single mothers whether they were widows, never-married, separated, or divorced. This wide circle of eligibility was supported by the liberal divorce law implemented also in the 1950s. Furthermore, the share of never-married single mothers remained at a low level in Hungary compared to the Anglo-Saxon countries, as only 6.2% of single mothers were never-married, 39% were divorced and 31.1% were widows in 1990 (Szukicsné, 1995, p. 24).

Table 1. Major Differences in the Institutional Design of Single Mothers' Benefits and Underlying Ideas in the 20th Century's US, UK, and Hungary (until the 1990s)

Institutional Differences	Countries			Ideas
	US	UK	HU	
In what form should the state support single mothers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributory (changed to universal in 1990) Free childcare services for working mothers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single mothers are perceived solely as mothers (US, UK) vs. mothers and workers (HU)
Who should help single mothers? <i>Signs (+) and (++) show the required level of support</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State (++) Fathers of children (+) Single mothers (increasing demand throughout the century, but legislation changed only in the 1990s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State (++) Fathers of children (+) (Child Support Act 1991) Single mothers (from the mid-1990s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single mothers (+) Fathers of children (+) State (+) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Male breadwinner model (US, UK) vs. socialist dual-earner model (full employment) (HU)
Which single mothers should be supported by the state?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widow to a higher extent Separated/divorced and Never-married to a lesser extent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widow to a higher extent Separated/divorced and Never-married to a lesser extent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widow Separated/divorced Never-married 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less eligibility for non-widow single mothers (US, UK) vs. liberal understanding of relationships (HU)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> White mothers (US) 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong racism towards African-Americans

2.4.2. Reforms and Applied Frames

There were not strong institutional obstacles to reform the system during the 1990s in the UK and US, as single mothers were involved in assistance-based schemes that usually had lower social legitimacy than other forms of support (that are contributory-based or universal) (Korpi, 1980; Rothstein, 1998), the male-breadwinner model became more and more outdated, and never-married/divorced/separated single motherhood became more common than widow single motherhood. Furthermore, the reform was supported by the strong negative image of unmarried single mothers, who were framed as undeserving for public support, by being unemployed and by deviating from the traditional family form (and who were perceived as Black in the US). These images were quite negative, also because they presented single mothers as undeserving based on most of the CARIN deservingness criteria, as Chapter 4 will show.

The undeserving frame built upon the negative attitudes towards AFDC recipients in the US, where the negative perception of single mothers gradually intensified from the mid-20th century. While the benefit was created to support white widow single mothers in 1935, the growing share of African-American and never-married AFDC recipients, who were seen as undeserving, invoked negative attitudes towards the AFDC program as a whole. These negative feelings were strengthened by the Moynihan Report in the 1960s, as well as the academic discourse on single mothers' state support by Charles Murray in the 1980s. The welfare reform discourse on single mothers' deservingness, therefore, built upon previous discourses as well as negative attitudes towards Black and unmarried single mothers. Similarly, the negative discourse on single mothers' deservingness was also not new in the 1990s UK, however, there was less continuity in its historical development compared to the US. Unmarried single motherhood was strongly stigmatized in early 20th century Britain, where they were perceived as mentally deficient and where they could only receive poor relief in workhouses. Stigmatization gradually lessened later on, and unmarried, as well as divorced and separated motherhood, became a non-stigmatized position in the 1970s. Consequently, the negative discourse on single mothers' deservingness in the 1990s was a more radical shift in the perception of single mothers in the UK than in the US.

The situation is quite different in Hungary, as single mothers were seen as deserving throughout the 20th century. They received a higher amount of family allowance since the

1950s, and this system remained more or less intact even after the regime change. Their extra needs compared to two-parent families were recognized and a higher level of state support was guaranteed even though the concept of the nuclear family was also the ideal one in socialism. Negative discourse on single mothers' deservingness, therefore, would not fit this historical-institutional context. Accordingly, single mothers are not the main characters of the reforms and the connected discourse. On the other hand, as the government believes that the main cause of the declining birth rate is the liberalization of the relationships, it also states that non-traditional families (among single-parent families) and liberal relationships are the sources of the problem. Changes in the benefit system (decreasing value of family allowance and a tax credit system that does not differentiate between single-parent and two-parent families) also point to the direction that the government aims to provide "less eligibility" to single-parent families than two-parent ones to prevent single parenthood from appearing more appealing than coupled (preferably married) parenthood (similarly to the Anglo-Saxon countries).

2.4.3. Gender Equality

These different historical-institutional designs of single mothers' state support and connected discourses also show different pathways of promoting gender equality. A liberal divorce law was introduced in Hungary already in the 1950s. This law eliminated the concept of fault in divorce and gave equal rights to illegitimate and legitimate children. In consequence, women could have exited unwanted marriages more easily, and women having illegitimate children were not stigmatized by the law. Moreover, in Hungary, working women could have also received the family allowance for children born out of wedlock. In contrast, in the UK and US, no-fault divorce was introduced only in 1969 (UK) (Lewis, 1998) and in the 1970s (US) (Ellman, 1997), while the illegitimate children rule in the US (applied in some of the states) denied social assistance to those women who gave birth to illegitimate children while receiving assistance.

Furthermore, under socialism, single mothers were obliged to work, and have their own income. In addition, they received an increased amount of family allowance from 1959, and fathers were forced to pay child support. Based on all of these sources, women had a higher capacity to form and maintain an autonomous household in Hungary compared to the Anglo-Saxon countries, where single mothers were treated as non-employable citizens, who relied on assistance-based benefits, and where fathers' responsibility (and

how the state forced it) varied during the century. Additionally, single mothers were not supported by childcare services in the UK and US, and they lost assistance if they had a job (that often paid only slightly better than the allowance). Insurance programs also involved only widow single mothers but not divorced/separated and never-married women, therefore, eligibility to these benefits were tied to the women's relations to men, and belief about the faultiness of those mothers, who somehow violated the social norms and had exited, or had not even entered, marriage.

The negative discourses of the US and UK also largely set back gender equality by blaming single mothers for their situation (being in need of state support), and by stigmatizing women who aimed to form a family without a man. Oppositely, in Hungary, the state propaganda emphasized the equality of the two sexes, and while the traditional family was also the ideal in Hungary, single mothers were not stigmatized by the state and the propaganda framed them as deserving recipients, who needed to take care of their children alone while working. Furthermore, while the 1960s discourse in Hungary and policies oriented towards a maternalistic welfare state, and advertised traditional gender roles, and especially mothers' caring role, single mothers were not excluded from the newly introduced benefits. They could receive the same benefits as married mothers, because eligibility was tied to employment and motherhood, and not to family relationships (e.g., wifehood, widowhood).

As the new benefits aimed to increase the fertility rate (besides economic aims) and to give a chance to mothers to spend more time with their young children, the emphasis in these reforms was on the relations between mothers and children, rather than on relations between men and women. Meanwhile, the reform and discourse of the 2010s set back gender equality more from the perspective of single motherhood, by focusing on the importance of marriage, and therefore the relations between men and women. This reform and the connected discourse, however, also could not exclude single mothers from the benefit system, and could not explicitly demonize single motherhood (compared to the Anglo-Saxon countries) as it would not be in line with the historical-institutional context.

To sum up, the socialist state compared to the UK and US created greater possibilities for women to divorce without being stigmatized and to live alone by providing a liberal legal environment, as well as by giving them more capacity to form and maintain an

autonomous household (through employment, benefits, and child support). These rights were provided much earlier to single mothers in socialist Hungary compared to the capitalist UK and US, and shed light on the progressiveness of the Hungarian state in promoting gender equality compared to the UK and US. The progressiveness of the socialist system could also be captured by the characteristic that it built upon the shared responsibility of mothers and fathers, while in the Anglo-Saxon countries the shared responsibility of parents had become important mainly in the 1990s. The socialist state's commitment to support single mothers seem to be a path-dependent feature in the Hungarian welfare system, that neither the materialist turn nor the 2010s traditional discourse could substantially change.

2.5.CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter reviewed the institutional changes as well as ideas that shaped the state support of single mothers in the 20th and early 21st century UK, US, and Hungary. The reviews aimed to identify relevant turning points in the benefit systems and shaped ideas that might have paved the way for the welfare reforms and connected discourses in the 1990s UK and US, as well as the 2010s Hungary. In addition, the chapter aimed to contribute to the comparative feminist social policy literature by evaluating the development of single mothers' state support in a (post)socialist country compared to capitalist democracies.

Based on these reviews, three major historical differences seem to explain the reason why the question in the Anglo-Saxon discourses was whether single mothers deserve state support at all, and why in Hungary, the question rather is that single-parent families deserve more, less, or the same support than traditional families: 1) engagement towards the male breadwinner state in the Anglo-Saxon countries versus two-earner family model in socialist Hungary (i.e., single mothers are mothers, workers or both?) 2) the design of single parents' benefits (selective in the US and UK, versus contributory and later universal in Hungary) 3) less eligibility for never-married and divorced single mothers in the US and UK, compared to widows vs. equal level of support for the widow, divorced, separated and never-married single mothers in Hungary.

These differences all explain why single mothers' state support could have been questioned in the 1990s UK and US. They were not-working mothers when already a large share of married mothers had paid employment. They received assistance-based benefits that are usually supported by a lower share of the public than more universal benefits. Besides, the share of never-married mothers, who were seen as less deserving than other single mothers, increased sharply.

In contrast, single mothers in Hungary were obliged to work in socialism and received an increased level of support that was built on the contributory family allowance system that became universal after the regime change and was means-tested only for a short period. The policies have not differentiated between widow and divorced/separated/never-married single mothers that was supported by the liberal divorce law introduced in the early 1950s. Therefore, single-mother families' state support has a long-standing and quite stable tradition in Hungary, and, consequently, single-parent families' state support could hardly be questioned there.

Moreover, the results of this chapter shed light on the progressiveness of the Hungarian welfare system compared to the Anglo-Saxon countries, regarding recognizing single mothers' needs, and consequently, also fostering gender equality. The liberal legal environment in socialist Hungary made it easier for women to leave undesirable marriages, while their employment, provided benefits (that were tied to employment) and fathers' forced responsibility in financing their abandoned children, provided capacity for women to form and maintain an autonomous household. In contrast, in the UK and US, single motherhood was a much more stigmatized position throughout the 20th century, as a liberal divorce law was introduced much later, and single mothers' employment was not encouraged by policies and services, and they lost social assistance when they had paid work. Based on these results, this comparison also challenges Western feminist literature regarding socialist states' belatedness in terms of gender equality, at least regarding the case of single mothers' state support.

Taking into account these historical-institutional characteristics, the next chapter investigates the Hungarian government discourse in more detail, to see how it directly addresses single-parent families' deservingness within the broad frame of population decline and the importance of traditional family values.

3. THE DESERVING TRADITIONAL FAMILY AND THE LESS DESERVING SINGLE-PARENT FAMILY – GOVERNMENT DISCOURSE IN THE 2010S HUNGARY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

A growing stream of literature highlights that framing welfare state change based on the (un)deservingness of the concerned target groups could be an effective strategy (e.g., Esmark and Schoop, 2017; Slothuus, 2007). Studies, however, mostly investigated welfare cuts that were legitimized by undeserving images of target groups (e.g., Hancock, 2004; Slothuus, 2007). Less attention has been paid to the deserving frame which aims to legitimate a higher level of state support for an advantaged group by advertising its deservingness, and how this frame could make other, less advantaged groups undeserving. This kind of framing works differently than the undeserving one – which usually emphasizes the individual responsibility and special interest of the group – it highlights the common interest and the role of the target group in achieving public purposes, such as economic competitiveness or national defense (Schneider and Ingram, 1993, p. 339; Ingram et al, 2007, p. 101).

The government framing of family policy change in the 2010s Hungary is a good example of this case, as the government justified the advertisement of traditional family values and increased support towards families with children to stop the decline of the population. Traditional families are seen deserving in this frame, as population decline is described as a cause of the liberalization of relationships, and the frame states that only the strengthening of traditional family values could lead to an increased birth rate. Within this frame, therefore, other types of families are seen as less deserving.

This chapter investigates how the government communicates about single-parent families within this broad frame. This issue is interesting as based on the historical-institutional context presented in the previous chapter, single-parent families could hardly be framed as undeserving. Therefore, this chapter investigates both the discourse on traditional family values, that, in general, refuses the alternative family forms (and by this, also single-parent families), and the direct discourse on single-parent families. Based on these two discourses, the chapter addresses the investigation of the following research question:

To what extent, and how, does the government discourse frame single-parent families as less deserving compared to traditional (two-parent) families?

3.2. DATA AND METHODS

Data for the analysis were collected from the website of the Hungarian government (www.kormany.hu) and from its archived website (www.2010-2014.kormany.hu) to cover articles also before and after 2014. Articles and speeches were gathered by using keywords in the search fields of the websites from the period between July 2010 and July 2020. On the one hand, speeches and articles that contain the phrase “traditional family” were gathered to see how the discourse on traditional family values relates to single parenthood. On the other hand, speeches and articles that mentioned either “single-parent families” or “single mothers/single fathers,” were also collected to see the communication of the government, especially regarding single-parent families. Collected data include transcripts of speeches given by representatives of the government and articles written for the website. The articles usually summarise events and speeches of government officials and could be regarded as a source of government discourse.

The collected texts were revised and texts irrelevant to the investigation (e.g., traditional family was mentioned but the text was not about the topic of family) were excluded. The final sample consists of 25 texts related to traditional family and 29 texts connected to single parenthood. Furthermore, additional five texts were collected regarding important events connected to single parenthood between 2010 and 2020, because texts collected from the government websites mainly focused on benefits of single parents (e.g., Single Parents’ Centre, summer camps etc.) but neglected speeches connected to events such as the modification of the Fundamental Law in 2013 and the National Consultation on Family in 2018. Moreover, an additional text was collected connected to the changes in the adoption system in 2020, as this event happened after the investigated period (July 2010 and July 2020), but was relevant to the topic. In most of the texts related to traditional family values (10 from 25), the speaker is the Hungarian prime minister, Viktor Orbán (including his speeches in one of the Hungarian publicly funded radio stations, Radio Kossuth, as well as other speeches at national and international events). Five of these texts include speeches (or summaries of speeches) of Katalin Novák, who has been the Minister of State for Family and Youth Affairs since 2014, and became the Minister

without Portfolio for Family Affairs in 2020, while in three texts, the statements of the representatives of the Catholic church are also presented (besides government members). The remaining part of these texts are summaries of speeches of other representatives of the government. In contrast, most of the texts connected to single parenthood include the statements or speeches of Katalin Novák at national events (17 texts from the 34), while the statements of Viktor Orbán appear only in one text (one speech at the Hungarian Diaspora Council). The remaining texts include the statements of other representatives of the government (most of them are other ministers of the government).

First, as the government's communication regarding traditional family values is connected to one broad frame, the analysis of this communication will start with a frame analysis. Based on Entman's (1993) definition framing is *"to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described"* (p. 52). Framing analysis connects communication with power, and states that while frames call attention to particular aspects of the reality and omit other information, they also reinforce the views of power holders. To identify the frame, texts were read in a manner to reveal the proposed problem definition, the causal interpretation, the moral evaluation, and treatment. I start the analysis with the identification of these elements, then I analyse the texts in more detail with critical discourse analysis.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a text analytical approach within which the researcher applies an attitude against power elites and in solidarity with dominated groups to investigate how power elites enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce or challenge relations of power abuse (dominance) through its communication (van Dijk, 2015). It investigates the role of language, language use, and discursive/communicative events in reproducing dominant positions of groups. CDA presumes that power elites (whose communication is under investigation) have access to special forms or contexts of communication, and control over other groups. Control incorporates two aspects: action and cognition. Regarding action, dominant groups could limit other groups' access to communication, while cognition reflects that power elites could influence others' minds through their communication (van Dijk, 2015; Wodak and Meyer, 2009). Such members of the government have exclusive access to government discourse and also, preferential

access to mass media. It is increasingly true for Hungary since 2010, as media sources are gradually linked to properties close to the government (Polyák, 2019). The government, therefore, controls other groups' access to the media and communication, and as a result, increasingly influences public minds, as the presentation of other perspectives are limited.

More concretely, CDA is used in this chapter to investigate the discursive practices through the government reinforces traditional families' advantaged position in the society at a disadvantage of other forms of family types – and especially in our case, at a disadvantage of single-parent families. The analysis is based on the following analytical steps of CDA: to select a discourse, to locate and prepare data sources for analysis, to explore the background of each text (e.g., social and historical context, producers of the text), to code texts and identify themes, to analyse the external relations in the texts (e.g., reciprocal relations between texts and social norms/structures/practices), to analyse the internal relations in the texts (e.g., examine the language, representations, speaker's positionality), to interpret the data (Mullet, 2018, p. 7).

Based on this analytical framework of CDA, I investigate two government discourses, the one regarding traditional family values, and the other, regarding single parenthood, and I will demonstrate that these two discourses reinforce single parents' subordinated position differently, as the government uses a double communication in this aspect. In the conclusion, I evaluate how the two discourses (the one on the importance of traditional family and the other on single-parent families) are related to each other.

3.3. THE DISCOURSE ON TRADITIONAL FAMILY VALUES

3.3.1. Framing the Importance of Traditional Family Values: Illiberalism, Christianity, Nationalism, and Pronatalism

The communication of the government on the traditional family is connected to one broad frame. In this frame, the problem according to the government is the demographic decline in Europe that is caused by liberal family values, promoted by liberal democracies. Therefore, it morally judges the demographic decline that will lead to the extinction of the nation, as children and families are the foundation of the nation. The offered solution by the frame is the promotion of Christian, traditional family values as well as increased

family benefits that will encourage couples to have more children. This frame, therefore, combines anti-liberalism (that the prime minister describes as *illiberalism*) with *Christianity, nationalism, and pronatalism*.

The protection of the traditional family is specified as one element of *illiberalism*⁴, besides the refusal of immigration and multiculturalism. The government refuses the plurality of families and cultures and claims that there is one basic culture that is *Christianity* and there is one basic form of family that is the traditional one. The “traditional family” is seen as being part of Christian culture, as well as the foundation of the *nation*. Therefore, alternative family types are blamed for eroding the basic culture that is Christianity, as well as contributing to the demographic decline that will lead to the extinction of the nation. The solution is *pronatalism*, as the state needs to encourage families to have more children to stop population decline. *Pronatalism* includes incentives through the family policy system, as well as strengthening traditional, Christian values of the population.

The following quotes from the Prime Minister’s speeches illustrate the frame. The first quote is from a radio show, recorded in 2018, where Orbán gave an interview after the formation of the third Orbán government and spoke about the plans of it – among the protection of families and Christian culture. The second quote is from his speech at the Second Demographic Forum in 2017, where he spoke about the Hungarian government’s solutions to demographic problems.

“It does not protect us in the world of families, because liberal democracy does not strengthen families, it says, that there are many kinds of families, many kinds of lifestyles, these kinds should not be distinguished, even these should have equal treatment in legislation. The consequence of these, also the consequence of these that we are living in demographical, population decline. Therefore, I think that we have problems also regarding Christian culture, because liberal democracy does not acknowledge that there

⁴ The Hungarian prime minister declared in 2014 that Hungary has been oriented towards an illiberal democracy instead of a liberal democracy (Orbán, 2014). Illiberalism means a system that combines democratic and anti-democratic features, such as there are general elections and a multi-party system, but there is no protection of citizens’ individual rights, and there are no constitutional limits of power (Zakaria, 1997). In these speeches, however, the Prime minister specifies illiberalism as antiliberal ideological considerations, such as the refusal of pluralism regarding family types and cultures, as well as the refusal of immigration.

is a highlighted, leading, determining culture, – of course, there are other cultures in a society, and those also have a place, as we are tolerant, however, there is still a basic culture of our society that need to be protected, this is the Christian culture.” (Viktor Orbán, 25th May 2018, at Radio Kossuth in the show called '180 perc', national audience)

“Our opinion is that we need to solve the demographical problems by relying on our capacities – and let’s admit it – we need to do it through our spiritual renewal. (...) This fight is only meaningful if we could put a family policy besides, which recovers the natural reproduction in the continent.” (Viktor Orbán, 25th May 2017, at the Second Demographical Forum, Budapest, international audience)

Within this frame, alternative family forms are seen as a threat to Christian culture and the nation, while the traditional family is the savior of the nation. The traditional family is clearly the deserving family, who deserves moral protection as well as financial support from the government, while alternative family types are not deserving as they are causing demographic decline.

In the following section, I highlight further how the discourse reproduces the dominance of the traditional family and how it reflects on single-parent families’ deservingness based on two recurring themes. First, the definition of family in the Fundamental Law and the connected discourse will be analyzed, then the rights of the majority (traditional family) and minorities (alternative family forms), as well as the normalization of the traditional family are going to be discussed.

3.3.2. The Family Definition

The government enacted the new family definition with the fourth amendment of the Fundamental Law in 2013. The definition specifies that *“Hungary shall protect the institution of marriage as the union of a man and a woman established by voluntary decision, and the family as the basis of the survival of the nation. Family ties shall be based on marriage or the relationship between parents and children.”* (Hungarian Fundamental Law, Article L). This definition clearly excludes same-sex couples from the definition of family by declaring that marriage is the basis of a family that could only come into existence between a man and a woman. It evidently excludes non-married heterosexual couples as well, even if they have common children. In their case, parents

form a family with their children, but parents do not form a family with each other (Pap 2018: 74). A legal study (Bánkuti et al, 2013: 7) also found that the article's understanding is ambiguous regarding single-parent families. On the one hand, the definition recognizes parent-child relationship, on the other hand, it uses the word "illetve" between marriage and parent-child relationship. "Illetve" in Hungarian could be understood in three ways: 1) and 2) or 3) and/or. Therefore, it is not clear, that both relations are necessary conditions of a family, or either one of them is enough to understand relationships as family ties. Moreover, the Hungarian justification of the amendment specifies it with "and" ("és")⁵, while the English version of the Fundamental Law uses "or" ("vagy") (Fundamental Law, Article L). Based on these definitional differences it is not evident if single-parent families are included or not.

However, government members in related interviews explained that they also included single parents and their children. One representative of the smaller governing party (KDNP), Péter Harrach, justified the inclusion of single-parent families in the definition, as they took into account the Hungarian reality. He added that in their view the "smallest family" is also family. On the other hand, he highlighted that in the opinion of the party, the healthiest environment for children is the community of parents and siblings. This communication suggests that single-parent families are accepted as families, however, they are accepted as less healthy, "second-class" families after traditional families. Furthermore, he highlighted that the new definition focuses on the interests of children instead of the relation between parents, and while each child is equally important, a distinction should be made between the different forms of relationships. He said that marriage is a legally well-arranged relationship, while civil partnership is a free, bondless form of relations. Therefore, on the one hand, he said that the healthiest form of family is the community of parents and siblings, on the other hand, he excluded those two-parent families from the definition of family, where the parents were not married. It suggests that marriage is a more important value than the community of parents after all, and while children could form "second-class" families with one of their parents, non-married couples could not (form a family).

⁵ "Háttéranyag az Alaptörvény negyedik módosításához". Available at: <https://2010-2014.kormany.hu/download/0/09/d0000/VB%20-%20Alapt%C3%B6rv%C3%A9ny%20h%C3%A1tt%C3%A9r%20130411.pdf> (Accessed: 1st September 2020)

The definition of family is a salient topic in the government discourse throughout the whole examined period. The most frequently emphasized part of the definition is that “family” requires a man and a woman, and only a man and a woman could marry. The emphasis is, therefore, clearly on the heteronormative family ideal and the importance of marriage. By this, the government recurrently strengthens what is written in the Fundamental Law and suggests some kind of rank order of families. Government members, first and foremost, exclude same-sex couples from the definition of family, as both the Law states, and government members also exhaustively emphasize, that only a man and a woman could marry, and marriage is a necessary condition of family. Second, they also evidently exclude heterosexual couples living in a civil partnership as they are not married. Third, while the family definition does not explicitly exclude single-parent families, the repeated statement that “*any form of relationship within marriage is family*” again questions whether single-parent families are families or not.

Viktor Orbán, the prime minister, also addressed the topic of family definition in one of his speeches in 2019. He spoke at the meeting of the Hungarian Diaspora Council (i.e., the meeting of those Hungarians who are living outside the territory of historic Hungary). He talked about the issues of Hungarians living outside of Hungary, afterwards, he presented the plans of the Orbán government. He described plans such as economic and martial development, the conservation of Hungarian cultural heritage, the strengthening of foreign relations, as well as increasing the fertility rate. Related to the latter, he said that there is a debate in Hungary about what family is, and while they tried to define it once, they realized that it is not an easy task. He continued:

“Does a married couple without a child form a family or not, or a single mother could be considered as a family or not? We realized that in this case, there is no cleverness, therefore, it is better to not define, as people feel it anyway what family is. That is a love community, taking into account one constitutional barrier, that naturally a man and a woman could marry in Hungary, within this, any form of union is family, and deserve support.” (Viktor Orbán, 14th of November 2019, at the 9th meeting of the Hungarian Diaspora Council, Budapest, international audience)

While Orbán raises the question whether childless married couples and single mothers (with their children) form a family or not, he does not address it explicitly. He says that

“people feel it anyway”. He also adds, however, that there is one constitutional barrier, namely that only a man and a woman could marry, and any form of union within this is family. This statement is ambiguous again as, on the one hand, the fact that only a man and a woman could marry does not exclude single parents and their children from the definition. On the other hand, the other part of the statement does exclude single-parent families and also couples living in a civil union (with or without children) from the definition of family, as Orbán says that any form of union within marriage is family. Consequently, in his view, only those unions where there is a married couple, are families.

Besides government members, representatives of the Catholic Church also often share their opinion on the family in government events. They strengthen the government’s message, for instance, by saying that family is based on marriage and a family’s aim is to have children, and that there is no family without marriage and openness to have children. They even more strongly emphasize traditional family values, and go one step further regarding the issue of single-parent families by stating that marriage is an indissoluble relationship, and religious people have to advertise these values even if they need to make sacrifices because of it (*Lajos Pápai, bishop of Győr, 20th of August 2011, at the festive Mass on the occasion of the foundation of the state, Budapest, national audience, a summary of this occasion was available at the government’s website*). Therefore, it says, couples should stay married even if they have marriage problems, because divorce is not an acceptable solution.

3.3.3. The Majority and the “Normal” Need to Be Protected

Another recurrent theme in the speeches is the protection of the majority against minorities. While the representatives of the government often emphasize that they are tolerant of the minorities (see also quotes above), they say that the majority also deserves tolerance. By this, they suggest that while they are tolerant, minorities are not, and consequently minorities are threatening the majority. The following two quotes from Katalin Novák, who has been the Minister of State for Family and Youth Affairs since 2014, highlight this issue. The first quote is from her speech at the international conference of ‘Political Network for Values’, which international network’s aim is to serve as a forum for policymakers to share ideas and good practices regarding the advertisement of marriage and family values. Novák talked about the Hungarian Fundamental Law, and how family, marriage, the protection of human life, and the

protection of human dignity are secured within it. The second quote is from her speech at an ecumenical forum organized on the occasion of the Year of the Family⁶. At this event, she talked about that a family's role is to give life, and consequently, she also emphasized that family is formed by a man and a woman. In this context, the quote especially refers to same-sex couples.

“There are people today who believe that marriage and classic family relations are old-fashioned. For these people, we should also strengthen the belief that the traditional family model and marriage are not outdated, out-of-fashion, and awkward, but trendy, cool, and sexy. (...) Tolerance and solidarity are two-way. It is also a right of the minorities and the majority.”

(Katalin Novák, 26th September 2015, at the international conference of 'Political Network for Values' in Washington, D.C.)

“We need to stand up steadily for the value of marriage, as there is a danger that we will forget about the majority when some people fight for the rights of a tiny minority group.”

(Katalin Novák, 30th of June 2018, at a forum organised at the Reformed Church Days in Transdanubia, national audience)

Some of the speeches go even further by not only stating that the majority deserves tolerance but explicitly saying that the “normal” – that is traditional family – needs to be protected. For instance, Mikós Szánthó, the president of Central European Press and Media Foundation said in a government event about the media's role in the formation of the family image, that it is absurd that “normal things” need to be promoted and protected. He added that it is, however, inevitable, as the traditional family is under a comprehensive attack, and the media need to serve the aim of “*strengthening national identity, protecting Christian culture and with that, strengthening traditional, normal families.*” (18th of June 2019, at the conference of ‘Media in service of families,’ national audience).

⁶ The government declared 2018 as the Year of the Family in Hungary. The aim of this occasion was to give more attention and support to families. Programs were organized during the year to advertise family life, and new benefits were introduced as well (e.g., mortgage reduction of families with three or more children). (Website of the Year of the Family, Available at: <https://csaladokeve.hu/>, Accessed: 15. 09. 2021).

The normality of the traditional family was also highlighted by the further part of the above-quoted speech of Katalin Novák. She talked about the importance of protecting the rights of the majority, and she emphasized women's and men's traditional roles in marriage. She said that they are often accused of homophobia even when they speak about the most evident facts. She continued that family is when there is a woman and a man, and the two of them are just enough for a family. Finally, she said: "*while soft drinks are promoted a lot, children like water even without advertisement*" (30th of June 2018). By that, she compared traditional family to water, which is natural, and compared to other family forms (in this context mainly same-sex couple families) to soft drinks, which are unnatural and unhealthy. Furthermore, it suggested that the traditional family is naturally liked by children, while other forms are only liked due to its advertisement.

The representatives of the government also emphasized the normality (and the tradition) of the family definition on other occasions by saying that the government could not simply rewrite something that had been the same for "*tens of thousands of years*" (Bence Rétvári, *Parliamentary Secretary of State of the Ministry of Human Resources*, 21st of November 2014, *at the conference focusing on the theme of family of the European People's Party and the Barankovics Foundation*⁷, Budapest, international audience) or by saying that family and marriage are determined by the Orders of creation (doctrine of theology), and not a social institution that could be changed when it expires (Zoltán Balog, *Secretary of State for Churches and Minorities*, 21st of November 2018, *at the conference of Churches in the Service of Families – organized by the government-funded The Maria Kopp Institute for Demography and Families –*, national audience). Viktor Orbán also "normalized" the definition of family in one of his radio speeches connected to demographic decline (8th of March 2019; *at Radio Kossuth, in the programme of 'Good Morning Hungary,' national audience*), by saying that the *way of life* is that people have both mother and father. By this, he again excluded same-sex couples from the circle of "normal" families, however, this statement also excludes many single-parent families, where one of the parents is missing from the child's life.

⁷ The Barankovics István Foundation was founded by the Hungarian Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) in 2006, and it aims to "cultivate the traditions of Christian politics" and "to seek Christian-democratic responses to the socio-political challenges of the 21st century" (Barankovics Foundation's website). Available at: <https://barankovics.hu/en/> (Accessed: 15.09.2021).

The government blames non-traditional families for causing demographic decline, and it also states that traditional families are the “normal ones” who need to be protected by the state. The detailed investigation of this discourse, however, showed that single-parent families are not explicitly refused by the government compared to same-sex couples and heterosexual couples living in a civil union. Nevertheless, single-parent families are accepted only as second-class families.

3.4. THE DISCOURSE ON SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

3.4.1. Single-Parent Families are also Families, but...

The acceptance of single-parent families as second-class families is also present in the direct discourse on single parenthood. On the one hand, Katalin Novák generally emphasizes that the government helps all kinds of families, and therefore, it also helps single parents and their children. She even emphasized on more than one occasion that single parents should not be disapproved by the public. On the other hand, she also suggested several times that these families deviate from the ideal one. For instance, at one conference organized for citizens, researchers, and policymakers especially on the topic of single parenthood, she talked about the government’s role in helping single-parent families. She, however, also remarked that the introduction of religious education and family life education as elementary school subjects serve the aim to prevent single parenthood and similar situations. While she also added that the government is aiming to help those people who are finding themselves in this kind of situation (i.e., single parenthood), the message was that single parenthood needs to be prevented. Furthermore, by mentioning religious education as something that could prevent single parenthood, she suggested that single parenthood is immoral. Similarly, by mentioning family life education as a tool that helps to prevent single parenthood, she suggested that single parents did not learn how to be a good parent or had failed in family life. The connected quote is the following:

“The government’s main aim is to support families, and to reinforce the safety net within which children could feel safe. This aim was also served by the introduction of religious education and family life education as elementary school subjects. With these steps, we could prevent, in many cases, the formation of single-parent families and similar situations. Meanwhile, if someone is getting into this kind of situation, we need to give

him/her as much help as we could.” (5th June of 2015, at the conference of ‘Single-parent Families in the Society,’ national audience)

Novák also remarked in one of her speeches that many problems of single-parent families are rooted in their bad financial situation, therefore, the government needs to help them in as many ways as possible. In line with this statement, the communication of the government regarding single-parent families often focuses on providing help to single parents. It includes speeches about the Single Parents’ Centre (a centre in the capital city that provides help for single parents with legal or child-rearing problems, as well as providing free-time programs for single-parent families), with the advantage of applying to crèche services, summer camps, and in-kind benefits, like tablets and laptops for single parents’ children. The common feature of these benefits is that they usually provide only occasional help for a proportion of these families. These are not financial benefits, and the government seems to avoid the topic of increasing the family allowance of single parents, which was, however, proposed many times by opposition parties. While the government members do not address this issue in their public speeches, governing party members argued in a committee meeting that the increased amount of family allowance for single parents would provide an opportunity for welfare fraud, as married couples would resort to divorce to take advantage of a higher level of family allowance (Committee of Social Affairs 20.04.2016).

In line with the historical-institutional context, the government advertises the deservingness of single-parent families, however, it also highlights that it is better to prevent these situations. Single-parent families, furthermore, seem to be deserving only of the kind of benefits that do not make single parenthood more “attractive” than married life.

3.4.2. Responsibility of Single Parents and a Child's Right to a Mother and Father

Novák further stated that single parents need to be helped because many of them are not responsible for their situation. By this, however, she said that there are parents, who are responsible for raising their children alone. She shared her (and the government's) view on this topic in a further interview that was recorded connected to the National Consultation on Family. The consultation contained the following question: *Do you agree with the principle that a child has the right to a mother and father?* The interviewer asked Novák to explain this question, and on this occasion, she replied that they aim to protect the rights of children and not the rights of parents. She added that people often think nowadays that parents have the right to have children, and not in a way that children have the rights to have both mother and father. She also said that those people who decide to have children alone deprive the children of having another parent. Furthermore, she suggested a higher level of deservingness for divorced single parents compared to never-married single mothers, when she remarked that, in her opinion, the two situations are different, namely, when a married couple has a child and later divorce, it's in contrast to a situation when a woman establishes a family alone. However, she also encouraged divorced parents to raise their children in collaboration even if they do not have a good relationship with each other, so the children could stay in touch with both parents (24th of November 2018, at the television show of RTL KLUB, called 'Magyarul Balóval,' national audience).

The government's commitment towards a child's right to a mother and father has been incorporated through the adoption system in the autumn of 2020. While in the previous system, unmarried couples and singles could adopt children if local offices could not find a suitable married couple, in the new system, unmarried couples and singles could adopt children only when officials cannot find suitable married couples in the whole country. What is more, Katalin Novák, who became the Minister without Portfolio for Family Affairs in 2020, needs to personally approve each of those cases, when the adopting parents are not married couples. In a related interview, when she was invited to speak about Hungarian family policy, the interviewer asked whether the Minister could imagine a situation when it would be better for a child to live in a single-parent household than in a children's home. Katalin Novák explained that she thinks that in almost every case, it is better for a child in a single-parent household. She continued that in her opinion, the government's communication was not clear enough regarding this question, and she feels

that single-parent families understood these changes as a kind of criticism. She insisted that single parents are admirable because they are working in place of two parents, and that the government aims to help them as much as possible. Novák mentioned the Single Parents' Centre, the advantage of crèche services, and that single parents could receive the same family benefits that other families also receive. Meanwhile, she also explained why they give an advantage to married couples in the adoption system:

“I can say regarding this situation that when the biological parents give up their child for adoption, and this child is waiting for adoption, it is a situation, when the state has an increased responsibility. In these situations, we always need to keep in mind, first and most, the child's interest, and we could work with principal rules. According to our guiding principle, we could say that if it is possible for a child to be raised by a married couple, that is, a mother and a father, then we have to give this chance to the child, who already has many burdens.” (Katalin Novák, 25th of November 2020 – at the festival of BrainBar – an annual tech conference in Budapest with roundtable talks, national audience)

Based on this quote, the message is that it is more advantageous for a child to be raised in a traditional family, than in a single-parent family, and the state should not encourage the formation of one-parent families. Moreover, by saying that the government needs to give the chance to children to live with a father and a mother, as orphan children already have many burdens, she suggested that living in a single-parent family is also a burden for children.

In line with the message that the state should not encourage the formation of single-parent households, never-married single parents are often differentiated from divorced and widowed parents, as Katalin Novák has also explicitly explained in the above-quoted interview. This differentiation was presented in other contexts as well, in more implicit ways. For instance, the government spokesperson, Alexandra Szentkirályi, answered citizen questions in a video uploaded to the government website in 2020 (2nd of March). One citizen asked whether the government plans to implement policies that help single-parent families. Szentkirályi replied that it is a very important question as around 600.000 children live in single-parent families as a consequence of the death of one of the parents, or even because of divorce. She added that each child is important to the same extent to

the government, therefore, most of the family benefits are available to single-parent families as well. However, while she said that all children are important to the Hungarian government, she also excluded many children living in single-parent families by saying that children live in single-parent families because of the death of the parent or divorce. She, therefore, excluded unmarried single parents and their children in general (i.e., those women who have children alone without a stable relationship, and also those single parents who lived in a civil union before).

3.5. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter analysed the government discourse on the family to reveal the extent to which it frames single-parent families as less deserving compared to traditional families. Speeches about the importance of traditional family values were analysed, as were speeches especially addressing the issue of single parenthood.

The general discourse on the importance of traditional family values is connected to one broad frame. This frame states that the problem is the declining population that was caused by liberal family values, promoted by liberal democracies. It claims, furthermore, that the demographic decline will lead to the extinction of the nation, except if traditional family values could be successfully strengthened by both its promotion and support of traditional families through the family policy system. In this frame, therefore, alternatives of the traditional family (also single-parent families) are seen as less deserving to state support, as they are the cause of the problem.

The less deserving status of alternative families is further strengthened by the sub-discourses of this frame. First, government members often state that the traditional family is the major, basic, or normal family form. Second, the discourse on the new family definition of the Fundamental Law also strengthens the traditional understanding of families. While the law explicitly excludes same-sex couples and heterosexual couples living in a civil union from the definition of family, connected discourse also echoes these ideas. It often emphasizes that only a man and a woman could marry in Hungary, and the family is based on marriage.

The issue of single-parent families is more complicated in this discourse. On the one hand, they are not explicitly excluded from the family definition of the law, however, the recurring statements of government members, like “family is based on marriage” or “a child has the right to a mother and father” also seem to exclude many single-parent families, as those are not based on marriage, and also that one of the parents is missing from many children’s life. While these statements most probably aim to reinforce the government’s refusal of same-sex and not married heterosexual couples, related speeches do not clarify the understanding of these statements.

In contrast, the direct discourse on single-parent families especially focuses on the deservingness and acceptance of these families and how the government helps them. This message, however, is mostly communicated to national audiences, compared to the frame regarding the importance of traditional family values, which is communicated to both national as well as international audiences. Moreover, while the importance of traditional family values is communicated by the prime minister as one of the central messages of the government, the idea of single parents’ deservingness is salient in Katalin Novák’s speeches and appears in speeches connected to events especially about single parenthood. Furthermore, the message regarding single parents’ deservingness is mixed also within this discourse.

While the direct discourse connected to single parenthood emphasizes the deservingness of single parents, it is also salient in this discourse, that single-parent families are only accepted as second-class, less healthy families, compared to traditional ones. Therefore, the message is that single-parenthood is accepted, but it is better to prevent this situation. The communication of the government on the provided support towards single parents also underlines this message, as it focuses on occasional in-kind benefits, while they avoid the topic of increasing direct financial support towards single parents that could compensate the absence of the other parent in financial terms in the long run (and therefore could make single parenthood more “appealing”).

The government, furthermore, seems to make a distinction between different types of single parents based on their perceived responsibility for their situation. Widows and divorced single parents are described as more deserving by the government, than single

mothers having a child alone without a stable relationship, as they are claimed to deprive their children of the other parent.

In conclusion, the discourse analysis showed that the government frames the alternatives of the traditional families as less deserving family types, who are threatening the Christian culture, as well as the nation. Within these alternative family types, however, single-parent families are regarded as the most deserving, as they are not explicitly excluded from the definition of family, like same-sex couples and heterosexual couples living in a civil union. The more cautious communication of the government regarding single-parent families, compared to other alternative family types, is also in line with the historical-institutional characteristics of single parents' state support (presented in Chapter 2), namely that single mothers were seen as deserving throughout the 20th century. This kind of communication could also be explained by public attitudes, as Chapter 4 will show. Single-parent families are, however, accepted only as second-class, less deserving, and less healthy families, compared to traditional families in the current government's discourse.

4. INVESTIGATING THE WELFARE DESERVINGNESS OF SINGLE MOTHERS: PUBLIC IMAGE AND DESERVINGNESS PERCEPTIONS IN HUNGARY⁸

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The social construction (i.e., public image) of a group includes stereotypes and also normative and evaluative characterizations (Edelman, 1988). Based on the theory of Schneider and Ingram (1993), beneficial policies are more likely to target those groups whose social construction is positive, as they are seen as deserving in the eyes of the public. Similarly, negatively constructed groups are often targeted by punitive or unbeneficial policies, as they are perceived as undeserving by the public. These public images of groups, furthermore, could be also effectively used in social policy reform narratives to win public support for the change (Blum and Kuhlmann, 2019). Expansionary reform narratives could highlight the deservingness of positively constructed target groups, while retrenching reform narratives could draw on the undeservingness of negatively constructed target groups (Blum and Kuhlmann, 2019). Therefore, there is an interplay between the social constructions/public images of groups, policies, and reform narratives, within the social constructions/public images of groups that serve as indicators of the social legitimacy of targeted policies and reforms.

Relying on this interplay, the current chapter investigates the public image of single mothers in the context of the Hungarian family policy reform that started after the election of the second Orbán government in 2010. Hungary serves an interesting case of investigation, as the reform narrative does not frame single mothers as undeserving compared to the widely-investigated cases of the welfare reforms of the 1990s in the UK and the US (Hancock, 2004; Phoenix, 1996), however, it highlights the deservingness of traditional and better-off families.

On the one hand, the promotion of traditional family values is central to the Hungarian family policy reform as it aims to stop the declining birth rate that, in the government's view, was partly, but significantly, caused by the liberalization of relationships (Juhász,

⁸ A revised version of this chapter has been published at *East European Politics and Societies*: Herke, B. (2021): Investigating the Welfare Deservingness of Single Mothers: Public Image and Deservingness Perceptions in Hungary. *East European Politics and Societies*. 35(3), 613-637. DOI: 10.1177/0888325420937773

2012, p. 4; Szikra, 2014, p. 494). On the other hand, family policies were also detached from social policies in 2011, in order to target those families who could raise children “responsibly” (Szikra, 2018, p. 8). This two-layered reform narrative, therefore, builds on the deservingness of traditional, better-off families, whose beneficial situation in policies is legitimized by their role in (responsibly) achieving the public purpose of increasing the birth rate. Single-parent families are less deserving in this reform narrative as they are not traditional families, and they are also in a disadvantageous situation in the new policy design because they are usually not better-off families – 62 percent of single-parent households were affected by poverty or social exclusion in 2015, which was the highest ratio among all types of Hungarian family households (HCSO, 2016, p. 18).

Our research question is *how the Hungarian public sees single mothers and to what extent their public image and perceived deservingness are in line with single-parent families’ low level of targeting in family policies*. Besides investigating the public image of single mothers, the chapter also explores single mothers’ deservingness based on five deservingness criteria, control, attitude, reciprocity, identity, and need, developed by van Oorschot (2000). This approach is different from the public image one, as it does not investigate the stereotypical image of groups but focuses on their perception regarding five criteria that proved to be relevant indicators of welfare deservingness. The empirical research especially examines the perception of single mothers, as in Hungary 90% of single parents are mothers (HCSO, 2013, p. 181). The research, furthermore, analyzes public opinion data, as it aims to investigate the link between public opinion and policy, and it does not explore single mothers’ public images and perceived deservingness in media or public discourses that might differ from public views.

The following sections review the theory of deservingness perceptions and earlier research findings of single mothers’ public images. The second part of the chapter analyzes the public image of single mothers and the perceived deservingness by using a series of survey data. The final section of the chapter discusses and concludes the main findings of the research.

4.2. A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR INVESTIGATING SINGLE MOTHERS' WELFARE DESERVINGNESS

As the introduction highlighted, the deservingness of groups could be investigated by analyzing their social construction (Schneider and Ingram, 1993). There is, however, another approach in social policy that focuses on the perception of the groups especially based on five deservingness criteria. According to the “CARIN” deservingness theory of van Oorschot (2000), there are five dimensions that affect the perceived welfare deservingness of a group. CARIN is the acronym of ‘control’, ‘attitude’, ‘reciprocity’, ‘identity’ and ‘need.’ *Control* is important, as those welfare recipients, who are perceived as responsible for their neediness are usually seen as undeserving by the public. *Attitude* is the perceived gratefulness of the recipient towards the received support, while *reciprocity* incorporates the perception of the recipient or target group contributing to the work of the welfare system. *Identity* refers to the social distance between the target group and the public, while *need* simply refers to perceived neediness.

The two approaches are, however, interrelated as the stereotypical characteristics of a group could reflect the deservingness criteria (van Oorschot and Roosma, 2017, pp. 17-20). While previous studies applied the social construction approach to investigate the welfare deservingness of single mothers (e.g., Hancock, 2004; Phoenix, 1996), I will use this interrelation in the latter part of the literature review to summarize how the CARIN criteria could be applied in the case of single mothers. First, however, I present public images of single mothers to see how they were constructed in other welfare contexts.

4.3. SINGLE MOTHERS' WELFARE DESERVINGNESS IN THE LITERATURE

Available literature mostly focuses on public discourses and media images of single mothers, while research on public opinion is rather rare. This section, however, also covers available research findings of public opinion. First, the section presents the well-documented images from the US and UK during the 1990s, where the topic received higher attention due to neoliberal welfare reforms (which reforms were supported by the historical-institutional characteristics of single mothers' state support in these countries, as Chapter 2 showed). Second, it briefly summarizes available evidence from other countries.

4.3.1. The Welfare Queen (US)

US president Bill Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act in 1996. This legislation had two main purposes: to promote employment among single mothers and to promote two-parent families (Kelly, 2010, p. 77). From the promulgation of this reform, public assistance ceased to be an entitlement for single mothers (Gilman, 2014, p. 249). The related literature (e.g., Hancock, 2004) argues that the success of the welfare reform was supported by the strong negative image of the target group, reinforced by political elites. The social construction of the “welfare queen” originated in the 1960s (Nadesen, 2007, p. 53) but became more prevalent in the public discourse in the 1980s – based on Ronald Reagan’s story of a woman on welfare – who had 80 names, 30 addresses, 12 security cards, and four imaginary deceased husbands. This story was based on the case of Linda Taylor, who was convicted of welfare fraud in 1977, as she cheated on the system with her two aliases. Reagan aggravated the circumstances and created a very strong, still present stereotype of the welfare queen. This concept represents single mothers living on welfare as manipulative, cheating, undeserving and lazy African-American mothers, who have children in order to avoid work (Gilman, 2014, pp. 259-260). Foster (2008) describes the welfare queen image as a construct of class-based racial and sexist assumptions: welfare queens are from the underclass, who constitute the culture of poverty, who violate the dominant sexual norms by rearing children alone, and who are lazy Black people. This class-based representation of single mothers evolved due to the influence of Murray’s (1984) underclass theory, which distinguishes the underclass, who are self-destructive and who are not capable of working themselves out from poverty, compared to the poor (Foster, 2008).

Several studies have shown that the welfare queen trope was extremely dominant in media discourses as well as in legislative debates prior to the reform (Hancock, 2004; Reingold and Smith, 2012). Later, the media representation of single mothers’ welfare decreased, although their image still contained stereotypical characteristics – such as lazy, Black and hyperfertile – in the late 2000s (Kelly, 2010). Some articles investigated how these negative stereotypical images of single mothers influenced the welfare attitudes of the public. The results of Gilliam’s (1999) video-vignette experiment showed that people more likely opposed welfare spending and most likely perceived poverty as personal responsibility in the case of Black single mothers, compared to white single mothers. According to the results of a national telephone survey of 2002, 57% of the American

respondents agreed that welfare encourages women to have more children (Foster, 2008, p. 170), while the results of a nationwide public opinion survey from 2010 indicated that Americans still underestimate the ratio of working single parents and overestimate the share of teenage single mothers (Chapman, 2014).

4.3.2. Single Mothers as a Social Threat, Social Problem, and Teenage Mothers (UK)

The problematization of lone motherhood as a threat to the traditional family was prevalent throughout the 1980s in the United Kingdom (Phoenix, 1996), and the social threat discourse became prominent in the late eighties and early nineties under the Tory government (Klett-Davies, 2007, p. 12). This discourse also featured Murray's (1984) underclass definition, and it blamed the moral and cultural characteristics of the social group for their disadvantageous position. It emphasized the significance of the traditional gender roles, and it stated that the lack of a male breadwinner causes welfare dependency. It declared that lone mothers reproduce the underclass and are a social threat to the society and the welfare state. Single motherhood was seen as a rational choice of the mothers, who find state benefits as a better economic solution than marriage and paid employment (Duncan and Edwards, 1999, pp. 28-31). As the Labour government came into power in 1997, the discussion changed: within the "social problem" discourse, lone mothers were seen as victims of the circumstances. The image of the lone mother who did not like to work disappeared and the public started to see them as individuals, who need to face some very significant barriers to find paid work (Klett-Davies, 2007, p. 13). Politicians understood welfare cuts of lone mothers as an incentive to live in a traditional family and to participate in the labour market. The new government promoted the view that people should work to get out from poverty, and activation programs aimed to help lone mothers' participation in the labour market (Duncan and Edwards, 1999, pp. 31-36; Klett-Davies 2007, pp. 13-14).

However, the stereotypical image of the white "feckless" British lone mother from the working-class, who became pregnant at the age of 17, and had children from more men (May, 2006, p. 8) was continually reinforced through government rhetoric and media representation (Phoenix, 1996). A media analysis shows that the public image of single mothers in the British press was the same in 2013 as in 1993: they were depicted as white teenagers from the lower classes who are economically dependent on the state. The only difference was the absence of the unmarried characteristic in 2013 (Salter, 2018, p. 70).

Evidence shows not only that the media presented single mothers as teenagers, but that the public still overestimated their share among single mothers by about 25 times, as their official share was only 2%, and the median age of lone mothers was 38.1 (Gingerbread, 2018, Ipsos-Mori, 2013).

4.3.3. Single Mothers' Images in Other Countries

In Scandinavian welfare states, the 1990s public discourse around lone motherhood focused on equality, as single mothers were framed no different from other mothers (Björnberg, 1997; Polakow et al, 2001; Siim, 1997). However, recent research from Denmark (Jørgensen, 2018) reports increasing fear of Islamic single mothers' welfare fraud. Regarding Germany, the research of Klett-Davies (2007) provides evidence. She found that the most dominant public discourse was the social problem characterization of the 1990s Germany, similar to that of the UK during the late 1990s. A report from 2012 states that the popular discourse in Germany still portrayed lone mothers, not as a stigmatized, but as a marginalised and isolated group: they are in a disadvantageous situation in the labour market, they do not get enough help from the state, and they are encouraged by the state to find a new partner (The Social Issues Research Centre, 2012, p. 7). Research shows that in the former socialist GDR, single mothers were perceived in the public discourse as "super-women," who did everything alone: work, childcare, and household tasks. This positive image was supported by the fact that the system identified both coupled and single mothers as workers (Klett-Davies, 1997). The ideal of the good mother was the working one in socialist Hungary as well. However, it was challenged from 1967 by the newly introduced parental leave, which provided an alternative of paid work for mothers (Csányi and Kerényi, 2019, pp. 146-150). In addition, Tóth's (2010) analysis of a women's magazine from socialist Hungary also shows that the representation of single mothers had continuously changed from the 1950s to a more favourable image due to the socialist ideology of equality. However, both in the former GDR, and in socialist Hungary, the traditional family remained the ideal one (Keiser, 1997, p. 52; Tóth, 2010, p. 83).

These research findings show that single mothers were mainly constructed negatively in the 1990s US and UK, while the constructions became more positive later in the UK, and there are also more positive images in other countries. The next section presents how these images reflect on the deservingness criteria.

4.4. PUBLIC IMAGES OF SINGLE MOTHERS AND THE DESERVINGNESS CRITERIA

According to the stereotypical image, “welfare queens” are from the underclass, who reproduce the culture of poverty, who violate the dominant sexual norms by rearing children alone, and who are lazy Blacks. By this token, identity is especially relevant in this context, as it incorporates classist, sexist, and racist stereotypes (Foster, 2008). Furthermore, the cheating character (Gilman, 2014) reflects on the attitude dimension, as it demonstrates that single mothers on welfare do not respect the welfare system and the support that they get. The reciprocity criterion is also present in the script as it defines women as mothers who receive support from the state, but do not contribute to the work of the system due to welfare dependency, while the belief that single mothers choose to have children alone in order to get benefits from the state, refers to a high level of control over the situation. As Table 2 shows, the welfare queen stereotype is an extraordinarily negative public image, as it contains negative elements according to four dimensions of the CARIN criteria.

In the stereotypical British single mother image, the teenager characteristic (May, 2006; Salter, 2018) is strongly connected to the belief that lone mothers are economically dependent on the state. These two beliefs suggest a low level of deservingness based on the reciprocity criterion, as they were not able to contribute to the work of the society previously due to their young age, and they will not be able to contribute in the future, due to welfare dependency. As the welfare queen and British single mother stereotypes are constructs of the social threat discourse, these both emphasize underclass position, the culture of dependency, the promiscuity of the mothers, and single motherhood as a rational choice to get benefits.

The social problem discourse, which was prevalent in the late 1990s in Britain, and Germany as well, (Duncan and Edwards, 1999; Klett-Davies, 2007) represents a more positive image of single mothers: they are victims of the social order (low level of control) who need help (high level of neediness). Nevertheless, it still portrays single mothers negatively according to the identity criterion as it implies that mother-only families are not ordinary families due to the lack of the father.

Table 2. Perceived Deservingness of Single Mothers in the Different Images and Discourses

Signs: (+) = deserving characteristic (-) = undeserving characteristic	Welfare queen (US)	British single mother (early 1990s)	Social threat discourse (US & UK)	Social problem discourse (late 1990s UK & Germany)
CONTROL	(-) they are lazy, choose to have children in order to get benefits	(-) choose to have children in order to get benefits	(-) choose to have children in order to get benefits	(+) victims, they want to work but poverty trap and childcare costs prevent them
ATTITUDE	(-) welfare fraud			
RECIPROCITY	(-) welfare dependency	(-) had not reciprocated due to the young age, will not reciprocate due to welfare dependency (teenager)	(-) welfare dependency	
IDENTITY	(-) a minority group, African- Americans (-) they are promiscuous (-) underclass	(-) teenager (-) they are promiscuous (-) underclass	(-) they are promiscuous (-) threat to society (-) underclass	(-) incomplete families, lack of fathers
NEED	(+) need help, poverty (+) economically and socially disadvantaged			

Note: The table is based on the cited literature about single mothers' public images, however, the author analysed the images according to the CARIN criteria.

The images from other countries are not well-documented in the literature, but the Scandinavian equalizing image of lone mothers reflects that there is no social gap between single-mother families and the public. This positive identity, however, seems to be threatened by the growing connection between single motherhood and minority status in Denmark. Meanwhile, the socialist image of single mothers concentrates on the working characteristic, which suggests positive scores on the reciprocity criterion.

Based on the socialist image of single mothers, we could hypothesize that single mothers' social construction is more positive than negative in Hungary, however, the preference of

the traditional family might cause negative perceptions in the identity criterion similar to the social problem discourse.

The policy context (described in the Introduction Chapter) shows that single-parent families are not excluded from the benefits in the current family policy system, but they also do not form a group that the Hungarian government targets with extra benefits, in contrast to their high risk of poverty or social exclusion. The lack of targeting could be explained by ideology, as single-parent families do not fit the traditional family model. Based on this policy setting, the public could see single mothers as under-targeted and needy in case their perception is positive/deserving. The public, however, could also give legitimization to this policy if they perceive single mothers as undeserving. The following empirical section addresses this question.

4.5. DATA AND METHODS

I started the research with the exploration of the public image of single mothers. For this purpose, a questionnaire was designed, containing both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Questions were divided into two parts, as well as the quota sample of 1000 respondents. Consequently, each question was asked on a 500-respondent sized quota sample. Quotas were based on gender, age, settlement type, and region. Data were collected in November 2017 by a Hungarian market research company (NRC), and the questionnaire was part of a bigger online survey. The answers to the closed questions were weighted by age, gender, region, settlement type, and education.

Each question block started with an introduction: *“In the following part we ask some questions about family life, more concretely about single parenthood.”* and open-ended questions were the first ones in both question blocks, in order to avoid any suggestions. In the first version, respondents had to complete the following sentence: *“Single mothers’ life is ..., because....”*, while in the second version the sentence was the following: *“Most single mothers are ... because ...”* Respondents had to explain their answers in both cases. The open-ended question method was selected as it is a valid and frequently used tool to measure stereotypes (Schneider, 2004, pp. 34-36). Fiske et al. (1990, p. 62) argue that questions which expect free associations are better than closed questions, as *“using any single category is inherently likely to be less accurate than using the individual’s whole range of noticeable attributes”*. Another advantage of the question format is that

respondents are not influenced by existing categories (Reja et al, 2003, p. 161). Nevertheless, limitations of the method need to be considered, as open-ended questions are usually answered by a lower share of respondents, because people have to express their opinions in their own words (Emde, 2014, p. 70). Considering both the limitations and advantages of the method, open-ended questions still serve as a good basis for investigating the public image of single mothers, as wrongly formed answers to the closed questions might not explore the real public image of the group. However, I used some closed-ended questions as well, in order to explore more concretely the beliefs about the connection between single motherhood and poverty.

Regarding the statement about single mothers' characteristics, more than the half (55.2%) of the respondents denied answering, while there was a remarkable lower share of non-response rate (36.8%) in the case of the question dealing with single mothers' life. In both versions, there was a significantly higher response rate among women, the members of the younger cohorts (age between 18 and 39), and people with a higher level of education. Although answers could not be stated as representative to the whole population, still more than 550 respondents provided first insights about single motherhood, among them there were 236 men and 315 women, 109 people with a low level of education, and 200 people above the age of 50. Furthermore, the opinions of the different subgroups do not differ to a great extent from each other. On the whole, 319 answers contained relevant information regarding lone mothers' lives, while 232 respondents provided meaningful association about the majority of single mothers.

In the second step of the research, I focused more concretely on single mothers' perceived deservingness. I analyzed the open-ended questions further to explore how the answers reflect on the CARIN criteria. The analysis provided insight about how the deservingness criteria could be operationalized in the case of single mothers. Based on these results, a set of statements were designed, in order to measure these perceptions among the public. The level of agreement was measured on a 4-point scale with the following options: 1 - not agree at all, 2 - rather not agree, 3 - rather agree, 4 - absolutely agree, 0 - do not know / would not like to answer. The following three statements were part of a national representative personal interview survey: *"Most single mothers are responsible for remaining with their child/children alone"* (control) *"Most single mothers demand too much support from the government"* (attitude) *"Most single mothers work hard to make*

a living for the family” (control & reciprocity). Data were collected by the Hungarian firm, Sonda Ipsos, in January 2019. The sample contained 1000 respondents. The results regarding these questions are representative of the Hungarian population.

Three other questions were asked on a quota sample, which was drawn from the respondent panel of another polling firm (NRC). Quotas were based on gender, age, settlement type, and region. Data were collected in November 2018. The questions, part of a larger online survey, included the following: “*Single motherhood is not an uncommon situation.*” (identity) “*Most single mothers have a bad financial situation.*” (need), “*It’s a role of the state to support single mothers*” (overall deservingness). The results of this survey are not representative of the Hungarian population; however, they could be treated as good estimations: the three questions from the representative survey were part of this data collection as well, and there were no significant differences between the results of the two different data collections (for the comparison of the datasets see Table 11 and Table 12 in the Appendices). Furthermore, the database was weighted by age, gender, region, settlement type, and education. Table 3 summarizes the main characteristics of the data collections.

Besides using descriptive statistics, the effects of the respondents’ demographic variables on single mothers’ perceived deservingness will also be tested to see if there is any significant difference between the perceptions of these groups.

Table 3. Summary of the Data Collections

Time of the data collection	Research question of the data collection	Question type	Sample
November 2017	How is the public image of single mothers in Hungary?	Open-ended and closed-ended survey questions	(Weighted in the case of the closed questions) quota sample; 500-500 respondents
November 2018	How deserving are single mothers in Hungary based on the deservingness criteria?	Statements with 4-point scales + do not know / would not like to answer option	Weighted quota sample; 1000 respondents
January 2019			Representative sample; 1000 respondents ⁹

4.6. RESULTS

4.6.1. The Public Image of Single Mothers in Hungary

Table 4 shows the categories of answers about single mothers and their life. The answers were categorized thematically. Looking at the results, we can see one salient trait: the public believes that being a single mother is a hard task. It was the most frequent answer in both versions, 64.8% of all associations reflected on this aspect. Table 5 shows that half of the respondents explained lone mothers' hard situation with the reason that they must solve everything alone, and they need to work in place of two parents. The remaining part of the answers emphasized more specific reasons, such as financial problems, the lack of the partner and father, or lone mothers' disadvantageous situation in the society and specifically in the labour market.

⁹ The data collections of November 2017 and November 2018 were funded by the grant K 120070 of NKFIH (Hungarian Public Research Funding Agency). The data collection of January 2019 was funded by the Doctoral School of Sociology, Corvinus University of Budapest.

Table 4. Free Associations Regarding Single Mothers and Their Lives

Single mothers' life is ...	%	N	Most single mothers are...	%	N
hard, very hard	89.7	286	in a hard situation	30.6	71
sad, bad, worthless	2.5	8	courageous, strong, heroic, honorable (and other positive characteristics)	13.8	32
usual, not special	1.6	5	busy, tired, overdriven, work a lot	12.9	30
good, happy, easy	1.9	6	lonely, depressed, stressful	7.8	18
ambivalent (easy&hard; good&bad)	1.3	4	poor, have bad financial conditions	7.8	18
incomplete	1.3	4	negative characteristics (such as grumpy, unbearable)	6.0	14
other	1.7	6	divorced	4.7	11
			deserted (their partner left them)	3.9	9
			lucky, happy	2.2	5
			other	10.3	24
Total	100	319	Total	100	232

Source: Data collection of November 2017.

Going back to Table 4, it is also noticeable that there are some other stereotypes that are connected to the belief that single motherhood is not an easy task. Around 30 respondents (13.8%) replied that single mothers are honorable and strong for rearing their children alone, and another 30 answers (12.9%) emphasized that lone mothers are tired because of the high volume of work they do. Eighteen respondents (7.8%) described single mothers as poor, and another 18 respondents (7.8%) wrote that lone mothers have emotional problems. Only 14 respondents (6%) wrote explicitly negative characteristics.

Results of the closed questions also show that the public believes that single mothers need to face a lot of problems. Table 6 presents that most respondents believe that the lack of free time (75.9%) and problems regarding finding a new partner (69.8%) *rather or to a great extent* characterize the life of lone mothers. Furthermore, most of the respondents (63.1%) believe that psychological and child-rearing problems (61%) and poverty (60%) characterize single mothers' everyday life. A remarkably lower share (31%) agree that single mothers need to face social problems such as social exclusion, or discrimination, and a lower share of them associate single mothers' life with positive characteristics, such as security (31%) and calmness (24.2%). The public also believes that single-parent families are more endangered by poverty than two-parent households. Given the figure

of two-parent households' poverty or social exclusion risk (27%), respondents had quite a good estimation: the mean of their responses is 60%, while the actual risk was 62% at the time of the data collection.

The associations, and the results of the closed questions, represent a coherent positive/ deserving public image of single mothers: they lack financial and emotional support, and they do their best to make a living for the family.

Table 5. Reasons Behind Single Mothers' Hard Life

Why is it hard to be a single mother?	%	N
they must solve everything alone	51.0	182
financial reasons	14.3	51
lack of the partner, father	10.1	36
they have a disadvantageous situation in the labour market or in the society	4.2	15
they need to raise their children alone	3.9	14
lack of free time	2.5	9
they are not able to give everything to the children	0.6	2
missing explanation	4.2	15
Total	100	357

Source: Data collection of November 2017 (N=491)

Table 6. Answers of the Closed-ended Questions

<i>(Scale: 1=not at all, 2=very little, 3=somewhat, 4= to a great extent)</i>		
To what extent single mothers' life is characterized by	Somewhat or to a great extent (%)	Do not know (%)
....		
lack of free time	75.9	13.7
problems regarding finding a new partner	69.8	15.6
psychological problems (e.g., loneliness, depression)	63.1	18.8
child-rearing problems	61.0	16.5
poverty	60.0	21.1
social problems (e.g., social exclusion)	34.7	16.1
security	31.0	18.4
calmness	24.2	16.7
	Mean (SD)	Do not know (%)
	60,0 (20.26)	26
Out of 100 single-parent households, how many are living in poverty? (two-parent families: 27)		

4.6.2. Perceived Deservingness of Hungarian Single Mothers

To arrive at a more detailed view about single mothers' deservingness, the associations have been coded according to the CARIN criteria. I used five questions for the categorization, each investigating one criterion: *Are single mothers responsible for remaining with their children alone? (control)* *Are they compliant and grateful for the received help from the state? (attitude)* *Do they provide anything in exchange for the received help from the state? (reciprocity)* *Are they one of us? (identity)* *Are they in a needy situation? (need)*

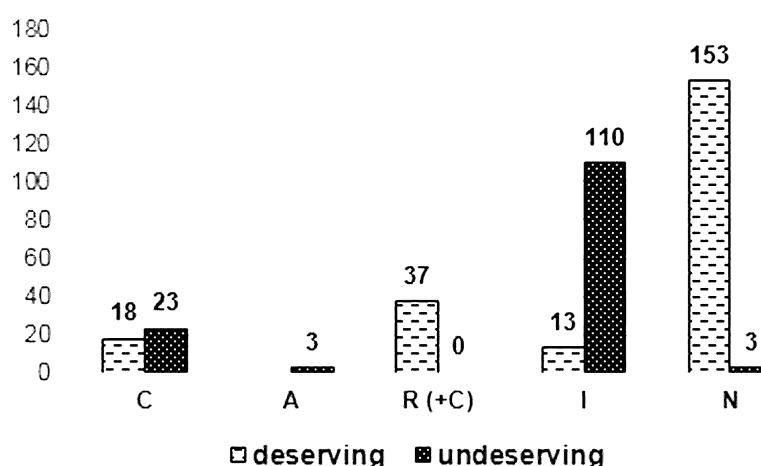
Using this categorization, 330 of the 551 responses (60%) contained a reference to at least one of the CARIN criteria. Figure 5 shows, that as the public image research suggested, need was the most prevalent criterion in the associations. Almost a third (28.3%) of the responses reflected on the needy situation of the mothers. Besides mentioning financial problems and poverty in general, answers also emphasized that one salary is not enough to make a decent living for a family with a child or with children. Furthermore, in 5.2% of all answers, respondents claimed that the government does not support lone mothers sufficiently, though there is a negligible share of respondents who believe that they receive too many benefits.

A considerably lower share (6.7%) of the answers reflected on the mixed reciprocity and control criteria. These answers highlighted the opinion that mothers need to work a great deal to make a living for the family. On one hand, it refers to the control over their situation as they try to do their best to make a living for the family. On the other hand, it also reflects that they contribute to the work of the welfare system, as they have paid work. However, the associations were coded under this category only in case of direct reference to the working status. I measured the 'control' category with explicit statements reflecting on single mothers' responsibility for remaining alone with their children. Overall, 7.4% of the responses contained reference to this aspect. Eighteen respondents emphasized the innocence of the mothers, by stating, for instance, that they are victims of violence, or their partner left them alone with the child. Almost the same number of respondents expressed that single mothers are somehow responsible for their situation by associating simply to the divorced status, implying the shared responsibility of the parents, or by stating explicitly that it is a consequence of the mothers' or parents' irresponsible behaviour.

The least frequent CARIN criterion was ‘attitude.’ One answer referred directly to welfare fraud by stating that single mothers are usually single just on paper to be eligible for benefits. Two other associations judged single mothers as exploiting their ex-husbands. These two were also coded under the attitude criterion, as it framed them as too demanding.

Thirteen associations referred directly to the positive identity of single mothers, by claiming that they are not different from other people or, that they could raise their children as well as two parents. However, 20% of all associations contained a reference to traditional family values. Some of them explicitly claimed that liberalization of the relationships is the reason for single motherhood, while a great part of the associations within this category (36%) referred to the traditional roles of the father and the mother in the family, and that the mother needed to fulfill both. Additionally, 28% expressed concerns about the missing partner of the mother, while 27% missed the father from the family. The emphasis of these values reflects on the identity criterion: the more the society accepts that single motherhood is an alternative to the traditional family, the smaller the social gap that exists between single mothers and society.

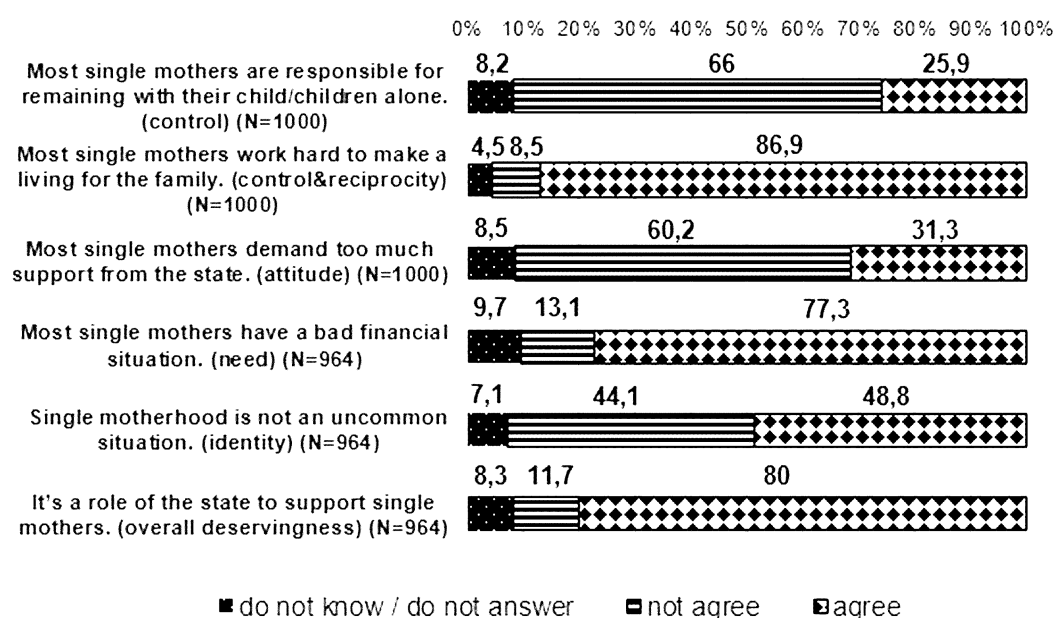
Figure 5. Number of Associations Referring to the CARIN Criteria



On the whole, associations suggest a high level of deservingness of single mothers based on need and the mixed reciprocity and control criterion, while a lower level of deservingness based on the identity criterion. There is no exact clue about the control over the single motherhood status and about the attitude criterion. However, the results of the survey questions directly investigating the CARIN criteria underline the findings of the

public image research. As Figure 6 shows, almost 90% believe that most single mothers work hard to make a living for the family (control & reciprocity), and almost 80% agree that most single mothers have a bad financial situation (need). Regarding the other three deservingness perceptions, the public is more divided: 66% do not believe that the majority of lone mothers are responsible for their situation (control), and 60% do not agree that lone mothers are demanding too much help from the state (attitude). The most divisive statement was the one measuring identity: only half of the respondents agreed that single motherhood is not an uncommon situation; referring to a social gap between the public and the target group. However, as 80% of the public agrees with the general statement: *It's a role of the state to support single mothers*, it seems that the identity gap between the traditional family and the one-parent family does not generate enough of a low level of deservingness of single mothers.

Figure 6. Perceived Deservingness of Single Mothers in Hungary



4.6.3. Deserving According to Whom?

The perceptions of single mothers are quite positive in the eye of the general public, however, as previous studies also showed, subgroups of the public could perceive deservingness of policy target groups differently (e.g., Bell, 2019; van Oorschot, 2000). Therefore, Table 7 shows how demographic variables of the respondents influence the perceived deservingness of single mothers based on the five criteria and the overall

deservingness variable. The results are quite diverse between the six models; however, some common patterns could be observed.

First, the results show that in two cases (attitude, identity), people with a high level of education perceive single mothers as more deserving than people with a low level of education. Despite single motherhood is more common among low-educated mothers in Hungary than among mothers with a higher level of education (Monostori, 2013), the higher-educated perceive single mothers as more deserving based on these two criteria.

Another pattern that prevails in more than one model is that the youngest age group is more likely to find single mothers deserving compared to the older ones. This pattern could be explained by the connection between age and traditional family values. A previous Hungarian study (Rohr, 2017, p. 185) has found that age increases the likelihood of having more traditional family values, except for people under the age of 25, as their attitudes were more traditional than those of people between the ages of 25-34. Nevertheless, as the age categories were grouped differently in this analysis, and the youngest group encompassed people between the ages of 18-29, it could be assumed that the attitudes towards single mothers' deservingness are influenced by the general pattern that older people have more traditional family values. Furthermore, regarding three criteria (control, attitude, and reciprocity + control), results show that people living in smaller settlements (compared to the capital city of Hungary) also find single mothers less deserving. It most probably could be explained again by the more conservative values of people living in smaller cities and villages.

Moreover, it is worth highlighting the results of the identity model, as respondents were the most divided regarding this statement. Gender influences deservingness only in this case, as women are more likely to believe that single motherhood is not an uncommon situation compared to men. Results also show that people with a high level of education are more likely to agree with this statement than people with a low level of education. One possible explanation of these results is that the statement used for measuring the identity criterion is more connected to gender equality than the others. Therefore, those groups are more likely to agree with this statement, who support gender equality more: women and people with a high level of education (Gregor, 2016, p. 103).

Table 7. Binary Logistic Models of Single Mothers' Perceived Deservingness

	Control		Attitude		Reciprocity & Control		Identity		Need		Overall deservingness	
	Exp(B)	p-value	Exp(B)	p-value	Exp(B)	p-value	Exp(B)	p-value	Exp(B)	p-value	Exp(B)	p-value
Female	1.326	0.064	0.842	0.255	0.948	0.822	1.908	0.000	1.137	0.560	1.513	0.075
Age (ref. cat. 18-29 years old)												
30-39	1.035	0.892	0.576	0.030	0.827	0.618	0.920	0.703	0.128	0.001	0.677	0.292
40-49	0.978	0.934	0.713	0.201	0.825	0.624	0.864	0.549	0.090	0.000	0.343	0.006
50+	0.819	0.362	0.518	0.003	0.896	0.741	0.876	0.563	0.099	0.000	0.796	0.561
Education (ref.cat. Low level)												
Medium level	1.237	0.230	1.406	0.047	0.683	0.140	1.328	0.108	1.469	0.147	0.696	0.160
High level	1.000	0.999	1.712	0.013	0.991	0.979	1.964	0.001	1.380	0.304	0.748	0.349
Settlement type (ref.cat. Capital city)												
Other city	0.508	0.003	0.305	0.000	0.333	0.014	0.777	0.206	1.110	0.712	0.862	0.604
Village	0.617	0.057	0.250	0.000	0.323	0.017	0.713	0.138	1.660	0.129	1.209	0.577
Involvement (ref.cat. Does not know single mother)												
Knows personally single mother	1.061	0.721	1.526	0.009	1.067	0.798	0.595	0.006	0.729	0.243	0.723	0.261
Single mother herself or was raised by a single mother	1.302	0.279	2.438	0.000	1.117	0.761	1.124	0.611	1.733	0.142	0.999	0.998
N	919		917		952		926		899		915	
Nagelkerke R ²	0.03		0.12		0.02		0.10		0.12		0.05	

Source: Data collections of November 2018 and January 2019.

Note: The answer categories of the statements were recoded into binary ones in a way that 0 is the not deserving answer and 1 is the deserving one.

Income was not added due to incomparable measurements of the two applied datasets.

Weights were applied for the analyses.

4.7. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this chapter show that single mothers have a coherent positive (deserving) image in the Hungarian public opinion: they are imagined as poor mothers, who work a lot to make a living for the family, and who lack financial and emotional support. This image is similar to the social problem discourse, which was prevalent in the late 1990s in the UK. In Hungary, however, they are seen as working mothers.

The positive public image in Hungary could partly be explained by the institutional design of single mothers' benefits: they were never targeted with selective benefits, but their subsidies were always embedded in the broader family allowance system. Working single mothers were eligible for the family allowance from 1959 (Jarvis and Micklewright, 1994, p. 16) and they received an increased amount of allowance from that time (Baranyai, 1998, p. 807). The family allowance was conditional on working status under socialism; it became universal after the regime change (Jarvis and Micklewright, 1994, p. 16) and was means-tested for only a short period between 1996-1997 (Darvas and Szikra, 2017, p. 219). Both the design of single mothers' benefits, and the legacy of the socialist regime, where single mothers were identified as workers, explain the missing link between single motherhood and welfare dependency. As a consequence, single mothers achieve a high score on the reciprocity and control criteria. The positive image of single mothers in Hungary is also supported by the results, as it is not connected to special identity categories such as classes, minorities, or age groups.

There is one criterion that slightly modulates the positive image: identity – measured as a gap between the traditional family and the single parent one. A great part of the associations expressed that the traditional family is the preferred family type, as the partner of the mother and the father of the child is missing from the family. Moreover, the public was most divisive regarding the statement measuring identity: only half of the respondents believe that single motherhood is not an uncommon situation. There are, however, two perceptions that have a high level of acceptance: a large majority of the respondents believe that single mothers have a bad financial situation (need), and that they work hard to make a living for the family (control and reciprocity). Overall, the identity gap between the traditional and non-traditional family is not enough to generate negative welfare attitudes towards single mothers: more than 80% agreed that it is a role of the state to support single mothers. These findings highlight that while the public

opinion is in line with the government's conservative family policy, they also find single mothers deserving of state support.

While the family mainstreaming policy only started in 2011, it is not surprising that this research has found similar family values among the public, as Hungary is one of the most traditional countries in European comparisons regarding the preference for marriage. In 2002, 53% of the Hungarians surveyed agreed that married people are generally happier than unmarried people, compared to Scandinavian countries where the share of people who agreed was around 16% (Tóth, 2006, p. 88). There was a slight decline in the following years, however, 42% of the Hungarian population still agreed with this statement in 2013 (Rohr, 2017: 180). Furthermore, in 2016, around 90% of the population believed that a child needs both parents to live a happy life (Makay and Szabó, 2018, p. 42). In spite of this, the attitudes of the Hungarians regarding divorce are more similar to attitudes of Western Europe: 58% believed in 2002 (Tóth, 2006, p. 89) and 71.7% in 2016 (Makay and Szabó, 2018, p. 42), that divorce is usually the best solution when a couple can't seem to work out their marriage problems, even if they have children. These attitudes also explain the results: while Hungarians believe that marriage is the best form of relationship, and a child needs both parents to live a happy life, they still accept divorce as a solution to marriage problems. Consequently, single motherhood is not demonized, and most of the public does not believe that single mothers are responsible for remaining alone with their children. These findings suggest that the preference of the traditional family does not lead to negative welfare attitudes towards single mothers not just because single motherhood is not stigmatized in the welfare context, but also because of the incoherent family values of the population.

To sum up, these results show that a low level of state support towards single-parent families could not be legitimized by the public's preference towards the traditional family in those social contexts where family values are not entirely conservative and where the perception of single mothers is positive regarding other aspects of welfare deservingness. These findings also seem to explain the Hungarian government's policy regarding single parents. While targeted benefits towards single parents do not fit the government's family mainstreaming policy, the government also could not simply cut back these benefits because of positive public attitudes towards single mothers. Therefore, the government has instead gradually devalued these benefits and introduced new ones without targeting,

as this is a less salient strategy, which requires a lower level of social legitimization. Relying on the results of this chapter, in the following, I investigate further the determinants of single mothers' high level of perceived deservingness in Hungary.

5. THE DETERMINANTS OF SINGLE MOTHERS' WELFARE DESERVINGNESS IN HUNGARY: THE ROLE OF THE CARIN CRITERIA¹⁰

5.1. INTRODUCTION

Investigations of perceived welfare deservingness regarding standard benefit groups, such as the unemployed, the elderly, or the sick/disabled (e.g., Buss, 2019; Laenen and Meuleman, 2017; van Oorschot, 2006) occurs frequently, and there is a growing interest towards the perceived deservingness of immigrants (e.g., Kootstra, 2017; Reeskens and van der Meer, 2019; van Oorschot, 2006). Other potential benefit target groups, such as single parents, are less frequently objects of welfare attitudes research. Statistics, however, show that lone-parent households represent a quite significant share of European households (Eurostat, 2020b), and their poverty and social exclusion risk is the highest from all types of households (Eurostat, 2020a). Furthermore, single-mother families, who form the majority of single-parent households, have a higher risk compared to single-father families (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2016, pp. 1-2). These figures underline that deservingness research is as relevant regarding single mothers as in the case of other target groups, due to attitudes' function of legitimating welfare policies (van Oorschot et al, 2017).

Recent studies of welfare attitudes research rely on the application of the deservingness theory (e.g., van Oorschot et al, 2017), which claims that five criteria influence the perceived welfare deservingness of a group: control, attitude, reciprocity, identity, and need (van Oorschot, 2000). According to these criteria, those target groups are seen (more) deserving in the eye of the public who: seem personally not responsible for their situation (control), seem grateful for the benefits that they get (attitude), have contributed, or most probably will be able to contribute, to the work of the welfare system (reciprocity), are similar to the majority society (identity) and seem in need of help (need). The theory claims that deservingness is gradual, and groups have a position somewhere

¹⁰ A revised version of this chapter has been accepted for publication in the Journal of Social Policy (Herke and Janky 2021). I am grateful to Béla Janky for helping to develop the chapter into a journal article.

between the absolutely deserving and the absolutely undeserving (van Oorschot and Roosma, 2017, p. 15). This position is dependent on the scores of target groups on the deservingness criteria. For instance, control plays a great role in predicting the welfare deservingness of the unemployed, while it is less relevant regarding benefits targeting the elderly (van Oorschot and Roosma, 2017, pp. 14-15). The role of the criteria is, therefore, different in the case of distinct social groups, and this chapter addresses its investigation regarding a previously unexamined group, single mothers.

The context of the investigation is Hungary, where Chapter 4 showed that single mothers are perceived as deserving of state support by a large majority of the public. Nevertheless, previous research has not investigated the causal links between the group's overall deservingness and deservingness perceptions. Therefore, the chapter addresses the following research question: *Which CARIN criteria explain single mothers' perceived deservingness in Hungary?*

I use two common methods of welfare deservingness research to provide a detailed analysis; first, I investigate to what extent the acceptance of five statements, each measuring one deservingness criterion, explains the overall deservingness of single mothers. Second, I use a vignette-based factorial survey experiment and analyze how the characteristics of hypothetical single mothers influence the perceived fairness of the received amount of family allowance. In the experiment, the characteristics reflect on the deservingness criteria. The application of both methods is supported by the theory of 'deservingness heuristic' (Petersen et al, 2011), which argues that people judge recipients' deservingness differently in the absence and presence of specific deservingness cues. If specific information regarding a potential beneficiary is available, people disregard their political values and stereotypes, and base their judgments on the deservingness heuristic, a psychological process developed during evolution to distinguish reciprocators from cheaters. Based on this theory, the chapter investigates another research question: *To what extent do the weights of the deservingness criteria, regarding single mothers, vary in the presence and absence of specific deservingness cues?*

The chapter is structured as follows: first, I review earlier research findings on single mothers' perceived deservingness, then I summarize the methodological literature about

welfare deservingness research and connect it to the theory of deservingness heuristic. Afterwards, I form hypotheses and describe the methodology of the research and then I analyse the results of both measurements. In the conclusions and discussion part, I summarize the main findings of the chapter regarding the role of the criteria and evaluate how the findings reflect on the current benefit structure of single mothers in Hungary.

5.2. SINGLE MOTHERS AND THE DESERVINGNESS CRITERIA

Previous studies addressed investigating the relative importance of the deservingness criteria regarding distinct social groups. The results show that reciprocity and control (Reeskens and van der Meer, 2017) are usually the most important in the case of the unemployed, while identity (Kootsra, 2017) and reciprocity (Reeskens and van der Meer, 2019) are the best predicting criteria when judgments are made about immigrants. Earlier works have not examined the weights of the deservingness criteria in the case of single mothers, however, there is some connecting research evidence.

First, regarding the need criterion, Groskind (1991) found in a vignette-based survey experiment, that compared to two-parent families, where the father's work status and effort to find a job (reciprocity and control criteria) were the most important, the number of children and the weekly income (both reflecting on the need criterion) were the most influential factors when US respondents evaluated the deservingness of single-mother families. In the case of single mothers, the mother's work status and effort to find a job were even less important predictors than the absent father's work status and effort, and the marital status of the mother (reflecting also on the control criterion) was not a significant predictor. The role of the need criterion is also supported by the results of Roosma and Jeene (2017), who found that Dutch survey respondents showed more leniency regarding benefit obligations in the case of those single parents who had younger children (higher level of need).

Other studies, however, highlight the importance of control criterion. Control is often understood as the responsibility for being alone with the children, which is usually measured by the marital status of the single mother. While widows cannot be blamed for living alone with their children, divorced and never-married single mothers are frequently seen as responsible for their situation (Battle, 2019, p. 599). For instance, in American

new poverty discourses of the 1980s, the narrators exclusively blamed single mothers, except for the worthy widows (Fineman, 1991). Furthermore, van Oorschot (2000, p. 38) found at the end of the 1990s, that groups facing one of the acknowledged social risks have a higher score on the deservingness criteria. One of the investigated social risks was widowhood, besides being sick or disabled or being a pensioner. More recent research findings show that the perceived responsibility of becoming a single mother is still an important criterion. Baumberg et al. (2012, p. 26) found that British focus group participants ranked single parents as more deserving in cases where their partner had left them, while those who intentionally selected single parenthood were judged as less deserving.

There is also evidence about the importance of the other three deservingness criteria, but it is related to government and public discourses, and not public attitudes. The American welfare discourse of the 1990s was interwoven with the ‘welfare queen’ stereotype. Single mothers on welfare were depicted as Black (identity), lazy (control), promiscuous (identity) women from the lower classes (identity), who received more of the taxpayers’ money than they were entitled to (attitude) (Gilman, 2014, pp. 259-260; Monnat, 2010). Class-based stereotypes regarding single mothers who do not like to work and do not work (low level of control and reciprocity), were also very salient in the welfare discourse of the 1990s in the UK, where single motherhood was strongly connected to teenage pregnancy as well (Duncan and Edwards, 1999, pp. 28-31). The latter one simultaneously reflected on the identity and reciprocity criteria, as teenage motherhood was seen as a form of parenting that deviates from middle-class norms (identity), while it was also associated with welfare dependency (low level of reciprocity) (Wilson and Huntington, 2006).

The misuse of benefits (attitude) was also present in recent debates about single mothers’ welfare in Denmark (Jørgensen, 2018), but in a different context. The Danish legislation defines that single mothers are entitled to extra benefits only in cases where they are ‘genuinely single’. However, it is hard to identify who is genuinely single, which means that the person does not have a marital like relationship. This uncertainty – which was also supported by the rising number of Muslim mothers on welfare benefits (identity) – had led to a fear of welfare fraud.

Based on the above findings, it could be hard to select one dominant criterion, as evidence is quite scattered regarding the time and place of the investigations. Furthermore, the role of the criteria could be dependent on measurement and available information on recipients' deservingness.

5.3. MEASURING DESERVINGNESS IN THE PRESENCE AND ABSENCE OF DESERVINGNESS CUES

While the deservingness theory was developed 20 years ago (van Oorschot, 2000), there is an ongoing discussion about how it should be rightly measured. For instance, the deservingness of a group could be investigated by using statements referring to the group's deservingness in general (e.g., Kootstra, 2017). It could be also explored by using experimental methods, such as vignette-based factorial surveys or discrete-choice experiments (e.g., De Wilde, 2017; Reeskens and van der Meer, 2019; van der Aa et al, 2017), which are measuring the deservingness of a group via judgments about hypothetical representatives of the target group. As the characteristics of the hypothetical person, object, or situation experimentally vary across the conditions, it is possible to detect their effect on the judgment (Auspurg and Hinz, 2016, pp. 24-25). These experimental methods are, furthermore, preferred in welfare attitudes research (Goerres and Prinzen, 2012, p. 530), as these are presenting specific situations, which make it easier to respond to the questions. These detailed cases are less likely to trigger conflicting considerations during the judgment process. The application of context-specific methods is also supported by the psychological process of the deservingness heuristic.

According to the theory of deservingness heuristic (Petersen, 2012; Petersen et al, 2011), attitudes towards target groups' deservingness are highly related to available information. In the absence of specific cues of deservingness, people tend to form an opinion based on their political values and stereotypes. This process, however, requires domain-specific knowledge to successfully connect values with specific policies. On the other hand, in the presence of deservingness cues, people rely on a psychological process developed during evolution to distinguish reciprocators from cheaters in interpersonal help-giving situations. The deservingness heuristic helps people to judge someone's deservingness when a limited set of concrete cues are available and directs people's attention especially to the perceived effort and reciprocity of the recipient. Recipients who demonstrated low

effort to avoid requiring others' help are categorized as "cheaters," while recipients who showed high effort (and consequently also demonstrated a willingness to contribute to the work of the community), but are still in need of help, are categorized as "reciprocators." The automaticity of the heuristic implies that people disregard their values and stereotypes regarding the target group if enough information on the recipient is available, and people with, and without, related knowledge produce consistent judgments.

This theory, therefore, highlights the importance of control and reciprocity criteria in interpersonal settings. Within those settings, empirical results also proved the decreasing role of political values and stereotypes, as well as the priority of these perceptions regarding public assistance recipients and the unemployed (Aarøe and Petersen, 2014; Petersen, 2012; Petersen et al, 2011). However, in the case of single mothers, previous results (Groskind, 1991) show that in the presence of deservingness cues, control and reciprocity are less important criteria, and people base their judgments mainly on the perceived need of the recipients. Therefore, the investigation of the deservingness heuristic regarding single mothers is interesting also because previous results contradict the priority of control and reciprocity criteria. In this chapter, I take into account the varying nature of deservingness judgments in the presence and absence of concrete deservingness cues to better understand the underlying factors behind single mothers' perceived deservingness, and I also aim to validate the finding that the deservingness heuristic works differently in the case of single mothers.

To develop the hypotheses regarding general perceptions on single mothers' deservingness (absence of deservingness cues), it is necessary to take into account the Hungarian context, as the stereotypical image of benefit groups, and therefore, the relative weights of the deservingness criteria could be highly related to national contexts, such as the institutional design of the welfare states (Laenen et al, 2019; Larsen, 2006), meso-level benefit schemes (Laenen, 2018), or economic and political characteristics of the country (Jeene and van Oorschot, 2014). Accordingly, the chapter connects the attitudes to benefit schemes of family policy, instead of applying a macro-level perspective, as the Hungarian welfare state has a hybrid character (Lakner and Tausz, 2016, p. 348), similar to other East-European countries (Fenger, 2007; Hacker, 2009).

5.4. HYPOTHESES

While single parents are not well-targeted in the current Hungarian benefit system, the public believes that single mothers are in need of a higher level of state support (Gregor and Kováts, 2018, p. 106). Furthermore, Chapter 4 showed that quite a large part of survey respondents associated single motherhood with poverty and financial need in an open-ended question task. The identity criterion, measured as the distance between the public and target group, was also very frequent in the associations, as a substantial part of the respondents reflected on the incompleteness of single-mother families and the preference of the two-parent family. Despite this preference, the quantitative results of the same chapter showed that perceptions of single mothers are quite positive regarding the other four criteria. These positive perceptions explain why the great majority of the respondents agreed that it is a role of the state to support single mothers. The complexity of the identity criterion, however, could also explain these results: while a large part of the public still believes that married people are happier, and a child needs both parents to live a happy life, the majority also accepts divorce as the best solution to marriage problems (Makay and Szabó, 2018, p. 42; Rohr, 2017, p. 180).

The above presented descriptive results on public attitudes and policies (presented in the Introduction chapter) suggest some differences regarding the importance of the five criteria in Hungary, based on I formulate the hypotheses for the context of the absence of deservingness cues. First, I hypothesize that control, attitude, reciprocity, and need explain single mothers' deservingness (H1), as most respondents found single mothers deserving based on these criteria, similarly that most of the respondents agreed that it is a role of the state to support single mothers. Second, I hypothesize that some aspects of the identity criterion (attitudes regarding divorce) explain the deservingness of single mothers, while others (attitudes regarding the need of both parents) do not (H2), because previous results showed that the family values of the Hungarian population are not entirely conservative. Third, as respondents most often associated single motherhood with the need and identity criteria in the open-ended question (hence, the strongest stereotypes in Hungary seem to be the financial neediness and the incompleteness of these families, whose perceptions are also strengthened by the family policy system), but as identity proved to be an incoherent criterion in the Hungarian context, I hypothesize that need has the highest relative importance from the five criteria. Relying on Groskind's (1991)

results, I suppose that the need criterion is going to be the strongest predictor not only in the absence but also in the presence of concrete deservingness cues (H3). Based on Petersen et al. (2011), it is also expected that family values influence public attitudes in the absence of deservingness cues, but do not have an effect in situations of concrete persons (H4).

5.5. DATA AND METHODS

For this study, a block of six survey items and a vignette-based survey experiment was designed. Both of them were embedded in a larger survey that was asked on a 2000 respondent large quota sample of Hungarian adult internet users. The sample was selected from the respondent panel of one of the largest Hungarian polling firms, NRC¹¹. The sample was split at that point in the survey, where the blocks and the experiment would follow. Consequently, both sets of the six survey items, and the survey experiment were asked from approximately 1000 respondents with one of the two versions was randomly assigned to each respondent. The sample is similar to the Hungarian population regarding gender and settlement type, however, the lower educated, and the younger segments of the population, are underrepresented. Sampling weights were used in the analyses to correct for these differences.

5.5.1. Absence of Deservingness Cues – Using Statements

Five items measured the five deservingness criteria, and the following statement measured the overall deservingness of single mothers: *“It’s a role of the state to support single mothers.”* The five other statements were: *“Most single mothers are responsible for remaining with their child/children alone.”* (control) *“Most single mothers demand too much support from the state.”* (attitude) *“Most single mothers work hard to make a living for the family.”* (control & reciprocity) *“Single motherhood is not an uncommon situation.”* (identity) *“Most single mothers have a bad financial situation.”* (need). The statement used for reciprocity also reflected on the control criterion, but in a different sense from the first statement. In this case, it measured the control over the current situation (i.e., they work hard to make a living for their family and avoid poverty) and not the control over causing the situation (i.e., becoming a single mother). The answers for

¹¹ The data collection was funded by the grant K 120070 of NKFIH (Hungarian Public Research Funding Agency).

the negative statements (control and attitude) were recoded for the analysis, in order to have the same direction for all of the questions.

To account for the incoherent family values of the Hungarian population that might affect the role of the identity criterion, additional statements were added to the questionnaire: *“It is all right for a couple with an unhappy marriage to get a divorce even if they have children,” “A woman can have a child as a single parent even if she doesn't want to have a stable relationship with a man,” “A child needs a home with both a father and a mother to grow up happily.”*

Variables measuring deservingness, deservingness perceptions, and traditional family values were measured on the same scale: 1 - not agree at all, 2 - somewhat disagree, 3 - somewhat agree, 4 - absolutely agree, 0 - do not know / would not like to answer. The dependent variable (deservingness), and variables measuring deservingness perceptions and traditional family values, were recoded into binary ones (not agree = 0; agree = 1), and logistic regression models were used for the analysis. It helps to achieve a reasonable statistical power of the analysis (low number of respondents in the first category; N=20) and make the interpretation of the parameters straightforward (ordered logit estimates with three outcomes are presented in Table 13 in the Appendices). The first model contains solely the deservingness perceptions, while family values are included in the second model. Both models control for demographic variables (gender, age, education, settlement type, involvement). The analysis includes only those respondents who evaluated all deservingness and family values statements, therefore the sample was reduced to 725 respondents.

5.5.2. Presence of Deservingness Cues – A Vignette-based Factorial Survey Experiment

In the experiment, respondents were asked to evaluate the fairness of the family allowance of hypothetical single mothers. The characteristics of hypothetical single mothers were designed to reflect on the deservingness criteria. Seven characteristics were manipulated between the vignettes, each of them had two, three, or four categories. On the whole, the vignette universe covered 576 possible combinations of all characteristics (2x2x2x2x3x3x4). From this universe, 100 vignettes were selected with a random sampling technique (without replacement). These vignettes were sorted randomly into ten

distinct vignette decks, and all of them contained ten vignettes. Consequently, all respondents had to evaluate ten vignettes. Vignette decks were assigned to the respondents randomly, and the order of the vignettes also varied between respondents.

Control was measured with the marital status of the mothers, as earlier studies (Battle, 2019; Fineman, 1991) showed that widow mothers are usually judged as more deserving than divorced or never-married single mothers, as they could not be blamed for their situation. The *attitude* criterion was operationalized by concrete information about the gratefulness of the mothers towards the received support from the state. *Reciprocity* was measured in the vignettes with two factors. First, the descriptions provided information about the employment status of the mothers. This characteristic, however, was paired with information about the mothers' income, which referred to the recipient's neediness. Second, age was also used as a proxy variable of reciprocity, based on the deservingness logic, older mothers should be seen as more deserving, as they had more time to contribute to the work of the welfare system. Age could also be important because of negative stereotypes about teenage pregnancy, however, the younger age was set to 22 years, as using vignettes with 18-year-old mothers would have made some cases unrealistic.

In the case of single mothers, not only did their own income reflect on the level of *need*, but also the amount of maintenance received from the father of the child, or the amount of the orphan's pension. The number of children was also added as a factor of need. In this regard, the expectation is that the number of children increases the perceived deservingness of single mothers. Furthermore, the amount of the family allowance was systematically varied with the number of children to test the acceptance of the current system. In Hungary, single parents with one child are entitled to a lower amount of money (13.700 forints) compared to lone parents with three children, who earn 17.000 forints after each of their children.

While most of the criteria can be captured similarly in both measurements, identity is a problematic criterion. *Identity*, on the abstract level, was measured by the acceptance of single-mother families as an alternative to the traditional family. This dimension, however, could be applied in a context-specific way only if the deservingness of single-mother families would be compared with the deservingness of traditional families. Nevertheless, as respondents of the experiment also had to evaluate the same three

statements of family values as respondents of the abstract measurement, these variables are going to be included in the vignette analysis as respondent-level characteristics. Furthermore, Roma origin was included in the vignettes as another aspect of the identity criterion, as race and ethnicity proved to be an important factor in other welfare contexts (Foster, 2008; Jørgensen, 2018).

Furthermore, the same ten female names were used in the ten vignette decks. As these are usual Hungarian names and were assigned to the vignettes randomly, they did not have a special role. Table 8 summarizes the vignette characteristics, attributes, and the measured criteria.

Table 8. Operationalization of the Deservingness Criteria in the Vignettes

Signs (+) and (-) show the expected effects: (+) = more deserving, (-) = less deserving

Criterion	Operationalization	Attributes
Control	Marital status	Widow (+) Divorced (-) Never-married (-)
Attitude	Gratefulness of mother	Very grateful (+) Dissatisfied (-)
Reciprocity	Age	22-year-old (-) 40-year-old (+)
Identity	Ethnicity	Roma (-) No direct reference (+)
Need	Number of children + amount of family allowance	One child (-) / 13.700 forints Three children (+) / 17.000 forints per child
	Amount of maintenance from the father / amount of orphans' allowance	No amount (+) 25.000 forints (-) 50.000 forints (-)
Reciprocity + Need	Employment status + Income	Not employed, no income (-) A lower level of income than the average (+) Average income (-) A higher level of income than the average (-)

Consequently, in the most favourable vignette, the character is a widow (low level of control), 40-year-old (high level of reciprocity) non-Roma (absence of identity gap) single mother, who works (high level of reciprocity), but has a lower level of income than the average (high level of need). She has three children (high level of need) and does not receive orphan's allowance (high level of need). She is grateful to the state for the family allowance (positive attitude). This vignette is the following:

“Erika is a 40-year-old, widow single mother with three children. She works, and has a lower level of income than the average wage. She is not entitled to orphan's allowance for her children and receives a family allowance of 17.000 forints after each of her children from the state. Erika is grateful for the support received from the state.”

Each vignette was followed by the question: *‘In your opinion, the amount of family allowance of (name of the mother) is fair, unfairly too low, or unfairly too high?’* and respondents had to answer it on an 11-point scale, where -5 was labelled as unfairly too low, 0 as fair, and 5 as unfairly too high.

To evaluate the judgments on the vignettes, the hierarchical design of the dataset was considered: the sample of the hundred vignettes was clustered into ten different decks (Level 3), and each respondent (Level 2) had to evaluate one deck with ten vignettes. In consequence, vignettes (Level 1) were clustered within the other two levels. The decomposition of the variance showed, that a two-level model was sufficient to use, as vignette decks explained only the 0.005% of the variance. On the contrary, the respondent level explained 45% of the variance.

I estimated linear multilevel regression models with the *mixed* command in Stata. The dependent variable was treated as a metric variable, as each level of the 11-point scale was used by the respondents, and there was a normal distribution of the values. In the original scale, the most deserving option had the lowest value (-5), while the least deserving, had the highest (5). This scale was reversed for the analysis to make understanding of the estimates easier. Furthermore, each number was recomputed into positive numbers. Ordered logit estimates are presented for robustness check in the Appendices (Table 16).

Three models were estimated. The first model includes solely the vignette characteristics, while family values of the respondents were added in the second model. The third model also contains the demographic characteristics of the respondents (gender, age, education, settlement type, involvement). Of the 1021 respondents, only those who evaluated the family values questions as well, were included in the analysis, resulting in 910 respondents and a 9100 vignettes large sample.

5.6. RESULTS

5.6.1. Absence of Deservingness Cues

From the respondents, 629 agreed and 96 disagreed with the statement that it is a role of the state to support single mothers. The overall level of deservingness of single mothers is quite high, and single mothers are clearly seen as deserving based on the ‘need’ and the mixed ‘control and reciprocity’ criterion (agreement level: 85%; 90%). There is a lower level of disagreement regarding the negative statements about control and attitude criteria (76%; 73% respectively), while respondents are strongly divided regarding the item measuring identity (43% agree that single motherhood is not an uncommon situation). But which CARIN criteria explain the perceived deservingness of single mothers?

Table 9 shows that three of the five criteria have a significant effect on the overall deservingness variable, and these effects remain quite stable in the second model, when family values of the respondents are also included. Agreement with the statement about single mothers’ hard work (reciprocity + control), is associated with an almost 20 percentage point higher probability of agreeing with the dependent variable. Furthermore, the belief that single mothers have a bad financial situation (need) means an 18 percentage point higher probability of finding the state responsible to support single mothers. In addition, finding single mothers not demanding (attitude), increases the probability by 11 percentage points. Agreeing statements about the control and identity criteria do not affect the overall deservingness variable.

The results of the second model reveal a quite interesting relationship: those who disagree that a child needs both parents to live a happy life, are more likely to believe that it is not the role of the state to support single mothers. Based on the deservingness logic, it was expected that agreeing with this statement would decrease the probability of finding

single mothers deserving. I hypothesized, that the belief that the ideal family is the two-parent one, also incorporates the concept that other family forms, such as single-parent families, should not be supported by the state. The negative relationship, however, suggests something different. The belief that single parents could provide a happy life for their children, seems to incorporate the concept, that they do not need extra help from the state. Regarding the acceptance of divorce, the result is in line with the expectation: the belief that divorce is an acceptable solution for marriage problems increases the probability of finding single mothers deserving of state support by eleven percentage points. These results contradict H2, as both the acceptance of divorce, and the belief that a child needs both parents to live a happy life, predict higher level of deservingness of single mothers.

In addition, post estimation tests show that there is no significant difference between the coefficients of reciprocity/control and need ($p=0.99$) and need and attitude ($p=0.69$). The coefficient of belief about a child's need of both parents is significantly different from the coefficient of need ($p=0.00$), but only due to the diverse directions of the two effects, while the sizes of these coefficients are also not significantly different ($p=0.80$). Finally, the difference is also not significant regarding the coefficients of accepting divorce and need ($p=0.60$). These tests partly support H1 as the results show that reciprocity/control, attitude and need, are all determinant deservingness criteria, while control (in the sense of causing the situation), is not. On the other hand, the priority of the need criterion (H3) is not supported, as there is not a single criterion that could be claimed as the most determinant one in this case.

Table 9. Average Marginal Effects of Deservingness Perceptions and Traditional Family Values

	Model 1			Model 2		
	AME	p-value	95% CI	AME	p-value	95% CI
<i>Controlled for demographic variables</i>						
Control (sm. are not responsible)	0.01	0.82	[-0.08,0.10]	0.01	0.76	[-0.06,0.09]
Reciprocity + Control (sm. work hard)	0.19	0.02	[0.04,0.35]	0.16	0.02	[0.03,0.28]
Attitude (sm. are not demanding)	0.11	0.02	[0.02,0.21]	0.10	0.02	[0.01,0.19]
Need (sm. have bad financial sit.)	0.18	0.00	[0.07,0.29]	0.15	0.01	[0.05,0.26]
Identity (sm. is not an uncommon sit.)	0.01	0.70	[-0.05,0.07]	0.01	0.66	[-0.04,0.06]
Accept divorce				0.11	0.01	[0.03,0.18]
Women's right to single motherhood (agree)				0.02	0.65	[-0.06,0.09]
Need of both parents (disagree)				-0.12	0.02	[-0.23,-0.02]
<i>N</i>		725			725	
<i>Pseudo R²</i>		0.31			0.37	

Note: Dependent variable: "It's a role of the state to support single mothers" (0=not agree; 1=agree; AME=average marginal effects, CI=confidence intervals.

Amongst the demographic variables, two explain the deservingness of single mothers. People with a medium level of education are somewhat less likely to believe that the government is responsible to support single mothers, compared to people with a low level of education; similarly, people in their forties, are less likely to find single mothers deserving, than people between the ages of 18 and 29 (Table 14 in the Appendices).

Furthermore, while control was not a significant predictor of perceived deservingness, it could be explained by the result that the understanding of this statement was varied between different groups of respondents. While in general, most of the groups were more likely to find single mothers deserving if they believed that most single mothers are not responsible, men and people above 50 were more likely to find single mothers deserving, if they believed that most of them are responsible for remaining alone with their children.¹² One possible explanation of this result is that these groups might think in a more traditional way, as these groups also have more conservative views regarding gender equality (Gregor, 2016, p. 103), and consequently, they believe that when mothers are not responsible, men should support women and not the state.

5.6.2. Presence of Deservingness Cues

The mean score of the dependent variable is 7.24, which strengthens that single mothers, in general, are perceived as a deserving group. Nevertheless, as Table 10 shows, all vignette characteristics, except marital status, attitude, and the age of the mother, have significantly influenced the evaluation of the deservingness of hypothetical single mothers.

The received amount of maintenance from the father/orphan's allowance, shows the highest coefficient, followed by the level of income. Post estimation tests indicate that these coefficients are significantly different from the others, proving that these characteristics influenced the evaluation to the highest extent, and supporting H3 about the priority of the need criterion. The number of children (also reflecting on the need criterion) indicates the fourth highest coefficient (after ethnicity). While the received amount of orphan's allowance/maintenance from the father clearly proves that a higher

¹² Separate models for demographic groups were estimated. AME of control is -0.09 (p=0.02) in the case of men, while it is -0.09 (p=0.04) in the case of people above the age of 50.

level of financial need makes single mothers more deserving, the results of the other two dimensions require further explanation. As the dimension of income was linked to the employment status of the mother, it did not simply reflect on the role of the need criterion, but also on reciprocity. The results of this mixed dimension prove that, in this situation, need is more important than reciprocity, as there is no significant difference between the evaluation of unemployed (low level of reciprocity), and employed (high level of reciprocity), but underpaid (high level of need), single mothers. The importance of the need criterion is also highlighted by the further results of this dimension, as single mothers with an average or high level of income, were evaluated as less deserving compared to unemployed mothers. Regarding the last dimension of need, results show that single mothers with one child received significantly higher scores compared to mothers with three children. These results, again, do not solely reflect on the need criterion, as the number of children systematically varied with the amount of the family allowance. It rather shows that respondents do not agree with the principle that single mothers with more children need to receive a higher amount of support after each of their children.

The received amount of maintenance from the father/orphan's allowance, and the level of income, were followed by the ethnicity of the mothers (identity). Similar to other contexts, results show that minority single mothers (in this case Roma) were judged as less deserving compared to those mothers whose ethnicity was not explicitly mentioned in the vignettes.

The difference regarding the age of the mother is not significant at the 5% level, but only at the 10% level ($p=0.07$). Nevertheless, the results show that older single mothers earned lower scores on the scale compared to younger mothers, which might have happened because age was not understood as a proxy of reciprocity, but rather as a factor of need. Respondents might believe that younger mothers are in need of more financial help as they usually have less work experience than older mothers. Cross-level interaction effects (Table 17 in the Appendices), however, show that the understanding of this attribute was diverse between different groups. Men and people above the age of 50 were less likely to differentiate between older and younger single mothers, compared to women and people between the ages of 18 and 29. These groups might also have associated young single motherhood with a low level of reciprocity, or due to more conservative gender attitudes, with deviation from middle-class parenting norms (identity). Furthermore, people who

are directly involved in single motherhood (i.e., single mothers themselves, or were raised by a single mother) were also less likely to find younger mothers more deserving than older mothers. Based on their first-hand experience, they might believe that a 40-year-old mother is as much in need of state support as a 22-year-old mother and therefore they have not found this aspect relevant during evaluation.

Neither marital status nor the attitude of the mother had a direct effect on the evaluation. On the other hand, cross-level interaction effects (Table 18 in the Appendices) show some interesting results. Regarding marital status, results show that people with a low level of education less likely differentiated between widowed and divorced, as well as widowed and never-married mothers, than people with a medium or high level of education. It could be explained by two reasons. First, it might indicate that people with a low level of education have less prejudices towards divorced and never-married single mothers. Second, it might as well suggest that marital status was not understood as a clear sign of control for all respondents, and the low-educated have not connected marital status with the responsibility of mothers for being in need of state support.

Moreover, the understanding of mother's attitude towards state support was also distinct between age groups (Table 17 in the Appendices). While most of the respondents found single mothers less deserving if they claimed that the state should support them more, people above the age of 50 found those mothers less deserving who were grateful to the state. This result suggests that the information provided on the attitude criterion was also understood as a sign of need (i.e., the mother demands more support because she is in need of help) among older respondents. One possible explanation of why older respondents found these mothers more deserving is that under socialism, single mothers were more supported by the state, and therefore people socialising in that era might find the demands of these mothers more rightful.

Family values variables were added in the second model, however, none of these variables had a significant effect on the evaluation. These results seem to confirm the theory of Petersen et al. (2011) on the decreasing role of values in the presence of deservingness cues (H4). On the other hand, interaction effects show (Table 18 in the Appendices) that while these values did not have a direct effect on judgments, they did influence the understanding of some attributes. First, results indicate that people agreeing with a

women's right to have a child without a stable relationship less likely differentiated between widow and never-married single mothers. Second, people disagreeing that 'a child needs both parents to live a happy life' found those single mothers who received the highest amount of child support more deserving, compared to people who agreed with this statement. At first sight, it seems to contradict the results of the previous method, which showed that people agreeing with this statement judge single mothers as more deserving. In this case, however, this relationship is mediated by the amount of child support/orphan's pension received from the father/state. Therefore, it rather shows that people agreeing with this statement find single mothers more deserving because of the perceived lack of financial support from the father, and whenever this support is appropriately guaranteed, they are less supportive of state's role in helping single mothers.

Finally, Table 15 in the Appendices contains the results of the third model, when demographic variables were added. The coefficients of the deservingness variables are stable over the second and third models. From these variables, only age had a significant effect, as people above the age of 50 found single mothers more deserving than people between the ages of 18 and 29.

Table 10. Multilevel Models of the Vignette-based Survey Experiment

	Model 1			Model 2		
	b	p-value	95% CI	b	p-value	95% CI
Intercept	8.46	0.00	[8.19, 8.73]	8.29	0.00	[7.72, 8.85]
Vignette variables						
Age (ref. 22-year-old) (R)						
40-year-old	-0.11	0.07	[-0.23, 0.01]	-0.11	0.07	[-0.23, 0.01]
Ethnicity (ref.: Roma) (I)						
No mention of ethnicity	0.47	0.00	[0.33, 0.61]	0.47	0.00	[0.33, 0.61]
Marital status (C)						
(ref.: Widow)						
Divorced	-0.09	0.28	[-0.24, 0.07]	-0.09	0.28	[-0.24, 0.07]
Never-married	-0.12	0.12	[-0.26, 0.03]	-0.12	0.12	[-0.26, 0.03]
Number of children (N)						
(ref.: one child)						
Three children	-0.39	0.00	[-0.52, -0.27]	-0.39	0.00	[-0.52, -0.27]
Employment status and income (R + N)						
(ref.: Does not work currently, no income)						
Works, have a lower salary than the average	0.06	0.47	[-0.11, 0.23]	0.06	0.48	[-0.11, 0.23]
Works, have an average salary	-0.21	0.02	[-0.38, -0.03]	-0.21	0.02	[-0.38, -0.03]
Works, have a higher salary than the average	-0.97	0.00	[-1.18, -0.76]	-0.97	0.00	[-1.18, -0.76]
Maintenance / orphan's allowance (N)						
(ref.: does not get any)						
Gets 25.000 forints/child/month	-0.95	0.00	[-1.11, -0.78]	-0.95	0.00	[-1.11, -0.78]
Gets 50.000 forints/child/month	-1.48	0.00	[-1.64, -1.31]	-1.48	0.00	[-1.64, -1.31]
Attitude (A)						
(ref.: Grateful to the state)						
Demands more from the state	-0.07	0.29	[-0.19, 0.06]	-0.07	0.28	[-0.19, 0.05]
Respondent variables						
Accept divorce (I)				-0.01	0.97	[-0.50, 0.48]
Need of both parents (I)				-0.09	0.76	[-0.66, 0.48]
(disagree)						
Women's right to single motherhood (agree) (I)				0.26	0.29	[-0.21, 0.73]
AIC		37417.62			37419.8	
Var. group		2.91			2.90	
Var. residuals		2.88			2.88	
Rho (ICC)		0.50			0.50	
Number of respondents		910			910	
Number of vignettes		9100			9100	

Note: Dependent variable: 'In your opinion, the amount of family allowance of (name of the mother) is fair, unfairly too low, or unfairly too high?' (11-point scale). Initials of the reflected CARIN criteria are marked in parentheses after the attributes.

5.7. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter explored the relative weights of the deservingness criteria in predicting single mothers' perceived deservingness with Hungarian data by using two different methods, regression analysis of statements, and a vignette-based survey experiment. The chapter's contribution to the literature is threefold. First, it provides a detailed investigation about the importance of the criteria in the case of a previously unexamined group, single mothers. Second, it combines two deservingness theories, CARIN (van Oorschot, 2000) and deservingness heuristic (Petersen et al, 2011), by investigating the importance of the CARIN deservingness criteria in the case of single mothers both in the presence and absence of deservingness cues. Third, it provides information about the social legitimacy of single mothers' benefit structure in the current Hungarian family policy system.

The chapter proved that in Hungary, where single mothers are perceived as a deserving group by the majority of the public, beliefs about their strong work ethic, non-demanding attitude, neediness, as well as liberal, but also some of the conservative family values, explain their perceived deservingness. These results also show that in the absence of specific deservingness cues, respondents relied on the attitude, reciprocity/control, and identity criteria as much as on the criterion of need. In contrast, in the presence of concrete deservingness cues, the perception of single mothers' neediness became the strongest predictor, and the direct effects of perceived attitude and reciprocity, as well as family values, disappeared. These findings support the existence of the deservingness heuristic, as stereotypes and family values did matter in the absence of deservingness cues, while respondents disregarded them when specific cues of deservingness were available. In light of these results, it is also reasonable that even in the US, where strong negative stereotypes about single mothers' welfare dependency exist, respondents in a vignette experiment (Groskind, 1991) mainly relied on cues related to single-mother families' neediness, instead of their perceived level of control and reciprocity (effort to find a job and employment status).

On the other hand, it seems that compared to previous results (Aarøe and Petersen, 2014; Petersen, 2012; Petersen et al, 2011), in the case of single mothers, the deservingness heuristic directs people's attention towards cues of need, instead of control and

reciprocity. The perception of need might be more important regarding single mothers, due to the presence of a third party, their children. When specific information on single mothers' financial situation is available, respondents might be more likely to realize that these circumstances affect also the welfare of children, and focus more on children's needs than mothers' characteristics.

Similarly, it would be reasonable to think that this mechanism works in the same way in the case of two-parent families with children, however, Groskind (1991) found that in those situations, respondents relied more on the fathers' perceived effort and employment status, than the families' perceived level of need. Therefore, this mechanism seems to also be driven by traditional gender roles (i.e., the women's role is to care for children and the men's role is to make a living for the family), and it suggests that it works this way only in the case of single mothers, and not in the case of single fathers. It is further supported by the result that the most important attribute in the vignettes was the amount of child support/orphan's allowance received from the father/state, and not the mother's level of income.

The results of this chapter also highlight that the theory of CARIN and the theory of deservingness heuristic together can explain the determinants of groups' perceived deservingness, as people find importance in different kinds of information (and criteria) in the presence and absence of specific deservingness cues. Further studies, therefore, might combine these theories and apply more than one method to arrive at a more detailed understanding of the determinants of groups' perceived deservingness.

Furthermore, the results of the survey experiment also provide feedback on the legitimacy of single mothers' current benefit coverage in Hungary. As the most influential factors were the ones connected to the need criterion, these results highlight that benefits supporting single mothers should be allocated based on their level of financial need. Respondents also did not differentiate between unemployed and employed single mothers, indicating that respondents do not support the principle that single mothers' benefits should be tied to working status. Therefore, these two results show that public attitudes are not in line with the current family policy system, which privileges the better-off, working families. Respondents would support a system that provides more benefits for single mothers with poorer financial conditions. In addition, respondents also do not

agree with the pronatalist idea that the amount of family allowance per child should be higher in case there are more children in the family.

Lastly, regarding the complexity of the Hungarian attitudes, our results revealed that despite the Hungarian government's conservative family policy, and the population's preference towards traditional family, some of the conservative beliefs such as "a child needs both parents to live a happy life" increases, not decreases, the perceived deservingness of single mothers. Therefore, single-mother families could also be seen as deserving in those societies, where a large majority of the population does not accept single-parent family as an alternative to the traditional one. Further studies might test the validity of this result in different social contexts, to prove whether this finding was caused by the incoherent family values of the Hungarian population, or if this complex effect of conservative family values is universal across societies.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1. AIMS OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation investigated single mothers' perceived welfare deservingness in Hungary and aimed to fulfill three main research goals. First, it aimed to explore the social legitimacy of single mothers' state support in Hungary, where recent changes in the family policy system caused a decreasing level of targeting towards single-parent families, and where these changes are supported by the conservative government rhetoric on the importance of traditional family values. For this purpose, the thesis applied a complex research design and not only investigated the attitudes themselves, but also those factors that could shape them (historical-institutional design of single mothers' benefits, public image of single mothers, perceived deservingness of single mothers based on special criteria and the government discourse). Moreover, the thesis also explored the interrelations between attitudes, policies, and discourses. By providing a complex case study on the different factors that could shape the social legitimacy of targeted welfare and the interrelations between these factors, the dissertation also aimed to contribute to the literature on the research of the social legitimacy of targeted welfare.

Second, it intended to provide an investigation regarding the topic in a context other than the UK and US, to initiate the comparative research of the topic, as previous literature

almost solely focused on the Anglo-Saxon cases. By the comparison of the historical development of single mothers' state support in Hungary to the UK and US, the dissertation also aimed to contribute to the comparative literature on gender equality in Eastern Europe and Western capitalist countries, that often present state-socialist countries as being slower to develop compared to Western countries.

Third, this dissertation aimed to explore the determinants of single mothers' perceived deservingness based on major theories of deservingness research. On the one hand, it applied the CARIN deservingness criteria (control, attitude, reciprocity, identity, need) (van Oorschot, 2000), that were already used in the research of several other benefit target groups' perceived deservingness (such as the unemployed or social assistance recipients) (e.g., van Oorschot and Roosma, 2017), but was previously not used in the case of single mothers. On the other hand, it also aimed to test the work of the 'deservingness heuristic' (Petersen et al, 2011) in the case of single mothers. Regarding other target groups, previous results showed that people decide differently about deservingness in the absence and presence of concrete deservingness cues.

The following part of this chapter separately concludes the main findings of the dissertation regarding each of these three research aims.

6.2. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS REGARDING HUNGARIAN SOCIAL POLICY – THE SOCIAL LEGITIMACY OF SINGLE MOTHERS' TARGETED WELFARE IN HUNGARY

One major aim of the dissertation was to investigate the social legitimacy of single mothers' state support in Hungary. This aim was approached in multiple ways in all of the chapters. First, in Chapter 2, it was investigated based on the historical and institutional characteristics of single mothers' state support. Second, in Chapter 3, the government discourse on traditional family values and single parenthood were analysed. Third, in Chapter 4, stereotypes regarding single mothers and attitudes towards single mothers' deservingness were explored based on survey results. Fourth, and finally, in Chapter 5, the social legitimacy of single mothers' state support was tested regarding the design of the family allowance (the major form of their state support) by a vignette-based factorial survey experiment.

Chapter 2 showed that single mothers' state support has a long-standing and stable tradition in the Hungarian family policy system. Their most important form of support, the family allowance, was founded at the beginning of the 20th century, and working single mothers became entitled as their right in the 1950s. From that time, single mothers (from the 1960s, single fathers as well) received a higher allowance than two-parent families. Single parents' higher level of support remained stable during the years of socialism, as well as after the regime change (with varying levels of exact support though). This stability in the system also shows stability in the perception of single parents' deservingness. This finding is further supported by the quasi-universal design of family allowance (it was tied to employment in socialism, however, due to full employment, it was available for almost every family) and also by the fact that single mothers remained included in this system after the regime change as well.

Chapter 3 showed that the government discourse on the importance of traditional family values frames the alternative family types in general (also single-parent families) as harmful for the nation by causing demographic decline. This frame explicitly states that the solution to the problem is the increased birth rate that could be achieved by the advertisement of traditional family values and the support of traditional families through the benefit system. In this frame, therefore, traditional families are clearly the deserving ones, while other types of families are seen as less deserving. Single-parent families, however, are not explicitly vilified, and they are not claimed as undeserving in the government's direct communication on single-parent families. They are rather described as accepted, but less healthy, "second-class" families compared to traditional ones. The message is that single-parenthood needs to be prevented, and in line with this, single-parent families are seen as deserving, but less deserving families than traditional families.

Chapter 4 investigated the social legitimacy of single mothers' state support by analysing single mothers' perceived deservingness based on their public image and deservingness perceptions. The public image of single mothers was investigated by open-ended survey questions, where respondents were asked to provide their associations regarding single mothers and single mothers' life. The results of this task showed that single mothers are seen as poor mothers, who do everything to make a living for their family and who lack emotional and financial state support. Within this image, the strongest characteristic (most often emphasized) was their poverty. Besides this deserving public image,

respondents, however, similarly often emphasized the incompleteness of these families by referring to the lack of the other parent. These two characteristics, therefore, touch upon two deservingness criteria, need, and identity. How single mothers are perceived is positive based on the need criterion, as they are seen as poor and needy. Regarding the identity criterion, the perception is not that positive, as the answers emphasized that these families are different from the preferred two-parent family form.

The investigation of single mothers' perceived deservingness based on attitude questions, also underlined these findings. On the one hand, the large majority of respondents (almost 80%) agreed with the statement that most single mothers have a bad financial situation. On the other hand, the respondents were most divided regarding the statement measuring identity, "*Single motherhood is not an uncommon situation*," as only half of them agreed. However, the results also showed that besides single mothers' lower score on the identity criterion, 80% of the respondents agreed with the statement, "*It's a role of the state to support single mothers*." These results, therefore, show that despite the public's alignment with the government's conservative family ideal (two-parent (married) one), they find single mothers deserving of state support. It could be explained by the positive scores of single mothers on four of five deservingness criteria (the only exception is the identity criterion), and also by the incoherent family values of the population. On the one hand, it is quite conservative regarding the importance of marriage and the need of both parents, while on the other hand, it is quite liberal regarding the acceptance of divorce.

Chapter 5 approached the social legitimacy of state support of single mothers by investigating attitudes towards the design of the benefits. A vignette-based factorial survey experiment was used within which the respondents were asked to evaluate the fairness of the amount of the family allowance of hypothetical single mothers. The characteristics of the hypothetical mother varied randomly between the vignettes based on their age, ethnicity, marital status, number of children, employment status, level of income, amount of received maintenance/orphan's allowance, and their gratefulness to the state for the received support. The results regarding the number of children (varied systematically with the amount of allowance per child), employment status, and the received amount of maintenance/orphan's allowance give information also about the social legitimacy of the current benefit system.

First, respondents found those mothers who had one child, and who received a lower level of support, more deserving, compared to those mothers who had three children and received a higher level of support after each of their children. Consequently, respondents do not share the pronatalist idea that the government should give a higher amount of allowance per child in larger families. Second, respondents did not differentiate between the deservingness of employed and unemployed single mothers, therefore, it suggests that they do not share the idea that single mothers' benefits should be tied to employment. Third, as respondents have found single mothers with both lower levels of income and maintenance/orphan's pension more deserving, it shows that the benefits of single mothers should be based more on their financial need. On the whole, these results show that the attitudes are not so much in line with recent changes in the family policy system that gave higher weight to income-based benefits (tax credit) that favour the better-off working families. Respondents would prefer to support a benefit system that is not tied to working status and which would help those single mothers more who have poorer financial circumstances.

The results of Chapters 2, 4, and 5 all point to the same direction. Namely, that single mothers' state support enjoys a high level of social legitimacy in Hungary. It is highlighted by the historical-institutional context within their benefits were (quasi) universal and remained quite stable over time. Furthermore, it is supported by single mothers' positive public image, their positive scores on four of five deservingness criteria, and their high level of overall deservingness. The supportive attitudes of the public, and the long-standing, stable design of single parents' benefits, also seem to explain the more cautious communication of the government on single parenthood compared to other alternative forms of families (Chapter 3), as well as the less salient strategy of decreasing targeted welfare towards single parents. These results also highlight that there are important interrelations between the investigated factors. Meanwhile, the high level of social legitimacy of single mothers' state support also shows that recent changes in the family policy system, which reduced targeting towards single parents are not much supported by the public (even though the public also prefers the traditional family), who would even increase their level of support (based on the results of the vignette-based survey experiment). More specifically, the shift towards income-based benefits is not supported, while a benefit system that would target poorer single mothers, would enjoy a higher level of social legitimacy.

6.3. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS REGARDING COMPARATIVE SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH

The aim of comparing Hungary to the Anglo-Saxon cases regarding single mothers' perceived deservingness was approached in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4. Chapter 2 compared the historical development of single mothers' benefits and related government discourse in these countries with a special focus on the ideas that have shaped the formation of the benefits, discourses, and gender equality. Chapter 4 focused on the public image and perceived deservingness of single mothers in Hungary, and to some extent compared it (by taking into account the methodological constraints) with the ones present in the 1990s discourses of the US and UK.

Chapter 2 showed that single mothers' benefits had developed quite differently in Hungary compared to the US and UK in the 20th century. In the Anglo-Saxon countries, single mothers were included in assistance-based benefit schemes, while in Hungary, working single mothers were included in the family allowance scheme within which they received an increased level of support. This difference in the design was a consequence of the diverse perceptions of single mothers in the examined countries. In Hungary, single mothers similar to other mothers under socialism, were seen as working mothers. In contrast, in the UK and US, policymakers perceived single mothers as non-employable citizens due to their commitment towards the male-breadwinner model. Furthermore, in the UK and US, widowed single mothers, who were perceived as more deserving, were included in the social security scheme and more often received assistance-based support than separated, divorced, or never-married single mothers. In Hungary, the system has not differentiated between single mothers based on their marital status.

Based on these institutional characteristics, there were no strong obstacles to reform the systems during the 1990s in the UK, and the US. Assistance-based benefits are usually supported to a lesser extent than more universal benefits. The male-breadwinner model was becoming increasingly outdated due to the rising female employment rate of coupled mothers, and the majority of single mothers were no longer widowed, but divorced/separated/never-married. Moreover, the reforms in these countries were supported by public discourses (government and media) on single mothers' undeservingness. Single mothers were described in these discourses as a social and economic threat by rationally selecting single motherhood and state dependency over

married life and paid work. The advertisement of traditional family values was an important component of these discourses such as it is in the discourse of the Hungarian government in the 2010s. On the other hand, in Hungary, the government discourse focuses on the advertisement of traditional family values, and single mothers are not demonized (but described as second-class families compared to traditional families). This discourse also fits the historical-institutional context, as in Hungary, single mothers were perceived as a deserving group, therefore, a negative discourse on single mothers' deservingness would not enjoy a high level of social legitimacy.

Chapter 2 also shed light on the progressiveness of socialist Hungary compared to the capitalist UK and US in promoting gender equality. While in Western feminist literature, Eastern European countries are often labelled as belated in terms of gender equality due to the forced equalizing process of socialist states, single mothers' state support provides a case which highlights that socialist states were indeed much ahead in fostering gender equality regarding some aspects of everyday life of women compared to Western countries. The liberal legal environment, as well as employment and benefit policies in socialist Hungary, all contributed to gender equality through the lens of the case of single mothers, as women could have left undesired relationships without legal stigmatization, and the state also increased women's capacity to form and maintain an autonomous household. The environment was less women-friendly in the UK and US, where no-fault divorce was introduced much later, and where single mothers' employment was not facilitated either through childcare services, or through employment policies. What is more, they lost assistance-based benefits when they had paid work, which often provided only slightly better income compared to social assistance.

Chapter 4 investigated the public image of single mothers in Hungary. While the exact comparison of this image, with the ones present in the 1990s the UK and US, was not feasible due to methodological constraints, the chapter rather used the Anglo-Saxon cases as a background of the research. The methodological constraints were that the studies investigating the US and UK focused on the analysis of the public discourse, while the investigation of Hungary was based on survey data. Nevertheless, the results showed that single mothers have a deserving public image in Hungary, which is quite in contrast with the undeserving ones in the US and UK.

The image of single mothers contained undeserving characteristics based on four deservingness criteria in the US and three in the UK. As these images were fuelled by the social threat discourse, both of them represented single mothers as responsible for their situation by rationally selecting single motherhood and state benefits (high level of personal control), who are reproducing poverty and state dependency (low level of reciprocity). In the American and British discourses, single mothers were presented as being promiscuous women from the “underclass,” who were teenagers (UK) and Black (US). These characteristics showed a lower level of deservingness regarding the identity criterion by referring to social distance between single mothers and the mainstream society regarding sexual and parenting norms, class position, and race. Furthermore, “welfare queens” in the US were also described as cheating women who get more out of the system than what they deserve.

In contrast, based on the Hungarian public image, single mothers are perceived as poor mothers (high level of need) who work a lot to make a living for their family (high level of reciprocity). The public image of single mothers in Hungary is also not connected to identity categories such as class or ethnicity. Single-mother families, however, are perceived as incomplete ones that show a lower score on identity.

On the whole, the results of Chapter 2 and Chapter 4 showed that Hungary is a quite different case regarding single mothers’ welfare deservingness than the US and UK, and that it could be explained by historical differences in the design of the benefits and ideas that shaped the formation of it. While the connected discourses advertised traditional family values in all of these three countries, single mothers could not be demonized in Hungary compared to the Anglo-Saxon countries, as they were perceived as deserving in the past. They are also perceived as deserving by the public in contemporary Hungary, even though the traditional family is still the preferred family type.

6.4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS REGARDING DESERVINGNESS RESEARCH

The aim to explore the determinants of single mothers’ perceived deservingness by applying the major deservingness theories was approached in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Chapter 4 focused on the operationalization of the CARIN criteria in the case of single mothers based on previous literature and open-ended survey questions. Chapter 5 went further, as it investigated the role of the criteria in the case of single mothers’

deservingness, and aimed to explore the most influential criterion, as well as to test the work of the deservingness heuristic in the case of single mothers.

Chapter 4 reviewed the available literature on single mothers' perceived deservingness. While *control* criterion is usually understood as the personal responsibility of being in need of state support regarding other benefit target groups (e.g., unwillingness of work in the case of the unemployed), it could also be understood similarly in the case of single mothers (e.g., efforts to make a living for the family). The review, however, showed that control in the case of single mothers usually reflects on mothers' perceived responsibility of becoming a single mother. In general, those single mothers, who seem to select this family form, are usually perceived as less deserving than those single mothers who remained alone because of other circumstances. Chapter 2 also showed that widowed mothers were seen as more deserving than divorced, separated, and never-married single mothers during the 20th century's the UK and US. To sum up, in the case of single mothers, control could be understood as control over causing the situation (i.e., becoming a single mother), but also as control over the current situation (i.e., being responsible for not overcoming the needy situation).

Regarding the criteria of attitude, reciprocity, and need, the literature did not show any special form of understanding. Such as in the case of other benefit target groups, *attitude* could be measured based on single mothers' gratefulness towards the received support. *Reciprocity* most easily could be understood as the employment status of mothers, and *need* could simply be measured by the financial circumstances of the target group.

Literature showed that race/ethnicity, class, and age groups reflected on the *identity* criterion in the negative public images of single mothers in the UK and US, as they were presented as Black (US) and teenage (UK) single mothers from the lower classes (US, UK). Furthermore, single-mother families were perceived as incomplete families in the late-1990s UK and Germany. The incomplete perception of single-mother families also touches upon the identity criterion by reflecting on the social gap between traditional families (that are complete) and single-mother families (that are incomplete and less preferable than traditional families). Therefore, similar to other minority groups (e.g., immigrants, ethnic minorities) (e.g., Kootsra, 2017; Reeskens and van der Meer, 2019), the identity criterion could be understood as the general acceptance of the group.

Chapter 4 also used open-ended survey questions to operationalize the deservingness criteria in the Hungarian context. Based on its results, the CARIN criteria were operationalized with five statements. *Control* was measured with single mothers' perceived responsibility for remaining with their children alone, *attitude* with the perception that they are too demanding, *reciprocity* (and control over the current situation) with the perception that they work hard to make a living for their family, *identity* with the perceived ordinariness of single-mother families, and *need* with the perception that single mothers, in general, have bad financial circumstances. Single mothers were perceived deserving based on four of these five statements (the exception being identity), while a general statement that measured the overall deservingness of single mothers ("*It is a role of the state to support single mothers*") also indicated a high level of single mothers' deservingness. While the results of the open-ended task showed that respondents most often associated single motherhood with poverty and the incompleteness of these families, the results of the attitude statements, and the incoherent family values of the population, suggested that only some aspects of the identity criterion (acceptance of divorce, but not the belief that a child needs both parents to live a happy life), explain deservingness. On the contrary, these results suggested that the perceived financial need has a great role in single mothers' perceived deservingness.

Chapter 5 investigated the determinants of single mothers' deservingness in Hungary based on two major deservingness theories (CARIN (van Oorschot, 2000) & deservingness heuristic (Petersen et al, 2011)). First, regression analysis of statements was used to investigate the role of the CARIN criteria in single mothers' perceived deservingness in the absence of deservingness cues. Second, a vignette-based factorial survey experiment was applied (within the criteria were translated into characteristics of hypothetical mothers) that measured the role of the criteria in single mothers' deservingness in the presence of specific deservingness cues. Both of these methods were used because the theory of the deservingness heuristic claims that people judge recipients' deservingness differently when more concrete cues about recipients' deservingness are available. Accordingly, people rely on their values and stereotypes when concrete information regarding recipients' deservingness is unavailable, while in the presence of specific information, people's decision is based on the deservingness heuristic. The heuristic is an automatic procedure, developed during evolution to distinguish

reciprocators from cheaters, and it directs people's attention to the perception of control and reciprocity.

The results showed that in the absence of deservingness cues, respondents relied on the attitude, reciprocity/control, identity, and need criteria to the same extent. Therefore, in Hungary, people see single mothers as deserving based on beliefs about single mothers' strong work ethic, non-demanding attitude, and neediness. Furthermore, liberal values regarding divorce, but also conservative views regarding a child's need of both parents, explain single mothers' deservingness. In contrast, when the deservingness of single mothers was measured in the presence of concrete deservingness cues, the perception of single mothers' neediness became the strongest predictor, and the direct effects of perceived attitude and reciprocity, as well as family values, disappeared. These results support the existence of the deservingness heuristic, as people disregarded their stereotypes and values when more concrete information regarding single mothers' deservingness was available. In the case of single mothers, the heuristic, however, directed people's attention towards the perception of financial need, that is, in contrast with previous results showing the importance of control and reciprocity criteria in the case of the unemployed and social assistance beneficiaries.

This result suggests a gender-related bias in the work of the deservingness heuristic, more concretely that perceived effort and reciprocity are less important in the case of mothers, as their traditional role is to take care of their children and not to make a living for the family. This mechanism is also supported by a previous experiment (Groskind, 1991). First, Groskind found the same result regarding single mothers (i.e., the perception of need was the most important criterion), and second, his results also demonstrated that in the case of two-parent families, the deservingness heuristic worked similar to other target groups, as the fathers' work status (reciprocity) and effort to find work (control) were the most important characteristics. Moreover, this gender-related understanding of the deservingness heuristic is further underlined by the finding that the amount of father's child support was an even more important predictor of perceived deservingness than the income of the mother in the current survey experiment. To sum up, it seems that while in the case of other target groups the deservingness heuristic directs people's attention to the perception of control and reciprocity, in the case of single mothers, traditional gender

roles overwrite this mechanism, and directs people's attention towards the perception of need instead of the perception of control and reciprocity.

Furthermore, the priority of the need criterion over control regarding single mothers' deservingness in the Hungarian context is also supported, as need explained deservingness also in the absence of deservingness cues, while control (in the sense that being responsible for remaining with children alone) had not explained it in any of the measurements. Meanwhile, as the results showed, the understanding of the control criterion was varied between respondents (in both measurements). In the regression analysis of statements, results showed that some groups (i.e., men and older respondents) were more likely to find single mothers deserving if they believed that most of the mothers are responsible for becoming a single mother. This result is in contrast to the deservingness theory, which claims that groups perceived as responsible for their situation are less likely to be seen deserving in the eyes of the public. One possible explanation for this surprising result is that these groups think in a more traditional way regarding gender relations, and because of it, they believe that when single mothers are not responsible, then fathers should help them and not the state. This result shows that to understand the role of control criterion in the case of single mothers, it is inevitable to include perceptions regarding fathers' responsibility as well.

Nevertheless, the result that control did not have a role in explaining single mothers' deservingness is somewhat surprising, as the Anglo-Saxon literature suggested that it is a quite determining criterion. This difference could be explained by several things. First, in the Anglo-Saxon discourses, the focus was especially on never-married single mothers, while in this dissertation, the marital status of the mothers was not specified in the abstract level measurement (and this could also explain the various understandings of this criterion). Second, in the specific level measurement, the marital status of the mothers was specified, and it explained perceived deservingness in the case of respondents with a medium or high level of education, but not regarding the lower educated. In this regard, there are also two possible explanations; the lower educated might be more accepting of never-married single mothers, or it could also be that marital status was not understood by them as a sign of perceived responsibility. Moreover, the various understandings of the control criterion, and its missing role regarding some segments of the public, might also be explained by the historical-institutional differences presented in Chapter 2,

namely that in Hungary, there has not been a strong differentiation between single mothers of different marital statuses since the 1950s. Furthermore, these days (as compared to the 1990s), it might be more an issue if a woman has a child alone without a stable relationship, than being unmarried or divorced while raising a child alone. It is further suggested by previous results from the UK (Baumberg et al, 2012), while the Hungarian government discourse also discriminates against those parents who decide to have a child alone.

The mixed results of the other three criteria in the two different measurements also show that people find importance in different kinds of information in the presence and absence of specific deservingness cues. These differences show that conclusions on the importance of the deservingness criteria in predicting groups' deservingness based on one measurement should be carefully drawn. Moreover, these different kinds of measurements provide information for different purposes. Investigating the deservingness of a group in the absence of deservingness cues could be useful in exploring the overall social legitimacy of the groups' state support, and to explore what perceptions drive this attitude. For designing benefits in a socially legitimate way, however, it might be more useful to apply context-specific methods. Based on these, it is clearer how the system should differentiate between members of the target groups, who could still vary in many aspects from each other.

To conclude, results showed that need is an important criterion in the case of single mothers' perceived deservingness in Hungary, while attitude, reciprocity (and control in the sense of having control over the current situation), and identity also explained single mothers' deservingness in one of the two measurements. Furthermore, the results also showed that the preference for the traditional family does not necessarily cause a low level of single mothers' perceived deservingness. Indeed, respondents holding the belief that a child needs both a mother and a father to live a happy life, are more likely to find single mothers deserving, compared to those who do not agree with this statement. Single mothers, therefore, are perceived as deserving in Hungary, because they seem poor, not demanding, and hardworking, but also because divorce is accepted by the large majority of the public, and because the widely shared perception that a child needs both parents to live a happy life predicts the deservingness and not the undeservingness of single mothers. This latter finding shows that single-mother families could also be seen as deserving in

those societies, where a large majority of the population does not accept single-parent family as an alternative to the traditional one.

6.5. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The dissertation has some limitations. First, while one of its aims was to compare the perceived deservingness of single mothers in the US, UK, and Hungary, it could not compare it on the level of public attitudes, as comparative survey data on this topic were not available. While the European Values Study (2008) and The European Social Survey (2016) do include related questions (the EVS asks “*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?*” (reflecting on the identity criterion); while ESS asks about the withdrawal of unemployment benefit of single parents under different conditions (reflecting on the reciprocity criterion)¹³), the United States had not participated in any of these data collections. From other available datasets, the International Social Survey Family and Changing Gender Roles module (2012) includes all of these three countries, and it also has one question related to the identity criterion: *Children grow up in different kinds of families. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement(s)? “One parent can bring up a child as well as two parents together.”* The Hungarian survey, however, measured this item on a 4-point scale, while the UK and US surveys used a 5-point scale, making the comparison complicated. While suitable survey data were not available, this aim was achieved by the review of the historical development of single mothers’ state support in these countries, and the public images of single mothers were also compared based on the deservingness criteria. Further research, therefore, might conduct international surveys on this topic and compare their results to focus investigation especially on public attitudes towards single mothers in different welfare contexts.

Second, most of the empirical results of the dissertation are based on quota and not representative samples of the Hungarian population. On the other hand, the results could

¹³ The ESS questions are the following: Imagine a single parent with a 3-year-old child who is unemployed and looking for work. This person was previously working but lost their job and is now receiving unemployment benefit. What do you think should happen to this person’s unemployment benefit if...1) ...they turn down a job because it pays a lot less than they earned previously? 2) ...they turn down a job because it needs a much lower level of education than the person has? 3) ...they refuse to regularly carry out unpaid work in the area where they live in return for unemployment benefit?

be treated as sound estimations, because some of the questions were measured on both representative and quota samples, and there were no significant differences in the results. Furthermore, the analyses were also weighted based on the most important demographic characteristics.

Third, as there is, in general, a growing interest in the field of deservingness research to test the validity of the criteria based on qualitative research (Laenen et al, 2019), this dissertation could also have used more qualitative data for the operationalization of the deservingness criteria regarding single mothers. Future research, therefore, might refine the understanding of the criteria in the case of single mothers by conducting interviews or focus group discussions. For instance, as the results suggest, the control criterion might be better captured by the perception of whether a mother has a child alone without a stable relationship or was in a relationship when the child had born and became single later on. Marital status seems not to sufficiently capture this criterion anymore (at least in Hungary).

Fourth, the age and health status of the child were not included in the vignette-based survey experiment as both of them reflect on the need criterion, which was represented in the vignettes by other characteristics (i.e., the number of children, the income level of the mother, and the amount of child support), and it was important to include only a small number of characteristics to avoid the overburdening of the respondents. Nevertheless, the age and health status of the child could also be important indicators of single mothers' neediness and, therefore deservingness. It would be interesting to investigate these characteristics in future research because the current Hungarian family allowance system handles homogenously single mothers based on the age of the child and provides slightly higher amounts after steadily sick or severely disabled children. Moreover, the age of the child is an interesting characteristic in an international context, because some welfare states provide higher amounts of family allowance after younger children (e.g., Canada, Iceland, the Czech Republic), while others give higher amounts after older children (e.g., Belgium, France, Switzerland) (OECD, 2019). It suggests that there is no universal understanding across societies regarding parents of older or younger children deserve more financial support.

Similarly, future research might further investigate the role of the identity criterion in the case of single mothers' perceived deservingness. The results of this criterion proved to be especially interesting, as some of the conservative family values explained the perceived deservingness of single mothers, while others explained their perceived undeservingness. The investigation of this issue based on international surveys would be interesting, to see whether this finding was caused by the incoherent family values of the Hungarian population, or if the complex effect of conservative family values is universal across societies.

Moreover, further research could address the complex investigation of the social legitimacy of targeted welfare – presented in this dissertation – regarding other social groups or geographical areas. As the dissertation demonstrated deservingness perceptions, public images, discourses, and (historical) policy designs all form public attitudes towards groups' deservingness and there are important interrelations between these factors. Such a complex investigation of deservingness could be useful to identify trajectories in groups' state support – (e.g., a strong negative perception regarding one of the criteria), or it could help policymakers to design policies that are more in line with public views.

7. REFERENCES

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8. APPENDICES

Table 11. Comparison of the Representative and Quota Samples

"Most single mothers are responsible for remaining with their child/children alone" (control)			
		Sample	
		Representative	Quota
Absolutely agree	N	99	66
	%	9.9%	6.9%
Somewhat agree	N	160	151
	%	16%	15.7%
Somewhat disagree	N	320	308
	%	32%	31.9%
Absolutely disagree	N	341	305
	%	34.1%	31.6%
Do not know	N	82	134
	%	8.2%	13.9%
Total	N	1000	964
	%	100%	100%

"Most single mothers demand too much support from the state" (attitude)			
		Sample	
		Representative	Quota
Absolutely agree	N	106	77
	%	10.6%	8.0%
Somewhat agree	N	207	163
	%	20.7%	16.9%
Somewhat disagree	N	344	326
	%	34.4%	33.8%
Absolutely disagree	N	258	261
	%	25.8%	27.1%
Do not know	N	85	137
	%	8.5%	14.2%
Total	N	1000	964
	%	100%	100%

Table 11 (Continued)

“Most single mothers work hard to make a living for the family” (reciprocity & control)			
		Sample	
		Representative	Quota
Absolutely disagree	N	12	24
	%	1.2%	2.5%
Somewhat disagree	N	73	62
	%	7.3%	6.5%
Somewhat agree	N	330	344
	%	33%	35.7%
Absolutely agree	N	539	463
	%	53.9%	48.1%
Do not know	N	45	70
	%	4.5%	7.3%
		N	964
Total		%	100%

Note: Weighted frequencies.

Table 12. Comparison of the Representative and Quota Samples (“Do not know” responses are excluded)

		Sample	
		Representative	Quota
"Most single mothers are responsible for remaining with their child/children alone" (control)			
Absolutely agree	N	99	66
	%	10.8%	8.0%
Somewhat agree	N	160	151
	%	17.4%	18.2%
Somewhat disagree	N	320	308
	%	34.8%	37.1%
Absolutely disagree	N	341	305
	%	37.1%	36.7%
Total	N	920	830
	%	100%	100%
$p=0.214$, Cramer's $V=0.051$			
		Sample	
		Representative	Quota
Absolutely agree	N	106	77
	%	11.6%	9.3%
Somewhat agree	N	207	163
	%	22.6%	19.7%
Somewhat disagree	N	344	326
	%	37.6%	39.4%
Absolutely disagree	N	258	261
	%	28.2%	31.6%
Total	N	915	827
	%	100%	100%
$p=0.117$, Cramer's $V=0.058$			

Table 12 (Continued)

“Most single mothers work hard to make a living for the family” (reciprocity&control)			
		Sample	
		Representative	Quota
	N	12	24
Absolutely disagree	%	1.3%	2.7%
	N	73	62
Somewhat disagree	%	7.7%	6.9%
	N	330	344
Somewhat agree	%	34.6%	38.5%
	N	539	463
Absolutely agree	%	56.5%	51.8%
Total	N	954	893
	%	100%	100%

$p=0,030$, Cramer's $V=0,070$

Note: Weighted frequencies.

Table 13. Average Marginal Effects of Deservingness Perceptions and Traditional Family Values – Partial Proportional Odds Model Estimates

Dependent variable: “It’s a role of the state to support single mothers”		not agree at all or somewhat disagree (N=96)	somewhat agree (N=356)	absolutely agree (N=273)
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Control (<i>sm. are not responsible</i>)	AME	-0.00	-0.01	0.01
	p-value	0.86	0.86	0.86
	95% CI	[-0.05.0.04]	[-0.10.0.09]	[-0.13.0.15]
Reciprocity + Control (<i>sm. work hard</i>)	AME	-0.14	0.06	0.08
	p-value	0.02	0.53	0.43
	95% CI	[-0.26.-0.03]	[-0.13.0.24]	[-0.13.0.30]
Attitude (<i>sm. are not demanding</i>)	AME	-0.13	-0.00	0.13
	p-value	0.00	0.95	0.06
	95% CI	[-0.21.-0.04]	[-0.12.0.11]	[-0.00.0.27]
Need (<i>sm. have bad financial sit.</i>)	AME	-0.15	-0.16	0.31
	p-value	0.00	0.00	0.00
	95% CI	[-0.24.-0.06]	[-0.21.-0.11]	[0.19.0.42]
Identity (<i>sm. is not an uncommon sit.</i>)	AME	0.00	0.00	-0.00
	p-value	0.94	0.94	0.94
	95% CI	[-0.03.0.04]	[-0.07.0.07]	[-0.11.0.10]
Accept divorce	AME	-0.11	0.10	0.01
	p-value	0.01	0.10	0.91
	95% CI	[-0.19.-0.03]	[-0.02.0.23]	[-0.12.0.14]
Women’s right to single motherhood (<i>agree</i>)	AME	-0.04	-0.07	0.11
	p-value	0.11	0.07	0.08
	95% CI	[-0.08.0.01]	[-0.14.0.01]	[-0.01.0.23]
Need of both parents (<i>disagree</i>)	AME	0.15	-0.13	-0.02
	p-value	0.00	0.06	0.78
	95% CI	[0.05.0.26]	[-0.27.0.01]	[-0.16.0.12]
N			725	
Pseudo R ²			0.20	

Notes: AME = average marginal effects, CI=confidence intervals. Models controlled for demographic variables. The first and second categories (not agree at all & somewhat disagree) were collapsed due to the low number of respondents (N=20) in the first category. Average marginal effects were calculated based on the two partial proportional odds ordered models (1st category vs. 2nd & 3rd categories; 1st & 2nd categories vs. 3rd category). Post estimation tests show that the coefficient of need is not significantly different from the coefficients of attitude and reciprocity in any of these models, and not significantly different from the coefficient of accepting divorce in the first model.

Table 14. Average Marginal Effects of Deservingness Perceptions, Traditional Family Values, and Demographic Variables

	Model 1			Model 2		
	AME	p-value	95% CI	AME	p-value	95% CI
<i>Deservingness perceptions</i>						
<i>Control</i> (sm. are not responsible)	0.01	0.82	[-0.08,0.10]	0.01	0.76	[-0.06,0.09]
<i>Reciprocity + Control</i> (sm. work hard)	0.19	0.02	[0.04,0.35]	0.16	0.02	[0.03,0.28]
<i>Attitude</i> (sm. are not demanding)	0.11	0.02	[0.02,0.21]	0.10	0.02	[0.01,0.19]
<i>Need</i> (sm. have bad financial sit.)	0.18	0.00	[0.07,0.29]	0.15	0.01	[0.05,0.26]
<i>Identity</i> (sm. is not an uncommon sit.)	0.01	0.70	[-0.05,0.07]	0.01	0.66	[-0.04,0.06]
<i>Traditional family values</i>						
<i>accept divorce</i>				0.11	0.01	[0.03,0.18]
<i>women's right to single motherhood</i> (agree)				0.02	0.65	[-0.06,0.09]
<i>need of both parents</i> (disagree)				-0.12	0.02	[-0.23,-0.02]
<i>Demographic variables</i>						
<i>Gender (ref. Male)</i>						
Female	0.00	0.99	[-0.06,0.06]	-0.01	0.63	[-0.08,0.05]
<i>Age (ref. 18-29 years)</i>						
30-39 years	-0.01	0.87	[-0.10,0.09]	-0.03	0.50	[-0.11,0.05]
40-49 years	-0.10	0.06	[-0.20,0.00]	-0.13	0.01	[-0.23,-0.03]
50+ years	-0.00	0.98	[-0.09,0.08]	-0.02	0.58	[-0.09,0.05]
<i>Education (ref. Low)</i>						
Middle level	-0.07	0.03	[-0.13,-0.01]	-0.06	0.04	[-0.12,-0.00]
High level	-0.04	0.28	[-0.12,0.03]	-0.02	0.54	[-0.09,0.05]
<i>Settlement type</i> (ref. Capital city)						
Other city	0.03	0.49	[-0.05,0.11]	0.03	0.47	[-0.05,0.10]
Village	0.08	0.09	[-0.01,0.18]	0.08	0.07	[-0.00,0.16]
<i>Involvement</i> (ref. Not Involved)						
Indirectly involved	-0.04	0.33	[-0.11,0.04]	-0.05	0.14	[-0.11,0.02]
Directly involved	0.01	0.80	[-0.07,0.09]	0.03	0.45	[-0.04,0.09]
<i>N</i>		725			725	
<i>Pseudo R²</i>		0.31			0.37	

Note: Models without demographic control variables show robust results regarding deservingness perceptions and traditional family values variables.

Table 15. Multilevel Linear Model of the Vignette Experiment with Demographic Control Variables

	b	p-value	95% CI
<i>Vignette variables</i>			
40-year-old (ref. 22-year-old)	-0.11	0.07	-0.23,0.01
No mention of ethnicity (ref. Roma)	0.47	0.00	0.33,0.61
Divorced (ref. Widow)	-0.09	0.28	-0.24,0.07
Never-married (ref. Widow)	-0.11	0.12	-0.26,0.03
Three children (ref. One child)	-0.39	0.00	-0.52,-0.27
Works, have a lower salary than the average (ref. Does not work)	0.06	0.47	-0.11,0.23
Works, have an average salary	-0.21	0.02	-0.38,-0.03
Works, have a higher salary than the average	-0.96	0.00	-1.18,-0.75
Gets 25.000 forints/child/month (ref. Does not get any)	-0.95	0.00	-1.11,-0.78
Gets 50.000 forints/child/month (ref. Does not get any)	-1.48	0.00	-1.64,-1.31
Demands more from the state (ref. Grateful to the state)	-0.07	0.27	-0.19,0.05
<i>Respondent variables</i>			
Accept divorce	-0.13	0.61	-0.62,0.37
Need of both parents (disagree)	-0.11	0.68	-0.66,0.43
Women's right to single motherhood (agree)	0.21	0.38	-0.26,0.67
Female (ref. Male)	-0.29	0.11	-0.65,0.07
30-39 years (ref. 18-29 years)	0.49	0.10	-0.09,1.06
40-49 years (ref. 18-29 years)	0.45	0.11	-0.10,1.00
50+ years (ref. 18-29 years)	0.53	0.04	0.01,1.05
Middle level of education (ref. Low level of education)	-0.25	0.26	-0.70,0.19
High level of education (ref. Low level of education)	-0.24	0.34	-0.74,0.25
Other city (ref. Capital city)	-0.16	0.55	-0.68,0.36
Village (ref. Capital city)	0.04	0.90	-0.57,0.65
Indirectly involved (ref. Not involved)	0.19	0.37	-0.22,0.60
Directly involved (ref. Not involved)	0.31	0.26	-0.23,0.86
Constant	8.23	0.00	7.29,9.16
AIC			37409.34
Var. group			2.79
Var. residuals			2.88
ICC			0.49
N vignettes			9100
N respondents			910

Table 16. Multilevel Ordered Model of the Vignette Experiment with Demographic Control Variables

	b	p-value	95% CI
<i>Vignette variables</i>			
40-year-old (ref. 22-year-old)	-0.13	0.04	-0.25,-0.01
No mention of ethnicity (ref. Roma)	0.48	0.00	0.35,0.62
Divorced (ref. Widow)	-0.13	0.14	-0.31,0.04
Never-married (ref. Widow)	-0.19	0.02	-0.35,-0.03
Three children (ref. One child)	-0.44	0.00	-0.58,-0.31
Works, have a lower salary than the average (ref. Does not work)	0.08	0.38	-0.10,0.27
Works, have an average salary	-0.27	0.00	-0.47,-0.08
Works, have a higher salary than the average	-1.09	0.00	-1.32,-0.87
Gets 25.000 forints/child/month (ref. Does not get any)	-1.14	0.00	-1.33,-0.95
Gets 50.000 forints/child/month (ref. Does not get any)	-1.79	0.00	-1.98,-1.59
Demands more from the state (ref. Grateful to the state)	-0.04	0.54	-0.17,0.09
<i>Respondent variables</i>			
Accept divorce	-0.26	0.46	-0.94,0.43
Need of both parents (disagree)	-0.07	0.86	-0.81,0.68
Women's right to single motherhood (agree)	0.18	0.58	-0.45,0.81
Female (ref. Male)	0.36	0.15	-0.13,0.86
30-39 years (ref. 18-29 years)	0.62	0.11	-0.15,1.40
40-49 years (ref. 18-29 years)	0.50	0.19	-0.25,1.25
50+ years (ref. 18-29 years)	0.56	0.12	-0.14,1.27
Middle level of education (ref. Low level of education)	-0.43	0.18	-1.06,0.20
High level of education (ref. Low level of education)	-0.48	0.19	-1.19,0.23
Other city (ref. Capital city)	-0.23	0.52	-0.94,0.48
Village (ref. Capital city)	0.02	0.97	-0.81,0.84
Indirectly involved (ref. Not involved)	0.36	0.20	-0.19,0.92
Directly involved (ref. Not involved)	0.49	0.19	-0.24,1.23
cut1	-6.29	0.00	-7.73,-4.85
cut2	-5.87	0.00	-7.30,-4.45
cut3	-5.14	0.00	-6.55,-3.73
cut4	-4.64	0.00	-6.03,-3.25
cut5	-4.02	0.00	-5.40,-2.64
cut6	-1.35	0.05	-2.70,-0.01
cut7	-0.63	0.36	-1.98,0.71
cut8	0.18	0.80	-1.17,1.52
cut9	1.11	0.11	-0.24,2.45
cut10	1.72	0.01	0.37,3.07
var(_cons[Respondent])	5.15	0.00	3.88,6.42
AIC		30507.08	
N vignettes		9100	
N respondents		910	

Note: Dependent variable: 'In your opinion, the amount of family allowance of (name of the mother) is fair, unfairly too low, or unfairly too high?' (11-point scale)

Explanation for Table 16:

The results of the multilevel ordered logit model are different from the multilevel linear model regarding two vignette attributes, age and marital status of the mother. In the case of mothers' age, the ordered model shows a significant difference, not only at the 10%, but also at the 5% level, while regarding marital status, the difference between the evaluation of widowed and never-married mothers is significant (while it was not significant in the linear model). These two variables, however, have not met the proportional odds assumption in the ordered model. More precisely, the odds of widowed mothers (being rated as more deserving) was not consistently higher than the odds of never-married mothers regarding all thresholds, but only in the case of thresholds 4 or higher. Similarly, the odds of 22-year-old mothers were not consistently higher than the odds of 40-year-old mothers through all of the thresholds, but only in the case of thresholds 3 or higher. These results could be explained by cross-level interaction effects. First, the lower educated have not differentiated between widowed and never-married mothers, and they were also more likely to give lower scores. Second, young respondents (age 18-29) were more likely to give lower scores (lower than 4) than respondents from the oldest age group (50+), and young respondents also less likely differentiated between older and younger single mothers. Considering these constraints, the results of the multilevel linear regression seem to be more reliable than the results of the multilevel ordered regression model.

Table 17. Cross-level Interactions between Respondent Characteristics and Vignette Attributes I.

	Model without interaction			Gender of the respondent # Age of the mother			Age group of the respondent # Age of the mother			Involvement of the respondent # Age of the mother			Age group of the respondent # Attitude of the mother		
	b	p	95% CI	b	p	95% CI	b	p	95% CI	b	p	95% CI	b	p	95% CI
Intercept	8.23	0.00	7.29,9.16	8.24	0.00	7.31, 9.17	8.27	0.00	7.32, 9.22	8.27	0.00	7.34,9.20	8.32	0.00	7.37,9.27
Vignette variables															
Age (ref. 22-year-old)															
40-year-old	-0.11	0.07	-0.23,0.01	-0.25	0.01	-0.43,-0.06	-0.32	0.03	-0.61,-0.02	-0.29	0.05	-0.58,0.00			
Attitude (ref. Grateful to the state)															
Demands more support	-0.07	0.27	-0.19,0.05										-0.26	0.08	-0.55,0.03
Respondent variables															
Gender (ref. Female)															
Male	-0.29	0.11	-0.65,0.07	-0.41	0.04	-0.79,-0.02									
Age groups (ref. 18-29 years)															
30-39 years	0.49	0.10	-0.09,1.06				0.37	0.24	-0.24,0.99				0.47	0.11	-0.10,1.05
40-49 years	0.45	0.11	-0.10,1.00				0.37	0.22	-0.22,0.97				0.30	0.31	-0.29,0.90
50-65 years	0.53	0.04	0.01,1.05				0.39	0.18	-0.18,0.95				0.34	0.22	-0.20,0.88
Involvement (ref. not involved)															
Indirectly involved	0.19	0.37	-0.22,0.60							0.12	0.57	-0.30,0.55			
Directly involved	0.31	0.26	-0.23,0.86							0.15	0.60	-0.41,0.72			
Cross-level interactions															
Male # 40-year-old mother				0.28	0.02	0.04,0.52									
30-39 years # 40-year-old mother							0.26	0.24	-0.17,0.69						
40-49 years # 40-year-old mother							0.19	0.31	-0.17,0.55						
50-65 years # 40-year-old mother							0.35	0.04	0.02,0.68						
indirectly involved # 40-year-old mother										0.15	0.36	-0.17,0.48			
directly involved # 40-year-old mother										0.43	0.02	0.06,0.80			
30-39 years # demands more support													0.02	0.89	-0.32,0.37
40-49 years # demands more support													0.30	0.11	-0.07,0.66
50-65 years # demands more support													0.39	0.02	0.05,0.72
AIC		37409.34			37393.86			37398.42			37394.57			37398.52	
Number of respondents		910			910			910			910			910	
Number of vignettes		9100			9100			9100			9100			9100	

Notes: Dependent variable: 'In your opinion, the amount of family allowance of (name of the mother) is fair, unfairly too low, or unfairly too high?' (11-point scale); All of the models are controlled for vignette attributes, family values, and demographic variables.

Table 18. Cross-level Interactions between Respondent Characteristics and Vignette Attributes II.

	Model without interaction			Education of the respondent # Marital status of the mother			Need of both parents (disagree) # Amount of maintenance			Women's right to single motherhood (agree) # Marital status		
	b	p	95% CI	b	p	95% CI	b	p	95% CI	b	p	95% CI
Intercept	8.23	0.00	7.29,9.16	8.15	0.00	7.21,9.09	8.31	0.00	7.74, 8.87	8.46	0.00	7.91,9.01
Vignette variables												
Marital status (ref.: Widow)												
Divorced	-0.09	0.28	-0.24,0.07	0.06	0.64	-0.20,0.33				-0.21	0.16	-0.49,0.08
Never-married	-0.11	0.12	-0.26,0.03	0.08	0.48	-0.14,0.30				-0.44	0.00	-0.75,-0.13
Maintenance / orphan's allowance (ref.: Does not get any)												
Gets 25.000 forints/child/month	-0.95	0.00	-1.11,-0.78				-0.97	0.00	-1.16,-0.79			
Gets 50.000 forints/child/month	-1.48	0.00	-1.64,-1.31				-1.58	0.00	-1.77,-1.39			
Respondent variables												
Education (ref. Low level)												
Middle level	-0.25	0.26	-0.70,0.19	-0.05	0.82	-0.54,0.43						
High level	-0.24	0.34	-0.74,0.25	0.00	0.99	-0.53,0.54						
Need of both parents (disagree)												
	-0.11	0.68	-0.66,0.43				-0.28	0.35	-0.87,0.30			
Women's right to single motherhood (agree)												
	0.21	0.38	-0.26,0.67							0.03	0.91	-0.46,0.51
Cross-level interactions												
Middle level of education # Divorced				-0.26	0.16	-0.62,0.10						
High level of education # Divorced				-0.35	0.03	-0.66,-0.03						
Middle level of education # Never-married				-0.36	0.05	-0.72,0.00						
High level of education # Never-married				-0.40	0.05	-0.80,0.00						
Need of both parents (disagree) # 25.000 forints/child/month							0.11	0.63	-0.34,0.57			
Need of both parents (disagree) # 50.000 forints/child/month							0.49	0.02	0.07,0.92			
Women's right to single motherhood (agree) # Divorced										0.14	0.41	-0.19,0.48
Women's right to single motherhood (agree) # Never-married										0.42	0.02	0.08,0.77
AIC	37409.34			37380.55			37283.69			37386.71		
Number of respondents	910			910			910			910		
Number of vignettes	9100			9100			9100			9100		

Notes: Dependent variable: 'In your opinion, the amount of family allowance of (name of the mother) is fair, unfairly too low, or unfairly too high?' (11-point scale); All of the models are controlled for vignette attributes, family values, and demographic variables.

9. LIST OF PUBLICATIONS CONNECTED TO THE TOPIC OF THE DISSERTATION

Articles in Peer-Reviewed Journals

Herke, B. (2021): Investigating the Welfare Deservingness of Single Mothers: Public Image and Deservingness Perceptions in Hungary. *East European Politics and Societies: And Cultures*. 35(3), 613-637. DOI: 10.1177/0888325420937773

Herke, B., Janky, B. (2021): The Role of the CARIN Deservingness Criteria in the Case of Single Mothers' Perceived Welfare Deservingness in Hungary. *Journal of Social Policy*. (accepted for publication)

Book Review in Peer-Reviewed Journal

Herke, B., Samu, F. (2019): Wim van Oorschot, Femke Roosma, Bart Meuleman and Tim Reeskens (eds) (2017), *The Social Legitimacy of Targeted Welfare: Attitudes to Welfare Deservingness*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar. *Journal of Social Policy*, 48(3), 648-650. DOI: 10.1017/S0047279419000503

Conference Presentations in English

Herke, B. (2019): The Role of the (CARIN) Deservingness Criteria in the case of Single Mothers' Welfare Deservingness. The 6th International Conference of Social Policy ESPAnet Poland 2019. Warsaw, Poland, 27 September 2019.

Herke, B. (2019): Investigating the Welfare Deservingness of Single Mothers: Public Image and Deservingness Perceptions in Hungary. ESPAnet NL-VL Young Researchers Day. KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium, 29 May 2019.

Herke, B. (2018): Investigating The Public Image of Single Mothers Outside Liberal Welfare Regimes - A Case Study of Hungary. The Challenges of Future to the Social Sciences, International PhD Conference. Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Budapest, Hungary, 25 September 2018.

Conference Presentations in Hungarian

Herke, B. (2018): "Az egyedülálló anyák megítélése és jóléti érdemességük Magyarországon" [The Perception of Single Mothers and their Welfare Deservingness in Hungary]. Magyar Szociológiai Társaság 2018. évi vándorgyűlése [Annual Meeting of the Hungarian Sociological Association]. Szeged, University of Szeged, Juhász Gyula Faculty of Education. 19 October 2018.