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# **Cultural Differences and Similarities among German-, French- and Italian- speaking Switzerland and Neighboring Countries**

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# Language and Culture

- > *“Language is both the vehicle of most of cross-cultural research and part of its object. Language is the most clearly recognizable part of culture and the part that has lent itself most readily to systematic study and theory-building”*  
Hofstede (1980, p. 34)
  
- > Switzerland is not *one* culture as such but a country encompassing at least three distinguishable subcultures:
  - German-speaking Switzerland
  - French-speaking Switzerland
  - Italian-speaking Switzerland

# Individualism-Collectivism and Its Discontents

- > Most attention of Cross-cultural research has been on the Individualism-Collectivism paradigm
- > Danger of using I-C as a “catchall” construct  
(Kağitçibaşı, 2007, p. 53)
- > Schwartz’s “autonomy-embeddedness” dimension or “interdependence-independence” more appropriate
- > Three family models that lead to different self-construals  
(Kağitçibaşı, 2007; Mayer, 2013)
  - Model of Interdependence
  - Model of Independence
  - Model of Psychological/Emotional Interdependence

# The Family in “German”, “French” and “Italian” Culture

- > The prototypical Italian and French family are closer to the Model of Psychological/Emotional Interdependence
  - Italian family (Barzini, 1990; Kohn, 1977)
  - French family (Kağitçibaşı, 2007; Sabatier & Lannegrand-Williams, 2005)
- > The prototypical German family more reflective of Model of Independence prevalent in modernized societies
  - Independent family value patterns in German mothers and their adolescent children (Mayer, Trommsdorff, Kağitçibaşı, & Mishra, 2012)
  - German parents offer more choices and fewer constraints on children than French parents (Sabatier & Lannegrand-Williams, 2005)
- > Swiss linguistic regions expected to mirror the differences among Italian, French, and German family models

# Indicators of Family Models

Operationalization based on several items from the *European Values Study* (European Values Study, 2011) and the *World Values Survey* (World Values Survey, 2009)

1. Child qualities as indicators of a more embedded versus more autonomous family model (Schwartz, 1994, 2006)
  - obedience, unselfishness and hard work → *Interdependence*
  - independence and imagination → *Independence*
  
2. Intergenerational commitment values
  - Unconditional respect for parents and Intergenerational support  
High → *Interdependence*  
Low → *Independence*

# Data

- > European Values Study (fourth Wave)
  - N (Germany) = 2'075
  - N (France) = 1'570
  - N (Italy) = 1'500
  - N (Switzerland) = 1'272 (968 German-speaking, 268 French-speaking, 36 Italian-speaking)
  
- > World Values Survey (Wave 5)
  - N (Germany) = 2'064
  - N (France) = 1'001
  - N (Italy) = 1'012
  - N (Switzerland) = 1'241 (633 German-speaking, 408 French-speaking, 200 Italian-speaking)



# Qualities in Children

SHOW CARD 52

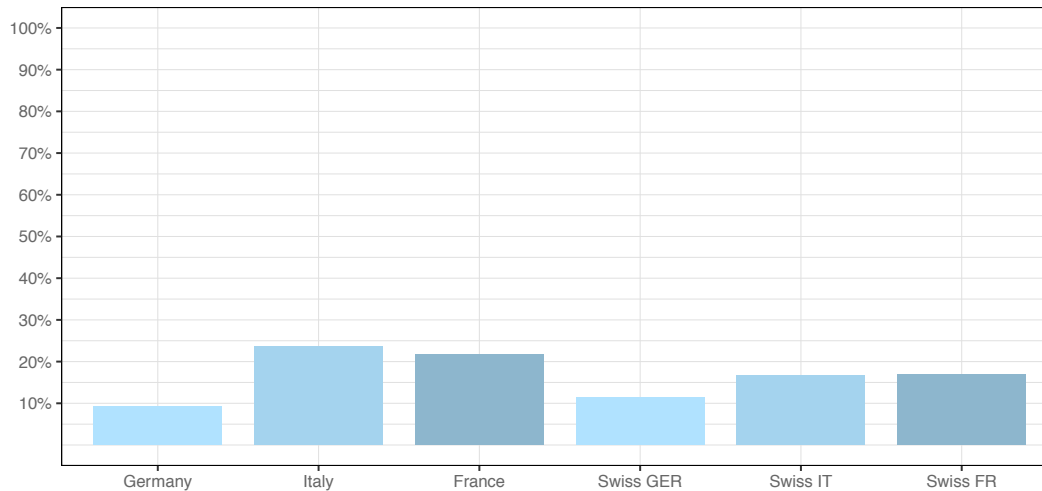
**Q52** Here is a list of qualities which children can be encouraged to learn at home. Which, if any, do you consider to be especially important? Please choose up to five!

INTERVIEWER: CODE NOT MORE THAN FIVE!

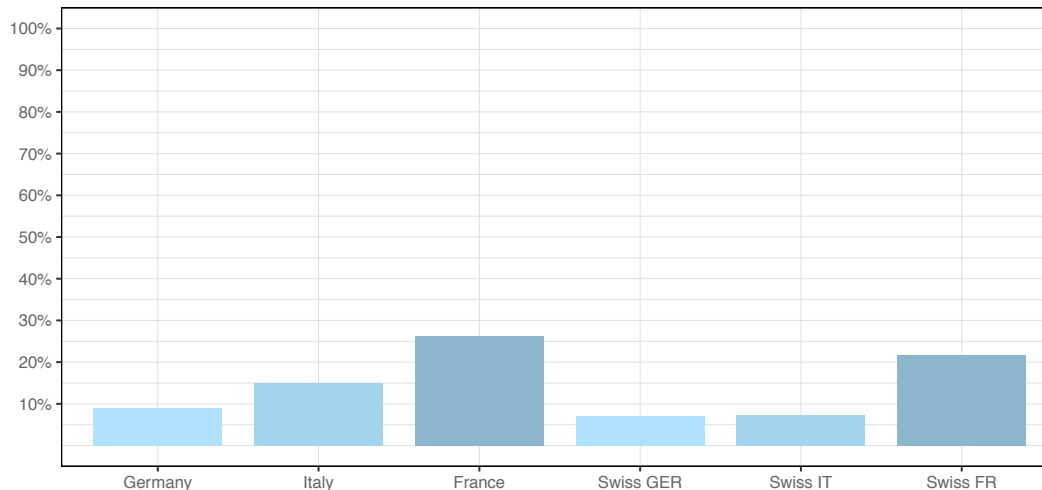
|      |   |  | mentioned | not mentioned | DK | NA |
|------|---|--|-----------|---------------|----|----|
| v170 | A | Good manners                           | 1         | 2             | 8  | 9  |
| v171 | B | Independence ●                         | 1         | 2             | 8  | 9  |
| v172 | C | Hard work ●                            | 1         | 2             | 8  | 9  |
| v173 | D | Feeling of responsibility              | 1         | 2             | 8  | 9  |
| v174 | E | Imagination ●                          | 1         | 2             | 8  | 9  |
| v175 | F | Tolerance and respect for other people | 1         | 2             | 8  | 9  |
| v176 | G | Thrift, saving money and things        | 1         | 2             | 8  | 9  |
| v177 | H | Determination, perseverance            | 1         | 2             | 8  | 9  |
| v178 | I | Religious faith                        | 1         | 2             | 8  | 9  |
| v179 | J | Unselfishness ●                        | 1         | 2             | 8  | 9  |
| v180 | K | Obedience ●                            | 1         | 2             | 8  | 9  |
| v181 |   | None (spontaneous)                     | 1         | 2             | 8  | 9  |

# Obedience

European Values Study (2008)



World Values Survey (2005)

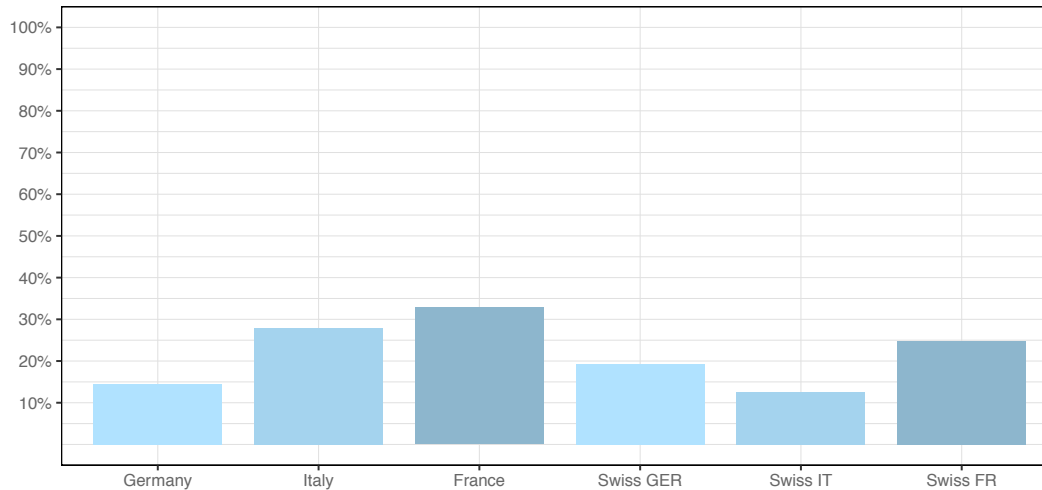


- Germany lower than Italy and France
- Analogous pattern for CH linguistic regions
- EVS & WVS very similar

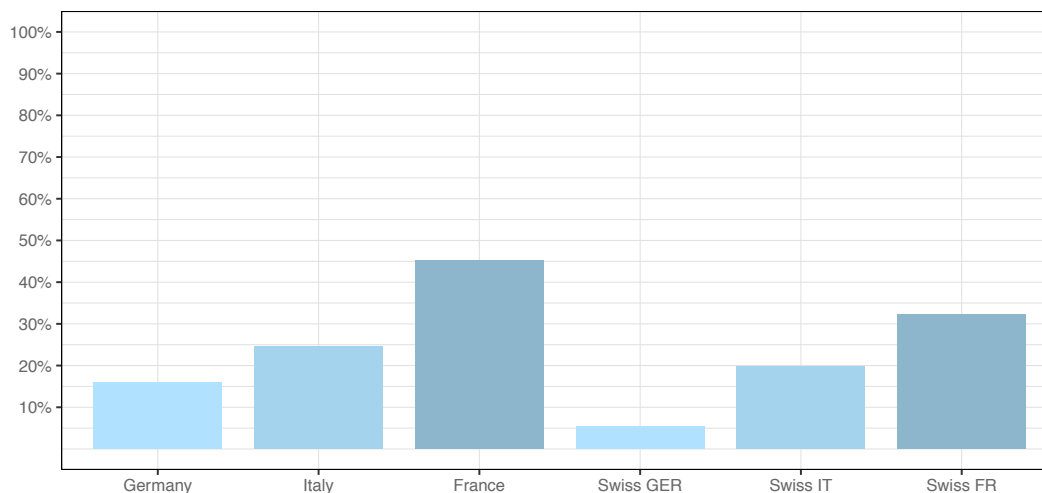


# Hard Work

European Values Study (2008)



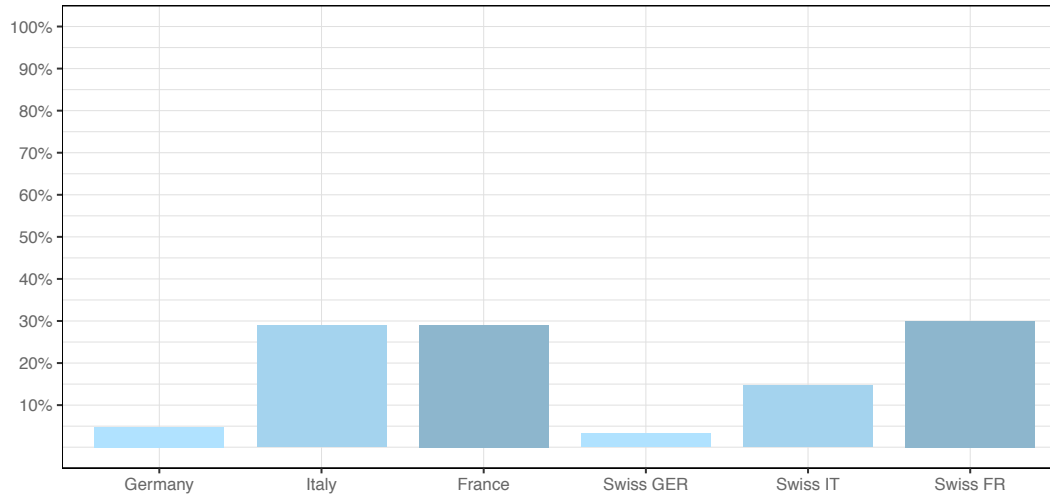
World Values Survey (2005)



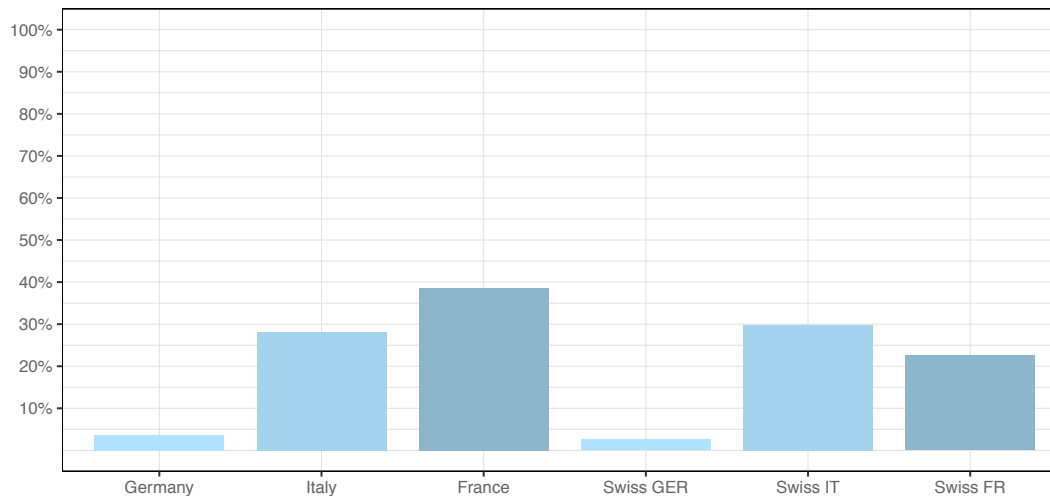
- Italian-speaking Swiss sample only exception to pattern
- French-speakers most likely to choose „Hard Work“ as important quality

# Unselfishness

European Values Study (2008)



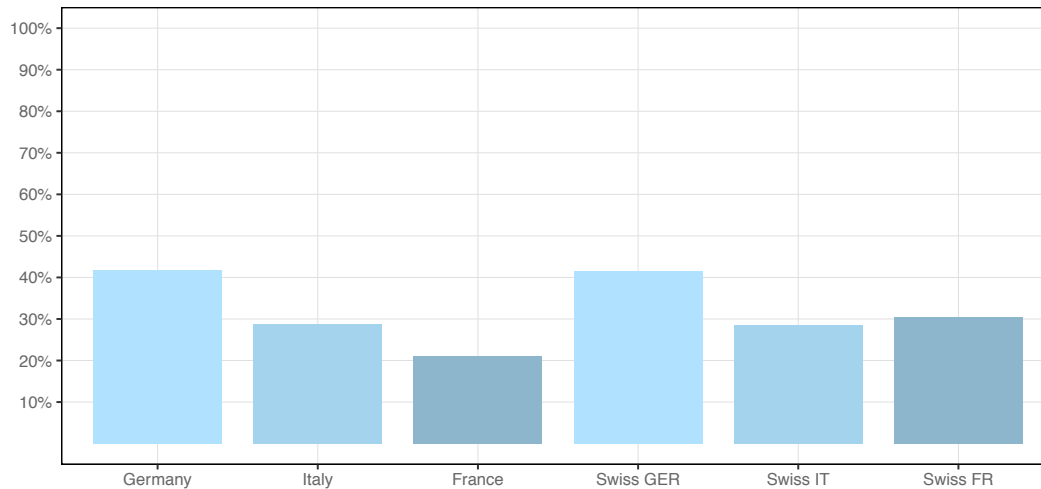
World Values Survey (2005)



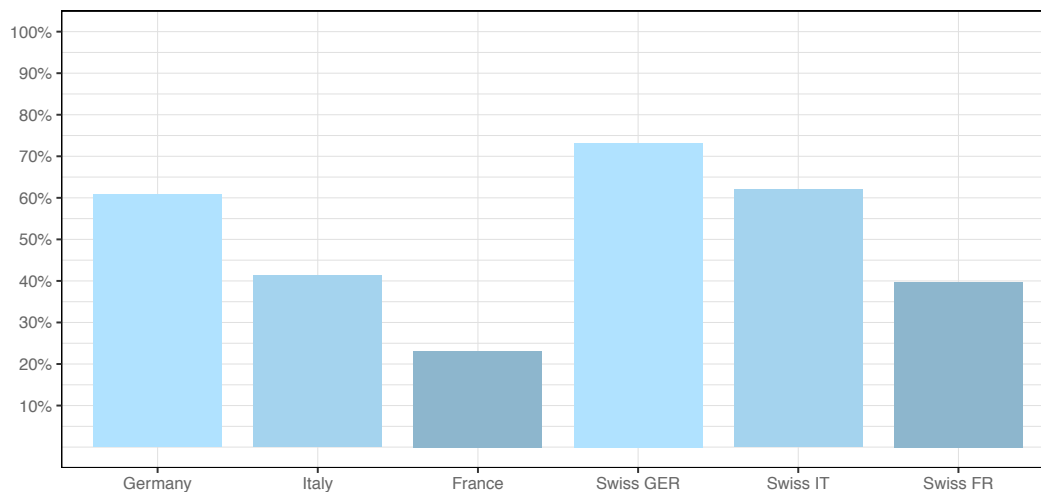
- Very low importance of „Unselfishness“ as child quality for Germans and German-speaking Swiss

# Independence

European Values Study (2008)



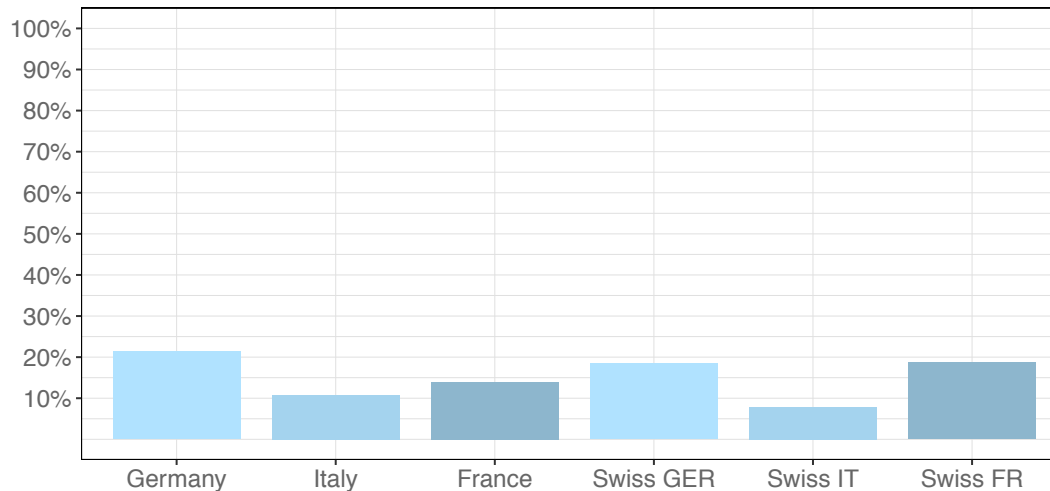
World Values Survey (2005)



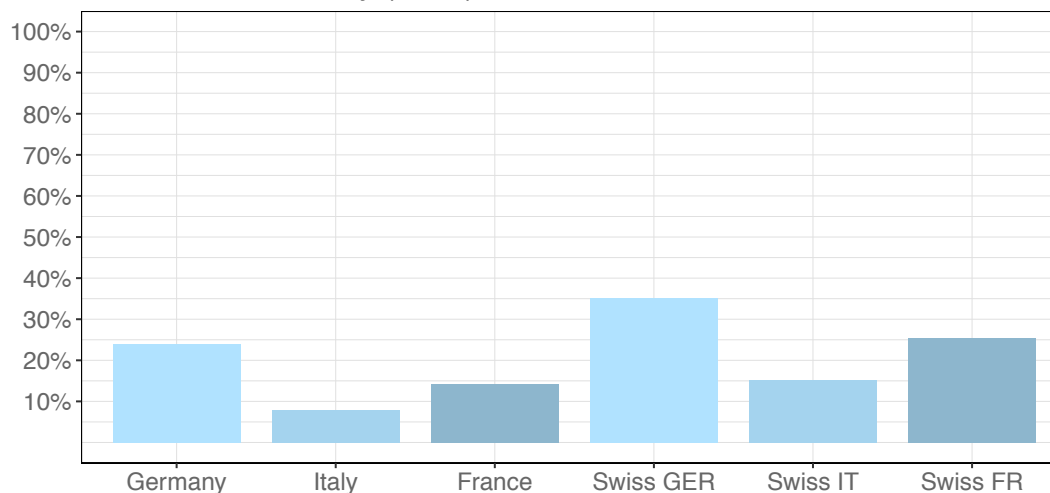
- Germany higher than Italy and France
- CH linguistic regions analogous pattern
- EVS & WVS very similar

# Imagination

European Values Study (2008)



World Values Survey (2005)



- Italians and Italian-speaking Swiss show lowest importance of „Imagination“ as a child quality

# Family Attitudes

SHOW CARD 49 – READ OUT AND CODE ONE ANSWER ONLY

**Q49** Which of these two statements do you tend to agree with?

- A:** Regardless of what the qualities and faults of one's parents are, one must always love and respect them;  
**B:** One does not have the duty to respect and love parents who have not earned it by their behaviour and attitudes

1 – Tend to agree with statement A

2 – Tend to agree with statement B

8 – don't know (spontaneous)

9 – no answer (spontaneous)

(v167)

SHOW CARD 50 – READ OUT AND CODE ONE ANSWER ONLY

**Q50** Which of the following statements best describes your views about parents', responsibilities to their children?

1 – Parents' duty is to do their best for their children even at the expense of their own well-being ..... [A]

2 – Parents have a life of their own and should not be asked to sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of their children ..... [B]

3 – neither (spontaneous)

8 – don't know (spontaneous)

9 – no answer (spontaneous)

(v168)

# Family Attitudes (cont'd)

SHOW CARD 51 – READ OUT AND CODE ONE ANSWER ONLY

**Q51 Which of the following statements best describes your views about responsibilities of  children towards their parents when their parents are in need of long-term care?** (v169)

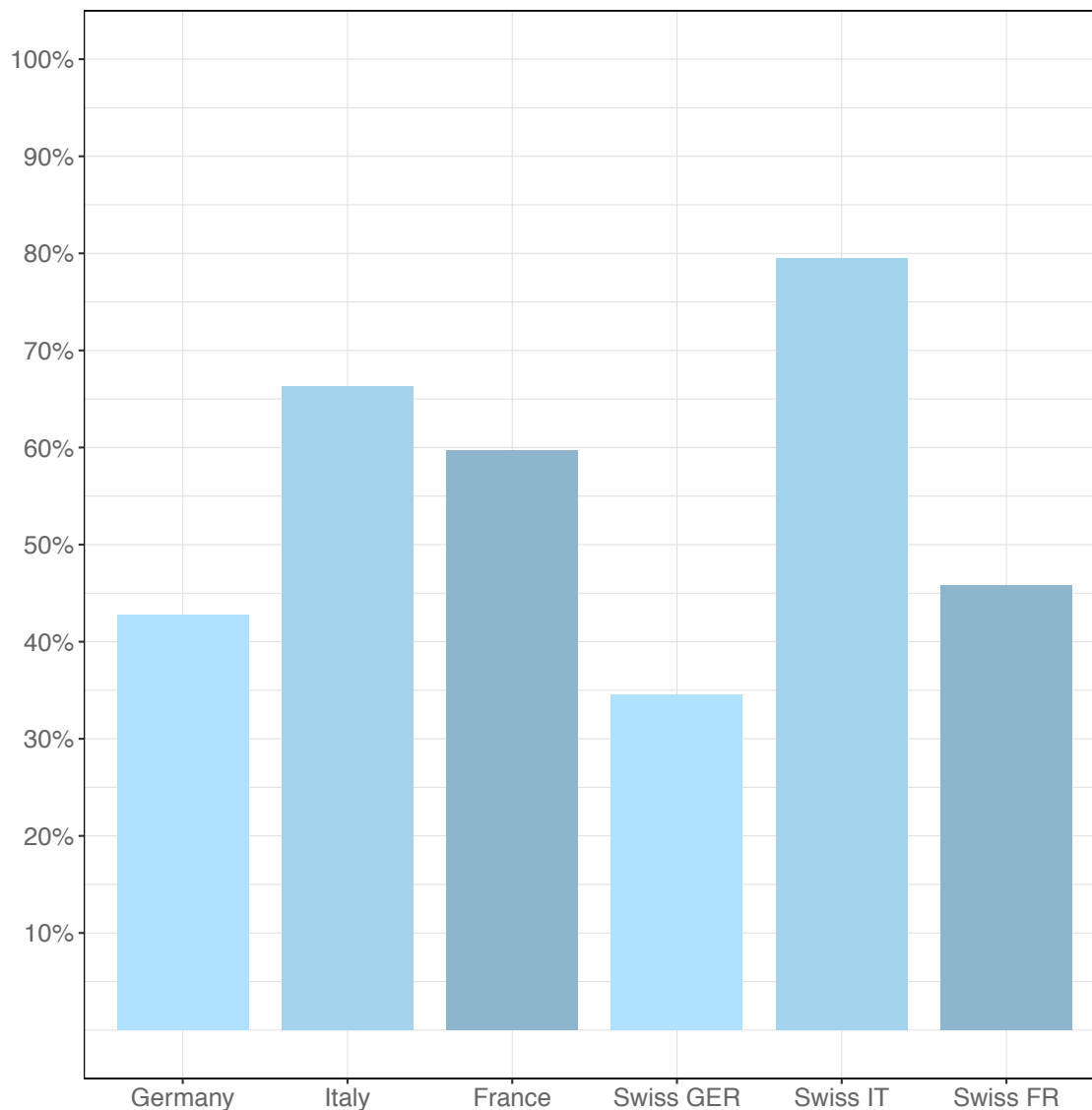
1 – Adult children have the duty to provide long-term care for their parents even at

12

7/03/2008

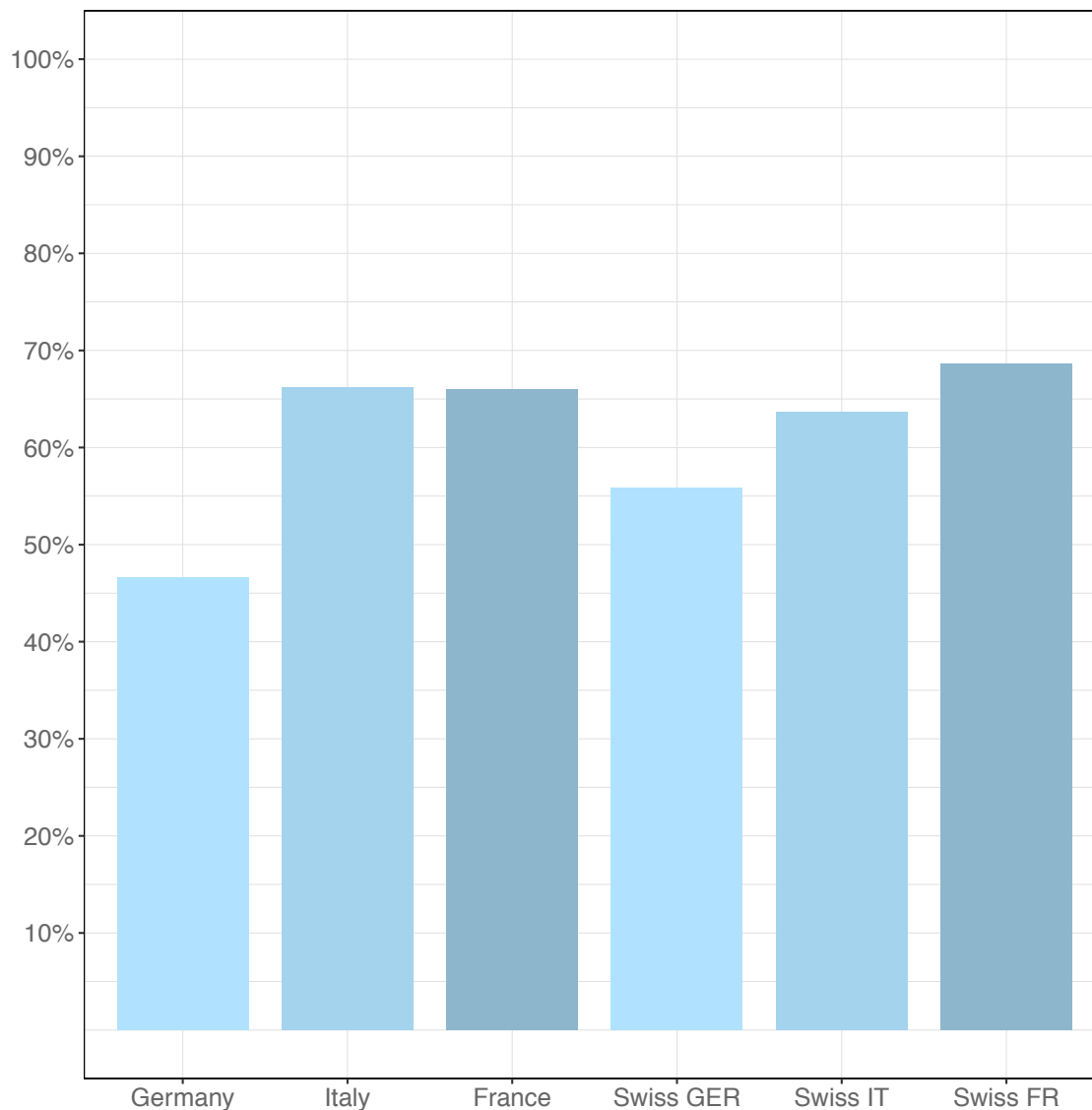
- the expense of their own well-being ..... [A]
- 2 – Adult children have a life of their own and should not be asked to sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of their parents.....[B]
- 3 – neither (spontaneous)
- 8 – don't know (spontaneous)
- 9 – no answer (spontaneous)

# 'One Must Always Respect Parents Regardless of Faults'



- Italy highest, Germany lowest
- CH linguistic regions analogous pattern

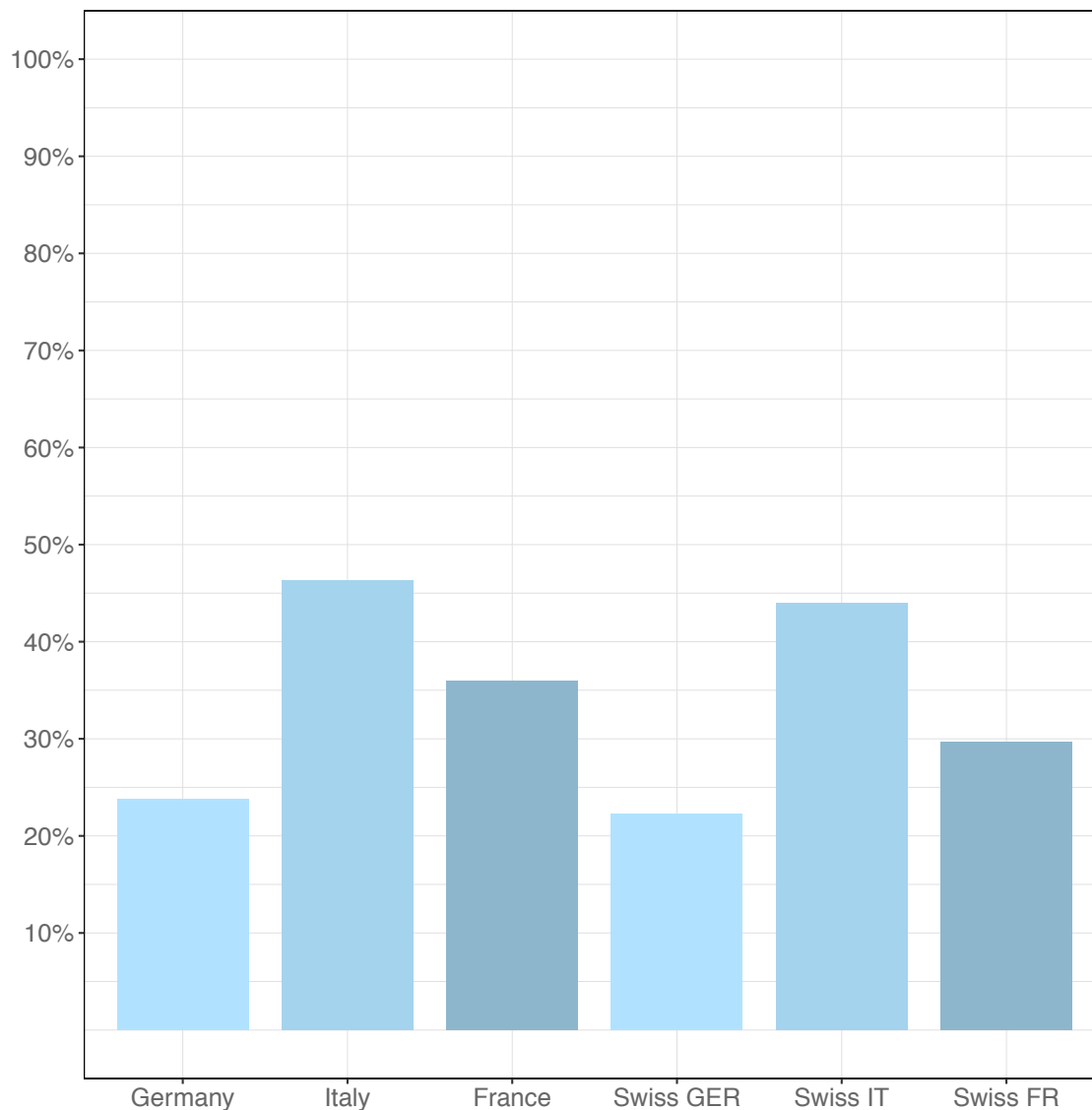
# 'Parents Should Sacrifice for Children at Their Own Expense'



- Italy and France higher than Germany
- CH linguistic regions analogous pattern



# 'Adult Children Have to Take Care of Parents'



- Italy highest, Germany lowest
- CH linguistic regions analogous pattern

# Discussion & Summary

- > The family and child-rearing are essential in understanding differences between German, French and Italian culture
- > A pattern corresponding to I-C can be found on the family level but not necessarily beyond
  - E.g. Hofstede's or Schwartz's indices show little to no differentiation
- > Kağitçibasi's family models refine the I-C paradigm and provide a more thorough understanding of cultural differences
- > Intra-cultural differentiation in Switzerland similar to neighboring countries

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