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## Which Qualities Should Children Be Encouraged to Learn at Home?\*

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**Abstract:** This paper uses the survey data of EVS 1991 and EVS 1999 and in an exploratory manner it seeks to find answers to four questions concerning qualities which children should be encouraged to learn at home: (1) Has there been a change in preferences of these educational values during the period 1991-1999 in Czech society, which has been undergoing a deep political, economic and social transformation? (2) Are these preferences structured along the social and demographic characteristics of the Czech population? (3) Is there a general pattern in educational preferences among the Czech population and if so, is it traditional or modern values that are being preferred? (4) What is the position of the Czech Republic among other European countries with respect to these preferences?

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### Introduction

This paper deals with educational values, concretely with educational values in the family as an institution that plays a major role in the upbringing and socialisation of children and adolescents. The way in which children should be brought up in families and the qualities they should be encouraged to learn are eternal questions that are not easily answered. Generations of parents have been dealing with them, and they search again and again for their own solutions because there is no simple and easy 'parental' recipe which they could learn from somebody else. The variety of opinions and attitudes held by parents as well as a number of different theories that deal with upbringing in the family play a role. Certain models for upbringing are offered by pedagogy and psychology. Some models for upbringing are certainly also provided by the family of orientation, whose attitudes regarding upbringing in the family are then confronted with the family of procreation. The opinions of other families belonging to the same generation that are passed on and shared in the process of communication at friends' meetings also have an influence. However, in the end, the specific style of upbringing which becomes dominant in the family depends on the parents and the educational values they incline toward.

The aim of this paper is to find out which educational values were preferred by the Czech population in the 1990s. The questions asked in this text are the following: (1) Can educational values in the family be considered together with the institution, the family in

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which they are practised, to be more long-term in character with a high rate of generational transmission? Or, in contrast, have people's opinions regarding what should be passed on in families as educational values undergone a radical shift during the economic and social transformation? Is this shift passed on from generation to generation and can it be already traced within a nearly ten-year time span? (2) Are there any differences in preferred educational values in the family that are related to basic socio-demographic characteristics and to relevant attitudes regarding this question, such as, for example, religious faith or the perception of the parental role? (3) Is it possible to talk about a general model of educational values which is prevalent in contemporary Czech families? Can this model be characterised more as a traditional or as a (late) modern one? (4) Finally, can the position of the Czech Republic among other European countries be identified according to preferred educational values? Are there any continuities traceable in the common social and political development of post-communist countries compared to Western European ones?

#### Data

Answers to the questions outlined above are based on data from the international comparative study EVS1991 and EVS1999.<sup>1</sup> Within its framework populations of participating countries were also asked about values that children should be taught and encouraged to learn at home. The question had the following form:

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

	Important	Not mentioned
A Good manners	1	0
B Independence	1	0
C Hard work	1	0
D Feeling of responsibility	1	0
E Imagination	1	0
F Tolerance and respect for other people	1	0
G Thrift, saving money and things	1	0
H Determination, perseverance	1	0
I Religious faith	1	0
J Unselfishness	1	0
K Obedience	1	0

Each issue is a dichotomous variable here. For each a score was computed denoting how many times it was selected by respondents.

#### 1. Are educational values that are preferred in Czech families of a changing or permanent character?

It could be expected that the influential social and political changes occurring during the past decades in Europe and during the last decade particularly in the countries of the former socialist bloc will in some way be reflected also in changes of opinions and attitudes.

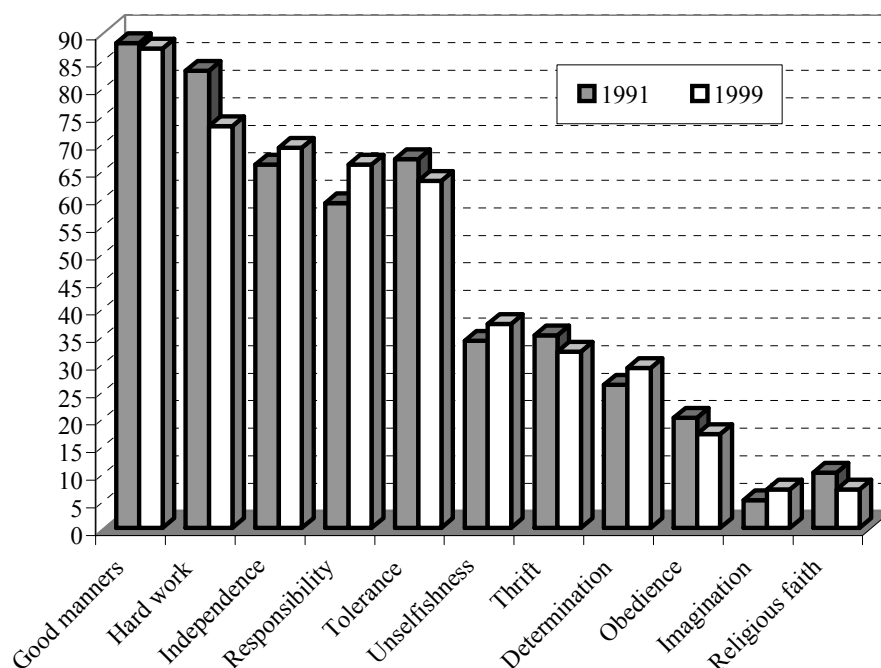
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<sup>1</sup>) Detailed information about the research project EVS – *European Values Study* can be found in the paper by Jan Řehák in this issue.

Opinions and attitudes are an outward expression of values which people believe in and respect. Becker [1995] explores this expectation of changes on the basis of a number of relevant theories (generational theory, theory of individualisation, theory of post-adolescence) to argue that people acquire essential values during their formative period in the life course and they prefer a number of these values for a long time.<sup>2</sup> It evidently does not mean that they cannot change later on, but the basis of value direction is actually laid at the age of 10 to 25. Thus during this period, the conditions – social, cultural, economic – in which an individual is growing up are the most important ones. “If major events in society and substantial transitions in the life course of cohort members coincide in time, new formation of values is to be expected.” [Becker 1995: 290].

Preferences of educational values in the family as expressed by Czech respondents are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Qualities which children can be encouraged to learn at home. Czech Republic 1991 and 1999 (in %)



Source: EVS CR 1991 and CR 1999

<sup>2</sup>) For example, Inglehart's [1990] concept of postmaterialism is largely based on the thesis of the formative stage.



First of all we can see that the rank-order of selected values has remained almost the same during the nearly ten-year period, with the exception of *tolerance*, which in 1991 ranked third while in 1999 it scored fifth, and *religious faith*, which changed from the last but one position in 1991 to the last in 1999. The five most preferred qualities remained the same in both researched periods. These were *good manners*, *hard work*, *independence*, *responsibility* and *tolerance*. Regarding the frequency of preferences, these five are clearly marked from the others.

The differences in the preference for the same issues in 1991 and 1999 were minimal, and apart from *hard work*, the preference for which fell by ten percentage points, they are on the edge of sampling error. In other words, regardless of important changes in various areas of social life, preferred educational values, expressed as the choice of the most important qualities which children should be encouraged to learn at home, remained constant. If we understand these values more in a sociological rather than a psychological sense, that is, as people's opinions about what is desirable, appropriate, good or bad, we can argue that in the Czech Republic *good manners*, *hard work*, *independence*, *responsibility* and *tolerance* have been unquestionably considered to be desirable and appropriate.

Let us now look at how this consistency in time sequence demonstrates itself from a generational perspective (Table 1). First we concentrate on a cross-sectional comparison, that is we compare the values within the same age groups in 1991 and 1999.

It is generally true that the biggest shifts occurred with respondents in the age groups above 58 and with the youngest age groups (18-25 and 26-33 years), while relatively stable attitudes to educational values were expressed by respondents of middle age and late middle age (34-57 years).

The support for qualities like *good manners*, *responsibility*, *unselfishness* and *obedience* remained in 1991 more or less the same regardless of the age cohort of the respondents. On the other hand, among the qualities such as *independence*, *hard work*, *determination*, *religious faith* and *thrift* we can detect differences between certain groups. In 1991 younger age groups valued *independence* and *determination* – these can be described as qualities underlying individual development of personality – rather more, while older generations tended to put more emphasis on *hard work*, *thrift* and *religious faith*, which can be understood as more traditional and possibly less dynamic qualities.

A somewhat different model emerged from the data collected almost a decade later. While in 1999 *good manners* remained a highly valued quality throughout all age cohorts, *hard work* as an important quality was in this case, unlike in the previous one, stressed more by younger people. *Responsibility* and *imagination* were in contrast emphasised by older people. *Thrift* underwent an interesting change. While in 1991 it was valued only by the two oldest age groups (58 years and older), in 1999, in contrast, only by the youngest group (18-25 years). Similarly, perception of *religious faith* went through a radical change in relation to the age structure of its supporters. In 1991 it was selected by people over 50 (and mainly by the group of over 66), while in 1999, by exactly the opposite, the two youngest groups, that is, ages 18 to 33. Another example of change is the support of *determination*. At the beginning of the 1990s, it was especially younger respondents who considered it important to encourage this quality in their children, with increasing age, such 'enthusiasm' was decreasing. At the end of the 1990s the situation was reversed, such 'enthusiasm' was growing with age.

A comparison of the 18-25 age group would provide the most informative viewpoint. In 1991 this group included respondents born between 1966 and 1973, in 1999 then those born between 1974 and 1981. While the first cohort experienced its whole formative stage in the period of 'real socialism', the second cohort lived through a part of its formative stage under the changed political and social circumstances of the 1990s. Nonetheless, this difference did not have a major influence on the preference of educational values, with both groups the majority of values were within the interval of sampling error, larger differences were only recorded with some qualities. These involved *hard work*, preferred by 72% of the young cohort in 1991 but by already 86% in 1999. Other differences include *religious faith* (in its case a growth in preference occurred from 4 to 14 percentage points), and *thrift* (an increase from 32% to 43%). A decrease in preference occurred in the case of *determination* (from 31% to 10%) as well as with *tolerance* (from 69% to 58%). Nonetheless, the five most preferred qualities which children should be encouraged to learn at home were the same in these two groups in both researched years and corresponded to the distribution of the whole sample.

A cohort comparison makes it possible to compare the development of opinions over time within the age cohorts. Again the most interesting finding for us concerns the analysis of the youngest cohort which changed from the original 18-25 year cohort in 1991 to the 26-33 year cohort in 1999. A shift was found regarding *hard work*, which was in 1991 preferred as an important educational value by 72% of respondents aged 18 to 25. In 1999, when this group grew older and became the group of 26-33 year old, 82% of respondents wanted to encourage their children to acquire the quality of hard work. So in the process of ageing a change in attitude occurred in this cohort.

Similarly, regarding *independence*, *tolerance* and *determination* there occurred a cohort shift in opinions, in this case the ageing of the 18-25 year cohort brought less support for these values. The ageing of this cohort, in contrast, contributed to the growing share of respondents with a positive swing toward opinions about practising religious belief. The share of young people who preferred this value increased from 4 to 14 percentage points between the two periods in which the research was carried out. In the case of the age groups of older respondents (50 to 57 and 58 to 65 years), in contrast, ageing brought about a decrease in these preferences (from 12 to 3 and from 14 to 6 percentage points respectively).

On the whole, however, the correlation between age groups and preferences of educational values was quite small, and it was within the 0.04-0.18 interval in 1991 and the 0.03-0.22 in 1999.<sup>3</sup>

What has been argued so far can be summarised and an answer to the first question can be formulated. During the 1990s there did not occur any marked shifts in opinions about educational values in the family, expressed by preferences of certain qualities that children should be encouraged to learn at home. As the analysed data suggest these opinions remained more or less constant within the Czech population regardless of the contextual changes which the Czech Republic underwent during the last decade, and no significant differences were found among age groups. This finding corresponds rather well with the already mentioned theory of a 'formative stage'. A large proportion of

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<sup>3</sup>) Thanks to a rather large sample (N = 1,809) all correlations whose value was higher than 0.03 are statistically significant.

Czech respondents experienced their adolescence and young adulthood in the same era, i.e. in the era of the 'construction of socialism' and in the era of 'real socialism'. The formation of their values thus occurred in the framework of more or less identical social representations.<sup>4</sup> No significant change has so far occurred in the group which lived part of its formative stage through the conditions of a free and democratic society. It appears as if even the youngest generation somehow has been reproducing the educational patterns which members of this generation themselves experienced at a young age in their families.<sup>5</sup>

Theoretically speaking, if the educational values of *good manners*, *hard work*, *independence*, *responsibility* and *tolerance*, which are most preferred by the Czech population, were to be fully implemented, in the near future a truly ideal individual would appear in Czech society. An individual who fulfils the requirements of a complex performance-oriented society: a well-mannered person who is working hard, making independent decisions, feels responsible and shows tolerance to all others. A practical implementation, however, can be, as sociology demonstrates well, a completely different 'cup of tea'.

## **2. What influences the preference of educational values in the family?**

Research on attitudes and value preferences regularly concludes that these structures are influenced by certain socio-demographic characteristics, usually including the gender, education and age of the respondent. In this regard we have as well conducted an analysis of relationships between preferred educational values on the one hand, and corresponding independent socio-demographic characteristics on the other. The independent variables were broadened to include political preferences, religious faith, whether or not the respondents have personal experience of parenthood, as well as opinions about the role of parents in relation to their children.

The findings of this analysis are in the table of intercorrelations (see Table 2), which includes findings only for the year 1999. Surprisingly, we found that preferences of qualities that children should be encouraged to learn at home do not show any relation with the characteristics which we considered to be bound to influence them. Thus, for example, the correlations between the educational issues and age groups ranged within the 0.1 to 0.22 interval. The correlations of these values with a respondent's gender were basically nil. Moreover, we found no relation with education, with the exception of opinions about *obedience*. People with higher education consider *obedience* a quality that

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<sup>4</sup>) The theory of social representations came into existence in French social science. In the presentation of its author Serge Moscovici [1984] it attempts to explore how various concepts, images and classifications come into life and exist in society and how these structures influence people's common knowledge. In other words, social representations are shared forms of knowledge (that come into existence due to socialisation) which influence the perception of everyday reality.

<sup>5</sup>) In this context, one of the anonymous reviewers suggests that it is unclear whether answers of older-cohorts-respondents really reflect their older value patterns and asks whether their answers had not been influenced by their views on what is most important for the present. This is a legitimate question. However, despite the fact that we have no data for comparison with the pre-1989 period, we interpret the very fact that views of cohorts aged 42-57 remained more or less the same between 1991 and 1999 as an indication of stable value patterns which have been formed in pre-transformation periods.



children should be led to at home less frequently (-0.18) than respondents with lower education. The right- and left-wing political orientation is not related to the preference of certain educational values either. Nor did *religious faith* sort our sample in relation to educational values, apart from one understandable exception: respondents with an inclination toward religious faith preferred education to *religious faith* more often. The fact whether the respondent had or did not have children did not play a role either, neither did the general attitude to the role of parents.<sup>6</sup>

Table 2. Correlations between educational preferences and socio-demographic variables (Spearman's  $\rho$ ), CR 1999

	Age	Gender	Education	Political orientation	Religion	Having kids	Role of parents
Manners	0.06*	0.02	-0.07*	-0.00	-0.04	0.04	-0.02
Independence	-0.06*	-0.04	0.07*	-0.02	0.14*	-0.02	0.02
Hard work	0.22*	0.00	-0.01	-0.08*	-0.02	0.13*	-0.08*
Responsibility	-0.04	-0.01	0.11*	0.03	-0.01	0.01	0.03
Imagination	-0.08*	-0.04	0.04	0.03	-0.02	-0.05*	0.00
Tolerance	-0.01	0.12*	0.05*	0.02	-0.01	-0.03	-0.02
Thrift	0.07*	0.03	-0.11*	-0.05	0.00	0.02	0.00
Determination	-0.16*	-0.07*	0.13*	0.06	0.10*	-0.10*	0.05*
Religious faith	0.10*	0.02	-0.09*	0.11*	-0.30*	0.06*	-0.10*
Unselfishness	-0.04	-0.01	-0.01	0.04	-0.03	-0.02	0.06*
Obedience	0.02	-0.03	-0.18*	0.06*	0.01	0.03	-0.02

Note: \* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Measurement: Political orientation measured as 10 point scale from left to right; Having kids: dichotomous variable with alternatives 0 = no kids, 1 = one or more kids; Religion measured by question: *Independently of whether you go to church or not, would you say you are:* 1. A religious person, 2. Not a religious person, 3. A convinced atheist; Role of parents: measured by question: *Which of the following statements best describes your views about parents' responsibilities to their children? (Indicate one only):* 1 - Parents' duty is to do their best for their children even at the expense of their own well-being; 2 - Neither; 3 - Parents have a life of their own and should not be asked to sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of their children.

These findings not only miss our expectations but at the same time they refer to a somewhat different pattern from the one common in a number of other European countries. Stenberg [1997] tested correlations between education, age, profession, gender and practice of religious faith and educational values using data from EVS 1990 in the following countries: Sweden, Denmark, France, the Republic of Ireland and the United States of America. In each of them certain correlations were found, at least regarding education, age and the practice of religious faith, and they demonstrated the existence of a relation-

<sup>6</sup>) This was expressed either by an inclination toward the opinion that parents should fully sacrifice for their children, or, in contrast, to the opinion that parents have their own lives and do not have to do so. In both years when the research was conducted only 25% of parents were of the opinion that they do not have to sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of their children.

ship and a certain regularity between these socio-demographic characteristics and educational preferences.

Only one regularity occurs in Czech society, and it is the fact that opinions about which qualities children should be encouraged to learn at home are universally shared by the Czech population regardless of whether they are male or female, people of higher or lower education, individuals who already have or do not have experience with the upbringing of their own children, regardless of religious faith, etc.

The fact that no pattern according to which certain characteristics of a respondent would be associated with certain educational preferences was found in the Czech Republic leads us to the statement that with respect to preferred educational values Czech society is very homogeneous. At least at the verbal level, that is, in communication with the interviewer asking questions, various social categories of Czech respondents chose the same educational values which, as we have already suggested in the previous sub-chapter, are close to a personality ideal. This homogeneous educational ideal, although found only on a symbolic level, is a very interesting feature of Czech society of the 1990s. The fact that notions about reality recorded in sociological research are far from the reality itself is, of course, a routine sociological experience, and thus, we should understand our results from this perspective.

### **3. What is the prevalent model of Czech educational values in the family like?**

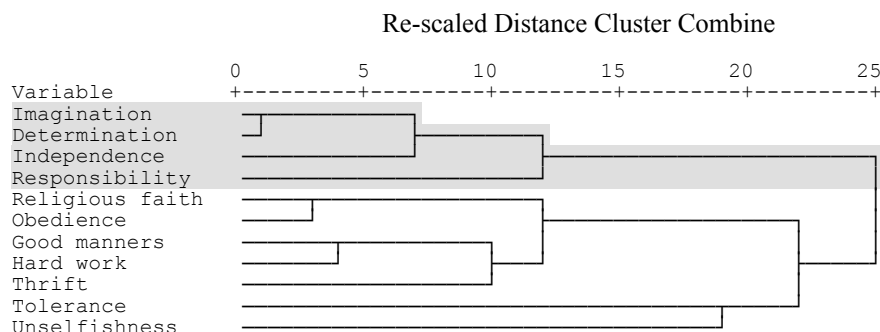
The list of eleven discussed qualities that children should be encouraged to learn at home in the EVS questionnaire has been constructed by its authors mainly along the tradition/modernity axis. This involves an *a priori* research construct that needs to be tested under various circumstances. Akker, Halman and Moor [1994] consider good manners, obedience, hard work and thrift to be traditional values. In our opinion, it is also possible to add religious faith to this group. Among qualities that reflect modern values these authors list independence, imagination and determination.

Let us consider to what extent these *a priori* constructs correspond with Czech reality, respectively, how these presuppositions are filled with Czech data. In order to explore whether the empirical solution corresponds with our model, we selected the method of hierarchical cluster analysis<sup>7</sup> to group the variables. Within its framework we decided to resort to correlational measures instead of the common distance measure of similarity to define intervariable similarity. This decision was influenced by the fact that our goal was to uncover latent structures between variables. If we decided to use distance measures, e.g. Euclidean distance, which focus on the magnitudes of the values, we would basically repeat the structure which we have already outlined in Figure 1. Findings of the cluster solution are presented in Figures 2 and 3.

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<sup>7</sup>) With this type of assignment, factor analysis is commonly used. In this case, however, it could not be applied here as the relevant data that entered analysis were of a dichotomous nature.

Figure 2. Cluster analysis of characteristics that children should be encouraged to learn at home. Dendrogram of the characteristics in 1991 (Dendrogram using Average Linkage Between Groups)



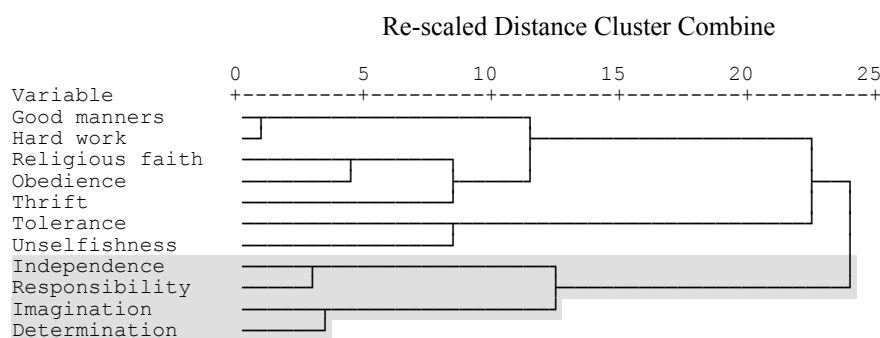
Source: Data file EVS CR 1991

In 1991 the variables were divided into two main clusters. The first one consisted of four qualities: *imagination*, *determination*, *independence* and *responsibility*. We believe that this cluster can be called the cluster of modern educational values. Stenberg [1997], who carried out the same analysis for Western European countries, reached a very similar cluster, which she labelled 'late-modern values'.

The second cluster is made up of five plus two qualities. We named it a traditional cluster, as it includes educational preferences such as *religious faith*, *obedience*, *good manners*, *hard work* and *thrift*. It includes qualities that can be considered to be of a constant nature and universal validity. According to Stenberg [1997], who comments upon the Swedish experience, these values have their roots mainly in religious morality, and they last also in a highly secularised and modernised culture. In the Czech case these are supplemented with *tolerance* and *unselfishness*, and these two formed a specific, partly independent substructure. We can refer to it as a 'pro-social' one.

In 1999 the cluster structure of all eleven qualities was basically accurately replicated (it does not matter that in Figure 3 the mirror image of the clusters is shown). The striking consistency which we have already noted in the case of preferences for individual qualities (see Figure 1) means that during the almost ten-year period the position of the individual qualities forming these clusters did not change at all. In other words, even this sophisticated analysis confirmed the already mentioned fact: ideas about educational patterns in the Czech population remained basically the same throughout the 1990s.

Figure 3. Dendrogram of the characteristics in 1999 (Dendrogram using Average Linkage Between Groups)



Source: Data file EVS CR 1999.

Let us consider what happens when, based on this information of empirical foundation, we create three types of values – modern, traditional and pro-social<sup>8</sup> – and we explore whether these types fit certain socio-demographic characteristics or not. As shown in Table 3, the modern type of educational values was in 1991 more frequently preferred by respondents of younger age, higher education, and without religious orientation.

Table 3. Correlations between clusters and socio-demographic variables (Spearman's  $\rho$ )

Type of values	Age	Gender	Education	Political orientation	Religion	Having kids	Role of parents
<i>A) 1991</i>							
Modern	-0.17**	-0.10**	0.27**	-0.09**	0.21**	-0.02	0.04
Traditional	0.25**	0.07**	-0.28**	0.09**	-0.24**	0.08**	-0.04
Pro-social	-0.07**	0.00	0.12**	-0.05*	0.08**	-0.01	0.01
<i>B) 1999</i>							
Modern	-0.15**	-0.06*	0.17**	0.06*	0.13**	-0.06*	0.05*
Traditional	0.20**	0.00	-0.19**	-0.06*	-0.11**	0.10**	-0.08*
Pro-social	-0.05*	0.09**	0.04	0.04	-0.03	-0.01	0.03

Note: \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.1 level (two tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.5 level (two tailed).

On the other hand traditional values were more frequently preferred by the elderly, less educated, and with a religious orientation. Other characteristics, as we have already detected also in previous analyses, did not have any influence on adopting respective attitudes. Pro-social qualities did not follow such a pattern. In 1999 the respondents' value distinctiveness depending on age, education and religious belief decreased in the case of the modern and the traditional educational type. Moreover, the decrease was significant in the case of religious orientation. Correlations with the pro-social type again remained basically nil.

Educational values in the family can certainly also be considered in other respects and dimensions than the traditional – modern. Stenberg [1997], for example, uses all the

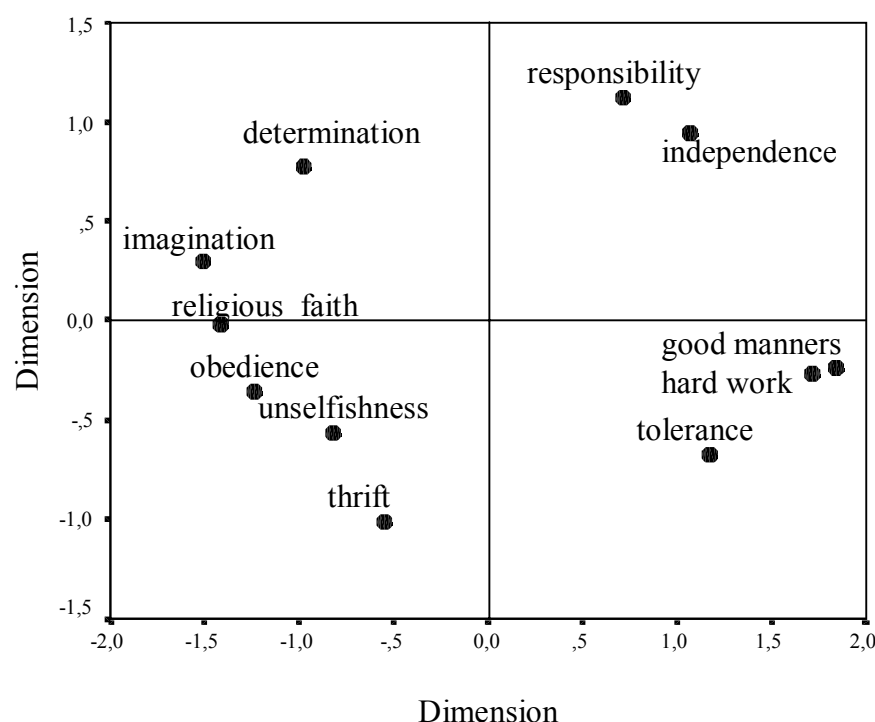
<sup>8</sup>) Individual types were created as composite indices of the issues which clustered together. The higher the value of the index, the more preferred the given type.

eleven researched qualities that children should be encouraged to learn at home as a starting point for a wider discussion about the consequences of modernity and indicators of individualisation. She achieves this on the basis of moral, mainly religious, values in five selected countries of different denomination (Sweden, Denmark, France, the Republic of Ireland and the United States of America).

Piet van den Akker, Loek Halman, and Ruud de Moor [Akker, Halman and Moor 1994] give an account of educational values in the family based on the first two phases of EVS research (1981 and 1990) under the heading of children's socialisation. They analysed the results of the selection of qualities that are considered important in the family and which children should be encouraged to learn at home using factor analysis (although in our opinion it is not an adequate technique for this set of variables), which pointed out two significant dimensions. One dimension was labelled the dimension of conformity, and the second was labelled self-centred achievement. An indicator of conformity, according to the authors, was the appreciation of qualities such as good manners and religious faith or, in contrast, the low regard for qualities such as independence, imagination and determination. These were indicators of non-conformity. The second factor, that of self-centred achievement, was fuelled by positively accepted qualities, such as hard work and thrift, that is, qualities needed for achieving a better life and upward mobility on the social ladder. The adjective 'self-centred' was used by the authors owing to the fact that qualities such as tolerance (show respect to others) and unselfishness negatively correlated with this factor. The factor of self-centred achievement thus reflects more of an egocentric rather than an altruistic effort.

Let us attempt to combine the approaches of Stenberg and Akker et al. and use them in our interpretation of findings from the Czech Republic. We used multidimensional scaling which usually can arrange analysed variables according to their similarities into a framework that can be interpreted in a sensible manner. The results can be found in Figures 4 and 5.

Figure 4. Grouping of educational preferences using multidimensional scaling, CR 1991

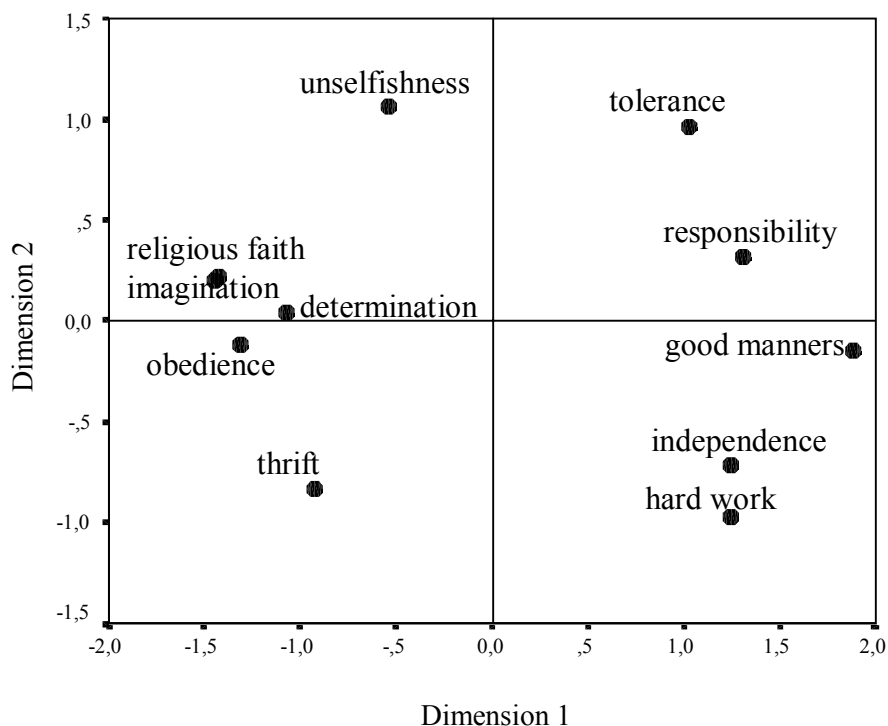


The grouping of individual educational values suggests that the dimensions, which were discussed on the one hand by Stenberg and on the other by Akker et al., are not present in the Czech educational environment. Self-centred achievement should include *hard work* and *thrift*. These qualities, however, do not appear together. Neither do the qualities that should be the opposite of self-centred achievement, namely *unselfishness* and *tolerance*, get together – they placed themselves in different quadrants.

If we are to answer the question which appears in the title of this section, namely, whether there exists a general model of educational values in Czech families, we can argue, based on cluster analysis, that basically there are three models. The first model is labelled the model of traditional values, the second of modern values and the third of pro-social values. In order to be able to reach an argument about which of these models prevail we have to relate the findings of cluster analysis to the concrete qualities that are most preferred in upbringing in Czech families. We can see that out of the five most frequently selected qualities, *good manners*, *hard work*, *independence*, *responsibility* and *tolerance*, two belong to the traditional type (*good manners* and *hard work*), two to the modern (*independence* and *responsibility*) and one to the pro-social type (*tolerance*). They were also selected in this order. According to our interpretation this means that preferred educational values in Czech families are a mixture of traditional, modern and pro-social orientation. Regarding the dimension of individuality and sociability, or the axis of self-centred achievement and altruism which was found in Western European countries, it is impossible to reach a more precisely formulated model based on our findings, as the case appears to be more of both types of qualities appearing next to each other in a disor-

derly fashion. Preferred Czech educational values can thus according to this perspective be labelled as a mixture of values aiming at the same time at the individual and the society.

Figure 5. Grouping of educational preferences using multidimensional scaling, CR 1999



**4. What is the position of the Czech Republic among other European countries according to preferred educational values in the family?**

The most frequently mentioned and the least preferred qualities which children should be encouraged to learn at home are rather similar in European countries (see Table 4). If we first compare the countries of Western and Eastern Europe, in 1991 the average rank-order of the most preferred values in the listed Western countries was as follows: 1. *responsibility*, 2. *tolerance*, 3. *good manners*, 4. *independence*, and 5. *thrift*. In Eastern European countries it ran as follows: 1. *good manners* (3rd in the West), 2. *responsibility* (1st), 3. *tolerance* (2nd), 4. *hard work* and 5. *independence*.

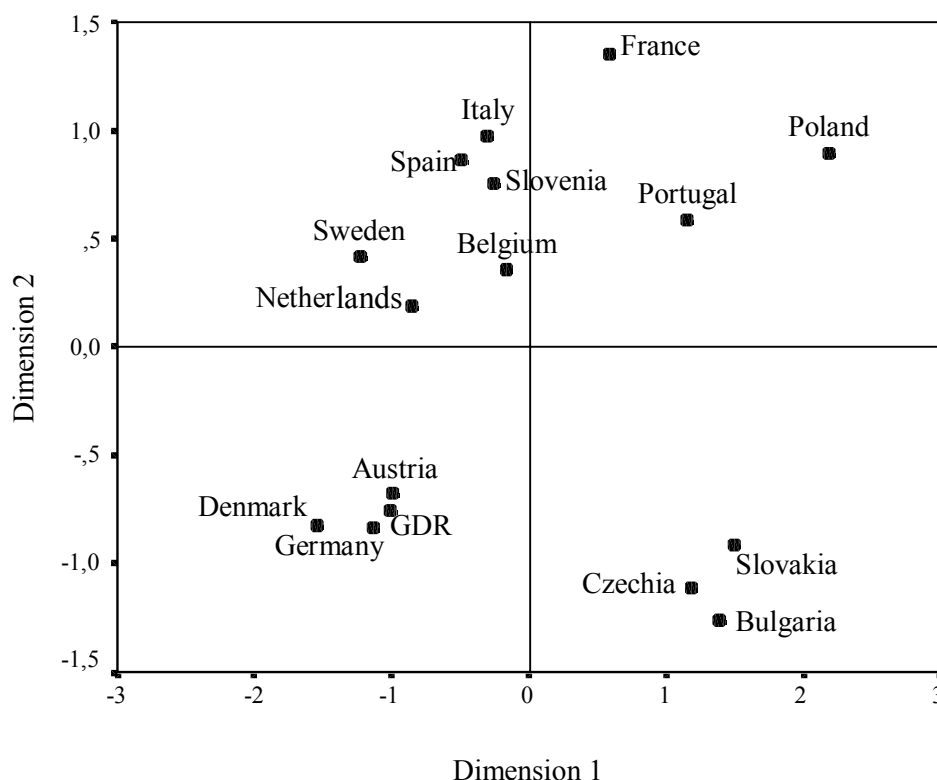




In 1999 these preferences remained basically the same in Western countries, only *thrift* was substituted by *determination*. In Eastern countries the order was as follows: 1. *responsibility* (2nd in 1991 in Eastern Europe), 2. *good manners* (1st), 3. *tolerance* (3rd), 4. *independence* (5th), and 5. *determination*. So the substitution of one value, that of *hard work* by *determination*, also occurred in this case.

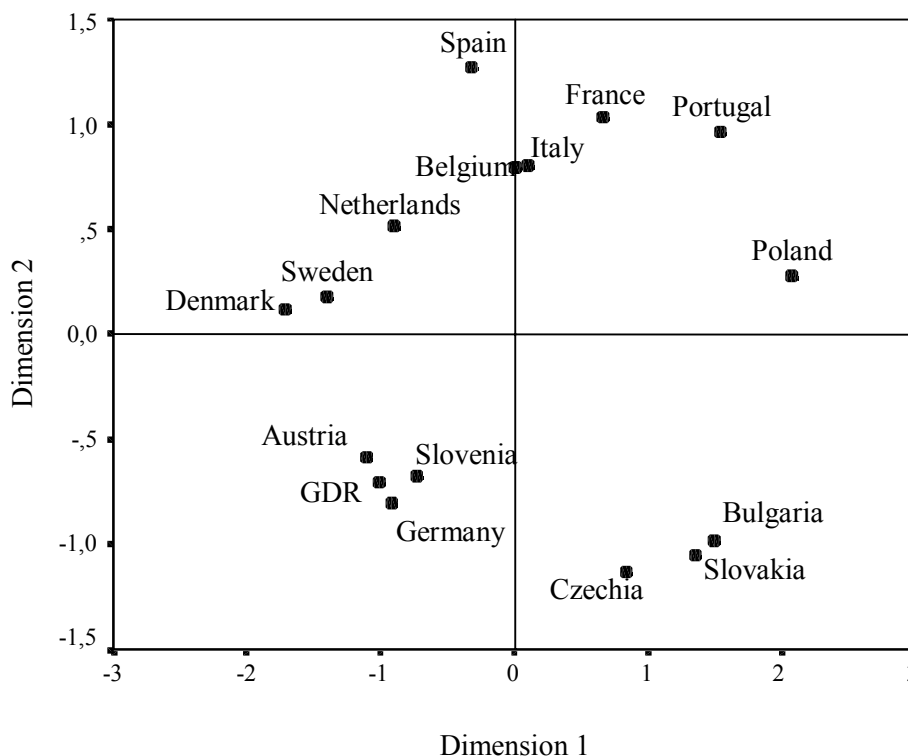
Data in Table 4, which show the distribution of individual qualities, are supplemented by the multidimensional scaling figure, which places each country in two-dimensional space according to the similarity of preferences of educational values. Figures 6 and 7 show the findings for both compared years. In both periods the Czech Republic appears close to Slovakia and Bulgaria. Countries like Sweden and the Netherlands are situated opposite this group, while at the end of the 1990s they were joined by Denmark. In 1991 countries like Spain, Italy and Slovenia were related to these countries in an even looser way. France and Portugal together occupied 'their own' quadrant, and Poland was joined to them, probably due to the inclination toward religious values. The remaining quadrant is mostly occupied by countries from the German-speaking world – Austria and both Germanys. In 1991 Denmark was added to them, while in 1999 Slovenia moved to join them.

Figure 6. The position of selected European countries in relation to preferences of educational values in 1991 – multidimensional scaling



Note: Stress = 0.16, R<sup>2</sup> = 0.90

Figure 7. The position of selected European countries in relation to preferences of educational values in 1999 – multidimensional scaling



Note: Stress = 0.13,  $R^2 = 0.91$

According to the vertical axis (Dimension 2), the Czech Republic was positioned in 1999 in the group consisting not only of the geographically close Austria, both Germanys and Slovakia, but also including Bulgaria and Slovenia. From a cultural perspective the influence of these countries on Czech history and vice versa certainly cannot be omitted. It seems that in the context of educational preferences the influence still continues to be present. If we exchanged the rather static view of Figures 6 and 7 for a dynamic one, throughout the 1990s only Slovenia and Denmark provide cases in which, from the perspective of educational value preferences, a shift occurred to other quadrants and thus to other imaginary neighbourhoods of values. The position of other countries remained more or less unchanged. In 1999, the Czech Republic became somewhat distant from its Slavic neighbours (Slovakia and Bulgaria), while the latter became more tightly linked. Overall, in 1999, the formation of European countries acquired the appearance of some kind of a necklace, with different European countries hanging on it as pendants. However, the inner formula for their hanging arrangement cannot be deduced from the figure.

In order to see how the depicted similarity is filled with empirical data, we regrouped the data from Table 4 in a way that enables us to put the countries in a sequence according to the results of multidimensional scaling. The result is shown in Table 5, though due to austerity measures we only deal with data from 1999.



It seems to be that from the perspective of dividing countries into those ‘in transformation’ as opposed to Western European societies other factors rather than such a dichotomy play a role. These include geographic, linguistic, religious and general cultural circumstances. The clusters of individual countries clearly suggest this. Only in the case of the value neighbourhood of the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Bulgaria might, apart from these circumstances, their common ‘socialist’ past also play a role. However, Poland, as well as Slovenia and the former GDR, do not fit this interpretation.

In answering the question whether any continuities are detectable from the social and political development in post-communist countries as compared to the countries of Western Europe, we can therefore state that the expected continuities were not found.

### **Summary and discussion**

In this paper we dealt with the question of how qualities which children should be encouraged to learn at home are preferred in the Czech Republic as well as in other European countries. We have reached the conclusion that, in the field of education, the Czech population prefers the following qualities: good manners, hard work, independence, responsibility and tolerance. It is clear from this structure that we are dealing with a mixture of traditional, modern and pro-social qualities. An important feature of Czech educational preferences is the fact that their structure has remained the same during nearly ten years of transformation, that is, from 1991 to 1999.

Another finding that we reached is that in the Czech Republic no formula according to which educational value preferences were sorted was found. This fact leads us to the conclusion that with regard to educational values Czech society is markedly homogeneous.

We also found that the structure of the five most preferred educational values that we detected in the Czech Republic is similar to the structure of preferences in other European countries. Nonetheless, in terms of the overall structuration of preferences of educational values, individual European countries differ. In 1999 the Czech Republic was positioned in a space between Bulgaria and Slovakia on the one hand, and Germany, Austria and Slovenia on the other – a space that we called German-Slavic.

In her work dealing with a similar topic, Stenberg [1997] uses Hall’s concept of ‘late modernity’, which reflects a kind of transitional phase between the modernity of industrial society and the post-modernity of post-industrial society. In terms of values this means, on the one hand, the reflexivity and fragmentation of value systems, and at the same time, on the other hand, a tendency towards the globalisation of values. In Hall’s [1992] terms this involves a tendency toward global homogenisation and at the same time toward local differentiation. It would probably be possible to interpret our findings, which present a European ‘map’ of educational values in the family, on the basis of this viewpoint.

Preferred educational values in the family are, as we suggested at the beginning of this paper, an individual matter of each family alone. However, it has become clear that the educational environment of the Czech family is influenced by universally shared notions about what children should be taught and how they should be brought up, because, as the findings of this paper suggest, the structure of preferences is the same in various social groups of Czech society.

If we were too optimistic, in a pedagogical sense, then we would probably believe that the found repeated preference of *good manners, hard work, independence, responsibility* and *tolerance* could be a certain promise that new generations of Czech citizens will be well-mannered and independent individuals who will show tolerance towards their surroundings. This together with their hard work and responsibility could perhaps one day lead the Czech Republic to belong among the most developed European societies.

However, as long as we are sociologically realistic we know that the selection of ideal educational values from the battery of offered issues during sociological research is guided by different rules than real everyday education in the family. Therefore, we will not be surprised if future generations of Czechs in the end acquire qualities that differ from those that their parents verbally preferred in the 1990s.

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