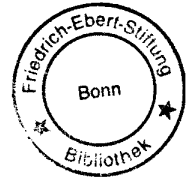


Zora Bútorová et al.

SHE AND HE IN SLOVAKIA

Gender issues in public opinion



Foreword by Jiřina Šiklová

Bratislava, 1996

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Edited by Zora Bútorová and Martin Bútora

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REPORT ON WOMEN IN THE POST-COMMUNIST CENTRAL EUROPE (PERSONAL VIEW FROM PRAGUE)

As a philosophical approach to reality, feminism questions the "only possible" scientific approach and emphasizes the ability of the individual, man or woman, to see reality from a perspective, different from the previously accepted view of traditional science. Feminism recalls the *Bible's* prophecy "The first shall be the last and the last shall be the first" or the famous Cartesian twist which for centuries had influenced science and the thinking of man. But nobody in Descartes' time realized how revolutionary and dangerous his approach to science was.

Feminism stresses that a personal experience, a subjectively perceived detail, can be as important for the understanding of the whole as a rationally and perfectly logically arranged explanation of all aspects and relationships.

For most of my life, I have lived under what is known as "real-socialism," the social system which emphasized class and economic determination of everything, including human consciousness. I will, therefore, be very personal in my introduction to this English edition of Zora Bútorová's book.

During the last twenty years of socialism, under different pseudonyms I have written dozens of works about and for women and participated in various sociological research projects concerning family issues. In spite of this, I did not know much about feminism. Feminism was then a "bourgeois ideology."

In 1988, I obtained *LETTRE INTERNATIONALE*, published in Paris by A. J. Liehm, a Czech émigré intellectual, which contained an article on post-feminism. I was shocked. I did not know much about feminism and here they were already speaking about post-feminism! Before I had an opportunity

to study the revealing article in some depth, it was confiscated during a search of my home and, according to the police protocol which is in my possession, it was burnt in the yard of the main headquarters of the communist censorship, Prague 1, 4 Benediktská Street, on March 31, 1989. Understandably, this incident only increased my interest. It had to be a fairly dangerous concept if the state secret police and the censors had to resort to measures more appropriate to the Middle Ages than to the last decades of the 20th century.

Shortly after the revolution in November 1989, on the initiative of and with help from Ann Snitow and Sonja Robinson and their *East-West Women's Network*, I founded in my home what was probably the first center for gender studies in a post-communist country. At the time hardly anybody knew what it was. In the Czechoslovak Bank of Commerce where we had opened an account to support lectures and library, they thought that I was opening a massage parlor. Today, five years later, there is hardly anyone who would say such a thing.

Being from East Central European countries, we did not know much about feminism, gender or women studies. However, we knew a great deal about women's liberation during socialism.

Socialism of the Soviet type needed cheap labor to build its often useless structures and industrial-military projects. This labor force did not only include prisoners and class enemies, but also housewives recruited to "build socialism." Czech women had experienced something similar during the Nazi occupation in World War II; they had been recruited to work in factories under the slogan "All wheels must turn for the victory of the Third Reich." The war had lasted "only" five years and the Totaleinsatz (general mobilization of civilians for the war effort) had lasted an even shorter time. Consequently, the life stereotypes of our families had not changed much. However, socialism lasted more than 40 years. During that period, the life of practically three generations of women was profoundly changed. In the name of class struggle, the communists suppressed civil and human rights. Feminism, if mentioned at all, was branded a "bourgeois ideology", threatening to undermine the working class and fragment the common class interests of men and women, and thereby delaying the introduction of the classless society.

Women's liberation was thus reduced to the role of taking part in the labor process. Socialist Czechoslovakia boasted that 97.4 percent of all able-bodied

women were working. Those women, who were taking care of their children and homes instead of engaging in the building of socialism, were scorned by the socialist-minded citizens of the new regime and regarded as "parasites." The statement of Friedrich Engels that marriage was some sort of prostitution, was cited often and incorrectly. Children from families where mothers were not working, were not allowed to take lunches in school cafeterias or attend after-school classes. Working mothers, who were also members of the Czechoslovak Association of Women, contributed greatly to their children's future. Those children whose mothers were building socialism, received good references and had a better chance of entering the secondary school system, particularly grammar schools and popular technical colleges.

To me, growing up under socialism, women's liberation meant something different than what it meant to my mother. She was in the first graduating class of the Girls' Grammar School, *Minerva*, and a classmate of Dr. Milada Horáková, the founder of the Women's Committee and a member of the Senate. Dr. Horáková was so prominent that she was hanged by the Gottwald government on June 27, 1950. For my mother and her generation, women's liberation was an ideal, a dream which they were pursuing. For me and my generation, the communist view of women's rights and liberation had a different "taste."

In the Prague street where I still live today, each morning at around 6 o'clock, we saw women pushing carriages with sleepy children going to nurseries and kindergartens. My mother, also going to work at that hour, used to say: "Look at them! This is their women's liberation!" Theirs, not hers or ours!

When, as an adolescent girl, I worked in the compulsory labor brigades, I saw that boys were usually issued better work tools. The authorities assumed that boys were stronger and that they would use those better tools to do better work. This practice was introduced in all countries of the Soviet bloc. This was also the case in Siberian labor camps: Whereas men were given shovels, women received wicker baskets to carry sand and stones for the dams.

I once took part in a youth brigade in a quarry where we were mining stones for the Slapy Dam on the Moldau river. I was given a pneumatic drill left behind by a male classmate who hit a piece of dynamite with the tip of his drill. He was taken to hospital and I was allowed to work with his drill. As a result of my performance, and in spite of the fact that I was "only"

a girl, they let me work with the drill for the whole month. I received enough money to buy myself a pair of elegant shoes and a voucher to buy rubber boots. More importantly, I was allowed to submit an application to study at the Faculty of Arts at the Charles University. I was praised for being an emancipated girl. Yet, for us girls the work was so strenuous that almost all of us stopped menstruating for several months.

Women's labor was very much sought after as late as the 1960s. Maternity leaves were then granted for four months. Working women who were breast-feeding after childbirth, were allowed to take two 15-minute breaks a day. During the breaks, they were allowed to leave assembly lines and breast-feed their children in factory nurseries. Alternatively, they were allowed to work 7.5 hours a day instead of eight. In such cases though, they had to bring a doctor's certificate stating that they were breast-feeding.

It is natural that there were cases of fraud. Female physicians (in Czechoslovakia, 76 percent of all pediatricians were women) often gave mothers certificates stating that they were breast-feeding. At the same time, mothers were also issued them vouchers to buy baby formula in drug stores and the grandmothers "breast-fed" the children. It was common that two or more generations lived in the same household and this enabled working mothers and daughters to arrange alternate work shifts so that the children did not have to be woken up in the early morning and dragged to a nursery.

I am not recounting this out of nostalgia: I only want to provide you with a historical context to help you interpret the results of the empirical study.

West European sociologists, particularly many female sociologists, usually judge the "status of women" in socialism by the "hard" data and facts at the time of the disintegration of the pseudo-socialist states. They tend to forget that the past experience of women in the post-communist countries, which was being formed for decades, was voluntarily or involuntarily handed down.

The Iron Curtain was getting rusty in the 1980s and through its openings we were receiving a lot of information and books from tourists and émigrés. We circulated, read, translated and copied Orwell, Popper, Dahrendorf, von Hayek, Althusser, Eurocommunists, punk, pop music, porno, etc. Only the feminists did not send anything! It may be that they were afraid that we

would have dispelled their illusion that they were afraid to admit that the employment of women is not enough to bring about their liberation, and that socialism was as unable to solve women's issues as capitalism, in spite of the references to Babeuf and Engels. Or it may be that women in socialist countries were not a good "investment." Or, it may be that, in their eyes, we were threatening their simplified perception of Eastern Europe just as they in our eyes, with their criticism of Western parliamentary democracy, were threatening our admiration for and similarly simplified perception of the West. Or it may be, as Zora Bútorová states in the conclusion of her book, something else: Friends of the Prague dissent in the West - and these were predominantly men - were thinking along the same lines as educated Slovak men today. To them, women's liberation issues are less important than issues associated with the preservation of democracy and protection of human rights.

In the summer of 1990, I came to Vienna for the first time in my life. (By the way, my grandmother allegedly made the trip to Vienna from Prague on foot. At that time, she did not need a passport or a special permit and borders were not "protected" by barbed wire...) In 1990, I noticed a poster of a girl wearing a scarf, looking very much like a Soviet Komsomol girl, holding a hammer in her hand but without the scythe. Underneath the picture, there were the following words: "With this hammer I will smash the patriarchy." I did not understand it then.

We, women growing up in "real-socialism," have encountered so-called "machismo," even though for a long time we did not have a name for it, and until now we have not analyzed it. We experienced state paternalism, which was called "security of the socialist regime." Women from the West had their own experience with patriarchy.

These notions were unknown to us even though we experienced their content.

Although the status of men differed from the status of women in socialism, for most of us this difference was not as important as other issues and controversies, particularly the issue of survival. The family in the socialist state was an oasis where family members could freely express opinions and political views and husband and wife were united because they often had to face the external totalitarian world together.

Politically conscious women, members of the former Communist Party, rejected feminism, although they probably had no idea what it was. Politically immature women - the majority of us belonged in this category - tried to survive and live as comfortable an existence as possible. However, solidarity among women existed even then. It extended to the international level as well. Women from East Germany were bringing us tampons and nylon draperies. Czech women were bringing their German counterparts quality hair color and hair waving products. Since currency exchange was too complicated, we bartered. From Slovakia we received lentils, peas, yeast used for making a house-wine from red currants, and food preservatives used to stop mold in pickles. In Budapest, it was possible to buy pessaries, retractable pencils and aluminum pots. A problem arose when I no longer needed pots from my friend with whom I bartered. It is possible that the same happened to the Phoenicians and that is how they invented money.

I am still appalled at how much time people - in most cases women - had to spend to procure the basic necessities for themselves, their families and their children. I recall, with tenderness, the little pleasures such as the procurement of tangerines for Christmas or of western-made mascara which was non-sticky and did not smudge. However, this was all very sad. Some of us, both men and women, look back nostalgically to that period of "socialist securities." But what were these securities?

I have no answer to this question. I know only one security: Nobody would be left behind, nobody would get ahead and we would all be in the same boat.

In the workplace, women were paid less than men for the same type of work. In the same branch of industry, the average income of women was - and still is today - about 29 percent lower than men's. Nonetheless, women in the socialist era were more liberated in the workplace than men. They did not have to be as politically active as men and their critical remarks were often explained away as a woman's political immaturity. If a man was a Communist Party member, all members of his family, including his wife, would get a good reference. If only a woman was a party member, it was suspicious. Party authorities considered a man to be a family provider, the person who made all the decisions. Therefore, children from families where only the mother was a party member were not sufficiently "politically reliable." People knew about these evaluations. That was also the reason

why fewer women compared to men, were members of the Communist Party. All women in the post-communist countries had this experience.

An attentive reader will note that women were not compromised to the same degree as men by their collaboration with the former regime therefore he or she will assume that women should be more politically active today. I agree with this statement. However, this is not the case in any of the post-communist countries. It is again men who are eager to get involved in politics despite being burnt so often in the past.

Following the dramatic increase of interest in politics in the short period between November 1989 and the spring of the following year, women have retreated from politics. In the Czech Republic, such a retreat is more noticeable than in other post-communist countries. There is not a single woman in the government and less than 10 percent of members of Parliament are women. Z. Bütörövá's book also addresses this fact; although it deals with Slovak women and men, the same trend has been observed in other post-communist countries, particularly in countries belonging to the so-called "Visegrád Four" - Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic.

My introduction to this pioneering book is not intended as a comparative study on the status of women in post-communist countries. Still, let me just note that the Czech Republic "copies" the Western model of demographic behavior with a greater speed than Slovakia does. This was the case even before 1989. Today, as in the past, a greater number of illegitimate children are born in the more secular Czech Republic than in Slovakia. The number of divorces, compared to number of marriages entered into, is also higher. Czech men and women more frequently live together without a marriage certificate. There are more two-career marriages and a new phenomenon has emerged: a relatively large number of Czech women are successful entrepreneurs even though, the majority of them do not have employees. But there are women who are afraid to "start a business." Instead, these women continue to work in enterprises that have not been privatized yet. The difficulties accompanying privatization of state enterprises are ahead and women are among the employees to be affected.

In one respect, however, the Czech Republic differs from Slovakia and other East Central European countries: There is an inexplicably low unemployment rate (2.7 - 3.0 percent). Even though unemployment is higher among women, most people perceive it as an insignificant detail.

In the Czech Republic, the age of brides entering into their first marriage is higher than in Slovakia. Also, statistics show that the age of first-time mothers is increasing. Czech women do not stay at home after "the velvet revolution." This behavior contradicts their past statements. During the socialist era, women repeatedly declared that they had to work for economic reasons. It appears that this was not true. To be employed became the norm. The social status of employed women is much higher than the status of homemakers. In my childhood, the opposite was true. Working women were "poor souls" whose husbands were unable to support them. As a result, a bad light was cast upon such parents and their children.

Many fundamental changes and profound interferences into basic human relations and into self-perception occurred during a lifetime of one generation. And this process naturally continues after 1989.

In the Czech Republic, women's liberation, which was formally proclaimed in the past but never followed, is evidently on course after the revolution of 1989. Neither in the Czech Republic nor in Slovakia is it justified to look upon women as "poor souls" who are being forced back into the kitchen. All the behavioral patterns observed by Zora Bútorová's research in Slovakia have been observed in the Czech Republic, too. If anything, the patterns are even more pronounced in the Czech Republic.

As research in the Czech Republic shows, the majority of Czech women are interested in political affairs, know the names of politicians better than women in other post-communist countries, read political articles and vote more frequently for political parties other than those voted for by their husbands. In light of these accomplishments, it is very puzzling that women do not protest against the situation in which it is still mostly women who do the domestic chores.

In the Czech Republic, the accepted model is the family with two children where the children are born in quick succession. After the age of 35, the motherhood stage is practically over and women return to work. Current restructuring of the entire society has enabled many of these women to start a new professional career.

It is remarkable that women are in professions which they did not practice in the socialist era. Women are now bankers, marketing representatives,

managers and entrepreneurs. They are particularly active in the non-profit, non-governmental sector. There are thousands of foundations and tens of thousands of non-profit, non-governmental organizations in the Czech Republic. Within these foundations, women enjoy a clear majority. Women compared to men are more involved in local politics which for them is "a broadened space for their family." Also, because they have to take care of their children, they are less mobile than their male partners. The fact that the posts in local councils and in the foundations are for the most part unpaid and offer no glory or media popularity could also play a role.

On average, Czech women have more qualifications than men. They attend retraining, educational, foreign language and computer courses more frequently and also devote more time to their appearance and health (attending fitness centers, beauty salons).

In general, Czech people are getting slimmer; they drink less in the workplace, they smoke less. Fewer Czechs are getting sick or hospitalized. The reason is that they do not want to miss work, so that their chances of a successful career remain high. For the same reason, many people do not go on vacation. At the same time, however, the use of drugs is on the increase. This is especially the case with psychotropic drugs, analgesics and tranquilizing drugs, as well as vitamins and dietetic products. Soon, our population will have as many kinds of vitamins in their urine as people in the USA. Whether this is progress, I cannot say. But it is a reality. Women in particular, want to look attractive; so the beauty industry is doing well.

In spite of all these advantages, today's women in the Czech Republic hold managerial positions less frequently than men - even in those professions where they are heavily represented.

In the era of socialism, many differences between the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic became smaller. Populations in the two republics became more "homogeneous." The proposition that after the "advent of capitalism" and the division of Czechoslovakia, the differences will become greater, is an untested hypothesis to be confirmed or rejected by future sociological research.

By examining the Slovak model and the status of women and men in Slovakia, it is possible to understand many phenomena common to all

post-communist countries. In this respect, the book *SHE AND HE IN SLOVAKIA* is very important. Only the timing of certain sociological phenomena is different in post-communist countries. Slovakia, after a brief delay (5-10 years), "copies" the model of behavior which, until recently, was valid for the Czech population. Similarly, people in the Czech Republic copy the model of behavior from the West - from the regions closer to the Rhine and the Atlantic. In the behavioral trends of post-communist societies of Central Europe, there has still been no significant departure from the established patterns of behavior.

The similarity between the Czech Republic and Slovakia can also be observed in the respective attitudes of their societies towards women's issues. In both republics, activities of women are adversely affected by the existence of the former official women's organization, the Czechoslovak Association of Women. In the eyes of many people, the political activities of women are frequently associated with activities of this organization. In both republics, this organization has undergone only a formal transformation. After the revolution, dozens of new women's organizations were founded in the Czech Republic, but they all suffer from a lack of funds and experience and are frequently dissolving as quickly as they are formed. However, they must be supported since only from grassroots organizations such as these can a women's movement arise which would attend to the specific interests of women. In the Czech Republic, we are trying to assist these organizations through lectures and libraries. To coordinate the projects of women's organizations and assist female politicians, we have organized *Profem*. Shortly after the revolution of 1989, with the help of women from the New School for Social Research and women from the Frauen Anstiftung in Hamburg, we founded a library and the *Center for Gender Studies* in Prague. Later, gender studies were transferred to universities. In this field, the two republics collaborate closely. In the exchange of lecturers, books and journals, we take advantage of the fact that Slovak and Czech languages are very closely related.

The concept of the courses in gender studies differs fundamentally from similar courses in the Western countries. There are not many female lecturers in the two republics who specialize in this field. We are able to cover only less than 10 percent of the material taught routinely in West European universities. This discipline is still in its formative stage. It is literally created on the go. We struggle with shortages of qualified lecturers, money and literature. Also, there is frequently little understanding on the part of academia. The first courses

were offered only four years ago and only in English. Today, with help from the West, courses in gender studies are firmly established in five faculties of arts in the two republics. For the academic year 1996/97, lecture courses are planned for five other universities. In addition to forming a part of doctoral studies, some topics from gender studies are now included among the questions in the comprehensive examinations. *Gender Studies Foundation* closely collaborates with all women's organizations in the Czech Republic and offers them specialized information and literature from the field of women's issues.

Despite the division of Czechoslovakia into the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, we continue to collaborate closely. In Prague, we are involved in gathering specialized literature; in Bratislava, we publish the journal *ASPEKT*. Sociological surveys in both countries are conducted in a comparable manner. We are doing this not because we want to stem the tide of history and reunite the two republics, but because we believe in a united Europe. Hopefully, future sociologists and political scientists will be grateful to us for trying to preserve the model situation and also because experiments "in vitro" between nations are not common. In the future, the Czech and the Slovak Republics might not only serve as a model for a "velvet divorce" of two nations but also as a platform for comparison of future divergences in the evolution of feminism, the seeds of which are already planted today.

Western feminism exercises a strong influence upon us, and our attitude to it is going through an exciting transformation. In the beginning, Western feminists lectured us and we listened. At first, we listened with awe, later with reservation. We learned about many West European currents of feminism. Some of them we liked and adopted. Analogous to "adolescent rebels," we now criticize and dispute with some of them, trying to find our own approach, searching for ourselves.

This search is combined with the need to solve other pressing social issues facing the post-communist countries. What in the West took decades to form, in our countries is unfolding at high speed and we are forced to find a balance and take a stand. If we manage to find our own identity, everybody would benefit from it. This is more valuable than imitating others.

The attitudes of Slovak women and men, recorded and analyzed in this book, are highly representative of attitudes of women and men in other post-communist countries. It is true that women from the opposite banks

of the Morava river (which forms a natural border between the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic) differ, but when observed from the Rhine or the Thames, the differences might not be very noticeable. Looking from Europe, Czech and Slovak women might seem to follow the same path with respect to their identity, self-acceptance and self-assessment. This is another contribution of the book which in its scope, presentation and importance is far greater than its title might suggest. You are not only reading a report on women in Slovakia, you are reading a report on women in the post-communist center of Europe.

Jiřina Šiklová



PREFACE

For a long time, Slovak society was in need of a change. In November 1989, this change was under way. The first political changes led also to changes in economic structure altering the way work is done in the most fundamental sense. Naturally, these changes affected the family. At present, we are in the process of transition from one form of social order to another. Women are part of this process, they help to shape its form by being either active or passive, and they ultimately have to adjust to it.

Members of the *Alliance of Women of Slovakia* are amongst those who want to take active part in the process of social change. The Alliance was founded as a network of women from all over Slovakia. The majority of them were active in public life even before 1989, particularly through the Slovak Association of Environmentalists which was trying, within the framework of environmental protection, to protect the quality of life and human rights. Some members ran as candidates in the municipal election in 1994; they are now members of local councils. The Alliance has three major goals: to analyze current status of women in Slovakia; to identify problems that lend themselves to a solution either through individual or communal efforts; with mutual support of its members, to draft strategies for the solution and to carry them out.

In accordance with these goals, the *Alliance of Women of Slovakia* gave its support to a large-scale sociological survey *Woman in Family, at Work, in Society* that sketched the changing status of women in Slovakia. This survey was financed by the European Union through a grant awarded to the Alliance. The survey was conducted by the FOCUS agency. Its findings may surprise some readers, confirm the beliefs of others, and provoke still others to join in the discussion. Whatever the case might be, the discussion based on this book can be livelier and more insightful.

Luba Lacinová
Chair, Alliance of Women of Slovakia



INTRODUCTION: JUSTIFYING THE GENDER LENSES

Over the past six years, since the breakdown of Communism, our research team analyzed various aspects of transition in Slovakia. We have been interested in how people in our country perceive economic and social changes, what opinions they hold on politics and democracy, what values they profess and which social issues they experience as crucial in their everyday lives. Yet, even though we included the differences between the views of women and men in our analysis, we did not conduct any major research into women's issues. This time we put on *gender lenses* and posed a series of questions to which we did not know the answers.

How do the women in Slovakia fare during the transition period? Is the social burden of the transition to a market economy distributed equally between women and men or are women disproportionately victims of macroeconomic changes? How is the role of women changing in a society in which after decades of silence, the voice calling for the return of women to family life can be heard? What remains of the so-called socialist emancipation of women? Do women really want to stay at home or are they hesitant to accept a reduction of their role and see in it the threat of a renewed "confinement to the kitchen?" What is men's opinion of this?

How are the profound political and economic changes after November 1989 reflected in the demographic behavior of people? How do they affect sex life, desire to get married, procreation and child-rearing? Does planned parenthood have any chance in a country where abortions were used in place of modern contraceptive methods?

How do men and women structure their relationships and how do they divide family responsibilities? To what extent have the traditional patriarchal relationships been substituted with partner relationships? What importance

do men and women ascribe to their social roles and how do they manage them? To what extent do their conceptions of an ideal man and an ideal woman differ?

When the barbed wire was removed from the border, Bratislava became a destination of our colleagues from Western countries. They (particularly our female colleagues - sociologists, political scientists and journalists) arrived with their gender lenses on and were interested specifically in women's issues. In their opinion, knowledge of women's issues was a part of the diagnosis of state of our society. It was difficult to answer their questions without conducting specific research.

Do you have problems with sexual harassment in Slovakia? How do people react to a flood of nudity on television, magazines or on billboards? How high do Slovak women set their own dignity?

Or, why do Slovak women accept their political marginalization? How do they participate in public life? What are the attitudes of Slovak women and men to feminism? Under what conditions can we expect a more pronounced civil and political mobilization of women?

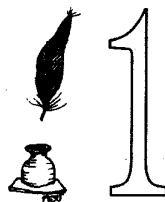
Thanks to our research project *Woman in the Family, at Work, and in Society*, we are able to find some answers. The first stage of research was a qualitative study with the results published by Tatiana Rosová in the article *Women in Slovakia* in the Slovak journal *ASPEKT* 1994, No. 3. In the second stage, a sociological survey was conducted, with the fieldwork undertaken in Summer 1995. The sample of 1,069 respondents, men and women, age 15 and older, was representative with respect to gender, age, education, nationality, community size, and region. In our survey, we purposely included men and women to be able to analyze similarities and differences between feminine and masculine values, conceptions and behavioral patterns.

In our book we draw inspiration from the works of several Czech and Slovak authors, particularly the Czech sociologists Ivo Možný, Marie Čermáková, Josef Alan and the Slovak sociologist Peter Gurán. A valuable source of information was the study, *Children - Future of Slovakia. Situation Analysis*, Bratislava, Slovak Committee for UNICEF 1995 and the statistical study, Gurán, P. - Filadelfiová, J.: *Main Demographic Trends in the Family. World - Europe - Slovakia*. Bratislava, The Bratislava International Center for the Study of the Family 1995.

Our book presents the first comprehensive attempt to describe how people perceive and interpret the status of women in Slovakia after November 1989. The scope of the book is broad. Obviously, we were left with some unposed questions, unincluded aspects and unexamined factors. Nevertheless, we hope to encourage a public debate on these topics which concern the very quality of our lives.

Our research was financed by the European Union through a grant from Phare Democracy Programme awarded to the Alliance of Women of Slovakia. For making both the research and the publication possible, we would like to express our gratitude for the financial support also from The Royal Netherlands Embassy, from Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, and from Slovak Family Planning Association.

Zora Bútorová
Chief author



WOMEN AND MEN AT THE CROSSROADS OF SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS

By the time we are born, a great deal has already been determined: we come into this world biologically defined - as people of two opposite sexes. Society amplifies this biological difference. "Within the framework of socialization of the child," states the Czech sociologist J. Alan, "comes to the formation of sexually differentiated behavior which interconnects the biological differences with the socio-cultural content of dichotomy of *masculinity* and *femininity*." ¹

Thus we have not only different *sex* but also different *gender*. In defining our gender roles, society plays the most important role. In other words, our differing *feminine* and *masculine life destiny*, our differing status in society, are culturally and socially conditioned and constructed." ²

1.1. CONCEPTIONS ON "THE IDEAL WOMAN" AND "THE IDEAL MAN"

What attributes should the ideal woman and man have according to people in Slovakia? Our respondents replied to this question by ranking 26 submitted attributes by their importance.

¹ Alan, J.: *Etapy života očima sociologie (Life Stages Through the Eyes of Sociology)*. Prague, Panorama 1989, p. 141.

² Možný, I.: *Moderní rodina (Mýty a skutečnosti). (Modern Family (Myths and Reality))*. Brno, Blok 1990, p. 101.

Table 1

Very important attributes for the ideal woman and man
through the eyes of Slovak population (%) *

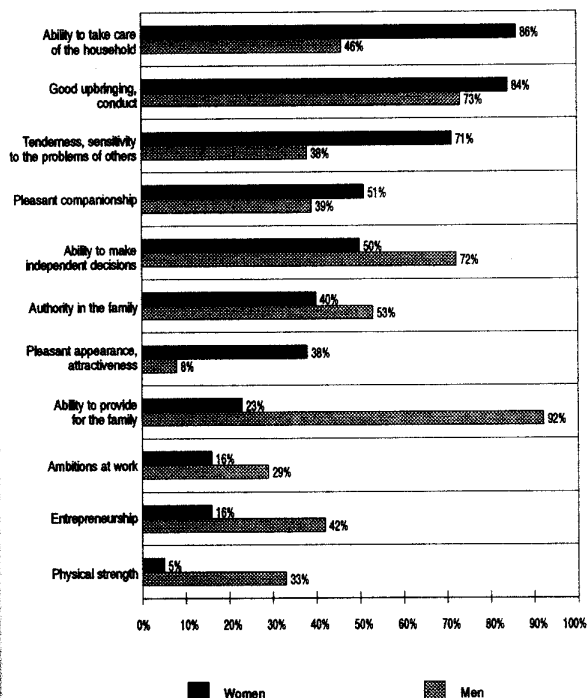
	Ideal woman	Ideal man
Ability to take care of the household	86	46
Good upbringing, conduct	84	73
Tenderness, sensitivity to the problems of others	71	38
Level-headedness	52	57
Pleasant companionship	51	39
Tolerance of others	50	45
Ability to make independent decisions	50	72
Respect at workplace	50	50
Adaptability	43	35
Authority at home, in the family	40	53
Pleasant appearance, attractiveness	38	8
Ability to protect weaker persons	35	35
Ability to provide financially for the family	23	92
Religious beliefs	18	15
Hobbies	17	20
Ambitions at work	16	29
Entrepreneurship	16	42
Interest in culture and the arts	16	11
Desire to excel in society	15	17
Self-assertiveness	12	18
Respect in the community	14	21
Good education	10	17
Ability to sacrifice oneself for country/nation	8	13
Interest in sports	7	16
Interest in public affairs	6	13
Physical strength	5	33

* The remainder of 100% comprises the answers 'rather important attribute,' 'rather unimportant attribute,' 'absolutely unimportant attribute,' 'don't know.'

Graph 1

Specific feminine and specific masculine attributes

(FOCUS 1995)



As Table 1 and Graph 1 show, there are three kinds of attributes:

- A. *Universal attributes*, i.e. attributes that have no significant gender identity, i.e. they are equally important for both women and men. For example, women and men should have good upbringing, they should be tolerant, level-headed, have respect at workplace.
- B. *Specific feminine attributes*, i.e. attributes expected to a greater degree from women, particularly the ability to take care of the household, tenderness, sensitivity to the problems of others, pleasant appearance.
- C. *Specific masculine attributes*, i.e. attributes expected to a greater degree from men, particularly the ability to provide for the family financially, make decisions independently, authority at home, in the family, entrepreneurship, physical strength, desire to excel at work.

What is the image of the ideal woman in the mind of women and men? To what degree do their views differ?

As Table 2 indicates, the views of women and men about the ideal woman are remarkably similar. However, we do observe *subtle differences*. *The women* attribute a greater importance to spiritual dimensions like tolerance, religious beliefs, and cultural interests. Women place also greater emphasis on attributes that are usually associated with men, which, however, are necessary for the effective functioning of women in the family: ability to make independent decisions; authority at home and in the family; and self-assertiveness. *The men* include in their views of the ideal woman her pleasant appearance and attractiveness, pleasant companionship - in other words, attributes traditionally perceived as feminine.³

And how do men and women see the ideal man? As seen in Table 3, their views are different. *The men* put a greater stress on their ability to assert themselves; their entrepreneurship; their ambition to excel at work and in society; and their authority at home and in the family. *The women*, however, stress the tolerance in a man, his tenderness and sensitivity to the problems of others; his adaptability; and his ability to be a pleasant companion. This indicates that men emphasize traditionally masculine traits while women stress those men's attributes which are important for coexistence.

³ I. Možný arrived at a similar conclusion in his study: "Women perceive themselves as more masculine than their partners perceive them." See Možný, I.: *Rodina vysokoškolsky vzdělaných manželů*. (The Family of University-educated Spouses). Brno, UJEP 1983, p. 162.

Table 2

Very important attributes for the ideal woman
through the eyes of Slovak women and men (%) *

	Women's views	Men's views
Ability to take care of the household	86	85
Good upbringing, conduct	82	83
Tenderness, sensitivity to the problems of others	72	69
Level-headedness	56	48
Ability to make independent decisions	56	44
Tolerance of others	54	45
Pleasant companionship	49	53
Adaptability	44	41
Authority at home, in the family	43	36
Pleasant appearance, attractiveness	34	42
Respect at workplace	29	26
Ability to protect weaker persons	26	23
Ability to provide financially for the family	24	22
Religious beliefs	22	14
Interest in culture and the arts	20	13
Hobbies	18	16
Ambitions at work	18	15
Entrepreneurship	17	14
Desire to excel in society	16	14
Self-assertiveness	15	8
Respect in the community	15	13
Good education	10	10
Ability to sacrifice oneself for country/nation	9	8
Interest in sports	7	8
Interest in public affairs	7	4
Physical strength	5	4

* The remainder of 100% comprises the answers 'rather important attribute,' 'rather unimportant attribute,' 'absolutely unimportant attribute,' 'don't know.'

Table 3

Very important attributes for the ideal man
through the eyes of Slovak women and men (%) *

	Women's views	Men's views
Ability to provide financially for the family	90	92
Good upbringing, conduct	77	70
Ability to make independent decisions	70	75
Level-headedness	59	55
Tolerance of others	52	38
Respect at workplace	50	49
Authority at home, in the family	49	58
Ability to take care of the household	46	45
Tenderness, sensitivity to the problems of others	44	31
Pleasant companionship	43	33
Adaptability	41	28
Entrepreneurship	39	44
Ability to protect weaker persons	38	31
Physical strength	32	34
Ambitions at work	25	32
Respect in the community	19	24
Religious beliefs	18	11
Hobbies	18	23
Good education	15	20
Desire to excel in society	14	20
Self-assertiveness	13	24
Ability to sacrifice oneself for country/nation	13	13
Interest in public affairs	13	14
Interest in culture and the arts	11	10
Interest in sports	11	22
Pleasant appearance, attractiveness	8	8

* The remainder of 100% comprises the answers 'rather important attribute,' 'rather unimportant attribute,' 'absolutely unimportant attribute,' 'don't know.'

From these subtle differences we can deduce that ideas of women about the ideal woman and man are mostly based on the attributes necessary for a *balanced partnership* of woman and man. On the other hand, men put more emphasis on the *traditional differences between the strong and weak sex*.

1.2. HIERARCHY OF SOCIAL ROLES IN THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF WOMEN AND MEN

Table 4

Hierarchy of roles by their importance for women and men
(% of answers 'role is very important') *

	Women	Men	All
Father/mother	90	82	86
Husband/wife	78	78	78
Man/woman	64	59	62
Son/daughter	58	61	60
Friend	54	55	54
Brother/sister	52	47	49
Employee	42	52	47
Colleague	34	31	32
Neighbor	26	28	27
Resident of the community	24	30	27
Citizen of the country	24	29	26
Manager	13	24	18

* Respondents were answering the question 'To what degree is each one of these roles important in your life?' The percentage is calculated from the total number of respondents who did not answer 'does not apply.'

As Table 4 indicates, people in Slovakia attribute the greatest importance to *family roles*, as well as to *gender roles*. The *work role* is somewhere in the middle of the importance range. This is an interesting finding, considering that in the official ideology of the socialist state, work was for decades praised as "the first life need of a man." The *civil role* (be it national or local level) finds itself on the lower steps of the ladder.

Even though the hierarchy of men's and women's roles does not differ significantly, women put more stress on their family roles and less on their work roles and the civil role. These differences indicate that the *world of women is more concentrated on family while the world of men reaches out more to the broader societal context*.

Now let us examine how women and men in Slovakia evaluate their performance in different roles.

Table 5

Order of roles according to their management by women and men
(% of answers 'I manage this role very well') *

	Women	Men	All
Father/mother	51	44	48
Man/woman	47	55	51
Husband/wife	42	41	41
Friend	39	4	42
Brother/sister	37	37	37
Employee	37	39	38
Son/daughter	35	37	36
Colleague	34	38	36
Neighbor	28	32	30
Resident of the community	25	31	28
Citizen of the country	25	30	27
Manager	19	21	20

* The percentage is calculated from the total number of respondents who did not answer 'does not apply.'

Differences in the men's and women's views are not significant. Women evaluate the fulfillment of their key role - motherhood slightly more favorably. They see in a slightly worse light their performance in other roles: woman, friend, colleague, citizen, and resident of a community.

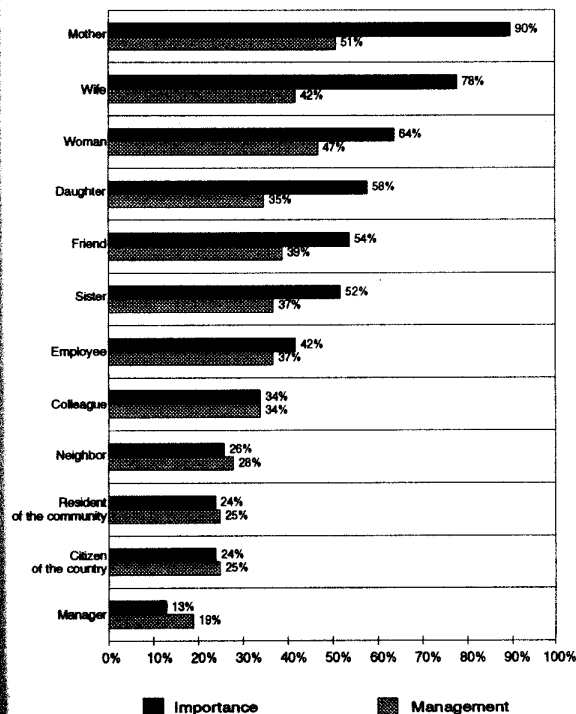
Now let us compare the degree of importance and the degree of success in the management of roles (Tables 4 and 5 and Graph 2). Both women and men perceive the biggest discrepancy between the importance of the parenthood role and its actual management: the ratio of women for whom this role is very important and of women who think they manage it very well is, 90% : 51%, while among men this ratio is, 82% : 44%. There is also a high discrepancy between the importance and management of the marital role (among women, 78% : 47%; among men, 78% : 55%). These findings point again to the important position the institution of family occupies in women's and men's lives.

Women experience less discrepancy between the importance and the management of roles of employee and colleague. This is probably because women attribute less importance to these roles.

Graph 2

Order of women's roles by their importance
and their management

(FOCUS 1995)



Both women and men feel *no discrepancy between the importance and the management of the civil role* on a national or a local level. If we keep in mind what small importance they attribute to these roles, it is not surprising. The small relevance of these roles for women and men correlates with the findings in Table 1 where the interest in public affairs belongs to the least important attributes for either the ideal woman or the ideal man.

These findings are worth reflection. After decades of living in a society of authoritarian socialism, which stressed an all-powerful state and a helpless individual, it would be inappropriate to expect a sudden awakening of citizens. Before 1989, several generations experienced first-hand that the key to survival was to give up participation in public affairs and reduce ambitions to the private sphere. Six years after the "velvet revolution," fear of public involvement still exists.

Our findings suggest that Slovakia resembles more a traditional community (*Gemeinschaft*) than a modern society (*Gesellschaft*) involving impersonal, instrumental social relationships. J. Polehňa went even further.⁴ He sees the community (*Gemeinschaft*) as "feminine" because it is the world of love and mutual support, a world where "domesticity" permeates all other spheres. On the other hand, society (*Gesellschaft*) can be seen as "masculine," because it is the world of performance, production, cold calculation, competition and contracts.

Relying on such distinctions, in his analysis of "habit" of the Czechoslovak society of the real-socialism of the second half of the 1980s, Polehňa came to the conclusion that it was a *feminine society*. He argued that not only in the female population but also in the male population, the dominant behavioral patterns, value stereotypes and life interests were traditionally typical of the female population. In his opinion, *men were socially feminized*.

Similarly, M. Prišová described the decline of masculine civilization values: "Slovakia is traditionally conservative and decades of socialism isolated it even more from the outside world. Women and men had a common enemy - the regime. But what is more important, women did not feel the need for emancipation because even though life was hard, and socialism exploited them and used them as a cheap labor force, under socialism there were

no basic values of masculine civilization - creativity, courage, ambition and success. It was only important to conform, to hunt for goods, arrange for kids to be accepted into schools, hold values of basic survival, maintain hearth and home - all feminine values. That's how ended the proud achievement of the classical masculine ability of abstraction - socialism: masculine values were in decline and there was some sort of pseudomatriarchy."⁵

This legacy of real-socialism was confirmed also by our findings on the stereotypes of the ideal woman and man, as well as on the hierarchy of social roles in the consciousness of men and women. The "civil dimension" of Slovak men has atrophied and the potential of their civil self-fulfillment is only insignificantly greater than that of women. Thus at the present time, it is important that a greater number not only of women, but also of men step out of their private sphere, take a part in public affairs and strive to achieve goals that would be beneficial for both women and men.

⁴ The author's name is a pseudonym. See Polehňa, J.: *Společnost feminizovaná nebo femininí? (Society Feminized or Feminine?)*. In: *Sociologický obzor* 1987, No. 1.

Prišová, M.: *Služičky. (Slaves)*. In: *ASPEKT* 1993, No. 1, p. 5.



WOMEN, MEN AND PROBLEMS OF REPRODUCTION

2.1. TRENDS IN DEMOGRAPHIC BEHAVIOR

Until 1989, demographic development in Slovakia was marked by a long-term decline in the birth rate; at the end of 1980s, by an accelerated increase in the abortion rate; in the last 15 years, by the stabilization of the death rate on unfavorable levels, particularly with respect to men; from the second half of the 1970s, by a slight decline of the marriage rate and by a slight increase of divorce rate.⁶

After the revolutionary change of the political and economic regime in 1989, the courses of most demographic processes in Slovakia have remained more or less the same (Tables 6 to 8). The marriage rate and the birth rate are declining. The divorce rate is fluctuating, indicating a slight increase. Only the abortion rate has undergone a significant change: previously increasing, it is now in decline.

Marriage and family in Slovakia continue to retain their high status. The majority of the adult population enters into marriage at least once (among men 20 years of age and older only 18.0% are single, among women 10.4%).

⁶ Our analysis of demographic trends is based on the study Guráň, P. - Filadelfiová, J.: *Main Demographic Trends and the Family. World - Europe - Slovakia*. Bratislava, The Bratislava International Center for Family Studies 1995.

The majority of women find fulfillment in motherhood; the majority of children are born in wedlock. However, the share of extra-marital births in the total number of births is increasing. For instance, in 1994 it was 11.7%.⁷

In Slovakia, people typically marry at a young age. The average age for a bride is 22.7 years for a groom 25.4 years. Moreover, the average age of women at first marriage has declined slightly in the past ten years; today, on average, first-time brides enter into marriage at 21 years of age and first-time grooms at 24 years of age. First children are born very soon after the wedding: the average age of mothers at the birth of a first child is 22 years.

Until 1990, Slovakia had one of the highest marriage rates in Europe. In 1994, however, the marriage rate reached the lowest level in the history of Slovakia.

Slovakia is among those countries which have a relatively low divorce rate. In the last years, this trend fluctuated, pointing to a slight increase.

After 1989, the birth rate has decreased dramatically. In 1987 already, it was 2.1 children per woman which, according to experts, was already below the level of simple reproduction. Since then, it has been continuously declining. Despite this trend, compared to other European countries, Slovakia is still a country with a high fertility rate.

Until 1988, the decrease in the birth rate was not the result of a decline in the overall number of pregnancies, but rather, the result of a higher abortion rate. Since 1988, when the abortion rate reached a peak of 11.3 abortions per 1000 inhabitants and 70.9 abortions per 100 children born, the abortion rate has shown a decline. The birth rate, however, has been declining sharply, too.

⁷ For comparison, in 1993, the share of extra-marital births in the Czech republic was 12.7%, in Hungary 15.6%, in Italy 6.7%, in France 33.2%, and in Sweden 50.4%. However, no data are available which would show whether children born to unmarried parents live in alternative families or with single mothers. See Horská, P.: *Problémy súčasnej rodiny očima demografu. (Problems of the Today's Family Through the Eyes of Demographers)*. In: *Lidové noviny*. September 6, 1995.

Table 6

**Selected indicators of demographic reproduction
in Slovakia from 1989-1994**

Marriages per 1 000 inhabitants					
1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
6.9	7.6	6.2	6.4	5.8	5.3
Divorces per 1000 inhabitants					
1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
1.57	1.67	1.49	1.52	1.53	1.62
Live-births per 1 000 inhabitants					
1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
15.2	15.1	14.9	14.1	13.8	12.4
Abortion per 1 000 inhabitants					
1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
10.7	10.6	10.1	9.3	8.6	7.7
Abortion per 1 000 women aged 15-49					
1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
42.9	41.6	39.3	36.0	33.5	-
Average age of women at first marriage					
1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
24.9	22.0	21.0	21.1	21.1	-
Share of extra-marital births in total number of births					
1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
7.2	7.6	9.0	9.8	10.6	11.7

Source: Gurán, P. - Filadelfiová, J.: *Main Demographic Trends and the Family. World - Europe - Slovakia*. Bratislava, The Bratislava International Center for Family Studies 1995.

The period between marriage and the birth of a first child is very short in Slovakia - the average age of getting married and of the first birth are almost identical. Annually, more than 50% of first children born in wedlock, are born sooner than 9 months after the wedding and more than 60% of first children are born within the first year of marriage. This indicates a high

incidence of premarital conceptions and is one of the distinctive features of demographic behavior in Slovakia.

Characteristic of Slovakia is a high fertility rate at the beginning of the reproductive period. Motherhood peaks between 20-24 years. Approximately 70% of all children in Slovakia are born to women before they reach 30 years of age; 95% of children to women before 35 years of age. Reproductive activity of most women ceases between the age of 30-35.

Table 7

**Age specific fertility rates
(Live-births per 1 000 females by age groups)**

	1980	1989	1993
15 - 19	48.2	46.8	47.8
20 - 24	204.8	185.3	166.7
25 - 29	131.1	116.8	106.7
30 - 34	56.0	46.0	44.6
35 - 39	18.9	15.5	15.2
40 - 44	4.3	2.6	3.0
45 - 49	0.2	0.1	0.1
All	77.3	61.1	53.9

Source: Gurán, P. - Filadelfiová, J.: *Main Demographic Trends and the Family. World - Europe - Slovakia*. Bratislava, The Bratislava International Center for Family Studies 1995.

Table 8

Live-births by mother age (%)

	1980	1989	1993
15 - 19	10.2	11.9	14.3
20 - 24	46.0	42.9	41.8
25 - 29	29.8	28.4	26.6
30 - 34	10.4	12.2	11.9
35 - 39	2.9	4.0	4.5
40 - 44	0.9	0.5	0.8
45 - 49	0.03	0.05	0.02

Source: Gurán, P. - Filadelfiová, J.: *Main Demographic Trends and the Family. World - Europe - Slovakia*. Bratislava, The Bratislava International Center for Family Studies 1995.

The development of the age of women giving birth has been unfavorable since 1980: there has been an increase in the number of children born to women aged 15-19 at the expense of children born to women aged 20-24 and 25-29.

The majority of women give birth to two children, usually in fast succession. Gradually, the model of a family with two children has stabilized. Among family households with dependent children, 46.2% are two-child families. There are 33.5% of families with one child where there is still a possibility of the second child, since these are mostly young families. 20.3% of families have more children. Their proportion, however, is declining.

2.2. CONCEPTIONS ON APPROPRIATE REPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOR

After outlining the demographic trends, we can now begin searching for answers to the question: To what degree do the populations ideas on appropriate reproductive behavior match those trends? It will be of a particular interest to examine whether these ideas contain some *potential for the optimization of actual reproductive behavior*.

To answer these questions, we will present findings of the representative survey carried out in Summer 1995. In this survey, over 1,000 respondents, aged 15 and older, formulated their views on the appropriate age of women and men for becoming sexually active, marriage and child birth; their ideas on the optimal number of children in a family; their preference of alternative strategies for parenthood; their views on interruption of pregnancy and on contraceptive methods; and their assessment of the role of the schools and the media in sex and health education of children.

Let us start with the conceptions on the appropriate age for commencing sexual relations, entering into marriage, giving birth to the first child. We have examined these ideas with the help of three open-ended questions: 'In your opinion, what is the appropriate age for women/men to marry? What is the appropriate age of women/men for the birth of the first child? At what age should women/men commence sexual relations?'

The first interesting finding is that the distribution of women's and men's opinions is almost identical, so that *we cannot speak about specific feminine and masculine lenses*. Therefore, the subsequent Tables 9 and 10 will present opinions of all respondents.

Table 9

"At what age should women become sexually active (a), enter into marriage (b), give birth to a first child (c)" - %

	a	b	c
17 or younger	23	1	1
18 - 19	52	9	2
20 - 21	20	34	24
22 - 23	4	27	30
24 - 25	2	25	29
26 - 29	0	3	12
30 - 34	0	1	2
35 or older	0	0	0

Table 10

"At what age should men become sexually active (a), enter into marriage (b), give birth to a first child (c)" - %

	a	b	c
17 or younger	17	1	0
18 - 19	41	1	0
20 - 21	28	6	3
22 - 23	7	14	9
24 - 25	6	40	28
26 - 29	1	24	38
30 - 34	0	13	19
35 or older	0	1	2

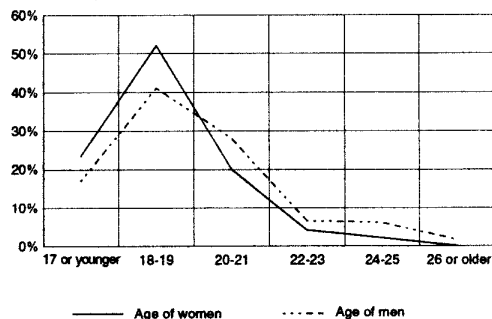
Appropriate age for becoming sexually active

As shown in Tables 9 and 10 and Graph 3, people in Slovakia think that *women should start sexual life a little earlier than men*. According to 23% of respondents, women should become sexually active at or before age 17, according to 75% at or before age 19 according to 95% at or before age 21 years.

Men are given a little more time: according to 17% of respondents, they should become sexually active at or before age 17, according to 58% at or before age 19 according to 86% at or before age 21 years.

At what age should women and men become sexually active?

(Opinions of Slovak population - FOCUS 1995)



The opinions regarding the appropriate age of women and men for becoming sexually active do not correlate with respondents sex, education, occupation, or the size of community. The only differentiating factors are age and religion. Favoring the postponement of the start of sexual relations of both women and men is more common among older respondents and people with deep religious beliefs.

Premarital sex

As Table 11 shows, for the majority of people (70%), premarital sex is acceptable, while 25% are against it.⁸ These attitudes reflect the situation

when, as I. Možný argued, "monopoly of the marriage on the legitimization of sex has broken down and sexual inexperience of a young couple became undesirable."⁹

Table 11

"Is it right to have premarital sex?" (By sex and age - %)

	Yes and rather yes	No and rather no	Don't know
Women	69	27	4
Men	71	24	5
All	70	25	5
17 or younger	81	14	5
18 - 24	81	12	7
25 - 34	83	15	2
35 - 44	79	19	2
45 - 54	70	24	6
55 - 64	49	45	6
65 or older	25	66	9

The tolerant attitude towards premarital sex is equally represented among women and men. It is most common among young and middle-aged persons; persons with a higher education (Graph 4); people identifying themselves with the middle and upper classes; and persons holding no religious beliefs (Graph 5). Entrepreneurs, business people, persons in white-collar professions and students share this tolerant opinion more frequently than blue-collar workers.

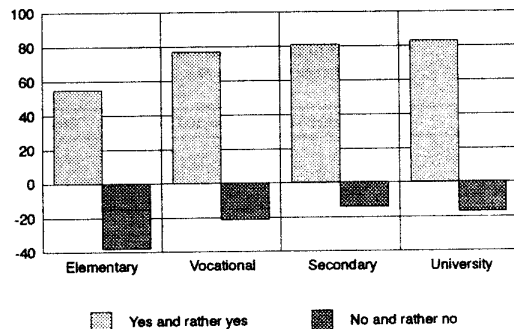
⁸ Research conducted in the Czech republic arrived at similar conclusion: 68% of respondents there did not reject premarital sex. See Černáková, M. - Maříková, H. - Tuček, L.: *Role mužů a žen v rodině a ve společnosti II. (The Role of Men and Women in Family and in Society II.)*. Data & Facts, No. 6., June 1995. Prague, Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences 1995.

⁹ Možný, I.: *Modern Family...*, p. 158.

Graph 4

Is it right to have premarital sex?

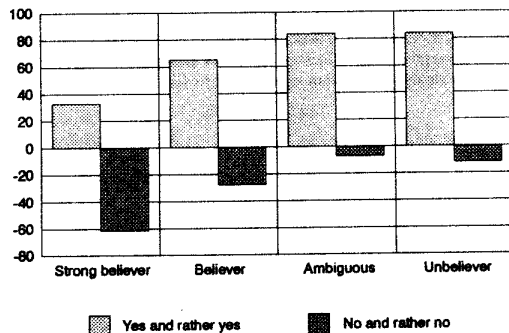
(By education - FOCUS 1995)



Graph 5

Is it right to have premarital sex?

(By religious beliefs - FOCUS 1995)



Appropriate age for entering into marriage and the birth of a first child

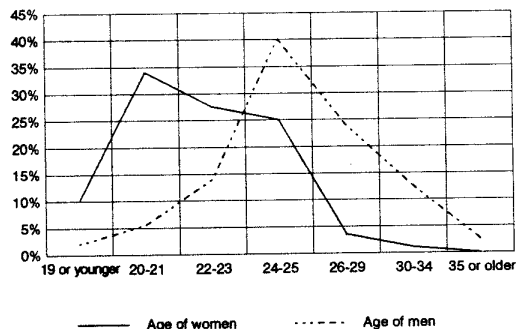
According to 44% of respondents, women should enter into marriage at or before age 21; according to 71% at or before age 23; and according to 96% at or before age 25.

Men are given more time (Graph 6). According to 8% of respondents, men should enter marriage at or before age 21; according to 22% at or before age 23; according to 62% at or before age 25; according to 86% at or before age 29; according to 99% at or before age 34.

Graph 6

At what age should women and men enter into marriage?

(Opinions of Slovak population - FOCUS 1995)



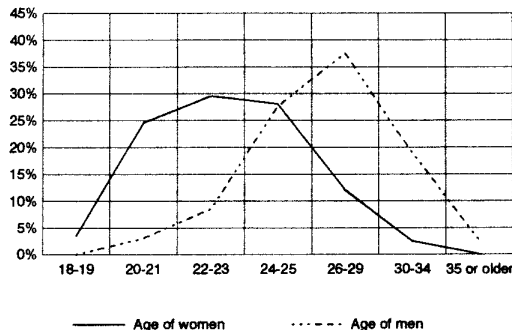
According to 27% of respondents, women should give birth to a first child at or before age 21; according to 57% at or before age 23; according to 86% at or before age 25. Women are most commonly expected to give birth to the first child at age 20-25 (83%).

The curve representing the distribution of conceptions on the appropriate age for fathering a first child shifts significantly to higher age categories (Graph 7). According to 3% of respondents, a man fathering a first child should be under 22 years; according to 12%, under 24; according to 40%,

Graph 7

At what age should women and men have a first child?

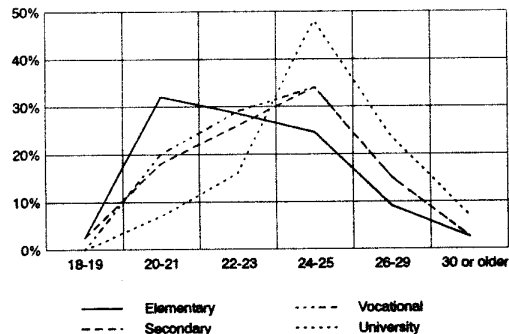
(Opinions of Slovak population - FOCUS 1995)



Graph 8

At what age should women have a first child?

(Women's opinions by education - FOCUS 1995)



under 26; according to 78%, under 30; according to 97% of respondents under 35 years. Most commonly, the respondents place the age at which man should father a first child in the age group 24-29 (66%).

The postponement of marriage and parenthood is more accepted among women and men with higher education; among persons identifying themselves with the middle and upper classes; among persons holding no religious beliefs; among residents of metropolitan areas.

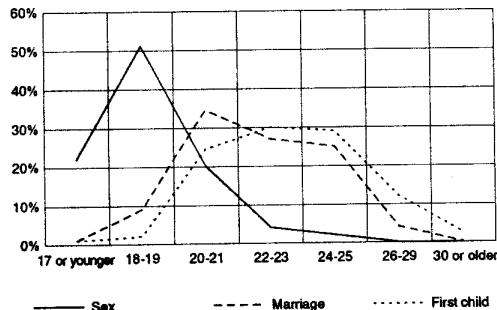
As shown in Graph 8, the degree of tolerance among educated Slovak women for postponing childbirth is rather low. *The sword of Damocles* hangs over the heads of those female university students who prefer not to marry and not to have their first child while they study.

To summarize, people in Slovakia accept the sequence of three life milestones: premarital sex - marriage - birth of a first child soon after getting married. With respect to all three of them, particularly with respect to the second and the third one, they perceive the earlier start of women as desirable (Graph 9). For men, they consider optimal a longer time period between the commencement of sexual relations and marriage (Graph 10).

Graph 9

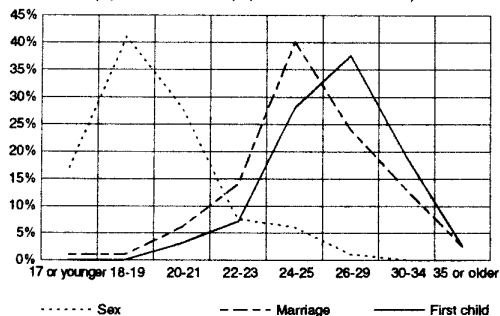
When should women become sexually active, marry and give birth to a first child?

(Opinions of Slovak population - FOCUS 1995)



When should men become sexually active, marry and father a first child?

(Opinions of Slovak population - FOCUS 1995)



The comparison of our findings with the demographic trends illustrated in Table 6 shows that the opinions on the appropriate age of women for entering into marriage correspond mostly to the average age at the first marriage. That means that *for women, marrying at an early age is considered normal in Slovakia. The young age of mothers at the birth of the first child is also accepted.*

It can be supposed that the on-going diversification in lifestyles of various social classes will gradually ease the social pressure on educated partners with professional ambitions with respect to early parenthood. Such trend would undoubtedly be desirable.

Conceptions on number of children in the family

As mentioned already, the model of the family with two children is firmly established in Slovakia: There are 46.2% of families with two children among the total number of family households with dependent children. The two-child family is the optimal model for 62% of respondents, while 23% of respondents prefer the three-child family, and 7% prefer only one child.

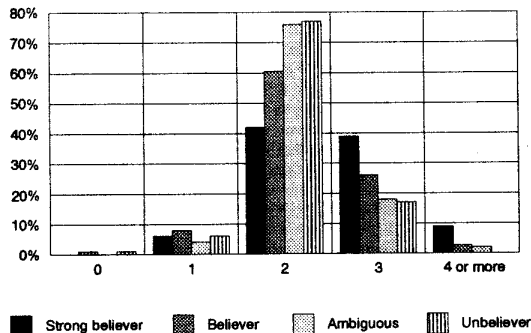
3% of respondents find that the ideal number of children is 4 or more and 1% of respondents consider the family with no children optimal.

The distribution of opinions among the population is remarkably even. Women, men and respondents of all ages, express almost identical views. However, the conceptions of persons with varying degrees of religiosity are significantly different (Graph 11). The more intense the religious beliefs, the weaker the support for the two-child and one-child model and the greater the preference for the three-child model. The two-child model has the greatest support among women with the highest education and among residents of Bratislava.

Graph 11

What is the appropriate number of children in a family?

(Women's opinions by religious beliefs - FOCUS 1995)



Pregnancy interruption

The most problematic issue with respect to the demographic behavior of the Slovak population is the high abortion rate. In 1994, for instance, it reached 61.9 abortions per 100 children born.

In most East Central European countries, this problematic behavior reflects the crucial influence of *the Soviet model of population policy*. While in the West, pregnancy interruptions at a woman's request were generally legalized only after a 10-year long development of female contraceptives,¹⁰ in the former USSR and its satellites, bills allowing interruption of pregnancy for social reasons were passed in the second half of the 1950s. Pregnancy interruption was legalized as a kind of *drastic substitute for mostly unavailable contraception*. In Slovakia, too, pregnancy interruption became a legal - though inappropriate - instrument for planned parenthood.

In the second half of the 1980s, after the liberalization of pregnancy interruption in 1986, the abortion rate sharply increased. As Table 6 shows however, beginning with 1988, the abortion rate has displayed a downward trend. Still, the number of interruptions in Slovakia is very high. Most of them are clustered around the age group 25-29. The probability of solving unwanted pregnancy by interruption increases with the age of woman. No less than 75% applicants for pregnancy interruption are married women with one or two children. This means that most of the interruptions take place in connection with postponing or refusing the second or the third child.¹¹

Interruptions are not only the means for the regulation of family size. The attitude towards them is an indicator of value orientation of the society and of the families. Therefore, in Table 12, we are presenting the opinions of people regarding circumstances that would justify the interruption of pregnancy.¹²

Table 12

"Do you approve the interruption of pregnancy in the following circumstances?"(%)

	Yes	No	Don't know
If a woman's health is in jeopardy because of pregnancy	90	6	4
If a woman was raped	83	10	7
If there was a chance that a child would be handicapped	82	10	8
If pregnancy is undesirable for any reason	59	31	10
If parents could not take appropriate care of their child for social reasons	55	35	11
If parents do not want any more children	50	41	9
If the woman was a minor	4	43	11
If the child was a result of an extramarital relation	31	54	15
If the woman is not married	23	66	11

Taking into consideration all nine reasons for the interruption of pregnancy, we have constructed a synthetic typology expressing the overall attitudes towards interruptions.¹³ Accordingly, people can be divided into three categories: those with approving, hybrid and disapproving attitudes.

As is evident from Table 13, differences between the views of women and men are negligible. Within both groups, two differentiating factors are at play. The most important are religious beliefs. As might be expected, among strong believers the approval of interruptions is least common (15%). This distinguishes them from the category of believers (35%) and from persons holding no religious beliefs (58%). As for age, the highest tolerance towards pregnancy interruption is exhibited by women and men in the age group 25-44.

¹⁰ In the United States, England and France the interruption of pregnancy was legalized only in 1970.

¹¹ See Vranová, Z.: *Situácia a postavenie žien v Slovenskej republike. (Situation and Status of Women in the Slovak Republic)*. Bratislava, Slovak Committee for UNICEF 1994.

¹² See *Results of the Comparative Research according to the European Questionnaire of Values - Slovakia 1991*. Bratislava, Institute of Social Analysis of Comenius University 1991.

¹³ This index was based on the summation of approving, disapproving, and ambivalent answers to all nine reasons for interruption. *The approving attitude* was assigned to respondents who rejected a maximum of two reasons for interruption. *The disapproving attitude* was assigned to respondents who rejected a minimum of six reasons for interruption. Respondents with *the hybrid attitude* are placed in the middle between these two categories.

Table 13

**Attitudes of Slovak population towards the interruption of pregnancy
(By sex, age, education and religious beliefs - %)**

	Approving Attitude	Hybrid Attitude	Disapproving Attitude
Women	40	51	9
Men	42	52	6
All	41	52	7
15 - 17	48	38	14
18 - 24	36	58	6
25 - 34	46	52	2
35 - 44	47	50	3
45 - 54	38	52	9
55 - 59	41	54	5
60 or older	34	52	14
Elementary education	37	52	11
Vocational	45	49	6
Secondary	41	53	6
University	45	54	1
Strong believer	15	51	34
Believer	35	58	7
Ambiguous	49	49	2
Unbeliever	58	41	1

Views on methods of contraception

One of the reasons for the large number of pregnancy interruptions in Slovakia is *insufficient use of contraceptives*.¹⁴ According to M. Kliment, the President of Slovak Family Planning Association, in 1995 than 6% of females used hormone contraceptives in Slovakia, while in the Czech Republic in the last couple of years, the number has been 18%; in the advanced West European countries it is about 40%. In Slovakia, there are still inhibitions

regarding the use of contraception in spite of the fact that in the last few years the availability of modern contraceptives on the market has radically improved.¹⁵

Attitudes towards the use of various methods of contraception are to a great extent based on opinions held by potential female or male users as to how reliable and safe these are for their health. As research in 1992 concluded, the awareness and knowledge of women of the fertile age (15-45) was insufficient.¹⁶ According to our findings from 1995, women's awareness, even after three years, has not improved. This was true especially of the women belonging to the youngest age group and women of the lowest education. Particularly insufficient is their knowledge of hormone contraception.

To target health education towards prevention of unwanted pregnancies, it is necessary to have a realistic idea about the *social acceptance* of various contraceptive methods (Table 14).

As Table 14 shows, the most acceptable form of contraception for women of fertile age is the condom, followed by the hormone contraceptives and the diaphragm. The so-called natural methods (coitus interruptus, the rhythm or calendar method) are accepted and rejected by approximately the same percentage of women. The least known methods are spermicidal creams and foams. The most unpopular method is male or female sterilization.¹⁷

It is interesting to compare the degree of social acceptance of a contraceptive method with its actual use. If, according to health experts, the share of women using hormone contraception is less than 6% in Slovakia, but the percentage of women of fertile age regarding this method as acceptable reaches 52%, it indicates a big potential for increasing the number of users of this form of contraception.

¹⁵ Quotation from the interview with M. Kliment, M.D. In: *Nový Čas*, November 23, 1995.

¹⁶ See Uzel, R.: *Use of Contraceptives in Czechoslovakia - Research Findings; Presl, J.: Beneficial Effects (Beside Contraceptive Effects) of Combined Oral Contraceptives. In: Progress and Errors in Obstetrics. Proceedings from National Conference of the Czech Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Prague 1992.*

¹⁷ Views of men on contraceptive methods are similar to views of women. However, men have less clear ideas about the methods directly concerning women (rhythm or calendar method; diaphragm, hormonal contraception). See Bútorová, Z.: *Vybrané problémy plánovaného rodičovstva. (Selected Issues of Planned Parenthood)*. Bratislava, FOCUS 1995.

¹⁴ 90% of applicants for pregnancy interruption in 1991 stated that they did not attempt to use any methods of contraception. See *Deti - zairažok Slovenska. Situačná analýza. (Children - Future of Slovakia. Situation Analysis)*. Bratislava, Slovak Committee of UNICEF 1995.

Table 14

"If you were to give advice to those close to you, would you recommend them to use any of the following means of contraception?"
(Opinions of women of fertile age - %)

	Yes and rather yes	No and rather no	Don't know
Condom	83	13	4
Hormone contraceptives	52	38	10
Diaphragm	48	42	10
Coitus interruptus	45	47	8
Rhythm or calendar method	43	46	11
Spermicidal creams and foams	30	44	26
Female Sterilization	16	74	10
Male Sterilization	14	74	12

In which social groups does the policy supporting the individual methods of contraception have a chance to succeed? Table 15 outlines some of the answers for the hormone contraception.

Table 15

"If you were to give advice to those close to you, would you recommend them to use hormone contraception?"
(Opinions of women of fertile age - %)

	Yes and rather yes	No and rather no	Don't know
15 - 17	47	32	21
18 - 24	62	32	6
25 - 34	50	38	12
35 - 44	49	43	8
Elementary education	45	34	21
Vocational	56	40	4
Secondary	52	40	8
University	60	37	3
Upper class and upper middle class	64	29	7
Middle class	53	38	9
Lower middle class	47	41	12
Lower class	42	42	16

The social acceptance of hormone contraception grows with increasing education and self-assigned social status. The same correlation was also found in the social acceptance of condom, diaphragm and spermicidal creams or foams. On the contrary, the acceptance of the so-called natural methods of contraception is evenly distributed among women with different education and social status.¹⁸

Strategies of parenthood

Planned parenthood

As many as 86% of respondents agree with the statement that "responsible persons use contraceptive methods and plan their parenthood" (Table 16).

Table 16

"Responsible persons use contraceptive methods and plan their parenthood"
(By gender, age, education and religious beliefs - %)

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
Women	87	10	3
Men	84	12	4
All	86	11	3
15 - 17	87	8	5
18 - 24	90	9	1
25 - 34	88	9	3
35 - 44	90	9	2
45 - 54	88	9	3
55 - 64	82	11	7
65 or older	63	30	7
Elementary education	81	14	6
Vocational	87	10	2
Secondary	90	8	2
University	92	8	0
Strong believer	33	62	
Believer	66	29	5
Ambiguous	85	9	6
Unbeliever	85	12	3

¹⁸ Ibid.

This opinion is shared equally by women and men and prevails at all age and education categories. Among the eldest and less educated people it has the lowest support. However, the most prominent differentiating factor is the attitude towards religion: unbelievers approve of planned parenthood more frequently than believers, particularly persons with deep religious beliefs.

Rejection of the regulation of parenthood

As many as 74% of respondents reject the view that "spouses should not aim to prevent pregnancy, either by limiting their sexual relations or by using contraception; they should welcome the pregnancy in all circumstances" (Table 17).

Table 17

**"Spouses should not aim to prevent pregnancy,
either by limiting their sexual activity or by using contraception;
they should welcome the pregnancy in all circumstances"
(By sex, age, education and religious beliefs - %)**

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
Women	19	76	5
Men	20	72	8
All	19	74	7
15 - 17	18	69	14
18 - 24	18	78	3
25 - 34	12	85	4
35 - 44	13	83	3
45 - 54	17	76	7
55 - 64	28	62	10
65 or older	42	44	14
Elementary education	27	62	11
Vocational	19	76	5
Secondary	11	86	4
University	8	90	2
Strong believer	40	48	12
Believer	20	74	6
Ambiguous	10	84	6
Unbeliever	13	82	5

Uncontrolled reproduction of children in a marriage is equally opposed by men and women. It is particularly unattractive to the 25-44 age group, while in the oldest group it achieves much stronger support. Uncontrolled reproduction of children has fewer supporters among persons with higher education. The most significant differentiating factor, however, is again the attitude towards religion: among those with deeply held religious beliefs, the support of uncontrolled reproduction of children reaches almost 40%.

Sexual abstinence

The majority of respondents reject also the strategy of sexual abstinence according to which the couple should restrict the sexual activity only for the purposes of producing a child. Such a view is rejected by 88% and approved by 8% of respondents.

Socio-cultural influences

Our findings indicate the following *paradox*. Most people in Slovakia approve of planned parenthood. Yet there is low use of contraception and consequently a high abortion rate. It shows that proclaimed support of planned parenthood does not necessarily correlate with actual behavior. However, recently the number of pregnancy interruptions has decreased in Slovakia. This signals the *narrowing of the gap between abstract declarations and actual reproductive behavior of the population*. This is, undoubtedly, a promising trend.

In conclusion, let us summarize the most significant findings on the correlation between conceptions on appropriate reproductive behavior and between respondents social characteristics.

Firstly, women's and men's conceptions on reproductive behavior are so similar that *we cannot speak about specific feminine or masculine opinions*. Women and men have similar opinions on when young women and men should become sexually active, enter into marriage and have children; on the optimum number of children in a family; whether and which contraception method to use; under what conditions women are justified to choose pregnancy interruption. The only significant difference is that women consider themselves to be more competent and informed on some issues, particularly on methods of contraception.

Secondly, the attitudes of women and men are deeply affected by their religion and education. It is characteristic of persons with deep religious beliefs,¹⁹ as well as of persons with the lowest education to frequently reject premarital sex; on the other hand, they consider a young age to be appropriate for entering into marriage and parenthood. At the opposite end are higher educated persons, as well as persons who are not strong believers. These individuals approve more frequently of premarital sex; the postponement of marriage and of the birth of a first child; the two-child model of a family; planned parenthood and pregnancy interruption; and modern methods of contraception.

Due to the obvious connection between education and conceptions on appropriate reproductive behavior, in conclusion we will examine what opinions Slovaks have on educational role of schools and the electronic media.

2.3. VIEWS ON HEALTH AND SEX EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

We asked the respondents to evaluate the attention paid by schools and electronic media to health and sex education. In Table 18, the areas of education are ranked from the most favorably assessed to the most critically assessed.

As Table 18 shows, people find the biggest deficit of schools and of media in health and sex education in the areas of *homosexuality*, *safe sex* and *planned parenthood*. According to statistical analysis, the members of the youngest generation, people with higher education and persons with higher self-assigned status feel the highest dissatisfaction with the role played by schools and media.

¹⁹ Strong believers represent approximately 12% of the adult Slovak population, believers approximately 50%, individuals with ambiguous attitude 12% and unbelievers about 26%. See *Current Problems of Slovakia - December 1994*. Bratislava, FOCUS 1995.

Table 18

"How much attention do the schools and the electronic media pay to the following issues?" (%)

	1 - adequate attention	3 - too much attention		
	2 - insufficient attention	4 - don't know		
Schools	1	2	3	4
Adolescence, puberty	41	35	3	21
Health risks of smoking	39	34	9	18
Dangers of drug use	36	35	9	20
Dangers of alcohol use	36	37	8	19
AIDS prevention	35	35	9	21
Planned parenthood	29	47	2	22
Safe sex	28	43	4	25
Homosexuality	18	51	3	28
Television and Radio				
Adolescence, puberty	53	35	4	8
AIDS prevention	53	22	21	4
Dangers of drug use	51	28	16	5
Health risks of smoking	51	30	15	4
Dangers of alcohol use	50	33	12	5
Safe sex	42	39	9	10
Planned parenthood	40	48	3	10
Homosexuality	35	43	10	12

At the beginning of this chapter, we posed the question of whether there is potential for favorable changes in reproductive behavior. Along with respondents of our survey, we can answer that a great deal will depend on effective health and sex education in the schools and in the mass media.



WOMEN AND MEN IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

3.1. PREREQUISITES OF A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE

Marriage and family in Slovakia continue to be held in high esteem. Before 1990, Slovakia was among the countries with the highest marriage rate in Europe. Individuals remaining single constituted less than 10% of the adult population of Slovakia.

According to the last census in 1991, family households comprised 77.9% of the total number of 1,832,484 households. 86.6% of homes were two-parent households and 13.4% were single-parent households. Families with dependent children comprised 61.8% of the total number of two-parent households and 51.9% of single-parent households. The single-parent households headed by women comprised 83.4% of the total number of single-parent households.

As I. Možný stated at the end of the 1980s, during the last several decades, Czechoslovak society had abandoned the traditional road to marriage and parenthood founded on Christianity. According to this vanishing tradition, "young people first get acquainted, then get to know each other and decide whether they were right for each other. They frequently seal this decision with a formal engagement. They would postpone the wedding until the man becomes economically independent and until both, the man and the woman finish preparing for their future vocations. Only on their wedding day do they move to their own home and become sexually active...Soon afterwards, the wife gets pregnant, the spouses become parents and the couple become a family."²⁰

²⁰ Možný, I.: *Modern Family...*, p. 157-158.

Due to abandoning this traditional way of founding a family, "not only the monopoly of marriage on one's sex life ceased to exist but so did another traditional prerequisite for marriage and starting a family, namely, the requirement of economic independence and social viability of the family. The present dependency of young couples on parents," I. Možný continues in his monograph, "is frequently caused by not completing their vocational training (about one half of female university students get married before completing studies), by the insufficient professional stabilization of young men, as well as by the high ratio of couples who get married and start a family without having their own accommodation." I. Možný stated that at the end of 1980s "more than four fifths of young married couples start a family without having their own home."

In this regard, not much has changed in Slovakia since then. According to sociological analyses, over 90% of young families depend on parents' assistance. Over 80% of young families spend the first 1-5 years of marriage under their parents' roof.²¹

Obviously, starting a family this way is very risky. For immature partners, marrying at a young age, often because of the bride's pregnancy, the marriage is a great burden. A young family must overcome a combination of several "firsts" (work, marriage, parenthood, founding a household), all in a very short time. The result is increased marital instability.

How do people react to such a challenging situation? To what degree have they preserved traditional conceptions regarding the prerequisites of successful marriage and to what extent did the norms legitimizing the current risky way of starting a family, take hold?

Economic self-sufficiency of young couples

Should a person marry when he or she becomes economically independent or is it unnecessary to postpone marriage until this requirement is fulfilled? The first option is for people much more acceptable: No less than 85% of the respondents supported the first view and only 16% supported the other one.

It is obvious, however, that the respondents subscribed to the first opinion without realistically assessing the circumstances. This is confirmed by their

²¹ *Children - Future of Slovakia...*

ideas on the appropriate age for getting married. Among respondents who stress the necessity of economic independence of young couples, no less than 56% consider 22 years as the appropriate age for women to enter into marriage and no less than 57% of respondents consider 25 years as the appropriate age for men to enter into marriage. As a rule, however, at this age the prerequisite of economic independence is not met. This is particularly true of young women studying at university.

Separate accommodation

A similar discrepancy can be observed when respondents evaluate the importance of separate accommodation for the good start of a young family. This requirement is emphasized by 78% of respondents. The opposite view, namely that "common living of several generations in one apartment or house (provided there are no serious space limitations) benefits both generations, young and old," was held only by 21% of respondents.

However, the conviction about the importance of separate accommodation for a young family is in striking contrast with peoples ideas on optimal age for entering into marriage. Among those who emphasize that a young family should live separately, as many as 59% believe that women should enter into marriage before reaching the age of 22 and 60% think that men should do so before reaching the age of 25.

To summarize, we can observe an obvious *discrepancy* here. The majority of people realistically acknowledge that the economic independence of the young couple and the possibility of separate living are crucial for a good start to the marriage. However, a great number of people share the conviction that people should get married at a young age when, as a rule, the above prerequisites are not met. The explanation must be sought in the social pressure to which the people yield. The result is that in spite of the declaration of the necessity of independence for young couples, respondents base their conceptions regarding appropriate age for marriage mainly on the condition of biological maturity of young people. In real life, this discrepancy from the very beginning leads to tensions in a great number of young marriages. Statistical data indicate that marriages of 2 to 5 years duration are the most threatened by divorce.²²

²² This agrees with the fact that the most intensive age at which women divorce is 25-29 years. See *Children - Future of Slovakia...*

Premarital cohabitation

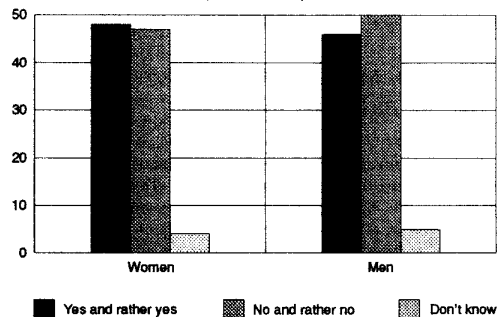
Another factor that can affect the quality of the partners' decision to enter into marriage is premarital cohabitation. Such "trial marriage," which is fairly common in developed Western countries, is rare in Slovakia: 85% of women and 83% of men live in their parents' homes until their marriage.²³

The premarital cohabitation of young couples is not only rare, but has a low acceptance among the population (Graph 12). In our survey, it was approved of by 47% of respondents and rejected by 48%.²⁴ The reluctance to accept premarital cohabitation of young couples is partly due to moral inhibitions: 37% of respondents do not consider it moral for a young couple to live together without being married.

Graph 12

Is it right for a young couple to live together before getting married?

(FOCUS 1995)



²³ *Children - Future of Slovakia...*

²⁴ On the other hand, as we have seen in Chapter 2.2., the share of respondents who approve of premarital sex is much higher, reaching 70%.

Women's and men's attitude to premarital cohabitation is similar and is affected by the same social factors as the attitude to premarital sex. It is more accepted by young people by persons with higher education; individuals identifying themselves with the middle or upper middle class; persons without deeply held religious beliefs; and residents of large cities.

In such a social environment, young people have a better chance to check the quality of their relationships before legalizing them. However, this chance is frequently prevented by the lack of separate housing opportunities. Moreover, marrying is often sped up by the insufficient use of contraception.

And there the circle closes. Our findings illustrate *the ambiguity* of the current situation. Firstly, even though the traditional way of founding a family seldom takes place in Slovakia, in social consciousness, this practice is still perceived as an ideal. Secondly, only about half of people approves of premarital cohabitation of young couples. The other half condemns it as immoral, even though some of them approve of premarital sex.

It is only natural that such a *double-edged approach* is less acceptable for young people than for their parents and grandparents. Moreover, such ambiguity is less common among individuals with higher education and higher social status, as well as among residents of large cities.

3.2. WOMEN, MEN AND THE ROLE OF THE BREADWINNER

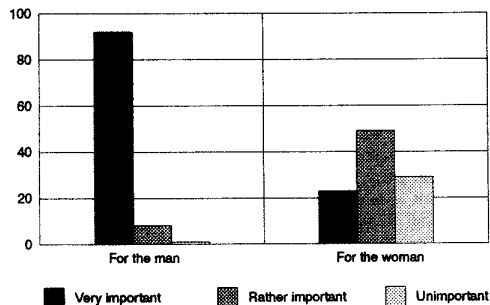
In Slovak culture, the idea that a man must be able to provide for the family is deeply and universally rooted. This particular ability is considered to be *the most important characteristic of masculinity*. Men and women, persons of different age groups, levels of education, extent of religiosity, and regardless of the place of residence, all agree equally on this. In Slovakia, the conception of a man as a breadwinner is alive although *the two-income household*, where the breadwinning role is shared by both spouses, has been the dominant type of family model for several decades.

Even though the ability to provide for the family is not perceived as the dominant virtue of an ideal woman, this ability is considered to be very important by 23% and rather important by 48% of respondents. Women place greater emphasis on the their breadwinning role than men (Graph 13).

Graph 13

Is the ability to provide for the family
an important attribute for the ideal man/woman?

(FOCUS 1995)



Even before the breakdown of Communism in 1989, criticism of the high employment rate among women (one of the highest in Europe) was heard more and more in Slovakia.²⁵ It was argued that women's employment is not an expression of real emancipation, but in most cases the result of the unsatisfactory economic situation of the family. Women simultaneously performed the role of wage-earner and the role of homemaker and mother. The critics of *the double-burden* advocated the return to a traditional division of labor in the family, with the married women devoting themselves exclusively to their homemaking and child-rearing role.

After 1989, some *new trends in the employment of women* have developed. In 1990-1993, the share of working women out of the total number of women of fertile age has decreased from 88% to 69%. At the same time, the number of unemployed women, as well as of women who did not work or search for work increased.²⁶

²⁵ Černáková, M. - Navarová, H.: *Ženy a transformační procesy v československé společnosti. (Women and the Transformation Processes in the Czechoslovak Society)*. In: *Sociologický časopis* 1991, No. 2.

²⁶ *Children - Future of Slovakia...*

As many as 60% of unemployed women are married. The above-average share of married women out of the unemployed women could be explained by two simultaneously contradictory and complementary reasons. As employment statistics show, women with small children have great difficulty in finding jobs. As many as 75% of women registered with the Employment Office are women under 39 years of age. In addition, married women are not very active in their job search, compared to divorced women and widows. That could mean that they find it a worthwhile task to care for their children until they finish elementary school.

It is too early to answer the question of whether the latest decrease in employment of women results in the lessening of the conflict between women's breadwinning role and their child-rearing and homemaking role. The fact is that this is frequently not an unencumbered decision on the part of women but a decision imposed by external circumstances. This is particularly true of unemployed women.

In any case, the economic situation in Slovakia has not improved to an extent which would allow women to decide freely, according to their personal preferences whether they want to work or not. Only a small number of women is fortunate enough to be able to make such a choice. For the majority of families the situation is difficult: from 1989 to 1993, real household consumption in the Slovak Republic decreased on average by 25-30%. This fact is one of the most important causes for the prevalence of the two-income household model. Indirectly, it was also confirmed in Table 19.

Table 19

"To what extent is your family dependent on your income?" (%)

	Women	Men
My family is dependent also on my income	73	70
My family is dependent only on my income	13	21
My family is not dependent on my income	14	9

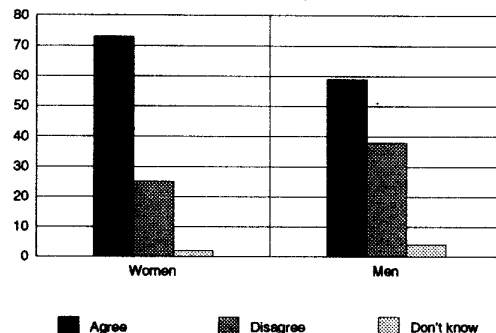
73% of women answered that their families are dependent on their income. In 13% of households, the entire family budget is dependent on a woman's income. Only 14% of women stated that their families are not dependent on their income.

The result of such a state of affairs is that the majority of people in Slovakia consider the separate income of a woman, independent from her husband or parents, as something of a given (Graph 14). Among women, 73% agree with this view. More frequently, these are women with a higher level of education and women who are young and middle aged. Among men, this view is accepted by 59%.

Graph 14

"A woman should have her own income and not be dependent on her parents or her husband"

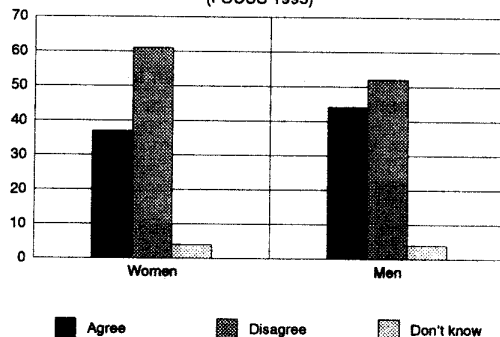
(FOCUS 1995)



How do women and men react to the situation where a woman fulfills the breadwinning role more successfully than a man? While most of women (61%) think that higher income of the woman compared to her husband does not necessarily harm the marital relationship, only half of the men agree (Graph 15).

**"If a woman earns more than her husband,
It is not good for the marriage"**

(FOCUS 1995)



The traditional model of a man as a dominant breadwinner and of a woman as a provider of supplementary income, finds the highest support among persons with the lowest education and persons of retirement age. More educated and young people - the groups most active in modernization of the Slovak society - adopted a model which is more based on a partnership between husband and wife. This model respects the necessity of both incomes to the household, as well as the growing number of highly educated women in the population.

3.3. DOUBLE-BURDEN: WOMEN AT HOME AND AT WORK

Should women give up the idea of going to work?

Let us examine a question which seems quite Utopian: How would families with children react to an improvement in economic situation that would allow women to leave their jobs and devote themselves exclusively to the care of their families?

At first glance, such a solution looks simple. It offers an attractive possibility for women to get rid of the double-burden that during the so-called socialist women's liberation, reached an exceptionally critical level. But are women in Slovakia willing to resign from their jobs?

Table 20

"A married woman should not work but instead devote herself to the care of children and the household" (%)

	Women	Men	All
Agree	48	61	54
Disagree	51	38	45
Don't know	1	1	1

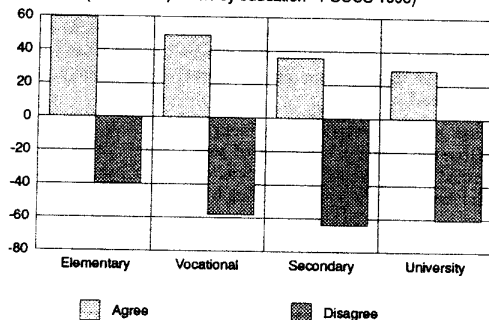
As shown in Table 20, less than half of women agree with the opinion that a married woman should devote herself exclusively to children and household. For the other half of women, such a solution to their double-burden is difficult to accept. On the other hand, men are stronger supporters of a traditional model which limits women's activities to family and household.

Categories of women that are more inclined to combine the role of a homemaker with the role of an economic provider, are more educated women (Graph 16); younger women; women engaged in intellectual professions; women identifying themselves with the middle class; women without deeply held religious beliefs (Graph 17); and unmarried women.

Graph 16

"A married woman should not work but instead devote herself to the care of children and household"

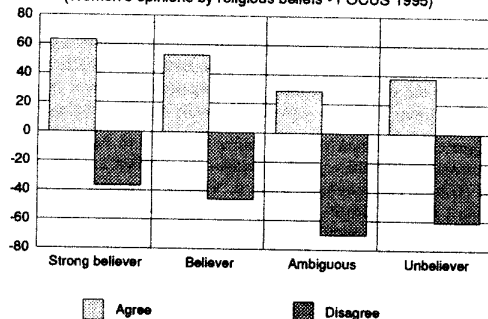
(Women's opinions by education - FOCUS 1995)



Graph 17

"A married woman should not work but instead devote herself to the care of children and household"

(Women's opinions by religious beliefs - FOCUS 1995)



During the decades of full employment, women's work became an economic necessity as well as a particular lifestyle, which despite several well-known negative phenomena (overworked women, sickly children, etc.), enjoyed social approval. Work became for women a *space for satisfying important social needs*. This is illustrated in Table 21.

Table 21

"Are the following reasons important for your working?" (%)

	Yes and rather yes	No and rather no	Don't know
I need to provide financially for my family	95	4	1
I enjoy working	89	10	1
I enjoy contact with other people	84	14	2
I need security in my old age and during sickness	80	18	2
I want to serve as an example to my children	79	17	4
My work is important for other people	71	25	4
I want to utilize my education	68	31	1

The critics of women's employment argue that a working mother cannot provide her child with as much love and security as the mother who is not employed. However, this argument does not enjoy majority acceptance (Table 22).

Table 22

"A working mother cannot provide her child with as much love and security as the mother who is not employed" (%)

	Women	Men	All
Agree	74	60	68
Disagree	26	38	31
Don't know	0	2	1

74% of women and 60% of men are of the opinion that the working mother can provide her child with as much love and security as the mother who does not work. As we can see, the views of men regarding the ability of working women to adequately fulfill her child-rearing role are again more skeptical.

All in all, we can say that employment of women has become an established part of the lifestyle and value system of the Slovak population. Therefore, it would be a simplification to identify the alleviation of women's double-burden with their exclusion from work. Among feasible solutions belong part-time work; development and affordability of services; greater availability of technical devices to lighten the burden of household chores; and last but not least, equal division of family and household responsibilities between women and men.

Should women give up the idea of starting a family?

Another radical solution to the inter-role conflict and the double-burden of women would be to forego the role of a wife and a mother and cultivate instead a professional role. However, such a decision is seldom made by women in Slovakia. As already mentioned, the majority of the adult population in Slovakia marries at least once. Among women of 20 years of age and older, only 10% are single. From the total number of women, only 10% do not have children and only 4% of married women do not have children.²⁷

In our research, we were interested in people's attitudes towards women who decide to pursue a professional career instead of starting a family.

Table 23

"Women who devote themselves only to their work and career and do not start a family, are not normal" (%)

	Women	Men	All
Agree	30	46	38
Disagree	68	47	58
Don't know	2	7	4

The majority of respondents expressed tolerance of such an atypical solution: only 38% declared it to be a deviation from the norm. The difference between the responses of women and men is similar to that of our previous

²⁷ Such a low percentage of unrealized fertility is considered by experts to be identical to the biological minimum. In other words, every woman who is biologically capable of giving a birth to a child, has a child. See *Children - Future of Slovakia...*

findings: among women, approval is more prevalent than disapproval, while among men disapproving answers equal approving ones. Older persons; persons with a lower education and persons with deeply held religious beliefs are less understanding of women's decision to devote themselves exclusively to their work and not to start a family.

One-career or two-career marriage?

In Slovak society, the traditional one-career (meaning the man's career) marriage model is no longer a universally accepted model. Socialist modernization, which from the beginning of the 1950s utilized women's labor, has significantly changed the traditional model of the division of labor between sexes. The foundation of the *traditional patriarchal model*, states J. Alan, basing his ideas on T. Parsons, was the "inequality of both sexes expressed by the idea that segregation of roles of both sexes - man as a breadwinner and woman as a homemaker - represents a functional necessity for marriage and family stability. Preventing the disturbance of the fragile bond between spouses can only be achieved when the woman's vocation is not a "career... Vocation of women can be reduced to only "going to work" which is by its economic content complementary and by its nature (from the point of view of "status" and competencies) non-competitive for the man since the integration of the family system is according to this model based on the absence of competition between spouses." ²⁸

The other model of gender roles is based on the principles of equality and partnership between a man and a woman. In this model, the stability of the marriage and family life presupposes mutual respect and cooperation. The affirmation of this *partnership model* was accompanied by a dramatic and controversial increase in employment of women and by a radical increase in their education and qualifications. These processes created the dilemma of two-career marriages whose existence contradicts the spirit of the patriarchal model. In Slovakia, the foundations of the partnership model were laid during the so-called socialist emancipation of women.

The conflict between the patriarchal and partnership model is far from being resolved. Table 24 is a clear illustration of it.

²⁸ Alan, J.: *Life Stages...*, p. 245.

Table 24

"Which of the following views do you agree with the most? (%)

- A. In the family, only one spouse should pursue a career and this should be the man
 B. In the family, only one spouse should pursue a career: which one it would be should be agreed upon by both partners
 C. The family can function properly even when both spouses pursue a career"

	Women	Men	All
Approving statement A	20	28	24
Approving statement B	24	24	24
Approving statement C	50	42	46
Don't know	6	6	6

24% of respondents support the one-career family model of patriarchal type in which the man pursues a career. An equal number prefer the one-career marriage model, though maintain that both spouses should decide whether the man or the woman will pursue a career. The advocates of two-career marriages present approximately half of the population (46%).

The differences between the views of women and men are symptomatic. Women prefer the two-career marriage model more frequently than men; while the men favor the one-career marriage of patriarchal type more frequently than women.

More pronounced differentiation takes place within the two groups. A traditional conception of a man pursuing a career is particularly common among persons with the lowest education; persons of old age; and persons from the lowest steps of the social ladder.

An important factor affecting the conceptions of respondents is the education of their parents. The higher their education, the stronger the preference for a two-career marriage. This indicates that the conceptions regarding an ideal model of integrating family duties and career requirements are transplanted from the parents' home. This is particularly true of the conceptions of men.

Division of household duties - ideal and reality

The majority of women of productive age fulfill both roles - the role of an employed worker and the role of a homemaker and a mother. For a long time, one of the most pressing problems for women in Slovakia has been their double-burden. Let us now examine the division of domestic duties between women and men and their conceptions regarding optimal division of responsibilities and tasks. We will direct our attention at those activities which traditionally belong to the domain of women's tasks. To what extent are women in Slovakia prepared to hand over a part of their traditional domestic duties to men? And, to what extent are men prepared to take them over? The answers are included in Tables 25 and 26.

A much bigger burden of everyday household responsibilities is placed on women. Women do the laundry, prepare meals, clean the house and wash dishes. The involvement of men in these duties is minimal. The proportion of women who share these tasks equally with men is between 16-30%. In case of some activities, such as doing laundry and cooking, women do not expect to be helped by men.

Sharing of responsibilities is more typical with tasks such as helping children with their homework, taking care of administrative matters or taking children to kindergarten and school. Women expect more help from their partners especially in helping children with their homework (the difference between the actual and the ideal state is 48%), taking children to kindergarten and school (difference 30%), regular shopping (30%), household cleaning and dish washing (27%).

The comparison of Tables 25 and 26 shows that the present division of domestic duties suits men more than women; the difference between the actual and ideal division of tasks is smaller for men. The conceptions of men on the ideal distribution of the majority of routine household tasks are very close to the actual division of these activities; men are satisfied that these tasks are performed by their partners. Men envisage greater involvement in controlling children's homework (difference 19%) and taking children to kindergarten or school (difference 17%).

Table 25

**"Who in your household carries out,
or should carry out the following duties?"**
(Women's opinions - %)

1 = as a rule man
2 = mainly man
3 = shared equally

4 = mainly woman
5 = as a rule woman

	1	2	3	4	5
Cooking					
Reality	1	1	16	37	45
Ideal	0	0	28	55	17
Washing dishes					
Reality	1	1	23	45	31
Ideal	0	1	50	40	9
Regular shopping					
Reality	1	4	30	46	19
Ideal	1	3	60	33	4
Cleaning					
Reality	0	1	21	42	36
Ideal	0	1	44	44	11
Laundry					
Reality	0	0	6	37	56
Ideal	3	1	6	42	48
Control of homework					
Reality	2	4	33	46	15
Ideal	1	2	81	14	2
Taking children to kindergarten, school					
Reality	1	4	49	32	15
Ideal	1	2	79	16	3
Taking care of administrative matters					
Reality	10	20	40	19	12
Ideal	10	27	57	5	1

Table 26

**"Who in your household carries out,
or should carry out the following duties?"**
(Men's opinions - %)

1 = as a rule man
2 = mainly man
3 = shared equally

4 = mainly woman
5 = as a rule woman

	1	2	3	4	5
Cooking					
Reality	3	2	17	43	35
Ideal	1	0	23	56	21
Washing dishes					
Reality	3	3	27	46	22
Ideal	1	1	31	51	16
Regular shopping					
Reality	3	6	40	42	10
Ideal	1	2	48	44	5
Cleaning					
Reality	3	2	25	46	25
Ideal	1	0	37	48	14
Laundry					
Reality	3	1	6	42	48
Ideal	1	1	10	56	33
Control of homework					
Reality	1	5	46	38	10
Ideal	1	3	67	26	3
Taking children to kindergarten, school					
Reality	1	5	52	30	11
Ideal	1	2	69	22	7
Taking care of administrative matters					
Reality	17	27	39	14	4
Ideal	12	31	51	5	2

Let us now compare the views of men and women on the division of household tasks. We can see that women are greater supporters of a balanced division than men. On the other hand, the traditional model, where the largest share of responsibilities falls on women, is more acceptable for men. Preference of the partnership model by men rises with increased education. It is also much stronger among residents of large cities than in a rural environment.²⁹

It can be concluded that, similar to many other countries, the stereotypes of everyday life in the Slovak households are close to the *traditional division between masculine and feminine tasks*. The strengthening of the partnership model presupposes abandonment of deeply rooted stereotypes regarding the roles of man and woman, handed down through socialization.

3.4. PARENTHOOD AND CHILD-REARING

Division of roles in child-rearing

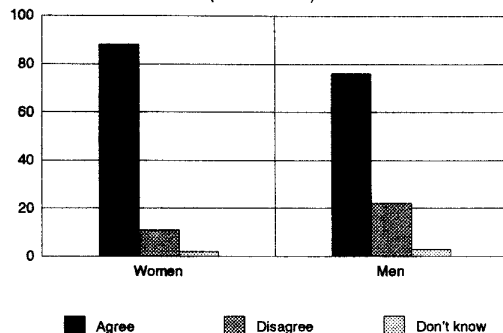
As observed in the preceding chapter, equitable division of duties concerning the upbringing of children finds slightly greater support among women than among men (Graph 18). It is more acceptable for women and men with higher education; for respondents whose parents have higher education; for representatives of younger age groups.

²⁹ "About three years ago when my husband was away from home I wanted to mow the grass. I was mowing and every time I saw a car coming, I threw away the scythe. I don't do this any more; I mow without being ashamed". Old people even taunt the young ones: "You peel the potatoes?! Your father never did that!" See statements of female respondents from the countryside in Rosová, T.: *Ženy na Slovensku. (Women in Slovakia)*. In: *ASPEKT* 1994, No. 3.

Graph 18

"In child-rearing, women should take turns with men"

(FOCUS 1995)



The right of unmarried women to have children

Child-rearing is different when a woman decides to have a child as a single mother. As the statistics indicate, the number of women making such choices is growing. The share of extra-marital births out of the total number of births is growing. While in 1950, only 5.4% children in Slovakia were born out of wedlock, in 1989, it was 7.2% and in 1994, already 11.7% (see Table 6). However, compared to other European countries, Slovakia has still a low percentage of children born to single mothers.

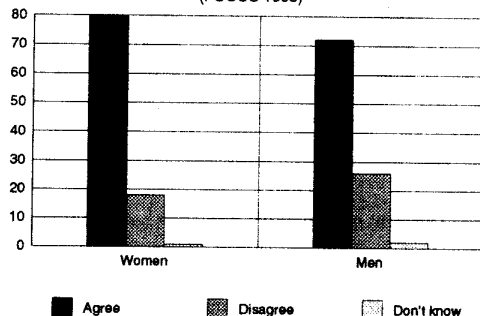
In the past, children born out of wedlock were mostly first-born children to single mothers. By the end of the 1980s, the number of children born out of wedlock as second or third children was increasing. This trend peaked in 1989-1990, when among the children born out of wedlock, the number of second-born children was higher than the number of first-born children. This increase was probably caused by divorced mothers and single mothers who decided to have another child without marrying.

How is the decision of a single woman to have a child and bring it up viewed by other people? To what degree is such an atypical solution socially acceptable? As Graph 19 illustrates, the majority of respondents expressed approval of the view that "if a woman wants to have a child and bring it up as a single mother, it is her undeniable right." Women's approval was slightly higher than men's (80% : 72%).

Graph 19

"If a woman wants to have a child and bring it up as a single mother, it is her undeniable right"

(FOCUS 1995)



Greater support of the right of a single mother to have a child was expressed by persons with higher education; persons identifying themselves with the middle class; persons of young and middle age; and persons without deeply held religious beliefs.

Divorce or not when marriage has failed?

In Slovakia, the divorce rate has increased since the beginning of the 1950s. The number of dissolved marriages with children out of the total number of dissolved marriages has also risen. While in the 1950s, marriages with children comprised 47% of the total number of dissolved marriages, in 1990 the percentage was already 74%. The most commonly dissolved marriages

are those with one minor child. However, the number of dissolved marriages with two dependent children has steadily increased. The average number of children in a dissolved marriage is 1.6. Out of the children's population of up to 14 years of age 0.8% are subjected to the psychological traumatization resulting from parents' divorce.

The high divorce rate is reflected in the prevailing acceptance of divorce among respondents. 64% of respondents share the opinion that it is better for children when parents divorce than to grow up in a bad marriage. 32% of respondents have the opposite view.

The declared attitudes of women do not differ from those of men, even though in reality, women's share of divorce applications is 65.5%.³⁰ Among both women and men, the younger age groups,³¹ as well as persons with no religious beliefs favor divorce more frequently.

As Table 27 illustrates, the reactions of both women and men are influenced by their level of education.

Table 27

"Which of the following views do you agree with the most?"

A. For the sake of children, it is necessary to stay in a bad marriage at any cost

B. Is it better for children when parents divorce than to grow up in a bad marriage?"

(Opinions of women and men by education - %)

	Women	Men
	A : B	A : B
Elementary	44 : 54	43 : 50
Vocational	30 : 66	25 : 68
Secondary	18 : 78	26 : 73
University	25 : 75	31 : 63

³⁰ Vranová, Z.: *Situation and Status of Women...*

³¹ This is in accordance with the fact that the most intensive divorce age for women is 25-29 years. See *Children - Future of Slovakia...*

Women with a higher education support divorce more frequently than men with the same level of education. This difference is particularly visible in the category of university educated respondents: Among women, 75% would prefer divorce, among men 63%.

This also corresponds to other sociological findings which indicate that as the level of education rises, the divorce rate among women increases significantly. According to P. Guráň, the correlation between education or socio-professional status and between the divorce rate is more significant for women than for men.³²



WOMEN AT WORK: DO THEY ACCEPT INEQUALITY?

Women in socialist Czechoslovakia, as in other countries of the former Soviet bloc, even though legally guaranteed equal status with men, were not always able to exercise their rights. *Equality de jure* was often *inequality de facto*.

In the process of the so-called socialist emancipation of women, the educational system and the labor market opened up for "the other gender." The educational level and employment rate of women rose significantly. However, this process had a dark side to it - one of the highest employment rates in Europe; low numbers of part-time jobs; under-utilization of women's qualifications; wage discrimination; career discrimination; and low numbers of women in managerial positions.³³

In the centralized Czechoslovak economy, the development of the labor force was different for women than it was for men. Women worked in different professions and mostly carried out work for which they received less remuneration. Whenever women and men performed the same profession, inequalities were to be found (this is particularly true of professions requiring a university degree). Some professions, and even entire branches of the economy were feminized. This concentration of women caused a decline in the prestige of such professions or branches, e.g. education, health care, and services.

After this brief historical excursion, let us look at some statistical data illustrating the present status of women in the labor market.

³² See Guráň, P.: *Rozvodovosť ako sociálny problém. (Divorce as a Social Problem)*. In: *Aktuálne problémy sociológie rodiny. (Current Problems of the Sociology of Family)*. Bratislava, Veda 1989, p. 295-336.

³³ See Čermáková, M. - Navarová, H.: *Women and Transformation Processes...*

4.1. THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE "OBJECTIVE" MIRROR

The educational potential of women

One of the distinctive structural features of the labor market in Slovakia is the relatively high level of education among women. Currently, the number of women with complete technical secondary education or general secondary education with a matriculation certificate is higher than that of men. The proportion of university-educated women in the total labor force is 41%. On the other hand, women represent 58% of the total labor force with only an elementary education.

Table 28

Percentage of women and men
in individual educational categories of the labor force

	Women	Men	All
Elementary school	57.6	42.4	100
Apprenticed (no Matriculation Certificate)	34.3	65.7	100
Technical secondary school (no Matriculation Certificate)	18.1	61.9	100
Apprenticed (Matriculation Certificate)	31.4	68.6	100
Technical secondary school (Matriculation Certificate)	58.5	41.5	100
Grammar school (with the Matriculation Certificate)	64.6	35.4	100
University	41.1	58.9	100

Source: *Statistical Numbers and Graphs. Results of the Census of the Labor Force for the Second Quarter of 1995*. Bratislava, Statistical Office of Slovak Republic 1995.

Participation of women in labor market

After the sharp increase in the employment rate of women at the end of 1980s, the percentage of women in the economically active population has stabilized. In 1960, women comprised 39% of the labor force; in 1970, 44%; in 1980, 45%; and in 1990, 45%.³⁴ After 1990, the percentage of women in the economically active population has oscillated around 45% (Table 29).

Table 29

Trends in women's participation in labor force (%)

Year	1989	1990	1991	1993	1995*
% of women in the total labor force	45.5	44.5	43.3	45.8	46.1
% of women in the public sector	46.1	46.2	46.3	49.0	49.6
% of women in the private sector	42.1	37.7	35.1	40.7	43.6

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Slovak Republic 1994*. Bratislava, Statistical Office of Slovak Republic 1994 *Statistical Numbers and Graphs. Results of the Census of the Labor Force for the Second Quarter of 1995*. Bratislava, Statistical Office of Slovak Republic 1995.

* Data for the second quarter of 1995.

In 1991, the percentage of employed women out of the total number of women reached 45.5%, while the percentage of economically active men out of the total number of men was 54.0%. In the second quarter of 1995, the percentage of economically active women out of the total number of women represented 42.6%, while the percentage of economically active men out of the total number of men was 52.3%.

Women ranked by income

In comparison with men, women more frequently fall into lower income categories. In 1993, the average monthly wage was 5,310 Slovak crowns (Sk),

³⁴ See *Štatistické ročenky ČSSR za roky 1961, 1971 a 1981*. (Statistical Yearbooks of ČSSR 1961, 1971 and 1981). Prague, SNTL 1961, 1971, 1981.

but as many as 73% of women were in wage brackets of up to 5,000 Sk, while only 46% of men were in the same wage brackets. In the wage brackets of 5,000 - 6,000 Sk, there were 15% of women and 23% of men. Only about 11% of women reached the 6,000 Sk wage, while 31% of men did so.³⁵

The differences in income between women and men are even greater in the individual educational categories. Table 30 illustrates the gross wages of university-educated women.

Table 30

**Percentage of university-educated women
in the selected income categories**

Gross wages in Slovak crowns	Percentage of university-educated women in the income category
3,001 - 4,000	61.5
4,001 - 5,000	59.4
5,001 - 6,000	56.1
6,001 - 8,000	36.9
8,001 - 10,000	30.8
10,001 - 12,000	20.9
12,001 and more	17.2

Source: *Statistical Numbers and Graphs. Results of the Census of the Labor Force for the Second Quarter of 1995*. Bratislava, Statistical Office of Slovak Republic 1995.

Over-feminization of some branches of the economy

In the second quarter of 1995, the percentage of women in the labor force was 46.1%. Women comprised over half of the labor force in the following branches of the national economy: clothing industry (90%), health care and social care (80%), textile industry (79%), education (78%), banking and insurance (70%), hotels, restaurants (66%), trade (60%), and food manufacturing (52%).³⁶

³⁵ Vranová, Z.: *Situation and Status of Women...*

³⁶ *Štatistické čísla a grafy. Výsledky výberových súpisov pracovných síl za 2. štvrťrok 1995. (Statistical Numbers and Graphs. Results of the Census of the Labor Force for the Second Quarter of 1995)*. Bratislava, Statistical Office of Slovak Republic 1995.

Proportion of women among the unemployed

The percentage of unemployed women is approximately the same as that of men. Since 1990, women have accounted for about 50% of the total number of unemployed. In May 1995, women comprised 46.5% of the unemployed.

Table 31

Proportion of women among the unemployed

Year	1990	1991	1993	1995*
% of women (of the total number of job applicants)	47.4	52.0	47.8	46.5
Unemployment rate	1.6	11.8	14.4	13.3

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Slovak Republic 1994*. Bratislava, Statistical Office of Slovak Republic 1994 *Employment Services Administration Statistics*. Bratislava 1995.

* Data for May 1995.

Women attend retraining courses more frequently than men. On the other hand, women are longer out of work, while staying less time on unemployment benefits.³⁷

Women as entrepreneurs

Even though the percentage of women working in the private sector is increasing, for the most part women work as employees and not as self-employed entrepreneurs. In 1994, female entrepreneurs represented 21.6% of the total number of entrepreneurs with no employees and 19.7% of the total number of entrepreneurs with employees.³⁸ In the second quarter of 1995, these numbers were slightly higher: Women comprised 25.7% of entrepreneurs with no employees and 25.5% of entrepreneurs with employees.³⁹

³⁷ Vranová, Z.: *Situation and Status of Women...*

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ *Statistical Numbers and Graphs...*

Women as managers

In the second quarter of 1995, women occupied only 28% of managerial positions in large organizations. The same percentage of women occupied managerial positions in small enterprises.⁴⁰

The load of domestic work

The majority of women work full-time, which averages out to 8.5 hours a day. According to the statistical data for 1993, only 2.2% of employed women were working part-time. According to data from 1990, domestic work took on average 5 hours a day. In comparison, the domestic work of men took 2.5 hours a day.⁴¹

It must be emphasized that the domestic work of women produces significant value. According to M. Potůček, "a considerable part of the social wealth (according to estimates, as much as 40% of the reported gross domestic product in the developed countries) is created through the unpaid domestic work. The domestic work, for the most part, is carried out by women."⁴²

4.2. THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE "SUBJECTIVE" MIRROR

In the previous chapter, the majority of the objective characteristics conveyed the unequal status of women and men in the labor market. In this chapter, we will examine the extent to which women and men realize such inequality. Do they accept it or reject it as being discriminatory?

If a person of opposite sex held my job...

The status of women and men in the workplace was examined with the aid of a hypothetical question involving two situations: A man was replaced in the job by a woman and vice versa. This question was posed to economically active men (Table 32) and economically active women (Table 33).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Vranová, Z.: *Situation and Status of Women...*

⁴² Potůček, M.: *Sociální politika. (Social Policy)*. Prague, SLON 1995, p. 107.

Table 32

**"Suppose that your current job was given to a woman.
What would her situation be?"**
(Opinions of economically active men - %)

Wages:	
A woman would earn higher wages	1
A woman would earn the same wages	50
A woman would earn lower wages	36
Don't know	13
The amount of respect paid to her:	
A woman would enjoy more respect	5
A woman would enjoy the same respect	42
A woman would enjoy less respect	39
Don't know	14
Work performance:	
A woman would work better	5
A woman would work equally well	44
A woman would work less	36
Don't know	15

The common, but not the prevailing view among employed men is that a woman would earn the same wages, enjoy the same prestige and perform equally well. However, more than a third of them admit that a woman holding their job would find herself in a disadvantageous situation in terms of wages and respect. At the same time, more than a third of these men think that the work performance of women would be weaker than that of men. As statistical analysis has shown, the assumption about lower wages and lower respect for women was expressed more frequently by those men who also presume that a woman's performance would be weaker. The men who presume that a woman would perform equally well will, for the most part, also presume that she would receive the same wages and enjoy the same respect.

And what were the answers of women?

Table 33

**"Suppose that your current job was given to a man.
What would his situation be?"**
(Opinions of economically active women - %)

Wages:	
A man would earn higher wages	34
A man would earn the same wages	50
A man would earn lower wages	2
Don't know	15
The amount of respect paid to him:	
A man would enjoy more respect	22
A man would enjoy the same respect	51
A man would enjoy less respect	9
Don't know	18
Work performance:	
A man would work better	4
A man would work equally well	60
A man would work less	20
Don't know	15

The highest percentage of women presume that a man would receive the same wages, enjoy the same respect and perform equally well. One third of women presume that if they were replaced by a man he would receive higher wages one fifth presume more respect for a man. At the same time, there is hardly a woman who thinks that a man would deliver a better work performance in her job on the contrary, one fifth of them expect that a man would work less.

Who has better opportunities at work?

Respondents also expressed opinions regarding other aspects of the status of women and men in the workplace.

As we can see in Table 34, the majority of women and men think that women in the workplace have fewer opportunities to be promoted to higher positions. Approximately half of the women and half of the men think that women have fewer chances regarding the wage increase and staying on the job after a lay-off. A relatively high percentage (35-46%) of both

women and men think that women have a lesser chance of receiving a better job at their workplace and a lesser chance to obtain employment.

Table 34

**"What is the situation in your workplace
if you compare the opportunities of men to women?" (%)**

- 1 = better opportunities for women
2 = no different for men and women
3 = worse opportunities for women

	1	2	3
Promotion to a higher position:			
Women's opinions	10	28	62
Men's opinions	5	37	58
To receive a wage increase:			
Women's opinions	7	39	54
Men's opinions	2	49	49
To stay on the job after a lay-off:			
Women's opinions	10	42	48
Men's opinions	6	47	47
To get a better job in your workplace:			
Women's opinions	10	44	46
Men's opinions	8	49	43
To get a new job:			
Women's opinions	19	46	35
Men's opinions	6	52	42

The percentage of women who think that there is gender equality is less than half when evaluating the opportunities of women and men to be promoted to a higher position, to get a new job or to get a better job at their workplace. The portion of men who think that there is gender equality when they evaluate the opportunities of women and men to obtain employment, get a better job at work, higher wages, and stay on the job after a lay-off, is about fifty percent.

The opinion held most seldom by women and men is that women would have better opportunities than men.

The comparison of women's and men's views shows that their evaluations do not differ in principle. This means that *women do not see their opportunities in the workplace in a more critical light than men do.*

Much the same assessment of women's opportunities in Slovakia was observed four years ago.⁴³ It can be assumed that such similarity demonstrates not only the stability of opinions of the population, but also the unchanging opportunities of women at work, compared to the opportunities of men.

Women and men as managers and administrators

As previously shown, the majority of women and men agree that a woman has fewer opportunities than a man to be promoted to a higher position. Such an assessment of women's opportunities is a realistic reaction to the *masculinization of management*, i.e. the low percentage of women in management. This is illustrated by Table 35.

Table 35

"Have you ever had a female manager?" (%)

	Women	Men	All
I have had both, male and female managers	62	30	47
I have only had male managers	23	68	45
I have only had female managers	14	2	8

45% of respondents have had only male managers and 47% have had both, male and female managers. On the other hand, only 8% of respondents have had only female manager.

The experience of women is very different from the experience of men. While the experience with male managers is prevalent among men, women have had more experience with managers of both genders. Significantly, women have had the most experience with female managers.

⁴³ See Čermáková, M. - Gatnar, L.: *Ženy v sociální struktuře 1991. Výzkum pracovních a životních podmínek žen v ČR a SR. (Women in Social Structure 1991. Conditions of Work and Life of Women in Czech and Slovak Republics)*. Prague, Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences 1991.

Let us now move from past experience to current preferences. Who is more acceptable in the role of a manager: a man or a woman?

Table 36

"Whom would you prefer as your manager?" (%)

	Women	Men	All
It makes no difference	49	43	46
A man	40	51	45
A woman	11	6	9

As Table 36 indicates, *a man is more acceptable in the role of manager than a woman.* This preference is more common among men (51% : 6%) than women (40% : 11%). For almost half of women (49%) and men (43%), the manager's gender is not an issue. The percentage of women and men who would prefer a woman as their manager, is small. The differences between the views of women and men are not significant.

Attitudes to preferential treatment of men

Our findings indicate that a significant percentage of men, and an even more significant percentage of women, see the current situation in the labor market as *disadvantageous to women*. The question is whether people find this situation acceptable and just. To what extent do people approve of, or condemn this situation? The answer can be found in Table 37.

Preferential treatment of men in hiring is considered appropriate by two-thirds of men and by almost half of women. Preferential treatment of men in the workplace is approved of by two thirds of men and by over half of women.

As we see, women are less willing to accept discriminatory practices directed against women. Nevertheless, a substantial part of them perceive such treatment as normal and do not question these deep-rooted cultural beliefs.

Still, it is encouraging to observe that the women's discrimination is viewed more critically by younger, better educated persons (Graph 20).

Table 37

**"Men should have better jobs and higher wages
because they have to provide for their families" (%)**

	Women	Men	All
Agree	56	72	64
Disagree	43	27	35
Don't know	1	1	1

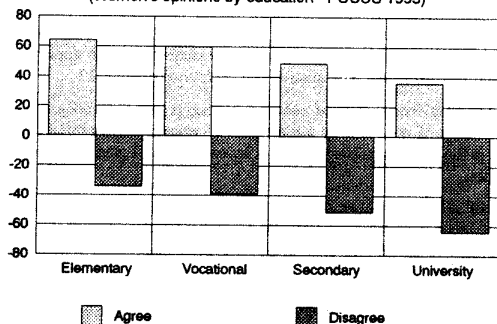
**"Men should be given preference in hiring
when there are job shortages" (%)**

	Women	Men	All
Agree	43	67	55
Disagree	56	31	44
Don't know	1	2	1

Graph 20

**"Men should be given preference in hiring
when there are job shortages"**

(Women's opinions by education - FOCUS 1995)



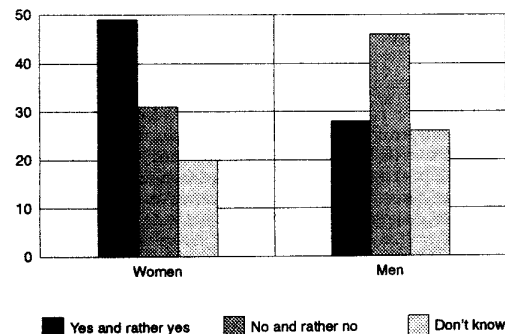
THE DIGNITY OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC AND AT WORK

The belief that women's dignity is denigrated is rather common in Slovak society. As Graph 21 shows, this opinion is held by 49% of women. Such feelings are more frequent among divorced women (as many as 73%); women in the 25-34 age group; women residing in big cities; and women employed in the private sector. The sensitivity of men to this issue is significantly lower, but not negligible: 29% of them interpret some situations of everyday life as being denigrating to the dignity of women.

Graph 21

Do you think that women's dignity is denigrated?

(FOCUS 1995)



Which situations are perceived as denigrating to the dignity of women? The answers to this question are shown in Table 38.

Table 38

"Could you give examples of situations when the dignity of women is denigrated?" (%) *

Sexual harassment of women	11
General belittling, discrimination	7
Discrimination at work and job discrimination	6
Depiction of women's bodies in the media	6
Brutality, physical violence towards women	4
Impolite behavior towards women	3
Prostitution, brothels, strip clubs	3
Unsuitable conditions for fulfilling motherhood role	1
Other situations	4
No answer	66

* Respondents could give three answers. Therefore the total is over 100%.

Some of the issues concerning women's dignity have already been dealt with in Chapters 3 and 4 where the status of women in family and at work has been analyzed. Now, other situations will be examined.

5.1. THE DEPICTION OF FEMALE NUDITY IN PUBLIC

After 1989, the number of nude bodies in films, advertisements, videotapes and even the daily press, not to mention the market for pornographic magazines, increased dramatically. Almost overnight, people in Slovakia have been confronted with displays that were previously reserved for private settings. What is people's reaction to this phenomenon? Which forms of presentation of naked female bodies are perceived as acceptable and which ones as unacceptable?

Table 39

**"In the last years depictions of naked or half-naked women can often be encountered in public. What is your opinion on this?"
(% of answers 'I am disturbed by it')**

	Women	Men	All
Posters in homes	77	53	66
On posters in the workplace	73	38	56
On billboards	72	44	59
In ads for products not directly associated with the human body (cars, etc.)	70	35	53
In regular newspapers and magazines	61	28	45
On TV	49	24	37
In movies in cinemas	32	13	23
In movies on video	27	12	20
In ads for products directly associated with human body (underwear, etc.)	26	13	20
In erotic magazines	22	8	1

The majority of people age 15 and over are disturbed by the display of naked female bodies on posters in homes, on billboards, posters in the workplace and in ads for products not directly associated with the human body. To a large extent, they also reject the display in regular magazines or newspapers not specializing in erotic material.

On the other hand, the majority of population is not disturbed by the display of naked or half-naked bodies on TV and in the cinema, ads for products directly associated with the human body (e.g. underwear), video and erotic magazines.

This means that the depiction of female nudity is condemned more frequently in cases where people have *no choice of whether they want to see it or not*. A typical example is highway billboards, which are difficult to ignore. The acceptance of female nudity by a large part of the population is limited to the private sphere where it is up to the individuals to make a choice whether they want to see it or not (TV, cinema, video). Stronger disapproval of the public display of female nudity probably stems from the consideration that children might be exposed to it.

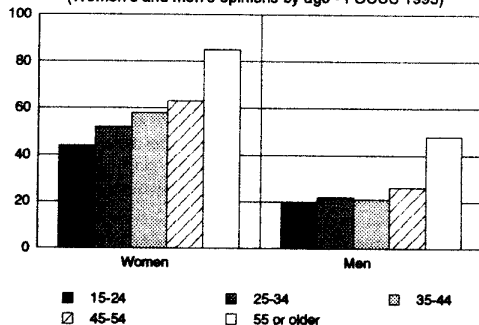
Table 39 illustrates the disparity between views of women and men. *Women object more fervently to every single manner of public display of female nudity.* The majority are disturbed by naked female bodies on posters in homes, in the workplace, on billboards, in ads for products not directly associated with the human body, and in regular newspapers and magazines. One half of women are disturbed by nudity shown on TV. They show a less disapproving attitude towards nudity in films, in cinemas, on videos, ads for products associated with the human body and in erotic magazines.

Women's age significantly affects their attitudes to the depiction of female nudity. The rejection rate increases proportionately with increasing age and this is valid for every manner of depiction (Graph 22). Stronger opposition to the display of female nudity is observed among women and men with elementary education (Graph 23) and among religious believers.

Graph 22

"I am disturbed by the display of naked women in regular newspapers and magazines"

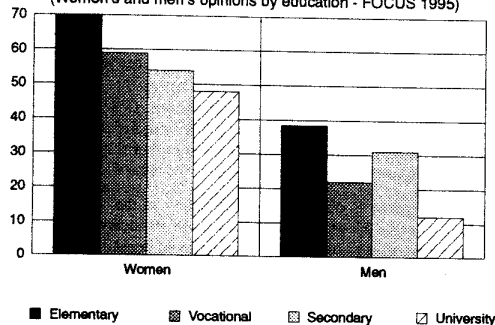
(Women's and men's opinions by age - FOCUS 1995)



Graph 23

"I am disturbed by the display of naked women in regular newspapers and magazines"

(Women's and men's opinions by education - FOCUS 1995)



In conclusion, let us ask whether the attitudes of people in Slovakia towards the display of naked female bodies have changed in the last couple of years. To answer this question, we can use the results of the sociological research conducted in 1991.⁴⁴ It revealed a similar pattern: The majority of respondents in Slovakia were disturbed by depiction of naked female bodies on billboards, posters in homes and in the workplace, in regular magazines, and in films. They were least disturbed by the nudity depicted in erotic magazines. The comparison has also shown that *the unyielding attitude of people towards the display of naked female bodies has somewhat softened in the last four years.*

⁴⁴ Ibid.

5.2. OBSCENE COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKPLACE

While the display of naked female bodies is a new social phenomenon accompanying political thaw and the advent of mass culture and advertising, the communication of dirty jokes and innuendoes in the workplace is not so new. This kind of communication accompanied the arrival of the socialist modernization in Slovakia. As a form of widely accepted behavior, it took hold in many places of work, regardless of whether these were factory halls, offices, teacher staff rooms or research institutes. Obscene communication in the so-called socialist collectives, together with deformed labor relations and overall moral degradation created, among other things, a fertile ground for sexual harassment.

How widespread is obscene communication in the workplace and what attitudes do people adopt towards it? As Table 40 shows, this is still a fairly common phenomenon. Almost half of employed people encounter regularly the communication of the dirty jokes, stories and innuendoes. The other half state that in their workplace this kind of communication is practiced rarely (42%) or not at all (10%).

Table 40

"Are dirty jokes, stories or innuendoes being told in your workplace?"
(Answers of employed respondents - %)

	Women	Men	All
Yes, quite frequently	34	55	45
Yes, but rarely	49	36	42
No	14	6	10
Does not apply, don't know	3	3	3

Observance of obscene communication is more widespread among men than among women: 54% of men, compared to 34% of women state that it is common. This manner of communicating is more prevalent among young people and persons with lower education.

Men are not only more frequent *consumers* but also more frequent *producers* of obscene communication. According to 61% of respondents, dirty jokes, stories or innuendoes are told exclusively by men, or more

frequently by men than by women. According to 35% of respondents, the share of men and women in obscene communication is the same. Only 4% of respondents state that the initiative is taken predominantly or exclusively by women.

According to our research, there is a *high social acceptance* of obscene entertainment in the workplace. As many as 73% of respondents declared that they are not disturbed by dirty jokes, stories or innuendoes. This group consists of passive consumers ("it doesn't bother me, but I only listen to it" - 37%) and active producers ("it doesn't bother me and I gladly participate in the entertainment" - 36%).

The numbers on the other side are much lower: obscene communication is sometimes disturbing for 24% of respondents and always disturbing for only 3% of respondents.

Table 41

"How do you react when dirty jokes and innuendoes are told in your workplace?" (%)

	Women	Men	All
It doesn't bother me and I gladly participate	16	52	36
It doesn't bother me, but I only listen to it	43	32	37
I find it sometimes disturbing	35	14	24
I find it always disturbing	6	2	3

The difference between the attitudes of women and men is quite pronounced: *women show less willingness* to take an active part in obscene communication and they object more frequently to this sort of social entertainment (Table 41).

Which groups of women are more tolerant to obscene entertainment in the workplace? The results of our analysis are startling: the attitudes are evenly distributed among women of both higher and lower education, identifying themselves with upper and lower social classes, and residing in large cities and small communities. The only differentiating factor is the religious beliefs. The more intense they are, the more resolute is the rejection of obscene communication in the workplace.



It can be concluded that *the majority of women in Slovakia do not interpret obscene communication in the workplace as sexual harassment* and therefore, do not view it as unacceptable behavior. This conclusion is even more valid for the masculine subculture where this type of communication is more approved.

5.3. SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The definition of the term *sexual harassment* is culturally conditioned. What is perceived by some people as a natural part of life, may appear to others as an act of aggression undermining their feelings of self-worth and threatening to their psychological well-being.

In our research, we chose a rather broad definition: we speak about excessively provocative and intimate behavior. We focused on the incidence of this phenomenon in the workplace. We did not limit our attention only to the harassment of women because such behavior can be directed also against men.

Table 42

"Has it ever happened that a boss or colleague of yours of the opposite sex has behaved more intimately or provocatively than you would consider appropriate?" (%)

	Women	Men	All
Yes, several times	33	26	29
Yes, once	21	15	18
Never	46	59	53

The data in Table 42 are revealing. Almost half (47%) of all employees were confronted with intimate or provocative behavior by their supervisors or colleagues. The unduly intimate or provocative behavior of managers or colleagues was endured by 54% of working women. Among men, a remarkable 41% reported it. One third of women stated that they had experienced such a situation repeatedly.

Due to a relatively broad formulation of the question, we were only able to record incidence of *sexual harassment in the broader sense*. To define sexual harassment in the strict sense, let us turn to S. Webb who describes the sexual harassment as "deliberate and/or repeated sexual or sex-based behavior (including, of course, remarks) that is not welcome, nor asked for or returned." The key question according to S. Webb is the question of power: "the harasser knows or thinks (consciously or not) that he or she has more power. Otherwise the harassee could simply say 'Stop' and it would be all over." ⁴⁵

A stricter definition of sexual harassment presupposes an unequal power relationship. The harassee is not capable of self-defense because she or he feels dependent upon the harasser and does not want to jeopardize her/his interests or needs. The situation when occupational authority or power are used to enforce sexual demands can become a case for public concern or court case only after the harassed person rejects this relationship as humiliating and unacceptable.

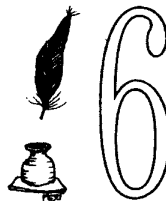
Having defined sexual harassment in strict sense, we have been confronted with the question as to how many of those 46% of respondents who felt that they were subjected to unduly intimate or provocative behavior in the workplace were actually subjected to sexual harassment? On the basis of our research, we are unfortunately not able to give a satisfactory answer to this question.

As Table 38 shows, 11% of respondents consider sexual harassment as a form of injury to women's dignity. And although this number does not reveal the actual percentage of sexually harassed persons in the population, it indicates that the term "sexual harassment" is relatively unknown in Slovakia. Attitudes on this issue are not affected by public debate which has been taking place in the developed Western countries in the last couple of years.

It can be assumed that *it is not the absence of the problem per se that leads to silence over the issue of sexual harassment in Slovakia*. Rather this silence could be explained by two circumstances. Firstly, sexually harassed persons might accept such behavior. They might perceive it as natural part of relationships in the workplace; they could be unable to defend their dignity because they feel helpless and dependent upon the harasser. Secondly, sexually harassed persons might be willing to join the harassing person in the violation of formal norms and rules of the institution which employs them.

⁴⁵ See Aburdene, P. - Naisbitt, J.: *Megatrends for Women*. New York, Villard Books 1992, p. 87.

Therefore, we think that the silence over the issue of sexual harassment in Slovakia is proof that the subject is still *taboo*. It would be beneficial to open the windows and allow some feminist air inside. Such an act might lead to a *reaffirmation of self-respect in women*. This value shift could have an indirect positive effect on men.



PROBLEMS OF TRANSITION THROUGH THE EYES OF WOMEN AND MEN

The traditional division of gender roles (man as a provider and woman as a homemaker) places a larger share of the responsibilities for the housekeeping, child-rearing and health of family members on the shoulders of women. It is this division of roles that leads women and men to perceive the most important social issues in a different light.

Table 43

"Each society has its own problems.
Which issues should be given priority in Slovakia?" (%) *

	Women	Men	All
Unemployment	53	50	52
Social security	37	35	36
Crime	29	29	29
Standard of living	27	22	25
Health care	27	18	23
Economics	23	36	29
Politics and democracy	15	17	16
Education	15	7	11
Human relations, ethics	5	5	5
Ethnic issues	3	5	4
Environment	3	5	4
Romany problem	2	3	2
Drug abuse, alcoholism	2	2	2
Rule of law, legislation	1	2	2

* Respondents could give three answers. Therefore the total is over 100%.

The views of women are different from those of men. Women put a greater emphasis on issues concerning *the standard of living, health care and education*. Men more frequently stress issues concerning economic transformation (privatization, foreign investment, private enterprise, taxes, and agriculture). On other issues, there is very little difference between the views of women and men.

Regular representative surveys⁴⁶ examining value and political orientations of Slovak population since the breakdown of Communism in 1989 show that women display *greater sensitivity to the negative social consequences of economic transformation*. They express higher expectations of the state and more frequently stress the responsibility of the state for the social welfare of its citizens. In comparison with men, women more frequently profess a socialist economic orientation and less frequently a liberal orientation. The liberal orientation of women increases with their greater education,⁴⁷ particularly at the expense of the socialist orientation (Graphs 24 and 25).

Women differ from men in their *lower interest and less knowledge of foreign policy issues*. Women support the integration of Slovakia into the European Union and NATO less frequently. The higher the level of education of women,⁴⁸ the greater their pro-western orientation (Graphs 26 and 27).

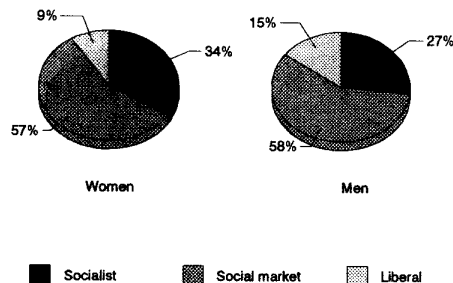
⁴⁶ See *Aktuálne problémy Česko-Slovenska - január 1992*. (Current Problems of Czechoslovakia - January 1992). Bratislava, C.S.A. 1992; *Current Problems of Slovakia after the Split of Czechoslovakia - March 1993*. Bratislava, C.S.A. 1993; *Current Problems of Slovakia after the Split of Czechoslovakia - October 1993*. Bratislava, FOCUS 1993; *Current Problems of Slovakia - May 1994*. Bratislava, FOCUS 1994; *Current Problems of Slovakia - December 1994*. Bratislava, FOCUS 1995.

⁴⁷ The typology of economic orientations (socialist - social market - liberal) is based on six statements of respondents concerning the principles of functioning of the economy. See *Current Problems of Slovakia - December 1994*...

⁴⁸ The typology of foreign policy orientations (pro-western - ambiguous - anti-western) is based on six statements of respondents. See *Current Problems of Slovakia - December 1994*...

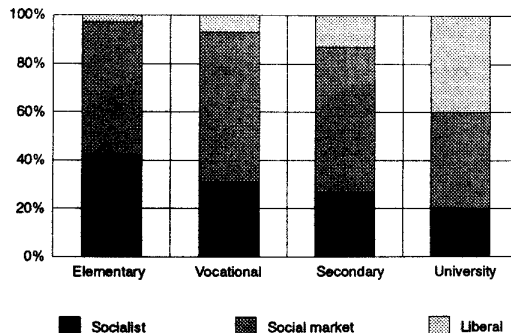
Graph 24

Economic orientations of women and men in Slovakia (FOCUS 1994)



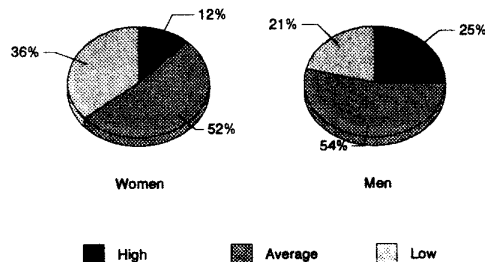
Graph 25

Economic orientations of women in Slovakia (By education - FOCUS 1994)



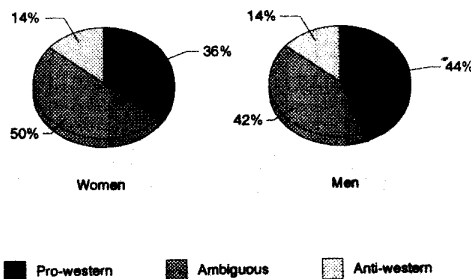
Graph 26

Level of information of women and men about foreign policy issues (FOCUS 1994)



Graph 27

Foreign policy orientations of women and men in Slovakia (FOCUS 1994)



WOMEN'S LOT AND MEN'S LOT: ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

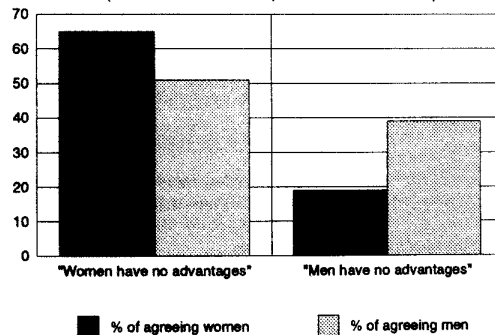
"In your opinion, do women have advantages over men? If yes, what are they? And do men have advantages over women? If yes, what are they?"

This set of questions enabled respondents to freely express their opinions on women's and men's lots in Slovakia. So, who has more advantages: women or men? According to 71% of people, men do. This opinion is held more frequently by female respondents (Graph 28).

Graph 28

Do women/men have advantages over the other sex?

(Women's and men's opinions - FOCUS 1995)



Women's lot is perceived as more difficult than men's lot. Only 42% of respondents state that women have at least some advantages over men. This opinion is shared more frequently by male respondents.

The percentage of respondents holding the view that women have no advantages over men increases with the age of women, particularly with ages 40 and over. University-educated women and women residing in big cities share this opinion less frequently than women with lower education and those residing in small communities.

7.1. ADVANTAGES MEN HAVE OVER WOMEN

Let us now examine where people see the advantages of men and women. Based on the statements of respondents, the advantages of men can be classified as follows:

1. Social advantages

1. 1. Advantages associated with work, career and social status

- * Advantages at work (better use of qualifications; better job; better financial compensation for work; easier promotion; fewer obstacles for self-fulfillment)
- * Higher status in society (greater opportunities; greater authority in society; the right to make decisions)

1. 2. Fewer responsibilities for domestic work and family

- * Fewer responsibilities for smooth functioning of the household (no "second shifts" after work)
- * Fewer responsibilities for child-rearing and family-caring

1. 3. More freedom in life

- * More independence in decision-making, more time for self-development
- * More personal liberties, more liberal public opinion (fewer prohibitions for men than for women)

2. Physiological/personality advantages

2. 1. Advantages associated with physiological distinctness of men

- * Physical strength; prowess; virility; ability of self-defense
- * Men do not have to go through menstruation, pregnancy and childbirth

2. 2. Advantages associated with men's abilities

- * Men can endure more; they are more persevering; tenacious; vigorous; better at arranging matters; assertive; courageous; more direct in pursuing their goals; have leadership abilities; self-confidence; entrepreneurship; determination; fighting spirit; ability to excel; face problems better
- * Men are more rational; more reasonable; have analytical abilities and can think strategically
- * Men are better at rising above problems; forget faster; take life less seriously; can adapt to the times; are not as emotional as women.

Table 44

"In your opinion, do men have advantages over women?
If yes, what are they?" (%) *

	Women's views	Men's views	All
Social advantages	64	35	50
Physiological/personality advantages	21	25	23
No advantages	12	30	21
Don't know	7	9	8

* Respondents could give three answers. Therefore the total is over 100%.

As Table 44 indicates, people emphasize *social advantages rather than physiological/personality advantages of men*. This is particularly true of female respondents who frequently define the social advantages of men as discriminatory advantages against women.

Compared to men, women more frequently state that men have greater advantages. Only 12% of women stated that men have no advantages over women, while this opinion was shared by 30% of men.

7.2. ADVANTAGES WOMEN HAVE OVER MEN

1. Social advantages

- * Legislative advantages (women are more protected by law; receive more assistance from the state; after divorce they are granted custody of children; receive alimony; receive widow's pensions; retire earlier)
- * Maternity leave
- * Women have no financial obligations to their families (do not have to solve family's financial problems; women are not breadwinners)
- * Advantages at work (easier work; less physical exertion; more job opportunities; their mistakes are better tolerated; there are fewer demands placed on women)
- * Greater tolerance, regard for women (men are more tolerant to women; men compromise with women; defend them; assist them; women have priority everywhere)

2. Physiological/personality advantages

2. 1. Advantages associated with the effect women have on men

- * Outward appearance (beauty, pleasant appearance, sex appeal; attractiveness; physical characteristics; coquetry; charm; know how to dress nicely)
- * Effectiveness in pursuing goals (women frequently achieve a great deal using their feminine charm; young and attractive women have greater opportunity to achieve their goals; women get what they want through crying and flattering; advance more easily; use manipulative methods; have advantage when dealing with men; are forgiven more easily; know how to control and influence men)

2. 2. Psychological make-up of women

- * Sensitivity (delicacy; gentleness; tactful behavior; fragility)
- * Understanding, tolerance (comprehension; perceptiveness; consideration for others; civility)
- * Ability to elicit sacrifices; adaptability; modesty
- * Morals, responsibility
- * Family orientation

2. 3. Advantages associated with women's abilities

- * Endurance, fortitude, ambition, patience, perseverance (women are mentally stronger; can endure more than men; women support men; are able to take care of themselves)
- * Competence; practicality; diligence; readiness; foresight; intuition; cleverness; decisiveness; diplomacy; rationality
- * Communication advantages (better language aptitude; sharper tongue; eloquence)

2. 4. Advantages associated with physiological distinctness

- * Motherhood
- * Women do not have to serve in the army; do not have to shave; live longer.

Table 45

"In your opinion, do women have advantages over men?
If yes, what are they?" (%) *

	Women's views	Men's views	All
Social advantages	8	18	13
Physiological/personality advantages	23	25	26
No advantages	58	42	50
Don't know	7	9	8

* Respondents could give three answers. Therefore the total is over 100%.

In their answers in Table 45, both women and men stress *the physiological/personality advantages rather than the social advantages of women*. Moreover, 65% of female respondents and 51% of male respondents did not mention any advantages of women over men. Both results add credibility to the statements expressing the existence of social advantages enjoyed by men.

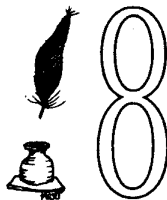
Also interesting is the fact that women's psychological make-up, which manifests itself in qualities such as sensitivity, responsibility, understanding, self-sacrifice, family orientation, was considered an advantage. Do these qualities really comprise women's advantages in the sense that they make women's lives easier? Or do these positive qualities simply benefit those around them?

Only very few male respondents count such an obvious difference as the longer life span of women, as a women's advantage. The life expectancy of women in Slovakia is approximately 7-8 years higher than that of men.

Let us summarize our findings. Both women and men have the tendency to attribute more advantages to persons of the opposite sex. At the same time, both women and men hold the view that women have no advantages over men more frequently than the view that men have no advantages over women. Among the advantages of men, respondents give higher priority to the advantages of a social nature rather than the advantages of a physiological/ personality nature.

Our findings show that *public opinion in Slovakia favors the view that men have a more privileged position in society than women*. However, as we saw in Chapter 4.2., this does not mean that the majority of women or men condemn the preferential treatment of men as inappropriate or unacceptable.

In search for the causes of this state of affairs we come to the last topic of our book: women's participation in public life.



WOMEN, MEN AND PUBLIC LIFE

In Slovakia, as well as in other post-communist countries, the political activity of women is rather low. This is not a new trend. *Political marginalization of women*, which characterized the socialist period,⁴⁹ continues despite the fact that after the revolution, space opened up for the meaningful and multifaceted participation of women in political life.

What are the causes of the continued political marginalization of women? Why did Slovak women miss the chance for a revolutionary redistribution of power as some Western political scientists have stated with evident disappointment? Did they even have such opportunity?

In the first place, the political activity of women depends on their everyday life conditions. Despite the radical political changes after 1989, career opportunities for women in politics were, and still are, restricted because of their family responsibilities. Political activity requires a great expenditure of effort and time which women who have major domestic burdens can rarely generate.

According to M. Čermáková, current low participation of women in politics might be the result of two phenomena.⁵⁰ *Firstly*, the majority of women voluntarily give up the idea of pursuing a political career. According to her research, women in the Czech Republic who voluntarily refuse to participate in politics and power comprise 85 % of the total number of women

⁴⁹ See Wolchik, S.: *Czechoslovakia in Transition. Politics, Economics and Society*. London and New York, Pinter Publishers 1991; Matynia, E.: *Finding a Voice: Women in Post-Communist Societies of Central Europe*. New York 1994 (manuscript); Štátná, J.: *New Opportunities in the Czech Republic*. In: *Transition. Events and Issues in the Former Soviet Union and East Central and Southeastern Europe*. Prague, Open Media Research Institute, September 1995.

⁵⁰ See Čermáková, M.: *Women in the Czech Society: Continuity or Change*. In: Čermáková, M. (ed.): *Women, Work and Society*. Prague, The Sociological Institute of Czech Academy of Sciences 1995.

of productive age. We estimate that in Slovakia their percentage is the same or even slightly higher.

Secondly, some women who have a high degree of charisma and aspirational capital, have already demonstrated an interest in pursuing a career in politics (2-3%). Others have all the qualifications to be in politics but are hesitant to do so (10-12%). In M. Čermáková's estimate, the percentage of these two groups is 15% of the total population of women of productive age. We assume that in Slovakia the percentage is the same or slightly lower. Women pursuing their ambitions hit a *glass ceiling*. Politics in Slovakia is gender-specific, a sphere dominated by men. Moreover, the probability that women will be discriminated against or excluded, increases with higher level positions.

8.1. INTEREST IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

In the socio-cultural context of Slovakia, women's interest in public affairs and their participation in political life is not generally accepted and approved. Low participation of women in political life reflects the widespread conception that women should first and foremost devote themselves to the family and their home.

While only 45% of respondents in our research considered the interest in public affairs to be an important quality⁵¹ of ideal woman, 67% of respondents assigned this attribute to the ideal man (Graph 29).

Women reflect these low expectations. According to repeated surveys, they show *lower interest in political affairs* than men. They more frequently perceive politics as confusing and non-transparent (Graph 30) and feel more inhibitions when speaking about it. For example, in December 1995, 58% of women, compared to 45% of men, held the opinion that it was best either not to discuss politics with anybody or speak about it only with people who were close to them.⁵² Compared to men, women demonstrate *fewer political aspirations* and less desire to become actively involved in politics (Graph 31).

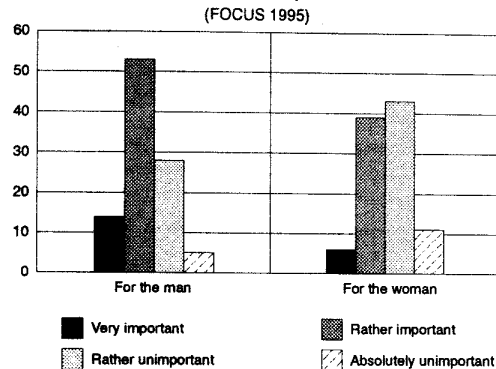
⁵¹ The values are the result of adding together the answers *very important characteristic* and *rather important characteristic*. Therefore, they are higher than the values in Table 1.

⁵² See *Current Problems of Slovakia after the Split of Czechoslovakia - March 1993*. Bratislava, C.S.A. 1993; Bútorová, Z. - Gyurfišová, O. - Kuska, M.: *Current Problems of Slovakia on the Verge of 1995-1996*. Data from the Survey. Bratislava, FOCUS 1996.

Lower too, is women's membership in political parties (5% of women compared to 11% of men), as well as in associations and civil organizations (12% of women compared to 19% of men).⁵³

Graph 29

Is an interest in public affairs an important attribute for the ideal man/woman?



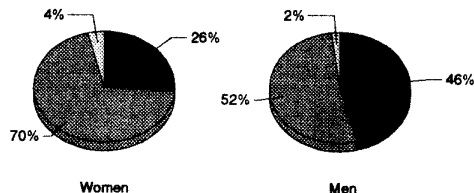
In this respect, Slovak women are not an exception. As comparative research conducted in April 1995 by the Open Media Research Institute has shown, women from all eleven post-communist countries, including Slovakia, showed less interest than men in politics. *The higher the education of women, the higher their interest and ability to understand politics and the higher their desire to become involved in it.* This trend was evident in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Bulgaria and Rumania.⁵⁴

⁵³ *Current Problems of Slovakia - December 1994*. Data from the Survey. Bratislava, FOCUS 1994.

⁵⁴ See Gigli, S.: *Toward Increased Participation in the Political Process*. In: *Transition. Events and Issues in the Former Soviet Union and East Central and Southeastern Europe*. Prague, Open Media Research Institute, September 1995.

Do you understand what is happening in politics?

(FOCUS 1995)

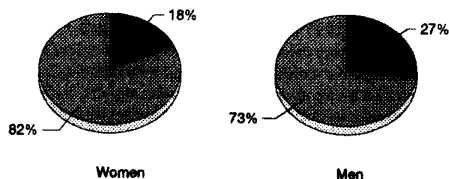


■ Yes and rather yes ■ No and rather no □ Don't know

Graf 31

Would you run for political office if necessary?

(FOCUS 1994)



■ Probably yes ■ No

Two opposite reactions can be drawn from these findings. The first is to look for ways to raise women's interest in politics, increase their involvement in public affairs, and realize their civil potential.

The second reaction is to see women's low interest in political affairs as a confirmation of the thesis that women should not aspire to political participation (Graph 32). In short, "women should not poke into politics." This view is based on deep-rooted stereotypes underestimating women's abilities to participate in rational discussions of public affairs.

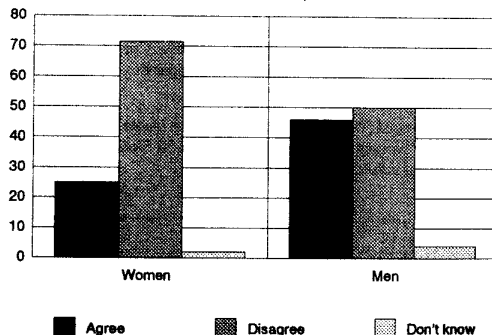
The latter reaction is particularly widespread among men. Almost half (46%) of them hold the opinion that the world of politics is primarily a male domain. This opinion is evenly distributed among men, regardless of their age, level of education, age, place of residence.

The exclusion of women from politics is acceptable for only 25% of female respondents. Among them are mostly older women and those with lower level of education, while younger and more educated women rarely find such approach acceptable.

Graph 32

"Women should not poke into politics"

(FOCUS 1995)



8.2. REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT

One of the conventional indicators of women's participation in political decision-making is their representation in parliament. In Czechoslovakia before 1989, there was a quota system in place guaranteeing a relatively high representation of women in parliament. However, this participation was formal and ritualistic.

Throughout East Central Europe, the quota system was abolished as a relic of the past. Due to this spontaneous political decision, the proportion of women in parliament has dramatically declined. In 1986, women made up 29% of deputies in the Federal Assembly of Czechoslovakia and 30% of the deputies in the Slovak National Council. Before the 1990 election, there was some discussion of a minimum of 40% representation of women in parliament. However, after the election, representation of women in the Federal Assembly decreased to 10%, and in the Slovak National Council to 11%. Similarly, representation of women in the parliaments of East Central Europe dropped from an average of 26.6% in 1987 to an average of 11.7% in 1990.⁵⁵

One of the reasons was the low representation of women on the candidates' lists of political parties, as well as the unfavorable position of women's names at the end of the lists. However, the unwillingness of women to run for elections played a major role, too.

In the September 1994 parliamentary elections in Slovakia, there were only 311 (15%) women among 2,008 candidates. Currently, there are 21 women in the National Council of the Slovak Republic. This is only 15% of the total of 150 deputies.⁵⁶

Several developed Western countries use the quota system to regulate representation of women in parliament. How would Slovak women and men react on the re-introduction of this system?

⁵⁵ See Čermáková, M.: *Women in the Czech Society: Continuity or Change...*

⁵⁶ For comparison: in 1994, women comprised 30.7% of all deputies in the Danish parliament; 24.6% in the Austrian parliament; 21.4% in the German parliament; 21.3% in the Dutch parliament; 12.9% in the Italian parliament; 9.5% in the Czech parliament; 8.7% in the Irish parliament; 4.3% in the Greek parliament.

Table 46

"In some countries a law has been introduced stating that a certain percentage of parliament seats must be reserved for women. Should such a law be introduced in Slovakia?" (%)

	Women	Men	All
Yes	60	37	49
No	20	45	32
Don't know	20	18	19

The views of men and women on the introduction of a quota system for representation of women in parliament differ. This idea was supported by the majority of female respondents (60%). The most frequent support was observed among women with higher education; women holding white-collar jobs; and women identifying themselves with upper or middle class. On the contrary, the introduction of a quota system is perceived as a good idea by a minority of men (37%) regardless of their age, level of education and other social characteristics.

Table 47

"What should the representation of women be in the National Council of Slovak Republic?" (%)

	Women	Men	All
0 - 14%	14	22	17
15 - 20%	9	16	12
21 - 30%	22	21	21
31 - 40%	14	10	12
41 - 50%	27	9	18
51 or more	2	2	2
Don't know	13	21	17

As Table 47 shows, only 17% of respondents consider appropriate the current or a lower number of women among members of parliament. As many as 65% of respondents - 74% of women and 58% of men - would prefer higher representation of female deputies. However, only 29% of women and 11% of men favor equal (or almost equal) representation of female and male deputies in parliament.

Obviously, the introduction of the quota system cannot be recommended as a panacea or as an end in itself. Women should not simply fulfill some quota, especially not through the inclusion of incompetent female deputies. What is of utmost importance is *the necessity to search for, motivate, select and prepare women for political career*. This is a task which until now has been insufficiently addressed by political parties and by the educational institutions of the governmental and non-governmental sector in Slovakia.

8.3. ISSUES CONCERNING WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS

In the preceding chapter, we examined the political marginalization of women. We would now like to turn our attention to the participation of women in non-political civic activities. How have the changes in Slovakia since 1989 affected the nature of women's social life? Even though this was not the main topic of our research, from the data obtained, we can piece together a map of women's interpersonal communication reaching out from their family and intimate sphere of life. Let us first examine the basic form of association: socializing with friends.

Meeting friends

Table 48 illustrates differences between the way women and men socialize with friends. In comparison with men, women more frequently meet their friends at home and in church and less frequently in cafes, restaurants or clubs, at sporting events, or in special interest associations.

The most important finding is that women generally have less time to communicate with friends. Their family status greatly affects the availability of time: Married women, widows and women living with their partners less frequently attend cultural, social and sporting events; they are less frequently involved in activities of special interest groups; and they less frequently go to cafes and restaurants. For the most part, women socialize with their friends in their homes, their immediate surroundings or in church.

Table 48

"How frequently do you meet your friends at the following places?" (%)

	Frequently	Rarely	Never
Answers of women			
In front of my house, in the street,			
in the park	61	33	6
At home	46	50	3
In church	25	28	48
At social events	16	47	37
In a cafe, restaurant, etc.	12	46	42
At cultural events	11	56	34
At sporting events	7	35	58
In special interest associations	6	22	72
Answers of men			
In front of my house, in the street,			
in the park	60	34	6
At home	38	56	6
In a cafe, restaurant, etc.	28	52	20
At sporting events	26	51	23
In church	18	31	51
At social events	17	53	30
In special interest associations	13	28	59
At cultural events	10	58	32

Education, age and community size play also a significant role. The more educated women are, the younger they are, and the bigger their community is, the more diversified and secularized are the settings for their communication with friends. In other words, these women less frequently meet their friends in church and more frequently in special interest groups, as well as at cultural, social and sporting events.

Women's association: shortcomings and new trends

According to 33% of women, there are no clubs, associations or other organizations suitable for the leisure pursuits or civic activities of women. Only 32% of women stated that there were suitable establishments in their

community or city area. As many as 33% of women did not have an opinion. The shortage of space for meetings, leisure pursuits and civic activities of women was most acutely felt in smaller communities of up to 5,000 residents.

As Table 49 illustrates, women would welcome the following kind of activities in women's clubs, associations and organizations:

Table 49

"What activities could clubs, associations or similar organizations offer that would contribute to the life of women like you?" (%) *

Handcrafts, domestic work, guidance	17
Cultural events	14
Sport, physical activities	11
Debating clubs, group problem-solving, mutual assistance	11
Lectures on health and psychology, counseling	10
Education, retraining, counseling	9
Recreation, entertainment	8
Social service for women	7
Social gatherings, networking	6
Politics, general issues	6
Special interest activities, courses	5
Trips, outdoor activities, package tours	4
Volunteer work	4
Lectures on improving appearance	2
Programs for children	2
I have no interest in associations	5
Don't know	17

* Respondents could give three answers. Therefore the total is over 100%.

Some activities of clubs and associations are directly associated with the everyday lives of women. Therefore, a question arises as to why such activities do not start spontaneously, on women's initiatives. Female respondents added the following to the list of possible reasons:

Table 50

"If in your community there are no suitable organizations for cultivating women's interests, what is the cause of this?" (%) *

Lack of financial resources	85
Women are too busy	82
Lack of understanding on the part of local authorities	59
Lack of able organizers among women	55
Women show no interest	45
Irrelevance of such organizations	12

* This question was answered by 33% of female respondents who had noted the absence of suitable organizations.

As Table 50 illustrates, beside the lack of financial resources and understanding on the part of local authorities, women see constraining elements in the lack of time, able organizers, and interest on the part of women, and in the irrelevance of organizations involved in the promotion of women's interests. Women's low self-esteem, poor resolve and lack of enthusiasm for leisure pursuits and civic activities combine with still more insurmountable unfavorable external conditions.

Besides these persisting shortcomings and difficulties, there are *visible signs of hopeful changes* in Slovakia. Firstly, recent research on the non-profit sector has shown that approximately 11% of women in Slovakia are involved in volunteer work, assisting people in need and solving different social problems. The potential for *women's volunteer activities* is far from exhausted: 40% of women who were not involved in any volunteer work in the past stated that they would be willing to get involved in such work if asked to do so.

Volunteers of non-governmental organizations involved in social welfare issues are mainly women. According to Z. Fialová, "this reflects the inclination of women to perform this kind of work as well as those specific tasks that require academic preparation in educational and social work which women more frequently have obtained."⁵⁷

⁵⁷ See Bütora, M. - Fialová, Z.: *Nonprofit Sector and Volunteering in Slovakia*. Bratislava, SAIA-SCTS and FOCUS 1995, p. 54.

Secondly, after 1989, new opportunities opened up for associations of women. The Slovak Association of Women which had a monopoly was dissolved. New organizations, clubs and initiatives sprang into life.⁵⁸

The National Report on the Status of Women in the Slovak Republic, published in 1995, listed the following women's organizations: Democratic Union of Women; various women's organizations affiliated with political parties (Christian-Democratic Association of Women, Association of Women of the Democratic Left, Society of Women for the Social Democracy); professional and special interest women's groups (Consumers' Forum, Society of Female Entrepreneurs and Managers, Association of Female Alumni, Association of Women for World Peace; Živena, Catholic Unity).⁵⁹ One such organization is the newly-formed Alliance of Women of Slovakia, the organization which commissioned our study.

Obviously, the number of organizations, associations and initiatives involved in women's issues is much higher. We estimate that within the non-governmental sector in Slovakia, approximately 15% of organizations are involved in women's issues and 22% of organizations are involved in family issues.

There is a high number of organizations with a "women's connotation," i.e. organizations in which a high number of women might be involved (organizations involving children of up to 15 years of age, charity, social welfare, etc.) Women are also active in organizations involved in human rights protection and environment protection.

ASPEKT, the educational and information center of women, organizes lectures, seminars and gathers feminist literature. Published by Slovak and Czech authors since 1992, the feminist journal *ASPEKT* provides analytical articles, critical reflection, introduces new topics and encourages broad interdisciplinary debate.

⁵⁸ On the beginnings of the "civil self-movement of women" and the systematization of women's initiatives see Plávková, O.: *Občianske iniciatívy žien - platforma regenerácie ženského hnutia na Slovensku v 90-tych rokoch. (Civil Initiatives of Women - the Platform for Regeneration of the Women's Movement in Slovakia in the 1990s)*. In: *Sociologia* 1992, No. 1-2.

⁵⁹ *Národná správa o postavení žien v Slovenskej republike. (National report on the Status of Women in the Slovak Republic - Working Draft)*. Bratislava, Center for Strategic Studies of the Slovak Republic, 1995.



FEMINISM IN PUBLIC PERCEPTION

Most of our findings point to the existence of problem areas in the everyday lives of women in Slovak society - whether it is reproductive issues, family life, work, political affairs and public life. According to widely spread public perception, women are at a disadvantage when compared to men. This fact is more acutely felt by women. However, our research findings have repeatedly shown that women themselves do not interpret their disadvantages as being a result of discriminatory practices. They also do not consider the situation to be inappropriate or unacceptable. On the contrary, women often identify themselves with masculine culture, its values and behavior patterns. Educated women are more critical of such a state of affairs.

Many problems identified in this study have also been present, albeit in different forms, in developed Western countries. But there they are dealt with by women's organizations and feminist movements. Feminism has become a part of the mainstream of Western culture.

What is the situation in Slovakia? To find out more about attitudes towards feminism, we asked respondents the following open-ended question: 'What comes to your mind when you hear the words 'feminism' or 'feminist'?' Their answers fall into the following categories:

Table 51

Interpretations of feminism (%)

	Women	Men	All
Positive and neutral conceptions	34	26	30
Negative conceptions	20	30	24
Confused, incorrect conceptions	11	11	11
Don't know	36	33	35

Table 51 shows that the words 'feminism' or 'feminist' have positive or neutral connotations for only 30% of people in Slovakia. The percentage of negative conceptions is almost the same (24%). Ignorance or incorrect interpretation of feminism is expressed by as many as 46% of respondents. It is symptomatic that women more frequently express favorable and neutral views while men's attitudes towards feminism are more frequently negative.

Let us describe individual interpretations in greater detail, using statements of respondents.

1. *Positive and neutral definitions of feminism (30%)* relate to two major areas:
 - * Promotion of equality of women, more women's rights, women's liberation, the women's movement, women's solidarity (21%)
 - * Positive characteristics of women (strong, courageous, self-confident, liberated, ambitious, persevering, resolute, modern, clever - 9%)
2. *Negative definitions of feminism (24%)* center on two kinds of characteristics:
 - * Negative characteristics of women (Amazon, fighter, radical, angry, exaggerating; with anti-male attitudes; conceited; careerist; with an inferiority complex, unfulfilled; unpleasant, egoistic; older, lonely; unbalanced, abnormal; functionary; lesbian; overfeminine - 20%)
 - * The women's movement is based on the rejection of men; useless, artificial, exaggerated, extreme, aggressive movement; men-hating (4%)
3. In the category of *confused answers and incorrect conceptions* regarding feminism and feminists (11%) there were answers such as: something interesting; something related to politics; prostitute; men's affection towards women; advertising campaign (cosmetics, cigarettes, etc.); over-feminized educational and other systems.

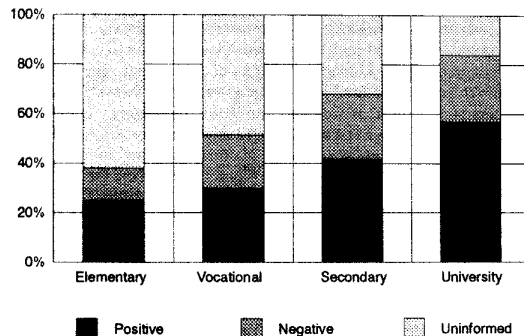
9.1. FEMINISM THROUGH THE EYES OF WOMEN

What affects women's conceptions regarding feminism? This notion is unknown to poorly educated women; women identifying themselves with the lower social class; deeply religious women; and women residing in small communities. Positive or neutral attitudes towards feminism correlate with increasing levels of education (Graph 33). Women identifying themselves with the middle and upper classes, women residing in large cities (particularly Bratislava), and unbelievers, see feminism in the most favorable light.

Graph 33

Attitudes of women towards feminism

(By education - FOCUS 1995)



The least informed about feminism is the group of women over 65. As many as 80% of these women do not even know what the word feminism means. However, the majority of women younger than 55 years of age, know what feminism is and are able to evaluate it. An above-average concentration of positive and neutral evaluations of feminism is among single and divorced women, as opposed to widows and married women.

Women with positive or neutral attitudes towards feminism differ from other women in that they show greater support for the equality of women at work, in the family and in politics. They less frequently accept men's privileges in the labor market and the opinion that married women should not work. They approve more frequently of non-traditional forms of cohabitation (premarital cohabitation, cohabitation of persons of the same sex) and the right of single women to have children and bring them up. They strongly reject the view that women should not get involved in politics and they support the quota system regulating representation of women in parliament.

9.2. FEMINISM THROUGH THE EYES OF MEN

One of our crucial findings is that socio-demographic attributes affect men's and women's views on feminism differently. Among men, the level of devotion to religion and their social class self-identification are not differentiating factors. Although the effect of age is relatively insignificant, some differences are noticeable. The age group 25-44 shows above-average awareness of feminism, as well as - and this is interesting - above-average concentration of persons holding negative attitudes.

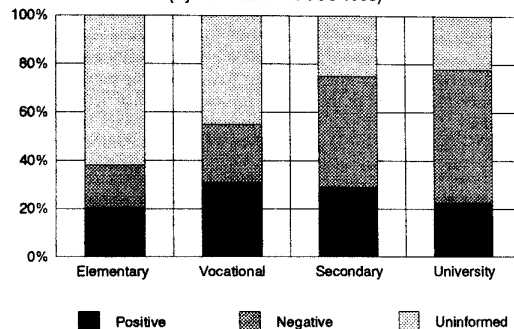
Men from Bratislava know significantly more about feminism than men from other places. This is reflected in two opposing attitudes: on the one hand, above-average unfavorable views, and on the other hand, above-average favorable views of feminism.

The most surprising finding is the correlation with education which is the strongest differentiating factor (Graph 34). As with women, the concept of feminism is well-known to highly educated men. However, these are not the men who more frequently express positive or neutral attitudes towards feminism. On the contrary, the concentration of negative attitudes increases dramatically in this group of men.

Graph 34

Attitudes of men towards feminism

(By education - FOCUS 1995)



Why is this the case? Why are more educated men more critical in their attitudes towards feminism? How do the views of those who reject feminism differ from the views of other men?

Statistical analysis shows that men who criticize feminism, are less likely to value attributes in women like assertiveness, the ability to financially provide for the family, an interest in public affairs, an ability to defend others, and being respected by their community. They also practice obscene communication more frequently at their workplaces. They are more likely to reject active participation of women in political life.

Thus we can conclude that the negative interpretation of feminism is more common among those men who assign to ideal woman the qualities of the *weaker sex*. This is why their criticism of representatives and activists of feminist movements is very strong. In their opinion, *feminists lack the attributes of submissiveness*. Such a conclusion is also supported by the typology of interpretations of feminism described at the beginning of this chapter. According to this typology, the negative evaluation of feminism is, to a greater degree, based on the negative image that feminists have, and to a lesser degree on the open rejection of the feminist movement itself.

Our findings, which demonstrate the reserved, conservative attitudes of women and men in Slovakia to feminism and its activists, require additional commentary. In the first place, we have to stress that such a phenomenon is not unique in East Central European countries. According to E. Matynia, "in our part of Europe, the attitudes towards feminism are very complicated. The word *feminism* itself has pejorative connotations. If, for example, a woman active in public life pursues mostly women's issues, she will be committing political suicide. Women holding public posts try to avoid resembling either of the two models of the woman activist that have been widely discredited: that of the communist functionary and that of the Western feminist." E. Matynia quotes a symptomatic self-definition of women-activists: "We are neither comrades nor feminists; we are women."⁶⁰

This is a vicious circle. If the politically active women emphasize women's issues too much, they will risk their access to decision-making positions. At the same time, women are under-represented in public life precisely because women's issues are not taken seriously.

Disparaging attitudes towards feminism have their roots in the pre-1989 political experience of women and men. As citizens, regardless of sex, they were both oppressed by the totalitarian socialist state. Dissident V. Havel stated in the middle of the eighties that "in our environment, even though women are faring much worse than women in the West, feminism appears to be simply *yada*."⁶¹

The belittling of women's issues in Slovakia is made easy because of the negative image of the officials of the former Women's Association (a monopolistic women's organization controlled by the Communist Party) and because of the perceived eccentricity of Western feminist movements and their representatives in the eyes of the Slovak women and men.

Moreover, we are dealing with the specific *feminine variant of learned helplessness* that characterized political culture during the era of "real-socialism." If the general syndrome of learned helplessness is the willingness to leave the representation of citizens in the hands of "experts," the specific symptom in the case of women was, and still is, to delegate those duties to men. According to O. Plávková, "women know how to define their problems and are able to determine the areas where they should get involved. However,

⁶⁰ Matynia, E.: *Finding a Voice*...

⁶¹ Havel, V.: *Anatomie jedné zdrženlivosti. (Anatomy of a Self-restraint)*. Prague 1985.

they are not willing to get involved themselves. Even though almost all women hold the opinion that women's status calls for a radical change, almost half of all women are convinced that their personal involvement is not necessary, that men can represent them as well as women can."⁶²

Even a cursory look at the Slovak political scene points to the masculine behavior of some politicians with elements of machismo thrown in.

In comparison with Western countries which have strong feminist movements, Slovakia and other post-communist countries have a different tradition with respect to women's liberation. Women from post-communist countries gained many rights during the socialist era in the process of the so-called "women's emancipation from the top." Women did not have to fight for their rights. Nor did they have to use their organizations for this political struggle. This might be the reason, as A. Bunčáková states, why "the majority of women from Eastern Europe are convinced that the women's movement with its politically articulated philosophy is not an appropriate instrument to introduce changes into socio-political conditions which, even today in the post-communist countries, are based on inequalities between sexes. Women from Eastern Europe prefer the individual strategy of self-actualization, typical of professional women. On the contrary, the Western feminist alternative is represented by the women's movements."⁶³

As seen through the eyes of most Slovak women and men, Western feminism is very esoteric in nature. As a consequence, it has a minimal effect on them. Very few women in Slovakia know that the feminist movement in the West has had a significant impact on political life in the last few decades. They do not realize that many problems and concerns that particularly affect women, and which previously may have seemed to be outside politics, are now central to political debates.⁶⁴

⁶² The 1992 observation of O. Plávková is cited from: *National Report on Status of Women in the Slovak Republic*...

⁶³ Bunčáková, A.: *Feministická kritika dichotómie verejnej a súkromnej sféry. Západné a východoeurópske perspektívy. (Feminist Criticism of the Dichotomy between the Public and Private Spheres. Western and East European Perspectives)*. In: ASPEKT 1995, No. 2-3. See also Čermáková, M.: *Gender, Society, Labor Market*...; Štátná, J.: *New Opportunities in the Czech Republic*...

⁶⁴ See Giddens, A.: *Sociology*. Oxford, Blackwell Publishers 1992.



CONCLUSION: GENDER ISSUES AS A VITAL TOPIC OF DEMOCRATIC POLICY

One hundred years ago, the Slovak writer, E. Šoltésová wrote: "What people imagine under women's liberation is the worst kind of distortion. The worst mistake regarding women's liberation is to see it as some sort of foolish rebellion of women against men." But for Šoltésová, who was the prominent representative of the influential women's association *Živena*, women's liberation was only "an elevation of women's education" and a "way of assisting women to achieve independence." "It is not simply the result of women's frustration, vanity and ambitions but rather the result of social circumstances, a necessary stage at which humanity had to arrive in the course of its development... Women's liberation has internal stimuli and external causes. The internal stimuli come from women wanting to grow, develop and act in the spiritual sphere, the same way as men do - regardless of whether the world approves or not..."⁶⁵

One hundred years after E. Šoltésová, J. Cviková and J. Juráňová wrote in the introduction of the special issue of the journal *ASPEKT* devoted to various forms of feminism: "Feminism is because of women, about women and for women... Humans are not from one sex but from two sexes. Each of them is capable of standing on its own. Only if this is apparent will they be able to have a dialogue and coexist... Feminism helps us to affirm our uniqueness and enrich our lives."⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Cited from Mikulová, M.: *Ženy a národ na prelome 19. a 20. storočia. (Women and the Nation at the Turn of the 20th Century)*. In: *ASPEKT*, 1994, No. 1, p. 73-74.

⁶⁶ Cviková, J. - Juráňová, J.: *Úvodné slovo. (Introductory Word)*. In: *ASPEKT* 1994, No. 2, p. 1.

Some critics of feminism in Slovakia argue that *the problems of the post-communist era are of a universal nature* and that it is not desirable to stress the gender aspect. "In Slovakia, there are more pressing issues than feminism to be dealt with," writes J. Juráňová,⁶⁷ quoting the objection raised by some men - often the most educated men - who, as our research discovered, share reserved views on feminism. According to these men, women's issues are less important than the political problems associated with the threat of an authoritarian backlash in Slovakia. If the democratic regime is to be preserved, it is important not to get engulfed by specific issues, "not to fragment the social agenda," but to form a united front. According to these voices, *feminism is a luxury* which the young Slovak democracy struggling for survival can hardly afford at present. The time of feminism will come after all the main issues are dealt with.

Against the manifold complications of post-1989 developments - the fragile democracy, the uncontrolled course of privatization, the persisting ethnic tensions and other threats to the transformation of the Slovak society - these arguments sound convincing at first sight. However, given the findings of our research, we must question them.

Firstly, these arguments undermine one of the main gains of the post-1989 change - the plurality of public discourse. Viable civil society must be characterized by a plurality of perspectives, visions, and conceptions, and represented by hundreds of associations, organizations, and initiatives, publicly discussing collective values.

Secondly, it is disputable, if not outright illusory, to assume that once the key issues regarding democracy are solved, the "low priority" issues (e.g. women's issues or environmental issues) will be easier to manage.

Thirdly, if the quality of life in Slovakia is to be improved; if the unfavorable trends in the reproductive behavior of the population are to be reversed (for example, if the trend towards a more responsible attitude to entering into marriage and having a first child is to be established); if a greater variety of life-careers is to be achieved; if discriminatory attitudes towards

⁶⁷ Juráňová, J.: *Stav feministickéj reflexie slovenskej spoločnosti päť rokov po... (State of Feminist Reflection in Slovak Society Five Years After...)*. In: *Päť rokov po... (Five Years After)*. Proceedings from the International Conference in Budmerice, 1994. Bratislava, Association of Writers' Organizations of Slovakia - Institute of Slovak Literature, Slovak Academy of Sciences 1995, p. 73.

women in the workplace are to be overcome; if the women's double-burden of work at home and in workplace is to be alleviated; and if the participation of women in public life is to be increased - it is necessary to conduct a *public discourse* about these issues.

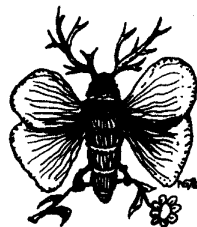
Obviously, such fundamental challenge to the present system of values, ways of thinking and norms of behavior can only be achieved through mobilizing a concerned public and through exerting efficient collective pressure. Such a civilizational shift presupposes the entry of dynamic, self-confident women on the public scene, as well as persevering activities of their collective representations - women's organizations and movements.

Finally, the critics of feminism should realize that developing a partnership and cooperation between women and men is one of the main trends of post-industrial democratic countries. Slovakia looks up to and aspires to become an equal partner of these countries in an integrated Europe.

It is important for women to realize that they should stop thinking and behaving like a minority.⁶⁸ It is necessary to remove the socio-cultural barriers which prevent gender issues from becoming the topic of public debate and the focus of democratic policy. In Slovakia, as in other developed countries, we can expect this process to release constructive social energy.

As we have tried to show in our book, we are now only at the very beginning of this process. It is possible that our findings in various areas have revealed only the tip of the iceberg leaving the greater part hidden, untouched and unanalyzed. However, even this protruding part should encourage the critical reflection of those women and men who are interested in improving the quality of our lives.

⁶⁸ Čermáková, M.: *Problém "Metuzelám" aneb Ženy jako sociální menšinová skupina?* (Problem "Methuselah" or Women as a Social Minority Group?). In: *Sociologické aktuality* 1992, No. 8.



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SHE AND HE IN SLOVAKIA

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