

# CZECH SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW

*Fall*

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**Volume VII, 1999**

# CZECH SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW

Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic

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# CZECH SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW

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### Scope and Mission

The **CZECH SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW** is a scholarly review open to the discussion of all professional and societal problems, sociological theory and methodology, and the dissemination of the results and interpretation of sociological research. Its attention is directed towards the development of the field and its teaching, while simultaneously striving to contribute to the solution of the practical problems of Czech social and economic politics.

### Manuscript Submission

The editors require an original and two legible copies, which do not state the name or workplace of the author, in order for the reading process to be anonymous on both sides. The accompanying letter should contain a complete contact address, including telephone number. Submission of a manuscript to another journal, while it is under review by the **CSR** is deemed unethical.

**Manuscript format:** Manuscripts must be typed or computer printed (12-point type preferred), double-spaced, with 60 columns (characters) per line, 30 lines to an A4 page. The maximum length of research and methodological essays is 20 pages, 7 pages for reviews, 5 pages for news or information, and 1 page for annotations.

**Editorial decisions:** Decisions are generally made within one month from the date of your manuscript's arrival at the **CSR** office. If your manuscript is accepted you will be asked to submit your final version both on paper and on a microcomputer floppy disk, either in ASCII or ANSI text-only file. IBM disks are acceptable. The final version should also include a twenty-line abstract and an eighty-line summary, an alphabetised bibliography and basic, relevant curriculum vitae.

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## Introduction

When we started planning this issue at the beginning of the year, we invited the wider Czech sociological community, together with some foreign authors, to turn its attention to the female half of the Czech population. Our aim was to present, together with the *Czech Sociological Review*, research concentrating on social questions from the perspective of gender or feminism. The title of this issue *The Position of Czech Women in the Society of the 1990s in the Spectrum of Research* also indicates a second aim, to use this issue as a place to confront research results and findings. We respected the various approaches and alternative points of view of both empirical research and analysis of material, of methodological questions, qualitative approaches and comparative research. This is the first collection of articles, research reports, comparative studies, and reports on the teaching of feminism and of questions linked with the conception of gender in the social sciences to be prepared in English in Czech academic circles. The issue also includes reviews and annotations of Czech and Slovak publications in the field.

The contributions to this issue are therefore the first to provide the foreign academic public with a profile of research in the social sciences that concentrates on Czech women. This is also due to the fact that the Czech community interested in questions of gender and feminism is oriented more towards research, methodology and the interpretation of data and research findings than directly towards theory. Approaches to the subject are far from limited, and there is an emphasis on the possibility of creating individual, alternative approaches and concepts.

The complexity of the conceptualisation of gender and the feminist perspective is due to the fact that it emerged outside the Czech sociological community, which for many years (1948-1989) was unable to participate in this development. It is theoretically strictly determined, which is also the case with our subject here – Czech women. Neither their past nor present state is influenced by feminist thinking, and this is still the case for the majority of women here today. For sociological thought, therefore, the loss of time which is to be ‘empirically’ demonstrated is not ‘empirically’ demonstrated. At times this is a even a *sine qua non* condition for opening the discussion.

It seems that the key to the analysis of Czech women is continuity, a respect for historical links and structural social ties. In the complex social and economic reality of a society in transition, concepts and analyses are strongly dependent both on studies and surveys of the behaviour and attitudes of Czech women as participants in possible social change. Czech sociology has come to terms with the question of concepts of gender or policies of equal opportunities for men and women by devoting greater attention to an analysis of institutional mechanisms such as the external influences of feminist ideas, agendas and policies, as well as the internal reactions of Czech bodies (governmental and institutional structures, political parties, the media, NGOs, etc.) to these influences.

Czech sociology also places considerable importance on the current position of Czech women in various spheres of social life – work, family, political activity, etc., because it is here that Czech society, with its own models and modifications, is struggling to formulate a new gender agreement, as yet without rules or an institutional framework.

The first article *Gender Differences among Economically Active University Graduates* by Marie Čermáková looks at questions related to the different positions of men and women university graduates. It analyses both differences in earnings and the subjective dimension of questions of performance and a career. The results presented are drawn from long-term sociological research and the discussion covers various extra-economic mechanisms which contribute to the secondary position of women university graduates on the labour market. The article also focuses on the functioning of women graduates' individual, personalised approaches to their careers or within certain professions and points out the risks and ineffectiveness of these in gaining equal status or in implementing equal opportunities policies.

In her article *The Political Representation of Women in Mass Media Discourse in the Czech Republic 1990-1998*, Hana Havelková offers a sociological analysis of the attitudes of the Czech intellectual public to the question of women's political representation. She analysed the main Czech dailies from 1990 to 1998, showing how the media helped open this question to public debate. The analysis also used the results of public opinion surveys on political issues. In terms of gender stereotypes, the author shows that in this context, the stereotypes of women have been disseminated and somewhat modified. One surprising finding of the analysis is the existence of a specific type of 'masculinity', which has reigned in Czech politics since 1990.

Eliška Rendlová in her article *The Gender Paradox in Public Opinion Surveys* uses a long series of public opinion surveys (1990-1996) to analyse the lack of difference between the opinions of men and women on questions of political and life values. As well as looking for an explanation of this, she tested the intervention of other demographic and social characteristics (e.g. age and education) which are in fact influenced by the category of gender.

In her article *Women and Employment*, Věra Kuchařová looks at questions related to the employment of Czech women today, basing this on the results of a 1998 research project on "The Status of Women and Men in the Czech Republic". She sees the key problem as the combination of the family and working lives of Czech women and so also compared working conditions with the professional expectations and satisfaction of working women in this country. She explains the position of Czech women on the labour market today from the point of view of social determination and the complementary nature of the male and female roles.

Martina Musilová's article *Equal Opportunity as a Matter of Public Interest* offers a broad conceptual framework for the analysis of attitudes in Czech society towards policies of equal opportunities for men and women. She uses two hypothetical models to describe the general and existing mechanisms for implementing equal opportunities in the Czech Republic. She looks at the differences between these and their appropriateness in the Czech situation, paying particular attention to the parties involved in these mechanisms.

Alena Křížková's article *The Division of Labour in Czech Households in the 1990s* is the only one of the Czech contributions that looks at the private sphere. She uses a database of sociological surveys in the 1990s to study the division of work in the house among Czech families. The article also includes an analysis of how men and women are tending to change the construction of gender roles in the home and an analysis of subjective views of the justice of the present model.

In her article *Men in the Czech Republic*, Iva Šmídová presents an aspect of the study of gender and feminism that is new to Czech social science – the integration of studies of men and masculinity. She looks at the differences between Czech and ‘western’ men and the scope for comparison.

An important part of this issue is taken by the section on Comparative Research, which includes articles by authors living and working in Great Britain, the USA and Canada, offering their professional view of the position of women in Czech society. While the different texts vary widely (from the presentation of the results of quantitative and qualitative research, through an analysis of equal opportunities in the EU and countries seeking membership of the Union, to reflections on the situation of emigrant women researchers whose main area of professional interest is still their country of origin), they all share a sociologically committed and critical approach.

The authors all consider the unequal position of Czech women at work and in the home, although at the same time they all see the situation in this country as fundamentally different from that in western countries. They believe that Czech society does in fact recognise the inequality of conditions in its own way, but also point out the conscious or more or less unconscious lack of interest in resolving these, a lack that is based in tradition.

The authors do not only criticise the situation in the Czech Republic, but also look at their present environment and at the discourse of western feminist or western European theory as such within this framework. Alena Heitlinger warns against a one-sided use of the western feminist framework to explain the Czech situation. Phyllis Raabe also notes that the approaches of certain western feminists do not allow for comparison and discusses the different life experience of Czech and Western European women. Mita Castle-Kanerova shows the EU’s inability to offer conditions for an equal partnership for the countries preparing for entry into its membership structure. Rosemary Crompton’s study shows both a number of other influences on the middle and micro-levels, as well as the influence of state (macro) structures on the fates of individual women and the mistakes made by a number of politicians.

The Reviews section includes reports on the Slovak feminist journal *Aspekt* and on two feminist works recently published in the Czech Republic. *Aspekt* has had a profound influence on Czech academics attracted to feminism and its texts and translations are used in gender studies. It is the only journal which also publishes Czech writing on gender and feminism questions. Jiřina Šmejkalová, who is at present teaching at Durham University in the UK and is studying questions of Czech cultural policy and gender relations in Central Europe, reviews two books, A. Heitlinger, S. Trnka: *The Lives of Young Prague Women* and the collection *The Maid’s War with Ideology*, edited and with an introduction by Libora Indruchová. Both books aroused considerable public interest and discussion, and so the article offers an interesting view of these initial ventures of SLON Publishers from a reviewer who is very familiar with the Czech situation, even though she has been working in western universities for a number of years,

News and Information is far from just an appendix to this issue in conceptual terms, as it provides information on the teaching of feminism and questions related to the conception of gender in the social sciences. For readers who are not familiar with the situation here, it should be said that this includes all such teaching and while the probability of new courses being offered is small, the existing ones will certainly see continual

improvement and innovation. The role of the 'Gender Studies Foundation' in the emergence and spread of feminism in this country has been irreplaceable and Lenka Simerská looks both at its past and its present position and activity. The section closes with report on two research projects – the first on "The Family and Fertility Survey" and the second on women in agriculture.

In conclusion, but in full awareness of their importance, I would like to thank all those who contributed to the issue and supported such an important project. First our thanks go to the Canadian Embassy, Prague, which provided finance for the translations and without whom it would have been difficult to produce this issue in the form it is, and to all the anonymous reviewers who contributed so greatly to the content and quality of the contributions. The translators had a demanding task and also deserve our thanks. Finally I would like to thank the editors of the Czech Sociological Review, and particularly the Executive Editor, Jitka Stehlíková, for the energy and understanding which she devoted to this issue.

*Marie Čermáková, Guest Editor*



**Canadian Embassy**  
**Ambassade du Canada**

## Gender Differences among Economically Active University Graduates\*

MARIE ČERMÁKOVÁ\*\*

Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague

**Abstract:** This article looks at the areas of difference in the positions of men and women with university degrees in Czech society. It uses the results of a project entitled "Men and Women University Graduates" and other available statistical data.<sup>1</sup> The comparison between men and women graduates and between women graduates and women with other levels of education provides a picture of the specific position of women graduates on the labour market. The article looks at the possibilities of studying gender differences and the specific status of women in a transitional society. The analysis concentrates on two basic areas – (a) that of salary differences, and (b) that of attitudes to performance and career. The author develops the thesis that the continuing gender differences between men and women graduates cannot be attributed to the nature of the female work force. The secondary position of these women on the labour market is due to non-economic factors. Aspects discussed include the existing guarantees for equality of men and women in Czech society, the double standard of university qualifications, the link between the university-educated female labour force and the female sectors of the labour market, the factor of the "unclear identity" of women graduates, and that of the low level of emotional support from these women's social surroundings. The article also looks at individualised, personalised ways of creating a social position that are used by women graduates on the market or in their career, and highlights the fact that these approaches are both risky and ineffective in the search for equal status or the implementation of equal opportunities policies.

*Czech Sociological Review, 1999, Vol. 7 (No. 2: 127-144)*

In this article I would like to draw attention to the continuing differences in the position at work of men and women university graduates, by considering certain indicators of salary differences and attitudes to questions of career and performance. I will also consider the

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\*) This research was supported by grant no. 403/97/0586 "The Position of Women Graduates in Czech society in the 1990s" from the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic.

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1) In 1998 the Sociological Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences carried out a representative sociological survey into "Men and Women University Graduates", as part of the project, "The Position of Women Graduates in Czech Society in the 1990s" (GA ČR č. 403/97/0586). The data was collected by the Sofres-Factum agency. The survey was intended to gain a wide-ranging view of the life and work of men and women graduates, comparing men's and women's working and social conditions, mapping gender inequalities and stereotypes of these from the point of view of educational attainment in the elites of Czech society. The representative samples included 1908 economically active respondents, of which 947 (49.6%) were women and 961 (50.4%) men. The sample was representative by age, the distribution of university education and type of place where the respondent lived. More than 95% of both men and women had a post-graduate or professional degree.

differences between women with and without a university education. I am particularly interested in the role of women, in this case those working women graduates, in the process of individual and group work and social advancement in a society in transition.

### 1. The Possibilities of Studying Gender Differences

Some economic theories, such as the neo-classical or institutional ones, provide justifications for the unequal position of men and women on the labour market. According to these the very nature of the female labour force means that it offers a lesser labour capital and higher cost (e.g. with respect to legal and social insurance). It is therefore both economic and right that it should have lesser value, since it is less productive than that of men. Institutional theories presuppose a dual labour market, or as many markets as there are segments of the national economy and gender differences further highlight the differences between the male and female labour forces. They see these as lying primarily in the educational capital and flexibility of the labour force and this leads to the segregation of men and women into certain professions [Anker 1998]. These theories do not explain the origins of the segregation, as they are not concerned with influences and actors from outside the economy. These are, however, indicated and interpreted by various gender-related or feminist approaches [Anker 1998, Abbot and Wallace 1997, Rubery 1998, Rees 1998, Jacobs 1995, Hakim 1996, Šanderová 1999] which argue that women's position on the labour market is the result of patriarchal social ties and the subordination of women in society and in the family. These theories assume that women are more likely to be found in those parts of the labour market with lower competence, lower work status, and also work with less social prestige.

One major methodological problem arises in comparing the overall level of gender differences with those in developed European countries (and possibly the USA). Apart from statistical surveys of salary levels and the basic set of selective surveys on the structure and movement of the labour force, there are no long-term analyses in the Czech Republic of the type available in, for example, the OECD countries. This article is therefore largely based on sociological data and analysis. Gender theories are an important concept for comparison but are not sufficient to explain the situation in a society in transition. Analyses of the social position of women in the Czech Republic [Čermáková 1995, 1997a, b] have cast a certain doubt on the simple declaration of a "dual burden" or "exploitation of women" and demonstrated a number of distinctions in the social development of the female population in this country between 1945 and 1989, which determine not only the current social status of women, but particularly the position and behaviour of working women in the 1990s. It can be hypothesised that both the *framework* of the system (i.e. the labour market, social system, gender relations, political decisions, etc.) and the *activity* of women (attitudes, behaviour, approaches, etc.) determine the subsequent level (degree) of the social status of Czech women, *but at the present time and in the conditions of a society in transition it is difficult to empirically delineate the relation between these two (i.e. between the system and the actor).*



## 2. The Position of Czech Women

The situation of women in the Czech Republic differs from that in developed democracies primarily in that *there is no legislation directly protecting them against discrimination*.<sup>2</sup> Nor is there an established principle of equal remuneration of men and women, or of equal pay for work of equal value.<sup>3</sup> There is a relatively large number of provisions relating to social protection for working women with children under the age of four, including the length of maternity leave (28 weeks), the length of extended maternity leave (up to the child's fourth birthday), various other social provisions protecting women with small children (sickness insurance), and a network of nursery schools and after-school care.<sup>4</sup>

The situation in the Czech Republic is distinguished by the following:

- long-lasting female employment, i.e. over several generations, with a clear trend towards a rising education and professional structure;
- the presence of women in all professions at all levels, although the percentage of women ranges from 2% to 19%;<sup>5</sup>
- women work in the both the private and state sectors and in all branches of the economy, and account for 22% of entrepreneurs employing other staff;
- a large majority (i.e. over 80%) of women work full time (i.e. 42.5 hours per week);
- 3% of women also have a second job;
- the classical pure model of a housewife (that is, of a woman dependent on her husband's income) is rare (not more than 1% of women of working age);
- Czech women spend more time at work than women in any other country [“Emerging...” 1999].<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the above factors, the fact that the Czech Republic is a country in transition is also significant [Machonin and Tuček 1996]. The processes now under way are shaped

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<sup>2</sup>) The equality of men and women is guaranteed by the Czech constitution, but in this article the stress is on practice in this country, where there is a lack of any explicit ban on discrimination against women.

<sup>3</sup>) Among politicians, doubts are cast on the value of introducing such provisions by pointing to the meagre returns which such provisions have brought to women in, for example, the countries of the EU over recent decades.

<sup>4</sup>) The network of day care centres and nursery schools has been considerably reduced since 1989, but in view of the present number of children it cannot be said to have been decimated. There are, however, considerable differences between the possibility of finding a nursery school place in different areas (e.g. between urban and rural areas), and there is also a financial element (the average monthly charge is approximately 10% of the average wage in the Czech Republic (1998), which is a lot for less affluent families to pay).

<sup>5</sup>) This is a general rule. The only exceptions are government functions and some professions which are considered to be dangerous (explosives, some positions in the military or police, etc.) Women do, however, make up 2% of the armed forces and in the police force this figure is as high as 10%.

<sup>6</sup>) According to a new ILO study published by *The Economist*, 11th September 1999, in 1996 more than 80% of Czech women worked more than 40 hours per week. This compares with 60% of women in the USA, 20% in Germany and 10% in the Netherlands.

by economic crisis and political rigidity, unemployment is rising and the first priority is to pull the country out of economic depression. This means that both the work system and women themselves have little or no interest in changing the existing gender differences in the division of labour.

These features of the economic and social environment are valid for all working women with all levels of education, including those with a university degree. Czech women place considerable value on employment and see no alternative to it. Czech women in fact declare a high degree of interest in paid employment, similar to that of men [survey *Muži...* 1995]. The most specific feature of the Czech situation is the forms and mechanisms of women's behaviour within the family, which are compatible with women's employment. Both the family and the work system show a clear tendency to suppress or influence what does not directly benefit them [Tuček et al. 1998].

*The weak dynamics of social changes in the 1990s in relation to women conceal the contradictions in the social position of women in a transitional society. In view of the risks defining the female role, stagnation is viewed as success.* Sociological and demographic surveys which have traced the female perspective in this country in the 1990s in detail have, however, highlighted the "cost of the conditions" under which women maintained their positions [survey *Muži...* 1995, Fialová and Kučera 1995]. The most important of these include:

1. Delaying marriage and a family;
2. A fall in the fertility rate, postponing having a child (children);
3. Renouncing salary increases and a career;
4. Increased time spent on work;
5. A high percentage of working overtime.

The current position of Czech women on the labour market shows the following characteristics:

1. *A large percentage of the workforce has been female* throughout the 1990s (44.4% in 1999) and this seems to be rising slightly.
2. *The division of labour* is determined by the division of certain important segments of the market into male or female.
3. There is no *legislation* directly concerning discrimination against women in the labour market.
4. *Social policy* guarantees social protection for pregnant women and women with small children.
5. *Unemployment* of women rose in the second half of the 1990s (8%). The level for men is lower (5%).
6. *The number of women on maternity leave* and extended maternity leave fell from 249,698 in 1989 to 170,490 in 1997, i.e. by 68%.
7. *The percentage of women in high positions at work* has remained stable throughout the 1990s at 3.7% (9.1% for men).
8. *The number of branches which are overwhelmingly female* has not changed (6 out of 15).

9. *The percentage of working women with a degree* has risen slightly during the 1990s (1991: women 7.5% – men 11.2%, 1998: women 9.6% – men 12%).
10. *The percentage of university students who were women* was still 45% of the total in 1998.

### 3. University Graduates and Other Working Women

There are fewer than 202,000 working women who have a university education, i.e. 9.6% of the total number [Trh... 1999: 91]. Both the number and the percentage are influenced by a number of gender factors.

The number of women graduates is so low with respect to the structure of the national economy that the gender-related division of work *means that women graduates are dominant in the female sectors* of the labour market. What then is the reason for this dominance? The position of university-educated women in the female sectors is not directed by the same 'social automatism' that is in force in the male labour market, but there are clearly social and economic mechanisms at work which create a relatively advantageous and stable environment for woman graduates. The relativity is due to the fact that comparisons concern only 46% of the labour market. These market mechanisms include:

- a small male presence in professions requiring a degree but with a monopoly of women (e.g. primary or secondary school teachers, judges, and some areas of medicine);
- new jobs for women have appeared which require higher initial capital (higher level of education, age requirements and other social characteristics). Female professions of this type can be performed by women with a secondary school education, but a university degree brings greater prestige in a given position (e.g. administrative secretary, head of the secretariat of private companies);
- the salary structure used in the state sector privileges university education, without any direct relation to the work involved;
- a university degree opens the way to further licences and professional certificates (e.g. a lawyer's licence, scientific honours, trader's licence);
- higher average earnings of university graduates in comparison with unqualified women (299%, see below) and even those with a secondary education, regardless of gender inequalities on the market;
- the prestige of woman graduates in the Czech Republic is generally high;
- the "particular incidence" of women with a university education (a low percentage in both absolute and relative terms) increases their value and there are segments of the market where graduates are highly regarded and irreplaceable. Their value, importance or irreplaceability is not however reflected in remuneration in this country and there is a widespread discrepancy between the prestige of a profession and the salaries paid in it.

The current work status of women university graduates is the result of the long-term penetration of women into the professions (1948-1998). Women with a university education are in an advantageous position in comparison with other working women. Many female (graduate) professions show a low level of unemployment (1998: 2.9%), greater stability and a higher number of vacant positions.

#### 4. Gender Differences

With respect to the question of whether gender differences in incomes and employment can be expected to deepen to women's disadvantage, remain the same or shrink, research results indicate that the answer must be sought on several levels:

(1) social

(2) institutional

(3) individual

(1) There is no social consensus in either the work or social environment which would limit the existing criteria of merit. The existing criteria are not however universally shared and are indeed controversial. A transitional society requires deep-reaching changes in social relations, since *equality of opportunities is not seen as a value*.

(2) *In a transitional society, institutions and organisations are strongly pre-coded with the continuing presence of stagnating social relations* and show an immense ability to set agendas without any real change. The hidden patriarchal structure of public institutions is a limitation on equal opportunities.

(3) Women in general have virtually no sensitivity to the question of gender differences or the perception of discrimination, and graduates are no exception to this. Qualitative research has shown an almost universal lack of knowledge of feminist or gender perspectives among, for instance, women doctors or teachers [Database... 1996, 1997].

In democratic societies, changes in gender differences (in pay or promotion) are conditioned by economic prosperity and social contracts, both of which are lacking in the Czech Republic.

The following analysis, therefore, takes not only a structural view of salary differences, but also a view of the structure of the attitudes of men and women to questions relating to their careers and performance, an assessment of the work climate, and of the distribution of various forms of capital and capacity by gender.

#### 5. Women Graduates and Salary Differences

The salary advantage of men is one of the fundamental gender differences on the labour market. In the Czech Republic it is not possible with the present level of research into these salary differences to show to what degree (in percentages) these salary differences are due to discrimination against women, and to what extent they can be explained by the different distribution of men and women between the professions and sectors of the economy. Most authors tend to argue that while discrimination may well exist, it is difficult to prove [Kuchařová and Zamykalová 1998, Večerník 1998, Dvořáková 1999]. The usual criteria for comparison and the indexes of measurement used internationally today are not used in this country.

The rate of the rise of men's average monthly earnings between 1984 and 1997 fell by about 6 percentage points after 1989 in favour of women, but they are still around 135% of women's average earnings. In 1997 this figure in fact rose to 136.2%. The reverse ratio 'women/men', i.e. of women to men, in that year was 73.4%, which in abso-

lute terms means that the difference between men's and women's average monthly incomes can rise by as much as 512 crowns in one year.<sup>7</sup>

This description of earnings inequalities offers a whole range of interesting analyses, but I would like concentrate here on the question of salary differences of women with university degrees. There are two main features of the structure of inequality that are of interest: in comparison with women with other levels of education, and with men with the same level of education.

Table 1. Average Monthly Earnings of Men and Women by Education (in CZK)

| Highest educational attainment | Men    | Women  | Differential<br>Women/Men | Average<br>in % |
|--------------------------------|--------|--------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Total                          | 12,632 | 9,272  | -3,360                    | 73.4            |
| Without education              | 8,004  | 5,370  | -2,634                    | 67.0            |
| Compulsory                     | 8,638  | 6,392  | -2,246                    | 73.9            |
| Secondary vocational           | 10,495 | 6,782  | -3,713                    | 64.6            |
| Secondary technical            | 9,936  | 7,558  | -2,378                    | 76.0            |
| Secondary vocational with GCSE | 11,556 | 8,711  | -2,845                    | 75.3            |
| Secondary general with GCSE    | 14,326 | 10,188 | -4,138                    | 71.1            |
| Secondary technical with GCSE  | 14,355 | 10,580 | -3,775                    | 73.7            |
| Upper Tertiary education       | 14,381 | 10,614 | -3,767                    | 73.8            |
| University                     | 21,018 | 14,321 | -6,697                    | 68.1            |
| Postgraduate                   | 19,558 | 16,016 | -3,542                    | 81.8            |

Source: [Mzdy... 1998], own calculations.

*Education* has a very marked effect on the pay structure and works in favour of women when seen from the point of view of average women's earnings. The earnings of a woman with a post-graduate degree are 173% of the average woman's wage and 299% of that of women who did not complete primary school. In comparison with men's earnings, however, all categories of women lose out, women with vocational training the most, followed by those without qualifications and surprisingly by those with a first degree, whose earnings are only 68% of their male counterparts.

An important factor is the comparison of the weight of education in the differential of men's and women's wages. According to Večerník [1998: 118] "education increases the differential in men's incomes, but decreases in the case of women. While for men individual explanatory factors function independently and can therefore reinforce each other, these factors have a more pronounced effect on women's earnings, but basically only in combination. This means that for women a handicap in one respect (e.g. age) cannot compensate for strengths in another area (e.g. education)." This of course means that there is a considerable discrepancy between male and female university graduates, since for the latter the income effect is lower in other educational categories. If this trend continues it would lead to a paradoxical conclusion: *if women climb (in educational terms)*

7) Average incomes are given in Czech crowns. The exchange rate to the US dollar varies around the figure of 35 crowns to one dollar. Gross average monthly earnings are compared for all employees. The percentage of employees with over 1700 paid hours per year is 81% for men and 76% for women.

the social status ladder to university education, then they are more likely to suffer discrimination (or gender inequality), since men with similar parameters often receive much higher salaries.

There is of course another relevant circumstance here. As has been shown, for women a post-graduate qualification increases average income, but this is not the case for men (Table 1). In the current 'salary situation' men will not receive major gains from a scientific qualification. This is naturally more linked with (salary) discrimination in science, research and education than in other sectors of the market, since there is a greater number of men and women with such qualifications in these areas. While in the female sectors a post-graduate qualification provides a 'salary advantage' while in the male sectors it is a definite 'salary handicap'.

*Higher education is a benefit for women in comparison with other women, but when compared with men, women university graduates have the same level of earnings as men with a secondary school certificate (maturita), i.e. one level of education lower.*

Closely connected with the above analysis is the aspect of *wage scales* (Table 2) – which combine years of work and level of education attained. Levels 9 to 12 relate to people with a university degree.

Table 2. Average Monthly Earnings of Men and Women by Wage Scales (in CZK)

| Wage Scale        | Men    | Women  | Differential<br>Women/Men | Average<br>in % |
|-------------------|--------|--------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Total             | 12,632 | 9,272  | -3,360                    | 73.4            |
| Of which: level 1 | 6,528  | 4,919  | -1,609                    | 75.3            |
| level 2           | 6,283  | 5,455  | -828                      | 86.8            |
| level 3           | 7,731  | 6,689  | -1,042                    | 86.5            |
| level 4           | 9,396  | 7,509  | -1,887                    | 79.9            |
| level 5           | 10,708 | 8,514  | -2,194                    | 71.5            |
| level 6           | 12,079 | 9,077  | -3,002                    | 75.1            |
| level 7           | 13,316 | 9,830  | -3,486                    | 73.8            |
| level 8           | 14,039 | 12,277 | -1,762                    | 87.4            |
| level 9           | 15,187 | 12,274 | -2,913                    | 80.8            |
| level 10          | 17,455 | 14,277 | -3,178                    | 81.7            |
| level 11          | 19,768 | 17,621 | -2,147                    | 89.1            |
| level 12          | 24,059 | 21,960 | -2,099                    | 91.2            |
| non-scale         | 19,257 | 13,006 | -6,251                    | 67.5            |

Source: [Mzdy... 1998], own calculations.

Gender inequalities should not play any role in wage scales. Nonetheless, even though the structure of gender equality is higher than for the previous indicators (ranging from 71.5% to 91.2%), differences still do exist. Inequality is greatest in the 5th and 7th group, but gender inequality also moves across the wage scale. Women thus very often fall into a lower group than men.

Women are dominant on the scales 1-3 and 7-9 and men on scales 4-6 and 10-12. This means that at two separate levels of education men are on higher scales and more often profit from a better scale wage. The Czech system suffers from a fatal inertia in the placement of men into higher groups and women into lower. If it is taken into considera-

tion that women are dominant in non-manual occupations – due both to their higher educational capital and certainly also to their other qualifications – and men in manual ones (80%), it could be expected that women will be in more advantageous, better paid positions. *The reverse is however the truth: in those occupations where women are in a majority they have a lower level of earnings than those women who work in typically male occupations.* As the following comparison shows, men are more likely have high and very high incomes.

Table 3. Intervals of the Highest Average Salaries and Distribution by Gender (in CZK)

| Salary Bracket  | Men-<br>Number | Women-<br>Number | % men of total no.<br>of men employed | % women of total no.<br>of women employed |
|-----------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 16,001-18,000   | 18,751         | 6,875            | 6.18                                  | 2.5                                       |
| 18,001-20 000   | 12,096         | 4,071            | 3.99                                  | 1.5                                       |
| 20,001-25,000   | 14,801         | 4,968            | 4.88                                  | 1.77                                      |
| 25,001-30,000   | 5,994          | 1,909            | 1.97                                  | 0.68                                      |
| 30,001 and over | 8,806          | 2,346            | 2.89                                  | 0.83                                      |

Source: [Mzdy... 1998]

There are two aspects to these differences. Not only do women represent only 25% of all those with salaries over 16,000 CZK, but the ratio of those earning less than 16,000 to those earning more than that figure is 80:20 for men but 93:7 for women.

A further important factor in comparison is average gross monthly earnings for the main occupational groups in the KZAM/ISCO-88 classification.<sup>8</sup>

Table 4. Average Monthly Salaries by Gender (in CZK)

| KZAM (ISCO-88) | MEN    |      | WOMEN  |      | differential |      |
|----------------|--------|------|--------|------|--------------|------|
|                | salary | %    | salary | %    | w/m          | in % |
| 1              | 28,378 | 9.1  | 16,483 | 3.7  | 11,895       | 58.1 |
| 2              | 18,702 | 8.1  | 13,597 | 12.2 | 5,105        | 72.5 |
| 3              | 15,643 | 14.9 | 11,517 | 22.3 | 4,126        | 73.6 |
| 4              | 12,580 | 2.9  | 10,282 | 15.1 | 2,298        | 81.7 |
| 5              | 12,681 | 7.2  | 7,525  | 18.5 | 5,156        | 59.3 |
| 6              | 9,671  | 2.1  | 7,995  | 2.4  | 1,676        | 82.7 |
| 7              | 11,942 | 32.1 | 8,397  | 7.4  | 3,545        | 70.3 |
| 8              | 11,789 | 17.2 | 8,628  | 6.7  | 3,161        | 73.2 |
| 9              | 8,785  | 6.4  | 6,775  | 11.8 | 2,011        | 77.1 |

Source: [Mzdy... 1998, Statistická... 1998], own calculations.

Legend: (1) Legislators, senior officials and managers; (2) Professionals; (3) Technicians and associate professionals; (4) Clerks; (5) Service workers and shops and market sales workers; (6) Skilled agricultural and forestry workers; (7) Craft and related trades workers; (8) Plant and machine operators and assemblers; (9) Elementary occupations.

<sup>8</sup>) The KZAM Classification of Occupations by the Czech Statistical Office, 2nd edition, 1996, is compatible with the international ISCO-88 standard.

The differences in average incomes between the highest status level (senior officials and managers) and the lowest (unqualified occupations) is 323 percentage points for men and 243 for women. Further analysis also confirms the considerable gender difference in both aspects under consideration.

Outline 1. Comparison of average monthly earnings by gender in the KZAM categories in % (Categories as in Legend for Table 4)

|    |                    |   |                    |         |      |
|----|--------------------|---|--------------------|---------|------|
| A. | men (category 1)   | : | men (category 9)   | ratio = | 323  |
| B. | women (category 1) | : | women (category 9) | ratio = | 243  |
| C. | men (category 1)   | : | women (category 1) | ratio = | 172  |
| D. | women (category 1) | : | men (category 1)   | ratio = | 58   |
| E. | men (category 1)   | : | women (category 9) | ratio = | 419  |
| F. | women (category 1) | : | men (category 9)   | ratio = | 188  |
| G. | men (category 2)   | : | women (category 2) | ratio = | 138  |
| H. | women (category 2) | : | men (category 2)   | ratio = | 72.5 |
| I. | men (total)        | : | women (total)      | ratio = | 136  |
| J. | women (total)      | : | men (total)        | ratio = | 73.4 |

Such a high level of pay differences is not due only the segregation of women into certain jobs. Other inequalities that have been identified include:

- a) the creation of gender-specific pay sectors (male and female) in which the proportions are much to women's disadvantage. The peak of the vertical axis is 80 percentage points lower for women than for men;
- b) the crisis test (F) shows that on average the earnings of managers are only 188% those of unqualified men, while a male manager has 419% of the earnings of an unqualified woman (E). While among unqualified workers the ratio M:W gives men around 2,000 CZK more than women, the difference for senior officials and managers is around 12,000 CZK;
- c) in the category of professionals the difference is 5,105 CZK, with men receiving on average 138% of women's earnings (G);
- d) gender differences identified in graduate professions include, for example, that women doctors earn on average only 76% the salary of their male colleagues, while for women university lecturers the figure is only 85%. The figure for lawyers is 91%, for directors of large companies it is 56%, for directors of small organisations 43%, for chemists 73%, for programmers 82%, etc.

## 6. Attitudes to Performance and Careers

In order to trace these questions, a set of 17 variables was constructed to test the differences between men and women [survey *Muži...* 1998: Table 5].<sup>9</sup>

The low values for *satisfaction with recognition of performance and salary* indicate the high degree of subjective deprivation of university graduates in the Czech Republic, regardless of their sex. There is also, however, a significant difference from the

<sup>9</sup>) A similar set of variables was constructed during research into working women and men in 1995 [survey *Muži...* 1995], but the differences identified then were not significant since only 10% of the sample were graduates.



gender point of view as the percentage of women who are satisfied is lower than that for men. Only *satisfaction with the use of education* is relatively high for both sexes. Women are worse off in terms of *satisfaction with opportunities for promotion*. The prevailing idea that women are not interested in promotion was not confirmed, and women with university degrees were in fact shown to be very interested in this. Only every ninth women said that she had no ambitions for a career, otherwise the percentage was the same as for men. There was, however, a lower percentage of women with a clear career orientation. *This important career path is significantly higher among male graduates. This suggests that it is not in fact the strongest factor influencing gender differences between graduates in the Czech Republic, that which sets off the avalanche of male dominance in the professional elite.* This dominance can also be seen from career symbols. The Men:Women ratios are clearly unfavourable for women – 65% of women with a university degree have not received any promotion since 1989. A small group of men (4.2%) reported high career mobility, while only one woman graduate out of 100 could report this level. Other symbols are secondary sources of income (reported by more than 27% of men with a degree) or position in upper management – 13.3% of male graduates. Women also reported less *satisfaction with their own abilities* (even though the differences are smaller – see Table 5). *Men's confidence in their own ability to cope with changes or to resolve problems is high.* In all the areas studied, therefore, women with a university degree lose out and questions of performance and career are primarily a male concern, particularly at high levels. There are few women “at the top” and there are many indications that not only is this top career level unattainable because of power, influence or social prestige (of which there is no doubt), but it is also important from the point of view of social models and changes in the implementation of equal opportunities policies.<sup>10</sup>

### Evaluation of the Work Climate

In analysing gender differences in evaluating the work climate, the emphasis was on the differences between subsets of men and women.<sup>11</sup> The initial supposition was that with the collapse of the planned economy and the transition to a market economy, people with a university education had more opportunities to change their job and for work mobility than did those in other educational categories. The working conditions in which they find themselves today are a mixture of personal choice of a working environment (e.g. between private entrepreneurs and employees in the state sector, or between independent and dependent jobs) and of unavoidable structural, organisational or technological factors arising out of the nature of a concrete job.

<sup>10</sup>) While very stimulating, the discussion of the different forms and courses of career advancement for women and men lies outside the scope of this article. It would be very interesting to trace career paths in a transitional society from the point of view of gender. In our attempts to do so, however, we have come up against the lack of significant data for the female population. Publications on the recruitment of elites in transitional societies do not generally differentiate ‘elites’ by gender. There is in fact no reason to do so, as elites in the Czech Republic are almost purely male. This is definitely the case in the economic sphere, while the political elite in the 1990s is only 15% female.

<sup>11</sup>) Interesting insights can also be gained from an analysis of individual professions and types of education routes, but this would require considerably more space than is available here and will be published with the overall results of the project.

Table 5. Attitudes to Questions of Performance and Career by Gender (in %)

| Attitude  | Male Graduates | Female Graduates | Differential W/M |
|---|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| <i>Satisfaction:</i>  |                |                  |                  |
| With use of education   | 76.5           | 77.5             | +1.0             |
| With opportunities for promotion                                      | 61.0           | <b>53.5</b>      | -7.5             |
| With recognition of performance                                       | 54.4           | 50.0             | -4.4             |
| With salary   | 51.3           | <b>41.2</b>      | -10.1            |
| <i>Importance of Career Mobility:</i>                                 |                |                  |                  |
| Most important thing, even at the cost of sacrifice                   | 16.2           | <b>8.4</b>       | -7.8             |
| Career, but in proportion to other interests                          | 73.5           | 80.4             | +6.9             |
| No career ambitions   | 10.2           | 11.2             | +1.0             |
| <i>Position of Graduates:</i>   |                |                  |                  |
| Satisfied with the position of graduates in society                   | 37.1           | <b>25.5</b>      | -11.6            |
| Good market recognition with respect to the demands of the profession | 42.0           | <b>32.2</b>      | -9.7             |
| <i>Career Symbol:</i>   |                |                  |                  |
| <i>Total number of promotions:</i>                                    |                |                  |                  |
| None  | 28.8           | <b>52.7</b>      | +23.9            |
| Several (3 or more)   | 29.3           | <b>12.5</b>      | -16.8            |
| <i>Number of promotions since 1990:</i>                               |                |                  |                  |
| None  | 45.2           | <b>64.9</b>      | +19.7            |
| Several (3 or more)   | 4.2            | 0.9              | -3.3             |
| Has subordinates  | 57.5           | 32.3             | -25.2            |
| Top management (more than one department)                             | 13.3           | 8.2              | -5.1             |
| <i>Satisfaction with own ability to:</i>                              |                |                  |                  |
| Win recognition   | 77.5           | 72.6             | -4.9             |
| Influence events around self  | 67.5           | 63.3             | -4.2             |
| Cope with changes   | <b>81.4</b>    | 71.6             | -9.8             |
| Solve problems  | 86.9           | 80.4             | -6.5             |
| <i>Other factors:</i>   |                |                  |                  |
| Other source of income  | <b>27.7</b>    | 17.7             | -10.0            |
| Regularly take work home  | 22.2           | <b>28.3</b>      | +6.1             |

Note: Attitudes were measured on a 5-point scale and the figures given are the total of the first and second levels.

Source: [survey *Muži...* 1998].

Men are more likely to work in an unstable and aggressive environment than are women and it was here that the greatest differences were found. The table shows that every fourth man in the sample works in an *aggressive work climate*, but only every eighth woman. Men are also more likely to see their own position as *independent*. Aggression and independence are not exclusive to male working environments, and the differences lie rather in the fact that significantly more men than women described their work environment in

this way. The difference in other features considered are much slighter. The percentages of men and women for the dynamics of the organisation, the style and characteristics of management were approximately the same. (Table 6).

Table 6. Working Climate and Gender Differences (in %)

|                                   | Men         | Women       | Differential M/W |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| <i>Environment</i>                |             |             |                  |
| Stable and secure                 | 44.1        | <b>49.8</b> | +5.7             |
| Unpredictable and unstable        | 27.4        | 21.0        | -6.4             |
| <i>Workplace strategies</i>       |             |             |                  |
| Defensive                         | 29.6        | 35.9        | +6.3             |
| Aggressive                        | <b>25.5</b> | 13.3        | <b>-12.2</b>     |
| <i>Management characteristics</i> |             |             |                  |
| Only orders                       | 30.8        | 29.7        | -1.1             |
| High self-motivation              | 33.8        | 31.3        | -2.5             |
| <i>Organisational structure</i>   |             |             |                  |
| Rigid                             | 28.9        | 29.2        | +0.3             |
| Dynamic                           | 35.2        | 32.4        | -2.8             |
| <i>Management style</i>           |             |             |                  |
| Authoritarian                     | <b>40.6</b> | 36.4        | -4.2             |
| Participatory                     | 25.5        | <b>28.2</b> | +2.7             |
| <i>Own position</i>               |             |             |                  |
| Dependent                         | 27.1        | <b>34.6</b> | +7.7             |
| Independent                       | <b>47.3</b> | 37.4        | -9.9             |

Note: A five-point numerical scale was used for each characteristic and the middle response (3) brings it up to 100%

Source: [survey *Muži...* 1998].

Are the differences found between men and women due to the fact that they work in diametrically opposed work environments, one of which is more demanding? And is it possible to take into consideration a person's own intervention in the nature of the work environment? The research did not provide conclusive answers to these questions. People with a university education are always significantly present at the 'two ends of the scale'. The differences therefore indicate an identification with the prevailing orientation. More men than women work in an exposed environment and place greater emphasis on an authoritarian management style. Women are more likely to see their work climate as participatory. One very important result which reflects the different attitudes in the set is *the difference in the way people assessed their own position – more women described theirs as dependent (a difference of 8%) and fewer women (a 10% difference) as absolutely independent*. Men therefore often have greater space for negotiation and manoeuvre, which they use primarily to gain higher salaries and promotion. These then reinforce their independence and the result is the dominance of men in the management and elite structures.

### Different Forms of Capital<sup>12</sup>

The research results confirmed that the distribution of various forms of capital among university graduates is influenced by gender (Table 7). Men have an advantage primarily in *social* and *emotional* capital, with 80% of the men in the sample possessing the former. *Political-activist* capital is also significant as almost every ninth male graduate is a member of a political party and more than one-third are active in associations, clubs, etc. The percentage of women who are members of trade unions is rather irrelevant, as union activity in the Czech Republic is low and formal. The findings on the educational level of spouses or partners were also interesting. More women (60%) than men (40%) are likely to have a partner with the same level of education, which means that Czech women are more likely to live in a two-career family than are men. The number of women whose parents had a university degree was also higher.

Unlike women, men are more likely to have a high level of emotional support from their partners (wives) and to be able to rely on their partner's (wife's) positive approach to their work. Far fewer women graduates are likely to possess such emotional capital. It can be supposed that women are more likely to be in a secondary, subordinate position in the family or relationship (as concerns their work in comparison with that of their partner). The differences can be very slight and refined in individual couples where both partners have a degree, but when the partners are forced to make decisions in various everyday situations, then Czech families are more likely to opt for a "*serial ranking*" than a "*parallel ranking*", i.e. the man's work first and then that of the woman. When asked about combining work and a family, women more often judged this to be successful.<sup>13</sup>

### Conclusions

In summing up the questions considered and opening the discussion of gender differences among university graduates, it is necessary to go beyond the framework of gender analysis and to restate the relatively low 'gain' in terms of income and prestige of this group of employees in the ten years of transition [Večerník 1998]. There are two problems still remaining: why have people with a university education (men and women) gained so little, and why have women gained even less than men? From the point of view of the division of labour in the economy it is difficult to imagine that market sectors with a predominance of women graduates could emerge when the number of such women is so small. There are, however, quite a few of these, with primary education, pharmacy and justice being the most obvious. There are also some rather less obvious occupations such as paediatricians, university-educated librarians, translators, interpreters and tax advisors.

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<sup>12</sup>) The project "Men and Women University Graduates" [survey *Muži...* 1998] investigated various support mechanisms which play a part in shaping a career. These were termed as "capitals": social, political-activist, family and emotions and in fact include only the variables given in Table 7.

<sup>13</sup>) The Family Module [survey *Rodina...* 1994] research project confirmed these conclusions for the majority of Czech families. The research found a certain nostalgia for a traditional model of "the man at work, the woman at home" combined with a very realistic idea of women's contribution to the family budget. This contradiction in the definition of gender roles in the family is also more frequently found among Czech men than among Czech women. University graduates were no exception to this.

Table 7. Evaluation of Various Types of Capital by Gender (in %)

| Capital   | Men   | Women | Differential M/W |
|---|---|-------|------------------|
| <i>Social</i>   |   |       |                  |
| Sufficient acquaintances and contacts (YES)           | 79.2  | 70.0  | -9.2             |
| Having influence                                      | 42.5  | 36.7  | -5.8             |
| Contact with persons who may be useful                | 28.3  | 34.5  | +6.2             |
| Relatives (friends) settled abroad                    | 31.3  | 30.5  | -0.8             |
| <i>Political-activist</i>                             |   |       |                  |
| Member of a political party                           | 9.3   | 3.9   | -5.4             |
| Union member  | 13.5  | 20.9  | +7.4             |
| Member of administration                              | 8.7   | 3.7   | -5.0             |
| Active in foundations, movements, associations, clubs | 36.0  | 23.9  | -12.1            |
| <i>Family</i>   |   |       |                  |
| Percentage of graduates – fathers                     | 24.3  | 26.0  | +1.7             |
| Percentage of graduates – mothers                     | 11.1  | 14.4  | +3.3             |
| Percentage of graduates – spouses                     | 40.6  | 58.7  | +18.1            |
| <i>Emotional</i>                                      |   |       |                  |
| (Perceived) partner's support: WOMEN                  | -   | 49.0  |                  |
| (Perceived) partner's support: MEN                    | 65.5  | -     |                  |
| Positive combination of work and family               | 28.6  | 36.7  | +8.1             |
| Work complicates family life                          | 10.3  | 7.6   | +2.7             |
| Positive relation of partner to respondent's work     | 28.6  | 23.1  | -5.5             |
| Note:   | For most variables a dichotomic evaluation – yes/no – was used. |       |                  |
| Source:   | [survey <i>Muži...</i> 1998].                                   |       |                  |

The continuing gender differences between male and female graduates at work cannot be and indeed are not accounted for by the nature of the work force. In this category, these are adapted to the male work force (qualification and practice) and partly to the attractiveness and relative irreplaceability. The secondary position of women graduates on the labour market seems to be due to the following factors:

- *there is no real guarantee of the equality of men and women.* Legal guarantees of equality are insufficient in the context of a society in transition where the value system is not fully functional and there is not a developed code of merit. Gender differences only become social inequality if there is proof of discrimination or privileged dominance. To prove this it is first necessary to be able to conceive of it, and for the process of proving it to be in the group or public interest.
- *there is a double standard of university qualifications* which works to the disadvantage of women. This is apparent in the economic and social processes which create separate fields, occupations, positions, professions, etc. for women graduates, with lower requirements on the work force. This mechanism is particularly used (and abused) in the state sector, but at the end of the 1990s even foreign firms have adapted to the 'Czech standard'. implementing different norms for the assessment and employment of women graduates to those which are in force in their home country.
- *women are closely linked with the female sectors of the labour market.* Employers see the distinction between women graduates and other working women in purely instru-

mental terms as a division by education. In many respects employers rate women graduates together with less competent employees (assuming them to lack mobility and stability, being unwilling to invest in improving their qualifications, citing the risk of their taking maternity leave, etc.). Various forms of discriminatory practices can be found.

- the “unclear identity” factor. Working women graduates have mostly relinquished the status which their sex gives them in society or even strongly rejected it<sup>14</sup> [Database... 1995]. They rely on themselves and bear the risks of a group which does not want to be identified with other women on the labour market. They try to make their way in professions or segments of the labour market as *individuals (not as a group)* but come up against the higher status of men, against the formal and informal male networks, and men’s higher social capital.
- the factor of “low emotional support” is present on many levels of social life, including family, partnership relations, the work system, political programmes, the language and media discourse. This refers to the degree of emotional (and social) support which most men, but few women, profit from. This makes it more difficult for women to reach higher positions and is a concealed form of patriarchal practice.

There is a lack of gender equality in graduate professions with a comparable level of qualifications and responsibility. No conflict aimed at parity of status for men and women need be expected, however, as nobody, particularly not women graduates, wants this. *In the patriarchal framework strengthened by transitional phenomena, continuity is stronger than discontinuity and inertia stronger than change.*

In this social context, where women graduates are redefining their attributed status (as women) but are not able to gain parity of income, mobility and prestige with men of a similar level of education, experience and ability, working women are faced with a high individual risk. In concrete terms this appears in the fact that they must constantly contest the stereotype of women workers but they do not share the advantages of the stereotype of male workers, and they develop highly individual models (modes) of behaviour and movement within the work system. These models are both fragile and risky since they vary widely and do not reflect a group. This is the case, for instance, with the “semi-professional” form, lowering university qualifications to create a monopoly segment of the market or removing themselves from the stereotypes of women’s work as such, as with artists or business women. The highly individualised, personal approaches do make it possible for these “models” to function as personal models and to be imitated within a market sector or profession, but they do not function as social models and are not spread through society. This is particularly the case with elites and high positions and status, which are predefined patriarchally. The recruitment of elites is therefore a matter for men, since the structure and symbols of inheritance are patriarchal. What remains is to open the discussion on the question of whether the position of the middle class in the Czech Republic would improve if a significant part of it was not made up of women. There is no clear answer to this, as certain market segments and professions (in which women predominate) can be shown to have relations (of salaries and promotion) which correspond to the male definition of the field. These are, however, exceptions, anomalies,

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<sup>14</sup>) This is a matter of real subjective perception and it is a paradox that they are constantly confronted with facts that appertain to the female population.

and the majority of women (graduates) cannot achieve this. On the other hand, most female graduate professions exclude forcible forms of implementation and are shaped by the nature of the work. Their status is therefore limited and they would also lose out in the middle term of the transformation.

The lack of clarity in the presence of women graduates in the work system does however lead to a double burden – one arising from membership of the middle class, the other from gender inequalities. The forms of transitional mechanisms which women graduates are using do not enjoy the support of society and are moreover very individual, so they are suitable only to maintain the gender-determined status, but not to achieve equal status or to implement equal opportunities policies.

Indirect discrimination against women with university degrees are therefore changing the patriarchal causes of lower status for reasons arising out of the transformation processes and the deficits of the transitional society and vice versa.

*Translated by April Retter*

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# The Political Representation of Women in Mass Media Discourse in the Czech Republic 1990-1998

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**Abstract:** In the Czech Republic the issue of the political participation of women has particular significance as the question that has opened up public discussion of the public status of women, perceived by the general public as the most conspicuous area of gender inequality of opportunity since 1989. The absence of discussion of the question under the communists meant that post-1989 debate has had to start 'from scratch', and so the article analyses the role of various categories of intelligentsia in establishing the terms of public discourse as well as considering specific and general perceptions of the gender dimension of Czech politics and gender stereotypes in the context of politics. The source materials are articles explicitly dealing with the subject in the major Czech dailies and selected magazines, and the article presents a typology of the attitudes embodied in these articles and classification of their authors in terms of profession, sex, age and political affiliations. This research confirms that media workers are weak in their response to public opinion and use of experts, and are principally aligned with attitudes directly derived from the sphere of politics. In relation to the issue of the political representation of women, the media has affected public discourse by both opening it and, paradoxically, blocking it. Nevertheless, gender stereotypes themselves have been undergoing special modifications in the context of political representation.

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This article is an extract from a hundred-page study written in Czech as part of a research project that I carried out in 1996-98.\*\* What is presented here is only part of an analysis of media discourse. The sections on academic and feminist discourse have been omitted, together with the analysis of interviews with women politicians, an account of trends in public opinion on this question over the period concerned, and most of the theoretical discussion.

## Theme

My empirical starting point for analysis of this subject is the surprising *reaction of the Czech public* to the very low representation of women in politics since 1989. It has become apparent that while the Czech public was very well aware that the 30% share of parliamentary seats occupied by women under communism was a mere formality, it was nonetheless surprised at the fall in this share to 10% after 1989 when the quotas were abolished, and regards the current 15% proportion of women deputies in the lower house of parliament as unsatisfactory. This percentage is slightly under the average for the countries of the European Union [Hoecker 1998] where certain other countries have

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lower percentages, and after the Baltic states it is in fact the highest percentage for countries of the former Soviet bloc. In this context, the public expression of dissatisfaction constitutes important information from the point of view of gender-relevant political culture, since it reflects a certain level of social expectations of equality in relation to sexual equality in the political field. The public has also begun to regard politics as an area where the whole social transformation is turning out to benefit men rather than women, and it is in fact one of the first areas in which there is a serious public perception of undesirable gender differentiation. The problem of the political representation of women has thus become one of the first gender orientated themes to be taken up by the Czech media, and it is therefore a theme that allows us to uncover what have been previously publicly unvoiced gender stereotypes in Czech society.

Public opinion surveys and the analyses presented here suggest that perceptions of *gender differentiation*, in relation to politics, may be identified on four levels. First, there is the already mentioned general dissatisfaction with gender asymmetry in politics. Second, there is ever deeper differentiation between men's and women's opinions as far as acceptance of this situation is concerned (a radicalisation of the female population). Third, a strikingly gendered perception of post-1989 politicians has emerged, with the crystallisation of a very distinctive image of the male post-1989 politician on the one hand, and on the other a projection of the qualities of the ideal female politician. Fourth, analysis of media discussion on the subject has shown clear differentiation between men and women in terms of their imaginative capacity to consider the importance of women in politics or the specific agenda that women might bring to politics.

It is obviously necessary to explain why the research has been focused on the analysis of mass media texts, since in Western countries the question of the representation of women in politics is not as closely linked as it is in the Czech Republic with expectations of media treatment of the subject. The reason is to be found in the specific character of a society undergoing a transformation in which certain kinds of cultural awareness and public discourse are having to develop from 'point zero', and the civic sector as a whole, women's activism, and even academic studies in the field of gender have also had to emerge 'from scratch'. We must therefore take into account the entirely non-standard and unprecedented situation, in which the media have for years been operating in the unbalanced context of hypertrophied interest in the political scene on the one side, and an almost complete vacuum on the side of the civic sector. This means that in contrast to that of the western countries, the emerging discourse has not been developing out of women's activation and a women's movement. It has not, in other words, been an expression of grassroots change, but simply a part of a general revival of self-conscious reflection on the state of society. As in other areas, the public status of women had been evolving over the long communist period without being the subject of public reflection or focused cultural and political debate and action. We should also remember that even after 1989, the first, and in fact the only discussion organised by women's groups on the question of the political representation of women, like the first publication on this theme, occurred as late as 1996. As far as the political scene itself is concerned, the pressure of internal party women's sections also continues to be weak, since where they exist they do not make the goal of a higher percentage of women in top political bodies a priority. In Czech society we are currently witnessing a curious situation, in which on the one hand public opinion is making relatively strong calls for the increased political representation of women while on the other the political structures are inert, and can afford to ignore these calls mainly

because women's groups are applying almost no organised pressure. In these circumstances the media remains as it were the only 'playing field' for contests about the legitimisation of the political representation of women, and in the hypertrophied role of a mediator on which society nevertheless relies, it can have a marked positive or negative influence on the development of discussion.

Analysis of media texts has shown that in the emergent Czech discussions on women in politics, the main problem has not been any clash between feminist and conservative sections of society (representatives of these sections have shown little engagement in the issue), but rather the inconsistency, lack of consequence, and surprisingly monologic character of the very forms of the 'discussion'. As a result, a theme that I originally regarded as secondary – the role of the mass media as mediator, middle man and initiator of the development of civic discourse and civic society – has come to the fore in the course of the research. Analysis of the explicit relationship of media workers and other media actors to public opinion, their use of expert opinion and their relationship to the political scene, proved to be especially fruitful. Analysis of the course and character of media discussion on the theme of women in politics thus made it possible, in an extremely concrete way, to document several dysfunctional and blocking mechanisms of media work in relation to public discourse, and to confirm the idea that the dominance of the political scene and weak position of the civic sector leads to similar asymmetry in media discourse.

### Theoretical Hypotheses

In this article the theoretical starting points can be set out only in broad outline. It is clear that the situation in the Czech Republic and other post-communist countries contradicts one of the basic theses of western political science, according to which the key factor for a high political representation of women is female access to education, paid employment and experience in the professions that dominate in politics [see Matland 1999 or Voet 1998]. All these conditions (including a large number of women with legal and economics education) are fulfilled here, but without the anticipated effect in the field of politics. My initial hypothesis was to posit the existence of a *cultural barrier* based on the idea that there was a difference between social acceptance of women's employment outside the home (which in this country has become culturally almost taken for granted) and acceptance of women's right to decision-making about society as a whole. From the point of view of political philosophy, one could here apply the distinction between *labour* and *work* (basic types of human work) on the one hand, and *action*, i.e. political action as the supremely human activity [Arendt 1960], on which men have historically held the longest-standing monopoly. In Czech media discourse (i.e. publicly presented opinions of the intellectual elite), however, this hypothesis was *not* confirmed (although in the overall population approximately 22% still regard the current low level of political representation of women as appropriate and natural). The overwhelming majority of the media texts are strikingly inclined to female political representation and assert that men and women are equally politically competent. Reference is often made to the high qualifications and expert abilities of Czech women and it therefore seems that at this level the cultural barrier suggested no longer exists. At least on this intellectual level, in other words, there would appear to be confirmation of the political philosopher Voet's theory that any kind of participation by women in the public sphere, e.g. in the work sphere, is a preparation for the

adoption of civic virtues and the condition for active or full citizenship in the Aristotelian sense [Voet 1980].

There are indications, however, of the existence of two types of cultural barrier that are, as it were, psychologically 'deeper' in nature. The first is the *image of 'the Czech woman'* as somehow 'above' any kind of formal battle with men over percentages, and as finding her social mission in 'other great things' such as love and sacrifice, obviously in the private sphere (for a typical example see Librova in [Buchert et al. 1995]). This attitude implies, among other things, the *legitimation of female indifference to politics*, and a view of politics as a game that can be safely *left to men*, since men do not have traditional female privileges. Related to this is a second pattern, i.e. the *expectation of traditional feminine behaviour* among female politicians, paradoxically the more severely applied the higher the position that the female politician achieves. This is reflected in the differing media images that are being created around female parliamentary deputies on the one hand and female mayors on the other (the chapter on the image of female politicians has been omitted for reasons of space). Female politicians themselves not only seek to maintain their feminine image, but it appears that in many cases this image prevents them from rising higher in office (it is worth considering, for example, whether the defeat of Magda Vašáryová in her bid for the Slovak presidency was not partly a result of the way her feminine image was undermined by the general perception that she had been "too aggressive" in a television debate). Strikingly often, Czech women politicians stress that they do not care about high office, and only achieved it 'by chance'. We may therefore deduce that the specific hybrid traditionalist-communist model of the woman who is employed but has no high, and above all no open ambitions, is changing only very slowly. This barrier may be linked to a further cultural barrier arising from the fact that despite public acknowledgement of the expert qualifications of women, the main arguments in favour of higher representation of women are themselves based predominantly on *traditional gender ascriptions* and the associated demand that both 'halves of humanity', or their 'good' attributes (as ascribed by gender) should *complement* each other. As yet, there are no signs of the emergence of a different kind of image of political representatives, involving the idea that some (traditionally gender differentiated) attributes might be combined in one person. This means that even those who support the political representation of women are *de facto* demanding the application of traditional feminine attributes (caring and cultivating) even if outside the domestic sphere.

My second hypothesis derives from my conviction that arguments in favour of women's representation in politics will remain weak and ineffective until a specific female social and civic experience is *identified and transformed into a political agenda* [see, e.g. Havelková 1996a, b]. My analysis has strongly confirmed this hypothesis. One curious feature of the Czech situation is the fact that here discussion of the political representation of women has *preceded* discussion of the social position and real problems of contemporary women. In no western country have these two questions been disconnected in this way, and this disconnection is the result of the previous absence of public discourse. The consequence is that Czech discussion of women in politics has so far, with very few exceptions, been mainly abstract in character, focused much more on *what women can do for politics* than on *what politics (and women in politics) can do for women*. Moreover, the non-existence of a concrete political agenda has gradually led to the degeneration and, as it were, folklorisation of the whole discussion (even in the serious media), and a tendency to focus on such subjects as which female deputy deserves the

title of beauty queen of parliament etc. [e.g. Pitrová 1998]. In the last two years such standard gender themes as 'women in the job market', domestic violence and so forth have begun to appear more frequently in the media, but so far *without* any links being made to the subject of women's lobbies and the importance of women in politics. The step to connecting these two areas in Czech media discourse has still to be made. In these circumstances it is, therefore, useful to distinguish between the question of the political *participation* of women and that of their political *representation*, i.e. the kind of participation related to the representation of the specific social interests of women.

With these theoretical structures in mind, I have focused successively on the following aspects of media discourse: the level of recognition of the potential political competence of women, the level of perception of their different civic experience and political goals, the perceived relevance of the political participation and representation of women to the quality of the democratic system, the gender image of men and women as it is articulated in relation to politics, and the extent to which this is allegedly based on culture (or convention), or on the current character of politics itself.

### Research Method

In view of the non-standard character of the Czech situation as I have described it above, the empirical research has not been conducted by applying standard research approaches taken from the Western political or gender studies that are based on detailed monitoring not only of the numerical representation of women in a broad range of politically relevant bodies but also of the structures through which they exert real practical influence, their professional deployment in politics, and analyses of differences in the media appearances of male and female politicians etc.

The subject-matter of my analysis consists of articles in selected Czech print media that explicitly deal with the question of the political participation of women in this country and offer information on the situation in other countries. I have exhaustively analysed such articles in the newspapers *Lidové noviny* and *Mladá fronta DNES* (the largest circulation dailies with a liberal orientation), from 1990 to the end of 1998, i.e. for a period that includes all parliamentary elections so far held since 1989. This material has been augmented by articles from the weekly magazine supplements of the two papers mentioned and the weeklies *Respekt*, *Týden* and *Reflex*. Limited research time meant that I have not yet included the most important left-wing daily *Právo*, and this to a certain extent limits the degree to which my results can be generalised. Nor have I analysed the electronic media. Overall, approximately eighty articles of varying lengths were analysed.

The texts were analysed in a purely qualitative way. I placed the emphasis on detailed differentiation, creation of a typology and categorisation of the opinions, attitudes and arguments that they contained. The aim was not linguistic but sociological analysis, i.e. primarily the identification of social attitudes categorised according to the gender of the authors, their professions and political orientation, and also their age group where this could be identified. The breakdown of authors in terms of professions proved to be particularly useful since it showed the proportions in which media staff and other kinds of author are contributing to the discussion. The basic authorial categories used are *journalists*, *politicians*, *experts* (specific expertise stated), *feminists* and *readers*. It must be stressed that my analysis was concerned not merely with media practice, but also with the extent and way in which the Czech intelligentsia are creating this particular discourse, and the type of intellectual who enters into it.

I considered the content of the texts from the point of the development of their thematic orientation in individual phases of the post-1989 transformation of Czech society, their use of expert opinion, the character of the ideological positions reflected in views of this particular theme and so on. The statements in the texts were analysed in terms of six categories created for this research project.

1. Statements justifying the *relevance* of the theme of women in politics.
2. Statements formulating the main *reasons* for the low representation of women in this country.
3. Arguments justifying the *need* for higher political representation of women in this country.
4. Statements relating to forms of *active support* for higher political representation of women in this country.
5. Presentations creating the media *image of women politicians*.
6. Commentaries creating the media *image of women voters*.

This classification itself shows the value of focusing on media texts rather than simply relying on public opinion polls. In relation to Category 1, such polls identify 'whether' the respondents regard this theme as relevant, but not 'why'. In relation to Category 2, they identify the basic catalogue of reasons put forward, but not the considerations in the background [Kalnická 1998]. For Category 4 they are only able to ascertain the extent of support for quotas, but not arguments for and against. The questions relating to Categories 3, 5 and 6 are not monitored by public opinion monitoring agencies at all. Within these categories, typologies of statements have then been developed on the basis of the material obtained. Category 3 deserves special attention since it is the category in which the issues go most significantly beyond the gender issue and statements reveal general views of the character of Czech politics, civic life and virtues, and suchlike.

The research has shown that the sociological analysis of texts would be much more effective if it also focused on the character of the connections (or formation of information channels) between the media public opinion, professional (expert) opinion and the political sphere. For this reason the media texts were supplemented as sources by a view of the main findings from other sources relating to the theme: public opinion polls, interviews with post-1989 women politicians, and specialist texts on the subject (using a gender approach) published outside the mass media. It is characteristic of the transformation period under study that these four areas of the creation of public discourse have so far developed more or less separately, and each has its own dynamic.

### **The Development and Basic Characteristics of Media Discourse**

In the first post-revolutionary years the theme of women in politics was virtually absent from the media. Society was absorbed by such major and fundamental themes as the new constitution, charter of human rights, nationalism, privatisation, Czecho-Slovak relations, rehabilitation, the general moral atmosphere of society, return to Europe and so forth. The only voices raised on gender issues were from the Christian side, on the themes of abortion and motherhood. All published reactions on the representation of women vehemently denied the existence of sexual discrimination and rejected the idea of quotas. Politics (and especially economics) were regarded as entirely gender-neutral and it was assumed that men would automatically represent and deal with the problems of both sexes, and so the

question of the representation of women was irrelevant. The turning-point came late in 1995, when the theme caught media attention partly as a result of comparisons made with foreign countries (and not only with the advanced democracies), and partly as a reaction to public opinion polls. What was especially surprising was the change in public views of quotas, i.e. the high percentage of people who would approve of quotas in some form [Haberlová 1993]. The parliamentary elections in 1996 were the first to involve public focus on the question of the political participation of women. In the pre-election period in the spring of 1996 interest in this subject reached a peak, although it must be stressed that this was too late for public opinion to have influenced the results of the elections themselves, since candidate lists had already been drawn up and the interest was partly sparked by the position of women in these lists. This makes it remarkable that the share of women in parliament following these elections nevertheless increased by 5 percent. Although it is clear that the increase was partly due to the higher percentage of women deputies in the SPR-RSČ (Republican Alliance) and the opposition parties in general, including the ČSSD (Social Democratic Party) which made major gains, the phenomenon has still not been fully explained. After these elections the theme of women in politics remained on the pages of the press, but in somewhat sporadic form, and with no sign of movement towards deeper analysis or fuller information. It was at this point that the development of media 'discourse' on the question began to lag behind the trend of public opinion. It failed to reflect the increasing range of expert publications since 1996 [Vodrážka 1996a, b, Hauserová 1996], or even the fact that the problem of women in politics was now part of an agenda being internationally monitored in the context of Czech efforts to meet criteria for entry into the European Union. It was not until the end of 1997 that criticism of the media presentation of the problem and an attack on empty, purely rhetorical character of calls for more women in politics, first appeared in the mass print media [Šiklová 1998b].

In the Czech situation, of course, the very term '*discourse*' can be used only with certain reservations. As far as discourse about women in politics is concerned, it is striking how rarely the subject generates real *discussion*. The authors of the articles analysed are almost always reacting to an event or opinion poll rather than to another presented view, and what they are delivering are more or less independent *monologues*. The result is that there has not yet been any genuine refinement of argument and so no shift in views of the problem. Another typical phenomenon is the tendentious use of *expert opinions*, in which professional qualifications are exploited to increase the apparent expert weight of a text without the people concerned having any specialised knowledge of the problem. Very frequently this leads to the legitimisation of commonplace prejudices and the manipulation of public opinion. Another striking aspect here is that the overwhelming majority of the 'experts' who have expressed themselves on the theme are psychologists, and it is to the psychologists that the media likes to turn. There has been hardly any input from sociologists and absolutely none from political scientists. One could therefore speak of the '*psychologisation*' of a social and political theme, which corresponds to one feature already mentioned – the way that the thematisation of male and female psychological attributes has dominated in arguments on the subject.

There are also several cases of pure *arrogance* on the part of journalists. For example, Miroslav Korecký [1996: 2] commented on the wish of 70% of the population to see legislative measures taken to ensure higher female participation in politics with the following words: "A nation that had got used to having one or two women in every communist government is *neurotic* about the issue, and this allows the opposition to pick up

points.” In fact the first female minister in this country took office in Gottwald’s government in the autumn of 1947 (before the Communist coup), and from 1970 to 1989 there was not a single woman in the government. Nor is there any evidence to support the claim that the opposition was “picking up points” on the basis of the question of women in politics. In their election platforms none of the parties played this card, and only in the ČSSD (Social Democratic Party) was there a hint of internal party discussion on the theme of quotas. The effect on the voters is likewise unknown and Korecký’s claim is tendentious fantasy. His vocabulary also indicates a dismissive arrogance in relation to public opinion.

Another peculiarity of Czech discourse is reluctance to state real *ideological positions*. Conservatively orientated authors never openly reject the principle of political participation by women, but appeal to the practical reasons for low participation, such as care for children. Among such authors failure to make any links between the issue of women in politics and the real social problems of the female population is absolute, since they essentially speak of women’s political careers as mere ‘hobbies’ that they can pursue if their husbands provide financial security [see for example Štětka 1995]. The authors who want more serious change and are also aware of the practical problems of women, have also, however, been shy of using any radical rhetoric about campaigns, strategies and so forth, obviously for fear of connotations of left-wing thought and social engineering. They too have been hiding behind the rhetoric of family values [see for example Brdečková 1994].

As far as the *language* of media discourse about women and politics is concerned, there is a distinct difference in the way information is provided about women politicians abroad, their successes, problems and even measures taken in foreign states to increase female representation. All such information is presented in a correct, objective way and without ironic comment, and is evidently taken over or excerpted from the foreign press without modification. Treatments of this theme in the Czech Republic, by contrast, and especially on the question of quotas, are rarely unbiased or solidly based. Our own politicians are very frequently collectively referred to as men or ‘gentlemen’ as if there were no women among them at all. Before the election of the Chairman of the Senate in 1996, for example, despite the fact that there was more than one female candidate, LN published an article with the headline “Who will be the Number Two Man?” [“Kdo...” 1996]. During this election there was also a case of the political abuse of female politicians and a cynicism that journalists copied without hesitation. In an article on the election headlined “The Best of the Worst”, the rejection of the candidates Irena Ondrová and then Jaroslava Moserová was described in these terms: “ODS wanted to put at the head of the senate a person who – in the words of one member of the party leadership – will make the Senate a laughing stock in three months.” [Holub and Mlýnář 1996-1997]. The language of a short news report from Kroměříž also unconsciously showed just how far female politicians are genuinely regarded as equal or natural: “In the Kroměříž region, all the candidates of any party who have any chance of a parliamentary seat are women. Their male colleagues *are unable to explain why this has happened*. But most of them *don’t mind*.” [“Na Kroměřížsku...” 1998].

It appears that there is also a difference in the way the media refer on the one hand to women in national state bodies and on the other to female mayors. The association of women with the world of high politics, which throughout the discourse is to a considerable extent regarded as an identification with power, clashes with the idea of femininity in



a much more immediate way than it does in the case of the female mayors, whose energy, panache and capacity for problem-solving is associated with a care for others that is compatible with the idea of femininity. While the texts on female parliamentary deputies or ministers have a tendency to refer to the fact that they have not lost their 'femininity', in texts on mayors the properties usually attributed to men sometimes turn into the 'typically female', i.e. are associated with pragmatism and courage [for example Jirků 1997].

### **Attitudes to Individual Aspects of the Question of the Political Participation of Women**

In the following pages I set out in detail the opinions, attitudes and arguments from the point of view of the first three categories set out above in the section on "Research Method".

#### ***1. Why the theme is regarded as socially relevant***

This is not a theme that was opened up by any special 'event' (although the change in public opinion on the question of quotas undoubtedly gave an important impulse to discussion). It was simply that the strikingly low representation of women gradually began to bother the public. At the general level, the justification of the relevance of the theme has been relatively vague, with some authors merely asserting that it's a "*bad thing for humanity*" [Buchert, Lipold, and Pecháčková 1995]. (For more on this generally humanist motif see also links to arguments in Category 3.) Essentially, the awareness of the relevance of the theme seems to be indirect, mediated partly by comparisons with the situation abroad and the discovery that this was a field in which we were visibly lagging behind the advanced countries, and partly by the contrast between the low representation of women in politics and accepted ideas about the equality of the sexes, producing evident surprise at the disproportion between the high educational qualifications and professional skills of Czech women and their political marginality.

As far as motivation for regarding the issue as important is concerned, however, some more opportunistic and superficial considerations could be at work. One theory is that given the discontinuity and accidental character of new political careers, and also a sense of the need to give the right impression and keep in step with the outside world, the current slightly raised percentage of women in parliament could be a kind of 'alibi' – just that minimum level of '*alibi*' appropriate to the last decade of the 20th century. Evidently, for example, there exists some kind of unwritten law that while women are to be found on candidate lists, the first woman candidate most often appears in the fourth or fifth place. One might argue that this is just a percentage high enough to 'soothe' the public into regarding the situation as acceptable rather than shameful. This is Petra Buzková's feeling about the current state of affairs: "In the Czech Republic we are now at the cross-roads. It is still unclear whether the women in 'high' politics represent selected exhibits in the Czech Potemkin village designed to get the country into Europe, or whether they reflect the relative maturity of the society." ["Vždy..." 1996].

#### ***2. Explanations given for the low representation of women***

The results of public opinion surveys were summarised in one of the first longer media articles. The reasons put forward were the unwillingness of men to accept women as equal partners, the unwillingness of women themselves to engage in politics, the centuries-old traditions in the position of women, and finally the continuing perception of motherhood as the most fundamental female role, which women only exceptionally wish

to give up [Buchert, Lipold, and Pecháčková 1995]. In articles published in the Czech media one can, however, find a whole range of other explanations, most of which offer insights more interesting than the standard explanations mentioned above. Unlike those standard interpretations, they usually have a less 'fatal' character and are often linked to criticism of the current political climate and the psychological characteristics of specific people on the political scene. My typology of views has been structured according to the factors individual authors regard as the reason for the low representation of women.

*a) An immature and masculine (macho) post-revolutionary political scene*

This factor is also regarded as determining factors b) and c), which directly relate to it. The primary cause is given as the *rise of predatory young men*. This explanation takes various forms. Psychologists point to the efforts of these men to stand out and make themselves visible, and the comic symbol of the phenomenon has been the purple jacket. In this context the psychologist Slavomil Hubálek has spoken of what he calls "*post-pubertal state*" of Czech society: "The leading positions have been taken by predatory men whose activities are mainly centred on themselves. (...) Even top politicians are provoked by every little thing, taking offence, sulking, slandering and sending each other messages through the press" [cited by Brdečková 1994: 7]. Politician Jan Kalvoda formulated the same idea more cautiously, saying that "the year 1989 *addressed men* in politics", but rather than concentrating on psychological influences on the political scene he stressed its *accidental quality*. He argued that the status of women in politics is deformed by the fact that current political elites are a "*community that was formed quite accidentally in 1989 or 1990*", and did not exclude the possibility that the development of a more standard route from local to national politics may increase the proportion of women at the top [see Rabenseifnerová 1996]. Here the causal chain of male dominance is seen the other way round: "The low representation of women in parliament is regarded as entirely natural in a situation in which for the most part people are not reaching top positions *by concentrated and purposeful work*, but instead by *a go-ahead style and sharp elbows*" (Alena Gajdůšková, party secretary in ["Strany..." 1995]).

*b) The negative attitude of these particular men to women in politics*

The above diagnosis of contemporary male politicians is behind the view, expressed by Hubálek, that "it is no wonder that in such immature beings the mere presence of women awakens huge *complexes*: they cannot forget the way in which they were subordinated to women for so many years – in the family and at school. For this reason they *revenge themselves* and *oust* them from politics" [cited in Brdečková 1994: 7]. From the point of view of gender relations what we have here is the assumption that men were subject to a particular kind of gender oppression under communism in the form of loss of their dominant position or domestic authority. This is a motif that appears relatively frequently [Wagnerová 1996, Možný 1990, Tatur 1992 and others], and which is attributed to the feminisation of the educational system, among other things. In this context we would seem to be dealing with a specific legacy of communism, in which the political arena is becoming a field for the 'settling of gender scores'. On the other hand, such a view indirectly casts doubt on the thesis of the traditional idyllic 'solidarity of the sexes' in our society [as claimed, for example, by Šiklová 1998a].

Another variation on the same theme appears in an answer given by the Social Democrat Petra Buzková when asked whether Czech women were in the position of a

minority (a question once again posed in relation to the issue of quotas): "At the level of political careers people sometimes draw attention to the negligible representation of women in political functions. It would not be wise, however, to confuse the state of Czech society with expressions of *mean-mindedness* in the current political coalition. (...) At the political level women don't need any special consideration. They simply need what we all need – that politics should become more cultivated." ["Vždy..." 1996].

*c) Women's distaste for working alongside these particular men*

According to Brdečková this situation influences the behaviour of women as well. She argues that "women are not too keen to be surrounded by the complex-ridden little lordlings on the parliamentary benches or ministerial chairs". [Brdečková 1994]. However courageous such psychological theories may appear to be, three years later they appear again in the following form: "women are always attracted to places where there are real men, and (...) there are practically no women in our political life, because there are no real men either. (...) The productions our gentlemen politicians have been putting on their stage for several years, are often, probably mostly, 'competitive games for boys' [Příhoda 1997]. This author generally attributes this state of affairs to the character of male socialisation, and the fact that 'our contemporary environment' offers little encouragement to men to grow up.

These theories are confirmed by some *experiences of women in high political office* with working in a male environment. "I repeatedly find that there are people who believe that because I am a woman, I can be shouted down *by arrogance and bad language*. I don't like confessing it, but occasionally the tactic has worked." (Buzková in ["Vždy..." 1996]). Politician Vlasta Parkanová noticed distrust and counter-pressures, the 'stigma of the outsider'. To the question, "Can it be said that your arrival at the ministerial level was free of complications?" she said "Not at all. I don't want to play any cheap feminine card, but I can't say that anybody made any great efforts to help me at the beginning. (...) As far as the professional success was concerned, it was a big jump up for me, and I was immediately *attacked on all sides, so that I wouldn't think it was a bed of roses...*" [Spurný and Šídlo 1997].

A rather different variant is an explanation that appeals to the risky overall character of post-revolution politics: "Women are far less willing to take major risks than men. Naturally, men who take risks – in politics too – tend to be successful. Sometimes. They can also fail hopelessly. Women are far more aware of the responsibility they carry, and don't permit themselves the same risks as men when they are responsible for a certain group of people." (Buzková in [Buchert et al. 1995]). Prime Minister Zeman's explanation for absence of women in his new government involved a different variation on the same theme. He said that it was a government of 'suicides' and promised that women would have the chance to work in government positions successfully and '*without getting scratched*' after two years [Kalenská 1998].

All the three factors just mentioned connect the immaturity of the political scene to the greedy monopolisation of political power by men. The causes are not presented in a one-sided way, but it must be pointed out that none of the authors have considered the historical advantage of these gentlemen's clubs, the value of experience with politics and power that they have gained, and the male solidarity that was, as it were, a christening gift to post-1989 Czech politics. While criticising the initial 'immaturity' of these men, the

authors fail to see that they have now obtained a lasting head-start on any women in politics.

d) *It is a result of free competition or 'the survival of the fittest'*

This explanation is a mirror reflection of all the factors mentioned, since it is adopted precisely by the type of politician already described and by their admirers in the press. It is based on the belief that entry into politics is entirely a matter of free competition and the outcome must therefore be entirely just. "The representatives of the stronger sex have told women success in politics cannot be *legislated for*" and that "To claim that (the situation) is the result of some unjust discrimination against women is nonsense. There is not a single proof of any such discrimination. The number of women in politics is precisely the number that have managed to succeed in the *relentless mills* of the political parties" [Stoniš 1996]. Naturally, the skills that are measured in this competition are not precisely defined, although they must include the interest of men and their efforts to succeed, the lack of interest on the part of women, etc., i.e. exactly the factors that undermine the argument. Only Ivo Možný has explicitly opposed this type of 'explanation', writing that "It's hard to say whether there is something there [in our political parties] that would really attract an intelligent person with claims to personal dignity. But if a women nevertheless wants to try, she doesn't have an easy time. It's already a textbook cliché, the way that men construct their 'relentless mills' in order to protect the positions to which they so pathetically cling. For a women to succeed, she has to be twice as competent as a man. (...) In politics one important element of competence is the ability to appeal to voters. If ministers were appointed only on the basis of expertise, they wouldn't be appointed by a political party after elections. Capacity to appeal to voters includes such factors as where a candidate is from and gender" [Možný 1996]. To Stoniš's appeal to 'the laws of common sense', he replies that "this is the kind of so-called 'common sense' that the creator seems to have given us for no better purpose than to enable us to enforce and justify our prejudices. It is something that has far more effect on the share of representation than quotas, which in fact no one has suggested" [ibid.].

e) *Liberal Fatalism or Liberalism without Problems*

Brdečková [1994] regards this idea of 'problem-free liberalism' as one of the causes of the low representation of women, since it provides a basis for the idea that everything is perfectly all right and the existing situation represents a satisfactory confirmation of alleged natural and personal capabilities. Moreover, this attitude rests ideologically on the priority of freedom and non-interference in the supposed 'natural' course of events. It is an attitude that for the most part is typical of female politicians as well, since it also provides a defence of their own personal success. One of its effects is to distance them from the perception of the problems of other women, since they are "satisfied with their own rarity" [Rolečková 1996].

f) *Female politicians have not proved their worth*

One of the few expressions of *public misogyny* and a typical example of *sexism* is generalisation from female individuals (usually caricatured) to the whole group. It can, however, be assumed that such opinions are held by the 50% of men (and approximately 16% of women) who according to a DEMA agency poll do not want a women in government, or by the approximately 15% of respondents who believe that "women do not belong in

politics” or are “incapable” [see Buchert et al. 1995], and express these opinions with phrases such as “women are hen-brained” or “it’s a job for men”. “The main reason why there are so few women in the government and parliament here is *bad example*. The women who occupy high political positions, can be divided *without exception* into two groups. Most of them behave (...) quietly, warily and inconspicuously. (...) The remaining few names, to which television viewers already react (...) unfortunately do not provide an example that arouses enthusiasm for *further experiments with the share of women in power*.” The examples given are Marie Noveská, and Zuzka Rujbrová, who is condemned for membership of the Communist Party, and Vlasta Parkanová, a highly successful politician to whose policies the author of the article is opposed [Huk 1997].

*g) The division of labour or gender models*

In this section I classify views that condemn existing gender models as outdated and confining, views that suggest they ought to be upheld, and views that see such models as something given and impossible to change. Brdečková, for example, refers these models with dissatisfaction: “At home men are often in the same position as women in politics: they are secondary (...) it is more a question of resignation than conscious division of labour” [Brdečková 1994]. It is relatively rare to find the view, quoted below, that the usual appeal to the priority of care for children is only an excuse, and what is more important is care for the man and the habit of staying in the background and supporting the man: “Why is it that ambitious and capable women whose *children have flown the nest*, and who are interested in political life – mature women in the forties or younger who are lucky enough to have a grandmother or supportive husband to take over the household – are not trying to get into politics? (...) The biggest problem, of course, is that we are too fond of them [men]. When a man has required so much of our work and attention, and we have invested such a lot of energy in him, he ultimately has to be placed high on the value ladder, or else it would all seem pointless. (...) Let us love them, but not make them our life programme. When Czech women *learn to concentrate on themselves*, the doors of politics will open to them, which will represent a step forward towards real humanity.” [Kučerová 1996].

*h) The absence of the necessary standard of living and spare time*

Appeal to this reason is strongly differentiated in terms of the polarisation of *right-left*.

The *conservative* attitude is expressed by the view that the reason for the low representation of women is ‘economic’. “One great crime of communism was the fact that it forced women away from the family and into work. (...) Czech women are only gradually being released from this obligation, since male salaries are *still insufficient* to keep a whole family. (...) It is therefore not surprising that women either go into business or – if at all possible – stay at home with the children. For the moment the satisfaction of political ambitions has to be put on the back-burner.” [Štětka 1995]. This attitude is remarkable for its complete disconnection from real female problems and neglect of the possibility that women in politics might help to solve them. Parkanová expresses a very similar view: “No female deputy has a chance of competing with her male colleagues if *her children are not grown-up*. Sometimes I have the feeling that certain feminists blame men for this situation, but it was ordained by *nature – or God*. I don’t believe that *women’s rights* in this society cannot be *defended by men – the prosperity* of women and men in society is interlinked. (...) But I can turn to representatives of women’s movements who are

calling for a higher representation of women in parliament, and tell them with a clear conscience that I don't have the feeling that women in parliament would suffer *discrimination* from their male colleagues. I believe that *as the overall level of society improves* and women are *liberated from a great deal of drudgery*, the percentage of women in legislative bodies will also rise." ["Otázka..." 1990]. A female reader enthusiastically agrees: "I believe that *absurd* calls for women to fight for *equality with men* are already things of the past. But I also believe that one day in the future there will be, among other things, financially accessible and *well-functioning services* that will allow all of us, women and men, to devote ourselves to family, the work I love, and to our own *interests and pleasures*." [Petrová 1990].

*The communists* consider that the low proportion of women in politics is connected to a situation in which *the work burden of the majority of women* at home and in employment has increased, so that they have little time for other activities ["Strany..." 1995]. This view of affairs indirectly refers to the *impact of the transformation on women*, given the existing division of labour, i.e. it suggests that far from a trend toward the gradual liberation of women from 'drudgery', mentioned by the right-wing women, the current situation has involved an increase in such work for 'ordinary' women. According to another view, *women's special work obligations* have been generally *increasing* because men devote more time to their jobs than before." [in Buchert et al. 1995]. To summarise, the existing gender division of labour according to these accounts is *deepening*, and not because women have chosen it, since they are not shedding obligations in the employment sphere and we know from sociological surveys that most women do not even want to give up work outside the home. At the same time these kinds of explanation are very speculative since they do not in fact rely on any analysis of whether it is true that fewer women actually engage in politics or simply remain in the position of grassroots party members or grey eminences.

#### *i) Czech women and discrimination*

"The main obstacle to the Northern model (of emancipation) here, is (...) the fact that Czech women generally do not consider men antagonists and do not demand full equality" [Brdečková 1994]. We hear this diagnosis of Czech conditions relatively frequently, but in fact the attitudes of Czech women are more complex, and depend on an understanding of the term 'discrimination' that is narrower than the meaning current in western countries. In Czech society only direct, explicit and deliberate discrimination is recognised as such. According to a STEM agency survey, "the majority of women do not regard the fact that they are so little represented in political and public life as a *discriminatory act*." At the same time, however, both women and the majority of the public as a whole considers this state as one of '*inequality*' – which is then discussed primarily in terms of the "*high level of privileges*" of men in politics [Haberlová 1993: 16].

### *3. What reasons are given for the need for a higher representation of women*

#### *a) The enrichment of politics by positive female qualities or the 'female element'*

"A female element brings to politics certain elements, shades and themes that men are not capable of providing" (Havel in [Buchert et al. 1995]). This argument forms a kind of counterpart to the reasons of type 2a, since it projects onto women the qualities that men in politics are alleged to lack. At the same time it is true that this gender ascription is gen-

erally shared even outside the political context and seems to be confirmed by the experiences of the first women politicians to have been active in high politics. It is worth mentioning that in this context less traditional qualities haven been attributed to women. *A better overall perspective, refinement and a sense of humour* are associated with the female element: "Try to answer the question of how the government would look and above all behave if there were five or six women ministers (...) only women, it seems could bring a sense of perspective and decency back to politics and above all political disputes. And even a sense of humour. Gentlemen, let us admit it: we are behaving arrogantly and insolently, and it is *we who are the hen-brains, not them.*" [Stránský 1997 on the TV discussion programme *Sedmička* with politicians V. Parkanová and V. Štěpová].

Positive female advantages have sometimes been expressed more philosophically: *a critique of male communication* based on Goethe's distinction between 'the man on the ground' (he can act but cannot see) and 'the man in the tower' (he can see but can only warn, not act), who together have to carry social responsibility, is presented by psychologist Zlata Hálová and juxtaposed with faith in the better qualifications of women to undertake such communication. "The 'tangling' of the processes that constitute the *vita activa* and the *vita voluptaria* is natural to me, *I am not afflicted by that dichotomy between hunter and tower-dweller and I don't need to experience the variety of the phenomenal side of things* (the world, ecology, the needs of the human being, the human being as a whole) as contradiction." She explains this in terms of female (maternal) experience of life. "I have the calm good humour and optimist faith of a women on the ground, since otherwise I could not love and give birth to children. (...) And I also have the perceptions, reflections and power of imagination of a women in the tower, which allows me to see what might harm the life of my children and the responsibility to protect them..." [Hálová 1996].

Other opinions expect women to bring to politics a traditionally defined *femininity*: "I regard women as *guardian angels* and life is impossible without them. Including politics." (Voleník in ["Ženy..." 1997]). "Women can bring to politics the dimension of the guardian of the hearth, and maintain warmth and light, a favourable climate." ([Kučerová 1996], inspired by the psychologist Matějčiek: "Man breaks through and woman sustains".) "The woman politician differs from the male politician. The man is usually more theoretical and systematic, and has a tendency to regard politics as a science. Not that politics is not a science, but it is also, to a considerable extent, work with people. Women have more capacity for empathy, putting themselves in the position of others, and more imagination. They are often better able to sense the atmosphere and adapt themselves. This means that they are successful (...) particularly in foreign politics." (Burešová in [Buchert et al. 1995]).

Here it should be pointed out that this type of argument *de facto* expects that women will add something extra to politics, a kind of dowry or promise that they will really enrich politics – which truly equal beings would not, of course, have to give. As a result they are more severely judged. The authors of the statements mentioned have no awareness whatsoever that even their positive view of the matter could place obstacles in the way of women in public life.

#### *b) Faith in the harmonious complementary roles of men and women in politics*

This factor is not identical with the preceding one. It is based more on the idea of 'complete humanity' and 'complementary roles' in politics, and not on the need to correct it. In

contrast to the preceding argument it stresses the equal weight of both sexes: "Only the combination of male and female ways of thinking produces a complete human being. Arguments from the lips of women are not often synthesising, but they are often very sharply analytic." (Hradská in [Buchert et al. 1995]). Otherwise, however, there is the same tendency to idealised projections. Nobody seems to doubt that the female and male element in politics will be harmoniously complementary: "In my view, the way that the male and female elements complement each other is very important and would also bring great benefits to Czech politics" (Burešová in [Buchert et al. 1995]). "The qualities of men and women, the good qualities, could complement each other in politics" (Buzková in [Buchert et al. 1995]). "And so if we are actually struggling for something, then we are struggling to develop this relationship of partnership at all levels. It is a desire for dual identity, partnership, and not a competitive desire. This is the specific character of what we call Czech feminism." (Hradská in [Vodrážka 1996a]).

*c) In order that women should speak for themselves, not via men, and apply specific female experiences in politics*

"Do it for me, Daddy!" This was the headline of Tereza Brdečková's pre-election article in which she argued that men in parliament *would not defend women's interests*, essentially because "*nobody had said anything comprehensible to them on the question*" about the nature, extent or consequences of women's problems. Nor, she said, could this be expected of them, since "despite all areas of equality, men and women represent *two mutually such inaccessible worlds* that it would be hard to require one to defend the interests of the other." Brdečková also acknowledges the existence of "a certain discrimination" against women, but "it is difficult to prove, because nobody wants to recognise it." As concrete examples of specifically female problems she cites such issues as the priority given to men in applications for top positions, the practice of insurance companies that refuse pregnant women travel insurance while accepting men with histories of heart attacks, and the recent attitude of male deputies to the 'morning after' pill RU 486 [Brdečková 1996]. "The absence of men in the family and women in politics has unpleasant consequences for both sides. In Parliament the deputies often debate social problems that can never effect ninety percent of them (...) questions of abortion or maternal leave can never affect men. (...) A person has to have lived through some situations to have any idea of how to improve matters. (...) Politics dictate living conditions to families, and for that reason improvement of the position of the family will not be achieved in the foreseeable future. Men also pay the price for the error: for their willingness to ignore the absence of women in public life, they are punished at home by the discontent of the 'guardian of the family hearth'." [Brdečková 1994].

This argument is the first and the only articulation of a female political agenda and its association with the question of the political representation of women. In public 'discourse' it has not yet found a response and thus remains atypical of Czech debate on the subject. For comparison we can mention the confirmation of Brdečková's view to be found in Norwegian experience, for example. The political scientist Hege Skjeie investigated whether members of parliament had the impression that the influence of women in politics had contributed to change in viewpoints inside the parties, and found that "reform of issues of care and care work [in the widest sense] is regarded as the most important contribution of female politicians in the present period. Care policy contains a series of political instruments by which the state plays an active role in organising and funding



care for children in particular. In all parties these instruments have been stressed as central political matters.” [Skjeie 1991: 241].

#### d) *Civic Freedoms and Democracy*

This type of argument does not focus on the political definition as a group, but on women as individual citizens. It refers to the generally unsatisfactory *civic conditions of women*: “to maintain *civic freedoms and the survival of modern democracy*, it is essential to devote continuous attention to ensuring increasing equality of opportunity for citizens *to share in the political, social and economic life of society*. And we have definitely failed to do all that we should to assure women an equal chance of career and free choice of role in life” [Rolečková 1996]. Eva Rolečková generally regards it as important “to think of ways of *giving women space* to make effective decisions on their own position, rather than merely listening to *the decisions of gentlemen’s clubs* on the role that women want.” [ibid.].

In her view ‘pseudo-conservative proclamations’ of the noble position women should occupy in the family, are a “typical example of the rejection of the family as the basic natural structures of society. If the family is to remain such a natural structure, then the division of roles within it should be determined without state or party indoctrination. And a family is created from a minimum of two adult beings: a man and a woman. The role of both is irreplaceable, and not simply the role of women” [ibid.]. This is Rolečková’s reaction to the tendency since 1989 rhetorically to stress the family role of women. It is worth noting that such views are taken, paradoxically, by spokesmen of the one Christian parliamentary party.

It is this type of contribution, which appeared before the elections in 1996 when the theme of women in politics was opened up, that uses the framework of this ‘discussion’ to draw attention to the wider issues of the social position of women with the theme of ‘woman and politics’ playing the role of mediator.

#### e) *Anti-sexist example or ‘missionaries’*

One completely isolated contribution refers to the role of publicly successful women who are *changing* the *gender stereotype* that prevents most women from succeeding (standing out). The author focuses on women who do not bring some ill-defined ‘female element’ to their work but are what he calls “*our sheriffs*” since they are exceptionally uncompromising and thorough in civic affairs. “But in our society, which suffers from *poorly concealed anti-feminism* just as from racism, every able woman in a public office is hugely important. She is worth a whole library of feminist books. She is a *missionary*.” [Blažek 1997].

For a further three categories I shall simply summarise the most basic findings. Statements relating to the idea of *active measures to encourage* the political participation of women, are in general negative, and most strongly negative from the side of journalists, since it is precisely here that their ties to the political scene and neglect of the wishes of citizens is most apparent. It is also over the question of ‘quotas’ that there are the most striking examples of manipulation of data, ignorance and subsequent passing on of false information to readers, and even of arrogant dismissal of the sections of the population who express support for quotas. A *positive image of the woman in high politics* continues to depend on the woman’s projection of ‘success’ in the family role, and female politicians themselves use this as a defence, minimising their political ambitions in their rheto-

ric at least, and often presenting their careers as 'accidental' etc. This is not surprising given the frequently voiced fears of women becoming masculine in behaviour after entry into politics [see e.g. Šiklová 1992: 28]. Since the elections of 1998, discussion of women in politics has begun to show sign of decline to the frivolous 'folklore' level, for example in debate about who should be beauty queen of Parliament and the flirting in parliamentary circles. The image of female mayors (local politicians) in the media is more respectful and serious, although the success of women in local politics is still sometimes presented as if it were rather astonishing. The category of the *image of the woman voter* represents an entirely separate chapter, in that here there is praise for the political maturity of Czech women who, for example, almost never vote for right-wing extremists [Petráček 1996].

### Conclusions

My analysis of the discussion of women in politics has highlighted two different but inter-related themes. One is the role of Czech intellectuals in the public articulation of a new theme of social debate, and the other is the nature of several gender stereotypes in contemporary Czech society.

In their attitude to the results of public opinion polls, the professional communicators have taken up ideological attitudes that reflect their primary orientation to the attitudes of politicians. The expert opinions to be found in the media have been taken almost exclusively from psychologists. So far the theme has been almost entirely ignored by political scientists, and only a few politicians have offered their views on the subject. Academics using approaches based on the concept of gender (feminists), have so far not entered mass media discourse, and this is largely because of the ideological character of Czech media space, in which the concept of politics has been deliberately narrowed and in which there is an anti-feminist bias. Women activists have also not entered the media discourse, since so far they are a relatively small group mainly focusing on questions of violence against women or commercial sexual exploitation of women. The theme of the political representation of women is very marginal to their interests.

Despite the limitations and bias of media discussion, it is interesting for the way in which it indicates an interesting trend in the perception of politics from the gender perspective, and also in the image of women as related to politics, i.e. in views of both 'gender in politics' and 'politics in gender'. The dissatisfaction of the public with the Czech political scene is acquiring a gender dimension, the specific content of which can be summarised as follows: men – immature and greedy for power, women – potentially more sensible but lacking self-confidence and without interest in power. In the context of calls for more women in politics, the traditional image of women has therefore been expanding and changing in remarkable ways. Not only are the professional capabilities of women more or less taken for granted, but there are expectations that women could bring to politics even attributes traditionally ascribed to mature manhood, such as rationality, courage or determination. At the same time, however, women in 'high politics' especially, are required to project traditional feminine qualities and aspirations. These very high expectations and demands of women politicians are associated with the primary orientation of discussion to the benefits women might bring to politics (cultivation and refinement), and neglect of the issue of the benefits politics might bring to women. As yet

discussion has not shifted from the purely cultural level to the level of the theory of democracy or active citizenship, let alone the context of social policy.

Translated by Anna Bryson and Jana Klepetáčová

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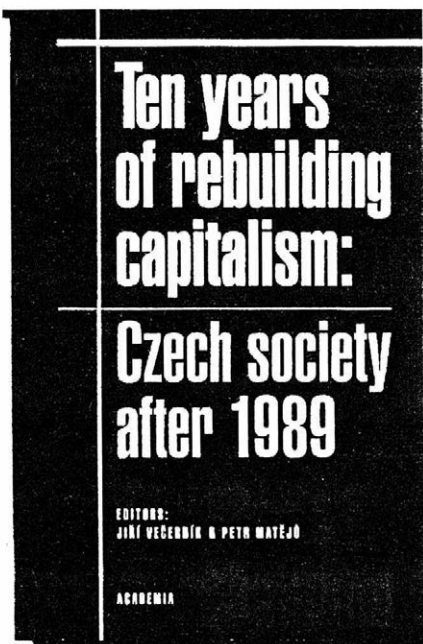
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## TEN YEARS OF REBUILDING CAPITALISM: CZECH SOCIETY AFTER 1989

Editors: Jiří Večerník & Petr Matějů

With foreword by Jacques Rupnik

Published by Academia, Prague, 1999



"Every society, like every individual, needs to stand back and examine itself from time to time. It is a moment when the question of identity merges with the capacity of projection into the future. If it is true that Czech historians are something like 'psychoanalysts' of society (putting old traumas as well as the recent 'white spots' in Czech history into a new context), then sociologists Jiří Večerník and Petr Matějů together with their colleagues are in a way the 'radiologists' of post-communist Czech society. Nearly ten years after the fall of the old totalitarian regime, they are now bringing a detailed and clear description of the changes that society has already gone through and still continues to go through including the basic economic and political transformation of the nineties." *Jacques Rupnik*

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**Part Three:** Social and Political Structures (The renewal of the middle class and its political circumstances, Social stratification and voting behavior, The crystallization of political attitudes and orientations, The development of political parties and the party system)

**Conclusion:** The challenges and pitfalls of the transformation

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# The Gender Paradox in Public Opinion Surveys

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**Abstract:** The results of public opinion surveys clearly reflect real gender differences in society on questions directly pertaining to gender, but there is no fundamental difference between the opinions of men and women on other questions of civic politics or life values. This article asks whether gender is a subject which is in fact separate from other areas of life. The analysis was based on empirical material from selected data bases from 1990-1996, which included all surveys testing civic and political attitudes and values over a period of time.

In civic and political questions the only difference was the greater tendency to extreme positions on the part of men, while women tended to be noncommittal. Among the values tested, no difference was discovered between men and women. Gender as an ascribed social status modifies values directly through acquired elements of social status, a typical example of this being education.

For the values of work and social prestige the dominant influence among lower and middle education groups is age, which is reinforced by gender. Among people with higher education, the influence of age virtually disappears and gender gains in strength.

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## Introduction

This article does not aim to change ideas on the current position of women from the sociological, psychological or cultural aspect, rather it is based on secondary analysis of public opinion surveys from recent years. Nor does it aim to transform empirical results into theoretical ideas, to align itself with any existing hypotheses or to formulate new ones.

I wish to focus on a paradox that constantly reoccurs: in the overwhelming majority of subjects investigated it is not possible to show any statistically significant difference in the opinions and attitudes of the two sexes. If such a difference is found it is much less than those typical of other demographic and social characteristics. From the point of view of public opinion surveys, the gender problem does not in fact exist – with one important exception. It only emerges when the subject of gender is itself the topic of research. In questions relating to the position of women, liberation or equal opportunities, the differences in the opinions of the two sexes are evident and sometimes dramatic. How can this be the case? Is the gender question an artificially constructed subject which has its own existence, set apart from all other social facts?

## Gender Differences and How They are Reflected in Public Opinion Surveys

On the other hand, it is rather banal to recall the existence of real differences in the positions of men and women in society today. Empirical data show the most significant dif-

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ferences in three spheres: the first is that of work, where women have been present for three generations now, but the division of the labour market into men's, women's and mixed professions still prevails. The low percentage of women in management and particularly top management is directly related to this segmentation of the labour market. Another effect of this is reflected in the economic disadvantage of the female work force (whose incomes are on average 70-75% of those of men) and in the lower social prestige of typically female professions [Čermáková 1997a]. The second area is the education system. For many subjects in secondary and higher education there is a typical differentiation in the presence of men and women, reflecting the needs of the labour market and the prestige of the profession. The third sphere is the low number of women involved in politics, particularly in high political positions and constitutional bodies.

These facts are generally known and are realistically reflected in public opinion surveys. To give one not atypical finding: the lesser opportunities for women in their careers and in management are accompanied by an awareness of the lower value of women's work and an idea of women as primarily run-of-the-mill employees with minimal decision-making powers, little authority and little opportunity to resolve common problems. Female employees are esteemed for their conscientiousness and their sensitivity in inter-personal relations [Muži... 1998]. In the political arena, there is a general sense that there are not enough women in politics and that this has a negative effect on society as a whole. The most important reasons for this are, in the public's view, family responsibilities, tradition, poor social conditions and a lack of interest among women, and the fact that the political world is a hard one [Zapojení... 1998].

Sociological research has repeatedly produced a number of findings on one further fundamental area of gender differences – the family [Čermáková 1997b and others]. In this country there is a modified patriarchal model of the family, which coexists with an unequal division of activities and a paternalistic approach to bringing up children. At the same time it is true that the ideal image of the family is much more traditional than the reality. The pre-war middle-class ideal of a one-income family where the male-breadwinner was undoubtedly dominant and the woman has a dependent position in the household, devoted to the needs of the family, is still alive and well [Rozdělení... 1998]. This model was forcibly broken down by the communist regime at the beginning of the 1950s. That period saw the expropriation of private property, a sharp drop in salaries to the level of workers' wages and economic and political pressure for mass employment of women in unskilled professions. This pressure was accompanied by the ideological rhetoric on the liberation of women from servitude to husband, children and household and on self-realisation in work. The forced abolition of the lifestyle of the one-income family in pre-war Czechoslovakia kept this romantic patriarchal model alive and it gained new strength after the fall of the communist regime. The only area not influenced by the patriarchal ideal is sexual cohabitation, where there is in fact an idea of equal initiative by both partners.

From the point of view of the family itself, this model is considerably complicated by the need of families for two incomes, by the increasing level of education and qualifications and by their increasingly individual lifestyles. The everyday reality of the family can therefore never attain this patriarchal ideal. Married women have still been left with the largest part of traditional household responsibilities. Married men tend to be only assistants in the day-to-day division of labour, including bringing up children. In activities basically outside the family (such as earning a living, building their careers) they



have lost their unchallenged dominance and it is probably for this reason that they have taken over the responsibility for the family budget from women. As a counter-point to women's work there has developed a now widespread model of men's doing practical and maintenance work in the household, which is to some degree a practical hobby. The Czech family therefore tends to be patriarchal in family activities, but notably liberal in decision-making powers [Ibid.]. This corresponds to the prevailing idea of the equal position of men and women in the family and with respect to the standard of living.

Alongside those areas related to work, education, politics and family life, recent years have seen the increasing predominance of another gender difference which is perceptible in public opinion: women's increasing exposure to certain social risks. The most serious of these are sexual harassment and domestic violence, together with unemployment. General crime, health risks and stress, on the other hand, are seen as an equal danger for both sexes [Rovnost... 1999].

Despite these facts and their clear reflection in public opinion surveys, the subject of gender differences is greeted with some embarrassment. This is evident in journalism, in political debate and in statements by prominent individuals. The most pronounced distaste is directed towards women's liberation or the feminist movement. Women tend to keep quiet on the subject while men play it down or satirise it. This may partly be due to the political and economic misuse of women's liberation to suit the needs of the communist political system and the renaissance of the traditional paternalistic ideal of the family, but this alone cannot entirely explain it.

### **Are there Separate Men's and Women's Worlds?**

Is it possible to talk of the different realities of men's and women's lives? Literature, journalism and even gender and feminist discussion constantly put forward the idea of separate worlds of men and women, which can only meet with difficulty [Oates-Indruchová 1999]. If the problem is considered purely from the aspect of gender differences then the reply to this question is clear – there are differences and these are reflected in the different worlds. Does this, however, also apply to other social phenomena? If there are more or less separate men's and women's worlds, it should be possible to identify them in the structure of attitudes and values which are not directly related to questions of gender.

As an empirical basis for verifying gender differences in ideas on the broader spectrum of life in society, I have taken the results of surveys by the Institute for Public Opinion Surveys between 1990 and 1997. The surveys were carried out on population samples selected on a quota basis, the size of the samples ranging between 800-1200 respondents over the age of 15. The samples are representative as the quota signs are age, sex, education, region and size of settlement. For this analysis specific data samples were created which included all surveys dealing with these areas between 1990 and 1997.

### **Tendency to Neutrality in Women's Civil and Political Attitudes**

The first area considered was civil and political attitudes, which were tested by a repeated set of questions. These dealt specifically with satisfaction with the present social development and expectations for the immediate future, and with trust in public institutions, the importance of social problems and an assessment of the government's ability to resolve them. In all cases the respondents gave their answers on the four-point scale of 1 = definitely yes, 2 = probably yes, 3 = probably not, and 4 = definitely not. They could also

choose a fifth possibility of "don't know". For more complex political attitudes the analysis included respondents' own placement of themselves on a left-right axis using a seven-point scale [*Občanské... 1991-1997*].

A comparison of the averages for these questions did not show any statistically significant gender differences. This is valid for all indicators without exception, whether trust in public institutions, satisfaction with the overall development, assessment of individual aspects, or self-placement on the left-right axis. A high level of agreement in the attitudes of men and women was found throughout the period studied. Since no differences were found in the judgements on individual points, the overall character of the response was also analysed. Here there was a statistically significant gender difference, in women's tendency to opt for the neutral "don't know" answer, and a greater liking for the extreme positions (positive or negative) on the part of men. This tendency is evident throughout the structure of civil and political attitudes, regardless of their actual content, and throughout the period under consideration.

There is no clear interpretation of the greater distance adopted by women. The simplest hypotheses is that women generally place less importance on civil and political subjects, but this is improbable since it would suppose at least some differences depending on the concrete question. The distance was, however, found in all social matters, many of which have a direct impact on everyday life (e.g. standard of living, salary policies, social security, health care, crime, etc.) and have a major influence on the lives of all individuals. The explanation may rather be found in the gender-specific styles of communication. The model of male dominance corresponds more to decisive, extreme statements, while female submission is more likely to be linked with gentler formulations. If this hypothesis is true, it still does not tell us whether the basis of the different ways of behaving is primarily cultural or primarily psychological. For a more searching examination of these questions, sociology must align itself with ethnological and psychological research and indeed with other disciplines too.

### **Conformity between Men's and Women's Values**

The second group of data analysed concern value orientations. These were surveyed each year using a set of partial statements which were placed on a four-point scale of importance, ranging from 1 = very important to 4 = not important at all, again with an option 5 = "don't know". This time there was no greater neutrality on the part of women (as judged by the frequency of "don't know" responses) nor any inclination towards the extreme responses on the part of men. The "don't know" responses were excluded from further processing [*Životní... 1990-1997*].

Table 1. The Importance of Life Values – Means and Standard deviations  
(Surveys from 1990 and 1997)

| Value  | 1990 |       | 1997 |       |
|--|------|-------|------|-------|
|  | Mean | S. D. | Mean | S. D. |
| living in a happy family   | 1.15 | 0.42  | 1.14 | 0.42  |
| living in healthy environment  | 1.20 | 0.48  | 1.38 | 0.61  |
| being healthy and looking after my health  | 1.31 | 0.56  | 1.43 | 0.64  |
| helping mostly my friends and family   | 1.35 | 0.55  | 1.31 | 0.54  |
| having true friends  | 1.36 | 0.56  | 1.36 | 0.57  |
| living in a beautiful place  | 1.36 | 0.56  | 1.47 | 0.63  |
| living according to my personal convictions  | 1.39 | 0.61  | 1.45 | 0.64  |
| having interesting work which I enjoy  | 1.43 | 0.75  | 1.59 | 0.90  |
| having valuable and useful work  | 1.44 | 0.73  | 1.59 | 0.85  |
| working with pleasant people   | 1.57 | 0.82  | 1.82 | 0.94  |
| helping anyone who needs help  | 1.72 | 0.72  | 1.92 | 0.78  |
| doing my job well  | 1.77 | 0.92  | 2.01 | 0.97  |
| earning a lot of money   | 1.80 | 0.89  | 1.93 | 0.95  |
| preserving my privacy  | 1.80 | 0.84  | 1.82 | 0.80  |
| being well-informed about events here<br>and in the world  | 1.81 | 0.76  | 2.10 | 0.84  |
| being well-liked   | 1.87 | 0.79  | 1.95 | 0.80  |
| having a broad general knowledge, a general idea<br>of culture, science, technology and politics | 2.03 | 0.90  | 2.09 | 0.87  |
| having friends who may be useful   | 2.07 | 0.88  | 2.17 | 0.88  |
| helping build democracy in society   | 2.07 | 0.89  | 2.39 | 0.89  |
| living well and enjoying life  | 2.12 | 0.89  | 2.15 | 0.89  |
| helping to improve life in the place where I live  | 2.13 | 0.83  | 2.42 | 0.84  |
| having time for my hobbies and interests   | 2.19 | 0.88  | 2.10 | 0.79  |
| having a job just to be employed<br>and not need state benefits                                  | 2.23 | 1.08  | 2.49 | 1.09  |
| helping mostly those who appreciate the help   | 2.25 | 0.90  | 2.31 | 0.88  |
| having work which lets me try new things   | 2.26 | 1.01  | 2.40 | 1.01  |
| having an interesting and exciting life  | 2.36 | 0.97  | 2.46 | 0.95  |
| having nice things which not everyone has  | 2.71 | 0.96  | 2.85 | 0.93  |
| achieving an important position in society   | 2.77 | 0.97  | 2.83 | 0.94  |
| having a job which lets me control the activities<br>of other people                             | 2.94 | 0.97  | 2.97 | 0.94  |
| having my own company where I can be my own boss   | 2.96 | 1.06  | 2.96 | 1.07  |
| promoting the policies of my party or movement   | 2.97 | 1.01  | 3.13 | 0.96  |
| living according to my religion  | 2.98 | 1.10  | 3.09 | 1.03  |

Evaluation on the scale 1 = very important, 2 = quite important, 3 = not very important, 4 = not important at all, and 5 = don't know (the "don't know" responses were excluded from the calculation).

As Table 1 shows, values tend to be very stable. Their order of importance did not change greatly between 1990 and 1997, even though society developed rapidly during this period. The most important set of values express social-biological roots, including family, health, and family or informal social networks, which are partly dependent on a certain material and aesthetic standard. A second fundamental value is the intellectual dimension and only then follows the broader social context. This is represented by a complex char-

acteristic of work as the most important economic and social link between the micro-sphere and the broader social environment. Less importance is placed on education and informedness, and civil and political involvement and religious confession come close to the bottom of the scale.

Table 2. Results of the Factor Analysis of the Entire Sample

|  | factor loadings |
|--|-----------------|
| <i>1st factor – Work</i>   |                 |
| having interesting work which I enjoy  | 0.78            |
| having valuable and useful work  | 0.76            |
| working with pleasant people   | 0.72            |
| doing my job well  | 0.65            |
| having a job, just to be employed and not need state benefits                                    | 0.62            |
| earning a lot of money   | 0.59            |
| having work which lets me try new things   | 0.50            |
| <i>2nd factor – Social Prestige</i>  |                 |
| achieving an important position in society   | 0.71            |
| having a job which lets me control the activities of other people                                | 0.68            |
| having my own company where I can be my own boss   | 0.67            |
| having an interesting and exciting life  | 0.53            |
| having nice things which not everyone has  | 0.50            |
| having friends who may be useful   | 0.44            |
| living well and enjoying life  | 0.40            |
| being well-liked   | 0.36            |
| earning a lot of money   | 0.35            |
| <i>3rd factor – Democracy</i>  |                 |
| helping build democracy in society   | 0.73            |
| being well-informed about events here and in the world   | 0.68            |
| helping to improve life in the place where I live  | 0.61            |
| promoting the policies of my party or movement   | 0.61            |
| having a broad general knowledge, a general idea of culture, science,<br>technology and politics | 0.60            |
| helping anyone who needs help  | 0.41            |
| <i>4th factor – Social-Biological Roots</i>  |                 |
| living in healthy environment  | 0.65            |
| living in a beautiful place  | 0.62            |
| being healthy and looking after my health  | 0.62            |
| having true friends  | 0.54            |
| living in a happy family   | 0.48            |
| helping mostly my friends and family   | 0.48            |
| living according to my personal convictions  | 0.41            |
| being well-liked   | 0.39            |
| <i>5th factor – Creativity</i>   |                 |
| having time for my hobbies and interests   | 0.68            |
| preserving my privacy  | 0.66            |
| living well and enjoying life  | 0.64            |
| having nice things which not everyone has  | 0.45            |
| having an interesting and exciting life  | 0.43            |

|   | factor loadings |
|---|-----------------|
| <i>6th factor – Christian Solidarity</i>                                |                 |
| helping mostly those who appreciate the help                            | 0.55            |
| living according to my religion   | 0.48            |
| having friends who may be useful  | 0.42            |
| helping anyone who needs help   | 0.39            |
| having a job just to be employed and not need state benefits            | 0.37            |
| Main component method, Varimax rotation, Rotated factor matrix N = 7757 |                 |

Factor analysis isolated the six most important factors. The first of these is undoubtedly *work*, which is valued primarily as an opportunity to be creative, to do something of benefit to society and to be professional, and to have good interpersonal relations. The aspects of financial necessity and security are less important, as is that of innovation.

The second factor concerns the wider spectrum of values which can be interpreted as *social prestige*. This is linked primarily with an important position in society and work as a manager or private entrepreneur. This factor is however a complex one. It also includes material comforts and being well-rooted in a social network, which in fact contribute to achieving an aim and are an informal confirmation of social prestige. The entire complex of these values is rounded out by the idea of an interesting and exciting life.

The third factor expresses the value of *democracy*, and its most important element is that of activity and information. A dominant role is given to involvement in the society-wide process of democratisation, which includes activity in different areas of society, such as parties and local government, and in informal civic solidarity. The second part of this factor is the value placed on democratic freedom of information, either as day-to-day contact with domestic and international affairs or as a required standard of education which will ensure a broad general knowledge and an overview of areas of individual interest.

The fourth factor is again a broad spectrum of values which as a whole express people's *need for social-biological roots* in the world today. The natural conditions judged from the point of view of health and aesthetic qualities are combined with the needed stability in the intimate social sphere composed of the family and informal interpersonal relations. Here equal value is placed on mutual effectiveness and emotional support, in combination with inner personal values expressed by the need "to live the way I want to".

The fifth factor can be termed spare-time *creativity* and is to some degree complementary to creativity at work, which was included in the first factor. The dominant elements are interests linked with a person's private life, well-being and material comfort. This factor is also linked with an idea of an interesting and exciting life, which (unlike the other characteristics of the social prestige factor) is tied to individual interests and undisturbed privacy.

The sixth factor expresses *Christian solidarity*, in which the most important elements are mutual support in the context of religious belief. Solidarity is linked with the idea of work as a source of livelihood and a rejection of state social benefits.

The correlation of factor scores with social demographic characteristics of the relevant age, sex and education confirm a certain link between the three strongest factors, which define the person's relation with society through the value placed on work, social

prestige and democratic society. The factors of work (0.41) and social prestige (0.30) are linked with the age structure, while the democracy factor is rather more loosely tied to the level of education (0.24). No differences according to gender were found. The structure of values in the population is therefore basically the same for men and women and it cannot be said that there are separate men's and women's worlds. We are back to being common parts of a single world.

This fact was confirmed by separate factor analyses for the samples of men and women.

Table 3. Differing Factors in the Sample of Women

|  | factor loadings |
|--|-----------------|
| <i>Democracy</i>   |                 |
| helping build democracy in society   | 0.74            |
| helping to improve life in the place where I live  | 0.67            |
| being well-informed about events here and in the world   | 0.65            |
| promoting the policies of my party or movement   | 0.63            |
| helping anyone who needs help  | 0.51            |
| having a broad general knowledge, a general idea of culture,<br>science, technology and politics | 0.50            |
| <i>Christian Solidarity</i>  |                 |
| helping mostly those who appreciate the help   | 0.60            |
| having friends who may be useful   | 0.54            |
| living according to my religion  | 0.37            |
| having a job just to be employed and not need state benefits                                     | 0.36            |
| having a broad general knowledge, a general idea of culture,<br>science, technology and politics | 0.35            |

There is little difference in the delineation of the factors for the male and female population, with one exception, i.e. the differing way in which education and informedness are understood. Women see these instrumentally, as an element, context or means of social relations, and they are present in two factors. These are the complex of democratic values, where they are linked with participation and activity on the local and society-wide levels, and Christian solidarity, where they are linked with living according to religious precepts and function as an element of a certain type of social network.

Table 4. Differing Factors in the Sample of Men

|   | factor loadings |
|---|-----------------|
| <i>Civic-Christian Solidarity</i>                 |                 |
| helping to improve life in the place where I live | 0.65            |
| promoting the policies of my party or movement    | 0.60            |
| helping anyone who needs help                     | 0.57            |
| helping build democracy in society                | 0.56            |
| living according to my religion                   | 0.50            |
| helping mostly those who appreciate the help      | 0.44            |

|  | factor loadings |
|--|-----------------|
| <i>Education and Spiritual Dimension</i>   |                 |
| being well-informed about events here and in the world   | 0.67            |
| having a broad general knowledge, a general idea of culture,<br>science, technology and politics | 0.66            |
| helping build democracy in society   | 0.49            |
| living according to my personal convictions  | 0.36            |

For men the values of education and informedness have a different significance. They form an independent fifth factor, which can be defined as the *educational and intellectual dimension*, since it also includes the desire to “live according to my personal convictions”. As far as the use of information is concerned, men place it on the society-wide level of “helping to build democracy in society”. The more concrete form of local or party politics or human solidarity becomes part of the fourth factor described as *civic-Christian solidarity*.

### The Mediatory Influence of Gender

With the exception of the differences noted above, the factors obtained from the separate samples of men and women confirm the high degree of similarity. Therefore, no direct influence of gender on the value structure was demonstrated. The question remains as to whether values are really so immune to the influence of gender or whether this influence operates in a less obvious way. Gender as an ascribed social status can modify values indirectly through the social status acquired. A typical example of this is education. To test this hypothesis we analysed the given value groups in three educational groups. Within these groups we tested the influence of gender and age (generation) in the form of dichotomic categories. Since the effect of age manifested itself mainly in the different social situation of employed people and pensioners, the sample was limited to those under 50. The dichotomy of generations was set with the age groups of 15-35 and 36-50 years.

Table 5. Calculated Correlation between the Discriminatory Functions and Variables Included in the Analysis of Discrimination (by level of education, gender and generation\*)

|                            | Elementary+Technical |        | Full Secondary |        | Tertiary   |        |
|----------------------------|----------------------|--------|----------------|--------|------------|--------|
|                            | Generation           | Gender | Generation     | Gender | Generation | Gender |
| 1. Work                    | -0.34                | 0.10   | -0.48          | -0.10  | -0.14      | -0.44  |
| 2. Social Prestige         | 0.86                 | 0.49   | 0.62           | 0.44   | 0.20       | 0.73   |
| 3. Democracy               | -0.14                | 0.22   | -0.31          | 0.45   | -0.45      | 0.28   |
| 4. Social-biological roots | 0.09                 | -0.44  | 0.24           | -0.51  | 0.12       | -0.37  |
| 5. Creativity              | -0.38                | 0.09   | 0.44           | -0.10  | 0.53       | -0.26  |
| 6. Christian Solidarity    | -0.31                | -0.46  | -0.34          | -0.48  | -0.60      | -0.21  |
| Classification (%)         | 60                   | 60     | 58             | 58     | 56         | 62     |

\*) Generations were set as 15-35 years and 36-50 years.

The influence of age and gender appears separately, even in individual factors within educational groups. The first two factors are subjectively the most significant and express the individual’s existential and social roots in society. In general, for these factors the dominant principle in lower educational groups is that of seniority, while among those with university education it is gender.

In concrete terms this means that in the factor of work for the lower and middle educational groups, age is the most important and the influence of gender is insignificant. In the university-educated group the situation was virtually reversed – the basic criterion of differentiation is gender and age is not significant. The social prestige factor is generally very dependent on demographic characteristics. In the lower categories the influence of age is the strongest, and in the middle one this is joined with gender. In actual life this means that among people with elementary or technical education a mature man has a high chance of having high social prestige and a young woman a very low one. In the middle group the influence of age is slightly weaker but still dominant, while the influence of gender is fairly strong. Among university-educated people this dependence is reversed. There, age is unimportant for social prestige, but gender is very strong. It is as if it has absorbed part of the social significance of the age difference and become the bearer of the overall influence of the demographic structure on values. This shows that the feminist movement and gender studies are reacting to a real and very strongly felt problem of discrimination by sex, which is experienced by educated women. In other social strata this fact is not felt so strongly, since it is masked by the principle of seniority, which is more dominant the lower the social stratum.

The Christian solidarity factor is something of a counter-point. While it is subjectively the least important, it, like the previous two factors, expresses a certain type of relationship between the individual and society, which has a long historical development and a basically spiritual dimension. In this factor the principle of seniority works somewhat differently. While in the lower and middle educational groups, age and gender have more or less the same degree of influence, among university-educated people age becomes dominant and the influence of gender declines. The sharing of humanitarian values is clearly not an obvious feature of all strata of modern society. The formerly important educational role of the church has not been taken up by either the family or elementary schooling. The importance of humanitarian values in people's lives manifests itself gradually, together with a broader educational base and rich life experience.

The factor of social-biological roots, which basically incorporates the microsphere including family and kinship structures, is differentiated by gender in all educational groups. Its influence is somewhat stronger in the middle group and lowest among the university-educated group, but the differences are not great. The influence of age was negligible. This can be said to be an area where the different status of men and women is reflected in all educational groups.

In each of the remaining two factors the influence of age and of gender acted differently. There was a relatively clear differentiation in the value of creativity, in which life experience is clearly valued and increasingly so with rising education. This factor can also act as a counterpoint for the factor of social-biological roots. There is greater pressure of time and interest exerted by families with dependent children, which weighs more on women. With rising age both partners gain greater space for their own interests.

The democracy factor shows relatively little importance for the lowest educational group, where the demographic characteristic did not appear at all. For high school and university graduates, the influence of age and gender is virtually the same.



## Conclusion

The analysis of public opinion surveys from the point of view of gender differences revealed that this is a complex problem. In terms of a simple relation between gender and opinion, a link was found only in those subjects which directly concern gender issues. For other subjects the direct influence was minimal. However, if gender is analysed as a contextual variable, acting through other social characteristics, such differences can be shown to exist, and can be quite striking. In this article two such findings were described:

In attitudes to civil values the influence of gender appears not in the actual value placed on different subjects but in the overall style of evaluation. Among men there is a tendency to extreme opinions (positive and negative), while among women there is a tendency to neutrality, represented by the more frequent “don’t know” responses. This finding does not apply to value orientations.

In the area of values, gender differences do not manifest themselves directly but through status, and the same is true for generational differences. For the most important social ties – work and social prestige – the gender differences are stronger in the university-educated group, where the influence of generation is unimportant. In the lowest educational group, on the other hand, generational influence is dominant and is reinforced by gender to differing degrees.

The difference function of gender and generational influence in relation to education may be linked to a certain rejection of gender questions in public opinion. This is a subject most discussed among educated women and in lower educational groups it may not arouse sufficient interest. The data show that there is a stronger link between lower education and a sense of generational differences, which the university-educated population does not greatly feel. The fact that the subject of generational inequalities has not received much interest among the public, may be linked with the dominance of university-educated professionals in the intellectual, journalistic and political elite. Lower educational groups may make less use of these possibilities for expressing their opinions, or have little opportunity to make their voices heard through the media. The importance of the generational conflict may not be considered at all by society for a long time. And if there are indeed such tensions, women in non-white-collar jobs may see the gender question as unimportant or foreign to them.

The tendencies extrapolated from the data analysed may become stronger in the future. The continuing rise in the level of education and the increasing number of people with a university education may mean that the importance of gender differences will be felt more and more strongly. This is clearly a subject which is only just appearing in the new political and socio-economic conditions in Czech society. Social tensions arising from both gender and age differences may intensify due to the fact that they have until now been overlooked by the political elite.

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# Women and Employment

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**Abstract:** This paper is based on the results of the research project "The Status of Women and Men in the Czech Republic" from 1998. It was inspired by the need to obtain information on the circumstances of enforcement of EU legislation on equal opportunities in the Czech Republic in connection with the Czech Republic's application for EU membership. The project aimed to investigate the public perception and consciousness of equal opportunities. Therefore, it deals with the main issues of the EU directives and recommendations: equal pay, equal treatment as regards access to employment, promotion and vocational training, legal knowledge concerning employment and so on. Reconciling family and working life is the crucial problem in the Czech Republic, as in other countries. It can be understood as a result of both modernisation and the special national situation that has resulted from the social and economic transition. The paper compares conditions of women's employment with their professional expectations and satisfaction. It shows the social determination of these, and some stereotypes in understanding men's and women's roles. These facts influence women's position on the labour market in various aspects.

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Employment is not merely a source of income and of personal satisfaction, but also an important field for the formation of social relations between individuals and one of the factors that determines social status [Čermáková 1995: 12, Šanderová 1998: 149]. Work has a somewhat different role in the life of women than of men, even if the basic self-realisation (to use one's abilities, to be independent, to share in a joint project, to do something useful) and instrumental (to earn a living or to be financially independent) needs are more or less common to both genders. The basic difference lies in the place that a person's profession and work holds both in determining the social status of women in comparison with men, and in confrontation with women's other roles and aspiration, primarily in the family.

The need (or necessity) of women to be part of the public work sphere is shown by their continuing high level of employment in the post-communist countries and the rising level of female employment in western countries.<sup>1</sup> The actual situation may differ according to its origins and development (e.g. the structure of female employment, the specific level of employment by age and marital status, the percentage of women in part-time employment). In balancing their maternal (partnership) and professional roles, a steadily increasing number of women (mostly young and well-qualified) are placing greater importance on the latter. This can be explained by the rising professional ambitions of in-

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<sup>1</sup>) In EU countries women made up 30% of the workforce in 1970, and 45% in 1995. In the Czech Republic in mid-1998 the figure was 43% [*Equal...* 1996, *Zaměstnanost...* 1998]. The comparison between the EU and the Czech Republic is complicated by the fact that the majority of women here work full-time.

creasingly educated women, by the increased demands on professions and by uncertainty on the job market, but also by the lack of support in combining the two. It is virtually impossible to eliminate the conflict between these two aspects since it is an expression both of subjective needs and of socio-culturally and economically determined conditions. For this reason, this conflict cannot be entirely disregarded in any study of female unemployment.

In this article I would like to sketch out the broad outlines of the question of female employment, principally on the basis of data collected in the survey *The Position of Men and Women* (MW98) [Kuchařová and Zamykalová 1998]<sup>2</sup> in comparison with other research and statistical surveys. The main questions in considering the selected aspects of women's employment were as follows: What role does work have in women's lives in terms of their position and of combining work and family? How do the approaches of men and women to their professional position differ and what effect does this have? Have women gained or lost in the field of work and employment during the process of transformation? To what extent is there (conscious) discrimination against women in the work arena?

### Employment and Education

The high level of women's employment common in previous decades has been carried over into the 1990s. While it fell slightly after 1989, it has remained around 52% in recent years. The fall can be attributed to a lower level of employment of young women due to prolonged maternity leave, and among older women to the fall in the number of people continuing to work after retirement age, and also to the higher level of unemployment in general. There has also been a slight rise in the number of housewives. In general, however, the main features of the relatively high female employment are still present: women's high level of qualifications and their interest in working, employers' willingness to employ female employees, the fact that most families need two (or more) incomes to survive, women's social-psychological motivation to work (as a means of gaining independence and social contacts, as well as of maintaining their social status) [c.f. Čermáková 1995]. The situation is slowly changing. The need imposed by the labour market for constantly improving qualifications is more difficult for women, as is the demand for increased mobility. Interrupting a career to look after children is becoming an even greater obstacle for women on the labour market. Employment opportunities for women are becoming increasingly dependent on their age, family situation and education<sup>3</sup> and on the relation between these. On the other hand, women in the Czech Republic have be-

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<sup>2</sup>) The survey *Postavení žen a mužů v ČR 1998* [The Position of Women and Men in the Czech Republic 1998] (referred to in the text as MW98) was carried out using a quota sample of 1000 respondents – 602 women and 398 men aged 20-60, distributed by regions. It was decided not to have the sample representative by sex (since we wanted a larger sample of women so as to be able to classify them more precisely) and the young and middle-aged groups were slightly larger (as we presumed that they would be more sensitive and concerned about "the woman question"), which influenced the distribution by education. The influence of these indicators was of course determined for each subject or indicator studied [*Postavení...* 1998].

<sup>3</sup>) The women's employment rate by level of education is 22.9% for those with elementary education, 68.4% for those with technical qualifications, 70.7% for high school graduates and 78.5% for university graduates.

come more evident in highly qualified professions and in private business. The socio-economic position of women in this country has however retained its specific structure both in comparison with that of men, and in comparison with EU countries (Table 1). It can be summed up as a high level of employment, with over 90% of women employed, and a high proportion of women (over 80%) working full time. In addition, 46% of working women have completed secondary school, technical or general, although only 10% have a university degree.

Table 1. The Socio-Economic Status of Men and Women in the Czech Republic 1998 and EU 1996 (in %)

|                                | Czech Republic |       | European Union |       |
|--------------------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|-------|
|                                | Men            | Women | Men            | Women |
| <i>Employed</i>                | 67.3           | 47.3  | 59.3           | 38.3  |
| of which: self-employed        | 11.6           | 4.0   | 12.1           | 5.7   |
| full-time employees            | 52.7           | 37.9  | 44.5           | 20.3  |
| part-time employees            | 1.3            | 4.0   | 2.7            | 11.9  |
| helping a family member        | 0.1            | 0.4   | -              | 0.3   |
| other*                         | 1.6            | 1.0   | -              | 0.1   |
| <i>Unemployed</i>              | 3.6            | 4.6   | 11.1           | 10.7  |
| <i>Not Economically Active</i> | 29.1           | 48.1  | 29.5           | 51.1  |
| of which: housewives           | 0.1            | 3.9   | 0.4            | 19.7  |
| (additional) childcare leave** | 0.0            | 4.2   | -              | 0.9   |
| old-age pensioners             | 15.6           | 27.0  | 18.5           | 20.9  |
| disabled pensioners            |                |       |                |       |
| or for other health reasons    | 3.8            | 3.8   | 1.9            | 1.1   |
| students                       | 8.6            | 8.0   | 8.5            | 8.3   |
| retraining                     | 0.0            | 0.1   | 0.2            | 0.2   |
| others***                      | 1.0            | 1.5   | -              | -     |

\*) In the Czech Republic, employees working outside the civil sector and those who were not working at the time the survey was carried out.

\*\*) In the Czech Republic, extended maternity leave (i.e. beyond the statutory limit), in the EU not specified.

\*\*\*) Categories which cannot be placed in comparable groups (those unable to start work within 14 days, those who do not want or do not need to work, those who do not believe that they could find work, etc.)

Sources: [Zaměstnanost... 1998, 3rd quarter; Equal... 1996]

The problems of women on the labour market today are partly the result of gender segregation on the market, and partly due to the restructuring of the Czech economy. The economic development has not affected the rate of female employment in different branches in the same way, in relation to the percentage of women working, the nature of the branch from the point of view of growth, stability or fall in overall employment, and of demands for qualifications. Women's share in the increasing employment in those branches which are expanding has been lower than their share in the decreasing employment in those branches that are in decline. With respect to job categories there has been a clear shift of the female workforce to more highly qualified professions – somewhat higher than for

men.<sup>4</sup> Women's presence on the labour market is dependent not on their increasing level of qualifications, but rather on the fields in which they tend to work. If the current distribution of men and women by field (including preferred subjects of study) were to continue, women would find increasing difficulties in remaining in the medium-qualified professions in many fields and their chance of attaining more qualified positions with a higher level of education would fall. Success on the labour market will be due rather to a greater orientation towards areas that have traditionally been seen as the province of men and towards newly emerging occupations. This is the responsibility not only of women but rather of all involved parties who are interested in how women make use of their qualifications.

In the survey MW98, 41% of men and women had attained their planned level of education, while 38% of women and 30% of men had not (the others had not had any concrete plans),<sup>5</sup> while 18% of women and 11% of men had been forced to change their plans for reasons unconnected with concrete conditions or academic failure, i.e. principally for family reasons. 14% of these women did not continue their schooling at a higher level, while the remaining 4% failed to complete their course. With respect to education, both available statistics and relevant researches show that conditions are by and large equal for men and women. The percentage of women who fail to reach their desired level of education for other than personal reasons is not significantly higher than for men. The fact that approximately one-third of the adult population would like to have a higher level of education, should however stimulate the creators of the education system to ensure access to education for able people not only in formal terms, but also according to the level and subjects required. The primary need is for a higher regard for further education in this country. Here too, however, simple statistics do not imply that women are lagging behind men. In the sample for MW98, the percentages of men and women with at least some form of further education were almost the same (46% and 44% respectively). In both cases the most common courses were (re)qualification (around 20%) and languages (11% and 9%).

No differences between the sexes were found in the extent to which people utilised the level and field of their education (MW98). Around two-thirds of men and women worked in their field or in a related one, around three-quarters worked at a level appropriate to their qualifications, and only one-tenth of men and women were not utilising their education.<sup>6</sup> Reasons for working outside their field are similar for both sexes. The only difference is that women are slightly more likely to 'sacrifice' choosing a job in their field for the sake of working nearer home (presumably because of their family), while men do so in order to earn more (at least partly for the same reason). As mentioned above, the high percentage of people who work in 'their' field is possible because of the still low demand for flexibility on the part of the labour force, which is to women's advantage.

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<sup>4</sup>) According to the classification in ISCO88 [*Zaměstnanost...* 1998] the percentage of women in higher categories rose by 3.3%, and that of men by 0.7%.

<sup>5</sup>) Among people up to the age of 30, 42% of men and 38% of women are satisfied with their level of education, and for both genders the percentage of those who would like to attain a higher level of education than they have at present is 32% [*Absolventi...* 1997 survey].

<sup>6</sup>) Even at the beginning of their careers (up to the age of 30) women did not report any greater difficulties in finding work appropriate to their level of education [*Absolventi...* 1997]. 74% of them work in the field they studied or a related one (72% of men).

In view of the recognised differences in the distributions of men and women by education and profession,<sup>7</sup> these findings show the relative stability both of the different educational and professional paths in a gender-segregated labour market [c.f. Čermáková 1995, 1997], and in the lasting stereotypes of men and women's work. While the younger generation is breaking away from these at the present time (in their status and declared professional ambitions, and in timing the start of their career),<sup>8</sup> this is a gradual process and does not always correspond to the needs of the labour market and even less to the demand for equal opportunity.

### Unemployment and Success on the Labour Market

Until recently the total unemployment rate for women in the Czech Republic did not reach the level originally expected, but their presence on the labour market does however vary. As in most countries the unemployment rate for women is higher in the long term than it is for men. The percentage of women among people registered at labour offices as looking for work has however fallen from its highest level to date, 60% recorded in September 1996, to 53% in December 1998. As the overall rate of unemployment was low, in the mid-1990s only up to 5% of women were unemployed, although by the middle of 1999 this had risen to 10.9% (7.4% for men).

Women are more likely to stop working for personal or family reasons (22% as opposed to 13% for men). The percentages of men and women losing their job are approximately the same, being 19% for women and 16% for men: for 26% of women and 28% of men this was due to redundancy, for 9% of women and 11% of men for other reasons [*Zaměstnanost...* 1999, 2nd quarter]. The increasing risk of unemployment for women does however reflect gender differences, since for both men and women there is a strong link with lower education and older age (which is accompanied by low qualifications). The younger or more educated generation of women do have problems with returning to work after maternity leave, primarily if their qualifications no longer fit the needs of the labour market. In recent years this has also affected graduates of some schools. The risk of women becoming unemployed is still higher for single mothers with small children or with health problems. For women in rural areas the negative factors tend to accumulate. In comparison with men, women's chances of success on the labour market are reduced if they are looking after family members [Sirovátka 1997: 175], which relatively (often only seemingly) reduces the importance of other handicaps such as the lack of professional experience<sup>9</sup> or belonging to the Roma minority.

Gender differences are not so apparent in a subjective view of employment. In the data from MW98, which are confirmed by other surveys, the number who feel a threat of losing their job is similar for women and men (33% of women and 28% of men). Conditions on the labour market have not reduced the chances of unemployed women (similarly

<sup>7</sup>) In simple terms, more women have elementary or secondary education, while more men have technical or university qualifications, although there is little difference in the average level of education.

<sup>8</sup>) Both the age of beginning work and that of starting a family are changing, as is the way of moving from school to work and the effects of these events. There is an increasing differentiation in forms of behaviour, so that gender is gradually losing its significance.

<sup>9</sup>) This does, however, have a significant influence on professional advancement (i.e. performing more demanding or managerial roles).

to men) finding a job in their field, and not forced them to reduce their other demands. These women do not report greater difficulty in finding a job than do men: 7% of women and 4% of men had major difficulties finding their present job and 38% and 37% respectively had some problems. There were, however, differences in the reported circumstances of these difficulties and also in connection with experience with unemployment (Table 2).

### Professional Career and Job Experience – The Attitudes and Interests of Women

It is assumed that a professional career is not as important an element in women's lives as in men's, although the differences are not great. Surprisingly, however, people feel this difference more here than in neighbouring EU countries. There, an average of 83% of men and 89% of women believe that women place the same importance on having a job as do men [*Equal...* 1996]. A similar (although not identical) question in this country elicited 69% of yes answers from men and 81% from women (as to whether a job has the same importance for women as for men). While in a certain sense there is a more deep-rooted tradition of women working in this country than in most EU countries, for men (and also for one-third of women) there is still a deeply-rooted traditional idea of men and women as having complementary roles.<sup>10</sup>

Table 2. Problems in Looking for Work and Some of the Sources

| Has been unemployed  | Men |     |       | Women |     |       |
|--|-----|-----|-------|-------|-----|-------|
|  | No  | Yes | Total | No    | Yes | Total |
| <i>Had problems (percentage of stated problems in a given group)</i> |     |     |       |       |     |       |
| Major  | 2   | 8   | 4     | 3     | 19  | 7     |
| Some   | 31  | 54  | 37    | 34    | 49  | 38    |
| <i>These were due to (percentage of positive answers)</i>            |     |     |       |       |     |       |
| Age  | 9   | 16  | 11    | 16    | 29  | 20    |
| Whether a man or a women   | 2   | 3   | 2     | 17    | 31  | 21    |
| Lack of assertiveness  | 14  | 27  | 18    | 13    | 36  | 20    |
| Lack of qualifications   | 17  | 33  | 22    | 19    | 37  | 28    |

Source: Research into the Status of Women and Men in the Czech Republic

This is not, of course, based on an underestimation of women's abilities – over 60% of men believe that women are equally able to be a manager or private entrepreneur as are men (80% of women agree with this). There is, however, a conflict of the 'dual outlook', that men recognise the rights and ability of women to self-realisation outside the home (professional, etc.), but on the other hand they do not wish to 'relieve' them of their domestic roles of women-partner and woman-mother of their children. Nor are women much more consistent in this respect. While women overtly express an interest in some degree of liberation from their 'domestic chains', they protect their irreplaceable position in the family: 84% declare that family and children are more important for women, while 'only' 64% of men say so. This does not prevent women from having professional ambitions (or from working for other reasons), even if this poses many difficulties. The subjective importance of work naturally rises with higher education.

<sup>10</sup>) The opinion that "a man should work and a woman primarily look after the home" was recently expressed by 38% of women and 63% of men [*Postavení...* 1998].



This is further explained by professional expectations and the degree to which they have been met. The most important reason for working (women 69%, men 73%) is decidedly financial, in the sense of "earning one's own money, being financially independent" (the need for money to meet basic needs was intentionally left out of the alternatives on offer). For women this is followed by self realisation at work ("I enjoy working") and meeting people (men chose similar alternatives but with a different emphasis). The last of these reasons is particularly important for women (particularly those with a lower level of education), while men place a greater importance on using their qualifications.

Women expressed a slightly negative evaluation of the degree to which the different aspects of their demands from work were satisfied (2.2 to 2.7 on a four-point scale), and this was very similar to (slightly more satisfied) men (2.0 to 2.5) – Table 3. While more highly educated women, however, expressed satisfaction primarily with the opportunity to use their qualifications, the degree of self-realisation and the position they had gained at work, for men a higher level of education increases satisfaction with remuneration and with work-related status. The fact that professional success is less important for women than for men is not purely linked with their orientation towards children and the family. It is also a result of dissatisfaction of certain professional expectations (particularly among less-educated women).

Table 3. Satisfaction with Selected Aspects of Employment  
(Contingency Coefficient)

| Aspect of Evaluation                | Average Evaluation** |       | Sex | Degree of Dependence |       |                       |       |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-------|-----|----------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|
|                                     | Men                  | Women |     | Education            |       | Professional Category |       |
|                                     |                      |       |     | Men                  | Women | Men                   | Women |
| Status at work                      | 2.2                  | 2.3   | -   | -                    | 27    | 42                    | 38    |
| Opportunities for work satisfaction | 2.0                  | 2.2   | 14* | 25*                  | 27    | 38                    | 37    |
| Level of income                     | 2.4                  | 2.7   | 19  | 29                   | -     | 43                    | -     |
| Promotion                           | 2.5                  | 2.7   | 13* | 25*                  | 22*   | 45                    | 30    |
| Increase of qualifications          | 2.4                  | 2.5   | -   | 27                   | 26    | 36                    | 33    |
| Social status                       | 2.3                  | 2.4   | -   | 27                   | 24    | 42                    | 34    |
| Using qualifications                | 2.1                  | 2.1   | -   | -                    | 31    | 32                    | 35    |

\*) statistical significance lower than 0.000

\*\*) on a four-point scale where 1 = definitely satisfied and 4 = definitely dissatisfied

Source: Research on the Status of Women and Men in the Czech Republic

Starting a family changes women's relationship to their job, although not to their profession or to work as such. It limits their ability to devote themselves fully to their work and also increases the importance of remuneration. Single women, on the other hand, (for whom the financial effect is also the most important) place a greater emphasis on using their qualifications and on self realisation at work. They are more willing to do more to gain a higher income, but this is primarily due to the lack of limitations on their activities. The conflict between family and profession is not, of course, always intractable and indeed appears mostly in certain phases of a family's development, i.e. when looking after small children. In choosing a concrete job, married women and mothers always bear their family function in mind, while for men the financial question is more important, although this may of course be a 'male' way of looking after the needs of their family (as the pri-

mary earner). Due to the accepted complementary nature of male and female roles, formal equality becomes a real inequality, although it need not always been seen as such. It is for this reason that many authors criticise the ineffectiveness of those measures to increase equality of opportunity which are limited to questions of employment and do not take their overall social-cultural context into account [e.g. Duncan 1996].

### Participation in Management

The lack of women in management positions is one of the main subjects of equal opportunities policy. It is an area where there are clear gender differences which go against the process of increasing equality of education and equal rights for men and women under law. There has been no real change in the number of women in management since 1989.<sup>11</sup> A more serious finding (MW98) is that this inequality also exists within individual educational groups, including among university graduates, of whom 58% of women have not attained any management function, compared with only 39% of men (the overall figures are 85% of women and 62% of men). This is despite the fact that for women promotion is more dependent on education. Age, on the other hand, plays a minimal role for both men and women. Nor was there any indication that the situation is different according to the branch regardless of the proportion of women working there.

MW98 showed that most people see men and women as equally able to assume a management position (82% of women and 61% of men). Public opinion surveys show that 43% of people would rather work under a man (36% of women and 50% of men), but approximately the same percentage see the gender of their superior as irrelevant (45%, including 47% of women and 42% of men).<sup>12</sup> Women nevertheless report worse prospects in their jobs, principally in terms of promotion<sup>13</sup> (the higher the position, the smaller the chance that a woman will get it), and this is proved in statistics of the percentages of men and women in different positions according to classifications of occupations.

Inequality of participation in decision-making is also due to the different paths to promotion of men and women. Alongside the subjective, socially determined barrier to women's rising to a certain level, there is their dual role (e.g. interruptions in their career and lower efficiency or motivation because of having to look after children or other members of the family). Even though women start from the same position as men they tend only to reach the middle management level in a company (as indeed in any power hierarchy). As well as meaning that women lose out on one of the conditions necessary

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<sup>11</sup>) According to the survey *Transformace a modernizace* [Transformation and Modernisation] carried out by the Institute of Sociology of Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, in 1988 90% of women and 79% of men had no subordinates at work, while in 1995 the corresponding figures were 89% and 77%, and for those with more than 10 subordinates, the figures were 2% of women and 7% of men in both years [*Transformace...* 1988].

<sup>12</sup>) ["Muži..." 1996]. Women's best management qualities were seen as their thoroughness, their willingness to think things over and their ability to resolve inter-personal problems, while the qualities praised in men were their ability to make decisions, their authority and expertise, and their intelligence.

<sup>13</sup>) Similar results were obtained by the research projects [*Podmínky...* 1994] and [*Ženy...* 1996]. The first found that 22% of working women and 38% of men have people working under them. The corresponding figures from the second project were 22% of women and 34% of men.

for higher social status and prestige, the low percentage of women in decision-making structures has an effect on the broader social context.

### **Women in Private Business**

The percentage of women in the private sector can be taken as one indicator of how much they have gained since November 1989. The percentage of women in private enterprise is relatively high in international terms (see Table 1), with the percentage of working women who were self-employed in 1999 reaching 6.6% of those without employees and 2.2% of entrepreneurs employing other people (the corresponding figures for men were 12.2% and 5.8%). The percentage of self-employed women therefore rose by 2.9 percentage points between 1993 and 1998. Women's interest in private business is still lower than that of men (sociological research puts the percentage of women seriously considering this as about half that of men).<sup>14</sup> A number of reasons for this can be deduced, but have not yet been proven, as for example the link with the different distribution of the sexes by field of work, or women's lesser willingness to take risks in business. The structure of employment by branch of self-employed women more or less corresponds to that of women-employees and to the 'traditional' preferences for subjects of study. Nevertheless, the distribution of self-employed women with employees is largely concentrated into three 'female' areas (retail trade, health and processing industries), where they clearly feel more 'competent'.

Findings on self-employed women indicate the validity of the idea that they have good conditions namely in 'traditional' female fields of work. The MW98 research showed that they have a relatively high level of self-esteem and that they gain greater fulfilment from their work than do women who are employed by others. They are more satisfied with the content and nature of their work, with the degree to which they make use of their abilities and qualifications, with their level of independence and with their income, so are more likely to report that their ideas of their occupation have been met.

Inspired by foreign experience we looked at whether self-employed women have greater difficulties than do men. We questioned how they managed the difficult aspects of business, the support they get from family members, their position in the face of the competition, whether their initial capital was sufficient, and the difficulties they had in obtaining bank loans. No difference between men and women was found in any of these areas, with both groups saying that their greatest difficulties were in financial matters.<sup>15</sup>

### **Legal Aspects of Employment**

It was assumed that the process of democratisation since 1989 would manifest itself also in people's increasing security in the face of the law. The legal system in the Czech Republic has overall a major lack of law enforcement, for which a developed legal knowledge is needed. In questions of the equality of men and women before the law, this lack is to some extent justified by the non-existence of specific 'anti-discrimination' legal norms.

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<sup>14</sup>) Data from MW98 showed that 7% of men and 3% of women were preparing to start their own business, while 44% of men and 23% of women were thinking about it, although there was, of course, no indication of how seriously. These women are more likely to be highly educated than are the men.

<sup>15</sup>) Women may be more likely to have problems due to their lower income from work, which generally provides the initial capital.

It was however interesting to discover the relevant positions in the field of legal work relations. The expectation of shortcomings in this area and of differences between the sexes were fulfilled. Only 33% of women and 44% of men said they knew their rights under the labour law (mostly, only in part). Men were (by their own reports) considerably better in this, perhaps because they are more likely to move to exert their rights, while women are more passive. The reasons for the low level of legal knowledge should be sought in the recent past, when it was entirely disregarded, and in the fact that in the face of past experience no clear counter-pole has been created to simplify the enforcement of individual legal rights. There is understandably a complete lack of experience of equal treatment for men and women.

In practice it seems that one-third of women and nearly half of all men had at some time had a serious conflict with their employer (MW98), but in about half of these cases, for both men and women, they did not dare to assert their rights or resigned due to a lack of faith in a successful resolution of the conflict. In the hypothetical case that the employer did not respect the rights of the employee, 30% of both men and women said they would opt for a passive reaction (do nothing because it would be too difficult to enforce their rights, or leave their job). Men would opt rather for resolving their conflicts themselves, while women were undecided or would call on the relevant institution for assistance (26% compared with 22% of men). They (similarly to men) cited as such institutions the management of the company (57%), a lawyer (42%), or a trade union (36%).<sup>16</sup> The preference for informal support is shown by the reliance on support from colleagues (57%). People are more likely to trust in the effectiveness of legal measures to resolve problems in less complicated or better-known situations (e.g. for pregnant women).

The low number of legal conflicts in the field of work cannot be seen as a sign of the legal probity of the behaviour of superiors at work, since it may also indicate a lack of knowledge of legal rights and experience with asserting these. At the same time a certain (to put it mildly) uncertainty in work relations on the part of women makes it easier for employers to abuse them.<sup>17</sup> A certain passivity on the part of women (and of some men) and a demonstrated scepticism can be explained by the absence of examples of successful assertion of the rights of female employees and of the publication of these.

### **Incomes and Remuneration**

Gender inequality in remuneration is one of the aspects that arises most frequently in the opinions of both men and women. The average difference in their incomes has dropped since the 1980s, but is still around 25% and is once again on the rise. This average figure conceals a wide variation due to a whole range of other factors which also affect it. It is necessary to break these down to gain an idea of the actual inequality, but this is a difficult task. The substantial effect of education, for example, is not straightforward (even bearing in mind the different educational distribution of men and women), age is a relatively unimportant factor (the lowest levels of inequality are in the youngest and oldest

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<sup>16</sup>) The percentages total more than 100 because the various alternatives were questioned independently. The percentage given is the total of all the "Definitely yes" and "Probably yes" answers for each case.

<sup>17</sup>) Examples of such abuse are discovered by chance and the research only showed the degree to which people are aware of such a danger.

cohorts), but inequality by sector is more marked (in state-run companies women receive over 80% of the income of men, while in foreign companies they have less than 60%). The range of incomes given by the basic indicators [*Mikrocensus* 1996] is similar for both the male and female samples, i.e. non-existent for age (for both  $\eta^2 = 0.01$ ), does not differ by category of employee (ISCO88,  $\eta^2 = 0.27$  for women, 0.25 for men), and only slightly by education (women 0.25, men 0.20) and economic branch (women 0.11, men 0.07).

Comparing the income distribution for each sex separately, there is a surprising similarity according both to education and to category of employee. The basic difference must therefore lie in the fact that men's incomes are 'set' about 30% higher than for women. The total range of average incomes (the difference between science graduates and people who did not complete primary school) is less for women than for men. This is also borne out by greater differentiation by education for men, while for women the financial effect of higher education is less, despite its greater importance for their advancement.

The highest incomes among women are generally in the same fields as for men. The income difference by field does however conceal an "internal" distribution of jobs of men and women (principally their role in management), linked with their different distribution of qualifications. The data from the *Mikrocensus* 1996 (Tables 4 and 5) show that the different educational level between men and women definitely contributes to the inequality of their incomes, while average education provides only a certain indication (the differences between various educational levels are not the same). Income differences are greater in branches and occupational groups where the educational level of women is markedly lower than that of men, while when the differences in the level of education are smaller or indeed women's level is higher than that of men, income inequality by sex is reduced. The link is not conclusive since there are some fields in which the differences in income are considerable but those in education slight, or vice versa (see Table 5).

There are two reasons for the above-average income differences in certain fields where there is a preponderance of women, which signal a greater inequality in education between men and women. The first is that there are also inequalities in the positions held, with a higher percentage of the men in those fields holding management positions. Secondly, some of these fields have a majority of relatively low-qualified manual jobs, in which women's work receives less financial recognition than that of men (the difference among people with technical qualifications is 42%). The idea that the low level of remuneration for women (and men?) in certain fields is due to the preponderance of women in them was, however, only partially supported by the data from the *Mikrocensus* [see Kuchařová and Zamykalová 1998: 34].

A more detailed explanation of income differences between men and women requires information on the already mentioned differentiation by position within the ownership sector (according to the *Mikrocensus* 1996). The highest position on the income ladder for men and women is held by those working in their own (non-agricultural) business, where men's income is 57% more than the average and women's is 34%. This group does, however, also include the greatest differences between women and men (the average income of women is only 58% of men's). The lowest incomes for both groups are in agricultural co-operatives, but women's average income there is 76% of that of men. Comparing employees with self-employed people does present certain methodo-

Table 4. Incomes (Gross Monthly) of Women by Type of Work and Level of Education

| Classification of occupations                   | Percentage of Women** | Women's average gross monthly income | Standard deviation | Proportion of average gross monthly income women/men | Average level of education* |     |           |
|---|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|--|-----------------------------|-----|-----------|
|   |                       |                                      |                    |  | Women                       | Men | Men-Women |
| Legislators, senior officials and managers      | 22.2                  | 15,454                               | 8,682              | 68.0   | 5.6                         | 6.2 | 0.6       |
| Professionals                                   | 53.9                  | 12,622                               | 5,610              | 72.6   | 7.0                         | 7.2 | 0.1       |
| Technicians, health and education workers etc.  | 54.4                  | 9,592                                | 3,513              | 71.0   | 5.7                         | 5.7 | 0.0       |
| Clerical, lower-level admin. work               | 80.3                  | 8,880                                | 3,506              | 71.7   | 4.9                         | 5.2 | 0.3       |
| Operational staff in shops and services         | 68.7                  | 6,647                                | 2,477              | 52.8   | 2.7                         | 3.8 | 1.1       |
| Skilled workers in agriculture & forestry, etc. | 49.2                  | 6,605                                | 1,928              | 73.8   | 2.2                         | 2.8 | 0.6       |
| Craft and related trades workers                | 15.4                  | 7,096                                | 2,801              | 64.8   | 2.2                         | 2.6 | 0.4       |
| Machine operators                               | 25.0                  | 7,154                                | 2,240              | 71.1   | 2.0                         | 2.5 | 0.5       |
| Unskilled workers                               | 60.1                  | 5,638                                | 2,951              | 71.9   | 1.8                         | 2.1 | 0.3       |
| Total   | 69.9                  | 8,258                                | 4,108              | 68.2   | 3.9                         | 3.8 | -0.1      |

\*) On a 9-point educational scale in which 1 = elementary and 9 = science graduate.

\*\*) According to the 1997 Yearbook, data from December 1996 to February 1997.

Source: *Mikrocensus* 1996, author's calculations.

Table 5. Incomes (Gross Monthly) of Women by Field of Activity and Level of Education

| Branch  | Percentage of Women** | Women's average gross monthly income | Standard deviation | Proportion of average gross monthly income women/men | Average level of education* |     |             |
|---|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|--|-----------------------------|-----|-------------|
|   |                       |                                      |                    |  | Women                       | Men | Men-Women   |
| Agriculture                                   | 35.5                  | <b>6,943</b>                         | 2,932              | 73.3   | 2.8                         | 3.1 | 0.3         |
| Mining and quarrying                          | 16.9                  | 8,562                                | 3,403              | <b>63.4</b>  | 3.1                         | 3.0 | -0.1        |
| Manufacturing                                 | 39.4                  | <b>7,615</b>                         | 3,392              | <b>64.0</b>  | 3.0                         | 3.4 | 0.4         |
| Electricity, gas and water industries         | 26.7                  | 9,476                                | 4,270              | 69.6   | 4.3                         | 3.6 | -0.7        |
| Construction                                  | 11.2                  | 8,671                                | 3,832              | 75.3   | 4.6                         | 3.1 | <b>-1.5</b> |
| Retailing and repairs                         | <b>57.4</b>           | <b>7,416</b>                         | 3,790              | <b>57.3</b>  | 3.2                         | 4.0 | <b>0.8</b>  |
| Restaurant and hotel sphere                   | <b>55.3</b>           | <b>6,171</b>                         | 4,222              | <b>65.1</b>  | 2.7                         | 3.4 | <b>0.7</b>  |
| Transport, storage, communications            | 32.4                  | 8,481                                | 3,564              | 75.5   | 3.6                         | 3.4 | -0.2        |
| Banking and insurance                         | <b>69.7</b>           | 14,512                               | <b>7,255</b>       | <b>62.5</b>  | <b>5.5</b>                  | 6.3 | <b>0.8</b>  |
| Real estate, research and development         | 42.6                  | 9,295                                | <b>4,810</b>       | <b>59.4</b>  | <b>5.3</b>                  | 5.8 | 0.5         |
| Public administration                         | <b>58.4</b>           | 10,058                               | <b>4,960</b>       | 70.9   | <b>5.1</b>                  | 5.3 | 0.2         |
| Education                                     | <b>74.1</b>           | 8,898                                | 3,361              | 68.7   | <b>5.5</b>                  | 6.6 | <b>1.1</b>  |
| Health and social services                    | <b>77.1</b>           | 8,841                                | 3,693              | 68.9   | <b>5.1</b>                  | 5.4 | 0.3         |
| Other community, social and personal services | 41.8                  | <b>7,030</b>                         | <b>4,734</b>       | 69.4   | 3.9                         | 4.3 | 0.4         |
| Total   | 44.6                  | 8,259                                | 4,107              | 68.2   | 3.9                         | 3.8 | -0.1        |

\*) On a 9-point educational scale in which 1 = elementary and 9 = science graduate.

\*\*) According to the 1997 Yearbook, data from 1996.

Source: *Mikrocensus* 1996, author's calculations.

logical problems. Bearing in mind the inexactitudes resulting from these, self-employed women with employees earn 130% more than the average annual income for all women. Self-employed women without employees earn only 5% more than this average income.<sup>18</sup> As the difference between the incomes of men and women running businesses with employees is considerably less than that difference between the incomes of male and female employees, the differences shown for men are lower – 83% in the case of businessmen and zero for self-employed persons.

Differences in the incomes of men and women are relatively high and are changing only gradually. It is not, however, possible to show to what extent this is discrimination in that the inequality is due to gender, without collecting sufficient individual cases of demonstrable discrimination or applying tested criteria for judging equal pay for work of equal value. The salary differences found can largely be explained by objective factors, i.e. by differences in qualifications, position at work and by women's careers being interrupted for children. It is very difficult to prove subjective factors (the unwillingness to place the same value on men and women doing work of the same value). In these areas women are paying for the fact that their careers are more affected by family responsibilities. They are also paying for the fact that this is (more or less consciously) accepted even in women's educational and professional aspirations.

#### **Attitudes to Discrimination at Work**

While the whole population, although particularly women, are apparently conscious of a degree of inequality (and even discrimination) in questions relating to the relative status of men and women, there is little difference between men's and women's evaluation of specific aspects of their own professional experience – self realisation, working conditions, dealings with superiors, etc. (in MW98, among others). Certain differences in attitudes can, however, be identified relating to those aspects of work where women are most liable to feel unequal with men – remuneration, promotion, participation in management, and somewhat less in self-realisation and independence.

To compare discrimination by sex with other forms of inequality we asked (MW98) what influences employers' decisions on remuneration and promotion, and gave gender as one possible factor (Table 6). The lack of any difference between men's and women's responses is particularly interesting, with both seeing the fact of whether an employee is a man or a woman as the least important. This in itself does not disprove the possibility that their work is valued differently. The factors that were considered most important – performance, experience and ability to work flexible hours according to the needs of the job – could (particularly in the case of the second and third of these) be the very ones where men and women differ most, independent of individual cases. In this case it is possible to talk of hidden discrimination (in concrete instances).

One-fifth of men and two-fifths of women are critical of gender inequalities at work, and in both cases they see a need for changes in women's favour. Measures to right such inequalities are supported by 57% of women and 40% of men, while 37% of women and 16% of men feel a lack of these. In other words, among those who support such measures the majority of men, but not women, consider that they are already sufficient.

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<sup>18</sup>) In both cases, self-employed women working in agriculture are excluded, as the number of such people is so small that there must be some doubt as to how valid and representative the figures about them are.



23% of women and 37% of men reject such measures (mostly because they believe that both groups have equal rights today and that this is how it should be, while current measures in favour of women are condemned by 6% of men and 2% of women).

Table 6. Influence of Selected Factors on Remuneration prospects and Promotion Opportunities – Opinions of Men and Women\*

| Factor                              | Remuneration |       | Promotion |       |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|-------|-----------|-------|
|                                     | Men          | Women | Men       | Women |
| Performance and quality of work     | 1.6          | 1.9   | 1.8       | 2.0   |
| Level of education                  | 2.4          | 2.4   | 2.3       | 2.4   |
| Experience                          | 1.9          | 2.1   | 1.8       | 2.0   |
| Age                                 | 3.0          | 3.0   | 2.8       | 2.8   |
| Sex                                 | 3.3          | 3.3   | 3.1       | 3.2   |
| Connections, relation with superior | 2.8          | 2.9   | 2.6       | 2.7   |
| Seniority in the organisation       | 2.5          | 2.5   | 2.5       | 2.5   |
| Willing to work irregular hours     | 2.0          | 2.3   | -         | -     |

\*) Average assessment of importance on a four-point scale from 1 = very important to 4 = not at all.

Source: Research on the status of men and women in the Czech Republic.

A telling example of the limited sensitivity to gender questions are the more 'conservative' opinions on discrimination in job advertisements. Advertisements which state requirements relating to the age or sex of applicants are condemned by only 6% of men and women, while 54% of men and 31% of women expressed a positive opinion, and a further 26% and 41% respectively thought they were justified in some cases. In this question it is clear that, regardless of discussions 'on the European level', a sense of what is right is combined with a degree of acceptance of gender segmentation of the labour market, which offered certain advantages for both men and women in the past. Growing competition on the labour market will doubtless lead to modifications of such views.

Such attitudes show the conflicting approaches to discrimination (not only by sex) in this society. A sense of equal rights is clear in sensitive reactions to those instances in which inequalities between men and women are obviously unfounded. In other cases they are generally seen as natural, which does not mean that they cannot be changed. Differences in opinions on these questions cut across all other types of social divisions and seem to boil down to differences between the opinions of men and women.

## Conclusion

While over recent decades there has been great progress towards equal conditions for men and women in the work arena, a number of discrepancies still remain. The necessary legislative measures have been taken, questions relating to education have been largely resolved, but there are still many aspects where inequalities still exist. These can be traced back to the biologically, psychologically and socially conditioned division of work between men and women, to deep-rooted views on the complementary nature of men's and women's roles, and to the difficulty of implementing legally and morally recognised rights in everyday life. In this country, questions of women's position at work and on the labour market arouse less interest than in developed countries, but this does not reflect the

real extent of gender divisions on the labour market or how far women achieve their professional aspirations. Nor does it reflect the growing importance of such questions.

There is certainly some interest in overcoming inequalities in the positions of men and women, but they are not generally seen as (conscious) discrimination. For this reason real change cannot be expected if equal opportunities policies are limited to the working arena, without setting long-term goals in the wider social and cultural context.

*Translated by April Retter*

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# Equal Opportunity as a Matter of Public Interest<sup>\*</sup>

## An Analysis of Institutional and Social Mechanisms

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**Abstract:** The article analyses attitudes to equal opportunities for men and women in Czech society, also against the background of mechanisms of the institutions of public interest. The author works with two hypothetical models, the first of which is the basic model of the general mechanism of the implementation of equal opportunities as a matter of public interest. This is compared with a second model which seeks to show how this in fact works in the Czech Republic. She then goes on to describe differences observed, suggests possible explanations for these, and outlines the factors which are specific to the Czech environment. In the conclusion she looks at the parties involved in the mechanisms investigated, and the way they conceive of and evaluate actions contributing to the implementation of equal opportunities in the Czech Republic.

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In analysing institutional and social mechanisms of the construction of public interest in Czech society in the 1990s, I start from two basic premises. The first is that public interest is a statement of the preferential interests of society and concerns the redistribution and securing of the public wealth which society uses as a whole or in parts. Secondly, the formulation of interests is a complicated process which has two principal sources. The first is the aspirations of individuals to satisfy those needs which are beyond their personal capacity. In the second case public interests are derived from the action of social, i.e. supra-individual, factors which determine social development. These are usually formulated by institutions (political, cultural, civil, constitutional, etc.).

*In a transitional society public interest expresses:*

- needs which concern large social units (groups or society as a whole)
- values which society is aspiring to
- the defence of social needs and values against threat [Purkrábek 1996: 78-79].

From the point of view of public interest theory, this is an important definition and specification of new dimensions of public interest. These are processes which are shaping social reality on the level of citizens in the 1990s. Public interest was a much-used concept during the state socialist period, but although the governing elite frequently referred to it, it did not meet the basic theoretical criteria governing it, that is:

- directing policy towards the development of society and the resolution of its actual problems;
- creating a free, democratic space for social and political expression;

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– guarantee open access to information and freedom of expression.

In the course of the current economic, political and social transformation of Czech society in the 1990s, the areas that have been publicly recognised as of interest are those which are important for the formation of the new social order and whose neglect would mean a threat of social anomie. The following processes have had priority:

- establishing democratic principles in the Czech constitution and other laws;
- creating political plurality of parties and movements;
- constituting a market economy and market environment.

The developed democracy and the presence of women on the labour market in developed European countries has led to equal opportunity for men and women becoming a matter of public interest. The mechanisms of public interest which concerns the development of equal opportunity for men and women in the Czech Republic will be analysed in this article. I have worked with two hypothetical models of the location of this public interest in this country. In the second part of the article I will describe the differences observed, suggest a possible explanation for these and outline the factors which are specific to the Czech situation. The conclusion will be devoted to the actors in the mechanisms researched and how they conceive of and evaluate the activities which contribute to the spread of equal opportunities in the Czech Republic.

### Models of the Implementation of Equal Opportunities

In the Czech Republic, equal opportunities are not conceived of or recognised as a matter of long-term public interest.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult for interests of this type to become established and since they are generally a case of ideas that affect the future, and the power sphere tends to underestimate their importance. Nor is public support for them overly strong, since people do not see these problems as urgent or as directly affecting them (unlike matters of short-term public interest). Approaches to the question of equal opportunities vary.<sup>2</sup> The most common approach at the outset is that which I have here termed Model A.

Model A shows the mechanism by which equal opportunities become established as 'classical, long-term interest'. Information dialogue and public participation play a fundamental role in identifying and formulating public interest. In the course of this process the bearers of this interest become actors on the highest level. There may eventually be a problem of identifying the established interest – most often on the level of political parties. These should be able to recognise which values are the most important in society,

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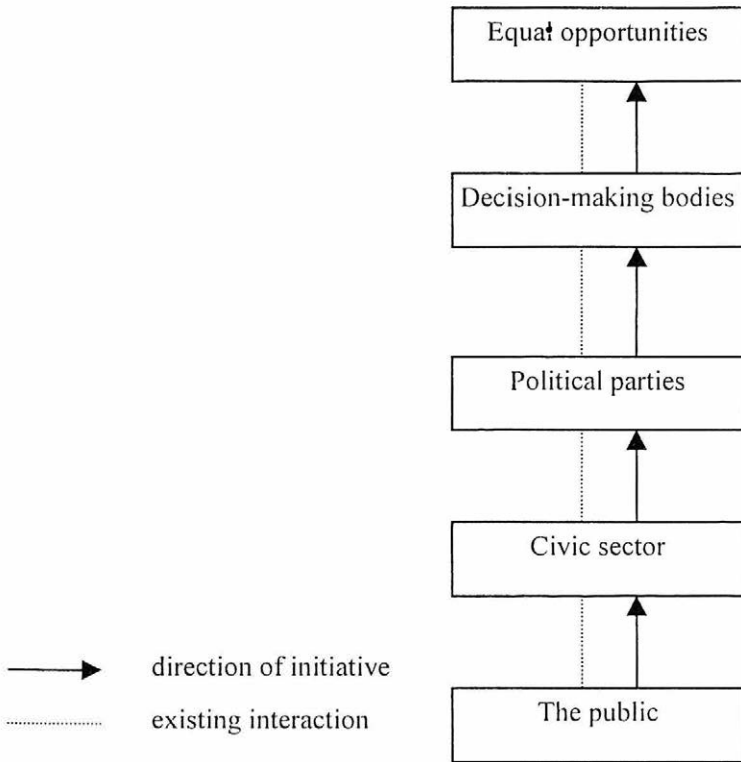
<sup>1</sup>) The most important factor in identifying and then establishing public interest in the Czech Republic is timing. The time-structure of public interest can take three forms:

- short-term – identifiable on the basis of existing social problems or tensions and functional needs of society;
- long-term – arising rather from values that the society propagates, as for instance with investment in future development (these values are often stated in party political programmes);
- mid-term – a combination of both approaches - generally a case of existing values which have repeatedly failed to gain recognition or of the re-emergence of social problems.

<sup>2</sup>) In a discussion of equal opportunities it is a *sine qua non* condition that a given society fulfils the preconditions of an open society. Public interest is based on the existence of a public sector and assumes the functioning of a market economy.

since only those which are really recognised become the subject of public interest. The decision-making bodies gradually become aware of this interest and determine whether it will be accepted or not. Whatever they may decide, it is important that the public be aware of the result, since collaboration is essential for the establishment of public interest.

Model A.



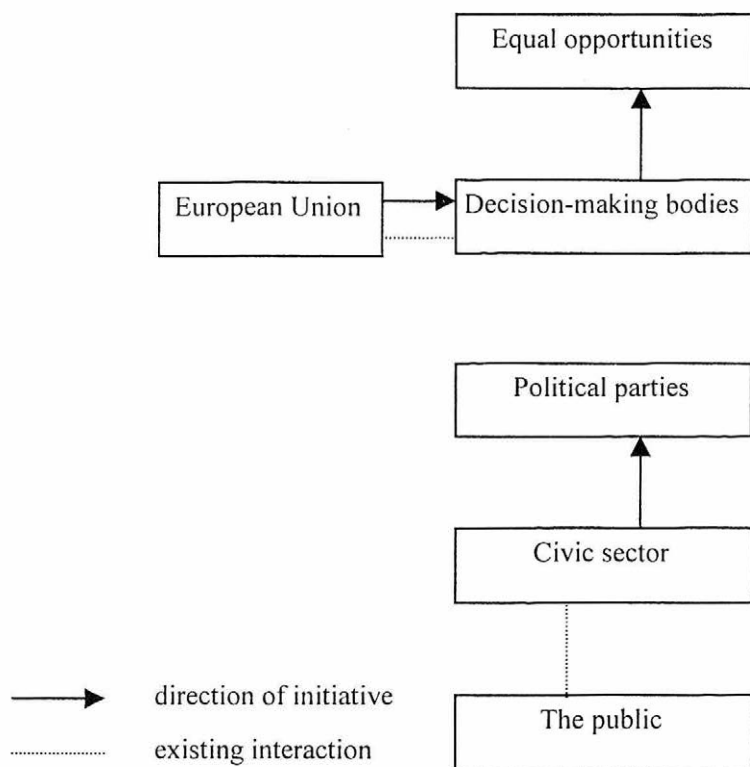
The problem in the Czech Republic is somewhat different. *Equal opportunities (recognised as a matter of public interest)* are an instrument for fulfilling another matter of public interest, i.e. entry into the European Union. This is at present a priority for mid-term interest, since the Czech Republic is actively seeking membership.<sup>3</sup>

There is now a very particular situation in the Czech Republic. On the one hand there is formal support for equal opportunities on the level of power-holders, but at the

<sup>3</sup>) Equal opportunities have not had an unbroken development even in the European Union, but there is now institutional support for them and forces which have gradually raised them to an EU priority. This public interest was originally voiced by individuals who demanded equality for women and men. It was a long time before it was in fact recognised as a matter of public interest and put into practice. There has however been a gradual transformation into a matter of social interest [Naisbitt and Aburden 1992, Purkrábek 1996, Rees 1998, Scruton 1990, Veselý undated]. This was primarily due to the attempt to resolve problems linked with unemployment and poverty, which affected women more than men and led to their social exclusion. Many member states accepted the principle of equal treatment when the European Community was founded in the 1950s, but the principle was in fact only fully established at the end of the 1980s [Rees 1998].

same time one important precondition for its recognition as a matter of public interest is lacking. This is the support of the public. The Czech public, both male and female, still does not see equal opportunities as a question which requires a solution. *Both men and women have a sense of equal rights, but at the same time they have no difficulty in accepting the roles which society prescribes for them.* Nor are the factors which determine the position of women in society as it is at present seen by the public as a source of conflict.<sup>4</sup> This degree of inconsistency in opinions is typical of Czech society and its roots probably lie in the so-called 'post-communist syndrome'.

Model B.



Mechanisms characteristic of the Czech Republic are depicted by Model B. Here there are apparently three unconnected sectors. At the bottom there is the public, which has as yet presented no demands for equal opportunities. In the middle, equally alone, stands the so-called non-governmental sector, which in normal circumstances acts as a type of 'mediator'. However, it only fulfils its functions in part, as some signals emerge on the level of the civic sector, but they come up against the barrier of the political parties.<sup>5</sup> A further

<sup>4</sup>) Czech women are, however, conscious of this to a certain degree, as 55% of respondents would welcome special measures to help women, particularly relating to work and maternity (although only 15% of women answered "definitely yes") [Kuchařová and Zamykalová 1998].

<sup>5</sup>) No political party has as yet expressed explicit support for the principle of equal opportunity. This goes both for the parties of the former coalition, which accepted the Government Declaration

gap appears between them and the decision-making level (government, parliament). Paradoxically, it is the latter where the attempt to establish equal opportunity is strongest, since the decision-making sphere is greatly influenced by its undertakings to the EU and various international legal documents.<sup>6</sup> Meeting these formally will bring the Czech Republic closer to entry into the EU, which is an aim which is dear to the heart of the Czech Government.

Identification and realisation of matters of public interest can only be effective when it is the result of a consensus of political partners. For this reason, the absence of any participation by individuals and interest groups is a negative sign. The government can then slide into a state of what is sometimes termed in the literature [Howlett and Ramesh 1995] as "agenda-setting". In practice it means defining public interest as a political agenda for the government. It is the "recognition of problems by the government". The government or public officials themselves decide what they will take as being in the public interest. The drawback of this approach is its narrow underestimation of public policy, which does not solve the problem of whether and to what degree this government agenda represents the real problems or interests of society.

*In the Czech Republic, equal opportunities policies have become an instrument for 'fulfilling' one of the tasks of a pre-emptive strategy. There is, of course, the danger that the means will become an end and that equal opportunities will stagnate at the level of a proclamation.*

Why then does the Czech public maintain its distance and not have its own position on this question? What factors are concerned and how can they influence the approach of the Czech public to equal opportunities.

a) *Historical tradition and the cultural pattern of behaviour.* "At the turn of this century the Czech public showed exceptionally strong support for women's emancipation" [Havelková 1995: 35]. The women's movement at that time was very active and launched a struggle for universal suffrage, which was only attained after Czechoslovakia was established. In the declaration of the independence of the Czechoslovak Republic on 18th October 1918 it says: "Women will be politically, socially and culturally on a level with men". Article 106 of the first constitution from 1920 states that "There shall be no privileges pertaining to sex, family or calling". The tradition of the First Republic was disrupted by the emergence of communism, but the percentage of working women continued to be high and this did not change greatly even after the economic transformation.

b) *The economic situation and the development of the country.* The beginning of the 1990s saw both social transformation and economic reform in this country, the latter aimed at resolving the country's difficult economic situation. At that time policies were concentrated on economic goals and the development of the civic sector and public interest receded into the background. The economic changes had a high level of support among the public and were seen as a necessity. In such an atmosphere, questions relating to women were seen as exaggerated and marginalised.

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on the Equal Rights of Men and Women, but also for the programme of the governing Social Democrats, where there is only a passing reference to equal opportunities.

<sup>6</sup>) For example, the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which the Czech Republic subscribed to 1982.

c) *The political regime of the state and society.* The equality of men and women had an important place among the aims of the former communist system. There was, however, a fundamental flaw in that the totalitarian state decided without the participation of the parties who would normally become involved in a democratic system, in this case men and women. The general presence of women in society was a part of the official ideology of the communist regime in the Czech Republic. The relatively high percentage of women in social and political life and in the economy was however due to state intervention and regulation. This contributed to a declining interest among women in their own emancipation, against a background of relatively equal but low standard living for all and the paternalistic approach of the state. In addition, all the various approaches and conceptions such as the feminist movement were 'ideologised'. This contributed to an ironic and pejorative view of women's questions which has largely continued even after the changes. In a survey by *Lidové noviny*, for example, one of the women questioned said:

*"I am against any -isms. Such a movement is not important for what I call the quality of life."* ["Profesionálky" 1999]

Dahrendorf compares the transition from an authoritarian regime with a centrally-planned economy to a democratic society with a market economy to a hyperbole. He believes that political institutions can be changed in six months, economic relations in six years, and people's habits, attitudes, behaviour and values in sixty years. [Dahrendorf 1991].

d) *The cultural level and quality of life in a given country.* This factor has a clear influence on determining those matters which have a chance of being recognised as in the public interest. In this respect it is clear that the establishment of equality can be of concern to those societies which have attained a certain level and no longer have to resolve the primary problems. One reason why equal opportunities are not clearly understood in this country is that there are still enough other problems which affect many people (bad economic situation, unemployment). Here it is possible to see an analogy with Maslow's theory of needs; higher needs can only be satisfied when the fundamental ones have already been met. Some people also feel that feminism can only interest women who already have a certain level of security. The owner of one large cosmetic firm expressed this clearly:

*"Feminism is like a superstructure. It is only women who have no other worries that can think about it."* ["Profesionálky" 1999]

e) *The country's geopolitical situation.* Until recently a great deal of energy in the Czech Republic was spent in measures relating to the country's entry into NATO. The wish to join the alliance was one of the government's main priorities. Since this aim was achieved in March this year, it can be supposed that the political sphere will now turn its attention to other areas.

f) *Responsibilities relating to international documents.* The government began to take a systematic approach to its responsibilities relating to the position of women in society in the second half of 1997. In addition to the Czech Republic's undertaking to fulfil recommendation 4 of the UNO World Conference on Women, which took place in Peking in 1995, and the convention on eliminating all forms of discrimination, it also tried to meet the general conditions for EU membership by a public declaration of equal opportunities. Until that time the activities of the Czech government were sporadic and the women's



Table 1. Parties Involved in Implementing Equal Opportunities in the Czech Republic

| Parties                               | Overview of their contribution to the implementation of equal opportunities   | Degree of fulfilment   |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <i>State</i>                          |   |  |
| Government                            | Consistent respect for documents accepted, support, proposals for new laws, decision-making.  | Beginning to take action in questions of equal opportunities.  |
| Parliament                            | Evaluation of laws presented for approval, proposals for new laws.  | Parliament tends to be rather evasive.   |
| Senate                                | Ensure that these principles are respected, repeated checking of legislation.   | Not committed.   |
| Ministries                            | Implementation of decisions, monitoring and analysis of the influence of gender, contact and dialogue with the public and civic sector, formulation of concrete measures. | -  |
| Ministry of Work and Social Affairs   |   | Established Department for Equal Opportunities, continuing co-operation with the EU, preparing documents for the government.   |
| Other ministries                      |   | Individual departments do not place any stress on equal opportunities.   |
| Courts                                | Ensuring that laws are respected, decisions in gender-motivated conflicts.  | As yet no problem has been resolved on this level, inert attitude.   |
| <i>Non-state</i>                      |   |  |
| Political parties                     | Identification of new problems, inclusion of questions in electoral platform, support in parliament.  | Parties pay relatively little attention to equal opportunities, most electoral platforms do not include it.                    |
| Unions                                | Social dialogue, commenting on situation.   | Inert attitude.  |
| Lobbies                               | Lobbying, supporting interests, pressure on decision-makers.  | Inert attitude.  |
| NGO's                                 | Identification of problems, assistance in implementation, awareness-raising activities, commenting, expert analysis.  | Collaboration with the decision-making sphere is developing but they are still reserved in their approach to the wider public. |
| Scientific institutions, universities | Expert analysis and research, creating conditions and analysis for the decision-making sphere.  | Some research on gender issues does exist, expert collaboration with the government has been established.                      |
| Media                                 | Awareness raising, channel of communication, presentation and information on the work of government and parliament, leading a social dialogue between all parties.        | Recently more space has been given to these subjects, but the form of presentation is often intrusive and inappropriate.       |

question was not a subject which interested the government or *de facto* even the public.<sup>7</sup> Two years after the Peking conference, however, it was no longer possible to postpone the matter and the first steps had to be taken. A further impulse came from the need to harmonise legislation in this area with that of the European Union. This led to formal responsibility for coordinating this policy being given to the Minister of Work and Social Affairs at the beginning of 1998. At the same time all government departments were directed to collaborate with non-governmental women's organisations and the Minister of Work and Social Affairs was directed to draw up a concrete programme for this area. As a result the Department for the Equality of Men and Women was set up within the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs on 1st February 1998. This department prepared a proposal for government statement no. 236/1998, "Government Priorities and Approaches to Establishing Equality between Men and Women", which was the first official document issued in the area.

In certain countries and societies there may be other specific factors which have a decisive influence on both the selection and the presentation and realisation of matters of public interest,<sup>8</sup> but the above factors are the key ones in the Czech situation.

### Actors

In considering who are the parties involved in these mechanisms, Table 1. provides a summary of them and their activities in the implementation of equal opportunities.

It cannot be expected that all these parties will completely fulfil their responsibilities all at once. As Model B showed, this is not in fact possible in the given situation.

In the Czech Republic there is a situation in which equal opportunities policies are implemented 'from above'. For this reason they remain confined to the basis of legislation, and decision-making bodies do not furnish the space to link up with all the parties mentioned above. In practice this means that there is no prevailing mechanism which would transform theoretical concepts into practical steps, investigate and evaluate women's concrete problems, and take measures to solve them. The inconsistent implementation of equal opportunities on the part of decision-making bodies is due to the lack of links between the basic levels. This leads to a rigidity of public attitudes, since the public does not at the present time have access to information as to what the concept of equal opportunities in fact means and what they have to gain from it.

### Conclusion

At the end of the 1990s the Czech Republic stands on the threshold of European integration. Membership of the European Union, which is being actively sought, will require a pre-emptive strategy in relation to certain demands. For the Czech Republic to be accepted by the European Union, it must first come to terms with a number of concrete tasks. In the social policy field this is a question primarily of harmonisation and coordination of Czech regulations with the social dimension of EU policy.

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<sup>7</sup>) In the early 1990s the greatest attention to women's questions came from non-governmental organisations.

<sup>8</sup>) This can be seen from the way the question of equal opportunities is dealt with within the European Union. Even though it may seem to act as a single unit, there may be considerable differences between the various member countries. In countries such as Spain, Portugal or Greece, the implementation of equal opportunities is proceeding at a very different rate. [Rees 1998].

Even if the social policy area is not a major obstacle to our entry, we still lag behind the EU in the implementation of equal rights for men and women. Recent years have seen the development of an active European policy of equal opportunities within the European Union. The nature and form of this policy are set by the attempt to define the space of action in solving problems which go beyond the national level. The inspiration by legislation on equality and mainstreaming would therefore represent an impulse towards the development of equal opportunities in this country as well.

Although the Czech government has accepted the approach of the European Union and in 1998 began to implement equal opportunities within Czech society, this process has not been entirely smooth. Behind it there is another interest which is governing the decision-making sphere. The fulfilment of one of the requirements for entry is at present both complicating and fulfilling undertakings arising from international documents. In parallel with individual phases in the creation of policy, equal opportunities policy has reached the phase of decisions, but has stagnated in the implementation phase, which is a fundamental shortcoming from the point of view of the government fulfilling its priorities.<sup>9</sup> The vacillation and uncertainty of the institutions and bureaucrats responsible for this issue are evidence of a problem that is typical for the Czech Republic – an inadequately functioning state bureaucracy.

The solution is certainly not a one-off acceptance of mainstreaming, since this would not have sufficient support in this country. Even if the Czech public is aware of certain differences and inequalities between men and women, its attitudes are not as yet inclined towards equal opportunities.

*Translated by April Retter*

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<sup>9</sup>) According to the document "Government Priorities and Approaches in Implementing Equal Opportunities for Men and Women", these priorities are as follows: (1) Acceptance of the principle of the equality of men and women as an element of government policy, (2) Legal measures to ensure the conditions for equality of men and women, and increasing the level of legal awareness, (3) Ensuring equal opportunities for men and women in entry into the economic sphere, (4) Ensuring an equal social position for women and men caring for children or other members of the family, (5) To consider women from the point of view of their reproductive function and different physiological makeup, (7) To follow and evaluate actions taken to implement the principle of equality of women and men.

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# The Division of Labour in Czech Households in the 1990s\*

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**Abstract:** This article aims to outline the basic division of household tasks in Czech families in the 1990s. It deals primarily with the two-income family, which is the norm in the Czech Republic. The starting point is a discussion of the construction of gender roles and their stereotypical reproduction in the family. This leads to the domain of the household and the related responsibilities, which virtually always fall to women. The article makes extensive use of a database from sociological surveys of the family carried out during the 1990s. In the overwhelming majority of households all usual chores are done by women, including caring for children. In comparison with other similar countries of 'Eastern' Europe, however, the division of work in the Czech Republic is one of the most equitable. Nevertheless, such work is still not very highly esteemed here. The article also looks at trends among both men and women towards changing relations with household tasks and at the subjective view of the justice of the division.

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Housework is an important subject in the question of gender roles in the family. It is influenced both by various factors in the social environment and by the family's internal problems. It is paradoxical that in Czech society today, when the nature of paid work is changing so greatly that physical strength is losing its importance and women are irrevocably part of the labour market, men are still more often preferred for paid work and women are considered more suited to housework, which is overwhelmingly manual.<sup>1</sup>

This article aims to identify the basic empirical nature of housework and its division between men and women in Czech families in the 1990s, as shown in sociological surveys of the family. One point that must be taken into account at the outset is that the two-income household is the norm in this country today. In such families both partners are in full-time paid employment.<sup>2</sup> Women's careers are virtually only interrupted by maternity leave [Čermáková 1995] and they are complicated by a 'second shift' of housework. As will be seen later, the fact that most housework in this country is done by women is a result of the stereotypical view on the division of gender roles that prevails in society. This stereotype is based on the assumption that women are naturally carers and defenders of the hearth and has been carried over into the set of roles assigned

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1) In 1996, 59% of men and 49% of women agreed with the statement that "The man should earn the money and the woman look after the house" [Rodina '96 1996].

2) In the Czech Republic in 1991 (the last census) these accounted for 62% of all households [for further details see Podrobné... 1998]. In 1996, 87.8% of all women of working age were working, the overwhelming majority in full-time jobs, and 7.7% were on maternity leave. 92.6% of all men of working age were employed [Zaměstnanost... 1996].

to women in connection with the even stronger stereotype of women's predestination as experts in caring for and raising children. This view assigns men to achievement on the labour market, through which they will basically fulfil all their roles in the family.

### The Situation in the Czech Republic

One factor which is a major determinant of how work in the house is allotted and done – women's employment – has not changed as much in this country in the 1990s as may have been expected. The percentage of women employed has stayed the same,<sup>3</sup> but both the distribution of their jobs (businesswomen represent 7% of all working women and an increasing number of women – 49% of all working women – are working in the tertiary sector: banking, insurance, trade [*Statistická...* 1998]) and their social conditions have changed. For many women paid work has ceased to be an absolute certainty and many women are living with the sense that their jobs are at risk.<sup>4</sup>

Between 1991 and 1995 women living in two-income households reported an increased workload (44%), less job security (52%), and fewer job opportunities (60%) or opportunities to change their employer (44%). Their situation is further complicated by the fact that 40% reported a decline in the level and availability of nursery and pre-school facilities [*Pracující...* 1995].

Czech women have not been able to stay at home during the 1990s, principally because most families need a second income. Here the Czech Republic is still very different from the model prevailing in western countries, where women far more often stay at home or work only part-time. Czech women have to share their strength between two shifts, even though the demands placed on them by their paid employment are continually increasing. At the same time, the family load on women is also changing, undoubtedly due to the increasing demands of their partners' jobs. Unlike their partners, however, women cannot simply cut back on their workload in the family when their outside job becomes more demanding.

In this situation it could be expected that more families would use the now available services providing housework, but only 1% of households do in fact make use of these [*Rodina...* 1994]. This is partly due to the low value placed on housework in this country and so to the feeling that it is unnecessary to pay for it. Using such services is often seen as a form of snobbery, but this is also partly due to the negative connotations of such services carried over from the pre-1989 period, when there was an unsuccessful attempt at a state level to transfer housework to services.

Housework should be seen primarily in the context of paid work, as a second shift. Seeing housework as women's work counts with women's lesser involvement on the labour market and so creates the parallel idea of the man's more difficult role as the provider, i.e. 100% employed. Women's paid work is thus marginalized in the context of housework. The quantitative difference between the time spent by men and women on these two shifts can be seen in Tables 1 and 2. Men living in a two-income family devote an average of 48.5 hours a week to their jobs and women 42.5 hours, while on average

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<sup>3</sup>) Women make up 44.5% of all people of working age who are employed [*Zaměstnanost...* 1996].

<sup>4</sup>) By the normal measures, 5% of women were unemployed in 1996 (3.7% of men), ranging from 2.1% in Prague to 8.1% in Northern Moravia. For women with only elementary education this figure rises to 10.6% [*Statistická...* 1998].

men spend 10 and women 25 hours on housework [*Rodina '96* 1996]. Women therefore work two and a half times as long as men in the home. This asymmetry is not however balanced out by the difference in time spent on paid employment and women's average total working week is 67.5 hours, compared with 58.5 hours for men.

Table 1. Time spent per week on paid employment by economically active married men and women in the Czech Republic, in percentages

|       | 0-10 | 11-20 | 21-30 | 31-40 | 41-50 | 50 and more |
|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|
| Men   | 2.7  | 0.2   | 0.7   | 17.6  | 55.7  | 23.0        |
| Women | 1.5  | 1.5   | 6.6   | 29.5  | 54.5  | 6.3         |

Source: *Rodina '96* survey.

Table 2. Time spent per week on housework by economically active married men and women in the Czech Republic, in percentages

|       | 0-10 | 11-20 | 21-30 | 31-40 | 41-50 | 50 and more |
|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|
| Men   | 72.0 | 20.0  | 5.7   | 1.2   | 1.0   | 0.0         |
| Women | 9.6  | 34.3  | 37.3  | 13.0  | 3.6   | 2.1         |

Source: *Rodina '96* survey.

## Housework

Narrowing down the discussion to the question of housework, the central fact is its unpaid nature, from which various other factors flow. There is no disagreement over the fact that housework is indeed work, but the problem begins when we begin to look at its productiveness. Is housework a productive activity, when according to economic theories it is not part of the market?

The concept of housework as unpaid because unproductive does not take into account the fact that if this work is done by someone other than a member of the family, it becomes paid work. If outside labour is hired to do this work, is it in some way done better or more professionally? The answer to this must be no, its value only increases because it is paid for. Why is the only obstacle to the unpaid nature of this work the fact that it is outside the market? And indeed is this so? On the labour market, in the Czech Republic as elsewhere, one of the basic assumptions and so reasons for the inferior position of women's work is and always was the assumption that each woman works a second shift, in the home, and so cannot devote herself to her paid employment to the same degree as can a man [Vodáková 1992, Čermáková 1997].

Housework is one of the main elements in the social construction of women's identity in society. This assumption justifies its status and unpaid work. The problem lies in the fact that we see this as work like any other work, but at the same time we see it as a part of women's natural existence, particularly in marriage [Delphy 1984, Pateman 1997]. This 'justifies' its unpaid nature, as complementary to a man's role as the provider [Bernard 1987], who is therefore more involved in his paid work.

In the Czech Republic, women's presence on the labour market is taken for granted. Even if society often realises that the load on both sexes from paid employment is increasing, the women still copes with 'her' work at home, because she feels that she

must. This also contributes to the lower status of such work. Even if men often also do housework today, their participation is often seen as 'helping' their partner with 'her' work. The present ideas (and practice) therefore *de facto* affect all 'life choices' of women in this country.

The solution to the problem does not lie in how to make this work paid, etc. but rather in the possibility of increasing its status in society. This is because the continuing low status of housework creates conflicts in the role of women who work full-time and also lowers the status of those women who have chosen to devote themselves to their home and looking after their children and see this as their main source of self-realisation, and of women on maternity leave.

Arlie Hochschild considers that "housework would have higher status if men did more of it" [Hochschild 1989: 515]. This assumption is clearly derived from the higher value of men's work than women's work which continues to be present in social stereotypes. In the Czech Republic before 1989 men did in fact often share the work in the house. This was either due to a lack of other opportunities for self-realisation, which they resolved by turning to do-it-yourself, household repairs, etc., or to the fact that the general scarcity of goods on the market forced men to produce items or tools which were freely available in other countries. Unfortunately there is no data from that period to bear out this hypothesis, but it is certain that whether or not it was in fact the case, even this form of male participation in the work of the household did not increase its status. The stereotype of such work still prevailed.<sup>5</sup> The Czech situation thus *de facto* overturns Arlie Hochschild's hypothesis.

My task here is to use secondary analysis of data from sociological surveys of the family carried out in recent years to answer certain concrete questions relating to work in the house and to identify any specific features of housework in Czech families in comparison with some other European countries. These questions include who (man or woman) does what, how important this work is for each sex, what aspirations people hold in relation to the amount of work done, and an overall assessment of the concrete division of labour in the household.

### Who Does What?

To analyse the actual situation relating to housework more deeply, it is necessary first to define what activities are included under this term. If it is to include all activities for which different authors use the term, these could be listed as follows, without the list being complete: cooking, washing dishes, cleaning, taking out the rubbish, washing, ironing, shopping, mowing the lawn, gardening, clearing away snow, caring for children or a sick member of the family [Delphy 1984, Oakley 1974, Abbott and Wallace 1990].

In major surveys in the Czech Republic these activities are usually divided into various items and respondents are asked who usually or always does them. The most

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<sup>5</sup>) No great importance is placed on housework in the Czech Republic. In 1996 it was rated 3 on a scale from 1 – least important to 5 – most important. Housework was thus placed second to last among such other values such as having the highest possible education and qualifications, having time for one's own interests, having interesting and useful work, living for one's family and children, achieving success and recognition, having plenty of money and living well, a quiet life without risks and tension. In the last place came gardening and household repairs.



common activities are: ironing, shopping, caring for a sick family member, cooking and minor repairs.

Some theorists use a more precise division of those activities more commonly done by women: cooking, washing dishes, cleaning, looking after clothes, caring for children, and those more commonly done by men: household repairs, car repairs, mowing the lawn, clearing away snow, cooking outdoors. They also define a group of activities which are gender-neutral: shopping for food, gardening, accounting for income and expenditure, socialisation of children.

The above list of activities is however insufficient for a detailed analysis in the Czech Republic. From the division of housework in a two-income Czech family shown in Table 3, it can be seen that none of the activities listed can be said to be typically men's work. Washing clothes is almost exclusively done by women in this country (95%). Other activities (caring for the sick, shopping and cooking) are usually or always done by women in about 60% to 70% of cases. Men, however, do not (usually or always) do any of the activities in more than 5% of cases. The activity which is most often seen as men's work is minor household repairs and it is in fact that which men most often do. According to the male respondents, men do these usually or always in 37.5% of households (although in a similar or even larger percentage it is the woman). Women set this figure rather lower at only 29.7%.

Of all the activities in question in the Czech Republic those which are 'normally' done are listed below (Table 3). These are the most routine tasks in the home. It can be seen that men in the Czech Republic do not take a systematic part in housework and to find out more about men's (and women's) work in the house, a more detailed list of activities is required.

Table 3: Division of individual activities in the home by sex among economically active people living with a spouse or partner in the Czech Republic, in percentages

| Task                | Sex | Usually or always | Both the same | Usually or always |
|---------------------|-----|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|
|                     |     | the woman         |               | the man           |
| Washing clothes     | M   | 93.1              | 5.8           | 1.2               |
|                     | W   | 96.7              | 2.1           | 1.3               |
| Minor repairs       | M   | 38.6              | 23.9          | 37.5              |
|                     | W   | 48.3              | 22.0          | 29.7              |
| Caring for the sick | M   | 65.8              | 34.2          | 0.0               |
|                     | W   | 69.3              | 30.3          | 0.4               |
| Everyday shopping   | M   | 63.6              | 32.9          | 3.5               |
|                     | W   | 71.3              | 23.2          | 5.5               |
| Cooking             | M   | 60.3              | 36.2          | 3.5               |
|                     | W   | 65.1              | 32.4          | 2.5               |

Source: Rodina 1994 survey.

The most recent family survey in this country was in 1996. It looked at the division of care for children (Table 4) but did not analyse housework by different tasks.

Table 4.      Answers to the question: "*Who in your family spends most time with the children?*" among economically active people living with a spouse or partner in the Czech Republic, in percentages

|       | Mostly the woman | Both together | Mostly the man |
|-------|------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Man   | 68.2             | 30.3          | 1.5            |
| Woman | 60.8             | 37.7          | 1.6            |

Source:      *Rodina '96* survey.

For all tasks in the household and in caring for children there is a significant difference between men and women, even when the sample includes individual respondents rather than couples. It seems that either women have overestimated their role or men have underestimated that of women. I tend to think that the former is the case, due to women's strong sense of responsibility for this work. The most notable difference is in the answers about minor repairs. In 48.3% of cases women claimed that they always do this work or usually, while men set their participation at 38.6%. Here I tend to think that men overestimated their participation, largely because this is considered 'men's work', even if it is often done by women.

This assessment of over- or underestimation of participation in housework does not however apply to caring for children (see Table 4), where the situation is the reverse, with men seeing women as more likely to spend time with children than women themselves claimed.

Comparing the Czech Republic with other European countries, the country with the most equitable distribution of housework between partners is the Netherlands (Table 5). There, around 60% of work in the household is done by both partners. In this respect Europe is split into east and west, with this split being influenced primarily by the type of household investigated. Limiting the sample to dual-income households means that in eastern Europe only a minimal number of respondents were excluded from the representative sample. In western Europe, where women more often stay at home or work only part-time, the dual-income household is, however, a common type and in itself implies a more equitable division of work in the home.

From the subjective point of view, the division of housework in the Czech Republic is closer to that in the Netherlands than in other former Eastern Bloc countries considered. The eastern European country where housework is most often left to the woman is Poland.

Table 5. Performance of household tasks by sex and country, among people living with a spouse or partner and working full-time, in percentages

| Country        | Sex | Usually or Always me | Both | Usually or always my partner |
|----------------|-----|----------------------|------|------------------------------|
| Czech Republic | M   | 0.5                  | 33.5 | 65.9                         |
|                | W   | 63.3                 | 37.0 | 1.7                          |
| Hungary        | M   | 2.8                  | 31.2 | 66.0                         |
|                | W   | 65.9                 | 30.2 | 3.9                          |
| Poland         | M   | 4.4                  | 23.6 | 71.9                         |
|                | W   | 77.6                 | 17.2 | 5.2                          |
| West Germany   | M   | 1.1                  | 46.0 | 52.9                         |
|                | W   | 59.2                 | 30.3 | 10.5                         |
| Netherlands    | M   | 1.0                  | 57.6 | 41.4                         |
|                | W   | 33.8                 | 61.8 | 4.4                          |
| Great Britain  | M   | 3.6                  | 47.0 | 49.4                         |
|                | W   | 69.6                 | 26.6 | 3.8                          |

Source: *Sociální spravedlnost* 1991 survey.

### Aspirations

It has been shown that men in the Czech Republic participate very little in the routine work of the household, and it is interesting to consider whether they have considered increasing their participation. As can be seen from Table 6, in 1996 around 18% of men wanted to spend more time on work in the house, although around the same percentage of women also wished to do so. No significant relationship was found between the time spent on housework and the wish to spend more.

A relatively large percentage of women, however, would like to spend less time on household tasks. Table 6 provides a fairly good picture of the major changes under way in women's housekeeping role, and also the lesser but still present changes in the corresponding men's role.

Table 6. Answers to the question: "Would you like to spend more, the same or less time on work in the house than you do at present?" among fully employed men and women living with a spouse or partner in the Czech Republic, in percentages

|       | Much more | A little more | The same | A little less | Much less |
|-------|-----------|---------------|----------|---------------|-----------|
| Men   | 1.5       | 16.3          | 64.5     | 15.5          | 2.2       |
| Women | 2.1       | 18.3          | 46.4     | 28.1          | 5.1       |

Source: *Rodina '96* survey.

### Evaluation

To date there has only been one attempt to understand how people really feel about housework in this country: the international comparative survey, *Social Justice*, in 1991 which asked whether people feel the division of household tasks in their family to be just. This assessment (Table 7) can be compared with Table 5, which showed at least the broad outlines of the division of work in this country.

It was to be expected that men would feel that it was more just than did women, since it is more to the former's advantage, and this was indeed the case. One possible surprise is that of all European countries, men in the Czech Republic had the greatest sense of the injustice of the division of work in the house, and it can be assumed that this was seen as unjust towards women. In all the Eastern European countries considered, women saw this division as more unjust than did women in Western Europe, even though all respondents were from two-income households.

Table 7. The subjective assessment of the justice or injustice of the division of household tasks by sex and country among fully employed people living with a spouse or partner, in percentages

| Country        | Sex | Just | Unjust |
|----------------|-----|------|--------|
| Czech Republic | M   | 73.1 | 26.9   |
|                | W   | 72.8 | 27.2   |
| Hungary        | M   | 78.0 | 22.0   |
|                | W   | 71.3 | 28.7   |
| Poland         | M   | 82.3 | 17.7   |
|                | W   | 63.8 | 36.2   |
| West Germany   | M   | 90.8 | 9.2    |
|                | W   | 84.2 | 15.8   |
| Netherlands    | M   | 87.9 | 12.1   |
|                | W   | 85.3 | 14.7   |
| Great Britain  | M   | 79.5 | 20.5   |
|                | W   | 78.5 | 21.5   |

Source: *Sociální spravedlnost* 1991 survey.

The hypothesis mentioned above that society sees caring for the home as more important for women was basically confirmed even from the responses of individual participants. In 1996 men placed the importance of caring for the home at an average of 2.9 on a scale from 1 = the least to 5 = the most important, a figure significantly lower than the average figure of 3.3 for women [*Rodina '96* 1996].

Women are well aware that housework is still seen as women's work and often accept this. They place greater importance on such work than men do, as can be seen from the fact that women also value their participation in this work rather higher than do men.

## Conclusions

In the Czech Republic housework is virtually always done by women. This work is significantly influenced by women's 'second shift' of work in their paid job. The five most frequent activities (washing, caring for the sick, minor repairs, shopping, cooking) cannot be divided into 'men's' and 'women's' work. Even minor household repairs, stereotyped as men's work, are not clearly the domain of men in this country. Despite the increasing demands of women's paid jobs and so the greater difficulty of combining these two shifts in women's lives, there has been no clear rise in the use of other persons (members of the extended family or paid help) to carry out housework. This option is used by only 1% of households.

Even if the division of work in Czech families is one of the most equitable of all the Eastern European countries surveyed, Czech men see this as more unjust than do the men of any other European country. It is clear that conditions in society are forcing both men and women to realise that women's work in the home can no longer be taken for granted, as 18% of men would like to spend more time on work in the house, and 23% of women would like to spend less. There is, however, a clear inconsistency here. Czech men may see the division of work in the household as unjust (as far back as 1991), but they still spend only a minimum of time on such activities.

*Translated by April Retter*

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# Men in the Czech Republic

## A Few Questions and Thoughts on Studying (Some) Men

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**Abstract:** The text raises questions and themes relevant for introduction of 'men's studies' or 'critical studies on men and masculinities' in the Czech Republic. The general issue of gender studies, and the situation and context of men in the Czech Republic are the two main parts of the text. The former deals with the theoretical basis for research on men, while the latter explores empirical data that are already available on men, which may be used in further research. The concluding part illustrates some steps the author took while preparing the empirical inquiry into the life histories of men in the Czech Republic. The topic of her research: different men (non-manipulative, lacking the need to control others, emotional), leads her to question the existence of a single normative (hegemonic) masculinity in the Czech Republic. However, the absence of relevant data and studies leaves the definition of Czech masculinity open for now. The author suggests, in accordance with contemporary sources from Anglo-Saxon social science literature, the existence of a plurality and colourful forms of masculine identity, and emphasises the need to explore them, in order to enrich knowledge of gender studies in the Czech Republic.

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This text introduces a new theme of research in the Czech Republic: studies of men, manhood, manliness and masculinities. Men's studies, which are non-existent in this country, should supplement studies on women, adding new perspectives and questions, bringing new topics and views to problems under discussion in gender studies.<sup>1</sup> In the West, 'critical studies of men and masculinities' or 'men's studies' are today an important topic of research in sociology as well as in other social sciences. In the Czech Republic, men have not been studied yet, the theme of masculinities is often considered as unproblematic, or 'the man's role' is only discussed under other branches of sociological inquiry – mainly research on family. Men (and women still) are an 'exceptional' topic for general public opinion; it seems that there is 'no problem', each of us 'naturally' understands 'what is going on here'. To question the everyday experience and (re)define it as problematic, to list men's problems and study them, or just deconstruct the man's position and stereotypes of the 'norm' and point to prejudices will be a delicate task. Ethical care and caution will be a necessity in research on men.

Here are mentioned some ideas and thoughts on constraints and advantages of research on men in the Czech Republic, and there is an attempt to open topics and problems relevant for such research. I outline a few themes to start empirical research with, and on the basis of my own research project mentioned later in the text, I also suggest a way of

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<sup>1</sup>) Gender studies have been recently 'established' also in the Czech Republic as an academic discipline in social sciences dealing mostly with femininities but also masculinities as constructed identities.

launching it (instead of continually discussing the lack of one). For the purpose of this text, let me play with the following questions with no commitment to complete or exhaust this complex issue. The relevant questions are: What can and should be studied about men in the Czech Republic? What empirical data is already available? What is the context in which research on men is being introduced in the Czech Republic? Two general groups of topics concerning men derive from this: (1) *The gender issue in the Czech Republic*: How does research on women correspond with the idea of studying men (as well) here? What is the situation of women and men here? This more theoretical discussion will be followed in this text by an empirical account: (2) *The men here*: What is the dominant (normative) masculinity? What are other Czech masculinities like? What is the specific difference, if any, in the experience and situation of men during and after the totalitarian past of the Czech Republic? And what is similar and different in comparison to often discussed Western masculinities, or with manhood in yet other cultures? What are the historical changes in Czech masculinities?

### The Gender Issue in the Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, feminist research on women started quite recently. Studies on women's position, experience and quality of life are still on the margins of public interest, though they do not seem marginal for the social sciences any more. Today we already have some data on the situation of women here, and a few pieces of information are available on men.<sup>2</sup> There have been some student theses and diploma research on men, several sections of books and essays also deal with particular problems that could be perceived as fitting with critical studies on men and masculinities.<sup>3</sup> Some sociologists mention that men is a theme they have planned and would like to devote attention to. Nevertheless, it has often remained in the appendix of their research interests, or some have managed to incorporate it within their main academic topics (the family, growing up, marriage crises psychotherapy, etc.). The time and environment was not ripe for discussion, or favourable for it to be initiated.

There are several alternatives to choose from when considering research on men: either use the track started by feminist research here, or try to introduce a complementary but distinctive men's studies approach, or a combination of the two. The latter approach is closest to my inclination: use knowledge of feminist research approaches and findings, be distinctive about men's gender and contexts, and yet consider the similarities and differences of each of them.

In the sphere of relationships between men and women, a discussion on the conditions, and lack of such conditions, for the rise of feminism in pre-November Czechoslovakia has slowly emerged [Wagnerová 1995; Šiklová 1993; Havelková 1993, 1997; etc.]

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<sup>2</sup>) These are in issues of *Sociologický časopis* 1/95, 4/97. [Heitlingerová and Trnková 1998], research on family structures (the large research project *Rodina 1994* [*Rodina...* 1994]), public opinion research on images of men and women in Slovakia [Bútorová 1996], women and men in the media [Žena... 1998], young single women and men [*Stratifikace...* 1997], university educated men and women [Čermáková 1999, Musilová 1999, Maříková 1999b], etc.

<sup>3</sup>) Among them: Vybíral [1995] – "Flights from Love – Marriage crises from the men's side", Matoušek [1997] – "Growing Up As a Boy in Bohemia and Moravia", or Hausmann's [1996] populist book on men's chauvinism; and several translations [Wieck 1994, Warshak 1996; Bly 1990; Badinter 1998] and book reviews, especially in the Slovak journal *Aspekt*.



but no such discussion has started on the necessity for men's studies. There is one specificity though, and that is the tendency in the Czech Republic to study women in relation with men, not to exclude men from feminist studies and research, as was the practice for some time in the West. This may have its origin in the sociological tradition of the Czechoslovak First Republic (1918-1938), where the women's question was present, accompanied by the question: 'And what about men here, too?' [Havelková 1993: 62-73].

What is the historical, political and social situation in the Czech Republic? Do we have any relevant data to start with – that is, the empirical context for research on men and masculinities now? There has been a large gap in the historical surveys of women and men in this region. And there are many aspects of Czech masculinity that have not been analysed either psychologically or in sociology. Once we choose to study it, we should endeavour to learn and start from our history. The context of the Czech Republic today reflects the situation of a society in transition, partly transformed, with stubborn remnants of the past totalitarian regime. It is not only the transition after 1989 that has brought changes and differences in the situation of gender relationships (and studies), experience from a more remote past should also be taken into consideration. The historical experience of our small landlocked European country, for several centuries ruled over by great-powers could give some clues to explaining the mild – in contrast to America – 'egalitarian' attitudes among men and women.

The historical specificity of Czech masculinities, both independently and in their relation to femininity and women's identities, should be opened to discussion. What was the impact of the following events on constructions of masculine identity: the 'tradition' (or myth) of the Czechoslovak First Republic (1918-1938), the influence of World War II, the 'building communism' era of the 1950's, the Prague Spring of 1967, the invasion of August 1968, the normalisation of the 1970's, Charter 77 (and dissident activities in general), November 1989, the transformation processes after 1989, and the split of Czechoslovakia in 1993? Havelková [1997: 61] identifies two major mistakes in our level of particular historical experience in her theoretical analysis of conditions for feminist research in the Czech Republic. These apply to and should not be ignored by studies of masculinities, nor by gender studies in general. In the socialist era, the status of women was imposed from above – it would be a mistake to regard it as an independent self-assertive process. The second important point is the underestimation of "the impact of long-term persisting structures, those from the pre-communist past, which influenced communist society, and those acquired under socialism, which also affect the face of the present societal transformation" [Ibid.]. It remains an open question what these long-persisting structures are.

Another study is needed in order to place our experience and situation within the context of European history and territory, and to try to define our role and place in it. A discussion on the situation of women and feminisms in the context of East and West or East in contrast to West is already underway [Funk and Mueller 1993, *Gains...* 1994; Kostash 1993, Nicholson 1990, Renne 1997, Salecl 1994, Scott, Kaplan and Keates 1997], whereas a discussion on men's (and women's together with men's) situation has yet to be launched in the Czech Republic. To study men (and masculinities) means to open discussions that reach beyond borders: of the Czech Republic, and of sociology. Deconstruction or change of the image and identity of men is only a part of much broader processes: desired change in value systems, discussion on new forms of partnerships and

personal identity construction, the perceived crises/fall of modern man (woman), and so forth.

### Men and Masculinities in the Czech Republic

Men in the Czech Republic (and women too) were in a different situation than men in the West. It would be tricky to adopt or 'translate' theories of masculinities from the West to our conditions and reality; some concepts popular and valid in the West do not apply here. It is clearly visible when we try to incorporate an image of men in the real socialism period into our present picture. A certain forced/involuntary feminisation of Czech men is frequently mentioned in this context [Šiklová 1993, Frišová 1993, Havelková 1997, Štátná 1998]; men did not have the possibility of self-assertion in 'masculine' spheres, that is, in, for example, professional careers, or politics (except for sports and games). Their position was similar to men in the West in some sense: men had higher salaries (*Sociologický časopis* 1/95, 4/97), some patriarchal structures worked to their advantage [*Politika...* 1996, *Žena...* 1998], they were (and were perceived as) those in power. Men have also been perceived as having no problems [Matoušek 1997, Vybíral 1995], and as emotionally tougher than women [Možný 1983]. Yet, it was contrasting in another sense: there was no chance of a professional career except 'to bend your back' for the Communist Party, not a favourable condition for playing the macho type.

The family, which represented the only widespread fortress of relative freedom, autonomy and security, has become increasingly deconstructed since 1989. New opportunities for self-realisation are emerging and there are several tendencies in people's orientation towards them (depending on socio-economic and demographic situation).<sup>4</sup> Some men in the Czech Republic now tend more to the conventional division of sex roles (the man as the breadwinner, the woman as caregiver and house-keeper – sometimes full-time housewife), for others little has changed in their structuring of family life after 1989. The empirical data available from research on family indicate that there is a split between the ideal and real division of men's and women's activities within the family structure, while the existence of specific men's and women's activities is not questioned ["Rozdělení..." 1998]. A list of activities of men in the Czech family may lead us in an attempt to define attributes of Czech masculinity. Perceived distinctive men's activities are: building a career (45%), and financially securing the family (74%). What men really do is: secure the household financially (48%), engage in social and political functions (22%), and work for their professional career (30%).<sup>5</sup> Men are more conservative in changing the *status quo* [Maříková 1999: 64], but these qualities do not distinguish Czech men from men elsewhere in western societies.

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<sup>4</sup>) Questions immediately arise. What are the tendencies? Which environment produces which orientations? Do there have to be any specific conditions for alternative choices? What people tend to conventional role models and who inclines to alternative tracks? What are the tracks? (My curiosity has led me to prepare a study on this: on men's life strategies different from the mainstream trend/norm/stereotype.)

<sup>5</sup>) Results also show that men in the Czech Republic do the shopping more often than is supposed. Women educate themselves more, financially support the household, cultivate social contacts, engage in social functions, work hard for their professional career also more than is the general image ["Rozdělení..." 1998].

Little data is available specifically on Czech masculinities. From the period before 1989, there is one relevant study – an appendix to Možný's [1983: 155-174] research from 1979 on marriages of university-educated partners *The Empirical Measurement of Cultural Norms of Personal Characteristics of Masculinity and Femininity*. His quantitative research findings indicate a move towards a transitional state of men's and women's role in the family [Ibid.: 63-66]. Možný [Ibid.: 161] defines the 'traditional man' and his characteristics for the context of research in the Czech Republic in late 1970's. It is supposed that the 'traditional man' is: psychically tough, prefers to lead, rational, assertive, independent, realistic, deliberate, ambitious, rough, and reticent.<sup>6</sup> Možný does not specify though potential differences of such a definition for the reality of Czechoslovakia. He assumes the existence of a single model of masculinity for Euro-American culture. Nevertheless, Možný's appendix gives us a good basis to start new research studies on men and masculinities in the Czech Republic now, especially because of its historical value and the possibility to compare it with recent studies.

A contemporary pioneering empirical research by a student into masculinity (regarding the context of this country's particularity) has been conducted Šťastná [1998]<sup>7</sup>, supporting hypotheses of a gentler, more family-oriented masculinity. Her research on fathers and sons shows Czech men as bearers of the following traits: fathers are laborious and apt, careful, tolerant and understanding, and men in general are required to be manly (self-confident, dominant, sensible, tough), independent, competitive but also careful, mild, strong and compassionate, they should be neither romantic (feminine, oversensitive), passive, nor 'macho'. The value of work (activity, ability, skill, robustness) and support of family values (care, friendliness) are the strongest traits, and Šťastná concludes that the main difference between Czech men and their western counterparts is the presence of mildness, or a mild femininity, which may or may not be remnant of the totalitarian past.

There is one more text where the specificity of Czech personality types is discussed. In a research study report [Bušta 1996]<sup>8</sup>, there were two descriptions characteristic for male gender personality in the Czech Republic: (1) 'Venca' – Jack of all trades and master of most of them, handyman (about 50 years old, married, low education, spends most of his time in his garage mending things), and (2) 'Robert' – a self-made man, the actor of change (no-time father, under 30 or then 40-49, educated, living in a city, very high income). The Venca type is often described as the 'typical Czech', and Robert represents the new western model of masculinity including doubts and uncertainty about his lifestyle.

These few data that are available inspire me in my endeavour to learn more, especially as I want to describe stereotypes connected with the 'male norm', and find alternative models of masculinity that are present but not adequately manifested in our images, or a single image of Czech masculinity.

<sup>6</sup>) Možný respects the assumption of one-dimensionality of the masculine-feminine scale, and thus characteristics of femininity (as minimal masculinity) are the reverse.

<sup>7</sup>) Another student's research is on young men by Ivan Vodochodský [1998] where he analyses ways of self-presentation of his male classmates.

<sup>8</sup>) It was a study in marketing, searching for new criteria (when usual demographic indicators would not apply) according to which people are stratified in society, what lifestyles people have. The key new criteria found for the Czech Republic was the active-passive attitude to life.

## Instead of Conclusions

Here I suggest the crucial importance of initiating a discussion and critical research on men and masculinities development in the Czech Republic. It is likely that our research will follow the development of such studies known in the West. Nevertheless, the Czech tradition of doing research both on women and on men may, in doing gender studies, cause a shift from western models with a tradition of feminist research on women and research on men conducted within men's studies.

A necessary step towards answering the questions listed in the text is an inquiry into subjective realms of experience of individual men in research studies on the life stories of Czech men. More (and qualitative) studies of social aspects and effects of transformation processes are needed to follow the available economic and political overviews.<sup>9</sup> My personal project in research on men and masculinities is a qualitative research collecting personal life histories (narratives) that should help us start to catch the context in which masculine identity has been and is being formed. Subjective interpretations of historical (social, political and economic) events and processes can help us understand individual men's strategies and ambitions, as well as the constraints and limitations in their being a man in the Czech Republic today.<sup>10</sup>

I have already touched upon the topic of my research in the text, now it is necessary for me to specify the direction of my exploration in the field of men's studies. There is the perceived trend in our society towards an adoption of western models, images of masculinity (masculinities) not excluded. And yet there are men in the country who resist the temptations of a (free) market society and its opportunities and pleasures. They have not begun striving for a professional career as their goal in life. I have decided to collect the narratives of men who do not represent the mainstream masculinity, those who have decided to drift against the stream. Librová [1994] describes these types of men as 'compassionate authorities': a strong, manly type, driven by compassion, resolute in action, capable of altruism, patience and love. They direct their energy towards protecting others, and do not use their power for self-assertion, domination, manipulation and control over others.

Among them, there are men who do so voluntarily – as their 'personal project' (1), or a 'natural drift' (2), as well as men who did not have any other choice and have still sometimes managed to build and live a satisfactory and rewarding life – as a 'virtue of necessity' (3). What are their masculinities like? What has influenced them? What would be their definitions of Czech masculinities? How do they reflect upon and interpret events and processes in the Czech Republic? I expect these men to be aware of their different masculinity, and through this distinctness (and their definition of it) I will try to draw traits of masculinities that are present in the Czech Republic, and describe negative stereotypes of the norm against which these men define themselves.

Such inquiry covers many questions: do we know what the 'norm' is, here and now? Should I try to define it? What is the hegemonic masculinity in this country? And

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<sup>9</sup>) For some information on social transformations of Czech society see reports of the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic ([www.soc.cas.cz](http://www.soc.cas.cz)).

<sup>10</sup>) A similar research for women and femininities should accompany it. There already exists a project of the Gender Studies Foundation in Prague *Memories of Women: All Our Yesterdays* [Paměť... 1998].

who is the bearer of it – since from the totalitarian past, there might be serious doubts about the existence of its traditional representatives: the middle classes (in our ‘classless society’)? What re-definitions and fragmentation has it been undergoing? If we do not know what Czech masculinity is, and if ‘what it means for Czech men to be a man’ is not reflected - how can I do research on alternatives to it?

There are, and always have been, many forms of masculinities, many intermingling types, and I want their plurality to be stressed (and later grasped in research studies). Men’s subjective interpretations of expectations towards them as men will indicate at least how some men deal with it, and how explicit or implicit such expectations were for them in their life histories. And for the different Czech men of my research, what were the influences and impulses that made them wander off-the-beaten track? Then there will be something to start with, perhaps something controversial, fascinating, or even boring.

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## Women and Gender in the Czech Republic and Cross-National Comparisons

In recent decades focus has increased on the situations of women and degrees of gender equality in the United States, Europe, and other societies. Employment discrimination against women and difficulties in integrating family commitments with employment and career achievement have been – and remain – issues of concern.

In 1991, I was privileged to be one of sixteen United States professors who participated in a Fulbright-Hays seminar in Czechoslovakia. This six-week study tour began in Bratislava and involved travel throughout Slovakia and the Czech lands. We were able to discuss economic, political and social issues with governmental leaders, university faculty and religious leaders, enterprise managers, workers and union leaders, Romany leaders, and many others. My particular research focus on “Women, Work and Family in Czechoslovakia” especially benefited from talks with twenty sources (both women and men) [Raabe 1991]. From these discussions, I more clearly realised the high extent of women’s full-time employment during communism and the difficulties women experienced in combining this employment with family responsibilities. While maternity and parental leaves and child-care facilities helped, inadequate services and low levels of domestic work by men made work-family integration problematic for women [Raabe 1995]. Many women spoke of their fatigue, their wish for part-time work and their discontent with past communist practices and full-time employment. As one woman put it, “In the past every woman had the ‘right to work’ – in at least two jobs!” Another spoke of past full-time employment as oppression, “a form of modern slavery,” and a few said that they wanted wages to increase so that women could stay home [Raabe 1991]. Gender inequalities (men’s advantages) in employment and wages were acknowledged, however, at the same time, many spoke of women’s advantages in being able to take leave and earlier retirement and in *not* having to function in upper-management positions under communist rule [Raabe 1991, 1995].

Building on this 1991 Fulbright-Hays research experience and in the context of all the post-1989 changes (democratisation, the growth of capitalism, and changes in employment and jobs), I wondered to what extent would there be continuities or changes in women’s work-family orientations and behaviours, in gender practices, and in national work-family policy supports?

In collaboration with Marie Čermáková of the Institute of Sociology in Prague, a 1995 research project funded by IREX (International Research and Exchanges Board, USA) focused on these questions and included surveys of 459 Czech and Slovak women originally surveyed in 1991, surveys of an additional 500 women, additional in-depth interviews with fifty women, and research reports on social policy trends [Raabe 1996, Čermáková 1996, Maříková 1996]. The following sections delineate some of the findings of this research.

### Czech Women’s Work, Family and Policy Views – Continuities and Differences

In accord with other research [for example, Čermáková 1995a, 1995b; Havelková 1996; Heitlinger 1995; Šiklová 1993], the 1995 study found that Czech women value family

and employment, and, overall, prioritise family. For example, in response to a question about comparative work-family commitments, 31 per cent of Czech women indicated they value work and family equally but 48 per cent said they "value both work and family, but family is the priority" and 12 per cent strongly endorsed family over work. (As in several other areas of the research results, educational levels differentiated among women: in this case university women gave more emphasis to valuing work as well as family.)

In the 1990s the large majority of Czech women of economically active age have continued to be employed full-time, and the 1995 survey likewise found that 60 per cent were co-providers for their families and 14 per cent were sole providers. At the same time, if their husbands "earned sufficient income for the family," only 21 per cent said they would prefer to remain employed full-time. Instead, 63 per cent said they would work either part-time (45 per cent) or intermittently (18 per cent), and 16 per cent said they would stay at home. Nonetheless, despite these preferences, in terms of their work plans for the next six months, majorities said they would definitely not work part-time (75 per cent) nor "be a housewife" (82 per cent). The *International Social Science Program (ISSP) Family and Gender Survey* [1994] also indicated that Czechs reject women "being a housewife" and, instead, endorse women as well as men being household economic providers, and the Czech majorities expressing these views were much higher than percentages in other European countries and the United States [Raabe 1998].

According to both 1991 and 1995 findings, Czech women have mainly valued employment for financial security and "to aid the family budget," and these financial motivations increased in 1995 in comparison with 1991. This was also true – and even more so – for women in Slovakia. Intrinsic interest in work ("like work") also grew between 1991 and 1995 (See Table 1)

These results are compatible with hypotheses that changes to a market economy from both totalitarian oppression in working life and from comprehensive state subsidies will increase interest in work, on the positive side, but also will increase financial insecurity concerns. The greater financial concerns of Slovak women in comparison with Czech women are congruent with the greater economic difficulties experienced in Slovakia, in contrast with the Czech Republic, during this period [King 1996, Kinzer 1995, Passell 1996, Paukert 1995, Večerník 1995a].

Table 1. Reasons to work? Percentages of women saying "very important" in the Czech and Slovak Republics, 1991 and 1995 (in %)

|                    | Czech Republic |      | Slovak Republic |      |
|--------------------|----------------|------|-----------------|------|
|                    | 1991           | 1995 | 1991            | 1995 |
| Financial security | 58             | 74   | 47*             | 80*  |
| Aid family budget  | 48             | 65   | 42              | 74   |
| Like work          | 39             | 55   | 52*             | 68*  |
| Social             | 41             | 49   | 45              | 61   |
| Job important      | 27             | 28   | 34*             | 49*  |
| Use education      | 22             | 16   | 33*             | 27*  |
| Habitual           | 15             | 7    | 18*             | 14*  |
| Everyone works     | 6              | 10   | 16*             | 19*  |

\*) Statistically significant difference in responses by republics.



In response to another question asking about improvement, continuity or deterioration in relation to a variety of conditions, Czech women tended to see *improvements* (scores under 3) in: work becoming more interesting, use of education and skills, earnings, satisfaction with life, and the political and economic development of the country. Conversely, they indicated some *deterioration* (scores over 3.5) in relation to job security, availability of jobs, and the quality and availability of nurseries (See Table 2.) Again, Slovak women were more negative in their assessments, and the evaluations of women in both countries seem to parallel the nature of the economic transformations and societal situations in each country in 1995.

Table 2. Czech and Slovak women's assessments of improvement, continuity or deterioration between 1991 and 1995 (Means)  
(1 = Significant improvement; 2 = Partial improvement; 3 = No change; 4 = Partial deterioration; 5 = Significant deterioration)

|   | Czech Republic | Slovak Republic |
|---|----------------|-----------------|
| Work demands                                  | 3.42           | 3.41            |
| Hours at work                                 | 3.31           | 3.34            |
| Interesting work                              | 2.71           | 2.83            |
| Job security                                  | 3.52           | 3.85*           |
| Availability of jobs                          | 3.62           | 4.14*           |
| Education and skill usage                     | 2.79           | 3.19*           |
| Earnings                                      | 2.83           | 3.22*           |
| Opportunities to change employer              | 3.18           | 3.80*           |
| Leisure opportunities                         | 3.38           | 3.52            |
| Time for children and family                  | 3.22           | 3.27            |
| Time for shopping                             | 3.08           | 3.14            |
| Holiday and travel opportunities              | 3.02           | 3.78*           |
| Satisfaction with own life                    | 2.96           | 3.37*           |
| Own health                                    | 3.31           | 3.4             |
| Availability of services for households       | 3.16           | 3.42*           |
| Health care for children                      | 3.02           | 3.45*           |
| Quality and availability of nurseries         | 3.7            | 4.12*           |
| Quality and availability of kindergartens     | 3.32           | 3.8*            |
| Political and economic development of country | 2.97           | 4.26*           |

\*) Statistically significant difference in responses between republics.

Although the data are not shown in Table 2, as may be expected with the changes to a market economy and the modernisation of industries and jobs in the Czech Republic, more educated Czech women were more affirmative than others about the situation in 1995 (in terms of interesting work, job security, availability of jobs, education and skill usage, earnings, opportunities to change employer, holiday and travel opportunities, life and health satisfaction, and political and economic development, and the adequacy of social policies – discussed below and in Table 3).

While significant reductions in social policies occurred in other post-communist countries (for example, reductions in maternity leaves and child care in East Germany [Adler and Brayfield 1996]), there have been more social policy continuities and more moderated reductions in the Czech Republic and Slovakia [Kvapilová 1993; Orenstein 1995; Večerník 1995a, 1995b; *IREX Social...* 1995-1996]. In the Czech Republic, maternity/parental benefits were expanded, and although the number of nurseries declined, this

was congruent with the declining birth rate and the development of other child-care options. Increases in kindergarten fees have been moderate, and although a move to more targeted social assistance in children's allowances provides graduated subsidies to correspond to need, it has only excluded the top five per cent of families from coverage. A variety of other subsidies (such as parental allowance, housing and transportation) similarly were continued and adjusted for inflation. At the time of the 1995 survey, Slovakia also had maintained comprehensive social policies through social insurance, state allowances and social assistance. However, one major problem was the government's non-adjustment of the minimum living standard, which is the base for many subsidy calculations, to keep up with inflation. This, in effect, led to a decline in some subsidies.

Czechs have continued to endorse a variety of state social policy supports [Večerník 1995b, Raabe 1998], and the views of women in the 1995 survey supported this assessment (see Table 3).

Table 3. Czech and Slovak women's endorsements of social policies (Means)  
(1 = strongest support)

|  | Czech Republic | Slovak Republic |
|--|----------------|-----------------|
| A. Women should receive allowance for bringing up children and homemaking (response range: 1-3)                | 1.55           | 1.47*           |
| B. The government should provide jobs for women (response range: 1-3)  | 1.56           | 1.31***         |
| C. The state should help all families (response range: 1-3)  | 1.91           | 1.81***         |
| D. The state should help working mothers with young children (response range: 1-3)                             | 1.65           | 1.54**          |
| E. The state should give maternity allowance to mothers (response range: 1-4)                                  |                |                 |
| – with children under 1 year   | 1.19           | 1.14            |
| – with children under 3 years  | 1.36           | 1.35            |
| F. The state should subsidise (response range: 1 = fully; 2 & 3 = partially; 4 = not at all)                   |                |                 |
| – nurseries for children under 3   | 2.35           | 2.11***         |
| – kindergartens  | 2.18           | 2.01***         |
| – elementary school  | 1.62           | 1.60            |
| – high school  | 1.86           | 1.72*           |
| – universities   | 2.22           | 1.96***         |
| – housing  | 2.35           | 2.08***         |
| G. The state should support single mothers with small children (response range: 1-3)                           | 1.27           | 1.38**          |
| H. Social policies today in comparison with before 1989 (1 = are better; 2 = about the same; 3 = insufficient) | 2.50           | 2.81***         |

\*) Response difference is statistically significant at the 0.05 level

\*\*) Response difference is statistically significant at the 0.01 level

\*\*\*) Response difference is statistically significant at the 0.001 level

As Table 3 delineates, in 1995 both Czech and Slovak women strongly supported a variety of "family-friendly" state policies with maternity allowances for mothers of a child under 1 year receiving the strongest affirmation. On scales of 1-3 or 1-4 (with 1 indicating the strongest policy support), Czech women were on the endorsement side (below 2) on eight of thirteen policies and Slovak women on ten of the thirteen. While women in

both countries were similar in endorsing family-supportive state subsidies, Slovak women were more affirmative on all policies except one (state support for single mothers with young children) where Czech women's endorsement was higher. Czech women were more likely to advocate more co-financing by individuals together with partial or income-adjusted state subsidies rather than universal ones (see F. on Table 3). In these views, Czech and Slovak women seemed to be in accord with their respective governmental practices: in the context of continuing social policy supports in both countries, there has been more of a shift to more targeted assistance and less universal benefits in the Czech Republic [Orenstein 1995; Raabe 1998; Večerník 1995a, 1995b].

### Gender

As seen above, despite interests in reduced hours of work, Czech women predominantly continue to be employed full-time (aside of the times on maternity and parental leaves), strongly endorse being an economic provider, and concomitantly, reject being a dependent 'housewife'. This strikingly contrasts with the experiences of women in many Western European nations and the United States where high proportions either work part-time or leave the labour force when children are young, and it also contrasts with greater endorsement of 'being a housewife' in some other post-communist countries such as Poland and Hungary [Raabe 1998].

At the same time, as elsewhere, family and work activities have been gender differentiated, with most Czech women subordinating employment and careers to family commitment, while men have prioritised their jobs and have had limited domestic responsibilities. However, in contrast with attitudinal and policy emphases on more gender symmetry in work and family roles in many other advanced industrial countries, Czechs overall continue to endorse gender differentiation [Čermáková 1995b, Crompton 1997, Crompton and Harris 1997, Raabe 1998]. For example, in response to a 1994 ISSP Survey item (where scores ranged from 1, "strongly agree" to 5, "strongly disagree"): "A man's job is to earn money, a women's job is to look after the home and family", among ten countries, Czechs, joined Poles and Hungarians on the 'agreeing' side, while seven other countries were more in disagreement.

(Average scores were: 2.3 Poland; 2.31 Hungary; 2.55 Czech Republic; 3.15 West Germany; 3.43 Britain; 3.54 USA; 3.6 Netherlands; 3.82 Norway; 3.9 Sweden; 3.95 East Germany.)

Yet, as already noted, along with other research, the 1995 findings affirm the interests of Czech women in employment and economic independence. As Table 4 delineates, majorities – and increasingly so in 1995 in comparison with 1991 – opposed subordinating their employment and income interests to men (see Table 4).

In other gender findings, while some Czech women in 1995 said that men are more advantaged in opportunities to succeed (51 per cent), 48 per cent said that chances are "about equal." In terms of family decision-making, in 1995 the majority of Czech women reported joint decision-making (69 per cent) or women's control (25 per cent). However, 58 per cent reported that husbands were not helpful with family responsibilities – either because they were too busy at work (27 per cent) or because they considered them a woman's responsibility (31 per cent). Nonetheless, despite full-time work and most of the '2nd shift', 53 per cent of Czech women said that they were able to manage work-and-family satisfactorily, and only 4 per cent reported great difficulties in work-family management.

All of the above seem to point to an interesting amalgam of Czech women's views on gender equality and differentiation: Czech women value their employment and economic independence, recognise men's employment and career advantages in the economy and government but also see opportunities for women; they appreciate and expect continued social policy supports; assume, to date, gendered responsibilities for family care and domestic work, and, at the same time, indicate pride in their family roles and efficacy in work-family integration. In terms of the latter, Czech women's assertiveness and sense of efficacy were expressed in the in-depth interviews in 1995 where several women stated that, in comparison with Western women, they "are more hard-working, can organise their lives, are independent of their husbands, can take care of their families themselves, do not moan, do not constantly declare frustration and depression" [*IREX Interviews... 1995*].

Table 4. Czech and Slovak women's gender attitudes – comparisons 1991 and 1995\*\*  
(Means, by Republic). (Scale: 1 = Agree, ..., 3 = Disagree)

|   | Czech Republic |      | Slovak Republic |      | Change* |
|---|----------------|------|-----------------|------|---------|
|   | 1991           | 1995 | 1991            | 1995 |         |
| 1. Women should give up their jobs for men for a certain period of time<br>(Differences by republic and education: more disagreement by Czech women and by more educated women in both republics)                 | 2.62           | 2.81 | 2.47            | 2.68 | CR, SR  |
| 2. Women should stay home and support the careers of their husbands, this is best for the entire family<br>(Education effects: those with more education disagree in both republics)                              | 2.4            | 2.5  | 2.2             | 2.5  | SR      |
| 3. Men should have better positions at work and make more money because they have to provide for their families<br>(Differences by republic and by education: 1995, 79% CR, 55% SR university graduates disagree) | 2.04           | 2.32 | 1.64            | 2.02 | CR, SR  |
| 4. Women should have their income independent of parents and spouse   | 1.56           | 1.49 | 1.66            | 1.45 | CR, SR  |

\*) Statistically significant change, 1991-1995.

## Conclusion

As delineated in the sections above, in the 1990s Czech women increasingly value employment intrinsically and, especially, for financial reasons. At the same time, they highly value their families and family involvement and their ability to combine employment and family roles. Despite preferences for reduced work time, they have continued to be employed on a full-time basis. They have benefited from supportive state family social policies – and endorse and expect the continuation of many of these policies (even if in modified forms). While indicating concerns and criticisms about some aspects of the post-communist transformation, they (overall and particularly those with more education) are fairly positive in their assessments of the changes. Although recognising men's past and current advantages in careers and political life, they tend to deny the attribution of 'patriarchy', and instead cite Czech women's independence and their advantages in family life and in combining 'work and family'. In these ways they seem to assert a kind of

'comparable worth' model of gender equality: activities and accomplishments are gender differentiated but, in the end, assessed as equal [Raabe 1998].

In addition to the above, what are some other insights for an American from these Czech findings and from experiences in the Czech Republic? In contrast with the seeming devaluation of family involvement and 'overvaluing' of work and careers by many American men and women [for example, Hochschild 1989, 1997], Czech women strongly affirm the value of family life, of women's family involvements and contributions, and of integrating family and employment. And similarly, from their long-standing experiences in full-time employment, their voices caution against valuing full-time employment and careers as the path to life achievement and happiness.

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## Gender Relations and Employment: A Cross-National Study

### Introduction: the research project

Cross-national comparative research has been conventionally categorised as representing either a broadly positivist approach, which seeks to establish continuities which may then be used to support universal or law-like assertions, or alternatively, as being largely concerned to understand the particular nature of events and circumstances which have generated a particular (i.e., unique) outcome [Kohn 1987]. However, the Gender Relations Project was designed to explore both similarity *and* difference. Thus the research has established the significance of *different* national institutions in structuring patterns of women's employment and gender role attitudes [Crompton and Harris 1997], but these differences are cross-cut by cross-national *continuities* at the occupational, interpersonal, and individual levels [Crompton and Harris 1998a, b].

Gender relations are produced and reproduced via already-existing institutions, norms and practices, as well as through the ongoing relationships between individual women and men. The above project, therefore, was designed to investigate gender relations at three societal levels: macro, meso, and micro. The institutional structures reproducing the gender order include educational systems, welfare states, systems of occupational regulation, labour markets, and so on, as well as legislation etc. pertaining directly to women. Systems of regulation and legislation are often linked to an 'equality agenda' which has been widely adopted, at a national and trans-national level, since the Second World War. The countries chosen for comparative analysis in the Gender Relations Project reflected the variations in welfare state 'regimes' identified in Esping-Andersen's [1990] typology: Britain ('Liberal'); France ('Corporatist'); Norway ('Social Democratic') and Russia and the Czech Republic ('State Socialist self-welfare'). This last category is not taken from Esping-Andersen's framework. The ex- 'state socialist' countries are an interesting comparative case in that their regimes had formally espoused women's equality in the public sphere – which included full employment for women – whilst gender relations, and the gender division of labour in the private sphere remained highly conventional. In the Czech Republic, the project was carried out in collaboration with Prof. Marie Čermáková, Dr. Irena Hradecká, and Dr. Jaroslava Šťastná.

In relation to the equality agenda, 'human capital' theories have explained women's relatively disadvantaged labour market position with reference to their lack of qualifications and employment experience. The research design did not, therefore, focus on such 'disadvantaged workers', but on women in professional and managerial occupations. This strategy also facilitated a systematic contrast between these two occupational types, which enabled us to focus on the impact of meso-level structures – in this case, occupations – on the structuring of gender relations at the occupational and individual levels. Biographical work-life interviews were carried out with women doctors, and retail bank managers, in all five countries. Standardisation was achieved via a number of simple rules to be followed by all interviewers. All doctors had to have completed their post-registration qualification, and all bankers had to hold managerial positions. All had to be currently employed. The women had to be aged between 30 and 55.

To summarise: the research framework and associated research methods were as follows:

- *Macro level*: Focused on the nation state. It included (i) Nationally available descriptive statistics including census data, government and other reports, for all five countries. These national 'case studies' included, (amongst other topics) information relating to education systems, family policies, 'welfare states', occupational and labour market structures as well as the 'equality agenda'. (ii) Data collected by the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) (Family and Gender Roles Module) for Britain, Norway and the Czech Republic.<sup>1</sup>
- *Meso level*: Focused on the occupational structure. It included case studies, for each country, on the development of medicine and retail banking.
- *Micro level*: Focused on individuals and their relationships. It included biographical work-life interviews with fifteen women, in each occupation, in each country (154 interviews in all).<sup>2</sup>

### Major findings

We have shown that a three-country (Britain, Norway and the Czech Republic) comparison of national level survey (ISSP) data indicates that gender role attitudes are the most liberal in Norway, most conservative in the Czech Republic, with Britain somewhere in between [Crompton and Harris 1997]. These differences are, we argue, systematically related to differences in national cultures and institutions.

Norway is a Scandinavian social democratic country at the forefront of both 'gender equality' and 'family friendly' policies which are reflected in liberal gender role attitudes. In contrast, the British government has not attempted to develop 'active' gender equalisation or transformation policies. Thus legislation has given women formal equality of opportunity, but (until recently) the government has not actively promoted women's employment through (for example) the provision of childcare – and indeed, Britain has had the second lowest levels of childcare provision in Europe until very recently. As an ex-state socialist country, the Czech Republic has actively promoted women's employment. Pro-natalist policies in support of motherhood have also been accompanied by extensive maternity leave and allowances [Heitlinger 1979, Scott 1974]. It might have been thought, therefore, that national attitudes to a mother's employment would be relatively positive. However, we found that Czech attitudes to women's employment and gender roles were in fact rather conservative, reflecting the lack of emphasis given to domestic labour as a source of gender inequality in the ex-state socialist countries [Buckley 1989].

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<sup>1</sup>) The International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) is an ongoing programme of cross-national attitudinal research, which fields (in addition to a set of core questions) module(s) relating to different topics each year, using a suite of mutually agreed questions [Davis and Jowell 1989]. Advance copies of the ISSP Family and Gender Roles Module, gathered in 1994-5, were obtained for Britain, Norway and the Czech Republic. Many thanks to SCPR (Social and Community Planning Research), London; The Gender Studies Centre, Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences, Prague; and Norwegian Social Science Data Services, Bergen, for their assistance in obtaining advance copies of the Family and Gender Roles data sets.

<sup>2</sup>) Interviews have been carried out by Dr. Elena Mezentsseva, Irina Aristakheva, Prof. Marie Čermáková, Dr. Irena Hradecká, Dr. Jaroslava Šťastná, Dr. Gunn Birkelund, Merete Helle, Dr. N. Le Feuvre, Florence Benoit, Rosemary Crompton and Dr. Fiona Harris.



Indeed, attitudes to Western feminism throughout the ex-Soviet Union are somewhat negative. The employment of women has been linked with their 'forced' employment during the era of state socialism [Crompton 1997], and gender role attitudes tend to be stereotyped – that is, rather traditional – in consequence. Our interviews in both the Czech Republic and Russia confirmed this at the micro (individual) level, as these examples demonstrate:

I always wanted a family and from home I knew what was involved (her parents are doctors). I took my husband's job into account when I was deciding on my specialism, when I decided to marry him I knew that his job would come first (...) I knew I would support him (...) in this sense, I am the 'second sex' (1/05 radiologist, two children).

He (...) never did anything at home (...) I was too busy at the bank but he did not do anything, everything waited for me. When I expressed my dissatisfaction he replied with ironical comments like 'Oh, our Director has arrived' – we separated, and I feel much better (1/21 banker, two children).

The ISSP data has also been used to demonstrate that more liberal gender role attitudes are linked with less conventional patterns of the domestic division of labour [Crompton and Harris 1999]. This paper also uses evidence from the work-life interviews in Britain, Norway and the Czech Republic to demonstrate that the domestic division of labour between doctors and their partners has a marked tendency to be rather more conventional than that between the bankers and their partners. This finding was one of the first indications of a systematic pattern of difference in the work-family biographies of the doctors and bankers in all countries, which cut across the cross-national differences we have identified.

We link these occupational differences in work-family biographies to the characteristic differences in the manner in which 'professional' (doctors) and 'managerial' (bank managers) occupations are organised, and the possibilities they offer to those in these occupations [Crompton and Harris 1998b]. Medical careers require long-term forward planning, and we found that many doctors had developed similar strategies in respect of their family lives as well. This had often resulted in a somewhat gender stereotypical domestic division of labour. In contrast, bankers had made their careers by responding to organisational demands, in which domestic life had often had to take second place, and if it was to be managed at all, more often than not required more than average assistance from a partner. The meso or occupational level, therefore, provides further evidence of the importance of occupational *structures* in shaping personal lives.

Nevertheless, we do not see women, or their employment decisions, as being in any sense entirely 'determined' by particular national or specific occupation-related structures and institutions. Thus the diversity of the work-family decisions (and their origins) that had been made by women in similar jobs has also been a focus of our research [Crompton and Harris 1999, see also Crompton and Harris 1998a]. In so doing, we found that there could be identified amongst the women we interviewed (and it should be remembered that *all* of them had been successful in employment terms) a minority who were 'super-women', and that this minority were equally distributed amongst the doctors and bankers. Thus macro and meso level structural patternings are criss-crossed by personal characteristics not necessarily linked to occupation or nation.

## Conclusion

In this conclusion, we will make some East-West comparisons, drawing on the research described above. In the West, the development of capitalist industrialism was accompanied by the emergence of the 'male breadwinner' model of the gender division of labour, in which women took the major responsibility for domestic labour and men specialised in market work. During the inter-war period, many married women gave up paid work entirely, and, up until the 1960s, women still tended to withdraw from the labour market when children were born, often only returning to part-time work when children were of secondary school age. The ex-state socialist countries instituted a dual earner/state carer model which supposedly constituted the conditions for women's 'liberation'. However, this economistic model of 'liberation' paid little attention to the prevailing gender culture, which remained, and still is, rather traditional. Thus in Eastern Europe, women remained the carers, and the major organisers of 'self-welfare'. Following the collapse of 'state socialism', gender roles and gender role attitudes remain highly traditional in these countries: some have argued that employment for women is associated with state socialist ideological prescriptions in relation to gender 'equality'.

As Western women have increased the level of their labour force participation, so they have also improved the level and extent of their academic and professional qualifications. Over the last ten years, women in all countries have been steadily increasing their representation in professional and managerial occupations. In the case of England, in 1998 women were 44% of all persons in employment, 32% of managers and administrators, and 40% of those in professional occupations. It would seem, therefore, that the improvement in the economic and social status of women, as reflected in their employment, is a non-reversible trend. In contrast to Eastern Europe, however, married women in the West took up market work during an era much influenced by 'second-wave' feminism. Thus although the situation falls far short of absolute equality, there are nevertheless indications that gender role attitudes are changing as a consequence, and men are carrying out an increasing amount of caring and domestic work [Gershuny et al. 1994].

Recent trends in Eastern Europe suggest that women are not simply 'returning to the home', despite economic difficulties. Interviews with managerial and professional women in the Czech Republic suggest that, although the majority would reject the label of 'feminist', they are nevertheless aware of, and hostile to, men's general lack of participation in domestic work. Thus, despite our emphasis on the importance of national cultures, it would nevertheless seem reasonable to suggest that over the next decade, attitudes and behaviour in respect of gender relations will also change in ex-state socialist countries, particularly those, such as the Czech Republic, that are close to the West.

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## **Equal Opportunities in the Czech Republic and other East-Central European Countries as Part of the Requirement for Accession to the European Union**

This contribution will look at some of the issues concerning equal opportunities for men and women in the Czech Republic and other former East European countries, as these have become one among many preconditions for entry into the EU. It can be concluded that behind the issue of equal opportunities lies a broader question of what new set of relationships between East and West are coming into place.

Equal opportunities are being given a high profile at European Union level, and the Czech Republic (CR), together with other countries that are waiting to join the EU are being asked to adopt EU standards and to create conditions for equal treatment for men and women before entry. What is this process about and what goals are being pursued?

This article will explore the question of what it means to adjust the national legislation on equal opportunities to that of the EU, and what kind of process has been unleashed. It will draw on the experiences from a series of PHARE projects, first in the CR in 1996, and later in 1998-99 in Poland, Hungary and Slovenia. These projects, initiated by the European Commission, were designed to review the existing national legislation on equal opportunities for men and women in the accession countries. The screening of that legislation led to a series of recommendations for change in order that the national legislation is in line with the legislation of the EU. The logic of the exercise was that once the legislative framework is harmonised (or approximated), then the entry into the EU will be easier. This means that once the former countries of Eastern Europe establish similar legal ground rules and interpret the law in a similar way, then accession into the 'common European home' is a matter of time and finer technicalities. The aim is a partnership of like-minded legal states. But is this really so?

The approximation exercise now covers a much larger area of social, legal, financial, commercial and even cultural matters. However, equal opportunities for men and women came at an early stage, to pave the way for further work in the harmonisation process. This was, in the authors view, because everyone on both sides – that is in the CR as well as at the EU level – assumed that equal opportunities is an easy, 'soft' subject to cover. After all, the old socialist constitutions were very clear on equality. Equal rights for men and women were written into the statute books, and generally, men and women received equal treatment before the law. In addition, many surveys have shown that men and women did not see themselves as discriminated against along gender lines. Hardship, in the old system, was meted out to everyone equally except the top elite. The issues, so hotly debated in the EU, have not yet arrived. There was no part-time work that would be less well-paid; there were no 'housewives' who stayed at home, dependent on their husbands to bring in cash and control the household budget; no dichotomy between paid and unpaid work; and in the last instance, no problem of money economy where the movement of capital determines the distribution of incomes and salaries and generates male-dominated structures of inequality. So to approximate equal opportunities legislation was seen as a relatively simple proposition.

However, the exercise proved to be more complex. On the one hand, because the EU follows its own motives by laying down conditions for the harmonisation of the legislative framework for the countries that wish to become members of the EU. On the other hand, because the exercise became entangled in the history of the formalism of the countries of East-Central Europe. It became evident during the projects, that the two sides do not conceptualise equal opportunities in the same way. It also became evident that the process of accession contains within itself hidden agendas on both sides.

Let us look at three things: first, what were the difficulties and the 'hidden agenda' on the side of the accession countries; secondly, what are some of motives and 'hidden agendas' on the part of the EU; and thirdly what can be gained by looking at equal opportunities as a social issue.

To begin with, one of the main difficulties was to do with the most basic issue of interpreting equal opportunities. It seems that the countries of East-Central Europe, the Czech Republic included, still operate on the basis of collectivist notions of rights and responsibilities. Equality is therefore a matter of legal and constitutional rules in the most essential sense, usually granted by the state. It is not a matter of inter-personal negotiations, a relational issue, or as in the language of social policy, a societal issue. The example of the Scandinavian approach to gender, for example, is that the social standing of men and women, including their position in the labour market, needs to be problematised, not merely codified. This is where some of the lessons from the EU can be helpful. But to arrive at a consensual view of this kind takes time, and usually requires some form of battle with the legislative arm of the state. This too emerged as a difficulty during the projects. The majority of the East-Central European accession countries have a specific understanding of the role of the state *vis à vis* the citizens, or the civil society. The Prussian concept of state administration, for example, still predominates in the CR, and this means that the legislators are seen, and see themselves, as the guardians of a higher order, upholding it on behalf of a greater good or a greater authority. They are not, on the whole, servants of the citizens. Often, it is quite the reverse. Even the reform of state administration that is currently being undertaken in the CR relies heavily on the argument of reforming the institutions and on the role of the profession itself, not on what kind of service is to be provided, to whom, and why.

This continued formalism, when translated to equal opportunities during the projects, manifested itself in an emphasis on proving that the national law does not differ from the EU law where equal treatment is concerned. Equal opportunities were on the whole interpreted as absence of discrimination. An absence of discrimination is qualitatively different, I would argue, from a positive endorsement of equal treatment, in much the same way as the absence of identifiable illness does not automatically signify a healthy individual or a healthy society.

The exercise was therefore not so much concerned with finding out and defining what is the actual existing reality in the post-communist social systems with respect to equal opportunities for men and women, and then addressing these, as much as with proving 'European' democratic heritage.

It was in the interest of the respective ministerial departments responsible for European integration to focus on the narrow legal aspect of equal opportunities. In that way, any necessary changes to the national legislation could stay in-house, that is, to be supervised by the appropriate ministerial and legal experts. The terms of reference of

these projects required a review of selected documents made available by the ministries, and a muted discussion with selected legal departments. No one else need not worry; one legal state can reasonably communicate with another legal state and get the matter settled with minimum of social disruption. The departments for European integration seemed to have been instructed to speed up the process of approximation. The European Commission even gave a signal that the time of actual implementation when real sanctions might apply was still far off. Thus, what had happened was that money was being spent, some EU documents were being translated, and some amendments to national legislation were added, whilst the status quo in society remained unchanged.

The hidden agenda was: "we are good European boys here in East Central Europe."

This is, of course, a slight exaggeration. But on the whole, the difficulties that came to surface during the projects were to do with the unwillingness to extend the debate on equal treatment beyond the legislative framework itself. Often the inclusion of the social context was seen as a diversion, or at best, as something that is at present unmanageable. Unmanageable because social habits, customs, and cultural attitudes are outside of the law. It was pointed out that certain aspects of inter-gender behaviour will remain within the cultural mores, and indeed, one has to accept that the law cannot 'solve' all life situations. This is in many ways one of the central points – one cannot legislate for everything. At the same time, however, law and life must interact with each other. Only where different life situations can be presented through the diverse voices of different individuals, can the policy making process be truly representative. It is in the loosening of the legal grip and through creating conditions where an individual's representations can be made, that new ways of securing the voluntary co-operation of citizens to obey the law of the land are found.

Opening up a public debate on what individuals experience as equal or unequal opportunities in everyday life can become messy, but it is the only way to break the deadlock between *de jure* and *de facto* inequality. Some debates along these lines are already taking place in the CR and elsewhere in East Central Europe, and are to be encouraged.

As indicated earlier, the EU has become a very influential regulator of such debates and processes of change. The EU, as it is now known, grew from the shared idea among the powerful original six countries that an integrated common market is a good thing for long-term economic prosperity in post-war Europe. Equal opportunities for men and women, as briefly enshrined in Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, were to ensure that no unfair competition on the labour markets of Europe would arise. Unfair, at that time, meant that women should not jump the job queue just because they have traditionally been paid less than men, even for doing the same work. Post-war Europe was to combine economic shrewdness, such as making sure that employers could not undercut each other, with fairness, that is gradual recognition that men and women, if they were to participate on the labour market equally, should also have equal rights. These two, shrewdness and fairness do not sit together comfortably though. As is more than well-known, equal opportunities had to be fought for step by step for a long time before they began to be taken seriously. And even now, it is not always obvious whose interests are being followed in upholding the complex web of EC Directives.

The concept of a common market was altered to embody the European Community in the 1970's, and then the European Union in the 1980's. The paradox is that as the language of unity is being reinforced at the top level, backed by the processes of integration

and harmonisation, we are discovering more disagreement and diversity. It is no accident that for the first time since its inception, the EU in the 1990's became seriously concerned with social policy issues of social cohesion, harmony and regional democracy. The common market did not produce the desired economic stability. Despite promoting fairness, unemployment has risen and is rising. Social exclusion is one of the main worries, threatening the fabric of the whole unified polity. The concept of the European Union is therefore a contested notion. In some of the more critical writers' view, the EU has failed in its major task, that is, to transcend the role of the post-war nation-state. What can be seen, is a further contradiction, that is, that the EU in fact defends the traditional role of the nation-state, except on a larger pan-European scale. The current difficulties with European integration and enlargement (of which approximation is an integral part), is that the institutions of the EU, i.e. the Commission, behave and act as a benevolent patriarch. The accession countries of East-Central Europe are being invited to share in the benefits of being part of international decision-making, something they lacked before. This is a powerful incentive. Yet, in order to be part of the 'club', there are conditions to fulfil. One of the conditions is to become a legal state along the lines of the EU. The difficulties of defining the EU and its economic self-interests mean that the accession countries are caught in an unfinished business of the European Union's own fuzzy democratic process. For the process of enlargement could go both ways – either the way of mutual partnership, or the way of new dependency. At the moment, the exercises to do with approximation are stuck at a stage that does not really help the in-coming 'new democracies'. They are stuck at a stage of proceeding with institutional reform in a most unimaginative, and often passive way (despite the training of key personnel, and transferring responsibilities to the domestic governments). The uncertainty of the EU about its own future means that to enlarge became synonymous with replicating itself. Thus, the countries of East-Central Europe are asked to emulate the institutions and the ways of doing things of those of the EU. The hidden agenda is expansion. The more recently initiated process of institution building inside the accession countries themselves remains a cut and dried affair, predicated on technical procedural matters and on legal conformity.

That is where the issues on equal opportunities become once more relevant. The significance of promoting equal opportunities lies in creating a social climate of trust and confidence for all individuals within a given political system, to pursue their rights. Not by turning to the constitution, but to fellow citizens, whereby no-one dares to transgress decent treatment of each other because it is in no-one's interest to do so. Discrimination is not about visible ways of differential or preferential treatment of one sex over another, which would be relatively easy to outlaw. Discrimination is about the invisible ways of behaving, bestowing preference or privilege to one section of society as opposed to another (or one individual/sex as opposed to another), without anyone being able to find ways of disclosing it as an improper practice. Discrimination therefore rests on the given, traditional, informal, call it cultural, ways of preventing people from raising their voices. It rests on invisible intimidation, on knowing that the boss will make my life hell if I, as a woman, for example, raise the issue of an unfair promotion that went to a man. It rests on social and cultural hierarchies that seem so 'natural'. It rests on fear of making a move against the established ways of doing things. Its essence is in being afraid to challenge bad practice. As an issue, it is therefore completely central to a well-functioning civil society.

The projects then raised the point of how important it is to pay attention to the implementation of equal treatment. It was accepted that the law, in its broadest sense, is essential as a starting point. How legal rights are then implemented, applied and safeguarded, is another matter. As is well-known from the past bureaucratic and centralist practices, the law can be invoked by the authorities at every available opportunity to prove that the state is indeed a legal state, yet the citizen may not feel any of its benefits whatsoever. The application and implementation can turn into a highly controlled affair.

Equal opportunities, it can be concluded, are about rights of individuals within a democratic structure. They are not about individual battles for supremacy, or about absolute equalisation of all actions. Thus, one is back to what law can or cannot do. It can guarantee and it can protect. It must give out a clear message that unlawful practices will not be tolerated. Yet, to get to that stage, there has to be an active civil society, with a whole range of its own structures, voices, and challenges. There are numerous cases of unequal treatment being challenged either in national or international courts within the EU. The moral of this is that the law and the courts only provide a stepping stone. It took years to get the right of equal pay for work of equal value to be established in the EU. It will take further years to make sure that it is upheld. It does not follow that once the law is there that it will always be obeyed. But it does make a difference if you, as an individual know that you will be supported when you decide to pursue your rights, and that your actions will not be dismissed as trivial or over the top if you continue to do so. Thus, it may help to have job evaluation schemes in place to determine that two jobs, even if they do not have the same content or title, but are of equal value in terms of skills and contribution, will be rewarded equally. This could mean a tremendous boost to those who feel that their skills are not recognised or appreciated. For example, if you happen to work in an environment that is either very 'male' or very 'female', your work may be undervalued, since it is 'natural' for women, for example to have patience in repetitive jobs, whilst concentration on detail in male jobs is rated as a form of expertise. A job evaluation scheme may go a long way to saying that women's patience is equal to male expertise, thus raising self-awareness, self-respect and fairness on both sides. That, in itself, cannot be bad for economic prosperity and work motivation. Arbitration procedures may not be everything, and one would like to see a situation where they may be used only as a last resort. However, how many situations are there where it takes time and effort to see that there is anything wrong at all? Defining what is, is therefore particularly important. On this note, definitions need to contain what is visible, as well as what is less visible. For example, stating that women and men have an equal right to apply for a job does not clarify what conditions may be in place to prevent one or the other from being able to fulfil that job. Indirect discrimination involves situations where there may be a rule or a requirement attached to a particular job, which one sex can fulfil more easily than the other. Their right to apply is equal, but their selection for that job will depend on whether or not they can fulfil that particular condition, and that can mean that the 'invisible' hand of tradition prevails. The practice of employers therefore has to be made explicit and accountable. Their decisions on employing a man or a woman need to be made transparent. The burden of proof about whether or not there has been discrimination against one sex or the other now lies with the employer in most countries. It enables the individual to be free to make a claim, and worry less about gathering evidence to convince the traditional sceptics. In addition, most definitions of equal treatment contain a clause that an individual who finds himself or herself wronged by an employer (or the state, in cases of pension



entitlements), will be protected against intimidation, i.e. someone wanting to silence this particular individual because he or she is seen to create trouble; and against victimisation, if they take their complaint to court. Victimisation in this respect can mean lowering the individual's chances of employment with another employer by exposing them as 'difficult', or not providing them with appropriate compensation to which they are entitled. In most EU countries now, in cases of proven indirect discrimination or victimisation, high rates of compensation are usually paid, thus it becomes unprofitable as well as socially unacceptable for employers to behave in such a way.

Indirect discrimination can also mean a very 'innocent' rule that only full-time workers can benefit from occupational pension schemes. Or it can mean that a payment for a job does not include additional perks (particularly non-cash benefits, such as the use of a company car, seasonal travel tickets, attendance of training courses paid for by the company, contributions to a non-occupational retirement scheme, etc.) in calculating the total earnings for social security purposes. It may be culturally accepted that men when they work in a male, for example, managerial, environment, expect these perks. But all these perks need to be declared and are nowadays defined as pay through the original Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome, with the purpose that women's pay in equal managerial positions is not lower because they are not part of men's executive networks where such perks may be distributed.

It may take a long time to get all this right – in the EU as well as in the accession countries. What has become obvious through these approximation projects are two things. One is that the law is clearly rooted in the historical and political structures of any particular country, and thus has to be treated accordingly. If we are to encourage new legal practices, we also need to encourage new and active social structures. Citizens' involvement is crucial. Law, in that sense can never be a destination for a process of change. Secondly, if there is to be a new European partnership that has a real rather than a symbolic meaning, then the EU has to be much more self-critical. Mutual showing off between the EU and the accession countries about how clever and muscular their respective legal systems are, only serves the purpose of prolonging the belief in the Emperor's new clothes.

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## **An Insider-Outsider Perspective on the Status of Women in Czechoslovakia/Czech Republic**

### **Researching women and feminism in the aftermath of the Velvet Revolution**

Having spent most of my professional career in efforts to explain a variety of women's issues in East-Central Europe to Western feminist scholars and activists, I was hoping that, with the fall of communism, I would finally be able to transmit something back from Canada and the U.K. to my country of origin – the Czech Republic. As a Czech-speaking feminist émigré scholar, I was looking forward to explaining to interested Czech women (and men) the scope and concerns of various Western feminisms. However, my personal experience as a young Czech émigré in the U.K., who in the early 1970s eagerly identified with the goals and political style of the WLM, turned out to be a poor guide to the understanding of Czech women's reaction to Western feminism. I soon found out that, like many other long-time émigrés, I am now more Canadian than Czech. My knowledge of local culture has dated, since my life experience of a North American middle-class lifestyle, political commitment to feminism and anti-racism, and cosmopolitan multi-lingual pluralistic orientations are quite different from those of most Czech women and men.

My attempts to comprehend the negative Czech reaction to Western feminism eventually led me to the analytic notions of 'framing', 'frame resonance' and 'frame alignment'. I have found that Western and Czech women are approaching a shared problem (of women's inequality) with frames based on very different life experiences, socio-economic contexts and ideologies. Feminism does not strike a responsive chord with Czech women (and men) "because the world view of Czech women is informed by the social legacy of communism, and as such it currently lies outside the descriptive and theoretical frameworks of Anglo-American feminism" [Heitlinger 1996: 90].

I soon discovered that I could learn more from my local informants by listening to what they had to say, rather than attempting to 'enlighten' them about Western feminist theory and practice. I conducted interviews with various academics, activists associated with the Gender Studies Centre, and officials at the Ministry of Health, the Czech Association of Nurses, and the Association of Home Care. My informants considered me as 'one of them', an insider rather than an outsider. They felt quite free to complain to me about some of their frustrating encounters with various Western visitors. 'Feeling free to complain' was often more important to them than learning something about Canada. What the Czech informants particularly resented were those Western visitors who 'wasted their time', either by asking uninformed questions and/or by imposing inappropriate research agendas and analytical frameworks.

### **Young Women of Prague**

How does one then move away from Western dominance in feminist analyses and research agendas? One possible approach is to engage in collaborative research projects. While during the communist period my research visits every two or three years were quite sufficient to produce credible knowledge – things changed rather slowly then – this mode of operation is clearly unsuitable for the current situation of rapid social change. I

have found my location in North America, and the fact that I do not want to leave my family for more than a month at a time, a real barrier to maintaining an on-going research association with my 'home' country. The only way I can now conduct meaningful Czech-based research is in collaboration with locally-based researchers. They do not have to be Czech-born and raised, but they need to speak the Czech language and have a first-hand current knowledge of local culture and politics.

My most recent research project was on the lives of young, 'ordinary' (as opposed to 'successful') Czech women who came of age in the aftermath of the Velvet Revolution. It was conducted in collaboration with Susanna Trnka, a second-generation Czech American, who spent the 1995-96 academic year in Prague. The publication resulting from this qualitative research project is a collection of interviews with fourteen women of similar age and education, but varying work, marital and childbearing experiences. Unlike many informants whose voices 'disappear' in random quotes and aggregate statistics and graphs, our respondents – 1989-90 and 1990-91 nursing graduates – get to speak for themselves, and come across as real personalities. The fourteen chapters of interviews are preceded by a background chapter outlining the social and historical forces that have shaped these women's lives. A concluding chapter analyses common themes that have emerged from the interviews, linking them to legacies of communism as well as to the current post-communist transition. Both English and Czech editions of the book have been published [see Heitlinger and Trnka 1998a, 1998b].

This small-scale qualitative study attempts to combine an insider's understanding of the local situation with an outsider's analysis. Addressing the problem of diverse audiences and multiple reception identified by Mani [1990], the English edition has an extended section on Czech history, while the Czech edition has an additional section on feminist methodology.

### **The politics of location as an insider-outsider**

As a researcher who has grown up in communist Czechoslovakia, who has maintained an on-going association with her country of origin, but who has lived for more than 30 years in the Anglo-American milieu, I am simultaneously an outsider and an insider in both realms. Being a 'stranger' (or, to use a post-modern term, 'the other') is generally seen in sociology as a privileged position from which to conduct research, since 'strangers' are allegedly more objective, and can offer useful comparative insights.

Émigrés speak the local language. This important asset enables them to access indigenous documents, journals and public debates, and interview other than English-speaking informants without the need for an interpreter. However, émigrés can also experience unique problems in conducting cross-national research, since their exile/émigré location may determine the type of data to which they can get access. Local hostility to émigrés can also hinder research. Moreover, as we noted, émigrés' background knowledge of local culture and politics can date. Over time, émigrés can lose their familiarity with the nuances of the local situation, and become instead more knowledgeable about the cultural and political environment of their adopted country. Thus émigré scholars, especially those writing for a Western audience, are not immune from gazing at women in East-Central Europe only through 'Western eyes'.

## Conclusion

Since an émigré status can create both special opportunities and special problems in transnational research, the best way forward in pursuing research on Czech women is to engage in a mutually respectful dialogue and collaborative research projects between 'émigrés', those 'who stayed', Western and East European scholars without an ethnic Czech connection, and a new generation of feminist scholars and activists, whose research agendas may cut across all these locales.

*Alena Heitlinger*

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**Alena Heitlingerová, Zuzana Trnková:**  
**Životy mladých pražských žen** [Lives of  
 Young Prague Women]

Praha, SLON 1998, 207 pp.

In the current Czech intellectual context, still so suspicious with anything related to gender and/or feminism, to deal with works on these issues generates a dilemma, in fact resembling the situation of *samizdat* production in underground circles not so long time ago. One gets trapped in a dilemma – symptomatic for any marginalised sphere – of tribal solidarity versus professional responsibility. It works along the following lines. A piece of work has a number of obvious problems. One possibility is, in the name of solidarity with the marginalised, to cover up its negatives, and to celebrate the very fact that it appeared at all, with the risk of supporting a lower quality production in the field, area or genre. The other possibility is to critically acknowledge the weak points of the piece, but at the same time to reproduce the commonly shared assumption that nothing interesting or valuable can be done in that particular direction anyway. The choice is far from easy. I would suggest that regardless the dramatic lack of original work on gender issues in the local context, the only way to promote the development of this area is to apply the highest criteria. As I take this approach, I have to admit that the book under review can be seen as a missed opportunity to say something innovative and original about young women in the Czech Republic in 1990s.

The book deals with the lives of fourteen “ordinary” Prague young women, graduates of a nursing school, who reached maturity around the time of the ‘Velvet Revolution’. Beyond the introduction and historical context drafted at the beginning and in the conclusion, most of the book is filled with transcriptions of the interviews conducted by Trnková in 1995–1996. The women answered a more or less standard set of questions on their attitudes to female and male roles, towards parenthood and family life, to the meaning of their nursing education and the profession today in general. According to the authors – an established professor of sociology at Trent University in Canada and a Princeton University graduate stu-

dent, both of them of Czech background – the book aims to address those, “who are interested in the position of women, in qualitative feminist methods, but also those interested in the problems of health care...” Does the project fill these expectations?

The limited space of this review does not allow a consistent critical analysis of the issues and conclusions presented in the text. Nevertheless, a few points regarding the object of study, the methodology applied, and the evaluation and elaboration of the research material presented in the book should be mentioned. The first question emerges: Why write a book on fourteen Prague nurses? Can an insight into their lives help us (i.e. including the international academic community, since the English version of the book was published by Macmillan Press under the title *Young Women of Prague*) to understand better the issues of gender in transitional societies?

The authors’ intention to focus on representatives of a “generation unburdened by the values of the past” is in fact very challenging and inspirational. But what did they get out of them? Reading almost hundred pages of these young women’s answers to similar questions is not easy in sense that after the third interview the identity of the individual story, and more importantly the sense of its cognitive value becomes obscured. Even a book with the highest academic ambitions is to be written in order to be read. The women’s answers could be used as a basis for anthropological or sociological analyses, but their narrative value is very problematic. The authors even explicitly admitted that “the women in our study have not tried to divert from the given questions and to bring into the interviews any new themes.” and “with few exceptions avoided all purely political, controversial and conflicting questions” (p. 14, 15). In other words, the capacity for self-reflection of the women chosen for this project seems to be rather questionable.

This brings up the question of the qualitative research methods applied. What an already rich – and in the book not even mentioned – local experience with the methods of oral history has taught us is that the most challenging moment appears at a point where ‘classic’, in this case feminist, research methods success-

fully applied in, for example the Anglo-American context, may fail in a different environment. To take just one example from the book: it is hard to believe that researchers with an Eastern European background and competence explicitly express their surprise at discovering "that concept of 'life strategy', commonly used in the West, has a very limited application in the context of the Communist area" (p. 12).

Even though I have serious doubts about the author's opinion that "feminists studying women's lives by the method of interviews don't usually have major problems with the process of interview," potentially fruitful methodological issues are raised. For example, the authors claim that regardless of the original intention to conduct open non-standardised interviews, they in the end decided to apply a structured set of questions. The question of why they took this decision goes unanswered. Here is precisely a moment at which the project might have brought a new light to the application of feminist methodology in the post-communist context. Such discussion has been one of the substantial points of a major women's oral history project in the Czech Republic, entitled *Women's Memory*, which has been conducted by the research team at the Prague Gender Studies Centre for several years. It is surprising that the book does not refer to it at all.

It is impossible to mention here all the arguments I find problematic in the theoretical introduction, in the chapter entitled "Historical and Social Context", as well as in the analytical conclusion. Contradictory arguments about the definition of the private and public spheres, simplifying statements such as "women did not choose emancipation" or "family was conceived as a somewhat public institution" would need more sophisticated discussion. Beyond some data quoted from some local and international sources, very few truly new and so far unknown issues on gender in post-communist society are raised. There are number of themes, however, which at least for me, came up in the course of reading the texts of the interviews and would have been worthy of further discussion in the final analytical part. These are the function of informal networks in the process of

managing the balance between family and professional roles, the homophobia, racism and ageism visible in the women's comments, the controversial reception of feminism in the Czech context, and finally the very issue of why Czech women, as the researchers discovered, are, compared to they 'Western sisters', not eager to speak out.

My last comment is related to the formal qualities of the text itself, especially concerning the references and the language used. Had I had an access to the English version of this book, the review might have been about something else. Some of the concepts and syntax used in the Czech text give the impression that it has been carelessly translated from English. The final point is the bibliography. The field of gender studies in this country, no matter how marginalised, is gradually developing. In a book published in 1998, it seems inappropriate to include a reference to the latest work of one of the leading scholars in the field (Čermáková) dated 1991.

Disregarding the moralistic and somewhat cautionary concluding point of the book advising 'Czech women' to take on a more critical attitude towards their own "economic, social and political helplessness" there is one more issue to be mentioned. Considering the lifelong internationally respected work of Heitlingerová on the issues of gender and totalitarian societies, one wonders why she has committed herself to such an incomplete project, moreover, presented under a rather misleading generalising title. This is certainly not a book on 'young women of Prague'. Perhaps the group of women studied here could have been an interesting dissertation theme for a graduate student, the result of which, however, does not seem to be ready for a publication. The rather confusing analyses of a small sample of interviews conducted with persons limited in terms of age, social and professional background, and most importantly experience, cannot but reproduce myths and stereotypes on gender issues in post-communist societies. For the Czech social science community, which is still rather allergic to gender topics, such a publication carries risk of promoting suspicion of not only feminist but qualitative research methods as such.

Jiřina Šmejkalová

**Libora Oates-Indruchová (ed.): Dívčí válka s ideologií. Klasické texty angloamerického feministického myšlení** [The Maid's War with Ideology. Classic texts of an Anglo-American Feminist Thinking]

Praha, SLON 1998, 304 pp.

While looking at the book under review it is worthy emphasising a commonly known, though often underestimated fact that the Czech intellectual context was isolated from the development of feminist and gender theory until early 1990s. Resistance to this stream of thought was perhaps one of the few points shared by both, the spokespersons of the various versions of Marxism dominating the so-called 'official' academia, as well as by the representatives of alternative intellectual circles. Books by Derrida, Habermas or perhaps Lacan were smuggled across the border into the country, but Kristeva, Irigaray, or Gilligan would have never been on the list of books secretly crossing the Iron Curtain.

Due to such a more or less *tabula rasa* situation, those, who later decided to introduce this significant part of the post-World War II Euro-American intellectual history to the local audience, were facing a following question: Where to start? To begin with translations of the 'classic' feminist texts from the early phases of the second wave of feminism which could locally sound like naive propaganda, or to try to introduce more advanced theoretical texts which, due to a different history of both thought and actions in this part of Europe, may hardly be understood at all. The "Maid's War" is one of the first attempts in the Czech language to find an answer to this question. Beyond a few monothematical issues of journals (i.e. *The Journal of Philosophy* 1992, *Labyrint* 1997, *Aspekt* in Slovak since 1993) there have not been any translated texts on gender and women issues published in a solid collection by any publishing house in this country. The fact that we have had to wait for such a basic collection until 1998 is, unfortunately, a symptomatic illustration of the current Czech intellectual context.

Oates-Indruchová, inspired by the ongoing requests she used to face as a former coordinator of the Prague Gender Studies Centre

some years ago, decided to choose samples of texts from the first wave and beginning of the second wave of English and American feminism, most of which originally emerged in 1970s. She has tried to identify those pieces which "left a significant trace in the history of feminist thinking within its own discipline or beyond: they either were the first ones or they provoked a massive response" (p. 9). The first wave is represented by samples of work by M. Wollstonecraft, J. S. Mill, and V. Wolf, in order to show to the local audience, as the editor claims in the introduction, that feminist ideas did not emerge in 1960s but have a long history on their own. In the second part, particular fields of social sciences and humanities are represented by key texts which made a major contribution to their development from mid 1970s onwards. Here we find Friedan's famous *The Feminine Mystique*, Millet's *Sexual Politics*, Kelly-Gadol's *Did Women have a Renaissance?*, Showalter's *Towards a Feminist Poetics* and Mitchell's well-known work on Lacan, just to name few.

Translating feminist texts is, due to the above noted Czech isolation from the development of feminist conceptual frameworks and methods, far from an easy undertaking. The Czech language does not even have an equivalent of the term 'gender'. The existing Czech word '*rod*' has not been exposed locally to the process of transformation from a term referring to a grammatical category to a theoretical concept. Moreover, many other terms used by feminist writers, such as 'oppressed' or 'marginalised', have until recently been related to other than gender identity. Such a demanding project needs not just translators fluent in English, but most importantly people with at least a minimal competence in feminist theory. It must have been very difficult not just to identify the right people but then to co-ordinate their work. With few exceptions, most of the texts are presented in consistent and cultivated language and even the most complicated points are to a great extent understandable.

Some of my reservations are, however, related to the editor's introduction, and to the title of the book. In a pioneering project of this kind one would have expected a more consistent historical study, explaining not just the

intention and justification of the book. What would have been very useful – particularly in the case of feminist theory – is an attempt to explain the complicated struggle for recognition, as well as the difficult process of achieving intellectual credibility and respect, which the early feminist scholars and activists had to go through. In order to present ‘feminism’ as an history of ideas, at least the conceptual development from ‘women’ to ‘gender’ should have been explained. A rather descriptive compilation of a few sources (the latest dated in 1993), is a poor supplement to a project of such importance. The simplified definition of the concept of gender with a reference to a local source of no particular theoretical relevance is just one example. And a final deficiency is the lack of an index and a more complete bibliography?

The problem is the title of the book by which the editor seems to follow exactly the phenomena she is criticising in her introduction. One cannot but agree with her point, that in this country “there so far does not exist an open discussion on women’s questions.” What is questionable, however, is her opinion that “as long as someone wants to deal with them, he or she has to use a humoresque or forgiving tone, otherwise a defamatory label of radical feminist is at risk” (p. 14). She (or the publisher) apparently did not take the risk. The ‘Maid’s War’ – a legendary story on a defeated woman’s war against men – evoking in every Czech man or woman an image of a rather obscure and panoptical hopeless struggle, com-

bined with the ‘Ideology’, which is precisely the major argument locally used against feminism, is in my opinion a mistake. The longer we keep reproducing such a not particularly creative “humoresque or forgiving tone,” even in titles of our books, the longer the process of convincing the local audience of the seriousness of feminist intellectual agenda will last.

Due to the massive feminist publishing industry, particularly in English since late 1970s, any selection of ‘basic’ texts is necessarily a subjective one and can never present the field in its full variety. But at the same time, some principles of the field should be respected. Even though an absence of intellectual Godmothers belongs to one of the proudly presented slogans of feminist theory, even this area underwent in the 1980s a process of disciplinarisation and institutionalisation, including a process of building a canon. Considering the fact that the book under review is truly the first collection of this kind in the Czech language, it serves as a good and, for the local audience, very useful, representation of this canon. Although some texts may seem too short (15-20 pages), they offer introduction to the interested public and provide a good basis for gender studies courses, slowly but gradually emerging at Czech universities. One can only hope that the even more interesting and challenging texts – not only of Anglo-American, but say French, German, or Latin American origins – which have built up a new phase of feminism in 1980s and 1990s will follow before too long.

Jiřina Šmejkalová

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### Aspects of Contemporary Feminist Thought in Slovakia and the Journal *Aspekt*

This history of the Slovak feminist journal *Aspekt* can, without exaggeration, be said to be the history of post-modern feminist thought in Slovakia. Since its founding in 1993, four years after the fall of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, the journal has expressed the attempt of its founders, editors, contributors and readers to avoid delimiting, unifying or simplifying the search for a space for reflection on gender and the associated

activity of women in the post-communist countries today. The founders of the journal were largely writers, academics working in the fields of literature and film, artists, sociologists and psychologists from Slovakia and the Czech Republic and against the background of the war in nearby Yugoslavia they chose to ignore the split of the former Czechoslovakia into two independent states and founded *Aspekt* as a joint Slovak-Czech journal and association of women. They organised the first international feminist conference in Bratislava in June 1993, initiated and sponsored by the *Frauen-Anstiftung* foundation from Hamburg. If we



want to choose a concrete date and event as the beginning of post-communist feminism, this meeting can be said to be it. Alternatively, the whole process of the birth of post-communist feminism in Slovakia could be found in the artistic, scientific and social activities by unorganised individuals in the 1960s and 1970s.

After the 'Velvet Revolution' of 1989, women in Slovakia (labelled as revolutionaries for not the first time this century) jointly discarded the dirt of the modern hegemonies and communist emancipation, which had brought new forms of discrimination ("*Communist emancipation of women is dreadful, because under the guise of making them equal it in fact exploits them.*" The ethnographer, Soňa Kovačevičová, in an interview for *Aspekt* 1/1993, p. 45.) Feminists and non-feminists came to terms with this paradoxical situation in no less paradoxical ways. Either they tried to return to the pre-emancipation traditions and roots of the national culture in the belief that they had had enough of *emancipation*, or they looked for a *different form of emancipation* for that deceptive, unjust, now 'unveiled' and rejected *communist emancipation*, which they had thrown off with the fall of communism and which they loathed. Some found themselves in a Möbius strip of never-ending recycling of modern emancipations distributing gender difference only in relation to the idea of women as equal to and of equal value to men, others proposed the end of this idea of the universalising of equality/identity and worked to develop a late modern emancipation which proclaimed recognised specific features and values of women as biologically and culturally valued *differences*, differentiating and critical ideas and being. Still others concentrated on a post-modern release from ideas of emancipation as a battle between binary opponents and the distinction of the *different* and took a female and feminist view of the continuing process of biological and cultural becoming of multiple forms and their assemblies of gender differences. In this sense the texts and articles of the feminist cultural journal *Aspekt* provide an overview of these and other forms of post-communist feminist thought, of their subtle differences, deviations, tensions and strains.

The editorial staff and contributors to *Aspekt* have continued to reflect on *their own special movement* in various feminist ideas. In collaboration with Slovak and foreign contributors, *Aspekt* has offered a mix of 'our' and 'foreign', of 'known' and 'unknown', 'recognised' and 'unrecognised' femaleness and feminism. Thus the authors of *Aspekt* have collected, considered, written and translated into Slovak a quantity of historical and contemporary portraits and maps of femaleness and feminisms and suggested extensions of their differences and with differentiation occurring within *Aspekt* itself. After a number of reorganisations and in collaboration with permanent editorial staff and regular and occasional contributors, the journal now takes the form of separate issues investigating pre-modern, modern and post-modern conceptions of gender differentiation in contemporary religion, philosophy, science, art and culture. Subjects covered to date include: *the beauty myth, maternity, feminism, witchhood, women's writing, women and power, lesbian existence, fears and barriers, human rights, the female body (I and II), women's thought, women's spaces, violence (I and II)*. The most recent issue is on *the personal is political*.

After seven years, *Aspekt* is still alive and each issue represents a new building block in the construction of critical thought and formulation of contemporary feminisms against the background of experience with the paradox of '*discriminatory emancipation*', and at the same time initiates a reflection, critique and ironic play with the Slovak 'surroundings' of this paradox. The journal also has its own and foreign maps of texts and works of art which define and are defined by feminisms, as well as maps of anti- and non-feminisms. By superimposing these, *Aspekt* is delineating the emergence of feminism and is identifying, defining and criticising the historical and contemporary efforts by national and state powers in Slovakia to reconstruct 'the Slovak nation and its renegades'. The 'female' and 'male' gender differences of various historical periods are almost exclusively seen through the state prism of unborn national tradition, which has also to codify the contemporary forms of national, family, confessional and cultural belonging of

men, women and children in Slovakia. For *Aspekt* this means first and foremost a critique of the powers that be's harking back to pre-modern folk mythologies, both Slovak and other. It also means a critique of the restitution of modern thought, feelings, actions and behaviour which ignore the contribution made by modern Slovak, Czech and international feminist theology, philosophy, science and art, and finally a critique of the excessive importance placed on this reconstructing 'basis' with post-modern 'superstructures', which ignore the past and present of post-modern feminism in the Slovak architecture of post-modern thought.

*Aspekt* was formed and formulated in the course of reflections on a number of non-feminist, feminist and anti-feminist maps and images which are in circulation in Slovakia today. At the centre of these pictures of the distribution of patriarchal and matriarchal power lie the games of exchanges between female unfree 'freedom' and male powerless "power" (or the reverse). This enters and imprints itself on the relation to the real map of feminist sensitivity and rage, collaboration and non-collaboration. In relation to the reference map of their own vision of the Slovak cultural environment's lack of sensitivity which, in founding the journal, the editors of *Aspekt* wanted to "infiltrate by writing about 'sensitive' matters, that is by writing which is not common in this country (...) and to support the development of its own self confidence." (Jana Cviková: *List z Bratislavy: Pokus o postsozialistický feminizmus* [Letter from Bratislava: An Attempt to Create a Post-Communist Feminism], *Aspekt* 1/1993). It is also related to the maps of the aggression of modernist prejudiced unconsciousness and disorientation of the culturally isolated Slovak public and 'spiritual', 'intellectual' or 'political' leaders who after forty years of common and general state coordinated and misused 'emancipation', are unaware of the languages, methods and means of cultivating feminist reflection used by women living in Central and Eastern Europe. *Aspekt* therefore works with the sensitivity, insensitivity, violence, aggressiveness, anger, rage and hate (its own and that of others). It is aware of the feminist and anti-feminist anger and hate which are virtually ignored in the

social and cultural structures of contemporary Slovakia. The radicalism and exclusiveness of Slovak feminists today lies in their refusal to collaborate with institutions which discriminate against women. While in the past Slovak and Czech anti-Communist dissidents were experienced with non-co-operation, the non-co-operation of feminist radicalism, alternative cultures, and ethnic minorities is widely criticised by both governmental and non-governmental former dissidents in Slovakia and the Czech Lands, even though the possibility of not participating in the violence in modern democracies is entirely legitimate (on this question see the study by Mirek Vodrážka: *O politickém harémismu* [On Political Haremism], *Aspekt* 3/1998, p. 180-185). The general condemnation of radicals' non-co-operation is now used by the mass media as a modern verbal version of the pillory, seen in its most visible instances on television.

Education in the field of gender or women's studies is not yet widespread in Slovakia. In the humanities and technical departments of state universities, an introduction to feminism is offered as an option by the Department of Philosophy for all other Departments of humanities, while in the natural and technical sciences feminist ideas remain untouched. In private educational institutions, gender studies have begun to be taught this year in connection with Cultural Studies (Open Society Foundation and SCCA, Bratislava). There are five non-governmental women's organisations which deal with feminism in some degree (*Aspekt*, Bratislava; *Aliancia žien Slovenska*, Bratislava; *Fenestra*, Košice; *Centrum Nádej*, Bratislava and *Pro Familia*, Humenné), of which only one openly claims to be feminist (*Aspekt*). There is only one homosexual and lesbian organisation (*Ganymedes*, Bratislava), one lesbian organisation with three offices (Museion Bratislava, Museion stred Banská Bystrica and Museion junior). Feminist thought and behaviour is not highly developed in Slovakia, either in local civic associations and initiatives, nor in anarchist groups. For this reason, *Aspekt* provides a space for non-dichotomic female solidarity and a transitory, repeated and many-directional alliance of women and men willing and able to discuss the

question of feminism in Slovakia and abroad, and above all a unique space for assessing the contribution of ideas on gender difference to contemporary Central European culture.

Whether womanhood is linked more or less with the history of the morphology of physical reality, or whether we separate it off from the (biological and cultural) physical reality, it is difficult to ignore the fact that, like women, the word is seen in the history of western philosophy in terms of sense, corporeality, materialness, externality and superficiality. The cultural history of words and women are similar: just as western Judeo-Christian tradition conceived the difference between the Word and words, so it saw that between woman and man. Women was (is) the mediator of man, was (is) seen as the sign of a sign, was (is) primarily a representation of an utterance. This is a further reason why *Aspekt*, both the magazine and its book publishing, which began in 1993 and has continued with financial support from the *Heinrich Böll Stiftung* and *Pro Helvetia na Slovensku*, concentrates on the *written* aspect of contemporary Slovak feminist philosophy, literature, art and architecture, together with discussing and translating into Slovak writings on gender by many contemporary national and international feminists (both women and men), homosexual and heterosexual women and men reflecting on problems related to the social acceptance of their gender. Through these writings in Slovak, it also has an influence on the language in gender terms and demonstrates the influence of feminist criticism, gynocriticism and theories of women's writing. *Aspekt* includes not only feminist studies from the humanities and such established literary genres

as lexicons, reviews, essays, sketches, notes, interviews, reflections, plays, poetry, legends and fairy tales, but also less common forms of comment and irony (the column *Pearls (of Men) before Women*) and the even less established – and less likely to be so – gossip (the *Let's Gossip* column). *Aspekt* is therefore first and foremost an aspect of feminist writing, graphic and polygraphic work. *Aspekt* presents the work of Slovak and international feminist artists, painters, sculptors and architects. In its own library and in public places in the city, it hosts group discussions, artistic performance workshops and presentations of feminist art. It performs both art and writing on art.

If I had not been able to write in *Aspekt* on aspects of contemporary feminism, I do not know where I could have *touched* on the contemporary writing and written, private and public division of Slovak feminism. I would probably have to repeat Gertrude Stein's "*There is not there there*". *Aspekt* also creates the maps of the feminist *there*, in Slovakia and abroad, in *Aspekt* and outside it. The map of the *there* of Slovak feminism is a not very extensive tissue of various interpretations of creative feminist currents and movements with a sense for deviations and inner tensions, rather than a harmonising, homogenous, symmetrical Platonic body, atom or thing – object – of female or feminist interpretations of womanhood. That it is like this is partly due to the *unformedness* of Slovak women writers, philosophers, artists, art historians, architects and all those who are interested in feminism in Slovakia today.

Monika Mitášová

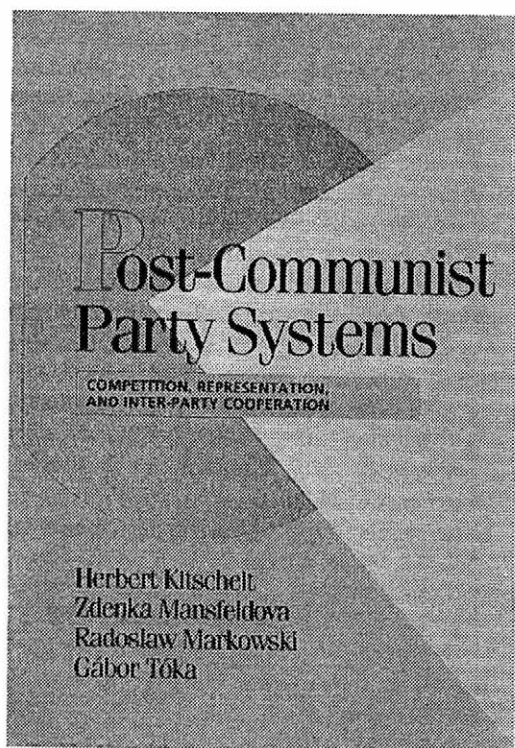
## Post-Communist Party Systems

Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation

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*Post-Communist Party Systems* examines democratic party competition in four post-communist polities in the mid-1990s: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. Legacies of pre-communist rule have played as much a role in accounting for differences as the institutional diversity incorporated into the new democratic rules of the game. The book shows various developments within the four countries with regard to the different voter appeal of the various parties, patterns of voter representation, and dispositions to join other parties in legislative or executive alliances. The authors also present interesting avenues of comparison for broader groups of countries.



## Gender seminars for teachers in Open Society Fund, Prague

### The beginning of our national women's program

In 1996 the Open Society Fund in New York founded by George Soros encouraged its Prague foundation to start the national women's program. Knowing that Czech society lacks a concept of life-long education and realising that gender issues would be more likely accepted than solely women issues we designed our cycle of trainings in the field of gender studies. In order to implement significant changes in the field we decided to address high school teachers of humanities and related sciences. Many of these teachers had been trained under communism and they were seeking new themes within their subjects, especially 'civic education', that should reflect the changes of society. It was clear that the state was offering the teachers hardly any further training, they had no contact with professionals, most of them were uninformed or misinformed about gender issues and there was a general lack of good and new materials at schools. On the other hand, our brief survey acknowledged a great demand to learn more about gender issues, not only among the teachers but also among the students. And that is why in 1997 we opened our educational cycle called *Women, men and society from a gender perspective*. The objective was not only to approach the educators who can apply and multiply this knowledge in their own teaching, but also to encourage unbiased classroom discussion about today's position of both sexes in personal life, as well as in wider societal contexts.

### How the courses are run

Each cycle, which takes place from October until May, consists of eight seminars and workshops, each of them one-day long. The topics cover social, cultural, personal and labour aspects of gender. Lectures are given by leading Czech sociologists, human rights activists, psychologists, artists, university teachers and representatives of non-governmental organisations active in gender issues. As regards the

number of participants, each cycle is intended for a closed group of 25-30 teachers. So far we have trained around 110 teachers, both men and women, from various schools around the whole country. The majority of them were from small regional towns where they are now trying to introduce gender issues into local communities.

The elementary course usually covers the following topics: introduction to gender issues (historical outline, outstanding personalities, role of political regimes and different societal needs), family and work (gender construction within the family and in wider contexts, men and women in labour market, changing gender relations in modern and post-modern society), culture, arts and mass media (their role in defining masculinity and femininity, gender stereotypes in literature, film and visual arts, mass media, style of life, position of men and women in various religious systems, such as Catholic, Jewish and Islamic), social dimension of gender (violence in the society; prostitution, trafficking in women, homosexuality; legal issues).

The subsequent cycle of four all-day seminars is designed differently each year, in trying to correspond with the special needs and interests of the particular group of teachers. Participants are actively involved in running these follow-up workshops: among other things, they write their own essays on relevant topics and present them to other participants.

### The development of the program

Since 1998 our courses have also been open to elementary school teachers and other educators. From 1999 they have been not only run in Prague, but also in Brno, the capital of Moravia.

In November 1998 a group of our participants founded "An association of teachers of civic education". One of their aims is to develop a methodology to implement the outcome of our courses into the classroom and to influence the national curriculum by lobbying at the state institutions.

In trying to contribute to a good-quality literature available on the subject the Open Society Fund Prague have published *The Czech Gender Studies Reader* that contains lectures

from our educational courses. Issued in June 1999 it is the first reference study text of its kind to appear on the Czech market. It will be used not only on our courses, but also distributed at high schools, as well as made available to university students, short of background literature.

To support the graduates of our courses in further activities we now offer them small grants in the field of gender issues. These "follow-up grants" are aimed to encourage teachers to organise their own seminars, surveys, projects and round tables within their regional schools and towns.

In the year 2000 we are planning to offer our educational cycle to a new profession group, which, as well as teachers, influences a large number of the public. Having found out that none of the 220 museums existing in Czech Republic reflects gender aspects we want to offer the courses to people working in museums and galleries throughout the country.

### Overall impact

Judging from participants' opinions and other means of evaluation the program has proved highly successful. It focuses not only on professional but also on personal development of teachers, and at the same time contributes to the development of democracy in various regions of our country.

The program also received recognition for its results through its selection by the Open Society Institute in New York as a model example for other women programs within the network of Soros foundations.

Let me close with a few excerpts from the evaluation of teachers that graduated from our gender seminars in 1997 and 1998:

*"The series of seminars most certainly provided an extensive and comprehensive overview of gender studies. For me it was important in terms of general recognition of one*

*social issue typical for the end of the 20th century. The series deprived me of my prejudice, which I personally think is the biggest outcome for me. We have used a lot of materials provided by OSF at our school, especially in humanities lessons."* (Zdeněk Sviták, High School Blovice, school headmaster.)

*"I am a history and literature teacher and the course was very beneficial for me in many ways. I used some of the themes in lessons of history and civic education. Most of the books that we received at seminars will find a wide range of uses in our school, because we can hardly get them in our region and they are perfectly suited for our lessons."* (Vladimír Bělský, High School, Soběslav.)

*"It was the best 'school after school' that I have experienced."* (Jaroslava Petra Filipová, Institute for Handicaped Children, Prague.)

*"I'd like to thank you for a very good choice of lecturers – all lessons were of a very high quality. I use the newly gained knowledge in my lessons of literature as well as social sciences."* (Věra Hlavatá, High School, Děčín.)

*"I learned something that would not normally reach our school. Thank to some lecturers I judge certain problems differently and I have gained courage to contribute to their solution. I also realised how important it is in our country to respect differences between men and women and – starting at schools – to prevent the vulgarisation of women's role in society."* (Jan Duda.)

*"I am seriously considering including gender issues as part of our school leaving examination."* (Jaroslav Staněk, High School, Aš.)

*"The course enlarged my vision of this world. Perhaps in the future I will be more tolerant."* (Jan Zouhar, Masaryk High School, Vsetín.)

Lucie Ryntová

### Gender Studies Centre, Prague

The Prague Gender Studies Centre (GSC) was set up in 1991 in the flat of the dissident sociologist Jiřina Šiklová, and initially functioned

primarily as a library of mostly foreign language literature and a so-called curriculum centre. A group of women from different professions (sociologists, philosophers and academics from various fields of the social sciences, writers, students, and a number of

Americans and Canadians who were mostly in Prague for a short time only) soon formed around the centre and developed the debate on the position of women with lectures, research and publicity. From the outset, the GSC was in close contact with similar centres in other countries. An important stimulus in the early stages was the conference on "Women in a Changing Europe" held in Denmark and the East West meeting of women in Dubrovnik, where the Network of East West Women was founded, with its offices in the NUSA. The GSC also took an active part in international dialogue, including the co-organisation of conferences, starting with *Emerging Women's Organisations in Post-Communist Europe* in Jíloviště u Prahy (Frauen Anstiftung Hamburg, 1992), or *East-East Gender Studies Inspirations* in Liblice (1993). Many other conferences followed directed at both the Czech and the international public (Politics with Women or without Women?, Women in the History of Prague, Project Parity – Training Women for Public Life and Politics, Woman and Man in the Media, The Hidden History of Women, Feminist Theology in Post-Communist Countries, Regional Action in the 43rd Session of the UN Commission for the Status of Women, etc.). The GSC received its earliest financial support from the Network of East West Women and its later development was aided by long-term support from the German women's foundation, *Frauen Anstiftung*, and grants from international foundations. The GSC was officially registered as a non-profit, non-governmental organisation in 1992 (under the law in force at the time, with the title of foundation) and two years later moved from Jiřina Šiklová's flat to its first premises in Prague's second district.

The great success of the GSC and the partial achievement of its aims since the beginning of the 1990s has been the introduction of gender studies in the social sciences in Czech universities. As early as 1992/3 GSC organised a lecture cycle on *Social Aspects from the Point of View of Gender* and *Gender-Culture-Society* at Charles University in Prague. In the following academic year the lecture cycle was extended to Masaryk University in Brno and J. E. Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem. Mem-

bers of the GSC gradually introduced the gender and feminist aspects into their respective fields and gave lectures in their departments or institutions. The Centre's greatest achievement in introducing gender and women's studies into university education was the establishment of the Centre for the Study of Gender in the Department of Social Work at Charles University in Prague, the first such centre in this country. The Academic Senate decided to establish the Centre on the basis of a proposal by members of GSC in 1998 and the first semester of teaching is now under way. The GSC is however still providing financial and organisational support for the work of this department, providing premises for its co-ordinators and a support for students in the form of its library.

Lectures are also directed towards the general public and since 1996 the GSC has organised regular lectures and debates in its *Tuesdays with Gender* cycle. GSC also responds to need for discussion on women's questions in the regions and participates in public debates on the invitation of local organisations or activists.

The library has at present around four thousand volumes in the field of gender and women's studies and feminism, as well as fiction and 200 periodicals (in both Czech and foreign languages). It has an extensive collection of cuttings from Czech and foreign newspapers, monitoring the media view of women's questions. The library also publishes its own works, provides an information service on the activities of women's organisations and the state bureaucracy and is developing an internet project, [www.feminismus.cz](http://www.feminismus.cz). An important feature of the library is its archive, which includes a collection of historical materials and works by activists of the Czech Women's movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

One of the GSC's most extensive projects is *Women's Memories*. Using oral history methods it is collecting women's experiences under communism. This idea has aroused interest among women academics in other post-communist countries and groups from the Czech Republic, Poland, Serbia, Croatia and Germany are collaborating on the project.

The GSC works closely with other women's NGOs. Together with the organisations profFem, LaStrada, Elektra, Rosa and *Bílý kruh bezpečí*, it has founded the Co-ordination Circle for the Prevention of Violence against Women and was one of the initiators of the Association for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men. In collaboration with state organisations, the GSC is attempting to influence the functioning of institutional mechanisms to improve the position of women and to monitor the respecting of international accords such as CEDAW or the Platform for Action. Members of the GSC were involved in founding the coalition of NGOs in post-communist countries, the Karat Coalition, and within the coalition are now working on the Peking+5 project (an assessment of the gains made by the World Conference on Women in Peking in 1995, and new perspectives).

The Gender Studies Centre in Prague can claim much of the merit for the increasing awareness during the 1990s, both among the general public and in academic circles, of questions of feminism and the position of women in this country and in the world. Its activities have created a space for discussion on the relations between women and men from the point of view of various academic disciplines, it has drawn attention to existing problems, contributed to reflection on the communist period and revived historical memory, carrying on the idea of the women's movement between the wars or even earlier as an integral part of a developed civil society.

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The GSC has also published many works, to date:

*Altos and Sopranos: A Pocket Handbook of women's Organizations*, 1995.

*Antologie filosofických, sociologických a historických esejů o českých a slovenských ženách* [Anthology of Philosophical, Sociological and Historical Essays of Czech and Slovak Women], 1993.

- L. Busheikin, S. Trnka (ed.): *Bodies of Bread and Butter: Reconfiguring women's lives in the post-communist Czech Republic*, 1993.
- N. Cetković, P. Frýdlová: *Epistolae*. Praha: CGS, profFem, Berlin: OWEN 1999.
- M. Čermáková, H. Maříková: *Data o ženách v České republice* [Data on Women in the Czech Republic], 1996.
- M. Čermáková, H. Maříková, L. Simerská: *Platforma pro Akci* [Platform for Action], 1998.
- R. Eisler: *Číše a meč, agrese a láska aneb Žena a muž v průběhu staletí* [The Cup and the Sword, Aggression and Love, or Woman and Man in the Course of Centuries]. Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny with contribution by GSC, 1995.
- P. Frýdlová (ed.): *Všechny naše včerejšky I., II. – Paměť žen* [All Our Yesterdays I, II. – Women's Memories], Praha: Nadace Gender Studies, 1998.
- H. Havelková (ed.): *Existuje středoevropský model mateřství a rodiny?* [Is There a Central European Model of Motherhood and the Family?], Praha: Divadelní ústav, in collaboration with the Austrian Cultural Institute and the Nadace Gender Studies, 1995.
- H. Havelková, M. Vodrážka (ed.): *Žena a muž v médiích* [Woman and Man in the Media], 1998.
- S. Hendrychová (ed.): *Právní postavení žen v České republice* [The Legal Position of Women in the Czech Republic], 1998.
- V. Ledvinka, J. Pešek (ed.): *Žena v dějinách Prahy* [Women in the History of Prague], Praha: Documenta Pragensia XIII. Scriptorum in collaboration with Nadace Gender Studies, 1996.
- Regionální zpráva o institucionálních mechanismech pro zlepšení postavení žen v zemích střední a východní Evropy* [Regional Report on Institutional Mechanisms for the Improvement of the Position of Women in the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe], 1999.
- M. Vodrážka (ed.): *Politika s ženami či bez žen?* [Politics with Women or without



Women?], Praha: Nadace Gender Studies, 1996.

M. Vodrážka: *Feministické rozhovory o "tajných službách"* [Feminist Interviews on the "Secret Services"], 1996.

*Zpráva o Nadaci Gender Studies v Praze 1991-1997* [Report on the Gender Studies Centre in Prague 1991-1997], Praha: Nadace Gender Studies, 1998.

With financial support from the UNDP the GSC is preparing a publication *Women in the Czech Republic in the 1990s*, assessing a decade of democratic development of this society in relation to women. The book will be published in early 2000 in both Czech and English editions.

Lenka Simerská

### **Gender in Sociology – Teaching at the Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University in Prague**

I have been teaching courses under this title in the Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University since 1996. The first course was a one-semester optional course on "Gender and the Labour Market". This was initially intended as an intensive thematically linked cycle covering the historical, cultural and social aspects of women's work, including contemporary economic-social theories on the position of women on the labour market, gender differences, social exclusion and other topics. It became clear that the students lacked an elementary sociological sensitivity to gender and feminist approaches and concepts, and so from the winter semester of 1997-1998 I added a further course under the general title of "Gender in Sociology". The course aimed to provide a systematic explanation of concepts of gender in contemporary sociology. This was a worthy ambition since it was the only opportunity for students of this faculty to come into contact with gender and feminist concepts. The number of students enrolled ranges from 25 to 50 and both courses are now in their third year in this faculty.

The key question in preparing all lectures is to develop a sociological sensitivity for the category of gender. This is extremely difficult in the Czech cultural context and social unawareness, since it is necessary to constantly cultivate the process of understanding and critical thought for subjects which already carry considerable 'baggage'. Cultivating analytical abilities and work with empirical data of a gender character is impossible without ex-

tending the students' knowledge of working with arguments in different paradigms and theoretical concepts.

There is good reason for calling the course "Gender in Sociology". It is concerned with the way in which gender subjects penetrate sociology and the social sciences and with introducing students to contemporary thought on gender and feminist sociology. The social rejection of feminism, which may not be particularly important in western universities, always infiltrates the subjects discussed here. Since the ground is thus inappropriately narrowed, the only alternative left to me is to concentrate on teaching students methods and comparative skills in work with theories and the scientific products of various social sciences. I place considerable emphasis on both feminist and gender perspectives and also provide students with the theoretical and empirical skills to develop their sociological imagination in different directions.

The course on "Gender in Sociology" presents students with concepts, definition of gender questions, conceptual apparatus and also various aspects of women's identity. It is constructed in such a way as to make students aware that every subject, problem or social phenomenon which they may meet in theory or their own lives can be understood from the point of view of gender. In concrete terms, lectures cover gender roles, power, female culture, socialisation, stratification, the family, motherhood, fatherhood, feminism, solidarity, sexism and other topics.

The course on "Gender and the Labour Market" discusses the dualistic theory of the market, the division of labour, segregation of professions, careers, mobility, female employ-

ment, men's work, the non-monetary system, the gender contract, and so forth.

Both courses are interspersed with intervention into the field of methods and techniques of research into the position of women, particularly Czech women, as I am an external lecturer at the Faculty of Social Sciences. My main area of interest is research into the female population, which I carry out within the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of

Sciences. I also suggest how the set and recommended readings for the courses can be located, which is a major problem. The set work for the course include an essay, work with foreign-language texts, and an examination. My work includes an endless series of consultations and support for students who are interested in working on 'women's questions' for their undergraduate papers or final thesis.

Marie Čermáková

## Lectures on Feminism at Charles University

I have been lecturing on feminism at Charles University since 1994. The first two courses, entitled *Feminism and the Media*, were taught in the 1994-1995 and 1995-1996 winter semesters in the Department of Mass Communications of the Faculty of Social Sciences, and I was employed as an external lecturer. The course presented the basic concepts and key problems of feminism as a political and cultural phenomenon, the world and Czech history of women's struggle for emancipation, Czech women's journalism and the question of women's journalism in general, contemporary gender issues in the foreign media, and attitudes to gender questions in the Czech media since 1989. Beginning with the summer semester of the 1995-1996 academic year I began to teach this course in my own institution, the Institution of the Fundamentals of Learning of Charles University, where it has now become a permanent part of the programme of study under the title of *Feminist Theory*. In response to the great interest on the part of the students I began to teach a second course, *Feminist Theory II*, in the 1996-1997 summer semester. In the 1997-1998 academic year the breadth of the question required that both courses be extended to two semesters and at present there are two two-semester courses running in parallel. These are also attended by students of other faculties, who can gain credit for these courses.

*Feminist Theory I* is an introductory cycle of lectures introducing the most important sociological and psychological theories of the formation of sexual and gender identity, a historical-sociological study of the two major

changes in the position of the sexes in the last two hundred years, theoretical issues and practical aims of the first and second wave of feminism, existing hypotheses on changes in gender relations during the communist era and since its collapse, the problems of women and men in this country and in the world today, in both the private and public arenas. Considerable attention is paid to the application of feminist theories in the area of critical and criminal social phenomena between the sexes, such as prostitution, rape, harassment, domestic violence, pornography, etc. *Feminist Theory II* is a seminar course which continues on from *Feminist Theory I* and is based on reading and analysis of key feminist texts on feminist psychology, sociology, anthropology, theology, history, philosophy, etc.

Since there is a tendency in this country to include such courses under the heading of *Gender Studies*, I would like to explain why I personally prefer the title of feminist theory. The principal reason is one of merit: I consider feminism to be an important part of modern thought, an intellectual paradigm, the application of which does not simply provide an alternative view of gender questions, but also of a much broader social and cultural context, of the nature of institutions, of the periodisation of history, and so forth. Contemporary gender studies offer an intellectual and practical political perspective of key analytical instruments and material, but feminist thought is a much broader concept. In simple terms it presents general cultural categories (including that of science). The second reason is historical-empirical: not only were many important works of feminist theory written long before the concept of *gender* began to be used in the sense it

is today, contemporary feminist thought does not accept without reservations the dualist concept of sex-gender. The attempt to create a politically (humanistically) neutral gender studies is not so much a question of rejecting ideology, but rather of rejecting the critiques of ideology. My experience has shown that stu-

dents are not put off by the use of the concept of 'feminism', indeed quite the reverse, since the questions that interest them most are those linked with changes in gender roles taking place at present.

Hana Havelková

### Men's Studies at the Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University

For the second year now the Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University in Brno is offering a course on Gender as a standard component of the curriculum of the Department of Sociology. Two interrelated courses *Gender Studies I – Women*, taught in the autumn semester and *Gender Studies II – Men* taught in the spring semester, offer undergraduate students a space for open discussion of the position of women and men in society in the form of seminars led by Iva Šmídová (PhD. candidate). Both courses deal with the relations between men and women, and the inter-relatedness of the two questions is stressed. Courses on gender issues and particularly on feminism are gradually becoming a part of teaching in Social Sciences and Humanities Faculties, but a course on Men's Studies is still a rarity in the Czech Republic.

The seminars of this year's *Gender Studies II – Men* course will cover the questions of (in chronological order) why men should be a subject of study, the relation of Men's Studies to the concept of patriarchy, hegemony or the crisis of masculinity discussed in western sociological literature. An important part of the syllabus consists of discussions on the forms of male identity (their de/construction, changes), the analysis of male sexuality (with considerable importance given to readings on homophobia and homosexual identity), violence, male ties/bonds, and texts and discussion on the male body and its depiction are also included. A second thematic block covers the family, fatherhood and inter-generational relationships. The second-to-last block of the course is made up of seminars dealing with possibilities for change, men in transformation,

'new men' and the men's movement. The final block pulls together and rounds out the whole course, dealing with the relation of masculinity, men's studies and the men's movement to feminism, feminisms, the women's movement and women. The syllabuses of the two courses are attached.

Discussions on the texts are directed towards tolerance for a plurality of forms of masculinity, the advantages and limits of norms and normative hegemonic masculinity. Favourite topics of discussion include stereotypes linked with male identity and roles, particularly the division of work in the home. The course draws on the rich English language literature on the subject. Thanks to a book grant from the Network of East West Women, a grant from HESP, the positive attitude of the Faculty management and personal donations, students have access to a good library. Visiting professors who have helped to broaden the spectrum of the discussion include Prof. Victor Seidler, Goldsmiths College London (April 1999), and Prof. Ann Snitow, New School, New York City (November 1999).

The course takes the form of seminars with student presentations and discussions, based on a wide range of literature which is linguistically very demanding. Each student must also prepare a book review and a final essay. Students are led to reflect on the question from reading to their own experience and the situation in the Czech Republic. *Gender I* is conceived as an introductory course and offers the standard number of credits, *Gender II* is optional and is more demanding (earning twice the number of credits). I am now considering offering a further course which will consider other aspects of feminism in more detail (also continuing, optional and more demanding). The courses are in great demand with the number of applicants about twice the permitted

limit for a seminar course. The students' responses vary widely. Those who finish the course find that their perspective on gender questions has shifted considerably, but a certain number fail to complete the course through

lack of interest or because it is too demanding. A group of students have however gone on to gain a grant for their project in the area of gender questions.

Iva Šmídová

### **One semester course on *The Czech Women's Movement up 1914***

In the winter session 1999-2000 at the faculty of Philosophy, Charles University, Prague

This course covers the period between 1820s and 1914. It is based on existing literature as well as on archival sources. It focuses mostly on struggles of Czech women, represented by several dozens of activists, to step outside of their private sphere and to achieve more possibilities for their education and gradually, for a more equal position in private as well as public spheres. With the exception of the revolutionary period 1848-49, up to the 1860s the overall political situation in the Habsburg Empire did not allow for organised women's efforts. Cultural and social events thus played the role of communication means on matters of public interests. And still, even in this period a number of women managed to achieve admirable results through their courageous private initiative, especially in education and as writers, although at the cost of heavy personal sacrifices. The lives of M. D. Rettigová, Josefa Pedálová, Bohumila Rajská, Božena Němcová, etc. are fascinating stories as well as those of other women in later periods. They were all aware that education and self-knowledge, in the broad sense, was a key to all kinds of improvements, and this aspect was at the centre of their efforts for the whole period.

With the introduction of constitutional freedoms in the 1860s more possibilities opened to women and they used them fully to advance their course and to fight the conservative perceptions of women as inferior creatures. In the 1860s charitable work and the struggle to establish pre-school care for the poorest women in Prague was primary concern, since the social conditions for lower classes in Prague were inhuman and the government and the Catholic Church considered sharp social differences normal. At the same time their concern

with the possibilities for older girls' schooling was growing fast.

Various women's associations were gradually being established, although the imperial government was not in favour of women's efforts to achieve too much too fast, and only women's persistency and diplomacy succeeded in overcoming great difficulties. Formation of women's associations for the purpose of establishing girls schools were at the centre of their activities from the mid-1860 until the end of the 1890's. Thousands of women in Prague and other larger cities participated in these associations, mainly to gather sufficient financial means from the Czech public, occasionally from rich sponsors and institutions, to establish these schools. Despite great pressures from women, the government never included the girls schools into the state system. The devotion of Marie Riegrová-Palacká, Karolina Světlá, and other women had formed an important example for women even in the next generation. The most interesting is the story of the foundation of first girls *gymnasium* (high school) in 1890, thanks to the skills and diplomacy of writer Eliška Krásnohorská. Especially in this period the co-operation of a number of enlightened men was indispensable to women to achieve their aims.

Since the beginning of the 1870s the Czech women had a good women's monthly journal *Ženské listy* (Women's Papers) under the editorship of a writer Eliška Krásnohorská, who over thirty years took care that the journal informed women about everything important to them. She included good educational articles by experts of both genders on history, arts, health, etc. From the 1890s the number of women's journals increased to five, including one for working class women. Journals maintained a broad context, fostering traditional awareness that the women's aims were also in the interest of the quality of families, society and the nation as a whole. All journals brought

regular reports on women's conditions and movements in foreign countries, which was often an inspiration for closer contacts with these movements. Since women gradually realised that their education was not sufficient to change the prevailing prejudiced attitudes towards women, these journals became a platform for exploring their roots. In this respect T. G. Masaryk was most helpful, especially with his articles on great differences between the original Christian teachings and between traditional attitudes of the Catholic Church, and with his philosophy that the "women's question" was also a men's question. Women also explored the periods, when the Churches were most destructive to women.

Gradually women got involved in struggles for more rights and for an equal position with men in other areas, such as health, private and public law, employment and finally the political sphere.

Only when the first medical doctors graduated, did the issue of women's health

obtain the needed attention, and traditional practices dangerous to women's health were removed and changed. The legal position of women was never satisfactorily improved, but in the social sphere a number of improvements were made in relation to working women, although probably more in theory than in practice. The involvement of women in the struggle for political rights is not only fascinating but was successful in unexpected ways. The personalities of F. Plamínková and B. Víková-Kunětická played a key role in this success. With the involvement of women in the political sphere, their efforts culminated, and were then interrupted by the outbreak of World War I.

Besides compulsory and recommended literature, students have at their disposal (in the library of history departments) rich material from original sources carefully selected to cover all issues.

Marie L. Neudorřlová

## Gender, Family, and Social Interconnections

Course for students of psychology, Philosophical Faculty, Charles University, Prague

This one-semester course, intended for students in the final stages of the Masters' programme in psychology at Charles University's Philosophical Faculty, I first offered in the academic year 1995-1996 under the title *Gender and Psychology* – in full awareness that it would, by necessity, merely touch upon selected topics in relation to the general theme, rather than constituting a thorough inquiry into all aspects of gender. My initial intention was primarily to develop in the students a sense of intellectual receptivity to the concept of gender ('gender sensitivity') in light of their future work in applied psychology, in particular in the so-called 'helping professions'. The aim was to draw attention to certain themes that have become points of feminist concern in the field of psychology, for instance domestic violence or eating disorders, and finally to acquaint the participants with the feminist critique of much traditional theory in developmental psychology, including the theory of psychoanalysis.

These questions, or rather issues, have in large measure not yet found systematic thematisation in the standard psychological curricula.

Through further experience, the course has gradually changed in both form and content, to ensure that it remains as stimulating as possible while retaining its original breadth of scope. The changes thus made in the original curriculum led to a selective refinement in the range of themes, yet simultaneously allowed attention to be focused more on basic principles of feminist analysis, for instance the 'social construction' approach, which the students found to be of great interest. I am well aware that extending the time-frame of the course to two semesters would be highly advantageous; this solution, however, is at present impossible for me as an adjunct lecturer with a demanding external work-schedule. The social construction of gender is an especially revelatory approach for the students, particularly in that it differs so markedly from the main theoretical currents encountered in their studies. Students at Charles University are at present exposed primarily to essentialist standpoints, as in the past decade theories of traditional psycho-

analysis and depth psychology (which before 1989 could not be officially taught) have now become dominant. Within the framework of constructionism, we have considered (among other subjects) the creation of 'gender identity', masculinity and femininity, motherhood and fatherhood, various forms of family life, and physical and mental health in both men and women. I have often made use of the skills acquired in the course of both teaching and practising family therapy. Interactive forms of teaching and the personal experiences of the

students themselves have also shown themselves to be highly valuable.

In the semester 1999-2000, approximately 25 students took part in the course, among them an increasing number of students of social work and sociology. I have welcomed the collaboration of other lecturers offering courses with gender-related themes, and together we are searching for methods of efficiently co-ordinating our efforts.

*Šárka Gjuričová*

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### **The Social and Economic Position of Rural Women, Particularly Those in Agriculture – Report on a Project of the Czech Grant Agency**

Institution: Agricultural Economy Research  
Institute Prague, Brno Centre  
Researchers: PhDr. Hana Horská,  
PhDr. Daniela Spěšná  
Period of Research: 1998-1999

#### **Outline and Aims of the Research**

Since 1991 there have been several sociological projects in the Czech Republic investigating the position and living conditions of women in Czech society – their situation in the family, at work, on the labour market and in society. These complex research projects were not aimed at a deep-reaching analysis of the factors determining the position of specific social subgroups of women. The question of rural women and women employed in agriculture (including farmers) was virtually untouched by these research projects and consequently information on this significant group of women is very fragmented and incomplete. The economic and social consequences of the transformation (including the restructuring and changes in property relations in the agricultural sphere), together with the traditionally specific conditions of life in these areas, have also had a more severe effect in rural areas. Quantitative and qualitative information on the development of conditions for the rural population and for particular groups of this population are also important with respect to the supposed entry of the Czech Republic into the EU and the begin-

ning of work to create regional rural development programmes.

This project analysed the social and economic dimension of the position of rural women of working age on the rural labour market, in connection with their position in the family, household and social environment of the rural area and in comparison with selected characteristics that determine status within a representative sample of rural women, women working in agriculture or otherwise, and rural men. (The information collected in the subsample of the male rural population provided a view of the position of women from the men's point of view, and where necessary to extend the database to include the entire rural population of working age.)

#### **Research Method**

The research was based on an empirical representative survey carried out on the basis of direct standardised interviews using a prepared lists of points. During the preparation of the questionnaire focus group interviews were carried out. Data was collected from four representative samples of women and men of working age (15-60 years) in settlements with up to 2,000 inhabitants:

1. A sample of rural women (1010 respondents)
2. A sample of rural women working in agriculture (732 respondents)
3. A sample of rural women working outside agriculture (711 respondents)
4. A sample of rural men (538 respondents).

The samples were selected using quotas on the basis of information from the Czech Statistical Office (SLDB 1991, AGROCENSUS 1995, Mikrocensus 1996, VSPS 1998). The samples are representative by age, education and region(district).

The field survey was carried out by the FOCUS agency and was completed in December 1998.

The questionnaire covered the following areas:

- characteristics of rural families and households
- the division of labour and decision-making in rural families
- rural origins, real and potential mobility
- reflections of the conditions for men and women in rural areas
- property relations for land and agricultural property
- household economy, division of work and decision-making

- employment of and level of discrimination against women on the rural labour market
- the income and standard of living of rural women and rural households
- the situation of women farmers (private land owners)
- demographic characteristics

The questionnaire for women included 75 questions (393 variables) and that for men 33 questions (110 variables). The data was processed by the FOCUS agency using the SPSS/PC program (univariate analysis of variables of all samples, bivariate analysis of variables in the samples of rural women, women in agriculture and women outside agriculture by age, level of education, marital status, employment, position at work, ownership relations to the land, personal income, household income, size of settlement and region, and a multivariate analysis of selected variables.

The results of the research will be published at the beginning of 2000 in a VÚZE publication and in specialist journals.

*Hana Horská*

## Family and Fertility Survey

At the end of 1997 the Czech Statistical Office in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the Sofres-Factum research agency (for the field survey) carried out a "Family and Fertility Survey". This was part of the international Family and Fertility Survey Project, which is underwritten by the population unit of the European Economic Commission of the UNO, the Centre for Population and Family Studies (SBGS) in Brussels, and the Dutch interdisciplinary demographic institute in The Hague (NIDI). Twenty countries have taken part in the survey up to the present time.

On the basis of internationally recommended methods, the survey focused on women of reproductive age (i.e. aged 15 to 44) and women living with a husband or partner and their partners. The sample was selected by a three-phase process: first, all households surveyed completed a questionnaire with basic information. If the household included a

woman aged 15-44, the surveyor asked the questions in the basic questionnaire and if the woman was living with a partner, he too completed a virtually identical questionnaire. The initial sample included 7,611 randomly selected families, of which 5,773 completed the questionnaires. Answers to the woman's questionnaire were obtained in 1,735 households and in 721 of these a man/partner also completed a questionnaire.

The survey was not primarily intended to gain a description of reproductive behaviour (which is ultimately shown better and more precisely by demographic statistics), but was more concerned with attitudes, opinions and values, that is, with questions of motivation. It is the combination of these two views, demographic and sociological, that is this survey's greatest contribution. The project has also provided a basis for international comparisons.

In addition to the basic features of the household, i.e. socio-demographic data (sex, age, marital status, occupation, relation to the respondent) on all members of the household

and information about the form of ownership of the dwelling, the questionnaire had nine basic sections and three modules. Unlike the basic sections, the modules did not have to be included in the questionnaire and the choice depended on the research team and the country concerned. A more detailed description of the content of basic sections and modules is provided below:

Basic section *The Parents' Home*: Ascertained the family's past history according to the following criteria: the number of children in the parents' family, who was the head, history of parents' cohabitation and reasons for the respondent's leaving this family.

Basic section *Partnership*: Ascertains the existence and type of the respondent's present and past partnerships, and asked about children living or having lived in the partnership.

Basic section *Children*: Ascertains information about all children of the respondent – both their own and adopted, fostered or stepchildren.

Basic section *Pregnancy*: Ascertains the number of births, abortions or miscarriages the woman has had.

Basic section *Regulation of Pregnancy*: Asks about use of contraception and/or opinions on this.

Basic section *Ideas on Children – To have or not to have?*: Ascertains ideas, attitudes and motives for decisions to have a child.

Basic section *Other Opinions*: Asks about attitudes and opinions on selected questions related to marriage, the family and parenthood.

Basic section *Education and Occupation*: Seeks to find out the respondent's education and work history.

Basic section *Partner's Characteristics*: Asks about the general outline of the partner's life, about the nature of the partnership, about the division of work and responsibilities between partners. Also includes questions on both partners' relations to faith and religion.

Module *Gynaecological Prevention*: Relates to the section on regulation of pregnancy and asks about regular check-ups and self-examination of breasts.

Module *Values and Convictions*: Concerned with attitudes towards circumstances which can or could influence the reproductive climate in

society and seeks to ascertain the importance of this aspect in the context of the broader connections in the people's life and society.

Module *Population Policy*: Ascertains ideas on society's relation to population questions and to circumstances affecting this and on how 'tuned in' the respondent is to these questions.

The results of the survey show that there is still a strong preference in Czech society for marriage, with a traditional view of the family prevailing in the questionnaires. The family into which a respondent was born and grew up is still a very strong and indeed deciding model for future reproductive and family behaviour. There are no great differences in opinions between the sexes, nor between inhabitants of rural and urban areas. The major influences on the public attitude to family and population policy and the relating reproductive behaviour are age and education. It remains an open question whether this confirms theories about a coming fundamental change in the institution of the family or whether it is simply the traditional generational shift in opinions, from more radical ideas among young people to a greater acceptance of the traditional model with increasing age and life experience. A single demographic survey is not sufficient to provide an answer to this question, which calls rather for continuing, long-term research. The influence of education was shown to be decisive. Increasing education and the increasing employment of women relating to this is basically reflected not only in opinions but also in the actual life of families and so in their patterns of reproduction. The main negative influence is the problems faced by young families in finding appropriate accommodation. This seems to be the most burning question connected with the negative trends in population development. Those interested in the details of the results can consult the publication *A Detailed Report on the Family and Fertility Survey* (1997), published by the Czech Statistical Office in its "News and Reports" series. For further information, contact PhDr. Eva Čáková (cakiova@gw.czso.cz) or ing. Jaroslav Kraus (kraus@gw.czso.cz).

Eva Čáková



**Annotations on Recent Important Czech Publications on Gender and Feminism**

**Books, Journals:**

**V. Kuchařová, L. Zamykalová: Aktuální otázky postavení žen v ČR** [Questions on the Status of Women in the Czech Republic Today]

Praha, VÚPSV 1998, 86 pp.

This research report provides an overview of the results of the project on "The Position of Women in the Czech Republic – Problems Today", which included empirical surveys of opinions and living conditions of men and women. The authors consider subjective perceptions on the position of women and men, and summarise the major or disputed questions relating to 'women's issues' in this country: women's education, women's employment and individual problems affecting them on the labour market, such as unemployment, role in management, discrimination at work and in terms of income. In the second part, entitled "Women between Work and Family – The Women's View", they concentrate on the value orientations of men and women in relation to the family and the division of roles within it. They conclude by looking at women's participation in politics and violence towards women. The report also uses data from other VÚPSV research.

**V. Kuchařová, A. Nedomová, L. Zamykalová: Předpoklady sňatkového a rodinného chování mladé generace** [Preconditions for Marital and Family Patterns of the Young Generation]

Praha, VÚPSV 1999, 96 pp.

The report is related to the project, "Forms of Family Life among the Young Generation" (for a report on this see Kuchařová et al., 1997), which aimed to ascertain the circumstances which influence young people's behaviour in relation to marriage and family today. This was a continuation of work with data from research into young single people's plans for a family in the "Young Generation" project, carried out

jointly by the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences and VÚPSV. The report is divided into three related parts. The first looks at patterns of forming partnerships and natality, opinions on marriage and living together outside marriage and young people's plans for their lives. The second half includes the basic possible explanations for the demographic changes under way in this country and internationally. The third section is entitled "Accommodation as one of the fundamental requirements for young families' independence" and deals with the most common problem, one possible explanation for the state of affairs of young people today.

**M. Tuček et al.: Česká rodina v transformaci – Stratifikace, dělba rolí a hodnotové orientace** [The Czech Family in the Throes of Transformation – Stratification, Division of Roles and Value Orientations]

Praha, SoÚ AV ČR, Working Papers 3/1998, 162 pp., ISBN 80-85950-45-6

This study summarises the results of the project, "Stratification, Gender, and Family", which mapped the state of the contemporary Czech family, with particular emphasis on the changing positions and roles of men and women in society and in the family, using a wide range of empirical material from recent research. The first chapter describes the development of the Czech family since the beginning of the century from a demographic perspective, the second analyses the models and norms of behaviour of the Czech family in the European context, and the third looks at the general situation of young families. A further three chapters deal with the functioning of the Czech family today, covering parenthood, partnership relations, and the combining of family and professional roles from the point of view of gender, including two-career marriages. The last three chapters are devoted to questions of work and stratification, both the historical development of women's position on the labour market and their subjective perception of work, and conceptual questions of the position of women in the stratification structure of society.

**M. Čermáková: Rodina a měnící se gender role – sociální analýza české rodiny** [The Family and Changing Gender Roles – A Social Analysis of the Czech Family]

Praha, SoÚ AV ČR, Working Papers 8/1997, 120 pp, ISBN 80-85950-42-1

The study is a social analysis of the Czech family based on data from the representative survey, "The Family 1994 – a sociological survey of the social conditions of the Czech family", carried out by the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences. The research formed part of the International Social Survey Programme, which encompasses 22 countries and the subject was gender roles in the private sphere since 1989. The analysis presents the divergence between female and male perceptions of the private sphere and investigates the factors causing this difference. Individual chapters deal with the basic characteristics of the sample, gender roles in the family, the position of men and women in the private and public spheres, money and gender roles, the division of labour in the household, the role of sexuality, marital relations, the role of children in the family and relations to the mother. The study identifies specific features of the Czech sample in comparison with other countries surveyed. A sample of the questionnaire is given in an appendix.

**M. Lenderová: K hříchu i k modlitbě. Žena v minulém století** [On Sin and Prayer. Woman in the Last Century]

Praha, Mladá fronta 1999, 306 pp. ISBN 80-204-0737-5

The author reflects on the position of women in Czech society in the context of the history of culture and everyday life in the 19th century, i.e. approximately from the 1780s to the emergence of the first women's political organisations. She looked particularly at the life of middle-class women, although not entirely disregarding the nobility or the urban or rural poor. The work first traces the course of women's life from birth to maturity, marriage

and motherhood, and then looks at the lives of adult women of the time. It looks at health, beauty, cosmetics, sport and fashion, including the emergence of salons both in this country and in the European context. The author also remembers that women were not only a subject of art but also created works of art themselves. The conclusion is devoted to the first beginnings of the emancipation movement, which was largely driven by women's demands for the right to a university education, choice of profession and political careers. The author used works published in the period, and newspapers, church, medical, legal, educational, philosophical and scientific literature. However, as she was also interested in describing women's inner life, as they themselves experienced the period, a major source of information was women's letters, diaries and memoirs. The book includes many illustrations and reproductions.

**J. Špitz, Š. Gjuričová, J. Kubička, E. Poďulková: Vidět věci jinak, rozhovory rodinných terapeutů** [Seeing Things Differently: Interviews with Family Therapists]

Praha, SLON 1998, 136 pp. ISBN 80-85850-51-6

This book by three family therapists is an attempt to explain their way of working and their views on problems in the family to all those who are interested in the question of living in the family. They decided to do this in the form of interviews with the 'lay person', rather than as yet another handbook of recommendations, as they wanted to inspire people to think about their own difficulties and possible ways of resolving these. After a brief introduction looking at the basic questions of what is family therapy, how problems can be solved by talking about them, what a family therapist is good for, etc., the interview is divided into thematic sections: How We Can Understand Each Other, The Child and Divorce, The Child in the New Family, Violence, On the Edge of Life, and Where Children May Not Go.

**E. Věšínová-Kalivodová, H. Maříková (ed.): Společnost žen a mužů z aspektu gender, sborník studií** [The Society of Men and Women from the Aspect of Gender: A Collection of Studies]

Praha, Open Society Fund 1999, 172 pp.

This collection presents the lectures from the course on "Society, Women and Men from the Aspect of Gender" which was run in 1997 on the initiative of the Open Society Fund. The lecturers included experts from different disciplines of the social sciences and humanities and the participants were largely from secondary schools. This was an attempt to help introduce the perspective of gender into Czech education. It did not, and indeed could not, provide an opportunity to go into the subject in depth, but rather offered ideas for further reflection, information on problems already analysed, and an overview of the broad range of the concept of gender studies. The volume includes lectures by J. Šiklová: *Gender Studies and Feminism in Universities in the Czech Republic and the World*, E. Věšínová-Kalivodová: *The Gender of Lifestyle: A Comparative Reflection*, H. Havelková: *The History of Feminism in the Czech Lands*, M. Čermáková: *Gender and the Labour Market*, H. Maříková: *The Changing Roles of Men and Women in the Family*, Š. Gjuríčová: *The Construction of Gender: Masculinity and Femininity from Different Perspectives*, P. Řičan: *The Life of Women with Men as War?*, S. Hubálek: *Ethics and Aggression in Business*, M. Balabán: *The Conception of Man and Woman in the Bible*, J. Opočenská: *Violence and Overcoming it*, L. Oates-Indruchová: *Gender in the Media: An Outline of the Problem*, J. Valdová: *"Male Directedness" in Upbringing and Education from the Linguistic Point of View*, P. Frýdlová: *The Features of Women's Cinema*.

**H. Havelková, M. Vodrážka (ed.): Žena a muž v médiích** [Woman and Man in the Media]

Praha, Nadace Gender Studies 1998, 53 pp., ISBN 80-902367-2-3

This is a record of the seminar of the same name organised by the Gender Studies Foun-

ation and the Czech Helsinki Committee. In the introduction, Hana Havelková stresses that this was not an analysis of the position and role of women and men in our society today or of a feminist conception of how the Czech media treat these questions. Mirek Vodrážka reflects on women's art. A number of contributions concern printed media: Eva Kalivodová analyses feminist magazines from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, Kateřina Jonášová analyses women's journalism in the 1920s, and Barbara Osvaldová looks at contemporary women's publications in this country. Jiřina Šmejkalová and Eva Hauserová show how hard it is to deal with the subject of feminism in the media and how this is possible – particularly in today's most powerful medium of television, Jan Jiráček looks at the roles of men and women as creators of news reports and as the viewers, Věra Veronika Tydlíatová considers the stereotypes created by these media, and Daniel Köpl analyses the roles of men and women in advertisements – including the developing Internet advertising, while Petra Jedličková looks at Cyberspace as an open challenge to women. The collection is complemented by a report on a survey of German and Austrian journalists by Eva Payerl, a report on the discussion at the seminar, and samples of Veronika Bromová's art.

**Marie L. Neudorfflová, České ženy v 19. století. Úsilí a sny, úspěchy i zklamání na cestě k emancipaci** [Czech women in the 19th century. Struggles and dreams, achievements and disappointments].

Praha, JANUA 1999, 460 pp.

The book is a lively story of several dozens of Czech women involved in a dramatic and gradually successful struggle to step outside the private sphere and to gain for all women more equal possibilities for their personal development as well as for a more equal position with men in the Czech society. The major spheres of their activities – education, social conditions, abuse, health, legal position in the family and society, political rights, etc., are systematically explored in fourteen chapters, which are based on rich sources. Hard and goal-seeking work was at the core of women's efforts but co-

operation with a few enlightened men was often indispensable to explore and slowly overcome traditional conservative and deeply rooted perceptions of women as inferior beings "meant only for the private sphere". The emancipation movement of Czech women is not dealt in isolation, many interesting references and contacts with other movements are included, especially in the last chapter.

### **One Eye Open, special issue – volume 1**

Praha, Both Eyes Open 1998, 156 pp.,  
ISSN: 1221-9148

This special issue of *One Eye Open* is an attempt to map gender through history and present it as a fully deserving subject of socio-historical analysis. This means showing how history has until now been seen as masculine, i.e. exclusively through male experience, which is moreover seen only as taking place in the public sphere, even if there is no doubt of the importance of women as subjects in history. This issue presents personal reflections on Czech History by H. Gordon Skilling, followed by an essay by Marci Shore on the trial of Milada Horáková, where she stresses how these events were viewed by the woman-actor herself. Petra Jedličková's contribution, "Women on the Wire or Czech Cyberfeminism" opens the new subject of cyberspace with a question as to how gender roles will be organised in this new world. This first issue also includes an "Oral History" section with members of three generations of the same family interviewed as part of the project of "*Women's Memory*", a review of the book *The Lives of Young Prague Women* and an excerpt from Eva Hauserová's book *You are a woman... (a small, slightly feminine advisor)*.

### **Theses:**

**M. Musilová: Vývoj politiky rovných příležitostí mužů a žen v České republice v kontextu evropské integrace** [The Development of Policy of Equal Opportunities of Men and Women in the Czech Republic in the Context of European Integration]

Praha, Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University, Public and Social Policy 1999, 107 pp.

This work offers an overview of the development of political equal opportunities of men and women in the framework of the European Union and a comparison with developments in the Czech Republic. The theoretical section analyses the concept of equal opportunities, defines the basic concepts and looks at basic gender and feminist approaches. The section on European policy on equal opportunities for men and women, describes its development, its institutional and financial basis and programmes of European co-operation. A further section looks at the labour market, participation in decision-making processes, the family and education in the Czech Republic from the point of view of the position of men and women. In the final chapter the author offers general suggestions for the further development of equal opportunities policies in this country.

**A. Křížková: Gender role v rodině** [Gender Roles in the Family]

Praha, Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University, General Sociology 1999, 80 pp.

The work describes the stereotypical definition of the content of gender roles in the family in the context of the contemporary relation of the private and public spheres of society in the Czech Republic. It shows both the incompatibility of women's working and family roles, and the very compactly organised unity of all male roles as a result of the complementary delimitation of the public and private spheres, and of the boundaries of gender roles in society. The author defines three basic types of organisation of gender roles in the family and identifies the transitional form as the prevailing one in this country, i.e. where both partners

work but the man is dominant in the sphere of work and the woman in that of the family. The work includes a special study of families of university graduates, whose attitudes often come closer to an egalitarian division of roles in the family. The author presents the hypothesis that this type is the household of the future.

**J. Nováčková: Proměny gender-rolí v důsledku radikálních změn období modernizace (Dualita mužské a ženské role, univerzalita a gender-identita)** [Transformations of Gender-Roles as a Result of Radical Changes in the Period of Modernisation (The Duality of Male and Female Roles, Universality and Gender-Identity)]

Praha, Philosophical Faculty of Charles University, Department of Sociology 1997, 94 pp.

The duality of the male and female genders is a general cultural principle of the world and the interconnection of the two forms a whole which is the socio-cultural basis of each society. Universalism is based on this assumption and resolves the general ethical question of human equality and freedom. The author describes the process of modernisation as a crisis of gender roles and a crisis of identity which has not been resolved even in the present period of the transition to the post-modern. She traces female and male roles in the light and conflict of various paradigms. From the sociological point of view she outlines male and female roles, their conflicts, status and changes in contemporary society. She describes the conflict between sociology and biology on the origin of gender and sexual behaviour. She presents the basic works of social and cultural anthropologists (Bachoven, McLennan, Benedict, Opler, Mead, Linton), sociologists (Simmel, Ortega y Gasset, Scheler, Freud, Fromm), and other disciplines (sociology of the post-modern, Marxism, feminism) which relate to this issue.

## Undergraduate Works:

**B. Osvaldová (ed.): Žena - muž? Žena + muž!!!** [Woman - Man? Woman + Man!!!]

Praha, Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University, Department of Journalism 1999, 72 pp.

A collection of three undergraduate works by journalism students on the subject of male-female relations, questions of gender and feminism, which were presented at the Faculty of Social Sciences in 1998 during a seminar of the same name.

**T. Boehmová: Obraz ženy v českém tisku a jeho proměny pod vlivem feministických teorií** [The Image of Woman in the Czech Press and its Transformation under the Influence of Feminist Theory]

This paper is based on an analysis of daily newspapers, periodicals and other publications, particularly just before and after 1989. The author shows how the image and behaviour and view of women in Czech society changed under the influence of new publications, lectures at universities and new types of periodicals inspired by feminism. The work includes an interview with Hana Havelková, who lectures on feminism at the Institute of the Fundamentals of Learning.

**A. Knapová: Feminismus v zrcadle českých médií** [Feminism in the Mirror of the Czech Media]

The paper shows both the high level of emancipation of women in Czech society (on the labour market) and the rejection of feminism that springs from a simple lack of understanding, which is largely due to the Czech media. The Czech media have chosen a simple and effective approach: not to ascertain the origins of this women's movement, not to deal with the question seriously, not to study it, but to tempt readers with the ageing but titillating "adventures of 'American' feminism".

**J. Živná: Ideální muži podle měřítek první republiky** [The Ideal Man in the Terms of the First Republic]

The author attempts to reconstruct the image of the ideal man in the period from 1918 to 1938 on the basis of an analysis of contemporary publications, particularly the magazine, *Gentleman*. She describes the ideal style of dress, behaviour and character of the man of that period and also identifies actual men who were considered to embody this ideal. She also shows how the type of the gentleman was gradually carried beyond the limits of the practicable and replaced by the democrat.

**L. Průšová: Ostře sledované matky. Obraz mateřství, jak je prezentován v rozhovorech se ženami ve vybraných týdenících** [Closely Observed Mothers. The Image of Motherhood as Presented in Interviews with Women in Selected Weeklies]

Praha, Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University 1999, 28 pp.

This is an excellent analysis of interviews with women of the post-1989 cultural, professional and political elite in four well-known weeklies (*Reflex*, *Týden*, *Magazín Lidových novin*, *Magazín MF Dnes*; from January 1998 to March 1999). A total of 114 interviews were examined from the point of view of the construction of an image of motherhood. The analysis preceding the theoretical part maps the role of the media in creating values and the media's influence in social change. Applied semiotics are used to reveal the process of the creation and transmission of meanings in the media and to understand motherhood and a code of meaning. The counterweight of the myths on which the weeklies' interviews are based is the feminist theory of motherhood.

*Alena Křížková*

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