

# **NEVER THE SAME AGAIN?**

**Families and their Relationships  
Ten Years after the Year of the Family**

**51<sup>st</sup> Annual International Conference  
Tallinn, Estonia  
13 – 16 June 2004**

**KEYNOTE PAPERS AND CHAIR'S REPORT**



**International Commission on Couples  
and Family Relations**

## **Introduction**

The editing of the contents of a publication is sometimes thought of as a burdensome task. The reality is that the many readings of the Tallinn keynote papers which editing required has proved to be a most rewarding exercise. It resulted in a much greater appreciation of the richness of the ideas, information and discussion contained in them. I urge readers to gain similar benefits by a careful reading of the content of this publication.

The texts supplied by the presenters have been emended, hopefully with no loss of meaning. They are otherwise just as the authors submitted them.

Derek R Hill  
Editor  
Chair, ICCFR (2001 – 2005)

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**51<sup>st</sup> International Conference**  
**NEVER THE SAME AGAIN?**  
**Families and their relationships Ten Years after the**  
**Year of the Family**

**Chair's Report**

**Introduction**

The wish of the ICCFR Board that the Commission's 2004 conference should explore change in the well-being of, and the provisions for, couples and families in the ten year period since the **International Year of the Family** made a proposal from Vitality of Estonia to hold the conference in Tallinn a very welcome one. ICCFR had had very limited contact with the Baltic states and it was anticipated that Estonia's on-going process of 'transition' or transformation' in the post-Soviet era would offer many insights into the ways in which couples and families respond to change, and about how the public sector and voluntary organisations have reshaped themselves to support family life. Our programme incorporated presentations by sociologists, demographers, a jurist, representatives of government departments and of voluntary organisations, as well as those engaged in therapeutic work. Conference participants brought an even greater spread of specialisms and of experience in contrasting work-settings. Our hope was that the conference would not simply review the current situation but would also offer all those involved new perspectives and ideas with which to enrich their work.

**The Conference programme**

Participants, 69 from 19 different countries, were first offered the opportunity of a guided tour of the city of Tallinn. Few had visited Estonia before and the insight offered by the tour into medieval Europe was fascinating, as was sight of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Tallinn rising alongside historic buildings.

Estonian Minister of Social Affairs, **Mr Marko Pomerants**, and the President and Vice-President of Vitality of Estonia, **Mr Ants Eglon** and **Mrs Urve Randmaa**, welcomed participants to the conference venue and spoke of their different roles in promoting the well-being of couples and families in Estonia. The young ladies of the **Kurkell Ensemble** greeted all present with song and dance.

The first keynote presentation focused on Estonia and was made by **Professor Dagmar Kutsar** (University of Tartu). Professor Kutsar's paper compared and contrasted change in the demographics of couples, children and families within the fifteen established members of the European Union, and in Estonia and the other nine new members. Marriages (defined in conventional terms) have declined as relationships of choice throughout the augmented Union during the past forty years and, most particularly in the Baltic states. The ages of the partners at first marriage have increased, especially in Northern Europe. Family formation has been affected by the 'de-institutionalization of the family', the many different, socially-acceptable ways of structuring families and the decreasing stability of the associated adult pairings. Children form a diminishing proportion of total populations – a concern

throughout Europe. This is seen to be a result of different choices being made about the balance between family life and career. Extra-marital birth rates, highest in Northern Europe, have grown throughout the Union.

By drawing upon a wealth of research findings Professor Kutsar focused attention on key features of the current situation in Estonia. A registered or an unregistered cohabitation is increasingly the basis of family formation. Marriage is a much valued institution and decisions about whether to marry or cohabit are strongly influenced by the young people's parents. Cohabiting couples have fewer children than married couples. For many reasons the actual number of children is lower than the number desired. Abortion, the main method of family planning for more than forty years, has reduced from about two per live birth to a ratio of one to one. It is estimated that children under 15 years of age will make up 14.2% of the population by 2015. Many children do not have siblings and contact with grandparents has reduced significantly. About 18% of children aged 15 – 18 years will have experienced the transition from two parent to single parent family. 764 divorces per 1000 marriages were recorded in 2001 and the number of divorces roughly equals the number of new marriages today. No data is available about the break-down of cohabitations. Historically Estonians have given priority to individual values over collective ones, something which suggests that the diversity of family forms and structures will increase in the future.

New forms of family have both changed the lives of children and set new challenges for Estonian policy-makers. Poverty, unemployment and work-family balance must all be considered as efforts are made to discover the extent to which family behaviour can be directed by political measures. No legislation exists which deals with issues raised by cohabitation and the various new ways in which family life may be disrupted. State policy is 'pronatalist' though it is known that large families are at greater risk of experiencing poverty. The principle of 'child-centredness' informs public debate and children influence their parents to move from living together to cohabitation, or from cohabitation into formal marriage. Estonians want their government to deliver policies creating an environment conducive to family life – one which allows maximum choice and a minimum of new dilemmas and tensions.

Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> June began with a second keynote session, the presenters being **Professor Rose Zoe-Obianga** (Yaounde University, Cameroon) and **Mr Martin Koschorke** (Protestant Central Institute for Family Counselling, Berlin)

**Professor Zoe-Obianga** began by drawing attention to the enormous sociological diversity of the African nations and warned against the sweeping generalisations sometimes used when discussing them. Confining herself to a description of Southern Cameroon, its largely Christian Bantu population and their predominantly rural lifestyle, she described the Cameroonian family as including the couple, ancestors, descendants and the siblings of both spouses organised in a patriarchal system. Polygamous, monogamous and single-parent families exist in both urban and rural settings. Within polygamous marriages the first wife (the family's 'mother'), the favourite and the last wife (who satisfies the husband's needs) dominate. Other wives engage in intrigues and feminine wiles, generating difficulties for all and making themselves the focus of criticism. In urban settings the financial and economic strength of the various wives determine their influence over the husband.

Monogamous marriage has long been a feature of Cameroonian society and is now the most common form of marriage in the younger generation. It remains a hard choice – traditional roots versus urban identity.

In town and village the environment no longer favours polygamy and women are intolerant of the promiscuity involved. Within the couple relationship the husband typically exercises authority through the agency of a female third party (mother, aunt, grandmother) and the wife experiences complete subjugation. Couples are subject to the claims of, and pressures from, families-in-law. Money has become a predominant issue and women, who may inherit nothing and be left to their own devices should their husband die, are resorting to studies leading to paid jobs. High bride prices and young females' desire for independence have led to the growth in numbers of single-mothers. As family heads they are exploited by all, no matter how small their income. Single parents have made a name for themselves thanks to their economic strength.

For all the change, the place of women in Cameroon has improved very little – they are still under the yoke of men in the family (father, brother, uncle, husband, grandfather) as families find new forms in response to changing economic realities.

In the second part of the keynote session **Mr Martin Koschorke** invited a consideration of the question “Who has Power in Today’s Families?” by using both a sociological perspective and that of a highly experienced family counsellor interested in the dynamics of family relationships. He argued that there are three basic functions of a family: to provide those things which ensure the energy and vitality of family members; to bring new members of society into the world and to prepare them to become effective citizens; and to recreate and reinforce the social order and the associated social differences. To undertake those tasks families are granted the means to function as totalitarian institutions by society, three powerful control mechanisms – fear and feelings of guilt and shame – being put to work. Reason plays a lesser role in many of the tasks families must undertake.

Observing modern western families forces the conclusion that children tyrannize adults, the latter becoming children’s slaves or else resist in powerless rage and in violence. Children develop self-esteem early on and assert their rights – “You have no right to hit me!” Self-esteem is an important factor in the power game. That game involves an awareness of, and respect for, boundaries which from time to time are tested, crossed and defended. Seeking insights into the evolution of such family dynamics Mr Koschorke suggested that three stages could be identified in the social development of our societies.

First, a Family/Clan based society in which individuals survive only if part of a family.

Second, a Construction Society based on the belief that things can get better and typified by the later stages of the industrial revolution.

Third, a ‘Now’ or Development Society in which the individual is ultimately supported by the state, but for how long and to what degree is uncertain. That uncertainty prompts life-choices that are about ‘now’ rather than the past or the future. ‘Nothing is certain, except that nothing is certain.’ Time constraints engender stress,

and happiness is defined in terms of constant self-realisation of the unique and distinctive individual. Parents and children must keep developing or, put another way, must be constantly reinventing themselves in the face of changing circumstances. That central task for all family members results in there being no hierarchical difference between the generations. In particular parents, who are charged with helping their children's development, may be less adept at the reinvention process.

The dilemmas presented by the 'Now' society require modern partnerships to operate on the basis of new principles:

- Nobody should sacrifice themselves
- Each partner must be able to do everything needed by the family
- Each partner must continuously develop themselves.

These principles call for high orders of personal maturity; social, communications and negotiation skills in the partners. When partnerships become families the partners confront the need to fulfil new tasks and to adopt new divisions of labour. As a result differences in protection, dependence and workload arise – changes in the balance of power. At times the demands of family life and that of the 'autonomous individual' seem irreconcilable – primitive and modern values war with each other. A social conflict becomes an inner conflict with the resultant confusion.

Today's parents are still charged with the responsibility to raise children who will be useful members of society. How to do that? Mr Koschorke proposed that it could be achieved by countering three fundamental responses to conflict – fight, flight and freeze. He spoke of the need to stay 'present' when faced by tensions with spouse or children. If that can be achieved there is hope that rational negotiation can be used to resolve conflicts rather than fight, flight or freezing being used to avoid them. An attitude of inner non-violence yields parents the power they need. *But how can today's parents learn these capacities and skills?*

Three powerful keynote addresses left conference participants with many issues to explore and inter-connect. Those processes began in the first of the facilitated Discussion Group sessions after which participants chose between four Workshops in which a more detailed examination of conference themes took place. The day's programme closed with a further Discussion Group session. (For details of the Workshops and the outcomes of the Discussion Groups see later sections.)

Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> June began with the third of our Keynote sessions. **Professor Elena Zdravomyslova** (European University at St Petersburg) spoke about 'Family Life in Russia – Hypocrisy and Passion'. Professor Zdravomyslova's perspective was that of 'gender order'.

In introducing her subject Professor Zdravomyslova spoke of Russia as a society in transformation rather than in transition (with end-points defined) or revolution (with implications of violence). First, she stated that understandings of the changes in Russian family life were hindered by the often deliberate concealing of private matters – a practice that had protected it from years of party-state interference. Second, she drew attention to the difference between ephemeral change and that which might stabilize and become structurally important. New 'rules' were being sought and two influences detected – the conservatism of family structures and,

contrastingly, experimentation with new family constructs. The family is becoming a planned, rational and moral unit. The expectations of spouses, and the price they pay, are much higher than before. That makes family life less common but more persistent.

The global tendency for new forms of family to replace the traditional models reveals itself differently from country to country. Different elements of family systems change at different speeds. Some change is supported institutionally, others are opposed by the traditional system. Research shows that, universally, modern families feature the nuclearization of the family, growth in divorce rates, growth in women's employment, a reduction in the traditional economic functions of the family, a gradual replacement of patriarchal family relations by patterns of partnership, and maintenance of gender linked roles. The late Soviet family is regarded as a version of the modern family, a version shaped by Soviet state-mobilized modernity and an imposed gender order

The Soviet gender order can be understood in terms of strategies (adopted by those with power) and tactics (employed by those who lack resources and thus also power). The gender order is 'etocratic' (one based on 'state power' and centralised decision-making) in nature. The state patriarchy adopted the strategy of multiple mobilization of women and required close compliance with the citizenship duties of both men and women. Women were seen as natural mothers/carers as well as being an important labour resource. The duties of men were construction and military service. There was a symbolic glorification of the powerful, resourceful, emancipated Soviet woman – mother, carer, waged-worker, citizen and beauty. The worlds of men and women were polarized

The state imposed contract was accommodated by both men and women by using tactics of social integration – escapism, cheating, manipulating, networking, internal migration, and (usually silent) dissent. There was thus a discrepancy between the official gender contract and the ways in which citizens lived their lives (an expression of a 'shadow contract'). For women, life was a double burden engendering feelings of guilt. They acquired an expertise in the 'survival' and 'coping' tactics needed because the state failed to implement its supportive role properly. Extended family relations, intergeneration support and network intensification, all needed to prop up the official contract, prevented stabilization of the nuclear family and individualistic strategies. It was argued that men are the weak sex and the roles of provider and protector were seen as elements of a gender mythology.

The official Soviet ideology of marriage was formulated in the 1930s. Marriage was the setting in which sexuality was expressed and childbirth took place. 'Mercantile' marriages were condemned as non-authentic and bourgeois. The marital couple was also represented as the fundamental building block of Soviet society – a kind of Soviet collective. Latterly, Soviet social policy was pro-natal, family-oriented and supportive of women as the centre of the family. Researchers have described the form of family which emerged as the *child-centred family*. A hybrid, it was nuclear but heavily dependent on intergenerational help and exhibited matrifocality as regards child care and domestic chores. Both Soviet law and ideology reflected the concept of a family based on children rather than on marriage. Professor Zdravomyslova suggested that such families might more accurately be described as *waged-working mother-centred families*. Such Soviet families proved fragile faced with economic



shortages, scarcity of housing, family conflicts, divorce and the unbearable burden of woman's imposed emancipation. On the other hand those families could serve as a refuge for escapists seeking autonomy. Hypocrisy can be seen in the discrepancy between the official gender and family contracts and everyday life. Women survived by developing an expertise referred to as 'social capital' in the face of inadequate state child-care provision and abortion as the normal means of birth control. Gender conflict sprung from women suffering from 'equality' and men suffering women's control. Such families, seen as reproductive units, were not considered the place for pleasure or happiness and both men and women looked for authentic (sexual) relationships outside them.

Since the end of the 1980s change has taken place in the Russian gender order. The influences at work include: liberal economic reforms and marketization of daily life, the liberalization and commodification of sexuality, weakening of social welfare provisions, social polarization and stratification, breakdown of the etacritic gender contract, the sustainability of working mother practices, a revival of patriarchy, and the critical agendas of the women's NGOs. The instability of the Russian economy and society has given the family new meaning as a survival and coping institution. Families are formed and sustained on the basis of rational calculation, passion can play little part in family decision-making. involving mutual sacrifice.

Several different trends have been at work since the 1990s. Reactive traditionalism, the differentiation and stratification of life-styles and family arrangements, and the individualization of social life are each having their impact. New family and cohabitation types have emerged and the trend to individualization of social life has resulted in later marriages, the later arrival of a first child, 'living together apart', and loneliness and childlessness no longer being stigmatized. There are fewer births to women aged 15 – 19 years though there are more single parent families, especially those involving women over the age of 35 years. The divorce rate has dropped because of the growth in the number of 'non-registered marriages'. Families with a man as bread-winner (though not head of the family) have found favour. Domination in the family no longer depends on the economic contributions of the spouses but on questions of budget control, parental control and moral control.

Researchers have proposed the existence of both manifest and latent conjugal contracts. The former are based on the breadwinner role but carry with them the risk that the man sacrifices professional self-realization. Some men abandon jobs and careers if they cannot support families by their earnings, taking up work which enables maintenance of the breadwinner role. Others, fearful of loss of professional identity, prefer to stay jobless. For all, conjugal family relationships limit self-realisation horizons, responsibilities being in conflict with the individual plans of family members. That fact is understood and prompts thinking about the cost-benefit aspects of decisions about family formation and development.

The fact that 'rational neo-traditionalism' is a powerful influence in Russia as regards family life is evident. It allows both men and women to preserve family values and those of professional self-realization in times when professions are not adequately valued financially. As a consequence the family is neither the home of hypocrisy or passion. It is a place of security and the means by which rational choices can be used to respond to a world in which the rules of the game are still very uncertain.

The remainder of the day was devoted to a Discussion Group session followed by a participants' open meeting and the opportunity to participate in one of four further workshops. In the evening participants travelled into central Tallinn to visit Dominiiklaste Klooster (a 13<sup>th</sup> century monastery) and to enjoy a 'medieval feast' in one of the city's restaurants.

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> June started with a Discussion Group session after which the conference's final plenary session took place. Members of the four Discussion Groups took that opportunity to share some of the thinking done during their sessions.

It was immediately apparent that the groups, each with a unique mix of nationalities and forms of involvement with couples and families, had explored the conference theme and the issues raised by keynote and workshop presentations in strikingly different ways. Amongst matters highlighted by the feedback which was offered were:

- The need to frame policies in all areas of government in an awareness of their impact on family life and, specifically, on the vital matter of achieving an appropriate work-family balance.
- The ever-growing need for family members of all ages to be able to engage in effective negotiation with each other, with other members of the community, with employers and with officialdom.
- The *choice* to bring children into the world needs to be firmly linked to the responsibilities involved in parenthood. "Children do not ask to be born...."
- The contrast between women who seek change in the social order and try to hasten its pace and men who appear to resist it.
- Different countries' strategies for influencing the behaviour of families and the limits of that influence, for example, pro-natalist strategies.
- The dilemmas faced when addressing the needs of the elderly. Do the elderly need families more than families need the elderly?
- The status of children within families and the idea of democratization of family life.
- Domestic violence and child abuse – denial on the part of society and ineffective legislation.
- The need to understand the world as it is experienced by children and thus learn their needs.
- The love of power and the power of love; positive uses of power within families.

Whilst groups were invited to submit resolutions or declarations for adoption by the Commission it is notable that the issues raised had more of the quality of 'works in progress' – matters which group members would take back with them to their working environments and which ultimately may benefit the couples and families they engage with, directly or indirectly. That seemed very much in line with the ICCFR Mission Statement.

The final plenary also provided an opportunity for **Ms Irene Slama** and **Dr Angelika Schiebel** (Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection) formally to invite the Commission to hold its 2005 conference in Vienna between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> of June.

The formal programme of the conference having ended, participants travelled by coach to a wooded Baltic promontory, listened to the stirring singing of the **Estonian Teachers' Male Choir** led by their conductor **Tõnu Kuljus**, and were provided with an alfresco meal. This excursion, organised by Vitality of Estonia offered an authentic experience of rural Estonian life and of the importance of singing in Estonia's history.

### **Postscript**

The ten years since the International Year of the Family have probably encompassed more public debate about adult intimate relationships and families than any previous period. Conflicts and the scourge of HIV/AIDS have resulted in families headed by children being a significant element in numbers of communities. 'Family' must now be understood to include lone adults and their children as an arrangement of choice. Gay and lesbian couples raise children in their forms of family and are recognised and supported by legislation specific to them in some countries. A vigorous debate centres around the word 'marriage' and it has become important to define one's terms when discussing formal contracts binding partners together. The reasons for the emergence of those variations on the theme of domestic life are many, complex, and might form the focus of numerous conferences. By accepting the invitation to hold its conference in Tallinn the Commission opened up the opportunity to explore the impact of regime change on the lives of couples and families and to examine the consequences of globalisation for family relations in contrasting settings.

It is never possible to predict exactly how chosen speakers and workshop leaders will engage the attention of conference participants. The programme described in earlier paragraphs seemed primarily to draw attention to the ingenuity of men and women when finding new forms of intimate relationships and new forms of family that are adapted to the realities of their societies. The inevitable consequence of those expressions of individual choice is that communities become ever more complex aggregates of differently structured households. Whilst 'one size fits all' legislation may have been a tolerably equitable way of governing societies based on traditional family units, today's communities look for public provision which supports all kinds of life-styles and life-choices equitably and which imposes as few constraints on individual choice as is possible. As conference participants noted, the implication is not that there should be a monolithic 'family policy' but that every aspect of government must monitor its actions in terms of its relationship and family 'friendliness'. Perhaps it is not surprising that governments struggle to measure up to that task (whilst at the same time asking the question "To what extent could/should government control citizens' relationship and family behaviour?")

Two other matters came to the fore. First, the notion of 'child-centred families', which prompts the question "Do we really know how children experience the world which they inhabit and can we speak with certainty about the needs of children?" Second, it became very apparent that today's democratic societies can only function effectively and creatively if all concerned have the self-esteem and the measure of skill needed to negotiate successfully. Those negotiations will range from how long a child can play with friends through to the formulation of employment regulations which provide adequate scope for the balancing of work and family. It seems that teaching these life-skills (to adults as well as children) must be an important part of any society's 'life-long learning' strategy.

The title of our conference was ‘Never the Same Again?’ Having reflected on the content of the conference it would seem reasonable to respond by saying that couple and family relations will not be the same again. For some the circumstances in which they live out their couple and family relations have improved significantly. For others adversity has had the upper hand, sometimes with tragic consequences. What the conference experience suggests is that, when all those who in one way or another are engaged in attending to the welfare of couples and families come together, their combined creativity and commitment offers the prospect of ‘joined-up’ support for the relationships which are the building blocks of society. That seems to promise well for the future.

### **Acknowledgements**

**ICCFR** thanks **Vitality of Estonia** for the initial invitation to hold a conference in beautiful Tallinn, and to the Ministry of Social Affairs and its Minister **Mr Marko Pomerants** for endorsing that invitation. Special mention must be made of **Mrs Urve Randmaa’s** long-term involvement in the planning of the event supported by her colleagues within Vitality. Special thanks are offered to **Vitality** for adding a particularly Estonian quality to both the opening evening and the excursion to the country at the end of the conference.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to our keynote speakers:

**Professor Dagmar Kutsar** (Tartu University, Estonia)

*Ten years after the International Year of the Family: the Estonian Experience.*

**Professor Rose Zoe- Obianga** (Yaounde University, Cameroon)

*Who has power in Today’s Families?*

**Mr Martin Koschorke** (Protestant Central Institute for Family Counselling, Berlin, Germany)

*Who has power in Today’s Families? A Western Perspective.*

**Professor Elena Zdravomyslova** (European University at St Petersburg, Russia)

*Family Life in Russia: Hypocrisy and Passion.*

and also to the Board members who chaired those sessions: Simone Baverey (S.A.) and Suzie Thorn (USA).

Thanks are also due to those who led workshops:

**Mrs Ülle-Marike Papp** (Ministry of Social Affairs, Estonia)

*Equal Opportunities and Women’s Rights*

**Ms Unni Gotthard and Ms Sirpa Leminen** (Family counsellor/therapist, Stockholm, Sweden)

*Creating space for children when working with Couples in Crisis*

**Mr Ferenc Kamarás** (Hungarian Statistical Office, Budapest, Hungary)  
*Family policy facing demographic and social challenges*

**Ms Desa Markovic** (Institute of Family Therapy, London, England)  
*A Family Therapist's view on Today's Families*

**The Honourable Justice Neil Buckley** (Family Court of Australia)  
*Family-related legislation and social policy in Australia*

**Mr Steve Bagnall and Ms Barbara McKay** (Relate, UK)  
*From Couples to Families*

**Mme Chantal Lebatard** (Union Nationale des Associations Familiales, Paris, France)  
*Families acting in Society – an example of the partnership between Family Organisations and government in France: the annual 'Conférence de la Famille'.*

**Mr Kalmer Hütt** (President, Estonian Union of Large Families)  
*Collaborative efforts to secure the well-being of Children and Families: Policies and Practices.*

Workshops were convened by ICCFR Board members and by Judy Cunnington, Elizabeth Everett and Herman Pas to all of whom thanks are due.

Thanks to the young ladies of the **Kurkell Ensemble** and their instructor **Ülle Raud** for opening our proceedings so tunefully. The lusty singing of the **Estonian Teachers' Mens Choir** and conductor **Tõnu Kuljus** brought our stay in Estonia to an end in a most moving fashion. Thank you teachers!

Discussion Group facilitators undertook a task as complex as it was enjoyable. We owe thanks to **Ms Robin Purvis** (Australia), **Ms Dianne Gibson** (Australia), **Ms Claire Missen** (Ireland) and **Mr Terry Prendergast** (UK).

The management of the complex conference finances was handled most successfully thanks to the assiduous work of ICCFR Board member and Treasurer **Mrs Simone Baverey**. Without her skills we could not have mounted so economical yet so enjoyable a conference.

Gerlind Richards, ICCFR General Secretary, once again played a crucial role in the planning and running of the conference. Without Gerlind's tireless efforts our conference in Tallinn could not have taken place. We all thank you and I particularly owe you thanks for making my job manageable.

Derek R Hill  
Chair, ICCFR

## **The families: Never the same again**

**Keynote Presentation by Dr Dagmar Kutsar**  
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The whole world is going through dramatic changes, affecting the behaviour and everyday life of mankind. Since May the 1st in 2004 the total population of the EU member states is about 451 million, which represents an increase of 75 million compared to the situation before the enlargement. New member countries – Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia<sup>1</sup> – are bringing new patterns to the social demographic development of the European Union. This key-note paper makes an attempt to discuss these changes in time and space focusing on the main demographic indicators of family formation during last forty years in the 10 new member countries. In addition, it is interesting to analyse how family formation differs, and what are the similar patterns in the former socialist, now transitional, countries and the 15 EU countries. It transpires that the family-creating behaviour is influenced by history but also by the location of the country. I will also discuss family formation and new family structures in Estonia in more detail, offering insights into the impacts on adult and children's lives. In the last section I will focus on some policy responses, returning to the European dimension.

### **Global diversity**

Changes in the structure of traditional families and households are currently being noted worldwide (Bianchi & Casper, 2000; Clulow, 1993; Fontaine, 2000; Gottlieb, 1993; Hantrais, 2000). The western family as an institution has gone through the following major changes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bengtson, 2001; Haavio-Mannila & Kontula, 2001; Hantrais, 1999; 1999a; 2000; Raley, 2001; Thomson, 2001):

- one generational families began to predominate over several generation families;
- the patriarchal model – working husband (head of the household) and a housewife – was replaced by an egalitarian family with both partners in employment;
- remaining single and living in a one person household became an acceptable alternative to founding a family; a new trend that Elina Haavio-Mannila and Osmo Kontula (2001) as well as Jan Trost and Irene Levin (1999) refer to as the sustainable partnership of people living alone;
- one parent families became more widespread alongside two parent families;
- the family was no longer viewed as a life-long commitment, which could only be terminated by the death of one partner. Establishing a new family following divorce became socially accepted ;
- the use of family planning measures to regulate the number of children gained approval within society. Sexual relationships were no longer seen as merely a

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<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations of the countries are used in the figures and tables respectively: CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SL and SV

means of procreation, but rather as a form of communication that creating mutual satisfaction;

- families based on cohabitation became a significant alternative to registered married families;
- homosexual family-like associations won the right to exist alongside heterosexual families;
- reconstituted families became more common, whereby children are blood related to only one parent and at least one of the spouses/partners has previously been married or has cohabited (Kutsar & Tiit, 2002).

The most important change observed in the development of Western families during the past decade (and one also regarded earlier as a significant trend) is its plurality, the multitude of different forms (Coontz, 2000). This is confirmed by the fact that the trends of changes in the family and social institutions during the several decades have not all been in one direction (Bengtson, 2001). In the same way that the age for getting married has increased, fallen and increased again, and that reproductive figures have oscillated (Demographic Yearbook, 2001; Raley, 2001, Council of Europe, 2001), the intensity of the influence of different generations on each other is not one-way. A few decades ago, researchers were of the opinion that the number of extended, several generation families would decrease and that nuclear families would then dominate. Now several researchers believe that there is a significant trend in the opposite direction – the bond between generations is becoming stronger and increasingly important (Bengtson, 2001). One possible reason for this is an increase in the number of one-parent households, where the grandparents have an important role in raising and looking after the children. Contributory factors are the increase in average life expectancy, improved health amongst the elderly and an improvement in their living standards. All these factors increase the opportunities for generations to spend their lives together.

In some areas, the age of leaving home has gone up, so that the trend prevalent a couple of decades ago for young people to leave home upon becoming adult and to establish an independent household is no longer dominant. The new trend is associated with prolonged education, and the increased availability of education, as well as unemployment among young people. A significant additional factor in the Central and Eastern European transition countries is the issue of adaptation and the stress rooted in that change (Hraba et al, 2000), but also the economic problems connected with leaving to live in a separate dwelling.

Behind all the polemics, family researchers have always been excited by the question – is the family based on marriage in retreat? This polemic was especially active in the 1960s and peaked in the mid-1970s. Is the importance of the family decreasing for people in general? It is apparent that the lifelong family based on one registered marriage has not been dominant for some time. Almost half of all marriages result in divorce in many countries (Wang & Amato, 2000). The new form of family alongside the registered marriage – unregistered cohabitation, which a few decades ago only covered a relatively short period of time prior to marriage – has become a significant alternative to registered marriage in several countries today (Brown, 2000, Ermisch, 2000; Eriksen, 2001; Raley, 2001; Haavio-Mannila & Kontula, 2001, Trost, 1988). Deciding to cohabit or to marry is not in the least socially determined, and the decision may therefore depend on somewhat incidental circumstances, for example

people wanting or not wanting to organise a wedding or to avoid bureaucracy. Besides cohabitation, other family structures – reconstituted families, homosexual couples, living apart together (LAT), living together apart (Trost & Levin, 1999) Other forms have been discussed but rhetoric over swingers, groups marriages or communes was put aside after the 1970s. All this has produced rising doubts again concerning the viability of the family unit (Coleman, 1996; Carling et al., 2002) and de-institutionalisation of family forms. The latter, by estimations of Hantrais (2003) has not developed to the same extent across European countries.

### **The family formation**

The new EU member countries of the Central and Eastern Europe have undergone social, economic and political experiences different to those in Western Europe; their development has been directed by a socialist system, which diverted them from their own developmental tracks. The collapse of the system has provided the opportunity for transition, turning transition countries towards the Western European mainstream (Kutsar & Tiit, 2000). What are the main characteristics differentiating the countries in transition that have currently diverged from the Communist pattern of development?

- Individual educational attainment has been only slightly affected by the change in the system. As a result, the general level of education in the population is relatively high, particularly among women. Women's labour force participation had almost reached its ceiling, even exceeding the male labour force participation in some countries. At the same time, structural changes (cohabitation, divorces, births out of wedlock) of families have taken place parallel to the rest of the West. The high human costs of transition are revealed by the deterioration of socio-demographic indicators (decreasing life expectancy, worsening conditions of health, unemployment, poverty, social exclusion).
- Revolutionary periods of social and political change uncover high social risks of upheavals in the family-related behaviour of the population. As one of the results, family de-institutionalisation is taking shape. In former times, making a marriage contract was the only way to legalise one's private life, putting community interest over the personal ones. 'Privatisation' of family behaviour (Ditch *et al*, 1994) means the enlargement of personal choices, aspirations and values now dominate over community interests.
- The Soviet type family policy was elaborated to support a working mother in a reconciliation of her work and childcare tasks, at the same time excluding her from diversity of choices between home and work. With the collapse of the totalitarian system and its planned economy, the Communist welfare system also ended. Reconstruction of national economies made it impossible for former social political measures to continue because they were too costly and largely ineffective. Changes in the family-related behaviour of the population have created new challenges for family policy.

In analysing the adaptations of the transitional countries towards the mainstream, let us look at socio-demographic trends of the families over the recent forty years and compare them with the trends observed in the EU-15 countries.



## *Marriages*

According to the developmental approach (Duvall, 1967; Christensen et al., 1964), families go through a series of structural changes over time, which form the family's "career" (Aldous, 1978). In the 1960s, marriage was the primary regular base for living together and forming the family. During the past 40 years the marriage rate decreased significantly all over Europe. In 1960 the marriage rate was considerably higher in the accession countries (9.1) than in the rest 15 EU member states (8.7 marriages per 1000 population), by the turn of the century the differences have been levelled to 5.6 and 5.5 respectively. The highest decline in marriages has taken place in the Baltic states (See Appendix, Figure 1). Cyprus is the only country experiencing an increase in marriage rate since the 1980s.

The total first marriage rate has decreased by more than one third over the past four decades in Europe. It transpires that the decrease has been approximately the same, both in country groups with different histories as well as different locations.

At the beginning of the period the female total first marriage rate was smaller in Southern Europe than in the rest of Europe. One explanatory factor of the declining marriage rate is the fact that family formation can be more often connected to alternative living arrangements. Two confirming phenomena can be traced here. First, the postponement of registering the relationship and the second, living in consensual unions.

## *Age of women at first marriage*

The age of women at first marriage is calculated among the female population below 50 years of age. The general trend in Europe is that women postpone making family-related decisions more frequently. Remarkably, the mean age of women at first marriage in Northern Europe (including new EU members) has increased by almost four years over the past four decades. While in the EU-15 the average age of a bride is 27.5, in the Northern part of the EU she is expecting her 30th birthday (the woman's age has increased in Sweden - from 24 years in 1960 to 30.2 years in 2000, in Denmark – from 22.8 to 29.5 years and in Finland from 23.8 to 28 years respectively). (See Appendix, Figure 2)

The age of marrying is influenced by the political history of the country. In the former socialist countries, four decades ago, women got married on average two years earlier than women in the democratic countries. By the turn of the century the age gap between the EU-15 and the 10 new member countries of women at first marriage is still on about the same level, mean age being the highest in Slovenia (26.7), Malta (26.7) and Cyprus (26.4) – but they are all lagging behind the EU-15 average. The remarkable increase in the bride's age goes back to the last decade (figure 2). The only EU country close to the average of the new member countries is Portugal where the bride's age at first marriage is 25.2 years (the lowest among the EU-15).

## **De-institutionalisation of the family**

De-institutionalisation of the family is reflected in increasing variability of individual choices concerning one's timing of family formation, and the form, structure and stability of the union. The Eurobarometer data have confirmed that the family as a romantic image has high value among the Europeans (CEC, 1993). People in real life put more importance on mutual love, trust and feelings of confidence and less on a legal bond between the partners (Clulow, 1993; Haavio-Mannila & Kontula, 2001).

### *Births*

Children have a powerful influence on the individual decisions of Europeans but in a majority of the EU-15 and the new members, the new generations of children form decreasing proportions of the total populations (See Appendix, Figure 3).

In all the new EU-10 there is a trend for the proportion of children 0-14 years among the population to reduce. However, they have slightly more favourable situation concerning the ageing population as here the proportion of children 0-14 years is larger compared with the EU-15.

Cyprus, Malta and Lithuania are in the best situation with high proportions of young people but Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia stay below the EU average and Estonia is close to it.

The rapid decline in birth rate causes concern throughout Europe and generally the country groups with the fastest birth rate decrease are those where the birth rate used to be high – the transitional countries and Southern Europe. Although the crude birth rate decline is influenced to a certain extent by the differences in the population age composition, the real birth rate decline is clear. In 1960 the crude birth rate was higher by one quarter in Southern Europe than in Central and Northern Europe, but the difference had virtually disappeared by the turn of the century.

The new EU members have mirrored the dramatic decrease in total fertility rates (the average number of children born to a woman). It is noteworthy that the decline has been faster than in the EU-15, which has now resulted in a lower birth rate than the EU average. Part of the reason for the decrease in birth rate is the postponement in having children, accompanied also by shortened period of female reproduction. This reflects the known fact that later marriages are concomitant with the lower proportion of married people in the population. The postponement of having children is linked with the lower birth rate.

One can conclude that this trend leaves more space for individual choices between the family and other aspects of one's life career and can be seen as a sign of the de-institutionalisation of the family.

### *Consensual unions and extramarital births*

Consensual unions form alternative paths to family formation but also open up potential for variability of family forms and structures - consensual unions of different types (cohabitation as alternative to marriage or as pre-marriage, LAT or LTA relationships). We lack data about the scope of consensual unions across Europe. Thus we can only indirectly assess the evidence by the number of children given birth by mothers who are not married to the fathers of their children.

The extra-marital birth rate is one of the most characteristic changes in Europe in the decades analysed. The rate of extra-marital births has increased approximately evenly both in the EU-15 and EU-10, at the beginning of the period the rate was slightly higher in the accession countries and at the turn of the century the rate of extra-marital births was slightly higher in the previous group of the EU countries. However, there is a wide gap between the rates of extra-marital births in the different geographic regions and this gap has widened over the decades. In Northern EU countries the increase in extra-marital birth rate has been the highest (in Sweden from 11.3 in 1960 to 55.3 in 2000; in Denmark from 7.8 to 44.6 and in Finland from 4.0 to 39.2 respectively) and the lowest in the Southern part (Italy, Spain and Greece – staying below 10% in 2000), however, it has also doubled here during the period of observation. (See Appendix, Figure 5)

The new EU countries reveal similar geographical patterns of extra-marital births being the highest in North (in Estonia 54.5 and in Latvia 40.3 per 100 births in 2000) and the lowest in South (in Cyprus 2.3 births per 100). Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia have extra-marital birth rate that is higher than the EU-15 average, the rest of the countries do not reach this level (Figure 5).

The extra-marriage birth rate continued to increase in Estonia thereafter, being 56.2 in 2001 and 56.3 in 2002. Most of the children born outside marriage have a cohabiting mother and father (table 1). About 10% of all births are accounted for by mothers living alone, while the percentage of children born to divorced women living alone and to widows is relatively small, even though the number of divorces in Estonia is higher than in EU member states (see the next section).

Table 1. Mothers at birth of the child by marital status in Estonia, 1992-2000 (%).

Marital status of a mother	Years of observation									
	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	
Married	66.3	63.0	59.7	56.2	52.3	48.8	48.2	46.3	45.5	
In cohabitation	26.8	30.0	35.1	35.1	38.5	41.3	41.8	42.4	42.2	
Single	6.2	6.5	7.5	7.5	8.1	8.6	8.9	10.1	11.0	
Divorced/widowed	0.5	0.5	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.2	

Source: Tellmann, 2001.

The increase in the number of couples living in unregistered cohabitation, as well as the number of children born out of wedlock, explains the growing variability of family structures based on new forms of partnership and new paths to family formation besides the traditional nuclear marriage-based family.

### *Family break-up*

The breakdown of family unions give a signal of family de-institutionalisation. Clear evidence of this is the crude divorce rate (calculation based on the total population), that has increased significantly throughout Europe over the past four decades despite the fact that the marriage rate has decreased. (See Appendix, Figure 6)

The divorce rate is significantly dependent on the location of the country: it is considerably higher in Northern Europe than it is in Southern Europe, but the most significant changes over the past forty years took place in Central Europe. The divorce rate was significantly higher in the socialist block countries than in the democratic countries in 1960, but with development the divorce rate increased faster in the EU countries and the country groups have levelled by 2000 (figure 6)..

In 2000 2.7 marriages per 1000 population underwent divorce in Finland and Denmark and 2.6 in Belgium and UK – all these comparable with the highest rates among the EU-15 countries. Estonia acquired the highest rate (3.1) among the new member countries followed by Czech Republic and Lithuania (2.9 in each) – all exceeding the EU-15 average. Poland and Slovenia have the lowest number of divorces (1.1 in each) among the accession countries and we do not have data about Malta. Among the EU-15, Greece and Spain have the lowest divorce rates (0.9 in Greece in 2000 and 0.6 in Spain in 1990). No data is available about Ireland.

Higher divorce rates link with a slightly higher extra-marital birth rate and also has a negative impact on total birth rate. Unfortunately we do not have regular data on how many couples of consensual unions separate. We even lack criteria of identifying these unions. However, Estonian data have shown that people living in consensual unions have fewer children on average and they also wish to have fewer children compared to those who are legally married (Kutsar et al., 2004).

### **Estonia in focus**

#### *Attitudes concerning family formation*

In an Estonian society unregistered cohabitation has developed from so-called pre-marital cohabitation ('trial marriage') into a separate alternative to formal marriage. Family forms are becoming much more varied, and researchers have introduced the concepts of legal (formal) and real (informal) marital status to estimate the variety of family forms of respondents (*Living Conditions Survey*, 1999; Civil Census, 2000). Legal (formal) marital status denotes being never-married, married, divorced or widowed; real (informal) marital status - living with a partner (spouse) or living without a partner. By combining these two variables, information can be obtained about different types of living together and different family forms in terms of household structure.

336 students from Tartu University and Estonian Agricultural University in Tartu were interviewed in 2001 (Kasearu, 2002). The study revealed that on one hand, the orientation towards individualistic values like free time, self-improvement, career and material welfare is characteristic to the young people in today's Estonian society.

Setting up a family based on registered marriage is becoming less common. But on the other hand, the studies carried out in 1990's reveal that marriage-based family and children are highly appreciated in the Estonian society.

Marriage is also highly valued by the young people of today and at least half of the respondents intend to marry in the future. One fifth of the interviewed students decided not to register their cohabitation and one third of the students mentioned that it is not essential either to marry or just live together. Gender is an important factor in predicting student's behavioural intentions towards cohabiting. Female students intend to marry and male students prefer cohabiting or do not emphasize the type of living together. The students, who chose marriage, highly appreciate the traditional values of marriage. But students preferring cohabiting without marrying think a consideration of factors which may determine the postponement of marriage to be vital.. Female students intend to marry because of emotional and economic welfare and males prefer less responsible cohabiting.

Cohabitation itself uncovers different meanings. For about a third of the respondents cohabitation means family formation that is alternative to a registered marriage. The temporary living together turns into cohabitation with high probability after a child is born. To conclude, the child is an essential factor in defining one's living together with a partner as cohabitation (without the intention to get married in the future) or a pre-marriage (with an expectation of marriage). In this respect cohabitation is equalised in its meaning to a registered marriage.

Why have a temporary living-together arrangement? Why start an unregistered cohabitation? The survey revealed the main reasons – a wish to live together with a loved person, a wish to find support and be cared for, and an intention to normalise the sexual life – motives similar to those claimed by individuals who plan to marry. Why register the cohabitation? The most widespread reason for this is the birth of a child and acquisition of a common family name, but also results from the belief that children should be born inside wedlock. But why do some of the cohabitants still postpone registering their relationship? Mostly, because of the high number of divorces in the society, young people recognise the importance of getting to know each other better and needing to test their mutual relationships during the pre-marriage cohabitation, but also because the delay improves one's social maturity – study, to better living conditions, and a focus on a career. The group of respondents who found registered marriage something that constrains one's freedom and individual choice, do not expect to marry some day but will continue cohabiting.

Living together can last at least two years after this cohabitation can be seen as an alternative to marriage, or defined as pre-marriage. Marriage can be contracted after one to two years of knowing each other. The strongest influences on making decisions about one's family formation are still, as the respondents found, the parents of those young people. The impact of school friends is put on the second place after parents (Kutsar & Tiit, 2002).

### *Children*

The population structure of Estonia by generations shows a clear tendency towards a decrease in the proportion consisting of children younger than 15 years and an increase in the proportion consisting of elderly people. Currently children less than 15 years of age account for roughly 17% of the total Estonian population (United Nations

Development Programme, 2003) and because of the decrease in the fertility rate (1.34 in 2001 and 1.37 in 2002) children younger than 15 years will continue to decline as a proportion of the total population. The United Nations Development Programme Forecast predicts that in year 2,015 children under 15 years of age in Estonian society will form 14.2% of the total population. The ratio of boys to girls among newborns favours boys — in year 2001 there were 1,071 boys per 1,000 girls (Statistical Office of Estonia, 2002a).

The number of children in a society is associated with several factors — individual and family values, social and family political preferences and measures, cultural and historical traditions, etc. Today, having children is increasingly a question of individual choice. The increase in the mother's age at first birth is correlated with the lower number of births per woman. As a result of many influences the postponement of having children causes a situation where the total (actual) number of children remains lower than the number of children desired.

Another factor is the high abortion rate, the problem of so-called 'unborn children'. Although the number of abortions has dropped by more than half during the last decade, the ratio of abortions to live births is still about 100%. The women who decide to have an abortion are mainly young women under 20 (only 43% of the pregnancies in this age group reach birth) who constitute about 1/8 of all women who had an abortion in last three years, and those from the older age groups who have achieved the desired number of children in the family. For more than 40 years, the main method of family planning in Estonia was abortion. During the Soviet occupation, it was legalized and the number of abortions exceeded the number of births by 1.5–2 times both in Estonia (maximum: 1.95 abortions per birth in 1973) and in most other parts of the Soviet Union (Tiit, 1999).

Other factors which restrict people achieving the desired number of children include the impact of a high divorce rate, increasing variation in family forms and the deteriorating economic situation of households in Estonia.

Estonian Civil Census data for 2000 show that about 75% of all children are living with both natural parents, including 20% whose parents are cohabiting without being married. Another 20% of children live in a lone-mother household, of whom 20% are in an extended family arrangement. Cohabiting couples account for 22% of all couples and 19% of couples with children. (Kutsar & Tiit, 2003; Kutsar et al, 2004).

The majority of children live at home until they reach 18 years of age (table 2). In the case of approximately three quarters of the children mother and father live at home (one of them may be a step-parent and there could also be an adult sibling).

Table 2. Structure of children households in different age groups (%).

Household structure	Age groups of children			
	0–3	4–6	7–14	15–18
By oneself	0	0	0	1.0
Single parent	7.7	14.4	7.5	18.5
Two parents	83.2	76.8	84.5	69.2
Three generations	9.2	8.8	8.1	11.3

Source: Statistical Office of Estonia, 2002b.

The number of children growing up in single-parent families increases as the age of the child rises. The probability of moving from a two-parent family type to a single-parent family type before a child reaches the adulthood is rather obvious. Less than 10% of children live in multi-generational families, including families with one or two grandparents. Approximately one per cent of the child population (below 18 years of age) live alone or with a spouse or partner.

From the child's perspective, if we try to compare the subjective universe of a child living in contemporary Estonia in year 2004 with that of a child living in year 1989, then we can see enormous changes at almost all levels in his relationship to society. Firstly, many children today do not have siblings, so their childhood is different in the sense that to find other children they usually have to look outside their home and, when at home, the only way to communicate with their peers is by using different communication devices. Secondly, because more and more women give birth at a later age and because the average life expectancy for women in the year 2000 was 76 years (which is considerably higher than the life expectancy for men (65.1 years), many children are now at greater risk of growing up without significant participation by their grandparents. This is especially true of their grandfathers because of the low average life expectancy for men. Also, men have tended historically to start stable conjugal relationships at an older age than women, and thus men experience a shorter time as a grandparent. In modern urban conditions young couples live in households separate from their own parents, thus grandparents play a small role in small children's everyday lives (Kutsar *et al.*, 2004). If young parents are still living in the same location as their own parents, there is not much contact, at least on a daily basis, probably because the old collectivist values of Soviet society are being replaced by the more individualistic stance of contemporary society; and social trends place more value on children being with their peers than spending time with the elderly, even if they are their grandparents. Indeed, the Time Use Survey (Statistical Office of Estonia, 2001b) shows that people above 65 years form the age group that spends the least amount of time with children below ten years of age.

De-institutionalization of the family is also reflected in the high number of separations and divorces. Unfortunately, we cannot say how many cohabiting couples separate but the divorce rate in Estonia started to rise in the late 1960s and has stayed high ever since. In 2001 764 divorces per 1000 marriages were recorded. After a divorce or separation children usually reside with their mother (Narusk, 2001). We need studies about children who commute between two homes, and we cannot say how much time on average a child of divorced or separated parents spends with each parent. Probably the child's mobility depends on the distance between the parents' households, the attitude of his/her primary caregiver towards spending time with other parent and the child's age. The most probable scenario is that the child meets the non-resident parent at weekends and may even spend the night in his/her house. But these exemplary situations may remain rare and in many cases the non-resident parent is either living at some distance or has problems with alcohol or illegal substances, so that child is wary of communicating with him/her.

There are some signs of a new phenomenon, which could be called a 'nobody's child' – one who is born of a cohabitation that has ended. This child commutes between two newly formed families who have each formed their own family identities, both consisting of one biological, one step-parent and their offspring. The child acts as a "relic from the past", commuting between these two identities, not fully belonging

anywhere. (The example is taken from a case study conducted by the author of the current paper in 2003).

There are many other – more traditional – cases where a child remains ‘not-wanted’. Children may be placed either in social care institutions or fostered into families of non-biological parents. Overall 0.5–0.6% of children live permanently in children’s homes or in foster families (Statistical Office of Estonia, 2003) and this number is shifting because of changes in the system of Estonian social care policy. It is possible that the higher child allowances given to mothers with infants in the first years after their birth will have a positive impact on the overall birth rate, but at the same time it will lead to the birth of a number of children produced simply to qualify for childcare benefits and then abandoned, so that they spend the rest of their childhood in childcare institution and boarding schools.

In a small qualitative study among ten year old children, Floren (2002) compiled a portrait of a typical boy and girl from the perspective of his/her freedom vs. control over time use. She found that parents participate actively in planning the use of their children’s time. Mostly, they give advice based on the children’s own interests, abilities and needs at the time, also keeping in mind the benefit of these activities for children. A child will follow the advice as long as it does not contradict his/her own interests or wishes. A child likes to feel him/herself to be an independent decision-maker. For this reason, a piece of advice that is given by a parent in the form of a ‘must’ reduces its real impact as a guideline and the child may stop following it. The parent in his/her turn can use punitive measures to maintain control over the child and to determine his/her activities.

The rights and freedoms of a child are prescribed by unwritten laws and contracts between children and adults. In many cases, one party will profit from these agreements more than the other. This leads to bargaining over changes in rules and contracts. Both sides are aiming to make more ‘profitable’ compromises. For example, a child may be allowed to stay in the playground for a longer time as long as s/he informs parents about his/her location and whom s/he is with. The child gets used to keeping the parent informed and in return receives more freedom to spend time outdoors. As a result of negotiation, the role of a parent as a direct and visible controller decreases. At the same time s/he still maintains control over the child indirectly, mediated through mutual contracts but also retaining the role as the main decision-maker about the child’s time use.

Children and adults live in different worlds which mutually impact on each other and children are able to keep some autonomy of their space. Apart from the permanent need to be cared for and protected, children like to keep control over their own lives by keeping relations with parents and friends separate. This is a strategy designed also to keep control over their own decisions away from the guidance of parents (Kutsar *et al.*, 2004).

Contemporary Estonian society puts children in a double-bind situation. On the one hand they are expected to be more successful than previous generations. Rapidly spreading Western consumerism makes children aware of the efforts they must make themselves to gain success. On the positive side, children learn to work hard and to prepare for a successful career and a ‘good life’ in the future. On the other hand, competitiveness and everyday problems among children deprive them of a safe and carefree childhood with the emotional support of close family members and good quality time. School bullying as a form of reaction, and drugs as the means of escape



from reality, are products of a violent and mercenary environment, Ender (2002) notes (see: Kutsar *et al*, 2004).

Fathers are acquiring more influential/significant role in their children's lives, although mothers are still the main caregivers. Flexible work schedules are emerging for both parents. Children are attending pre-school institutions more often. Children from wealthy families are able to attend a high quality private kindergarten or a grass-roots mini-kindergarten organised by parents themselves as a group-wise childcare *on a self-help basis*. Throughout history, Estonians have been observed to give priority to individualistic values over collectivistic ones and that paves the way to further diversity of family forms and structures in Estonia.

### *Policy responses*

De-institutionalization of the family and diversification of family structures has complicated old traditions of understanding families, as well as changing the everyday lives of children, thus creating new challenges to policy-makers. New family forms and structures, unemployment, poverty, work-family balance and other problems are included in the policy agendas. The questions how far should state interventions dig into family lives and how much of families' behaviours can be directed by political measures have not been answered.

Students who participated in the survey concerning family forms and ideal spouse in Estonia (Kasearu, 2002) found that close relationships among people do not need state interventions. This attitude confirms the fact that many young people do not consider differences between unregistered cohabitation and formal marriage essential. The decision to contract a marriage may be impacted by legislation (the registered marriage secures one's relationships, creates mutual obligations and sets barriers against the breakup of the union). But even more powerfully the decision is impacted by the individuals' values and personal life politics. Those who value personal life perspectives highly are more likely to orient themselves to cohabitation, or do not define their preference. Those who follow more traditional family values, expect to get married and have more children than average than those oriented to cohabitation.

What are the policy responses? Up to now, the state has not introduced any legislation for unmarried cohabiting couples. Such couples may not adopt children and do not have the same rights as married couples. National legislation discriminates against unmarried couples. The family remains in a centre for the Family Law Act (passed 12 October 1994) and is confined to the family created by marriage. As stable but informal partnerships continue to increase in Estonia the family law is under review. Mostly the revisions touch on the division of property acquired during the marriage. Unmarried cohabitation is a concern for the policy makers due to its impact on fertility. The number of children born in consensual unions is smaller than for registered marriages.

If the low number of marriages is a new trend in Estonia, divorce has become widespread. The increase in divorce rates was first recognized in the late 1960s. Together with the abrupt decline in the number of new marriages, a situation has arisen in Estonia today where the number of new marriages equals the number of divorces. High divorce rate refers to a large number of breakdowns of legal marriages. In addition to the large number of divorces there are also separations of legally married and cohabiting couples, which are not highlighted in the state statistics but

which also create social as well as economic problems for children, requiring policy responses. Unfortunately the fact policy-makers have focused on is the divorce rate of legal marriages, little attention has been paid to any other type of family breakdown.

State policy intervention in the area of family size and composition is mainly concerned with the low fertility rate in Estonia, thus being pronatalist in its main features. Paradoxically, the Estonian government is in a double-bind situation. On one hand, the government is concerned about low fertility in the country and so tries to pass pronatalist measures aimed at changing the reproductive behaviour of the population of a reproductive age. On the other hand, every additional child creates a greater risk of poverty for a household, thus countering poverty reduction efforts.

Policy responses to low fertility rates have not been successful because the amount received in child benefit is low compared to the cost of rearing a child and does not provide a strong financial incentive for having children. In places of high unemployment, however, social surveys show that even low-level child benefits (where it is the only regular income for the family) encourage welfare dependency and cultivate a poverty culture — the latter also among children. The family as well as child benefits have not been effective in reducing the poverty of children but it has a particular value as a regular source of family income for those in direct poverty. Unfortunately, large families, single-parent families, as well as children as a separate social group, are still highly vulnerable to poverty. On the other hand, the universal child benefit carries a high ideological value. It was the first measure to bring children as a separate group into political debates and it raised public awareness of the need to value every child and specifically, to value families with children. The process of making children more visible in political rhetoric has complicated political discussions over new family policy measures by producing dilemmas about meeting the needs of two interest groups – adults and children. New solutions can be looked for in solidarity and social justice in the distribution of societal resources.

Estonian family policies are similar to those found elsewhere: supporting families financially; providing social insurance for families; making provision for parental leave and arrangements for working hours; regulating the provision of children's day-care; supporting family counselling. During the last decade, the new principle of child-centredness has been introduced. In family policy arrangements, a child is given a priority no matter whether his or her parents cohabit or live in a formal marriage. The child being a central figure in influencing his or her parents decision to move from living together into cohabitation or from cohabitation into formal marriage, can also influence the acceptance by law of individual choices that favour cohabitation. The marriage-based family will stay a traditional construct and romantic image in the people's minds, but also as one of the options for making rational choices between the increasing diversity of family forms.

Researchers from EU 5FP IPROSEC (see: <http://www.iprosec.org.uk/>) found that in Estonia as well as in the other European countries it observed, compared to other policy areas, family policy is often the vehicle used for delivering the objectives of other policy areas — employment, demographic balance, economic growth, social cohesion or a reduction in criminality — rather than pursuing its own clearly defined set of objectives. Estonian governments are fluctuating between targeting the family unit with pronatalist measures to encourage family building and protecting individuals in need. The Iprosec project also revealed that Estonians want their governments to

deliver policies that will create an environment conducive to family life. Individuals expect to be able to choose how they manage their lives. They are, therefore, looking to the state to provide conditions that allow them maximum choice without generating further dilemmas and tensions. As in many of the other countries studied in the project, the emphasis must therefore be on public policies that impact on families by enabling them to achieve a standard of living compatible with raising children (Hantrais, 2003).

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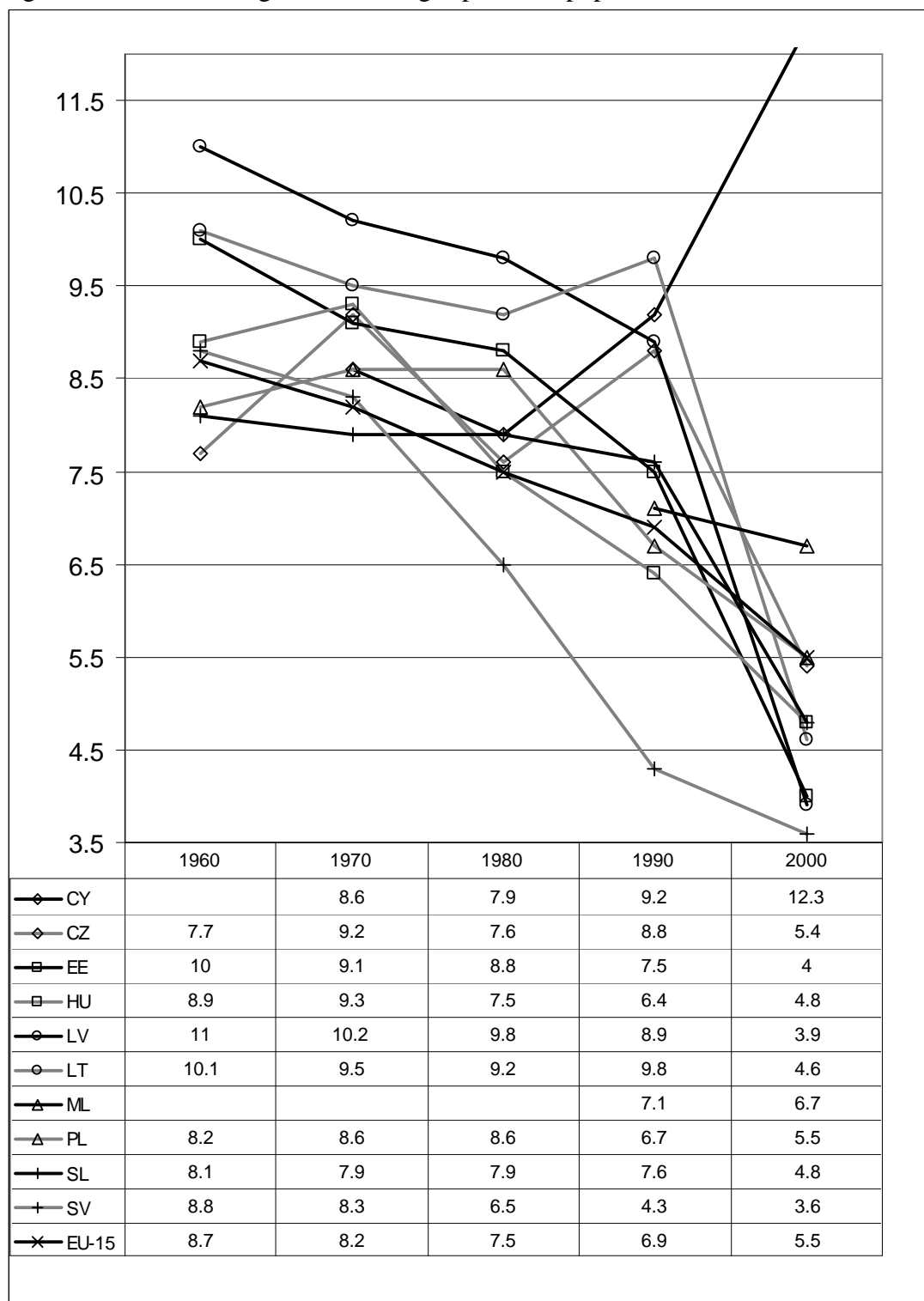
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## Appendix

Figure 1. Crude marriage rate: marriages per 1000 population



Source: *Recent Demographic...*, 2001

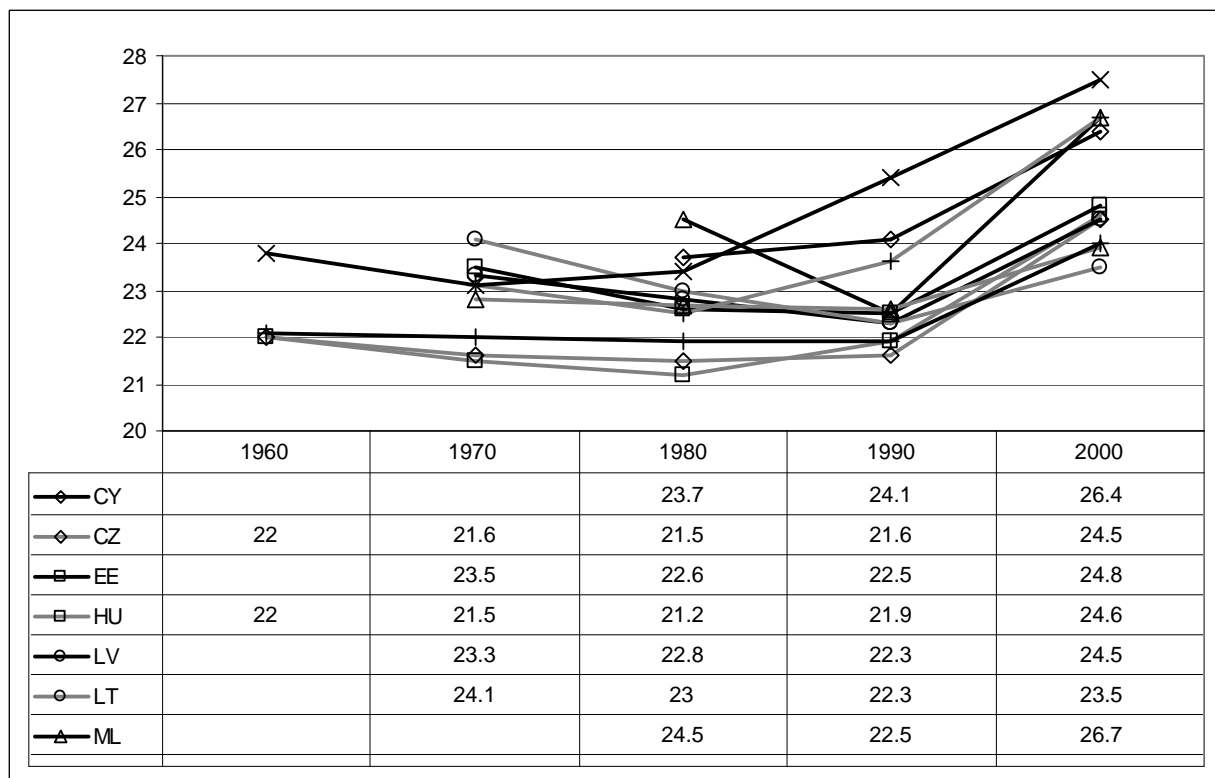
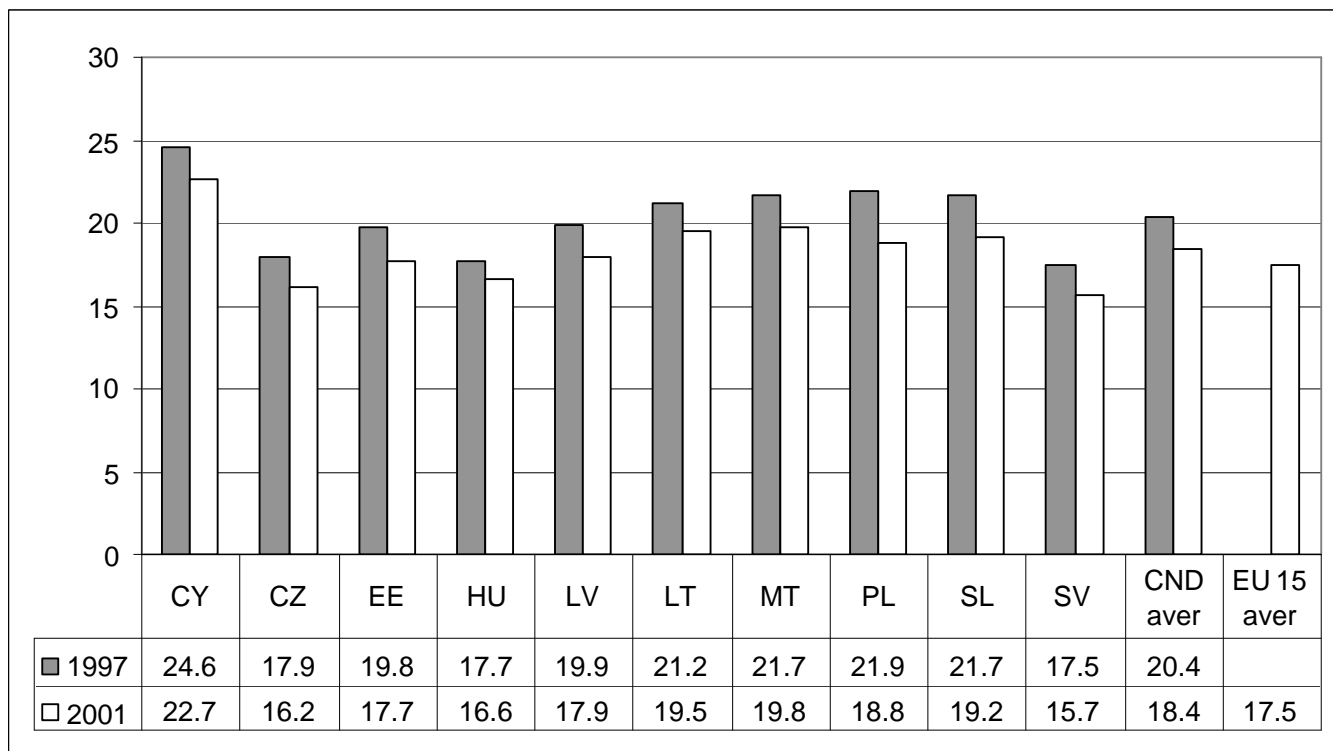


Figure 2. Mean age of women at first marriage (below 50)

Source: *Recent Demographic...*, 2001

Figure 3. Proportion of 0-14 age group of the total population, 1997 and 2001



Source: *Recent Demographic...*, 2001

Figure 4. Total fertility rate in the enlarging EU, 1960-2000 (averages)

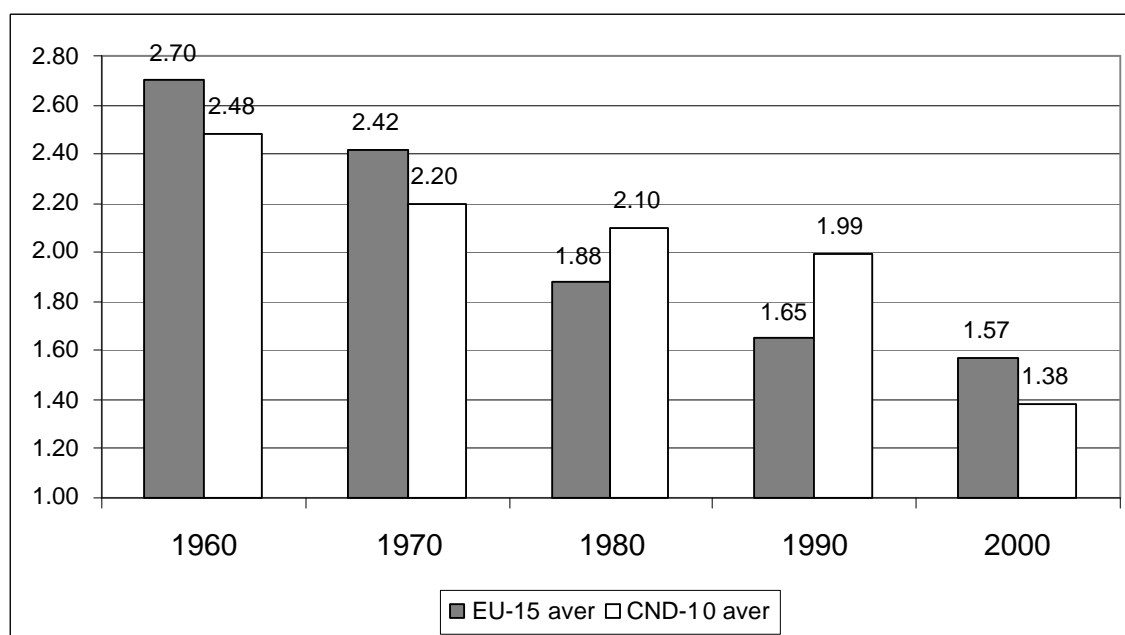
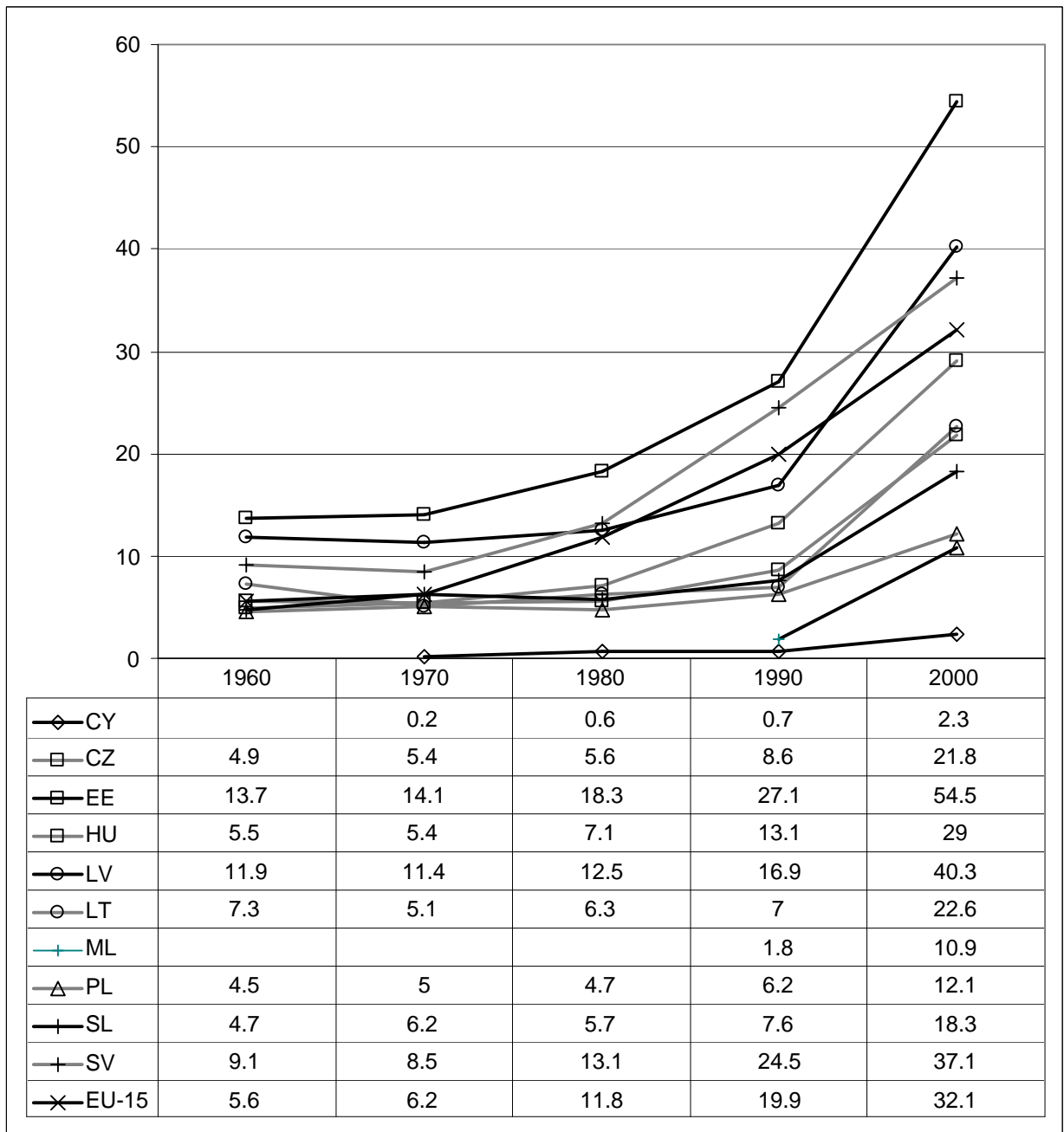


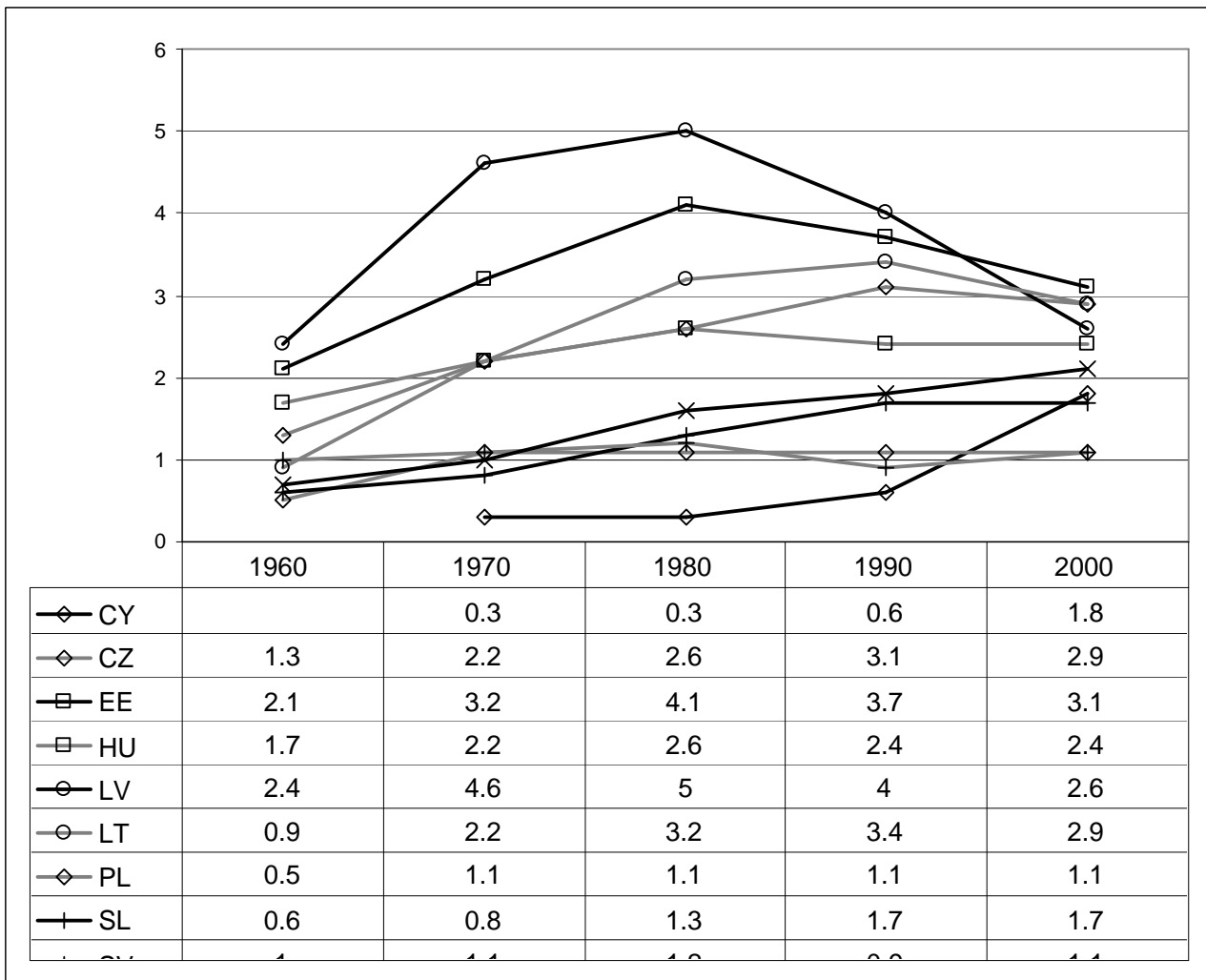


Figure 5. Extra-marriage births, per 100 births



Source: *Recent Demographic...*, 2001

Figure 6. Crude divorce rate: divorces per 1000 population



Source: Recent Demographic..., 2001

# **Who has Power in Today's Families: A West African Perspective**

***Keynote Presentation by Professor Rose Zoe-Obianga  
Yaounde University, Cameroon***

## **SUMMARY**

The sociological reality in Africa is not as homogeneous as one would be tempted to think. That is why, off-handedly, there is a tendency to make baseless declarations. It is therefore important for us to understand the different, diverse and diversified reality which turns out to be an extraordinary asset judging from observation.

This sociological reality applies to the African family in general and to the African couple in particular. We are going to focus our interest on the situation which prevails in the Southern part of Cameroon, notably a small area that borders on the North by the Adamawa Plateau, on the South by Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea, on the East by the Central African Republic, and on the West by the Gulf of Guinea.

The population is Bantu, 90%, Christian (Catholic and Protestants) and other religions 10%. The population is basically rural. However, there are some relatively important towns like Yaounde (the capital), Douala, Ebolowa, Bertoua, Edea, Eseka, Sangmelima, Kribi, Abong-Mbang and Bafia.

The Cameroonian family includes the couple, the ancestors, descendants and siblings of both spouses. The system that prevails is patriarchy and it applies at various levels. It would have been ideal to talk about traditional and modern marriages. However, the difference between this presentation and making a clear-cut distinction between the two is very slim. Hence very little or nothing is lost. There are polygamous and monogamous marriages and even single-parent families in the rural and urban areas. Eventually we might find other very interesting, subtle differences.

### **a) Polygamous marriages**

Generally, it is one man married to several women. By virtue of the law in Cameroon a man has the right to marry up to four (4) women. However, some men go beyond four wives who already are too many.

In the village, three women dominate, the first (ékôma), the favourite (nkpwek) and the last (ntum-nnôm). The first because she is considered to be the 'mother' of all the others and she pulls the strings. The youngest because she is still capable of satisfying all the needs of her husband, particularly his sexual needs. Her powers can equally be easily understood. The rest of the wives indulge in intrigues and feminine wiles which do not in any way improve their marriage, hence they are generally subject to criticism unfortunately.

In town the economic and financial strength of the various wives would determine their degree of control over their husband.

b) Monogamous marriages

Though present in the traditional marriage setting, monogamous marriages are growing thanks to the tremendous changes Africa is currently going through. It is the most common form of marriage among youth who cannot stand up to the challenges of polygamy. Torn between the two, they find it hard to choose between their traditional roots and their urban identity (GIBBAL. 1986 p 23)

In the village, just like in the town, the couple must face all the challenges together, assume the old and new forms of responsibility, the difficulties and the joys. The environment no longer favours many wives and women hardly tolerate such promiscuity.

That notwithstanding, there is plenty of pressure on the couple from the families-in-law who are omnipresent and claim to have a right to the couple's income, or at least to its management. Hence, the extreme tension, frustration, etc. Money has come to replace everything and being the war of nerves women have resorted to studies and training that will earn them paid jobs.

The couple would have had less difficulty in terms of relationships since it enjoys the recognition and support of the law. However, the woman is left to her own devices upon the death of her husband and during the sharing of property which remains a traditionally male preserve in the family. That is why the values or the terms of a will may be completely ignored.

In the couple the husband generally exercises authority through a third party (mother, sister, influential aunt, grandmother). The woman therefore finds herself completely subjugated.

c) Single-parent homes

The current crises couples face, in addition to young girls' desire for independence and the problems relating to the often exorbitant bride price, have all led to the phenomenon of single-parenthood. Girls with early pregnancies end up without husbands. They have to bear the brunt on their own, or with the help of their parents.

They become family heads exploitable and exploited by all and sundry, particularly if they have a job, however small the pay package. Certainly this is a fairly new phenomenon. Despite their marginalization from the religious point of view, single parents have made a name for themselves thanks to their economic strength.

d) Conclusion

As we have noticed, the Cameroonian society operates differently, but looking at it closely, the situation of the woman has not really changed in the ethnic groups under study. The woman is still under the yoke of men in the family (father, brother, uncle, husband, grandfather) "Beware, she knows her husband is her master." (Oduyoye. 1995, p101)

Economic strength for sure plays a key role in the couple's relationship. In the rural area export crops (like cocoa, coffee, tobacco, etc) no longer generate as much income as they did in the past for men who could marry as many women as they desired to assist them in the plantations.

# **Who has Power in Today's Families? A Western Perspective**

***Keynote Presentation by Martin Koschorke  
Protestant Central Institute for Family Counselling  
Berlin, Germany***

***Translation: Hillian Durell***

Who has the power in the family? At first sight this may seem a strange question. The parents, of course - will be the immediate response. And there are many reasons for such an answer, including theoretical ones.

## **The institutional power of the parents**

I shall start with a brief excursion into sociological theory. In complex societies whose economies are based on a provision of services and industry, the family as an institution has three basic functions.

It is the task of the family to “reproduce” in a number of different ways.

1. Reproduce (in the sense of ‘to restore’) energy and vitality.  
Families ensure that:
  - a) the basic needs of its members are satisfied; that all family members have a roof over their head and clothing, that they can eat and sleep, that they are given recreation, protection, affection and emotional support;
  - b) the conditions exist that will render possible the satisfaction of the family members needs; there has to be an income or money to provide a home and consumer goods, which must then be maintained and managed etc.
2. Reproduce (in the sense of ‘to bring into the world’) future workers and consumers, i.e. bring new members of society into the world.  
Families imply children. In families:
  - a) Children are generated.
  - b) These children are cared for, brought up and educated in such a way that they are prepared to become members of society and that in their turn they are prepared to bring children into the world and then to socialise them in the same way.
3. Reproduce (in the sense of ‘to recreate’) the social power and dependence relationships, i.e. the social order and social differences.
  - a) In the family children find out that there are concepts such as dependence and power, differences and inequalities. They learn how to handle differences in power (to accept them, to knuckle under or to rebel, to develop their own active or passive power).
  - b) The family allots the younger generation its place in the social hierarchy of society: each child is introduced to and placed in its social environment, it

acquires language skills and a view of life for its particular environment, and it learns to manipulate its environment. Personality development (structure of self, self-image, role models) is still a major factor in determining the professional development and consequently the social status of the person concerned.

c) In the family girls and boys internalise self-esteem and the rank and role of their gender in accordance with the ideas of their culture or environment.

This last function of the family, that of allotting people a position in society, may be shocking to western ideas of equality and freedom. Unfortunately, it is still true, even today: families perpetuate social inequality; this is perhaps even truer now than in the past.

In addition, parents have much power over their children, either intentionally or unintentionally. Because of this they have power over their future. They decide whether or not the children will live and they have influence over how the children live. They decide what they are to be called. Small children are almost completely dependent on their parents. Parents can pick up their child and carry it to some other place. They can give or refuse it things and show or withdraw feelings. They can define their child: attribute certain qualities to the child or deny them these qualities. Parents do have power.

### **The family – a totalitarian institution?**

To enable parents to carry out their tasks, society allows them a special framework and puts extraordinary means at their disposal.

The framework: From a structural point of view the family is a totalitarian institution. The persons who make the decisions in the family are allowed an unusual amount of power.

Democracy means: those who are subjected to power exercised by others have the right and the means to check and control this power. For this reason the legislative, judicial and executive powers in democratic countries are strictly separate. This means that it is impossible for the same person to **set** the standards, to ensure that they are **adhered** to and to **sanction** any deviations or infringements. The institutional separation of standards, control and sanction is one of the criteria in deciding whether a society is free or not.

The family is not a democracy, because here exactly the opposite happens. The standards of behaviour are set by the same person or body who checks that they are adhered to, and this same person praises or punishes the children for compliance or infringement. As we have already said, the family is in principle a totalitarian institution. Within the family parents have almost total control over their children, at least at the beginning. That is to the children's advantage, at least when all goes well.

**Fear, feelings of shame, guilt  
or: Reason fighting a losing battle**

In the long term parents cannot supervise, guide, praise, punish their children or tell them what to do all the time. This is why the external guidance and control which is initially a part of the parents' task and later that of the school and other institutions, will be internalised. The new members of society will of course internalise standards, control and sanctions in varying degrees. This is called conscience, super-ego or just a good upbringing.

In this process society makes use of three very powerful control mechanisms: fear and feelings of shame and guilt. With the help of these instruments society attempts to control the development and behaviour of its members and to guide their spontaneous impulses along particular lines. Fear is a semi-automatic response of any organism to a threat to its existence. Feelings of guilt or shame are part of human being's psychological and social basic equipment: every person has the capacity to be ashamed or to have feelings of guilt. The criteria are different for each individual. Whilst fear is usually connected with situations, and feelings of guilt are bound up with behaviour, feelings of shame usually control the person as a whole - his identity and his self-esteem. All three control mechanisms operate to a large extent unconsciously – or, in the case of shame and fear, even “preconsciously”. This is why they are so effective.

So far I have not mentioned a fourth behaviour control mechanism: a person's reason and good sense. People can be persuaded to do or not to do particular things by exercising their ability to reason. This reason or good sense was a relative late-comer in the history of the development of humankind and of the human brain. Even in the development of individual persons, the ability to reason will develop only gradually. Very often good sense demands that individual advantage be subordinated to the interests of the community. In the same way reason sometimes has to battle with both a person's self-interest and with fear and feelings of shame and guilt. No wonder that the contribution of reason is quite limited in the business of creating socially acceptable beings.

Who has the power in the family? Parents - or whoever exercises parental responsibility – have been given a clear task by society. They have been given the wherewithal to compel the next generation to do as they are told, to make them into responsible members of society.

**Powerless parents**

Let us now have another look at the power relationships in modern western families and ask again: who does in fact have the power?

In 1920 Max Weber defined power as follows: “the opportunity to enforce one's own will in spite of resistance”. At first, this sounds a very masculine definition. It includes aspects of arbitrariness and force. If you leave behaviour and active



persuasion out of the equation, then what Weber says is: power means that I can influence others and their behaviour, I can make them do what I want.

From a psychodynamic and systematic point of view exercising influence can be observed in a social field of relationships and attachments. It can be characterised as an area of tension between poles such as: exercising power and experiencing power being exercised; submitting to influence and resisting or escaping from influence; power and counter-power, power and powerlessness. Questions will be asked as to the different types of power and the responses to power: active and passive, voluntary and involuntary, conviction and persuasion, authority and force, to type-cast the other party or give him no chance despite attempts to communicate, to adapt or to subjugate, to extort or to tempt, to irritate and tyrannise etc.

Do parents have power? Let us go to a playground, let's watch families having a holiday, at the beach or in a restaurant, and watch them fight for the best seat or the right to determine how the others are going to behave. Let us visit families at home to see who wields power via the television remote control, who dominates the home with the volume of his/her stereo equipment. Let us accompany parents with their pre-pubescent children when they buy clothes or shoes and see who manages to impose their will on the other party. Who has the power in families? Let us ask a family counsellor: what is the main problem in families with difficulties. The answer is often: the natural hierarchy has been turned on its head. The little ones tyrannise the adults, parents have become their children's slaves or else they resist in powerless rage and become violent.

### **“You have no right to hit me”**

I would like to illustrate this with a little story. My wife witnessed it herself. A woman walks along a street in Berlin. Some 12 to 13 year old girls follow her. Suddenly one of the girls throws a firecracker in front of her; it explodes with an almighty sound. The woman nearly jumps out of her skin with fright, the noise has deafened her and for several seconds she cannot hear anything. Giggling, the three girls disappear into a house entrance.

This might have been the end of the story, an everyday story of dangerous youthful high spirits. But the story does not end here. The woman is not going to let these girls get away with their aggression. She follows them into the courtyard of the building and finds them. They are still highly satisfied with their success. She says to the girl who threw the firecracker: “What would have happened if I had had a weak heart, you might have killed me!” The girl just laughs at her. In her indignation the woman clips her round the ears. The 13-year old is highly indignant and says: “You have no right to hit me, I am going to the police to report you!”

You have no right to hit me! The child is in fact saying: I am unassailable – children learn to display this self-esteem which is in itself a good thing from a very young age. I am like an adult, I have the same rights, the same position as an adult, irrespective of my behaviour. There is no longer any hierarchy based on age. You cannot tell me what to do or how to behave.

How did the story end? The woman took the girl's hand and said: "Fine, let's go there now." And that was the end of the matter.

What does this little episode tell us? Self-perception, self-esteem is an important factor in the power game. Power is not only – in the words of Max Weber – the successful attempt to go beyond one's own boundaries into the territory of someone else, to invade this other person's territory and in doing so to influence his behaviour, his ideas, his feelings and his self-esteem. Power can also consist of successfully preventing such incursions and attempts to influence. Power is a game that involves boundaries, it involves respect for boundaries, crossing boundaries, intrusion into behaviour, feeling, thoughts and possibly also the other's physical self-perception. And it involves the prevention of such invasions.

### **Three types of society and their value systems**

Family counsellors and family therapists are familiar with the behaviour and self-confidence youngsters display. It is one of the typical conflicts within families. I have rights and entitlements. I will not tolerate any intrusions into my territory. I am not talking about any intrusions into other people's territory that I may carry out. You are not allowed to touch me, and when you do it is an incident of punishable violence. When confronted with this attitude many parents often respond with violence towards their offspring, which puts them in the wrong vis-à-vis the child, or they experience powerlessness.

How can this powerlessness on the part of the parents be explained? I would like to try and give three explanations. To do this, I would like first of all to describe three stages in the social development of our society, i.e. compare three value systems or time models (Roussel 1988; Popitz 1999).

In the "*Family-based Society*" the individual can survive only when he is part of a family. The family or the clan takes care of him, feeds him, clothes him, protects and defends him, looks after him in illness or old age. The existence of the individual is secured only for as long as the family exists. This means that the continued existence and the reproduction of the family has absolute priority. Any plans made by the individual or wishes expressed by the individual are unquestioningly subjugated to the interests of the clan. This applies to all areas of life, from the choice of partner and profession to the way the individual's own children are brought up. Authority and decision making power rest with the family, i.e. the elders. Age and gender identity are clearly defined and determined.

This form of society existed in western countries until the time of the industrial revolution. In other continents it still exists to this day.

The "*Construction Society*": Everything changes as soon as people learn the following lesson: The social order and the oft miserable conditions in which they live can be changed. When they have a chance to exercise their influence they can start to make plans: their profession, their marriage, a family, the number of children, their future. When there is a chance that things will get better for me one day, and if not for me then at least for my children, the plans I make will be different from the ones that I made when there was no chance of a better life. The number of children in families is

reduced, the large family becomes less prevalent, the individual becomes more important, and the choice of partner becomes more individual, the internal climate of the smaller family becomes more intimate

This form of society existed in western countries from the time of the industrial revolution until the 60s and 70s.

### **Live now – pay later**

The “*Now or Development Society*”: There is another radical change when the economic survival of the individual is secured even without a family - whether large or small. Now it is the task of the state to create a general framework for the care of the individual and the realisation of his happiness. How long and to what extent the state is able to do this is highly uncertain. As well as the certainty that even without a family nobody needs to starve there is now a collective uncertainty, which at the same time is also an individual uncertainty. How long will I be able to count on being cared for to the same standards as I have been until now? How long will the privileged situation last which we have enjoyed in the West over the past few decades? “In this situation it is quite logical to try and get as much satisfaction as possible out of this brief reprieve and with the least possible effort” (Roussel 1988). Both the state and the individual act according to the motto: Live now, pay later.

The satisfaction of needs is first-of-all individual-orientated. To get as much satisfaction as possible is easiest when I am not weighed down by social obligations, when I am on my own and independent: “Being a Singleton“ is seen as the ideal lifestyle. (In Germany we have coined the phrase “Ich-AG“ (I PLC) both in professional and private circles.) The singleton has to pay a high price for his autonomy: loneliness. The conflict between autonomy and dependence becomes a collective problem. In order to achieve a high degree of satisfaction everything is weighed up carefully, even in private relations. The same applies to relationships – choice of partner, living together, getting married or not, having children (how many, which gender) – all these questions are scrutinised on the basis of the cost versus benefit account of those involved. If there is insufficient satisfaction then there is not much motivation to hang on to the relationship or the family. (The guiding principles in such cases should be: The happiness of the parents should not be based on the unhappiness of the children. And at the same time: The happiness of the children should not be based on the unhappiness of the parents.) See Appendix, table 1.

### **Nothing is certain, except that nothing is certain**

The basic feeling of the *Now or Development Society* can be characterised in three sentences:

- We have no time and therefore we are in a permanent state of stress.
- Nothing is certain, except that nothing is certain.
- The highest expression of happiness is freedom in the sense of development of one’s personality, of constant self-realisation of the unique and distinctive individual (which in itself causes significant stress).

In such a situation I can only achieve personal certainty when I can be sure that I always make the choice that is best for me and my development. This means that I

must acquire the ability to weigh up and decide, because otherwise I will be unable to hold my own on the globalising market of relationships, professional opportunities, consumer options and privileges. I must keep developing this ability. The ability to foster personal development is subject to the competition pressure in the market place. During the conference of this International Commission in Stockholm in 2001 it was pointed out that children of kindergarten age develop the ability to assess at a glance what their best personal development opportunities are as soon as they enter kindergarten. During the conference of this Commission that was held in Louvain last year François de Singly said that the central function of the family of today is to help all family members in the discovery and permanent construction of their ego. It is the task of the family “to permanently consolidate the ego of adults and children alike“ (de Singly 2003).

Parents and children are faced with the same task: The parents must keep developing and so must the children. This is perhaps easier for children, teenagers and adolescents than for adults. As a result the parents no longer have an absolute advantage over children. From the point of view of a central task of the family there is no hierarchical difference between the generations. This leads to the following dilemma: *Adults who realise that they should develop themselves somehow as partners and as parents but who do not really know how, must nevertheless help their children in their development, a task which the children may find much easier in a number of areas of life;* this leads to confusion, uncertainty and helplessness.

This is my first explanation for the powerlessness and paralysis of today's parents.

### **In the Stone Age as well as in Modern Times**

In families the partners operate on three different levels: They are parents, long-term companions and lovers. Each of these three levels has its own specific aim, follows its own value system and laws and corresponds more or less with the forms of community or time models described above.

As *Parents* the adults care for their children. Life is passed on. The parents live on in the lives of their children. The parents are part of a chain of generations, placed in a context of relationships and family traditions. - The dynamics which the adults experience in this phase can be compared to a large degree with those of the traditional society based on the family.

As *long-term companions* the adults build up a life together with the partner, they furnish a home or flat, build up a profession or a career, plan leisure activities and holidays or make plans for the future and old age. The dynamics which the adults experience in this phase can be compared to a large degree with those of the Construction Society.

As *lovers* the partners show each other affection, would like to enjoy the other and enjoy life with the other. They want to realise their potential and have their personality respected, possibly they want to develop themselves with the help of the other in accordance with the ideals and goals of the Now and Development Society.

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**Long-term companions**  
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**Lovers**  
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**Parents**  
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### **Modern Partnership – Realising one’s potential**

The three basic rules for modern partnership are:

- *Nobody should sacrifice themselves.* Because both partners are equal. They have the same right to professional and personal development.
- *Each partner must be able to do everything.* It is of course possible to come to an arrangement about division of labour, but in principle both partners accept the same rights and the same obligations for all the tasks in their life together.
- *Each partner must keep on developing themselves – continuously.* In a partnership both partners should find fulfilment and happiness jointly and individually. This is not possible, when one partner is left behind or when one partner sacrifices himself or herself out of love for the other (see Rule 1).

Modern partnership demands that both partners have a high degree of personal maturity and social skills, communication and negotiation skills. The partners must know what their own needs and interests are, they must be able to communicate to the other in an appropriate way what they are. When the other tells them what his or her own needs and interests are they must listen and understand what the other means (not just what he or she says) and negotiate about differences (in the form of requests and offers, rather than demands and complaints). They must be able to make compromises and meet the other halfway without sacrificing themselves. They must respect the other, their otherness and their territory. They must agree who is in charge in joint territories (bringing up the children, leisure, kitchen etc.) and who is the helper. In principle there is no longer any territory that is exclusively male or female. This means that responsibilities must constantly be re-established. To take responsibility for all areas of family life means that the areas of responsibility traditionally associated with female or male roles or domination must be changed, and this can be a difficult problem. If this process of renunciation and acceptance of responsibility is to be successful the partners must constantly redress the emotional balance through mutual appreciation etc.

Modern partnership is a difficult art, but if partners are successful the rewards are great: a high degree of satisfaction, a basic feeling of being at ease with the other partner, which lasts beyond the infatuation phase (Vansteenwegen), finding an equilibrium between shared interests and time spent together on the one hand and individual development and freedom on the other hand, in short to have equal rights. Even when sacrifices are made from time to time, neither party is less important than the other, both have equal rights. Both have the right to personal and professional development, neither party is forced to sacrifice themselves.

## **Family – Total self-sacrifice?**

What happens to the dynamics when a partnership becomes a family? Even when the children are welcomed, small children equal dependence. This means that the parents have to sacrifice important areas of their personal lives. This means that the parents will have less time and that their personal lives and career development will be subject to limitations; also, small children will need care and protection for many years. It also means that the woman will need protection, at least during her pregnancy and for as long as she is feeding the baby. The person who is looking after the children will always need protection. This results in basic differences with regard to the need for protection, dependence and workload, i.e. a hierarchy of power. There are not many countries or social environments where the conditions are sufficiently family-friendly that there is no need for either one of the partners to sacrifice a portion of their own life plans, or to put it differently, to give up at least part of themselves.

Many young women and men live in accordance with the values of modern partnerships. The realisation of their own interests and life goals and the demands of family life frequently appear to be completely irreconcilable. (This is one other reason for the falling birth rate in many western countries.) Stone age and modern values are in conflict: on the one hand there is the family society with its demands, rules and temptations (to live on in one's own child), on the other hand the opportunity to live in the here and now and to develop oneself personally. This is not only a social conflict. The desire to have a family, to build up a satisfying life and the longing for fulfilment in a happy partnership is common to all people. *A social conflict becomes an inner conflict. It is perceived as being insoluble. The people involved feel torn between two conflicting life goals, between different longings that are very important to them but that appear to be irreconcilable - between world views and rules of behaviour that belong to different eras.* This creates confusion and disorientation when the question is asked: What do I want? Who am I? What should I do? *This makes it more difficult for partners to come to an understanding, when the partners not only disagree with each other but when each partner is not certain of their own hopes and desires.*

This confusion is in my opinion another reason for the powerlessness of many parents.

## **A modern upbringing – how do we achieve this?**

Parents must bring up their children so that they become useful members of society. This remains society's task for parents. What is new is what this actually means: to bring up human beings that are able to keep developing their personality and their independence. Adjustment is not what is wanted, because the world to which children might be able to adjust today will no longer exist tomorrow (de Singly 2003). This also means that the legitimacy of the means of education which had up to now achieved adjustment no longer exists: fear of punishment, feelings of shame or guilt. *So, which means, which tools do parents have to fulfil their task? What are the skills they have to develop?* How can young people develop into independent personalities in a market and consumption orientated society? Many parents are at their wits' end, helpless and without means.

To me this seems to be the third reason for parents' current powerlessness with regard to education. I would like to explain this in more detail.

### **Ten ways to exercise power**

Very often helpless and powerless parents are confronted by children who are anything but helpless and without power with regard to their parents.

*Rarity value confers power.*

In a market society what is rare has the greatest value. The rarer children become, the more valuable they become – to society as well as to their parents. In the case of separation and divorce parents often battle passionately for their most prized possessions: their children.

*Whoever embodies the future has power.*

Nobody embodies the future more than children, in particular in an aging society, where youth is seen as the ideal.

*Whoever knows what he wants has power.*

**Whoever acts in accordance with the social consensus has power.**

An example for this are the disputes about consumer wishes, in particular when children use social exclusion as a threat.

*Whoever can wrest the control of power from others has power.*

Reduced or non-existent parental presence often leads to extension of the boundaries of children's or teenagers' power.

*Whoever operates without others realising it or being aware of it has power.*

*Whoever persuades the others to practise restraint, to give in or to withdraw even before the start of the conflict has power.*

*Whoever is weak, is regarded as a victim, or manages to present himself convincingly as a victim has power.*

Powerlessness can be very powerful, because it inhibits the opponent's aggressiveness. The position of the victim is particularly empowering. It has 16 advantages.. (See appendix)

*Whoever can mobilize others to serve his interests has power.*

In connection with the battle against physical, sexual or mental violence against children we have seen not only the development of child protection agencies but a whole lobby of, in part, very dedicated defenders of the innocence of children and parents' guilt.

*Whoever frees himself from ties that continue to restrict others has power.*

A family has fulfilled its task when it is dissolved. For teenagers and adolescents saying goodbye to the family is a piece of necessary development. For the parents it is often a painful process.

Which options are open to parents to influence their offspring? How can they set appropriate boundaries and not only support but also challenge their children?

### **The partner as threat**

When animals and humans feel an existential threat they respond instinctively either by going on the offensive, by escaping or by curling up (fight, flight, and freeze).

- They attack, like a bull or a tiger,
- They run for it like a deer or a gazelle,
- They freeze like a tortoise or a hedgehog.

These types of response can also be observed in the behaviour of partners. If one of the partners feels that there is a threat to his territory, important needs or interests he usually opts for one of these strategies more or less automatically:

- He attacks the other through words, tone or behaviour.
- Or he takes evasive action, withdraws, and refuses to interact.
- Or else he lets it all slide off him like water off a duck's back, he withdraws into himself, does not respond.

As a rule partners prefer one of the three strategies, which they often combine with one of the others. Depending on the culture and environment there are typical preferences for women and men. It often happens that there is a sudden change, which is something the ethologist N. Tinbergen observed in animals: someone who would normally give up or act as if they did not hear the partner's attacks suddenly becomes vocal or actively aggressive. Someone who would normally go on the attack suddenly caves in, in resignation, etc.

Attack and flight responses are defence or self-protection mechanisms, but they do not resolve the conflict. On the contrary. Those who attack run away from solving the conflict, and those who run away cannot resolve the conflict either. Whoever attacks causes the other to get angry, set up a counter-attack, be afraid, withdraw, etc. That is not the way to come to an understanding. The partner who escapes or withdraws into himself also causes anger and resentment. He refuses to be a partner, it is impossible to communicate or negotiate with him. Fight and flight behaviour is a response to violence, and at the same time it is a violent response, because it exceeds boundaries or provokes the other into going beyond boundaries. And it is exactly this type of behaviour that is perceived as attack in partner relationships, as active or passive violence.

### **Overcoming violent responses**

How might non-violent behaviour between partners be achieved? In short we might say: by making a distinction between feelings and behaviour (English 2000). Or to put it differently: by controlling the old fight-flight impulse and making a conscious decision to use one's reason and conflict-regulating behaviour.

- When my partner, my opposite number makes me furious I do not attack.
- Nor do I withdraw.



- Nor do I act as if nothing has happened.

I remain *present* as partner, as protagonist, so that dialogue is possible. I repress the impulse to spontaneous response, the fear and threat. I remain inwardly steadfast: I ask what my opposite number means or tries to say before I respond. This is because I am convinced that my partner does not constitute a threat to me. I list the various positions and interests. I ask for concessions and for my part offer concessions. Nobody surrenders, nobody threatens the other party, but we can make offers, propose a compromise, and try to win the other to one's own point of view - in short: negotiate in an adult fashion.

### **Authority through non-violence**

The partners adopt the same attitude as parents towards their children. When the children overstep the mark, infringe regulations, the parents do not respond with violence.

- They do not attack, even when they are furious. They remain present and promote dialogue. They respect the individuality and interests of their children. They ask questions, but they also make their position clear. They can make proposals, but no reproaches.
- They do not withdraw out of a sense of resignation, because they do not know the answer or because they want to be left in peace. They do not take flight; they do not escape from a confrontation that can clear the air. They remain present.
- Nor do they act as if nothing has happened. They do not look the other way when their child takes drugs or fails to come home at night. They take the time and trouble to look out for their child. They remain present.

Appropriate parental presence (neither too much nor too little of it, nor the development of inhibiting presence) is the solution for many problems in families. This presence is characterised both by non-violence as well as by strength and clarity. In education counselling and family therapy emphatically non-violent conflict solutions are applied and taught. Examples are: a sit-in by the parents in the children's room, non-violent restriction of children's behaviour in the case of irresponsibility and neglect (Omer / v. Schlippe 2002), holding therapy in the case of autism and tantrums (Otte 1994) etc.

Physical and mental presence, a basic attitude of active care with respect for the other, is the answer when there are conflicts between partners and in the family. This approach requires very different behaviour for partnerships and families.

- In a partnership the negotiations are between two equal parties. If differences occur one partner cannot force or command the other to do anything. There can only be requests and possibly offers of compromise.
- In the family it is the parents' task to offer care and to set boundaries. Here the parents may have to learn *not* to use the word "please" when they draw the necessary boundaries. The word "please" gives the other party the option either to comply or not to comply with the request for a particular behaviour modification. It implies equality in rank, but parents and children are not at the same hierarchical level. In particular conflict situations it is the task of the parents to make sure that their will prevails, even if the children oppose them; it must all be

done in an attitude of non-violent care and love. This requires great inner strength and conviction and the ability not to allow oneself to be provoked, as well as the ability to recognise and keep control over the fight and flight impulse in good time.

Counsellors and therapists need years of training and practice to gain insight into the way they react themselves and to acquire an attitude which enables them to respond to their clients' feelings and behaviour that is not aggressive, blocking or uninterested. Parents have power when they think and act from an attitude of inner non-violence.

Where and how can parents learn this lesson today?

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## Appendix

### **16 advantages of being the victim**

Why is the position of the victim so desirable? When you play the role of victim you can obtain a **number of social, emotional, moral advantages** that the others do not have.

- **The advantage of the clear difference between innocence and guilt**
- **The advantage of freedom from guilt and the resulting satisfaction**
- **The advantage of the claim to the moral superiority / superior value and the resulting satisfaction**
- **The advantage of the public recognition of this claim to moral superiority**
- **The advantage of the absence of ambiguity – for others and for me**
- **The advantage of the simplicity**
- **The advantage of clearly defined perceptions**
- **The advantage in social competition**
- **The advantage to be in a position to make claims without having to pay**
- **The advantage of passivity**
- **The advantage of liberation from activity**
- **The advantage of passive activity**
- **The advantage of narcissistic hurt**
- **The advantage of (apparent) defencelessness**
- **The advantage of being the injured party**
- **The advantage of modes of behaviour others cannot indulge in**

**Table 1**  
**Comparing**  
**Family, Construction and Now Society**

	<b>Family or Traditional Society</b>	<b>Construction or Industrial Society</b>	<b>Now or Development Society</b>
<b>Identity</b>	I am because I belong to a family	I am what I/we can build up for myself / ourselves	I am what I can afford. I exist when I fulfil my potential
<b>Institution Family</b>	Family = chain of survival	Family = a means to get on	Family/Partnership = where needs are met, the place of wellbeing
<b>Safety, stability</b>	Tribe, extended family	Nuclear family, marriage	Individual under the protection of the welfare state
<b>Authority, hierarchy</b>	The oldest members of the tribe at the top of the generation	Parental authority	Everybody has rights. Authority must be based on merit
<b>Ideal age</b>	Old age	Adulthood	Youth, "young old age"
<b>Time perspective</b>	The future will be the same as the past	The future will be better than the past	The future is uncertain. What counts is the present.
<b>Grounds for social positions</b>	Sacral, as ordained by nature	institutional, roles are prescribed	individual, contract or personal competence
<b>Woman – Man</b>	Woman = Source of life Man = Protector of life	Division of labour Hierarchy of power	Equal rights Everybody does and can do everything
<b>Number of children</b>	Large number of children is a life necessity and natural; childlessness = tragedy	Nuclear family reduces the number of children	Children = extreme satisfaction/ extreme burden
<b>Function of the child</b>	The survival of the family, insurance policy for the future	Getting on, investment in the future	Realisation, confirmation of the parents
<b>Aim or style of education</b>	To imitate, to repeat, to integrate	To adjust, to integrate, to obey	The development of the individual's achievement and development

# ***Family Life in Russia: Hypocrisy and Passion***

**Keynote Presentation by Professor Elena Zdravomyslova**

***EUSPB, St Petersburg, Russia***

## **Introduction**

In this presentation I will consider the changes in family life in contemporary Russian society in the framework of the changing gender order. The social-political context of my analysis will be the post-Communist transformation. I will focus on both continuities and inertia in families as well as on innovations and new problems.

Transformation is the category which is used to describe the radical changes in social arrangements in all spheres of life. Researchers prefer to use this term to designate post-Communist changes since the mid 1990s. This was a symbolic choice for them and I will explain why. The previously dominant category *Transition* was denied on the assumption that we can identify neither the direction, nor the final destination of social change, there are a lot of structural uncertainties involved. It is also important to mention that it was basically political scientists who developed “transitology” focusing on the formal institutions of the regime changes.

Another term - Revolution - was also cleaned out of the discourse because of its ambiguous reputation and connotation with violence.

Transformation is understood as a process which is characterized by a structural overlapping of continuity and change without really imposing the final point of the changes.

The focus of the paper is transformation of the private sphere – transformation of the family - which as the title of the conference says is *never the same again*.

Actually this reminds me of the first passage of the novel of L.Tolstoy ‘Anna Karenina’ which says:

*All happy families are similar*

*All unhappy families are unhappy in their own ways.*

In the context of transformation we observe that families undergo considerable change and there is diversity among both happy and unhappy families. However the changes in family life are more difficult to grasp than the changes in politics or economy. This methodological difficulty in the studies of family change, its structures and practices, is caused by several circumstances.

First – the family is the institution that belongs to the private sphere and it is difficult to observe the change in private life on the march. It is basically silent change, not always visible to the outsider, sometimes even being deliberately hidden from public scrutiny. Private life is not always being politicized, contrary to the claims of the

second-wave feminist movement. This is the more so in the case of the Russian Transformation where a lot of individual and family efforts are invested in construction of a private sphere with solid walls separating it from the public invasion.

Second, the family being a highly conservative institution is changing in specific ways – not radically, not immediately and not as whole. Changes in the laws and in political and economic structures do not have immediate impacts on the family. They basically have long term effects showing themselves in the next generation. Small, seemingly unimportant changes accumulate in certain milieus that can be called the vanguard of social change – a site of experiment. The new patterns are gradually transmitted to other social groupings and gradually become not extreme, token or marginal but just mainstream.

Third, the observable changes of transformation claim two possible interpretations. They can be understood as ephemeral or just temporal and reactive to the uncertainties caused by the breakdown. Otherwise they can be conceived as part of the logic of the new regime that will stabilize and become structurally important.

Transformation as the process of deep social change obviously influences family life. The mediating process of this influence has been the growth of institutional reflexivity in society. When old institutions crash or stop working in the expected fashion (as happens in the spheres of labor, social welfare and ideology in the post-Soviet world), society gets stunned, the breach in everyday routines becomes embarrassing, and people suddenly find out what the old rules of the game were and re-valorize them (because they are not efficient any more). At the same times the new rules of the games are being created, and new practices are being tested in a new, unstable reality. Time has to pass before these practices become stable, or are rejected. The research shows that the context of social instability has been conducive to two major trends in the family arrangements:

- articulation of the conservatism of the family conceived as a site of security and a survival anchor in the impetuous seas of change.
- Experimenting with family arrangements – attempts at establishing new family constructs.

The discourse of transformation includes the discourse of the family crisis which is seen as a true moral jeopardy. In order to make any statements about change in the family in contemporary Russia we have to clarify the starting point of that change and draw a picture of the late-Soviet gender order and the family arrangements relevant to it. Here I will use such categories as hypocrisy and passion to describe certain aspects of late-Soviet family life and I hope you will see why. From Soviet hypocrisy and passion the Russian family becomes the planned rational economic and moral unit which is separated from passion, but which is the site of mutual calculations, reciprocal responsibility and mutual sacrifice. This revalorization of the family makes many old families break, causes marriages to be delayed and accounts for the spread of nonmarital co-habitation.

Very generally my statement is as follows:

**In post-Soviet society the trend of rationalization in family arrangements becomes obvious. The expectations and the cost for the spouses becomes much higher than before. This make the family less common but more persistent.**

The paper will proceed in the following way.

First, I will explain the categories that I use in a conceptualization of the family in the framework of the gender order.

Second, I will focus on the Soviet mother-centered family.

Third, I will speculate about the contemporary changes in family arrangements.

### **Gender order**

New categories are used to describe Russian transformation. The term *gender* is a novelty in the Russian discourse.

Feminist researchers use the category gender order as it was developed by R.Connell for the purposes of conceptualizing gender relations and gender practices.

The starting point is the premise that the Soviet state promoted and institutionalized a distinctive gender order which is now being reformulated in the period of transformation (S.Ashwin).

Gender was always the organizing principle of the Soviet system. Gender citizenship was imposed on Soviet men and women and special women's and family politics were targeted on women as a state resource and a social category as well as on men. In the late Soviet period Gleserman (1977) for example identifies several crucial social distinctions in the classless Soviet society – differences between the urban and rural settings, differences between manual and non-manual labour, differences between centre and periphery, and differences between men and women

Gender order can be defined as:

- A historically constructed pattern of power relations between men and women and definitions of masculinity and femininity in a given society. Configuration of practices identified in society as feminine and masculine (Connell, R.).
- Practices conceptualised as stable patterns of everyday actions and interactions within the context that creates barriers and opportunities for action performance (structuration theory of A.Giddens)
- Resources and rules which are constitutive for practices
- Bringing the State back in as the strategic actor in gender order formation

**Structural levels of gender order formation (Connell, R. Gender and Power 1987):**

- economy and labour
- politics

- cathexis
- symbolic representations

Currently we witness changes in the gender order. The working mother contract is undergoing transformation both on the official and everyday level. Sexual and contraceptive culture is also under change. New agents in the formation of gender order emerge (i.e. church, private medicine, Family-planning centers, feminist discourse). The Orthodox Church interferes in the debate with its emphasis on the Christian understanding of life and free will. We see contradictory discourses however all of them share a common denominator - gender difference is important, natural, crucial. It is a powerful resource that should be utilized in adaptation strategies. This difference is articulated in contradictory ways: in rigidly patriarchal and in liberally patriarchal fashions. ....

However let us start from the beginning rather than from the conclusion. In order to understand the transformation of gender order we have to look at its configuration in Soviet society. I base my description on the literature sources as well as on the research in which I've been involved.

### **Soviet family and Soviet gender order**

Changes in family structures in the modern world are widely recognized. This is called the silent revolution of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is part of the individualization trend in value change as well as other factors such as demographic shift, urbanization, mass women's involvement in the paid jobs, etc.

W.Good emphasized that the global tendency for the changing of the traditional family can have different expressions in different societies because of cultural inertia and specific features of family transformation<sup>2</sup>.

- Different elements of the family system are changing with different speeds – certain changes are supported institutionally, others are opposed by the traditional system.
- Certain innovations in family patterns cause extremely strong resistance by those committed to the traditional pattern.
- The education and mass employment of women is institutionally supported, while intra-family relations are often regulated according the traditional family model.

These statements are important as starting points for the discussion about the differences among the modern families. In spite of the differences the researchers identify *the following features of the modern family*:

- Nuclearization of family
- Growth of the divorce rate
- Growth of women's employment
- Cutting down of the traditional (mainly economic) functions of the family

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<sup>2</sup> W.Good. World Revolution and Family Patterns. N-Y- The Free Press. 1965.p.8



- Gradual substitution of patriarchal family relations by the partnership patterns of intra-family relationship
- Maintenance of the sex-role-division in the modern nuclear family (Parsons: instrumental vs. expressive roles)

The late-Soviet family is looked upon as a version of the modern family. But it is the very type of the Soviet state-mobilized modernity that formatted the profile of the Soviet gender order and Soviet family arrangements as part of it. The family was a weak and fragile institution not underpinned by religion or large amounts of inherited private property. The family was controlled by the Party-State, officially being perceived as the unit of Soviet collectivity. The family was officially constructed as a patriarchal unit, but in reality operated as the mother-centered household and interaction group.

Let us consider in a nutshell *the features of the late - Soviet gender order* (the result of the intersection of state strategies and diverse everyday popular tactics). According to de Certeau and James Scott, in order to analyse power relations in a society it is useful to understand power as opportunity to capitalise the available resources. Resource asymmetry results in power asymmetry and oppression. Power holders implement strategies. Those with a lack of resources implement tactics adapting to the strategies, manoeuvring, using guerrilla methods, improvising and using indirect power of influence. To describe Soviet gender order it seems useful to apply the distinction of strategies and tactics. It was necessary to reconceptualize Russian gender order because of the official Soviet ideology of women's emancipation and the solving of the women's issue. On the one hand, and because of the liberal anti-feminist discursive, victimisation of Soviet men and women and, on the other hand;

- *Etacratic character* - State feminism as oppressive multiple mobilization of women (strategies of the state patriarchy). The State rigidly directs women and men to implement their citizenship duties, it defines the rules of the game - the 'rights' are duties.
- Polarized gendered citizenship based on the biological and cultural essentialist arguments, supported by expert knowledge. Women and men are different by nature. Women are natural mothers and carers. They are also capable of being an important labour resource. Men are natural military and active constructors. Medical, physiological and psychological researches justifying this statement. Men's only duty is military service. Women's destination is motherhood. Homosociality and polarization of men's and women's worlds in spite of the mass public involvement of women.
- An imposed waged-working mother contract of woman's citizenship. The term *contract* presumes that there are equal parties defining the terms of exchange. *Etacratic order* presents us with another type of contract – the one which is imposed from above by the state, developing the strategies of women's mobilisation.
- Women (and men) accommodate to the terms of this state imposed contract using certain tactics of social integration - escapism, cheating, manipulating, networking, internal migration etc. or even dissent though often just silent

dissent. The majority of women work. In professions like engineering and medicine women constitute around 50% of those employed. The glass ceiling effect and professional and qualification segregation by gender is confirmed in statistics. Women earn 30% less than men. Motherhood is defined as women's duty. This was established in 1930s with Stalin's policy.

- The politics of woman-centred families (parenthood was defined as motherhood in law, domestic chores were considered officially to be women's responsibility)
- Symbolic glorification of the powerful resourceful emancipated Soviet women as a mother, carer, waged-worker, citizen and beauty
- The discrepancy between the official gender contract and the critical and everyday discourses (shadow contract). Life is a double burden - guilt feelings. The contract was not voluntary - women's expertise in "survival" and "coping" tactics. The State did not properly implement its supportive role in the contract – the low quality of the child care centres. This contract relied upon extended family relations, intergeneration support and network intensification, it prevented stabilization of the nuclear family and individualistic strategies.
- The crisis of etocratic gender order and longings for traditionalism as alternative in the liberal critical discourse, 'safeguard the men' discourse - men are close to extinction in Russia. Men are the weak sex. Demography as true science develops this argument.

*The official ideology* of the Soviet marriage was formulated in the 1930s after the short period of the Bolshevik defamilization period: "Soviet marriage reveals the spiritual side of marriage, its moral beauty and its inaccessible to capitalist society" (1936). Marriage was considered to be a site for childbirth, sexuality. It was officially represented as a nuclear brick of the Soviet society, a type of the Soviet collective. Late-Soviet social policy was pro-natal and family oriented supporting women as the centre of the family. The following gives you the picture of the gender politics of the late-Soviet state:

#### *Family and Women's politics of the late Socialism*

- Legalization of abortion (1955). Abortion contraceptive culture as part of the reproductive freedom with lack of institutional reflexivity.
- Liberalization of divorce (1968). 'Successive monogamy', spread of the woman-headed family. Matrifocality revealing itself in the court decisions about the children custody.
- Light-labour regulations for pregnant women (1970s)
- Growth of pre-school and school child-care facilities (1970s on)
- Extension of maternity leaves and benefits (in 1956 and in 1980s).
- Legalization of fatherhood in the single-mother family (1968). Growth of the number of single mothers.
- Single motherhood supported financially.

According to the Soviet family researchers (Kharchev, Golod), the Soviet version of the modern family is defined as a specific type of the nuclear family, which can be

called the *child-centered family*<sup>3</sup>. This type of nuclear family is characterized by hybridization of the modern and traditional features. Among the latter - intergenerational help is extremely important as well as matrifocality of domestic chores, and child caring obligations, equalization of parenthood with motherhood, double burden of women, double breadwinner marriage contract, absent father syndrome as well as many other things. Soviet law as well as its ideology reflected a concept of family based on the children rather on the marriage.

**The main features of the child-centered family as a hegemonic type of the Soviet nuclear family are as follows:**

- Centrality of the values of the private life in society,
- Emotional relations as the most valued resource of the family
- The central value of children for the family stability.
- Moral responsibility of parents for early socialization of children.
- Encouragement of strong bonds of marriage and motherhood.

Theorizing with a gender perspective I would claim that it is more appropriate to speak about *waged-working mother-centered families (rather than child-centered)*.

**Soviet family construction proved to be a fragile one which showed the obvious discrepancy between the official ideology of family stability and real life involving economic shortages, scarcity of housing, divorces, family conflicts, and the unbearable burden of woman's imposed emancipation. On the other hand the family in the Soviet society could escape rigid control and could be conceived of as a refuge for an escapist looking for autonomy.**

Young people used to marry very young – 22 years old for women, 24-5 years old for men were the average ages. Early marriages are seen as the reasons for the high divorce rate. Motivation for early marriages (according to the biographical research conducted by Anna Rotkirch) was as follows:

- Romantic script of marriage. Romantic and passionate love and passion were considered to be good reasons to marry.
- Non-planned pregnancy was sufficient reason to marry (Pro-natal)
- Searching for autonomy and escape from the parental control (Nuclearization)

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<sup>3</sup> In the traditional society the dominant type was extended family (traditional or agrarian family). The future type is so called conjugal family.

After the changes in the marriage code that liberated the divorce procedure (1968) the divorce rate grew very high<sup>4</sup>. Two-thirds of divorces were petitioned by women. In 1970s from 39% to 44 % of first marriages were failing. 20 % single parent families.

*Sociologists identify legitimate motives for divorce in the Russian families (based on surveys and biographical research) to be:*

- Infidelity of one of the spouses, caused by strong passion
- Alcoholism of one of the spouses
- Emotional crisis in the family (Psychological incompatibility of spouses)
- Economic and space scarcities

The widespread recourse to divorce showed that the socialist family is an ideological construct which bore less and less resemblance to reality.

### **Features of the hypocrisy in the late Soviet family contract.**

The title of the paper is 'Russian family: hypocrisy and passion'. Why adopt such a title? The point is that both, hypocrisy and passion were the categories that organized family life and intimacy in the Soviet period.

How shall we define hypocrisy? The main feature of the gender hypocrisy is *A discrepancy between official gender and family contracts, on the one side, and critical and everyday discourses, on the other. We contrast the official contract supported by ideology and the shadow contract that characterizes everyday life.*

The shadow contract operated in such a way that family responsibilities of the waged working mother were conceived as double burden, her leading position in the family was seen as compulsory and not voluntary. Guilt feelings were incorporated in the Soviet femininity which could hardly manage to combine the imposed roles. In their social position women accumulated extremely important expertise often referred to as social capital - expertise in the "survival" and "coping" tactics. The State did not properly implement its supportive role in the imposed gender contract. The scarcity and low quality of the child care facilities in the Soviet society are well-documented. The absence of contraception and painful, humiliating abortion was part and parcel of the average women's life. The wage-working mother centred family was supported by extended family relations, intergeneration help and network intensification, which prevented stabilization of the nuclear family and individualistic strategies. For men the family was the place of social control, emotional and material obligations, the place where they should, but often could not, implement the role which has been crucial for the masculine identity in the Russian society – the role of breadwinner.

This discrepancy between official and shadow contracts was observed and conceptualized in the critical discourse that focused on the crisis of etocratic gender order and revealed a discursive longing for gender traditionalism as alternative to the Soviet ideology. The key slogan of liberal gender criticism from 1970 onwards was

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<sup>4</sup> The divorce law which was extremely hard from 1944-1968

“Safeguard the men”. In this discourse men were victimized as those who suffer from the pressures of the Soviet modernization and from their ‘natural’, demographically proved weakness. This discursive formation suggests the normative model of masculinity – traditional patriarchy of estate society – nobility, aristocracy, peasant family with rigid definition of gendered honor, roles and obligations. Normative models of man as a protector and provider of the family and the woman as a mother with a career and as a Dame was one that became the never achieved dream in the late Soviet discourse.

*Let’s turn now to the features of the waged working mother-centred family*

- Traditional parental domination over adult offspring is destroyed
- Mutual support and help between generations persist. This demand for help mobilizes matrifocal extended families.
- Traditional role division in the family is justified by the mass belief in biological determinism. Traditionalism reveals itself in the gender polarization.
- Women’s employment is compulsory, caused by the need for economic provision for the family.
- The motherhood role included economic provision for the children (of the child-centred family)
- The motherhood role presumes support of child-care institutions.
- The waged working motherhood role presumes abortion as the mass practice of the birth control.
- The woman is the dominant parent in the waged-working mother-centred family. Her parental domination makes her the head of the family which is looked upon as a reproductive unit.
- Women in the economically egalitarian and low class families are considered to be the heads of the families. Women are traditionally responsible for the housework. In combination with a paid job it makes her dominant in the family.
- Men were not the only breadwinner, or the head of the family, though they are presented as the moral authority.
- The power balance in the family is not determined economically.
- Gender conflict was caused by the situation in which women suffer from ‘equality’, and men from women’s control.

In such a family emotions and sexuality are routinized. Both women and men look for freedom of emotions for authentic relationships outside the family life. The Russian population reveals quite a high tolerance to intra-family parallel relations, though research reveals double standards. Women’s infidelity is less tolerated than that of men. Extramarital sexuality, practices of sexual hedonism and passion are tolerated in society where family is not considered to be a place for pleasure or happiness. Opinion surveys show that women are 30% less satisfied with family relations than men. They also reveal low satisfaction with their intra-family sexual life. These trends characterize the late-Soviet family and its legacy which is still evident in the Russian society. But there are changes. What are they?

## Family and Transformation

Changes in the family life we see through the lens of the changing gender order which has taken place since the end of 1980s. Below I suggest a short list of the new features of the gender order that one can observe at the level of everyday life.

- Marketization of everyday life as consequence of liberal economic reforms.
- Liberalization and Commodification of sexuality
- Articulation of non-market based differences in public representations
- Weakening of social welfare for families, parenthood, the poor and sick
- Striking social polarization and stratification (demonstrative ways of life of the new rich, street beggary, the new poor, the diverse strata of the middle class)
- Breakdown of the Soviet version of the working-mother etacratc gender contract.
- Sustainability of the working mother practices in the majority of population as the family strategy.
- Articulation of discursive patriarchy vs. revival of patriarchy. (everyday sexism, initial attempts of withdrawal of women from public sphere, articulation and sexualization in symbolic representations of femininity, growth of religiosity, discourse on the failed masculinity and the demographic deficit of masculinity, lack of women's political representation)
- Women's NGOs and their critical agenda (Feminization of unemployment, women's political representation, pornography, sexual work, traffic in women, feminization of poverty)

All these changes penetrate the family. Instability gives the family new meaning. It operates as a survival and coping institution reinforcing a traditional role division in the family; especially the breadwinner responsibilities of men. The hypocrisy of the Soviet arrangement gives the way to a contract based on the rational calculation. In the 'wild' market passion cannot be the reason for the marriage or the reason for divorce. The place of romantic love in individual strategic motivations is much more modest than in the Soviet time. The unstable rules of the "wild market", especially in the first decade of transformation, are making the family the site of mutual sacrifice in conditions of economic decline.

Several trends are overlapping, structuring diverse and hybrid configurations in the Russian family patterns today. Let us try to identify these trends:

- The first trend is the *reactive traditionalism* in the discourses, family practices and gender attitudes caused by identity search and economic restructuring. Articulation (or revival) of diverse types of traditionalism and patriarchy, including liberal patriarchy) is obvious in the Russian public.
- The second trend – demonstrative and articulate differentiation and stratification in the ways of life and family arrangements.
- The third trend - individualization of social life when an individual becomes the centre of his/her world.

Let's give more attention to each of them.

*Reactive traditionalism.* Russian gendered experience has always been the experience of gender polarization, sometimes discussed in terms of gender wars or separateness, and the hostile foundations of life (Berdyev), sometimes understood as two complementary cultural domains, feminine and masculine. The two genders had been conceptualized by Russian intellectuals as different cultures that exclude each other, that have articulate boundaries. The same views prevail in popular beliefs. The heterosexual gender system has been based on the ideology and popular belief in major polar differences between men and women and in obvious, non-dispensable cultural barriers between the masculine and feminine worlds. The exclusiveness of the boundaries between male and female cultures was confirmed by essentialist arguments.

This master frame of the gendered cognitive map was partly challenged by the Soviet mobilization, modernization project. However the transformation ruined the main pillars of the Soviet gender contract of the waged-working mother and also crushed other structures providing the grounds for social identity. Identity search became one of the conditions of transformation. Non-economic criteria of social belonging became the grounds for the discovery of the new identity and a revival of a forgotten one. Primordial social definitions gained authority.

Biographical work in the unstable society is centred on genealogical searches; people actively and passionately look for their family roots and trying to stabilize their families against the cultural uncertainty. Looking into the past has something to do with new trends in family construction in post-Communist Russia. This genealogy has become the ground for explanation of different life trajectories of family members, their specific habituses, their sense of honor and its benefits as well as its deficits, their virtual estates claim a social space; the organizing of the family clubs of nobility, the kazak community, and ethnic networks.

Another side of this traditionalism is a strong mass belief in the appropriateness of the role division of the family, division of the male breadwinner role and woman's career role as the core of the intra-family gender contract with its definitions of masculinity and femininity.

Russian researchers Olga Zdravomyslova and M. Aratyunyan use the concept of gender boundaries, borrowed from the 1985 article of J.Gerson and Kathy Peiss (Social Problems 32, N4 1985). They define gender boundaries as complex arrangements – physical, social, ideological and psychological - which install differences and similarities between men and women as well as among different categories of men and women.

Gender transformation includes the change of gender boundaries. Sociologists see these boundaries not as hard and fast division lines but as borders that on principle can be negotiated and transgressed. This transgression can be a risky thing to do. Polar gender differences, double standards - gender boundaries are conceptualized as the areas of latent conflicts between men and women (between spouses in the family). Research identified three issues of possible conflict (which are relevant to the power relations in the family).

- 1) The issue of the family budget. The majority of spouses agree that women are the main family budget managers. However, men consider that men should make

major financial decisions (43%); 66% women think that it is woman's responsibility.

- 2) Attitudes towards sexual freedom in marriage and towards marital infidelity: 57% men and 42% of women demand that infidelity of a spouse should result in divorce. Men are more demanding than women on this issue.
- 3) Education of children. Men emphasize the fathers' role in education of boys; while 50% women claim that a single mother can bring up a good son. Men are more inclined to support autonomy of children while women prefer close control over activities of children.

These discrepancies between men's and women's attitudes were also the reasons for conflict and divorce in a number of the Soviet families. But living under the conditions of the so called equality, in poverty, the majority within sustained families kept these conflicts latent. But as soon as the structures providing these conditions were ruined and the balance was questioned the family become an arena of open re-definition of the gender boundaries. The families where wives earned more than their husbands were especially prone to conflict. Women with higher incomes have problems finding a permanent partner. These life patterns I interpret as a revelation of patriarchal world views. One of the important components of Russian patriarchy is the wide-spread imagery that the breadwinner's role is the core construct of a true masculinity image.

There are also vivid generation differences in the ideal models of families that dominate people's world views.

The older generation (over 55 years old) claim that a wife should work on equal terms with her husband in order to support the family (lower economic classes). The majority of younger women and men support the model of the male breadwinner (maybe because they do not have experience). The middle generation (35-55 years old) emphasize the family control over children typical for the waged working mother model where parental duties are mainly understood as the woman's responsibilities. In general women's attitudes show homology with the main patterns of the late-Soviet waged working mother family arrangement adding to it the model of the male breadwinner. The majority of women would like to remove part of their family responsibilities for the family economy though they are not ready to be housewives and want to exercise social control in the family. 60% of men agree that a career is important for women and 73% that spouses have to share family responsibilities.

The higher the level of economic prosperity of the family the greater the gender economic imbalance. The more traditionally oriented are women who claim that husband is the head of the family. According to Mezenceva the portion of women who head families drastically drops in the group of rich families. The research shows that the poorer the family the higher is the probability that wife is the head of the family.

However, in the male-breadwinner families, family decisions are taken through negotiation.

The more prosperous the family is the more negotiation-oriented are family interactions. Democratic decision-making in the family is characteristic for 58.6% of poor families and 76,9% of rich families.



Traditionalism shows itself in the new (for Russia) family and cohabitation types:

- housewife and breadwinner
- waged-working wife and husband as breadwinner, with women responsible for the family chores
- sponsored woman and her sponsor.

*Individualization of social life.* This trend makes also its impact on the post-Soviet family landscape. In a situation of structural instability where old collectivities deteriorate but social networks are intensified under the pressure of the wild market, individualization has its specific shape. Old family structures do not fit contemporary life-strategies, the State has different concerns about the family than its citizens. As the non-intended consequence of this discrepancy new forms of cohabitation are being developed which account up to 37% of the post-Soviet type of family.

The spread of rational family-planning strategies is resulting in the decline of birth-rates, delay in marriages (compared to the Soviet past), emergence and growth of the single households, different forms of cohabitation, so called test marriages, “living together apart” patterns, etc. Marketization and social instability prevent stigmatization of loneliness and childlessness. The State considers the threat of individualization in the categories of demographic crisis. Statistically this trend is not very significant, but according to demographic prognosis it will grow in the younger generations and within the middle class.

*A new demographic mentality and a new model of demographic behavior in the younger middle class* generation is reported in the Annual Demographic Report ‘Russia’s Population’ 1999.

- Disposition towards later family formation and later first child-birth. In younger age groups research reveals active transformation of the birth-rate model. The age of the mother will grow. This is obvious since the end of 1990 when at last the number of births among the women under 18 years old diminished. Researchers claim that it will be a stable trend.
- Growth of the out-of-wedlock birth-rate.

*Table. Births per 1. 000 women in the age group from 15 to 19*

-	1995 y.	-	1997	-	2000
-	24.6	-	19.8	-	13.7

*Table. Births per 1. 000 women in the age group from 15 to 17*

1997	1999	2000
7.1	5.1	4.4

Individualization really intensifies the contract and negotiation in the family arrangements. The stable unit becomes possible only when partners work on the terms of their long-term co-existence. Individualization in principle weakens family bonding, inducing the growth of nuclear and conjugal families and, later, gives way to the trend of growth of single households. On the other hand individualization is the framing device explaining development of egalitarian models of family power relations.

Individualization accounts for such gender contracts as:

- waged-working wife and husband as breadwinner, with women responsible for the family chores
- double career family purchasing domestic labor services
- double waged-working family oriented on social welfare and social networks (kin and friendship)
- single career-oriented individuals avoiding family burdens
- sponsored woman and her sponsor

*However one should not forget that in the Russian case, because of the demographic imbalance which become obvious in age cohorts after 35 y.o., we witness the growth of the middle aged and elderly single woman households. And there is another feature of the family landscape which needs deeper scrutiny...*

*In the case of the post-Soviet family we witness diversity of patterns in different social milieus and contradictory tendencies:*

- A continued transformation of traditional family connected with the mass employment of women and family planning opportunities.
- A crisis of the Soviet waged working mother contract as the core of the Soviet family structure.
- A new version of the child-centered family with two waged-working spouses
- The influence of the long-term, socio-economic crisis and breakdown of the Soviet economic arrangement.
- Social stratification processes - inequality, instability of statuses (status inconsistency)
- Survival strategies as the major family strategy – growth of the economic function of the family.
- Revival of traditionalism in family structures – extended family patterns in the context of instability and decline.
- Revival of traditionalism in family structure: hegemonic ideology modern, the nuclear family of the bourgeois type (Parsons)
- Role of the Orthodox church and intensification of the social function of the family.
- The counter-tendency of individualization typical for the post-modern family and institutionalized loneliness (one member households) prevail in the younger cohort of the Russian middle class (professionals)
- The conservative tendency is articulated in the poor and certain segments of the new rich class

These statements are supported not only by sociological research but also by the demographic findings. Let's name several trends.

- Decline in the number of registered marriages
- Diminution of the total number of divorces because of the growth in non-registered marriages.
- Registered marriages become older. ( In SPb in 2000 after 25 y.o. registered 67% of men's marriages and 53% of women)
- Majority of women register in the 18-24 age-group. (45.3% in 2000)
- 25-39 y.o. age group has a higher probability of divorce (more than 50% of all divorces)
- In 1990-2000 obvious growth in divorce in the 40-49 age group

The normative model of the family is undergoing significant changes. The attitudes change from the Soviet waged-working mother model to the model with the male-breadwinner but not to the model of the man as a head of the family. This neo-traditional family model is widespread in the younger upper middle class. Gender asymmetry in the everyday life is intensifying in post-Soviet period. Gender differences are articulated together with other non-class based differences.

The interesting feature of the normative model of the family described above which proves to be popular is the understanding of the power relations in the family. Our informants believe that domination in the family is not the question of the economic contribution of spouses, it is a question of budget control, parental control and moral control.

Discussing the rationalization trends in the contemporary Russian family life M. Aratjunyan differentiates manifest and latent conjugal contracts. The manifest contract is based on the role of breadwinner which has certain not-intended consequences. These non-intended consequences constitute the latent part of the conjugal contract: in the families where the man properly performs the breadwinner role it is highly probable that he sacrifices his professional self-realization to his version of the family chores. It means that men give up their jobs and even professional careers if they cannot support the family on the money which they earn in these jobs. For the sake of the family's prosperity, and based on the breadwinner role, they look for the occupations that allow them to follow the breadwinner pattern. They substitute professional identity for the family identity. In such cases the role conflict of the family man becomes similar to that of the working mother. There is also evidence that in certain milieus men are afraid to lose their professional identity, preferring to stay jobless if they lose their work so as not to lower their professional status, or they allow wives to seek new qualifications and employment in order to survive... Both patterns of men's behavior is found in the middle class – men who give preference to their breadwinner status if they have to choose between family obligation and intellectual profession, and men whose priority is their professional identity. As a trend the first pattern being induced by the market institutions will have more probability. This is typical for traditional family organization based on the hard gender role division where the man is a breadwinner and the woman is a housewife and her other activities are looked upon as supplementary entertainment, probably important for her self identity but not important for her cultural identity as a woman

of the family. Women prefer housewifery because they also have to choose between career and family duties.

*Conjugal family membership limits one's self-realization horizon. It introduces responsibilities that can conflict with the individual plans of the family members.*

The family becomes the site of mutual sacrifice and people understand it. Who is ready for the sacrifice and under what conditions? What should be the benefit of the sacrifice? This is the reason why the new generation of educated people delay family decisions – marriage and childbirth - trying to look at marriage as the contract and estimating costs and benefits of such a decision. Nowadays love even in official rhetoric is not looked upon as sufficient condition for marriage (compared to the Soviet rhetoric which condemned so called mercantile marriage as non-authentic and bourgeois).

## **Conclusion**

In spite of the diversity of the family patterns we obviously witness articulation of rational neo-traditionalism in the discourse and the practices within normative models and in everyday life. Only a small segment of the younger generation resists this trend. But we do not know what will happen when they get married. We consider rational neo-traditionalism in family arrangements to be a result of adaptation strategies in a situation of structural breakdown. This neo-traditionalism provides a compromise which allows women and men to preserve family values and values of professional self-realization under conditions in which the value of the professions is not adequately measured financially. The family contract is based on mutual interest. *The family is not the site of hypocrisy or passion. It is a place for security and agency for rational choice strategies in a world in which rules of the game are still uncertain.*