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Czech and Slovak Family Patterns and Family Values in Historical, Social and Cultural Context

Nataliya Panasenko*

INTRODUCTION

The family has long been regarded as a stable and essentially unchanged institution that does not alter its shape, internal organization or habits and changes in their environment offsets. However, family—like other social institutions—is changing (Tamášová, 2007). These changes are connected with many factors, among which changes in family standards and lifestyle, changes of a woman's role, and changes of views on child-rearing are the most significant.

I regard family as a **psycho-physical phenomenon**, because family consists of people of different sex, age, and temperament patterns, etc. Family is also a **social phenomenon**, because it is part of the society and this or that type of society is very closely connected with the historical stages of the mankind development: feudalism, capitalism, socialism, and so on. It is a **spiritual phenomenon** due to the important role of religion, as well as the moral and spiritual education of children. It can be treated as a **cultural-historical phenomenon**, because every generation has its own culture and system of family values. In fact, this division is relative, because gender roles are very closely related to the social aspect and types of society development, and are part of world history. Yet, this approach gives an opportunity to find out which of these questions are crucial ones. As the object of my research I have chosen family patterns in the Czech Republic and Slovakia that used to be one state and parted in 1989.

This article presents the analysis of different approaches expressed by scholars (mainly psychologists, historians, ethnologists, and demographers), journalists and writers. This complex study lays bare the problems connected with the psycho-physical, social, spiritual and cultural-historical aspects of family studies, and it provides for seeing how family problems are reflected not only in serious research projects and monographs, but also in the mass media and modern Czech and Slovak fiction. I will present various points of view on family problems, but in my study the accent is made on the works by the Czech and Slovak authors published mainly in their native languages. With the help of statistic data analysis presented in the Tables and Graphs, I intend to show the demographic situation in the former Czechoslovakia and then in ten and twenty years after its disintegration.

Czech and Slovak families follow the Eastern European family patterns, but one must take into account that any family pattern is greatly connected with the peculiarities of natural environment and, correspondingly, with the economic situation of Eastern European countries. Referred to as Eastern European families are here the family patterns occurring in

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Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Rumania, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, and Macedonia that have much in common. The Polish family pattern has some specificity, though it could be referred to as Eastern European type as well. A special group is formed by families in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina belonging to the system of Muslim civilization, which leaves its specific mark on the family patterns in these countries. Slovene, Croatian, Czech and Slovak families are hardly to be related as belonging to Eastern European families, because they belong to the European catholic civilization with a corresponding specific character. One should bear in mind that in all the above mentioned Eastern European countries there existed essential differences between family patterns, evoked by the differences in their history, environment, and the peculiarities of their economic development.

FAMILY TYPES IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

A few words should be said about the so-called Hajnal's line. The British scholar J. Hajnal (1965) distinguished two basic models of family history—Northwestern and Southeastern, which, according to him, were established sometime in the early 16th century. The dividing border was between Trieste and St. Petersburg. It is interesting to note that this border nowadays is supposed to be somewhere on the border of present-day Moravia and Slovakia. Moravia (in Czech *Morava*) is a historical region in Central Europe in the East of the Czech Republic, and together with Bohemia and Silesia it is one of the former Czech lands. It takes its name after the Morava River which rises in the northwest of the region. Moravia's largest city is Brno, its historical capital. Thus, the territory of the former Czechoslovakia was divided into two parts according to the family types. The Northwestern model, which then included the greater part of Bohemia and Moravia, had the following features: A small number of family members, a lower level of blood kinship in the family, relatively high age of marriage (25-26 years), 10%-25% lifetime unmarried women and men, because by the marriage they had to have a potential fiancé land on which to settle and which would give them subsistence; Inheritance law, according to which the firstborn son inherited the property, but had to pay his mother and siblings (who had to leave the house) so that the estimated cost of the fixed assets and either gave them a definite sum of money ("vejrunky" in Czech), usually when the feast of St. Havel (16.10) and St. Jiří (24.4) came.

The Southeastern model was spread on the territory of modern Slovakia. This family type was polynomial: Two married couples could live under one roof (in the Northwestern model they never live together for a long time) and was characterized by high marriage rate, marriage age of 20-21. Inheritance law was different: No one knew exactly who inherited what, but the siblings (only sisters married elsewhere) stayed on the farm; the families were large, mothers often moved into the position of woman farm hand ("*podruhyne*" in Czech) (sources: Možný, 2006; Nosevich, 2001; Rodina).

There is no unanimous scholarly definition of a traditional family. Is it a traditional *biological* family, which involves high mortality and high fertility and produces great numbers of single-parent and step-families following the death of a partner? Is it a traditional *economic* family with father as the family breadwinner and mother as a housewife? Or is it simply a traditional *ideological* family, in which sexuality, fertility and reproduction are intertwined? Is it a *model* family, which excludes contraception, premarital sex, cohabitation and unmarried heterosexual marriage that begins and produces children during the lifetime of monogamy? (Cliquet, 2003; Tamášová, 2007).

In social sciences, the term "traditional family" refers to the child-rearing environment that sociologists formerly considered the norm—a middle-class family with a bread-winning father and stay-at-home mother, married to one another and raising their biological children. "Nontraditional" family forms, by definition, involve any kind of variation from this pattern. Thus, families with fathers who assume responsibility for childcare would qualify as nontraditional, as would families with employed mothers, with two employed parents, single-parent, or those families that rely on childcare centers instead of performing childcare exclusively at home. Nontraditional families constitute the vast majority of families in the United States today (Lamb, 2009).

The bourgeois family is understood as a family structure arising out of 16th century and 17th century European households, in which the family centers on a marriage between a man and a woman with strictly defined gender-roles. The man typically has responsibility for income and support, the woman—for home and family matters (Family in the West. Family types).

DO CZECHS AND SLOVAKS HAVE A COMMON FAMILY PATTERN?

Nowadays Czech and Slovak societies and respectively Czech and Slovak families which were closer to Western family patterns than other Eastern European countries continue the process of integration into European cultural and spiritual system. Moreover, this process is carried out at an increasing speed. I suppose that at present the process of blurring the distinctions between European, Czech and Slovak societies is constantly minimizing, thus leading to complete Europeanization of the Czech family and considerably fast changes of traditional family patterns in the Slovak society.

Historically, Czech and Slovak societies were exclusively closely connected with Western European civilizations, unlike other Eastern countries. In the Middle Ages, for example, Bohemia, (Czechia) being part of the Holy Roman Empire of the Germanic nation, adopted Catholicism contrary to the majority of Eastern countries which adopted orthodox Christianity. Bohemia as a part of Austria in the system of dualistic Austrian-Hungarian monarchy was a complete element of the Western European Catholic civilization. Slovakia, which was under the rule of more backward Hungary within the system of the dualistic Austrian-Hungarian monarchy for a long period of time, was a part of Hungary and also had features of the European civilization, but was an outsider in it. The peculiarities of the landscape determined economic life in Slovakia and stimulated to a greater degree than in Bohemia the conservation of patriarchal relations in economics, as well as in the family. As opposed to the urbanized Bohemia, Slovakia was traditionally an agricultural region with the predominance of farm enterprise, but patriarchal-family agriculture.

Nowadays the historical differences between the Czech and the Slovak people and the Czech and the Slovak countries and other Western European countries are quickly being settled, though, naturally, some cultural-historical traditions are being preserved.

Political and social changes, which hit Central and Eastern Europe in the early 90's brought about a significant transformation in the lives of families in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Changes in the family were due to the rapid transition from totalitarian regime to a democratic society and it affected all areas: Political, economic, social, and cultural. The massive transformation caused radical changes in the social norms and values, and even in the standards and family values (Tamášová, 2007). After the division of Czechoslovakia into two independent states these changes also attracted the scholarly attention (see, e.g., the

book by Tuček et al., (2003) *Jak se máte Slováci, ako sa máte Česi? 10 let po rozchodu* – How are you, Czechs? How are you, Slovaks? 10 years after separation). These changes have influenced the demographic situation in Europe.

Philipov and Dorbritz (2003) have analyzed the demographic tendencies in 24 countries of Central and Eastern Europe, namely Bulgaria, Croatia, Belarus, Poland and many others, but the data concerning the Czech and the Slovak population are of special interest, because they are connected with the topic of this article. With the help of figures, tables, and graphs they convincingly show that there was a model typical of Czech and Slovak families characterized by early marriage, early birth of the first child, and mostly two children in a family. Considerable changes in the political and social life have greatly influenced the demographic situation. In particular, in Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of the Iron Curtain and the transition from centrally planned to market economies, a renewed and dramatic fertility decline aroused interest and concern at all levels of society (Höhn, 2005: 20).

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE CZECH FAMILY

As it is presented at the site "Countries and their cultures" (Marriage, Family, and Kinship), later marriages prevail in the Czech Republic. Middle-class men usually did not marry until they had launched into their careers, typically in their late twenties or early thirties; women usually marry in their early or mid-twenties. More recently, men have begun to marry earlier. Czech newlyweds prefer to live separately from their families, but because of housing shortages in big cities, this aim is not easy to attain. Both spouses usually work unless a very young child keeps the mother temporarily at home. The typical household unit is a nuclear family, consisting of a husband, a wife, and children or stepchildren. In the Moravian countryside (see the explanation above), where people own family houses, parents commonly live with their adult children. Typically, when Moravians build a family house, they include space in it for their parents. For urban Czechs, the effective kin group is limited to the closest relatives. For most people, distant collateral relatives are seen only on special occasions such as weddings and funerals. However, most villagers, especially in Moravia, continue to maintain relations with more distant relatives. Descent is bilateral, i.e., through both mother's and father's sides, but the husband's surname becomes the family name (Countries and their Cultures. Czech Republic).

In historical research families that lived before the Industrial Revolution are called traditional or pre-industrial or corporative ones. A typical Czech family had a common household, which included close relatives and also other individuals in the house. At that period not the bloodline, but common management and having meals together were more important. If we treat a Czech family from the point of historical demography, the key difference between traditional and modern family consists in the fertility rate and mortality, as well as the existence of the so-called demographic crisis in the pre-industrial society, and finally and most importantly, about the existence of a mass deployment of birth control in modern society. This difference is regarded as cardinal, because it is connected with moral standards, religious beliefs (or lack of them), and attitudes towards life and ideas of a certain standard of living (Source: Rodina).

As a result of the transformation processes, Czech family has noticeably receded from the steady traditional model. In the 20th century women gained considerable personal, economic and social autonomy, because the role of men and women, as well as the economic function of the family, is changing (Čermáková et al., 2000). There appear priorities of childcare in the

families. Among other changes we may name an increasing proportion of children born to unmarried mothers, as well as the acceptance of divorce and unmarried cohabitation. Among the causes of changes in value orientations and lifestyles sociologists name differentiation, growth and development of economic uncertainty, and economic conditions of young families (Chaloupková & Šalamounová, 2004). The demographic situation in modern families will be discussed below.

Speaking about the Czech identity, Korovitsina (2006) mentions that family institution, its traditional function of self-sufficiency was always very important for the Czechs. Family is the main instrument of adaptation and resistance with respect to the external world. Relatively independent from the state, a Czech family is a keeper and an instrument of national treasures transmission from generation to generation. Family was the most important source not only for rest and comfort, but also for the accumulation of creative forces (Коровицина, 2006: 105-106).

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE SLOVAK FAMILY

In the first half of the 20th century a Slovak family – whether in its simple or advanced form – was the basic and the smallest economic unit. The research by Škovierová (1999) highlights a very interesting aspect of a Slovak traditional family in the system of cooperative relationship in a village community during the early 20th century. At that period, due to a large number of family farms with a small land area and a lack of equipment, cooperation in living was a necessity. A suitable family work force was one of the key factors in developing cooperative relationships with other villagers. It depended on the generational composition and the family size (more precisely, the number of household members and their position). It is obvious that family prosperity depended greatly on the number of its members who could be used as labour force, and also on the ability of the family to cooperate with other members of village community.

Describing traditions of the agricultural family in Slovakia Slavkovský (1999), in a concise form, gives a panoramic view of the traditional family history beginning from the 18th century and up to the first half of the 20th century. The role of a peasant family was great at that time, it was the bearer of cultural traditions, it created a social compact-consuming and production unit. The first half of the 20th century culminated in a continuous development of agrarian culture in Slovakia and, correspondingly, the lifestyle of a peasant family and of the village community. Much has changed, but the traditional cultural basis of the family has remained; the intergenerational transmissions of cultural values in the family have been preserved. What is very important, as Slavkovský writes (1999: 198), is the fact that civilization and social changes that occurred in the Slovak countryside in the second half of the 20th century, meant not only discontinuity of agrarian culture, but also of the whole lifestyle of the rural population. The larger amount of work in modern agriculture and the unprecedented access to information (appearance of radio, TV, and Internet) have weakened all cultural traditions, the mission of which was to prepare the individuals for life in traditional rural communities. What the author finds very important and socially favourable is that the positive spiritual and moral values formulated by the previous generations in their cultural-historical development are still preserved.

This was the model of a traditional Slovak family, which lasted for years. But after the Velvet Revolution (Czech *sametová revoluce*) or Gentle Revolution (Slovak *nežná revolúcia*) (November 17 – December 29, 1989) in Czechoslovakia, which led to the overthrow of the

communist government, this model was completely changed. Tamášová and Ustaníková (2005) claim that these changes were due to a number of both positive and negative factors, such as equality of status between men and women in all areas, diminishing the influence of the church and "traditional" religions, emphasis on individualism and independence, birth control and family planning, living in an urban environment, breakdown of marriages and divorces, and some others. Some statistic data which illustrate these facts are given in the text below.

Now let us consider some important aspects of the Czech and Slovak family studies, focusing our attention on four of them: Psycho-physical, social, spiritual and cultural-historical.

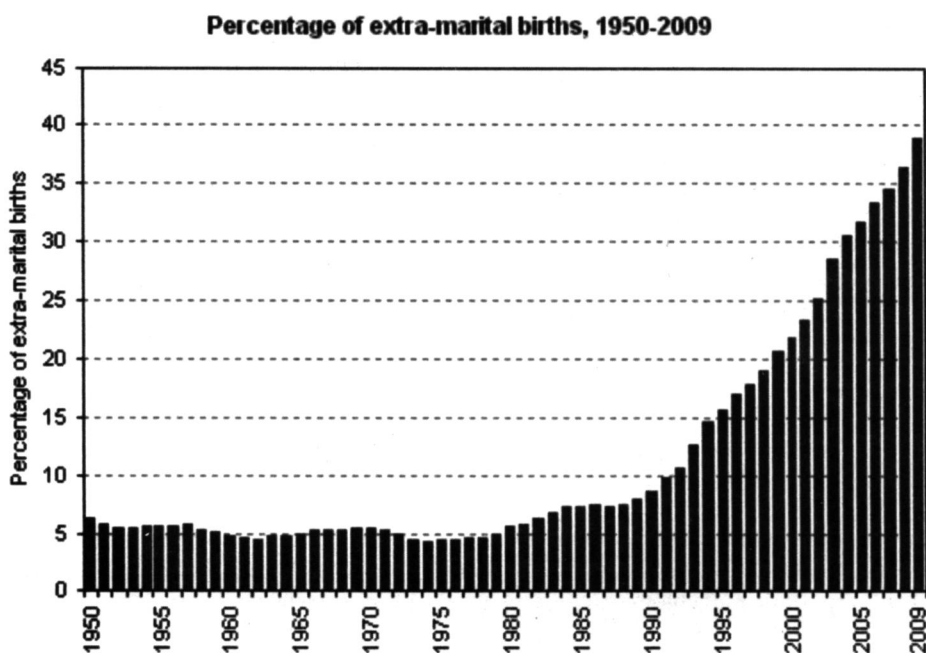
FAMILY PROBLEMS DISCUSSED BY CZECH SCHOLARS

As it is impossible to analyze all conjugate publications on the topic of this article, I will summarize the most frequently discussed problems. The first group of publications describes the **psycho-physical aspect** of family relations, namely the mechanism of the mutual choice of partners, the influence of the overall female employment on the upbringing of children (Možný 1990); the changes in the gender differentiation of the Czech society, the roles of men and women in private and public spheres, money and gender, the division of labour in the household, the role of sexuality, matrimony, and children in the family, and the role of the mother (Čermáková, 1999; Čermáková et al., 2000; Smidova, 2005).

The second group of publications presents different views on the **social aspect** (Možný 1999; 2006; Matoušek 1993; Čermáková et al., 2002; Fialová and Vohlídalová 2005; Mareš 2006; Kocourková 2009). These papers touch upon the problems of the family functioning in the system of property and social inequality, within the dynamic changes in Czech families under the influence of political and economic system, and many others.

One of the problems which modern Czech families are facing nowadays is the problem of combining work and family life. The results of the research show that it is not always possible to speak about men and women as a homogeneous, monolithic group. Within these categories there are numerous differences, which in the case of parenthood are particularly evident in the female population. The real options and preferences of women and men differ: Men put greater emphasis on work performance and its results, while women—mothers—always take into account their family situation and the possibilities it gives them. The scholars claim that there is a lack of men's participation in the household, in raising and caring for children, thus these responsibilities rest with the women. Nowadays there are two current changes in the Czech population's reproductive behaviour: An increase in extramarital fertility and a postponement of parenthood to a later age (see Graphs 1 and 2).

It is very interesting to compare the official term "maternity leave" in different languages. Its Czech equivalent is "mateřská dovolená", in Slovak it is "materská dovolenka", and in Russian—"декретный отпуск" (literally "decree leave"). According to the law in some countries, a father can also take the so called parental leave and stay with a newborn baby. The Russian term is free of any gender connotation. But in Czech the word "dovolená" connotes the enjoyment of free time from work, doing nothing, relaxing, etc., and it devalues and entirely ignores the care and work that this period involves (still performed mainly by women). The use of the term expresses an indifferent and condescending stance of the society and even the state (because this is an officially established term) towards the tasks of raising and caring for children. This is connected with the higher value that the Czech society

Graph 1. Percentage of extra-marital births in the Czech Republic

Source: © Czech Statistical Office, 2011

Graph 2. Mean age of women at birth in the Czech Republic

Source: © Czech Statistical Office, 2011

places on gainful occupation and work performance and the undervaluation of the (unpaid) work and care performed (primarily by women) in the family (after Křížková et al., 2006).

The third group is connected with **spiritual problems** (Sirovátka, 2003; Tuček (ed.), 1998) and the fourth one is formed by the publications discussing the **cultural aspect** (Hamplová (2003).

This approach is in harmony with my understanding of family as a **psycho-physical, social, spiritual** and a **cultural-historical phenomenon**. Now let us see how these problems are reflected in the mass media and in fiction. I have chosen some recent Internet publications which raise the issue of modern family problems. The illustration material from literary texts written by famous authors has been chosen according to the semantic principle, using the method of complete selection. Such examples have been thoroughly selected from the books the main topic of which is family problems and family values. The extracts from fiction reflect the different stages of family relations, the problem of fathers and children, of working women, single mothers, etc.

FAMILY PROBLEMS AND FAMILY PATTERNS REFLECTED IN THE CZECH MASS MEDIA AND IN FICTION

Art, literature, folklore, and mass media form an integral part of any society. There is always a ready response in newspapers, on TV, in theatre, etc. to events that take place in any country. Art, films, and literature indicate critical situations in the institution of marriage. But according to Stadtrucker the effect of their work may be either positive or negative (1999: 25).

Not long ago (2.11.2010) in the mass media there appeared a publication *„Sčím zápasí současná česká rodina* ("What does modern Czech family struggle with?"), in which the problems connected with the decline of birth rate, the unfavorable demographic trends, the reasons of negative factors influencing the family lifestyle were highlighted. Later it evoked hot discussions on the Internet. The problems discussed by the author are connected with **social** and **spiritual** aspects.

Now I will try to illustrate some of the most interesting publications with examples by modern Czech authors. Hamplová et al., (2000), Křížková (ed.), (2006), Tuček (ed.), (1998) and others wrote about the assumptions of happy family life (**psycho-physical aspect**). In childhood Alexandra, the heroine of the book "Manželky, milenky, zoufalky" ("Wives, Mistresses and Desperate Women") by Lanczová, was dreaming of her family life. She saw herself as a successful psychologist dressed in a smart elegant suit, with expensive rings on her fingers and a luxurious limousine waiting for her outside. Vacation would be spent on the Seychelles with a handsome husband and nice children. And what happened in reality? Two teenagers, ex-husband who brings alimony for children once a month, a weekend in the countryside with girlfriends. But because of the changes in gender differentiation of the Czech society (Čermáková, 1997; Čermáková et al., 2000) (**social aspect**), Alexandra survives. She loves her children, helps her girlfriends, colleagues, and neighbours. At the very end of the book she confesses that though she will never be a lady in an elegant suit on the Seychelles, but the one in jeans and a T-shirt, on a motorbike with two children and a dog waiting for her at home, she is quite happy.

In the books by Czech authors I came across cases of homosexual love and love to a homosexual. This type of relations was impossible in a traditional family. Following is an

example of confessing love to a homosexual and his reaction to it below. Karla declares her love, and Alex with tears in his eyes confesses that he can't love her, because he wants to be a woman, he loves her, but can't marry her: "*Mám tě rád. Věř mi, že tě mám moc rád. Ale nemůžu tě milovat. Odpusť mi to, prosím. Nemůžu.*" . . . *Jsi homosexuál? "Tak co?! Mám právo to vědět!" "Nebaví mne být chlapem. Nedokážu být mužem, oporou, hrdinou, otcem . . . Neumím to. Chtěl bych být ženou.*" (Nesvadbová "Bestiář", p. 15). It is an illustration of the **psycho-physical aspect** of relations between men and women in modern Czech prose.

Moral qualities, honour, and good family reputation have always been among Czech family values (the **spiritual aspect**). When Zdena Čistá finds a note with her father's deathbed confession, she comes to know that he was a gambler who had wasted not only their personal money, but also that belonging to his clients. She is a young woman, a promising architect student, but in the wish to save her family good name, she radically changes her life: She stops classes, sells a luxurious flat in a prestigious district, pays her dad's debt and searches for work (Hornová "Zdena Čistá: Můj život s Králem").

One of the favourite topics of writers is adultery (Hercíková "Vášeň" – "Passion", Lanczová "Milenky a hříšníci" – "Mistresses and Sinners"). E.g., Anděla, the character of one of the novels, is a Czech woman married to an American. In her love to Jozef, her lover, who is also a Czech, she passes several stages: From blind passion to regret and disillusionment. Perhaps the important factor of their love was a common language, nationality, and culture. At the beginning of their relations they were very happy, flew from the USA to Prague, where they spoke their native language. During their secret meetings, they walked together holding hands, felt drunk without touching alcohol, kissed in the street, smiled, laughed, enjoyed every moment of being together: *Ještě nikdy jsme se spolu neprocházeli, nanejvýš spěchali společně na letiště nebo se najíst. . . Procházet se bylo sladké. Navíc v městě, kde jsme se oba narodili. Jozef mě držel křečovitě za ruku, jako kdyby se bál, že se mu mohu na pražské podvečerní ulici, plné stínů, ztratit. Uletět. Zmizet* (Hercíková "Vášeň", p. 26). This story with no happy ending gives to readers a moral lesson (**spiritual aspect**).

FAMILY PROBLEMS DISCUSSED BY SLOVAK SCHOLARS

Making a review of the Slovak papers and media discourse, I would like to start with those which focus on the **psycho-physical** family problems, e.g., on the collective monograph *Ona a on na Slovensku. Zaoštroené na rod a vek* (She and he in Slovakia. Focusing on gender and age) edited by Zora Bútorová (2008). The authors highlight such topic as the image of an ideal husband and wife, the role of work, the political and social activity in life of men and women, etc. The changes of gender differences in the family have been analyzed by many authors (Cviková & Juráňová, 2003; Bútorová (ed.) 1996).

The **social** problems are connected with the demographic situation in Slovakia. Tamášová and Ustaníková (2005) show the following development trends of the modern family. The first one is **non-marital cohabitation**. In Slovakia, the number of illegitimate children in recent years has been rapidly increasing and now stands at a value 26.5% (ŠÚ SR – Statistical Office, statistical figures and charts, 2004). If we compare these data with those presented in Table 2.4.3 (Extra-marital births per 100 births) in a book by Philipov and Dorbritz (2003:104), we shall see that in Slovakia in 1990 the percentage of illegitimate children was 7.6%, in 1995 it was 12.6%, and in 2000 it amounted to 18.3%; the dynamics of growth is obvious.

The second trend is represented by the **birth rates**: Fertility is closely linked with

employment, and, accordingly, to the woman's career. It includes the phenomenon of a delayed onset of motherhood, thus postponing parenthood to an older age. The third trend concerns **marriage**: The marriage rate is declining as well – 80% of engaged couples are under 30 (ŠÚ SR – Statistical Office, statistical figures and charts, 2004). The fourth trend is connected with the **divorce**: In 2004 in Slovakia the number of divorced marriages with minor children was 53.96%. The most intensive divorce age for men is between 30-34 years of age, for women between 25-29 years (ŠÚ SR – Statistical Office, statistical figures and charts, 2004). And the last trend concerns the **households**: The average size of households in Slovakia has decreased, although at the same time the absolute number of households has increased. More people live in smaller types of households and the forced cohabitation of two generations, with the exception of intergenerational solidarity, is gradually disappearing. Presented here are only the data which are given by Tamášová and Ustaníková (2005). More recent data are given below.

The first Centre of Family Studies in Slovakia appeared at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University in Bratislava in 2001. University teachers and scholars have worked out the programme for students and conducted many interesting investigations. Later their experience was supported by other Slovak universities in Prešov, Banská Bystrica, Nitra, etc.

The results of many interesting projects and **social campaigns** in Slovakia (*Plus pre ženy 45+ – Plus for women 45+, Moja mama chce pracovať – My mom wants to work, Práca verzus rodina? – Work versus family* (2007), etc.) are presented not only in research papers (Bútorová, 2007) (ed.), but also in the mass media and fiction.

Slovak scholars focus their attention on the **spiritual problems** in family studies: The influence of church on the culture of family relations (Rábek 1999) and the character education in the family (Danek 1999). Kovář (2009) offers fifteen definite steps which should be taken to save the Czech and the Slovak families. His point of view is shared by Piovarči (2005), who in his paper *Je slovenská rodina v existenčnom ohrození?! ("Is Slovak family in existential danger?!")*, discusses the burning issues of family life. As well as Kovář, he thinks that love for parents becomes a moral value only if it is evoked by his father's and mother's personalities. Kovář (2009) finds five instruments important for the family development policy: The theological, psychological, philosophical, social and economic ones.

The book by Botíková et al., (1997) *Tradície slovenskej rodiny* (Traditions of the Slovak family) includes a vast scope of questions connected with the **cultural-historical** aspect of the family: Medicine, law, psychology, pedagogy, sociology, history of economy, demography and some others. The information of ethnic and cultural-anthropological character deserves special interest.

FAMILY PROBLEMS AND FAMILY PATTERNS REFLECTED IN THE SLOVAK MASS MEDIA AND IN FICTION

As Bútorová notes (2008: 11), changes in political life, the entry of Slovakia into the EU, the greater attention paid to family life, have found their reflection in fiction (in books by Uršula Kovályk "Travesty šou", Etela Farkašová "Stalo sa", Žo Langerová "Vtedy v Bratislave"), in TV shows, and in theatre performances.

Among the problems in Slovak families which Tamášová (2007) names, there is an

increasing abundance of single-parent families. Some researchers claim that single-parent families led by a mother will become a kind of template families, or at least one of the most frequent types. This would mean that the union 'mother- child' would once again become the basic unit of society (the **psycho-physical aspect**). This situation is reflected in many novels, but here I would like to mention the book "Láska s nami zatočí" ("Love Will Send us Whirling") by Hamzová, in which Hana Bohdanová, the protagonist, has four children, who she brings up herself, because their father, Jan, is a vagabond. From time to time he comes to their home and begs for alcohol. Sometimes he takes the last money, and they live from hand to mouth. She can do everything at home by herself, and can even repair the car engine. The children are very proud of her. At last she gains her strength and divorces Jan.

Another critical topic discussed by scholars, in the mass media and in fiction is the woman's desire to work or to go back to work after the maternity leave (the **social aspect**). Slovak scholars have launched several projects and campaigns in the mass media: *Moja mama chce pracovať*—My mom wants to work, *Práca verus rodina?* —Work versus family? (2007). This situation is the keystone in the novel "Cukor a soľ" ("Sugar and Salt") by Keleová-Vasilková. Everything is fine in Nora's family: For a number of years Nora has been living like in a cotton wool, wrapped in warmth, comfort and love—*Nora roky žila ako vo vatičke . . . obalená teplom, pohodlím a láskou* (p. 16). Her husband and she have two daughters, a large house, enough money, but Nora wants to go back to work, to earn her own money. This irritates her husband, their family collapses, but after many collisions the story has a happy ending.

Writers describe the family life of people belonging to **different social groups**. At the early days of their marriage, Tereza, the protagonist of the novel "Za to mi zaplatíš!" ("You Will Pay Me for This!") by Nagyová-Džerengová, got up early, prepared breakfast for her husband, and they were sitting in silence. She followed his movements with loving care. But then she realized that he kept silent because he found her silly and not equal to him—he was a doctor and she was only a nurse without any higher education.

There were many children in a traditional family, though now their number is not very large, but men do want to have heirs, and a woman's refusal to bear a child leads to a divorce or separation (Lukáš and his mistress Renáta in a book "Vôňa karameliek"—"The Smell of Caramel Candies" by Hamzová): Renáta loves herself too much, is proud of her perfect body and doesn't want to deform it with pregnancy—*Bola krásna, takmer dokonalá. Jej telo mohlo súťažiť s európskymi modelkami. Dokonalé miery, dokonalé pohyby, dokonalý úmysel... dokonalý chlad. Toto telo ho už dávno nevzrušovalo. Bolo síce krásne, ale studené ako ľad. Príliš dokonalé na to, aby sa nechalo dobrovoľne zničiť. Napríklad tehotenstvom. . . Ani Renáta nikdy nechcela mať deti* (Hamzová "Vôňa karameliek", p. 103).

As to the other numerous examples which can represent the articles, papers, books or projects connected with the family problems either in Slovakia or in the Czech Republic, because of space limits they will be used in my further publications.

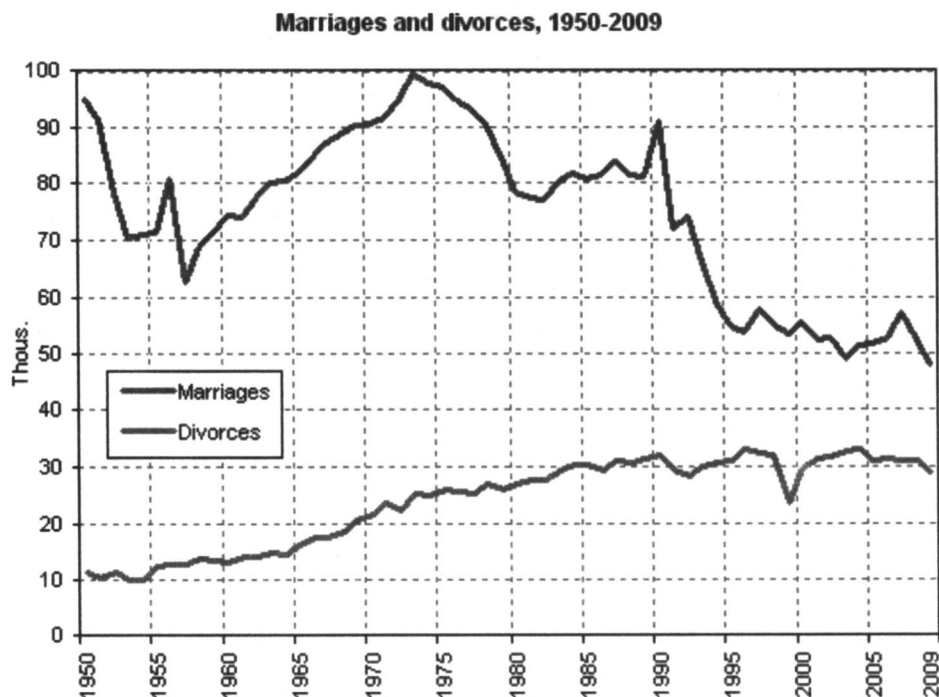
IS MODERN FAMILY REALLY IN CRISIS?

This question has been asked many times by scholars, journalists, and writers. What is going on in Europe? In Cliquet's opinion (2005: 62-63), Europe faces three major population challenges: (1) increasing population greying, (2) persisting population dejuvenation, and (3) sustained immigration pressures from developing countries.

Demographic changes in Europe are connected with a combination of growth in women's loneliness and international mobility, and increasing education of women. Notwithstanding all these factors, as Tamášová (2007) writes, family is still important in the prevention of poverty, social insecurity and violence.

In her analysis of modern families (*Súčasná rodina: Koniec stereotypov* – Modern family: The end of stereotypes) Černušáková (2004) touches upon several very important questions. One of them is the question of the so-called "delayed marriages". After 1989 in Slovakia the number of marriages began to decrease gradually (see Table 1). The same situation is in the Czech Republic (see Graph 3). Marriage has ceased to be perceived as a necessary condition of the family. As a result, changes were most visibly reflected in the declining birth rate, which affected not only Slovakia, but also other countries in Central and Eastern Europe. She writes that the average marriage age in Slovakia is a few years lower than in Western Europe. Men marry at the age of 29.5 and women at 26.5. The other problems worthy of social attention are the value gap between the parents and the children, the hidden instability in the couple's life, the growth of divorce and free co-habitation, the emancipation of women, and the disregard for household responsibility. Summing up her research, Černušáková comes to the conclusion that modern family is at a cross-road: On the one hand we hear the warning call on the crisis of family values, on the other hand, the family remains, but enters into a new form and any return to the patriarchal family pattern in which its members had definite roles, is hardly possible. Women are not willing to return to households and give up their education, self-empowerment, and their emotional and sexual freedom.

Graph 3. Marriages and divorces in the Czech Republic



Source: © Czech Statistical Office, 2011

I have collected data from different sources provided by the Statistical Office of Slovak Republic and presented them in Table 1. It gives a possibility to trace what marital status of the population existed before the Gentle Revolution and how it changed afterwards. We can see that the number of married men and women is diminishing, whereas the number of divorces is growing. The year 2009 is the last one available in this source. In another source we can find that the number of divorces in the Slovak Republic per 100 marriages is as follows: 1989 – 22.74%; in 1999 – 35.35%, and in 2009 – 48.08% (ŠÚ SR, *Štatistické čísla a grafy*, 2011). If we compare these data with those presented in Graphs 3 and 4, we shall see that in the Czech Republic the situation is the same. As it can be seen in Graph 1, in 2009 there was the largest number of extra-marital births in the Czech Republic (39%), though in 1989 it was only 8% while in 1999 it represented 21%. The situation is the same concerning the mean age of women giving birth. In 1984 it was the lowest, in 1989 a bit higher, then in 1999 a bit less than 27 years. And now (in 2009) it is a bit lower than 29.5. Having gained independence and the possibility for individual development, women put work and career on the first place and postpone the birth of the first child.

Table 1

Slovak Population by Marital Status and Sex (in 1989, 1999 and 2009)

	1989		1999		2009	
Males and females in total	5 287 663		5 398 657		5 424 925	
Per cent	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
	48.9	51.1	48.6	51.4	48.6	51.4
Marital status						
Single	46.97	39.12	46.85	38.45	47.8	38.68
Married	48.56	46.54	47.44	44.96	45.16	42.89
Divorced	2.41	3.24	3.7	4.8	5.6	7.23
Widowed	2.06	11.09	2.01	11.73	1.43	11.2

Source: © 2011 Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

According to Vella (1999: 22), the laws in various countries which place marriage and cohabitation on the same level, the recognition of people of the same sex living together as family, the "in vitro family", the genetic manipulations, etc. work against the fundamental values of life, marriage and family. Among the reasons which have brought up the decay of the family Vella names individualism, which has substituted the family; privatization of morality, and privatization of family (Vella, 1999: 24). The result of cohabitation is the delayed birth of the first child (see Graph 2) and a number of extra-marital births (see Graph 1). These facts differ greatly from the pattern of a traditional family.

What has future in store for the modern family? Researchers believe that future families will develop under the following three scenarios: The disappearance of traditional forms of the family, the reestablishment of the traditional family, and the persistence of various new forms of family (Tamášová, 2007). Vella thinks that in the New Millennium the family will survive if it is based on the triangle of a new culture of the family, consisting of love, family and community (1999: 27-28). All this mentioned above leads us to the question of family values.

ARE FAMILY VALUES CHANGING?

Sometimes it is difficult to describe family values or ideals of culture. Certain ways of thinking, acting, communicating and family relations result from cultural values. To better understand Czech and Slovak cultures, we must go back to history and recall the traditional family with its traditions and specific way of life. Family has always played a very important role in the life of the Czechs and the Slovaks, but now I would like to use some statistic data, collected by Bútorová (2008) which can make my observations more convincing. I have written above that the traditional family patterns where the man was the bread-winner and the woman was a good housewife are still very strong in the Slovak society. Let us have a look at Table 2, in which the most important features of a good wife and a good husband in the opinion of the whole population are presented for the period 1995 and 2006. Good housekeeping skills were listed both in 1995 and 2006. The second very important feature (in 1995) was delicacy, i.e., the sensitivity to the problems of the others, and the third one—rational thinking (1995). In 2006 the second place of female virtues was given to a pleasant companion and after it to such a value as delicacy, i.e., the sensitivity to the problems of others. An ideal husband must have the ability to support the family financially (92% in 1995 and 79% in 2006) and the ability of individual development (ranked second both in 1995 and 2006). The third place was different. In 1995 it was rational thinking (or common sense) and in 2006 entrepreneurship, the ability to socialize. Because of political and social changes that took place in the Slovak society during the period between 1995 and 2006, we can state that these changes have found their reflection in the priorities of choosing the important features characterizing the husband and the wife.

While discussing family problems we take four main approaches to the family studies. Here I would like to touch upon the gender aspect connected with the **psycho-physical aspect**. The same questionnaire was offered to representatives of different generations—under and over 45—of both sexes (see Table 3 and 4). In 2006 the opinion of men and women under and over 45 was unanimous: A good wife must be a good housekeeper. The points of view of men and women on other features do not coincide. Answering questions about a good wife, men and women under 45 express the opinion that she must be a pleasant companion; the third important quality of a woman is, as women think, the ability of individual development, but men give preference to pleasant appearance and beauty. Both men and women over 45 rank as first the good housekeeping skills (see Table 3). The second most important feature chosen by women as a feature of good wife is delicacy, i.e., the sensitivity to the problems of others, and the third one the ability to be a pleasant companion, combined with the ability of individual development. For men over 45 an ideal woman is not only a good housekeeper (72%), but also a pleasant companion (57%). The delicacy as a female feature of good wife receives 47%.

Among the important features of good husband (see data in Table 4), the representatives of both sexes and of different generations give priority to the ability to support the family financially. Women (under and after 45) as the next important feature of good husband name the ability to make progress at work. Entrepreneurship and the ability to socialize are ranked third (60%) (female opinion, generation under 45). For women after 45 the ability of individual development is more important (55%). Male opinion is also a bit different. Men under 45 give preference to the ability of individual development (68%) and then to the ability to make progress at work and entrepreneurship (63% each). For men after 45 the ability to make progress at work ranks second (58%) and entrepreneurship and the ability of individual development rank third (56%).

Table 2.

Most Important Features of Good Wife and Good Husband in the Opinion of the Whole Population (1995 and 2006 – in %) After Bútorová (2008: 21)

	Good wife		Good husband	
	1995	2006	1995	2006
Ability of good housekeeping	86	70	46	44
Pleasant companion	51	58	39	43
Delicacy, sensitivity to problem of others	71	51	38	30
Ability of individual development	50	48	72	61
Tolerance to others	50	45	45	42
Rational thinking	52*	46	57*	54
Pleasant appearance, beauty	38	42	8	15
Entrepreneurship, ability to socialize	16**	34	42**	60
Ability to make progress at work	–	32	–	63
The highest education	10	24	17	32
Ability to support the family financially	23	18	92	79
Desire to be superior at work	16	17	29	25
Interest in social things	6	10	13	14
Ability of sacrifice to society, authority and peoples	8	8	13	11
Physical strength	5	7	33	34

Note: the age of respondents was after 15.

– Was not examined

* In 1995 there was used the term “good sense”

** In 1995 there was used the term “entrepreneurship”

Source: FOCUS, June 2005 and Institute for Public Affairs, August 2006.

Most of the features mentioned in the questionnaire can be considered as family values. Men want to have a very good housekeeper at home, a pleasant companion, and a reliable partner. Notwithstanding the desire of individual development, higher education, a woman still looks for a reliable partner, a good father for her children, who can support the family financially.

Speaking about the lifestyle of Czechs, it is worth mentioning that family is a key element of the Czech culture and is valued higher than work. Traditional families are quite a norm with mothers cooking and raising children while fathers work. One of the family values is mutual respect: Fathers spend their free time with children over the weekend, giving the mother a possibility for her individual development or simply for rest. Another family tradition is regular celebration of holidays together. There are more fathers at school events than in other countries. Many mothers stay at home with the children until they are three years old, because they have a greater responsibility not only for delivering, but also for upbringing the child in accordance with the family traditions (sources: Czech Republic Culture; Family).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The information presented above testifies to the fact that in the last fifty years in the Czech

Table 3.

Most Important Features of Good Wife in the Opinion of Junior and Senior Generation of Women and Men (2006 – in %) After Bútorová (2008: 27)

	Generation under 45		Generation over 45	
	female opinion	male opinion	female opinion	male opinion
Ability of good housekeeping	69	69	68	72
Pleasant companion	56	63	49	57
Delicacy, sensitivity to problem of others	54	49	50	47
Ability of individual development	55	44	49	42
Tolerance	51	42	47	38
Authority at home, in family	43	28	35	32
Entrepreneurship, ability to socialize	41	29	33	27
Pleasant appearance, beauty	42	51	31	40
Ability to make progress at work	39	31	32	22
The highest education	29	25	22	19
Ability to support the family financially	26	17	18	11
Interest in social things	12	9	9	7
Physical strength	8	6	9	4

Source: Institute for Public Affairs, August 2006.

Republic and Slovakia the process of the urbanization of the society, of its transition from the traditional, agro-patriarchal form typical in the first half of the 20th century of Czech-Slovak society into the modern one continues, deepens, and gains strength. This process is more typical of the Czechs, though in Slovakia this process goes a bit slower and still takes place now. Naturally, these social processes find their vivid reflection in the family relations, which constitute the criterion that shows us the level of the movement of the society towards urbanization. To show these changes more vividly, I take into account four different aspects in analyzing the family patterns and the family values: **Psycho-physical, social, spiritual, and cultural-historical**. Another important thing is the attempt to present different points of view on the same topic, expressed by scholars, journalists, and writers. Notwithstanding the high quality of many publications, they are not known to the broad cross-section of the population, and it is mainly the mass media (newspapers, journals, radio, TV, and Internet) which create the public opinion and manipulate it. That is why the social campaigns in the Czech Republic and in Slovakia initiated by psychologists, demographers, sociologists, teachers, politicians, etc., were conducted by the mass media and were later presented in serious research papers (see, e.g., the article by Bosá et al., (2008) *Female images in Slovak mass media* and many others).

All the changes which take place in the society inevitably find their reflection in fiction, which has also a strong influence on the public opinion. As an illustration I would like to mention the project Plus pre ženy 45+ (Plus for women 45+), supported by the European Social Fund, European Gender Equality and Diversity Network, Institute for Public Affairs, and some other Slovak public and state organizations. The statistic data with their detailed

Table 4.

Most important features of **good husband** in the opinion of junior and senior generation of women and men (2006 – in %) after Bútorová (2008: 28)

	Generation under 45		Generation over 45	
	female opinion	male opinion	female opinion	male opinion
Ability to support the family financially	79	76	79	79
Ability to make progress at work	65	63	58	58
Entrepreneurship, ability to socialize	60	63	54	56
Ability of individual development	59	68	55	56
Pleasant companion	52	38	42	35
Ability of good housekeeping	49	43	43	40
Tolerance	48	36	47	32
Authority at home, in family	46	46	44	48
Delicacy, sensitivity to problem of others	40	23	34	22
The highest education	35	35	31	27
Physical strength	34	33	34	38
Pleasant appearance, beauty	21	15	10	11
Interest in social things	15	14	12	15

Source: Institute for Public Affairs, August 2006.

analysis, tables and diagrams were published in the book *Ona a on na Slovensku. Zaoštrene na rod a vek* (She and he in Slovakia. Focusing on gender and age) (Bútorová, ed., 2008). In Graph 2.1. (p. 47) the data concerning the development of the number of births and abortions in the period 1921-2006 are presented, children are sorted as those which were born in the family and out of it; all the miscarriages and abortions have been calculated in the period of 1950-2006 (Bútorová, ed., 2008: 47). To speak figuratively, these numeric characters hide tears of happiness and grief, female histories which can be the pride of the family and those which are carefully hidden. What happiness it brings to a woman to bear a child (to be more exact, twins) and what grief it brings to her to lose a baby because of a cruel husband is artistically described in the book "Vôňa karameliek" by Mária Hamzová. How a woman longs for a family and a baby and cannot have it because she loves a bisexual, who prefers to spend time with his partner, is the main topic of the novel "Vášeň" by Iva Hercíková, which was later filmed.

Such examples are numerous and reflect the changes which take place in the Czech and the Slovak societies: The diminishing of the role of physical labour, and the increasing extent of intellectual, creative, research, organizing, managerial and service work. These changes in their turn lead to the revision of the role of a woman in the society in general and in a family in particular, with all the far-reaching consequences.

Notwithstanding some negative tendencies in the demographic situation, the economic crisis and other problems, Czech and Slovak families have managed to preserve the family values which have strong historical and cultural roots.

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