

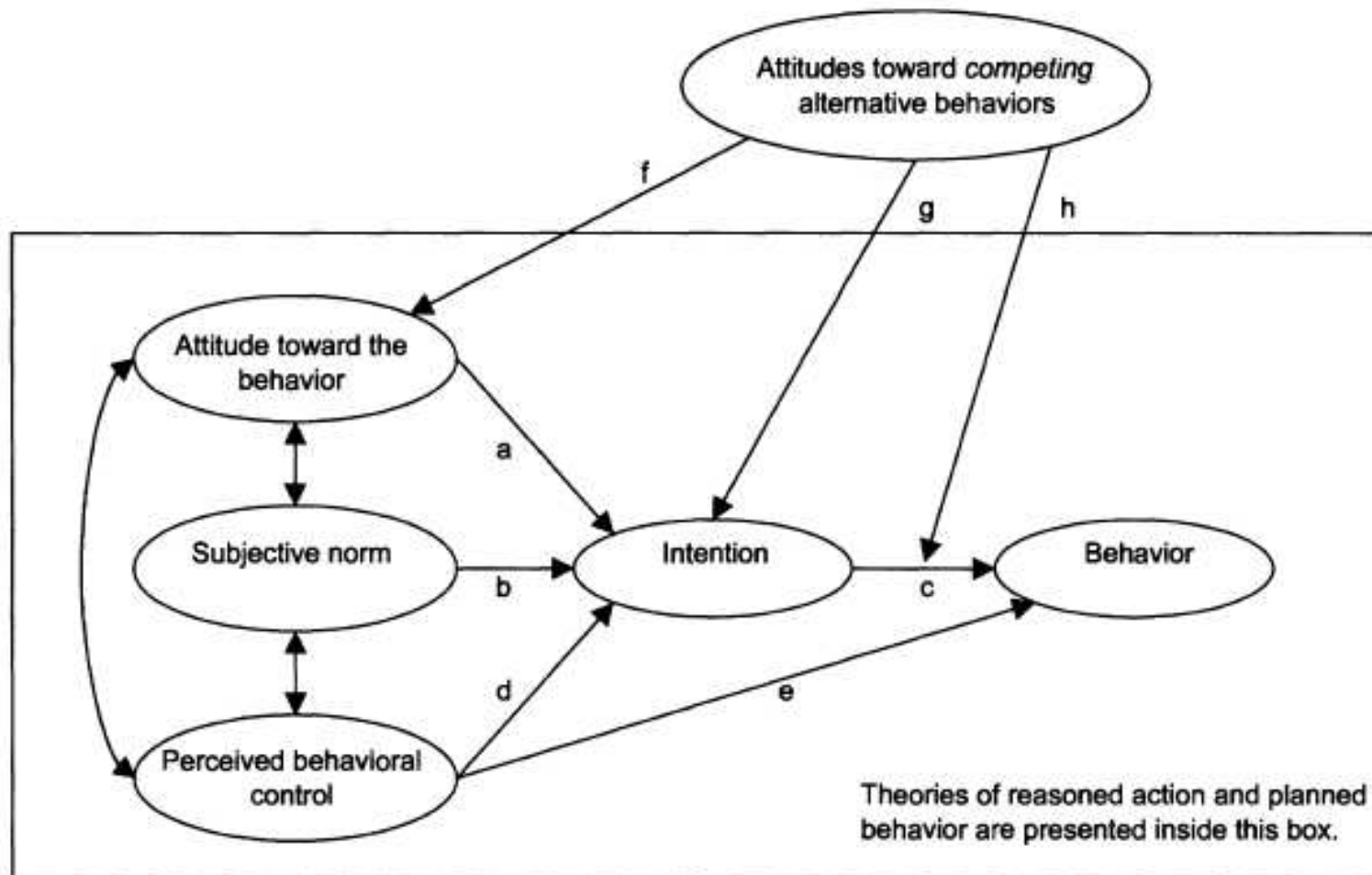
*Work package 5: Fertility intentions and behaviours in context:
a comparative qualitative approach*

**Between economic necessity, professional
aspirations and motherhood:**

Women's attitudes towards paid work in post-socialist countries

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Introduction

Paid work – main activity that competes with childbearing for women's time and attention

- Women's work as economic necessity – important for behavioral control
- Women's work as way of self-realization – competing life-goal, influencing attitudes towards childbearing

We explore women's attitudes towards paid work and investigate how they are related to women's attitudes towards motherhood?

Post-socialist context:

- Before 1990 – high female labor force participation and high fertility
- After 1990 – medium level of female labor force participation and lowest-low fertility

- Difficulties in combining work and motherhood
- Work as an economic necessity?

Semi-structured in-depth interviews with young women
in four post-socialist contexts: Budapest, Sofia, Rostock, Warsaw

- Women in relationships (dating, cohabiting, married)
- Childless or with one child
- Aged 20-35 (mean age: 27)

- Medium to highly educated
- Mostly: Middle class

In total: 70 women interviewed in years 2004-2005

→ Naples (Italy) will be incorporated as a contrasting case



Work is important for financial reasons: to become independent and to start a family

“A registered job with a good and fix salary was an absolute precondition for me to even start thinking about a child.”

(Budapest, Fem, 27, childless)

“Women think about having a permanent job, they know they have to have a permanent job so that they could afford to have a child.”

(Warsaw, Fem, 25, childless)



Work: Not Only For Money



But work is also a break from domestic chores, opportunity to do something interesting, to develop

*“Q: Are you planning to return to work after the parental leave?
- Yes, yes, definitely. I want to develop myself!”*

(Sofia, Fem, 26, childless)

“I would not manage and I would not want to sit at home and only take care after a child. I cannot imagine that even! I would like to work... it is always a chance to go out, it allows me to have contact with people. This is not just sitting, cleaning and laundry”.

(Warsaw, Fem, 29, childless)



Work: Not Only For Money

The respondents do not even consider a life-style that would exclude paid employment

Being a full-time mother / housewife is negatively evaluated

*...I would go crazy if I stayed at home...
...boring... dull...
...getting tired from sitting at home... depressed...
...would start neglecting a partner...
...it would decrease my self-esteem...
...they think you don't do anything...
... I don't know what to do at home...*



Work and Professional Career

Women's work is perceived as self-evident and normal

Women strive for a balanced life that would include both:
motherhood **and** paid employment

Motherhood remains priority:

“Sure, I would like to earn some money, but if as a result I couldn't dedicate myself to my child's upbringing, then I am sure I would not like it.” (Warsaw, Fem, 24, childless)



Work – yes

Professional career – no

“It is not possible to combine career and childbearing. You have to choose. In my case... I would interrupt my career.”

(Sofia, Fem, 25, childless)

“I don’t want a career, I would rather like to have more kids”

(Budapest, Fem, 30, 1 child)

“There are women who realize their ambitions in business and don’t have time, don’t feel like having a child. However, I think that most of them will regret that sooner or later.”

(Warsaw, Fem, 26, 1 child)



Work and Motherhood

- Meanings of and attitudes towards work **can** influence fertility intentions

- Women differentiate between **work** and **professional career** when they consider employment and motherhood:
 - Work should be (and can be) combined with motherhood
 - Professional career is perceived as difficult to combine with motherhood – as competing life-goal

- In our study women attempt to balance motherhood and employment
 - They perceived employment **not only** as a source of income, but also as a source of well-being and satisfaction
 - At the same time, they have a negative attitude towards professional career as it would be pursued at the expense of children



Child-care arrangements

- Our results indicate that not only attitudes towards work are important but also attitudes towards work and family reconciliation

Budapest and Sofia:

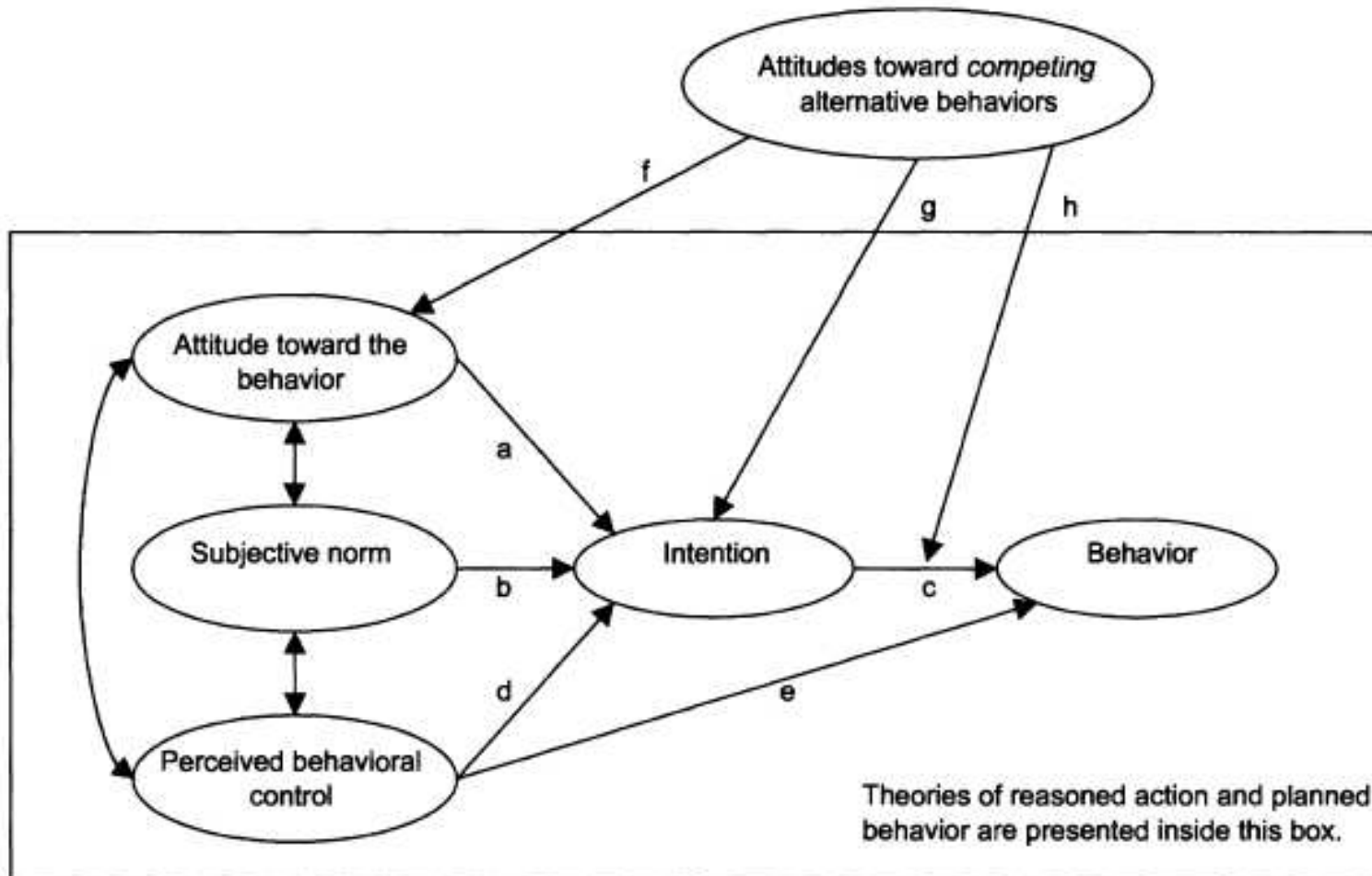
A woman should stay at home until a child is big enough to go to a kindergarten

Rostock and Warsaw:

A woman should come back to work as soon as possible

- Rostock: day nursery is a common solution
- Warsaw: negative opinion on day nursery, informal child-care arrangements are preferred

Extension of TPB



Thank you!



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- Hungary:
 - 24 months, paid 70%
 - Third year – approx. 60 EUR a month (approx. 1/3 of minimum wage)
- Bulgaria:
 - 135 days (19 weeks), paid 90%
 - Two years – approx. 65 EUR a month (minimum wage) + 6 months unpaid
- Germany
 - 14 weeks, paid 100%
 - Three years parental leave with a child-care benefit for maximum two years (300 EUR a month for two years or 450 EUR a month for one year)
- Poland
 - 16 weeks, paid 100%
 - Three years parental leave unpaid – child-care benefit of approx. 80 EUR (approx. 1/2 of minimum wage) only for the poorest families